A critical geopolitics of RAF recruitment

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PhD Thesis. November 2012

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Abstract

This PhD thesis investigates the geopolitics of Royal Air Force (RAF) recruitment practices. Set at the interface between military and civilian life, RAF recruitment represents an important site from which particular imaginations of the military are consumed, enacted and performed. Drawing primarily on critical geopolitical theory and military geography, along with more-than-representational approaches to popular culture, the thesis uncovers how RAF recruitment necessitates an understanding of, and participation within, certain military-political narratives and imaginaries. It shows that these imaginaries – variously associated with the role, utility and legitimacy of state-sanctioned military violence – are powerful in their ability to affect popular understandings of the military, and to affect certain bodily and material engagements within the immediate spaces of recruitment. Furthermore, with a specific focus on the RAF, it demonstrates how certain ideas around the role and utility of military airpower are represented, enacted and performed.

The thesis approaches the geopolitics of RAF recruitment in three ways. Firstly, focussing on the representative tenets of recruitment, the thesis examines both the historical and contemporary design of recruiting texts, images and documents. Using a socio-historical analysis of recruiting images, and drawing upon interviews with the military and corporate producers of recruitment, it demonstrates how recruitment emerges from particular structures, knowledges and experiences.

Secondly, focussing on the visualities of military public-relations, the thesis demonstrates how large-scale public and private events, such as military airshows, provide spaces in which military-political narratives and imaginaries are enacted in and through regimes of seeing and sighting. Based on ethnographic research at military airshows, the thesis works to uncover the ways in which techniques of vision at spectacular events tie the potential recruit into particular imaginations of military legitimacy, efficacy, heritage and power.

Thirdly, the thesis examines how the more mundane, quotidian sites of RAF recruitment are powerful in their ability to affect bodily predispositions and material engagements. Focussing on RAF recruiting games, military fitness regimes and the material, ephemeral nature of the airshow in particular, the thesis provides an insight into why the material and bodily cultures of militarism matter, and how they work persuasively to entrain particular imaginations of military life and culture.

The thesis raises important questions about the presence of military narratives and imaginaries in the public, civilian sphere, and in popular culture in particular. Set at the interface between military and civilian life, RAF recruitment demonstrates how popular geopolitical discourses of the military sometimes work not only to script imaginations of military violence, but to affect, mark and alter civilian lives and futures.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Figure 1.1 Be Part of the Story (The Irish Sea)

In the latter part of 2009, the British Royal Air Force (RAF), via the Central Office of Information (COI) and the advertising agency Delaney Lund Knox and Warren (DLKW), unveiled their new recruiting campaign, *Be Part of the Story* (BPotS). Using a realist-come-comic style reminiscent of the popular *Commando* comic books, the BPotS image series follows the stories of serving RAF personnel in order to explore a range of roles available to the potential recruit. In figure 1.1, for example, we're given a dramatic insight into the job of the RAF in U.K air-sea rescue. Both real and fictional images of the servicemen involved are set against a dramatic rendering of a moody and treacherous Irish seascape which plays host to the ultimately successful rescue of the crew of a container ferry. The story told of the RAF in this case is one of bravery, professionalism and technical mastery in an unforgiving environment, and in a situation where lives are at stake. The image at once outlines the efficacy of the British military, airpower, and at the same time, invites the viewer to imagine themselves as part of the myriad RAF stories currently unfolding in the world's dangerous and threatening spaces.

The BPotS campaign, being not only confined to the RAF's domestic air-sea rescue role, also covers the deployment of the RAF's Intelligence branch, Regiment and Aeromedical evacuation service (amongst others) in the current spaces of the global War on Terror. In chapter two of this thesis, for example, we'll see as part of the BPots series *Sean Langrish*, a RAF Aerospace Battle Manager, as he successfully arranges an airstrike in Afghanistan's Helmand Province. Similarly, and again in chapter two, we'll see RAF Regiment Officer *Mark Bowden's* attempts to stabilize a fractious situation in an Iraqi village. As broad in format as imaginative coverage, the BPotS campaign is also available on the RAF's career website in animated form (figure 1.2), came to be present on poster hoardings in public spaces, on television for a time as a short clip (entitled *RAF Eagle*) advertising Intelligence roles, and as full-page spreads in popular magazines like *Men's Health*. Whilst much will be made in this thesis of the inherent problems which beset the representation of space, place, action, response and identity in recruiting campaigns like BPotS, this initial discussion now turns elsewhere, and specifically, to issues connected with the current *absence* of the BPotS campaign from the magazines and poster hoardings where it was once present.

Figure 1.2 Be Part of the Story (Chris Long)

The BPotS campaign – though gaining its creators, DLKW, eighth place in the coveted Campaign Annual awards in 2009 (BrandRepublic 2009) – is no longer present in the form it took immediately after it was released. Though the 'Be Part of the Story' tagline remains part of the RAF's current promotional portfolio, images which advertised the roles of regular Regiment Gunner, Intelligence Analyst or Battlespace Manager, for example, have been discontinued. Owing to the freezing of all Ministry of Defence and Civil Service corporate procurement budgets (COI 2010b), the scrapping of the Central Office of Information (COI) (BBC 2011), and recent cuts to branches of the British military, the RAF is undergoing a 'change of balance' (Urban 2011) which entails the discontinuation of recruitment for regular personnel (and their redundancy from service in some cases), and the stepping-up of reserve forces recruitment. For the RAF, this has meant the cancellation of many of its ongoing recruiting campaigns, and the merging of intellectual content therein with the recent *Your Spare Time Transformed* (MoD 2011) multi-service campaign. Being part of the British military story, in these instances, is more about envisaging the benefits of part-time military service and getting more out of your (civilian) life, as opposed to envisaging oneself part of liberation in Afghanistan, for instance.

Whilst this thesis will not be overly concerned with the politics and histories of force (re)structuring, what it will do is map the impact that restructuring has on the 'end product' of recruitment. As chapter three will describe, RAF recruitment is a product of a range of vested (state and commercial) interests, and it will be shown that the relationships between these interests have direct impacts on the types of stories being told about the military through recruitment. Simply put, recruitment is licensed and limited by the

political economies of its production. But, as it will be shown, it is also licensed and limited by the types of war being fought by the RAF, by the spaces in which the RAF is (and has been) present, and the popular myths and imaginations which are central to public support for the British military. For instance, the BPotS campaign tells of an RAF engaged primarily in the Middle East (Iraq and Afghanistan), of a world racked by the vagaries of international terrorism, and accounts for the contemporary utility of airpower, of remote-control and computerised warfare, and counterinsurgency operations. In this way, RAF recruitment will be considered here as evidence not simply for the range of roles available to the potential recruit, but as evidence for how the military is able to account for itself (practically and imaginatively) and its role as a military force in the world.

The final part of this opening provocation around RAF recruitment centres on another range of geographies which cannot be accounted for just by looking at images such as those in the BPotS series. As will be shown, alongside its variously appealing images, RAF recruitment happens in the immediate, in spaces such as the high street, the shopping centre arcade, the military airshow, and in private spaces like the home where fictional RAF stories are played out as online games. An essential part of this thesis (considered in chapters five, six and seven) are the practices and performances that are enabled by the RAF's promotional policies. Here, being part of the RAF story will be shown to involve things like being overawed with the spectacular sight of an aircraft aerobatics display; being willed to compete in physical exercises that assess the suitability of the body for combat; or finding that the ephemera of recruitment (pens, posters, keyrings, mousemats) have found their way into one's daily (civilian) routine. Overall then, an emphasis will be placed in this thesis on the ability of RAF recruitment to constitute not only certain imagined military geographies, but to allow for the construction, mediation and living-in of immediate spaces.

This opening chapter is in three parts, and firstly, it will consider the extent to which military recruitment has been studied in the social sciences. The aspiration of this first part is twofold. Firstly, it is to outline the simple fact that recruitment is essential to the sustenance of military forces, and to the continuance of military defence and armed conflict. A second aspiration is to demonstrate that, despite these issues, little has been done to consider the role recruitment plays in persuading people – by means of common-sense geopolitical stories – to join the military. The second part of the chapter will outline the opportunities of a critical geopolitical analysis of RAF recruitment. As will be demonstrated, RAF recruitment is, above all, about providing the potential recruit with a

sense of *what the military is, what it does and where it does it*. Where critical geopolitics tries to account for the constructed, partial and discursive nature of our imagined and (more recently) lived in worlds, it will be suggested that a more nuanced study of military recruitment necessitates this type of analysis. Put a different way, that RAF recruitment might allow the potential recruit to be part of the literal military stories of the future is also to suggest that recruitment works imaginatively, affectively and materially to create worlds in which individuals come to consider a military career a reasonable decision. Lastly, the chapter will cover the more formal aspects of the thesis, and will outline the methodological approach, methods, and chapter structure.

1.1 Military recruitment: a neglected area of study

The study of military recruitment – currently present in literatures around economics, psychology, advertising research, and notably, military sociology – has been generally limited in fashion. With its origins in the development of military sociology beginning during the Second World War (Janowitz 1960 1977; Moskos 1970), concerns around military recruitment were initially framed by the implementation of an all-volunteer force in militaries, particularly in America, and a subsequent conceptualisation of military service around Moskos' (1977; c.f. Jenkings *et al.* 2011) Institution/Occupation (I/O) model. Here, as Padilla and Laner (2002: no pagination) suggest, where post-second World War Anglo-American militaries were moving toward a more civilian-influenced soldiering model, 'the…soldier was rendered the status of a mere employee'. Therefore, rather than being able to rely on the institutional tenets of 'duty to country, loyalty, and commitment [which] uniquely differentiate military service from civilian work', recruiting for the soldier-as-employee came to rely on extrinsic, occupational 'concerns such as comparative pay, acquisition of technical training, working conditions, and enlistment incentives' (Eighmey 2006: 308). Though some have critiqued the conceptual division between I/O more generally for its broader legacy in military sociology (Jenkings *et al.* 2011), others have questioned this division more specifically in relation to recruitment. For example, Padilla and Laner (2001) have suggested that, despite I/Os dominance as a framework for understanding the perceived motivations of recruits, there is little evidence to suggest that recruitment displayed a qualitative thematic shift with the advent of all-volunteer militaries. Moreover, as Faris and Burk (1982) and Chadhoff (1983) argue, Institutional and Occupational motivations (and the related thematics used in recruitment) are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, as Padilla and Laner (2001) continue, there may be a range of influences on recruitment in any one period (or 'era' of war) which include: the military and its

manpower needs; the necessary split between the advertisement of combat and non-combat roles (see Harries-Jenkins 1986); the appeal of elite military units; persuasive iconographic tropes such as uniform insignia; or 'independent civilian influences' (Padilla and Lander 2001: 433) (the latter of which, they suggest, fall outside current understandings of motivations for enlistment).

Where these studies are useful is in their identification of motivating factors. That is to say, following the opening provocation around RAF recruitment, studies of military recruitment in the sociological tradition outline the fact that recruitment is tied, first and foremost, to military requirement, to the fact that recruiting might draw upon themes of patriotism and nation, upon 'extrinsic' concerns around employment, and to the possibility that there might be wider social and cultural knowledges that enable recruiting to become effective. However, whilst military sociology has experienced more recent conceptual jolts – ones associated with Moskos *et al.*'s (2000) notion of the 'postmodern military', concerns over military work and citizenship (Cowen 2005 2008) and the emergence of non-state military actors in global conflict (Sheppard 1998; Avant 2000; Singer 2001; Fredland 2004; Carbonnier 2006) – the study of military recruitment in military sociology has not been so influenced. Put more simply, studies of recruitment in military sociology remain tied, empirically and in some cases epistemologically, to the foundations that paralleled the I/O model. Following Jenkings *et al.*'s (2011) critique of macro, 'top down' military research, the remainder of this short review will outline the more specific problems and issues that arise if recruitment remains to be studied in this way. There are three points for discussion here.

Firstly, there is the issue of analysis. The predominant method of analysis in sociologies of military recruiting, as Jenkings *et al.* (2011: 38) note, is that of a 'hypothetico-deductive epistemology and a resultant emphasis on positivist methodologies and the development and testing of models of social relations'. For example, Withers (1977) – focussing on estimations of British recruiting policy and simulated recruit behaviour – employs a regression analysis of manpower objectives; Padilla and Laner (2001 2002) use a content analysis of recruiting images to assess trends in U.S recruiting; and Eighmey (2006; see also Miller *et al.* 2007 and Yeung and Gifford 2010) analyses American Forces telephone survey data on youth motives. Whilst there do exist a small number of qualitative analyses of recruiting images (Hockey 1981), military promotional iconographies (Roderick 2009), and the qualitative disparity between the image and reality of military service (Shyles and Hocking 1990), little has been done to consider, in

particular, the power of the image to construct particular imagined worlds and to affect dispensations towards military service. As Jenkings *et al.* (2011: 38) note, is was the retention of hypothetico-deductive approaches in military sociology, when the broader discipline was experiencing its 'cultural turn', that explains the lack of enthusiasm for, and a lack of critique in, social scientific studies of the military: where scholars like Padilla and Laner (2001) take terms like 'patriotism' and 'nation' unproblematically and as normative, more might be done to apply a more rigorous analysis to the common-sense nature of categories which have been used to model and describe recruit motivation.

The second issue is that of the lived-in cultures of recruitment, and the lack of work in military sociology and related fields (in terms of recruitment) which has 'prioritised identity and (inter)subjective embodied experience' (Jenkings *et al.* 2011: 38). Whilst there has been a recognition that social scientific studies of recruitment might be looked at from 'two perspectives' (Karsten 1998a) – from the government and policy side, and from the individual perspective – it is clear that in terms of the latter, the literal, lived-in realities of promotional cultures which are so central to modern military recruitment (see Allen 2009) remain understudied. In the first instance, studies represented in Karsten's (1998b) edited collection – to use this as exemplary – negate identity and subjective experience because they account for varying histories and politics of state-based policies towards the amassing of armies in the face of military threat. In the second, approaches to the 'individual perspective' are marred by the same positivist approach to recruit motivation as are the examples above.

Lastly, there is the issue of the purpose and utility of military research. As Jenkings *et al.* (2011: 39) continue, part of the reason there is a paucity of research on the qualitative power of the image, identity, and experience in military sociology is the 'close institutional links between sociologists and military establishments'. Simply put, because military sociology follows an 'engineering' rather than 'enlightenment' model of inquiry (Higate and Cameron 2006) – informed by the requirements of the academic-military nexus (see Stavrianakis 2009) – it is limited in what it can say and do. The military-social collaboration between scholars and military institutions has three effects:

> First, it facilitates access to data, whether primary or secondary. Second, collaboration involves gatekeepers, who by virtue of their role have significant authority and power in shaping research trajectories (this applies, of course, to all social scientific research). Third, collaboration requires accepting military institutional definitions of acceptable methodologies, conceptualisations of the social world that underpin the development of

research questions, and understandings of how research fits a broader 'national interest' dictum; these are all acute factors in the design and operation of research (Jenkings *et al.* 2011: 44).

The military-academic nexus which informs much of military sociology certainly facilitates research (indeed, data used in places in this thesis is drawn from military sources), but it also shapes the types of research produced. For social scientific studies of recruitment, these effects are telling. For instance, whilst the military itself is interested in the sociologies of recruitment (c.f. McCrory 2002; and for a critique, Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009), there are clear similarities between approaches to recruitment from 'military' and 'non-military', sociological perspectives. The issues here are twofold. Firstly, it is clear that the purpose of sociological studies of military recruitment (and broader phenomenon) has been used, in a large part, to 'accord with the conceptual world-views of [military] forces and their governing institutions' (Jenkings *et al.* 2011: 44). Secondly, the utility of research into recruitment (not least because of its representation in the journal *Armed Forces & Society*) is designed, in part, to inform military institutions about changes to recruiting policies.

Overall, then, studies of recruitment, because they have been traditionally allied to a primarily functionalist military sociology, present a range of opportunities for the critical human geographer and the scholar of critical geopolitics. Considering the opening provocation around recruitment, these opportunities might best be outlined by posing a number of interrelated questions: Firstly, how might a more critical approach to military recruitment – especially one that considers the formative power of images – broaden our understanding of recruitment as it tries to account for what the military is, what it does and where it does it? Secondly, how might it be said the common-sense themes used in recruitment – e.g. service to nation, the veracity of military (air)power and elite service, and extrinsic employment benefits – form part of wider social and cultural knowledges of the military which enable recruiting to become effective? Thirdly, considering the identification of military requirements as formative in the nature and presence of recruitment in the public sphere, how do the working motivations of recruiters themselves qualitatively change the imaginative essence of recruiting? Fourthly, how do the literal and lived-in worlds of military promotional cultures (things like experiential advertising and large public military events) come to be conducive of recruitment? And lastly, taking into account the decidedly partial nature of social scientific studies of military organisations,

how might a critique of recruitment (i.e. centring on its role as imaginatively and literally perpetuating war) be enabled?

In part, military sociological studies of recruitment are roughly on track. As Padilla and Laner (2001: 422) suggest;

> The purpose of the recruitment message is to capture the attention of potential recruits and to persuade them to sign in to a new way of life complete with a new set of symbols (e.g. insignia), rules, and sense of identity.

The problems of definition aside, as it has been demonstrated in this review, there is little to suggest, though, that studies of recruitment have engaged with the issues that this definition implies – at least from perspectives present in that of critical human geography. As it will become clear in the pages of this thesis, persuading the recruit is fundamentally about providing an imagination of the role the military plays in the political world of the state, in worlds suffused with violence, and about suggesting connections between the identity of the recruit and individual responses to these imagined worlds. Questions surrounding the possibility for critiquing military promotional cultures are all the more important because, as Jenkings *et al.* (2011: 46) suggest:

> Armed forces are responsible for the deployment of state-legitimised lethal violence, and this requires the activities of people. The occupations of these people [including the means by which they were persuaded to take up these occupations], their work, and their labour, are therefore something that we all, civilian and military, have an obligation to understand.

As it will be demonstrated in the next section, the most suitable analytical frame through which this obligation might be met is critical geopolitics. In the following, a review will be given of critical geopolitics as it has attempted to account for the imaginative and literal politics of the state, for worlds suffused with violence, enemies, allies and dangers, and for worlds that require the actions of military forces.

1.2 Critical geopolitics

Whilst notoriously hard to define, critical geopolitics might be thought of as 'the moniker for the writings of a loose assemblage of political geographers concerned to challenge the taken for granted geographical specifications of politics' (Dalby 2010: 280). Being fundamentally critical of the academic tradition of geopolitics and its (re)production at various scales (formal, practical, popular), critical geopolitics is concerned with two things. Firstly, as Dodds (2007) suggests, critical geopolitics is concerned to critique the

tradition of geopolitics as it 'offers for many a reliable guide of the global landscape [which employs the use of] geographical descriptions, metaphors and templates'. Secondly, as Dodds (2007: 5) continues, is it concerned with how these descriptions, metaphors and templates 'generate particular understandings of places, communities and accompanying identities', which in turn, Dalby (1990: 180) notes, 'shape our political existence'. RAF recruitment – as we'll see in the following chapters – involves, in a similar way, the employment of particular templates, hierarchies and imaginaries which attempt to make sense of the British military's role in the world. Following this, it also entails the resultant production, consumption and performance of more specific understandings of enemies, enemy spaces and requisite military identities and responses (amongst other things). Although more will be said on these themes below and as the chapters of the thesis develop, this section will introduce critical geopolitics more thoroughly. The section is in four parts, and firstly, it will provide a general overview of critical geopolitics which will include a discussion of its origins, guiding structures, and overarching thematic concerns. Secondly, it will look to those works in critical geopolitics which have dealt with the military head-on, consider work which has influenced, and has been influenced by, critical geopolitical studies of the military, and will outline the necessity of thinking critically about the geopolitics of armed conflict and violence. Thirdly, the section will discuss the current erasures and opportunities of critical geopolitics, particularly as it exists at a confluence with contemporary cultural geographies. The section will finish by outlining the opportunities that face critical geopolitical scholars working at this cultural geography/critical geopolitical interface, and therein, foreground the original contribution of the thesis. Lastly, it will briefly summarise the main concerns of a critical geopolitical approach as it will be applied to the geopolitics of RAF recruitment.

Critical geopolitics: an overview

Critical geopolitics developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s 'in reaction to the framing of militarised Soviet-American competition in stark geographical terms' (Megoran 2010: 187; Kuus 2012; Dalby 1991; Ó Tuathail 1996). For scholars who would later become associated with what Dalby (1990) first coined as 'critical geopolitics', the Cold War gave rise, in a simple way, to 'concerns about nuclear war and the dangers of superpower confrontation' (Dalby 1996: 656). In the first instance, with the word and essence of 'geopolitics' re-entering the political lexicon after its absence since the Second World War, this was a time when questions of geography – of geographical determinism, the inevitability of inter-state and territorial antagonism – became 'deeply implicated' in

the operation of (particularly American) statecraft (Ó Tuathail 1998a: 47). With such things as the Truman and Brezhnev doctrines, ideological (and territorial) alliances between NATO and Warsaw pact states influencing the practical geopolitics of interstate relations, 'Anglophone and continental European writers felt a deep-seated obligation to address the alleged connection between [geopolitical] ideas and the political practices associated with spatial expansionism and the domination of place' (Dodds 2001: 470). No longer were geographers tasked with 'providing policy makers with rationales for foreign policies that promote[d] imperial power or coercion', suggests Dalby (2008a: 417; see also Nayak and Jeffrey 2011), rather, critical geopolitics 'turned precisely on these activities, and in the process [became] an explicity critical activity'. In the second instance, and although the 'crucial certainties' (Agnew 2007: 2) of the Cold War world quickly shifted or disappeared beginning in the early 90s, critical geopolitical scholars were, above all, concerned with the capacity for statecraft and conflict to be 'informed by entrenched geographical and territorial assumptions about East and West, freedom and unfreedom, development and underdevelopment' (Kuus 2012: 5). Connectedly, drawing on variants of poststructuralism, on efforts in International Relations (IR) to incorporate a notion of discourse to the study of international politics (Shapiro 1988; Der Derian and Shapiro 1989), and on the 'Foucauldian premise that geography as a discourse is a form of power/knowledge' (Ó Tuathail 1996: 59), early writers in this vein moved to suggest that:

> Rather than taking geopolitics [and entrenched assumptions] for granted as either the name of a particular tradition of thinking about international politics or as part of the self-evident reality of international politics, [we might seek to instead] reconceptualise it as the problematic of the social inscription of global space by intellectuals of statecraft (Ó Tuathail 1996: 61).

The project of critical geopolitics, at least in its early form, was then at once practical – being rooted in concerns over the operation and effects of geopolitical thinking – and also conceptual, in that it was concerned to:

> Re-conceptualize [geopolitics] as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way as to represent it as a 'world' characterised by particular types of places, peoples and dramas (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 192)

Where it was shown in the opening that RAF recruitment is indeed practical, being the way that states raise combatants, it will be most important in what is to follow to discuss the conceptual basis for the critical geopolitical critique. In moving forward to outline critical

geopolitics more thoroughly in this regard, we turn next to the three-fold typology of geopolitical reasoning which has prevailed as the basis for critique and categorisation in scholarship of this sort.

Identified in a broad sense by Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1992), the critical study of geopolitics has been structured by three overriding sites of production. Notwithstanding the necessary refinements which have added more clarity to this early agenda-setting paper, a discussion of these sites in turn will be necessary to correctly frame the following chapters. Firstly, then, we turn to *formal* geopolitics. Formal geopolitics might be defined as the 'codified…reasoning of intellectuals of statecraft in civil society and various institutions of the state that seek to enframe world politics within a certain spatial logic of intelligibility' (Ó Tuathail 2005a: 68). Where critical geopolitics emerged as a critique of the deployment of particular imaginations during the Cold War, this was explicitly done in reference to histories and historiographies of its 'founding fathers' (Ó Tuathail 1996: 23) – thinkers such as Rudolf Kjellen, Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer and Halford Mackinder. Based on 'elite-level pronouncements and well-established institutions' (Kuus 2012: 13), work on formal geopolitics (which constituted the primary motivation of early work in the critical geopolitical field), thus tried to identify the genealogy and legacy of 'classical' geopolitical treatise around a 'natural attitude' toward politics (Ó Tuathail 1996), toward Imperial expansionism, a Cartestian notion of perceived space, and the envisioning and mapping of the 'global scene' ensconced, notably, in the work of Mackinder (see also Agnew 2007 on the 'three ages of geopolitics'). Work on formal geopolitics – though not as voluminous as that in its practical and, less so, popular variants – has thus extended to critical appraisals of Mackinder's work in particular (Ó Tuathail 1992a; Dodds and Sidaway 2004 and associated special edition; Kearns 2009), and has attempted to track formal and neo-classical geopolitical thinking in and through contemporary 'elite' circles, and as it has been associated with modern foreign policy (Megoran 2010; Dalby 1998).

The study of formal geopolitics has, consequently, outlined a number of problematics around the geopolitical tradition. For the present study, a discussion of the fact that formal geopolitics has been critiqued for its 'fixed imperial perspective' (Ó Tuathail 1996: 35) will suffice at this stage. As Ó Tuathail (1996: 35) continues:

> The geopolitical gaze, born in conditions of time-space compression and fin de siècle turmoil, had a future among those elites who required the spinning world to be disciplined by a fixed imperial perspective.

Part of a critical geopolitical approach to formal geopolitics, is, then, the recognition that 'the great irony of geopolitical writing…is that it [is] always a highly ideological and deeply politicized form of analysis' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 192). More specifically, the knowledge produced by theorists like Mackinder and Haushofer was knowledge produced in the name of the British and German Empires, respectively. To authenticate and justify the subsequent practical geopolitics of territorial expansion and inter-state warfare, however, the early theorists of geopolitics told a story of a world racked with struggle. For Mackinder, as an example, this meant an international politics infused with a struggle for the 'relative efficiency' of states (Ó Tuathail 1996: 34), and a requisite ability to visualise the global scene (by way of his 'Natural seats of power' thesis) as part of a protectionist Imperialism. Recognising, however, that 'the geopolitical envisioning of the global scene is inseparable from the desire to use the displayed scene for one's own purposes' (Ó Tuathail 1996: 34) has a more specific import here though. Simply, critical geopolitics recognises that geopolitics (as a discourse) is situated, partial, and a product of specific contexts. As Kuus (2012: 2) puts it, formal geopolitics is a 'statist, Eurocentric, balance-of-power conception of world politics' which is 'intimately connected to the competitive ambitions of European states'. Though more detail will be given in the next chapter about how we might interrogate the situatedness of geopolitical texts and images in this regard, taking into account the necessarily contextual approach taken by critical geopolitics should be borne in mind for the later chapters.

Moving from formal geopolitics to *practical* geopolitics, we turn now to briefly explore work in critical geopolitics which has attempted to understand the 'ad hoc…reasoning of political leaders and foreign policy decision makers engaged in practical politics of foreign policy making' (Ó Tuathail 2005a: 68). A far more defined element of the critical geopolitical project, most work in critical geopolitics uses this site of production as its focus, not least because 'most geopolitical production in world politics…is of a practical and not a formal type' (Ó Tuathail 1996: 60). In this respect, studies of practical geopolitics has spanned the interrogation of American foreign policy as it relates to the Cold War (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992; Dalby 1990 1993; Campbell 1992; Agnew 2007; Dodds 2003a), the first Gulf War (Ó Tuathail 1993), America's involvement in the Bosnian War (Ó Tuathail 2002 2005b), and the 'War on Terror' (Coleman 2003; Dalby 2003; Elden 2009; Sidaway 2010), amongst others. Key to understandings of practical geopolitics though – at least as it applies to military recruiting – is that it works via 'means of consensual and unremarkable assumption about places and their particular identities' (Ó

Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 194). Where the operation of practical geopolitics (including that of defence staff) is based on the truisms of state-based politics, on axiomatic connections between national self-interest and power projection (Dodds 2007), work on practical geopolitics has aptly demonstrated the fact that 'practical geopolitical reasoning tends to be of a common-sense type which relies on the narratives and binary distinctions found in societal mythologies' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 194).

Examples in this vein are numerous, and include metaphors of 'Othering' and danger in Cold War American politics (Dalby 1988 1990), President Bush Jr.'s pronouncements around an 'axis of evil' prior to the invasion of Iraq (Agnew 2007), and calls to state and military action based on anarchical (Dalby 1998) and bifurcated (Dalby 2007) visions of the world. In this sense, as Dodds (2005a: 2) notes, whilst practical geopolitics (or those who deploy it) displays 'a propensity to divide the world into discreet spaces often informed by a judgement on hierarchy, which places some peoples as superior to others', it is, at the same time, concerned with the 'desire to offer policy advice to states and their governments'. Put in more stark (military) terms, 'key to the argument is the simple but unavoidable point that critical geopolitics is about challenging how contexts are used to justify violence' (Dalby 2010). Central to the 'militarist mappings of global space' (Dalby 2010) which characterise the 'grammars of geopolitics' (Ó Tuathail 2005a: 69), are, more often than not, resultant questions around the deployment and articulation of violence and warfare.

Though Kuus (2012: 14) suggests that a study of practical geopolitics is 'particularly effective because it combines the clout and authoritative tone of formal geopolitical reasoning with common-sense metaphors of popular culture', it is to these latter metaphors we turn now in a subsequent discussion of *popular geopolitics*. Drawing on Ó Tuathail (2005a: 68) once more, popular geopolitics might be thought of as the 'geopolitical logics which permeate the various manifestations of popular culture, from visual media to news magazines and novels'. Though a study of a 'multiplicity of different sites…from the classroom to the living-room, the newspaper office to the film studio, the pulpit to the presidential office' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 195) was prompted in early iterations of critical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, for a time, received much less attention than did its formal and practical counterparts. With the agenda-setting work of Sharp (1993 1996) on the *Reader's Digest* and American Cold War nationalism/identity, and Dodd's (1996 1998b) early work on the political cartoonist Steve Bell, scholars of critical geopolitics were able to attend to a number of sites beyond the purview of a critical

geopolitics concerned with the 'narrow confines of the diplomatic circuit, foreign-policy decision-making and intergovernmental conferences' (Dodds 2005a: 75). Though a much more detailed, and applied, review of popular geopolitics will be provided in the next chapter, there are three points of discussion around this area which are important at this stage.

Firstly, the study of popular geopolitics is an attempt at decentring the focus from elite-level intellectuals of statecraft and their pronouncements (Sharp 1996). Though reactionary in that it was first designed around the neglect of 'low' (popular) cultures in social science (Sharp 1993 1996; c.f. Burgess and Gold 1985), popular geopolitics presents a critical intervention to the ways we might assume geopolitics to operate and become sensible. Namely, it suggests that for 'common-sense' assumptions around foreign policy, nationalism or the military to become so, they need to be circulated in and through popular media. It is in and through popular media, then, that issues around a national sense-of-self (Raento 2006; Dittmer 2007a 2007b), notions of state-sanctioned military intervention (Ó Tuathail 2005b; Dalby 2008b; Dodds 2008b), and conceptions of 'good' and 'bad' places (Dodds 2003b 2005b 2006), for example, are (re)produced and consumed in 'regular and consistent ways' (Dodds 2005a: 74). Secondly, much like formal and practical geopolitics, popular geopolitics contends that the 'transmission, circulation and reception of [popular cultural] information and images is never a neutral process' (Dodds 2005a: 73). Whether it is in the service of a particular (oppositional) sense of the national body politic (Sharp 1993 1996 2000a 2000b), or evidences the peculiar nexus between the military and entertainment industries (Ó Tuathail 2005b; Der Derian 2001), or allows for the playing-through of senses of danger and conflict (Power 2007), popular geopolitical media allow for common-sense geopolitics to become sensible as part of everyday practices and habits. Thirdly, popular geopolitics, whilst certainly allowing for the association of particular 'values and behaviours with particular parts of the world' (Dittmer 2010: 16), is useful in its connecting *identity* with geopolitics. Where issues of nation are connected to the more quotidian practice of consumption (Sharp 1993), or, through a curious blending of reality and fiction, evocative of people's lived experience of trauma (Dittmer 2005), popular geopolitics is central to the 'personalisation' of geopolitical discourse. Where popular geopolitics and identity become pivotal to the current project, though, is in their consideration of (the possibility) of military recruitment. For example, Power's (2007) paper on post-9/11 gaming cultures goes someway in exploring the connections between interactions with popular media (military-themed games) and the uses of games for recruitment.

Furthermore, as Ó Tuathail (2005b) suggests when he concludes his discussion of the film *Behind Enemy Lines*, whilst it is unclear to what extent Hollywood inspires individuals to join the military, what is more certain is that popular media provide a resource through which individuals are able to conceptualise how they might respond, individually, to worlds suffused with violence (see also Dalby 2008b).

In that RAF recruitment is, necessarily, a set of *popular cultural* images, practices and interactions, popular geopolitics will be foundational to the thesis. However, to summarise before the next discussion: an attempt has been made so far to outline the guiding tenets of critical geopolitics, and in so doing, a foreground has been given, however implicitly at this stage, to the utility of a critical geopolitical analysis of RAF recruitment. The next section will further extend this discussion, and in particular, considers a broader collection of work which has attempted a critical geopolitics (or at least a critical geography) of the military and military activities.

Critical geopolitics and the military

Critical geopolitics…is…a series of investigations of the uses of geographical reasoning in the service of state power, a power that is often about war and violence, and that potentially renders all of humanity insecure and unsafe so long as large nuclear arsenals remain intact. More than that, it leads to an analysis of the global operation of militarization, and the social and political consequences of both the preparation for and the actual use of military force (Dalby 1996: 656).

Building upon Dalby's (2010; see also 2008a) pronouncements around the history of critical geopolitics, it becomes clear that critical geopolitics has always taken the matter of military violence seriously. In a formal (geopolitics) sense, for example, much has been done to expose the fact, following Megoran (2011: 178), 'that geography is much better at studying war than peace'. For example, in exploring Mackinder's legacy for the geopolitical tradition in particular, the links between geopolitical theory, strategy, Imperialism and warfare become undeniable (c.f. Blouet 2004; Sloan 2008 and related special edition). As Livingstone (2008) and others concerned with the history of geography's military past have noted, there is much to be said around something like Lacoste's 'La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre' (see Dalby 2010 and Ó Tuathail 1994). Connectedly, in a practical (geopolitics) sense, others have concerned themselves with the re-emergence of classical geopolitical reasoning in the service of contemporary visions of military strategy (MacDonald 2007; Megoran 2010), and

differently, with the geoeconomics of military procurement (Ó Tuathail 1992b). The most important engagements in critical geopolitics with the military, though, have been in the field of popular geopolitics and visual cultures. Here, in considering the 'specifically military dimensions [of] war and representation' (Dalby 2008b: 439), critical geopolitics has considered filmic representations of war and conflict (Power and Crampton 2005 and related special edition; Ó Tuathail 2005b; Dodds 2008a 2008b), military-themed games (Power 2007), and the visualities, or ways of seeing, which enable geopolitical sensibilities to emerge (MacDonald 2006; Hughes 2007; MacDonald *et al*. 2010).

Though the popular and visual cultural aspects of critical geopolitical engagements with the military will be explored more broadly, and in detail, at various points in the following chapters, the review here has a different purpose. Namely, it is to suggest that whilst critical geopolitics *does* engage with the military, one should not ignore the broader efforts in critical geographical scholarship which draw upon and, in equal measure, influence critical geopolitical studies of the military. For example, scholars not explicitly associated with the critical geopolitical project have readily engaged with the histories and historiographies of geography's violent past (Gregory 1994) and present (Farish and Vitale 2011), have detailed the political geographies of contemporary war and conflict (Gregory 2004; Flint 2005; Elden 2009; Gregory and Pred 2007; Cowen and Gilbert 2008; Ingram and Dodds 2009), and have explored war and visual and popular culture (Campbell 2003 2007; Campbell and Shapiro 2007; Shapiro 2008). Other vital literatures which might often fall outside of the common-sense boundaries of critical geopolitics include political geographical and anthropological engagements with militarism and militarisation (Enloe 1983 2004 2007; Lutz 2002; Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009; Bernazolli and Flint 2009a 2009b 2010), and critical geographical studies of the military and military activities (Woodward 2004 2005).

Where these scholars are all, ultimately, concerned with 'deciphering the…pluralist ways that war gets represented, framed, and understood' (Grondin 2011: 256), a central part of this thesis will be to suggest that there is far more work to be done in thinking across and between these literatures. Indeed, more than this, it will be suggested that if critical geopolitics is to develop more thoroughgoing critiques of militaries and military activities, it is essential that it engages with these broader literatures. This process might be taken in various directions, and be put to various uses (as it will throughout this thesis). However, the central point here, after Dalby (2010), is to begin to question the specificity of a critical geopolitical analysis considering the contemporary flourishing of work around war and

militarisation. As such, the application of a critical geopolitical analysis in this thesis attempts to be more specific in this regard, and looks to how;

> Militaries continue to be central to the production and popularization of geographical knowledge – not only to formal cartographic representations, but to more elusive spatial principles, such as the perception that the world is a composite of hostile environments (Farish 2010: xviii).

One way we might begin to do this is by reviewing the current erasures and opportunities posed by critical geopolitics relationship with cultural geography. It is to this discussion we turn next before outlining the aspirations of the thesis in more straightforward terms.

Critical geopolitics and cultural geography: erasures and opportunities

Critical geopolitics fits solidly into a trend which has seen the blurring of the constituent sub-disciplines of human geography. Where 'the traditional divisions between economic, social, political and cultural geography seem increasingly irrelevant' (Painter and Jeffrey 2010: 1), critical geopolitics has been at the forefront of attempts to reconcile a gamut of postmodern approaches to geography. With its overriding concerns configured via discursive, postmodern and postcolonial traditions, then, critical geopolitics has, more recently, been seen to adopt, for example, concepts of affect (Ó Tuathail 2003; Carter and McCormack 2006) and performance (Megoran *et al*. 2005) in order to more fully extend a critique of the geopolitical. Furthermore, where some have claimed that critical geopolitics has been disappointing methodologically (Dodds 2001), efforts have been made to address this in a number of ways (c.f. Megoran 2006; Dittmer and Gray 2010). Overall, whilst critical geopolitics is tasked with challenging the 'taken for granted geographical specifications of politics on the *large scale*' (Dalby 2010: 280 my emphasis), this isn't to say that its engagements with contemporary cultural geographies haven't prompted a consideration of geopolitics as it happens and becomes sensible at the level of everyday life. Where it was shown in the opening of this chapter that RAF recruitment (whilst practical in important ways) exists as a set of popular visual and everyday cultures, the gains that critical geopolitics has made in these areas will, therefore, be central to the thesis. However, in order to explore the opportunities of these new critical geopolitics of the everyday, note must be taken of the debates which have facilitated these more recent shifts in the remit of critical geopolitics.

New critical geopolitical approaches to the everyday experience of geographies and politics have arisen, essentially, because of the discontentment (Boedeltje 2011) felt by

many around the 'criticality' of critical geopolitics. Whilst some take issue with the limits of its methodological palette, for example, others have considered the limits and status of 'discourse' (Müller 2006 2008; Müller and Reuber 2008). More famously, Thrift (2000) outlines an alternate critical geopolitical project, one that takes seriously the 'little things' that bring the geopolitical into being, and differently again, Megoran (2008a) has begun a debate around what it is to be critical of state-sanctioned violence, and seeks a different vision of critical geopolitics, one that interrogates peace as concertedly as it does war (Megoran 2011). Whilst, primarily, this thesis will be an empirical exploration of the geopolitics of RAF recruitment, its other aspiration is to be a record of the changing landscape of critical geopolitical research, especially where that research engages (and is beginning to engage) with issues of everyday popular visual and lived-in military cultures. In order to explore the opportunities of these 'new' approaches to geopolitics, the next discussion (and indeed, the whole thesis) is structured around the three discernible (though highly connected) 'pivot points' upon which the debates around these new approaches hinge; these are *representation*, *visuality*, and *materiality*.

Firstly then, many would argue that the mainstay of a critical geopolitical analysis is the interrogation of texts, images and other representative materials. In that representation 'makes claims about the way the world is, and as such…claims to unveil the world to us' (Dittmer 2010: 49), the study of maps, policy documents and other texts and images has been a central to critical geopolitics. In general terms, because of the privileged position held by representation in Western philosophies of knowledge and perception (which entails not only representation itself, but the ways of seeing which enable the representation of the world in particular ways), the stability and fixity given to the referent of geopolitical representations has been the locus of critique. Fitting into a broader tradition in human geography associated with the 'cultural turn' (which will be discussed at length in chapter two), critical geopolitics has thus rejected the more 'structured explanations of representation [and has attempted to] understand more about how visual images, language and the communication of ideas influence[s] the constitution of 'reality'' (Shirlow 2010: 309). However, whilst a critique of representation has done much to advance the critical geopolitical project, this critique has not been without its detractors. For example, Heffernan (2000: 348) in his commentary on Ó Tuathail's (1996) *Critical Geopolitics*, takes issue with the fact that whilst *Critical Geopolitics* extrapolates a theory of the disenchanted gaze of the geopolitical theorist via a critique of visual imagery, there was an 'absence [in the book] of any serious analysis of precisely how specific visual images have

been deployed within western geopolitics'. This 'unwillingness to engage head-on with visual images' (Heffernan 2000: 348) is also picked up by Thrift (2000: 381) who, in a similar way, suggests that a 'mesmerised attention to texts and images in critical geopolitics' negates the more mobile, 'actual practices' (385) of geopolitics.

The flaw of a critical geopolitical critique of representation, in these cases, has two ramifications. Firstly, it falls foul of the efforts of cultural critics (including cultural geographers) who have confounded textual approaches with sustained analyses of visual media (see chapter two); in this sense, as Smith (2000: 368) suggests in his critique of *Critical Geopolitics*, Ó Tuathail's 'argument seems to have more to do with buttressing claims of a linguistic poststructuralism than with the details of…geopolitics'. Secondly, and again drawing on Smith (2000), the object of analysis in *Critical Geopolitics* was seen to be not so much the landscape or the globe, but the array of pre-existing geopolitical *texts* viewed and read by the detached theoretical eye/I. Whilst critical geopolitics is expressly concerned with decentring the occularcentrism latent to forms of geopolitics, the visualism professed in Ó Tuathail's (1996) account entails a 'potentially paralysing contradiction' (Sparke 2000). That is, it risks perpetuating the very same detached analytical gaze which has been exposed as being so central to the operation of statecraft.

Whilst it shouldn't be said that the (2000) collection of commentaries on *Critical Geopolitics* single-handedly invigorated an evaluation of critical geopolitics' critique of representation, it certainly played a central role in the emergence of the second 'pivot point' – that of *visuality*. Building upon his other suggestions for Ó Tuathail, Smith (2000: 368) neatly foregrounds what would become a central part of critical geopolitics' engagement with visual cultures when he argued:

> The critique of visualism [enabled by a focus on representative media in *Critical Geopolitics*] has itself become a floating signifier, dislodged from its context and rationale. The issue surely, is less visualism as such than the *socially imbued substance of that vision* (my emphasis).

Drawing on the work of John Berger (2008), Jonathan Crary (1989 1992 2000) and others, work by Campbell (2007) and MacDonald (2006 2010) has, in kind, convincingly argued for a consideration of *visuality* in geopolitics. This, in the first instance, allows us to take more seriously vision as it is practiced by practitioners of statecraft, and in the second, enables us to correctly situate practices of vision as part of the embodied experience (on the part of the researcher and researched) of the political world of the state. Where a focus on

visuality has impacted the empirical concerns of critical geopolitics, it has further demonstrated the importance of thinking ethnographically (Megoran 2006) about geopolitics, with work by MacDonald (2006) implying a range of spectacular sites whereby military geopolitics becomes active at the point of perception. However – and in thinking about empirics – rather than denigrating the use of images and visual materials, the 'visual(ity) turn' in critical geopolitics has also provided a range of new perspectives on the print- or screen-based image. For example, in their collection *Observant States*, MacDonald *et al.* (2010) set out a vision for critical geopolitics which allows us to consider the co-constitutive nature of geopolitics and visual culture. As they suggest:

> It seems that the conduct of war and peace (if indeed these can be individuated), as well as the competition of state sovereignty through diplomacy, is being transformed by our increasing dependence on the visual to comprehend and represent the world around us (MacDonald *et al.* 2010: 2).

Where this 'new' geopolitical approach to visual culture will be employed in this thesis, it will, in turn, consider the curious case of online RAF recruitment gaming (chapter five). However, drawing on MacDonald *et al.* (2010: 14) once more, what a focus on visuality in critical geopolitics does is to 'insist on a consideration of visuality in general rather than an iconology in particular'. Where the iconographic tropes of RAF recruitment will form a central part of the thesis, an equally central aspiration is to consider the *ways of seeing* which allow for these iconographies to assume a pivotal role in the mediation of ideas about the world.

Lastly, we turn to the final 'pivot point' – *materiality*. Where the theme of visuality in critical geopolitics is most intriguing (and where there is most room for improvement) is where it considers 'visuality as both indivisible from a wider bodily sensorium and as being inevitably implicated in the world of words' (MacDonald *et al.* 2010: 6). Though the 'under-examined nexus between bodies, senses and states' (MacDonald *et al.* 2010: 17; Manning 2007) remains a work-in-progress for critical geopolitics, any efforts to address these issues must be connected to some of the other challenges raised at critical geopolitics in the past ten years. With the emergence of feminist geopolitics (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2003 2007), for example, critical geopolitics of fear and emotion (Pain 2009a 2009b), specific calls for a material critical geopolitics (Nicley 2009) and other interventions, notably around art and geopolitics (Ingram 2011a 2011b 2012), and cultural geographical (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004) and political studies of matter and mattering

(Braun and Whatmore 2010), it is clear that the body and material engagements therein/on must figure in future assessments of how the geopolitical is 'engendere[d] within particular place contexts' (Nicley 2009: 20). The figure of bodies and materiality in critical geopolitics, then, will feature in chapters six and seven of this thesis, and will form the basis for a consideration of future directions in critical geopolitics.

A *critical geopolitics of RAF recruitment: a summary of concerns*

By way of summary: to state again, whilst this thesis will primarily be an empirical exploration of the geopolitics of RAF recruitment, it is also concerned with *what can and cannot be done with images, both from the point of view of the RAF recruiter, and from the point of view of the critical geopolitical scholar*. In order to facilitate these two aspirations, the thesis is structured in three parts, with the six substantive chapters divided equally between the three themes of *representation*, *visuality*, and *materiality*. However, before outlining the methodology and thesis structure in more detail, it will be useful to briefly outline a related set of concerns which, whilst central to the study of critical geopolitics, will flow across and between the three sections of the thesis. (This discussion will also point to a set of more specific research questions which will be asked of the geopolitics of RAF recruitment.)

Firstly, the predominant and most straightforward concern for the thesis will be the identification of those sorts of tropes, scripts and designations which pervade geopolitics. More specifically, the thesis will ask how, in order to be persuasive, RAF recruitment draws upon imaginations of space, danger, nationalism and identity, how it designates particular places as the sites for particular military responses, and how the spectre of *airpower* figures relative to these broader tropes by way of it affording a unique battlespace technology.

Considering the emphasis put so far on the difference between the *imagined* and *literal* spaces of geopolitics though, the identification of geopolitical tropes feeds into the second concern – that of the presence of RAF recruitment, firstly, in print and on-screen (posters, T.V ads etc.), and secondly, as an *experience* at events such as the airshow. As it has been demonstrated, a critical geopolitical approach provides a foundation on which to interrogate these two sites of prospective influence. However, an overarching concept which will be used to try to understand RAF recruitment as it happens through, and beyond, representation, is the *geopolitical imagination*. Drawing on work by Gregory (1994) and Farish (2010: xii), the geopolitical imagination here is defined as a set of 'influential

presentations of the world and its contours that are made possible by particular knowledges about that world'. Consequently, the thesis will ask to what extent the geopolitical imaginations ensconced within RAF recruitment become influential at the site of the image, and through sites of performance, embodiment and material experience (notably, at military airshows).

In being connected to the geopolitical imagination, the third concern will interrogate the extent to which the imaginative elements of recruitment are made possible by the association of recruiting with the political world of the state (and so the dominant ways-of-knowing that bring it into being, and enable its perpetuation). Part of this concern will be allayed in chapter three as part of an analysis of the logistics of recruitment *production*. However, more fundamentally, the thesis will ask; *to what extent does successful and influential military recruitment depend upon, and evidence, a particular consciousness of the world*. Notably, the consciousness which we ask after here is one bound to the dispassionate, privileged and occularcentric perspective of the practitioner of statecraft (the military recruiter). However, this concern also entails asking after the equally problematic consciousness of the geopolitical researcher. A connected concern, then, is how the conceptual basis for a critical geopolitical analysis, and the consciousness that this affords, (dis)enables the researcher to say things about the world. Fed through literatures on positionality and autoethnography, the final parts of the thesis, then, question the geopolitical assumptions and designations which always enter into critical geopolitical analysis.

1.3 Methodology, methods and thesis structure

This thesis has adopted a mixed-source, mixed-method and mixed-analysis approach. Where the review has outlined the necessarily broad nature of RAF recruitment, and the equally broad nature of critical geopolitical engagements with the military, the methodology attempts to reflect this. The section is in five parts, and firstly, it will outline those parts of the methodology which have encountered historical and archival materials. Secondly, it will detail the approach adopted to inquire after the *production* of RAF recruitment. Thirdly, it outlines the ethnographic approach adopted to RAF recruitment as it happens in public spaces such as the airshow, and fourthly, it discusses those parts of the data-gathering exercise which fall outside of these more formal categories (and discusses themes around collecting, autoethnography and positionality) which have unique significance in terms of critical geopolitical methodologies toward the everyday. Each of

these sections will discuss the practices, logistics and reasoning behind the adoption of particular methods, and will also detail methods of data analysis. Lastly, this section will provide a brief discussion of the thesis structure.

Image/Archive

A fundamental part of the thesis is a consideration of how RAF recruiting has been done historically, a consideration of how recruiting has changed over time, and an interrogation of the changing thematic range of recruitment as it accounts for the role of the RAF in, for example, World War Two, the Cold War and the War on Terror. In the broader schema of research for this project, a historical analysis thus serves two purposes. Firstly, it provides a necessary context for the discussion and development of the three concerns/research questions outlined above. Furthermore, in order to develop a notion of the geopolitics of RAF recruitment *beyond* representation, it is necessary to first provide a solid foundation of representative themes to take forward to the later stages of the research. Secondly, a historical analysis provides a vital starting point (in terms of the intellectual trajectory of the project). In this way, not only are the first two chapters of this thesis evidence for the representative geopolitics of RAF recruitment and an analysis of representation according to the tradition of critical human geography, but evidence for the earliest, exploratory stages of the empirical work. The 'image/archive' approach can be divided into two main stages which also represent two archival sites.

Firstly, much of the earlier parts of the empirical work were given to identifying historical examples of image-based RAF recruiting within online archives and collections. Whilst one image in this thesis is from the Imperial War Museum archive (figure 2.2), the predominant source for historical (print-based) examples is the Aviation Ancestry website (http://www.aviationancestry.com/). A website run and moderated by an ex-RAF serviceman, as personal communications revealed, aviationancestry is a record of the commercial and military history of aviation in the U.K from between 1900-1980. In terms of RAF recruitment, the site also provides a large number of examples from between 1919-1984 which have been drawn from popular magazines and newspapers (the images used from the site were all originally present in *Flight Magazine*). The site is run by an enthusiast who is able to provide high-definition copies of the originals, and the method of collection in this case isn't limited by restrictions on copyright (as it might have been if a

more formal, physical archive was consulted).[1] Other print-based images which appear in the thesis have been gathered as part of the interview phase (see next discussion), or as part of my own collection of images (see the penultimate discussion in this chapter). Of the over 200 RAF recruiting images (and counting) made available on the aviationancestry site, three are used in the thesis to discuss some of the key analytical themes which begin to develop in chapters two and three.

This first phase of identifying images and image sources was also useful for identifying a range of physical archives which, consequently, lead to the second archival site – the Film and Sound archives of the RAF Museum, Hendon. Hendon was identified early on as having a relatively accessible collection of RAF recruiting film and ephemera, and through initial discussions, the archivists were happy with the aspirations of the project and in all, over two day-long visits in 2009 (not including other visits to the museum proper), eighteen films of between 45 and 60 minutes were analysed (the stated extent of the film archive for recruiting at Hendon was roughly one third larger than this sample). Because of their length, and due to the advice of the archivist at Hendon, all of the films reviewed should be assumed to be of a type to be shown in schools as part of careers services, to youth organisations, or as short-films in cinemas.[2]

In terms of archival practice, my approach involved, in the first instance, choosing from a list of films provided to me by the archivists. Because little information was given beyond the title of the film, my selection of films in this respect centred on identifying relevant titles (ones that portended an interesting theme – for example, *A Show of Strength*), and otherwise, over the two visits to Hendon, an effort was made to view an equal number of films from the eight or so decades represented in the archive. Recording data involved notetaking, the rewinding at points of the 8mm film to capture narrator quotes, and note-form descriptions of visual imagery. After each trip to the archive, the notes taken were then written up in essay form to be used for subsequent analysis. At the point of writing about the films, my notebook and write-ups were coded in order to categorise my observations around central themes such as 'space', 'nation' and 'identity'.

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[1] Indeed, the decision to use aviationancestry was also based on the fact that other physical archives (the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives) had either limited electronic cataloguing of recruitment images, restrictive reproduction rights (it was important that images should appear in the pages of the thesis), or were undergoing restructuring which meant that the images required were unavailable at the time of study.

[2] The British Film Institute, who, after the archival stage was complete, made available RAF films of the same sort, assume the same original intended contexts for these films in a number of film synopses.

The fact that this stage of the research was the earliest, and so formative in the development of the major themes of the thesis, is important. Notably, following Ogborn (2003), this was a stage at which not only *answers* were being sought, but also *questions*. In this way, being in the archive was as important to the immediate analysis of the film and development of research rationale as it was useful for the more formal interpretation of notes at a later date. Nevertheless, in terms of analysis (and this applies to the material gathered from aviationancestry, and indeed, a proportion of the visual images used in the thesis), the mode adopted follows Rose's (2007) notion of discourse analysis, and specifically, on iconographic and iconological interpretation. In terms of iconography, each image and film was interrogated for those sorts of icons (and the verbal framing of icons) which 'have specific symbolic resonance' (Rose 2007: 151). That is, the repetitious use of national flags and maps, images of defensible (British) spaces, the imaging of, or reference to enemies, for example, were noted in respect of the key thematic concerns of critical geopolitics. For instance, where an image of a globe is imprinted with the colours of the Union Jack (figure 2.2), note was taken of this iconography as it might relate to military omnipotence, or the control of territory. In terms of iconology, or, noting the 'general cultural significance' (Rose 2007: 151) of both print image and film, a second level of analysis was applied to inquire after the more general significance of particular iconographies relative to their historical context. For example, where evocations of military airpower are quite common throughout the materials consulted, airpower means something different as it is evoked aggressively during the Second World War, to when it is evoked defensively as a central element in the defence of NATO's borders in the Cold War. In this sense, the images used in chapters two and three in particular are readily cross referenced with the imaginative geographies associated with notable 'eras' of conflict and geopolitical change.

In straightforward terms, the analysis of visual images in this thesis asks two questions. Firstly, it asks: *what are the central and common iconographies used in RAF recruitment?* and: *how do these iconographies become significant as part of a broader geopolitical visual culture?* The simple visual analysis adopted here is warranted, in part, because of the heavy use of textual and verbal framing in images and films, respectively. Thus, whilst it is important to contextualise particular iconographies relative to their histories, the format of these materials often leaves little doubt as to what the viewer (and in turn, the potential recruit) should be associating with them. Where images and films are discussed throughout the thesis, an effort has been made to pinpoint relevant textual quotes,

and in terms of film, an introduction to each film is given, and reference made to direct quotes from the narrator or central characters where this is appropriate.

A final brief discussion should focus on those images which feature in the thesis, but which were not collected from the aviationancestry site or from other archival sources. In chapter three, for example, two images are used that are drawn from a set of materials provided by an interviewee (see next discussion). These images are illustrative, and are used only to bolster the discussion which draws upon interview data predominantly. In chapters five and six, there are a number of screencaptures taken from the RAF website which are used to illustrate RAF recruiting as an online game, and to illustrate recruiting practices that target the body. Unlike chapter three, these images provide material for a discourse analysis of the type outlined here. The majority of images used in the thesis though are photographic, and were taken by the author. Whilst these, again, are primarily used as illustrations, there is a methodological discussion to be had below around the use of photography as part of ethnography. Lastly, throughout the thesis, reference will be made to the BPotS campaign and its various images. These images were either sourced online from advertising agency archives (see relevant figure for details of reference), or collected by the author from magazines. Where the amassing of images and ephemera for the project was essential and unavoidable, the penultimate discussion of this opening chapter is designed to think through collecting as it has come to be integral to the research.

Producing RAF recruitment

The second part of the methodological approach was designed to ask after the *production* of RAF recruitment and involved various interactions with producers and their online archives, a monitoring of advertising industry commercial websites, and two subsequent interviews with a former RAF inspector of recruiting. In that this part of the methodology ran into difficulties, and required a shift of focus, warrants a brief discussion.

As the review of literature in chapter three will discuss, whilst popular geopolitics has, in recent years, been adept identifying methodological approaches to audiences and audience interpretation, there remains a lack of work focussed on how geopolitical meaning is conceptualised at the point of production. With this and the broader concerns of the project in mind, part of the methodological design from the outset included scope to investigate how the 'finished product' of recruitment is realised, and how the imaginative, iconographic geopolitics of recruitment becomes a record of the practical geopolitical work done by its producers. A cursory exploration of how RAF recruitment is produced will

evidence the fact that the 'creative' work of recruitment is done by corporate advertising agencies, and because of the limited prospect of access to the British Military, a methodological approach was designed that would target agencies working on current RAF campaign contracts. More specifically, unstructured interviews with producers were planned which were to have a specific focus on working practices.

Identifying agencies that were involved with current RAF contracts necessitated membership of Brand Republic (an online agency magazine) and the monitoring of twitter traffic between MoD, COI and creatives, amongst other things. This revealed a number of agencies with work on-going, but initial contact with five agencies (Agency Republic, BEcause, Delaney Lund Knox and Warren, J. Walter Thompson, and Lean Mean Fighting Machine) via letter, and subsequent repeat communications via email and phone were all unsuccessful, with all communications going unanswered. In eventually making contact via phone with an agency team-member who was involved in previous RAF campaigns, I was told that agencies working on Government-funded campaigns would be highly reluctant to provide information about campaign details. This was due, firstly, to the fact that information is gathered – as part of campaign design – on potential recruits (demographics, website hit-rates, etc.), and agencies would be in breach of contract if information of this sort was divulged. Secondly, their reluctance was due to the highly competitive (and lucrative) nature of Government work. In a similar way, revelations about the minutiae of campaign design might well jeopardise future bids for contracts.

Whilst the 'negative data' gathered here has direct relevance to discussions in chapter three, its occurrence necessitated a shift in focus. Namely, an alternative source of information was required to fulfil the production element of the project. This alternative was found upon contacting a retired Royal Air Force Air Commodore and former Inspector of Recruiting (1979-81), Ian Forster, who was involved with a separate project in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University. After an initial meeting to discuss the aspirations of the project, Air Commodore Forster provided a range of materials pertinent to this part of the research (notably, documents pertaining to the relationship between the RAF, COI and J. Walter Thompson agency in 1981 (see reference to figure 3.1)), and subsequently agreed to a more formal follow-up interview. The interview was unstructured, with a set of talking points drawn from the initial meeting, and based on the working relationship between the RAF, COI and advertising agencies. Talking points were also developed from emerging themes identified at the archival stage (themes of space, danger, emphases on patriotism vs. extrinsic, identity-based recruiting, for

example). The interview lasted an hour and a half, was recorded and transcribed, and then coded according to the emerging themes.

The data from these two meetings will form the backbone of discussion in chapter three. Alongside this, however, other data gathered from agency websites which pertains to current and ongoing campaigns (notably from the Lean Mean Fighting Machine agency website) will be used to facilitate a discussion around the process of production. In two instances in chapter three, images taken from materials provided by Air Commodore Forster are also used to illustrate his role in the logistics of Cold War RAF recruiting.

Ethnography and the airshow

The third and most expansive part of the methodology involved ethnographic studies of airshows and other public events at which the RAF was present in a recruiting capacity. A central part of the opportunities posed by 'new' approaches to critical geopolitics, the use of ethnography in political geography has also figured in more recent calls for a critical geopolitics which appreciates everyday human experience (Megoran 2006). Following Megoran (2006: 625) ethnography is meant here as a:

> Sojourn amongst a group of people where the researcher immerses himself or herself in daily life, continuously reflecting on meticulously kept fieldnotes, to learn the social understandings of the group in its own terms.

Where, also, ethnography 'seeks to understand the world as it is 'seen through the eyes' of the participants' (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 224), this approach has special relevance in terms of the aspiration to understand how *visual practices* at the airshow are constitutive of particular geopolitical consciousnesses. Whilst not only confined to recent political geographies, ethnography has a notable relevance in for more general critical study of war. As Lutz (1999) suggests, ethnography is an opportunity to understand processes of miltarisation at various scales. As she continues, 'while battle has beckoned as the central place of war to many observers, it [is] more important to see the crisis [of global militarization] in the mundane, the everyday' (Lutz 1999: 617-8). Indeed, as more recent studies of military promotional cultures at large events (including airshows) has demonstrated, 'the praxis of [ethnographic] fieldwork is necessary to gain any solid understanding of the sinews that connect individual actors [showgoers] to larger trends [such as miltarisation]' (Allen 2009: no pagination).

The ethnographic part of the research was carried out at eight events, all in the U.K: the Saltwell Park show in Gateshead (April 2009) at which the Territorial Army were present alongside local community, handicraft and horticulture groups; the Northumberland Show (May 2009), a prominent agricultural show in the North East which played host to a Battle of Britain Memorial flight display and more general military recruiting presences; the open day of the Territorial Army centre at South Shields on Armed Forces Day (June 2009) at which the RAF, Army and Navy were present in a recruiting capacity; the Waddington International Airshow (July 2009); Fairford Royal International Air Tattoo (July 2009) – the largest airshow in the world; the Sunderland Airshows (July 2009 and 2010); and an RAF open day at Waddington Airbase (September 2010). In nearly all cases, these trips were day-long visits (the larger airshows were only attended on one of their two days), and I was accompanied by family members.[3] In its broadest guise, my approach to the airshow involved partaking in the usual showgoer activities (watching air displays, making walking tours of the airfield, visiting stalls and hangar exhibitions). Put a different way, it entailed 'becoming the phenomenon' (Laurier 2003: 134) of a typical showgoer. In terms of 'data collection', a field notebook was kept which allowed room for frequent personal reflections on presences at airshows (maps were often drawn here), on the reactions of showgoers and my own feelings toward air displays, and the normative engagements showgoers had with the space and spectacle of the show.

Data collection at the airshow also involved three other methods. Firstly, it involved asking questions of recruiters about the importance of airshows to the recruiting effort. Responses therein were telling in a number of ways, and direct quotes from recruiters appear in several chapters. Secondly, it involved photographic documentation. Drawing on Suchar's (1997: 35; see also Rose 2007) method of 'shooting scripts', this allowed for the 'strategic organization of field photography in order to establish a base of photographic information'. As part of 'shooting scripts', a set of questions were posed which, whilst connected to the research concerns/questions, relate to the conceptual problems set out in the review of literature for chapter four. (The strategy being that photographs would be taken *in answer* to these questions.) As chapter four details, where finding out how recruitment is done and is effective at the airshow is important, a fundamental line of inquiry should be the show as a broader experience and aesthetic. The questions that were

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[3] Here, and throughout the thesis, I will refer to my ethnographic work at these events as 'airshows'. Not all events included formal air displays, but all played host to RAF recruiting. Where an event is discussed that is not an airshow, this will be highlighted.

set, then, were: *how is the RAF present at airshows? How is RAF recruiting done at airshows?* and, *how does the broader culture of the show enable recruiting?* As Suchar (1997) notes though, where one might think that a shooting script might limit the exploratory scope of the method, this is not so, and the researcher is bound to adapting their questions in light of a review of their notes and other observations. In kind, where several visits to different airshows enabled time to reflect on observations, a further set of questions was set. These were: *how is the show experienced (visually or otherwise)? How are objects, materials and 'stuff' enrolled into the airshow experience?* and, *in what way are experiences framed by, and linked to, particular imaginations of the military?*

A third method of data collection was the literal collection of documents (recruiting pamphlets, corporate military brochures) and objects (pens, keyrings, stickers). As chapter seven will detail, the airshow is inherently materially profuse, and in 'becoming the phenomenon' of the showgoer, the collection of these types of things was a necessity. Based on the assumption that 'objects may not merely be used to refer to a given social group, but may themselves be constitutive of a certain social relation' (Miller 1987), the collection of 'stuff' at the airshow is set within a small literature on material ethnography (c.f. Geismar and Horst 2004 and related special edition). Here, whilst material objects (such as recruiting pamphlets) may be used as 'interpretative tools to understand the nature of society [one should rather consider them active agents] within the social relations' which are being studied (Geismar and Horst 2004: 6). Engagements with the materials and material cultures of the airshow were not, then, only about amassing evidence for subsequent analysis. Rather, engagements with objects, and the taking-home of mundane things like RAF mousemats, posters and pencils became practices worthy of analysis in-and-of-themselves, and are considered in chapter seven a pivotal site in the constitution of military and geopolitical imaginations, and importantly, central to the process of recruitment.

After each airshow visit was completed, notes were copied up and (similar to the archive stage) written into more substantial commentaries. These documents were coded according to the thematic aspirations of chapters four and seven, and individual photographs associated to the scripted questions set.

Collecting/autoethnography/positionality

Where the previous discussion betrays the essentiality of *collecting* for the ethnographic part of the project, it also hints at the central place collecting has had in the

broader development of the project themes. Whilst this project, to state again, is interested in *what can and cannot be done with images*, the collection of images and documents was one of the initial activities carried out. From purchasing historical recruiting posters, RAF magazines and airshow programmes online, RAF recruiting-style postcards at museum shops, the photographic capture of recruiting materials in museums and public spaces, much of the early 'sorting and sifting' of ideas was done at the point of amassing an archive of materials pertinent to the project. The aspirations of these activities was simple, and it was to *inquire after the scope and range of RAF recruiting as it has been done historically, and after the thematic content of RAF recruiting*. Where, later, a more systematic and conceptually grounded analysis of texts and images was carried out, these early stages of collecting were formative, and cannot be disconnected from the more academic business of thinking through what these texts and images meant.

A point is made of the connection between the practice of collecting and business of interpretation in these terms in chapter seven. In brief, this has entailed asking after the propensity for texts, images and objects to amass in my home and workspaces, to become symbolic of my identity as a military researcher (as in a poster pinned to a workspace wall), and useful (as in an RAF pen or keyring). The latter part of chapter seven, then, is framed by an approach to autoethnography, and asks to what extent, firstly, my engagements with the 'stuff' of recruitment might stand analogous to that of the potential recruit, and secondly, asks after the problematic presence of military things around a project which is, essentially, critical of everyday cultures of militarisation. Autoethnography, as Butz and Besio (2009: 1671) argue, attempts to 'collapse the conventional distinction between researchers as agents of signification and a separate category of research subjects as objects of signification'. In this way, autoethnography is a 'practice of doing…identity work self-consciously, or deliberately, in order to understand some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self' (Butz and Besio 2009: 1660), and practically, involves 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay 2002: 9). In this way, the autoethnographic part of this project tries to uncover how my own experiences with the material cultures of the airshow, and the material cultures of military research, connect in ways to the larger themes (militarisation, geographical imaginations, geopolitics) which guide the project as a whole. Written within the context of literatures around materiality and material culture, chapter seven provides, then, a set of unexceptional and reflexive commentaries on the 'thingness' of this research. As these discussions will demonstrate though, it is the very un-exceptionality of mundane things like posters, pens and keyrings

which raise a range of important questions around the criticality and position of the military researcher.

With researcher position in mind, and with the discussion of my own unavoidable experience of militarised cultures to follow, it will be important – before outlining the thesis structure – to briefly discuss positionality. There are a number of issues at stake here, all of which can be prompted by identifying myself as *a researcher using a critical geopolitical frame through which to understand the military and popular military cultures.* We might begin to explore these issues by thinking through the 'critical' in critical geopolitics. With some challenging the extent to which critical geopolitics engages seriously with the social institution of the military (Megoran 2008a 2008b), the project is testament to a continual, and continuing, personal struggle over how best to understand the 'task and responsibility' of the critical geopolitical scholar. Though, through studying the popular cultures of RAF recruitment, one might seem distanced from the more 'serious' considerations of war and peace, a more considered evaluation must see these cultures intimately linked to the valorisation, legitimation and continuance of lethal violence. This thesis does not provide an answer to how, exactly, critical geopolitics should be critical in this regard (though it does provide some pointers). But, by way of situating my own position here, I would hope that this project goes someway (and is the starting point from which) to help me understand the role of the critical geopolitical scholar, especially when they are dealing with issues of militarisation.

The questionable clarity of critical geopolitical engagements with the issue of military institutions (and my own, evolving position therein as critical geopolitical scholar aspirant) has also had semantic force as part of the fieldwork, and has played itself out particularly through my engagements with military people. For instance, upon trying to foreground my interest in RAF recruiting at the show or other events in order to ask questions of military personnel (or at least those who clearly admire the military), the word 'critical' has sometimes had particular effects. (My having an affection for how critical geopolitics is able to uncover the basis and effects of our stories about the world often lead me to mention the word 'critical' as part of discussion at the earlier field studies.) At lunch in an awning-type tent on the airfield of Waddington airbase (part of an RAF open day visit enabled by Air Commodore Forster), for example, a representative of a company which sells jet engines to the British MoD, was clearly perturbed at the possibility that I was being

critical of the military.[4] In backtracking slightly, I provided a 'softend down' version of my sub-discipline, and told him of my desire, simply, to understand how the military fits into the bigger picture of international relations.

The avoidance of personal confrontation aside, episodes like these (I soon abandoned using the word 'critical' in my précis to fieldwork interviews) have certainly introduced me to an often problematic disparity between the 'public face' of the researcher, and their requisite intellectual morality. Where it is essential, I believe, for critical geopolitical researchers to be present in spaces, and at events, which openly promote and celebrate some of the more problematic assumptions of the military and the state, there remains no clear guide to how the critical of critical geopolitics might be exercised as a situated, methodological practice. My position, then, is that of the critical geopolitical researcher coming to terms with the variously efficacious nature of geopolitics and common-sense understandings of the use of military force. But at the same time, this is a position limited in ways by order of how critical geopolitics allows us to think, and do, critical military research.

Thesis structure

As discussed above, the thesis is divided into three parts, with the six substantive chapters being divided equally among them. The first chapter – *Messages* – begins with a review of work in postmodern human geography which has dealt with the issues of image and representation. Tracking some of the predominant analytical traditions therein to a review, subsequently, of popular geopolitics, the chapter provides a broad fame with which to begin to interrogate RAF recruitment as it exists as a representation. The second half of the chapter is given to an analysis of print-based and filmic examples of recruitment. A fundamental chapter in terms of the development of overarching thematic concerns, *Messages* will outline the basis for thinking critically about RAF recruitment as it accounts for imaginations of space, place, danger and nation, amongst others. The second chapter, written in the spirit of McLuhan's (1964) *The Medium is the Message*, takes some of the more forward-thinking notions of representation reviewed in the first, and applies them to the site of image production. This chapter – *Mediums* – attempts to account for how the common-sense versions of the world espoused in recruitment are licensed and limited by

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[4] The particular culture of this open day was brought into sharp relief, when, later in the day, one of the visitors asked of the Station Commander at a QandA session: 'what is the RAF going to do about the North Korean threat?'

the politics and economies of its production. It will also develop a more nuanced reading of some of the thematic concerns outlined in the first chapter, and insofar as it seeks connections between critical geopolitics and advertising geographies, ends with a discussion around the limits of a representational approach to RAF recruitment.

The second part of the thesis – *Visualising Recruitment* – contains two chapters again, and firstly, looks to the militarised culture of the airshow to develop a notion of RAF recruitment as effective beyond representation. Here – in *The Spectacular* – airshows are discussed vis-à-vis their particular spatial politics, and notably, in their capacity to entrain particular imaginations of the military via the prescription of visual techniques. Read through work in critical geopolitics which has considered visuality as a key locus of geopolitical experience, the chapter is also based in a more general history of the politics of airshows. In chapter five – *The Mundane* – the site of analysis moves from the spectacular and public to the private and everyday. Remaining with the visual though, this chapter considers the role online RAF computer games play in affording particular engagements military life and culture, and with imaginations of the military. In this sense, where chapter four considers the theme of visuality, chapter five considers geopolitics and visual culture, and accounts for the affective affordances of games and gaming.

The sixth and seventh chapters – part of the third and final section, *Materialising Recruitment* – begin with a feminist critique of geopolitics. Here, the private spaces of the everyday (the home, the computer screen) will be considered central to the operation of geopolitics as it is expressed in recruitment. In chapter six, for example, the *body* of the potential recruit is discussed. Here, whilst accounting for how the body is forced to perform certain tasks and exercises as part of the recruitment process, the chapter will also consider the military body as it tends to become an ideal body in a wider, civilian sense. Furthermore, drawing again on ethnographic studies of airshows, the chapter will detail how the literal body of the potential recruit is willed to perform in ways which mark it out as militarily ideal. The last chapter – *Materials* – considers the 'stuff' of recruitment; the pens, stickers, posters and other ephemera so central to modern recruiting practice. Using literatures from the cultural geographies of materiality, anthropological studies of material culture and others, this final substantive chapter will end with calls to consider stuff seriously as they work in and through popular geopolitical and military cultures, and through cultures of academic research. The thesis ends with a discussion and conclusion, and suggests future directions for critical geopolitics of the military and military activities.

Part 1. Representing Recruitment

Chapter 2. Messages

A theme that started to develop in the preceding chapter – something which will provide the foundation for investigating the geopolitics of RAF recruitment throughout the thesis – was the military image. To provide a brief outline of the conceptual basis for this chapter, it will be important to re-visit what the military image is, and why it is important. There are three main issues at stake here.

Firstly, the military image is important because it tells us something about the production, representation and consumption of specific military-geographical imaginations. It was argued in the previous chapter that, necessarily, military recruitment must provide the potential recruit imaginations of what the military is, what it does and where it does it in order for it to become a realistic career choice. These imaginations – as we'll explore here and in the following chapters – are inherently geopolitical. However, as the previous chapter also outlined, there is a marked lack of any real qualitative studies of what military recruitment actually does from the perspective of the individual, just as there is a lack of qualitative studies of military lives and cultures more generally (c.f. Jenkings *et al.* 2011). Following from this, the work that military recruitment does in promoting imaginations of how, why and where the military is active in the world remains understudied. The work that the military *image* does as part of these recruiting practices, consequently, exists outside our current understandings of the media, the military and geopolitics.

Secondly, the military image is important because it presents us with an insight into how ideas and imaginations about the world become *active* at the interface between civilian and military cultures. More simply, because RAF and military recruitment is designed to change attitudes towards, and encourage people to join, the military, those elements of recruitment that are image-based, are elements that *do work*.

In providing a brief introduction to critical geopolitics in the previous chapter though, we've heard much about how the work that is done to express and articulate ideas about the world is done through images. Indeed, it might be argued that the mainstay of the critical geopolitical tradition has been the interpretation, analysis and critique of images in this respect. However, an argument that will be developed throughout the thesis will be that there remains a difference between the nature of those images traditionally studied in critical geopolitics and military recruiting images. Put differently, I argue that military recruiting images do more than just script the dramas of global geopolitics, and furthermore, allow for other things alongside engagement with and contestation of popular

geopolitical narratives (c.f. Dodds 2006). Specifically – as the current RAF recruiting campaign has it – I suggest that the military recruiting image allows the potential recruit (at least potentially) to *Become Part of the Story*. The work that RAF recruiting images do might often, then, have the power to change lives in a literal sense, and so must be considered as such.

Thirdly and lastly, the military image is important because geography is a subject which has traditionally been interested in both the military and the image. In the first instance, 'military geography has a long history, its roots tangled up with the imperial ambitions and military requirements that late-nineteenth-century Geography emerged to serve' (Woodward 2004: 6). But, from the 'sternly practical' use of geographical knowledges for the furtherance of Imperial power (Livingstone 2008: 241), to more recent debates around commensurability of military and academic cultures (Barnes 2008; Farish and Vitale 2010), it is clear that representation has been an important theme in military geographies. Namely, geography – at least when it is concerned with military knowledge – has always prioritised a reading of images in their capacity to account for the 'means by which the mechanisms and strategies of military control [are] explained, normalized and naturalized' (Woodward 2005: 8). What is more generally at stake though, and beyond the specifically representational nature of geography's connections with the military, are the broader connections between geography and images. As Sui (2000: 322; Rose 2003) notes, 'it seems almost trivial to point out that geography is a visual enterprise'. As others note, the faculty of sight is essential, both practically and philosophically, to the geographer's craft (Tuan 1979 1989 1991). In the second instance then, to understand, conceptually, the impulse to represent in geography (Livingstone 2008) – to map, photograph, draw, to see and interpret images – forms a vital element in our understanding of what work the military image can and might do as part of imaginative military geographies.

It is to these three issues that we turn in this chapter, along with an analysis of what RAF recruiting images do as representations of imagined military geographies. The chapter is divided into four parts, and firstly, it will begin with a discussion of the image and the geographical tradition. Specifically, this first section – focusing predominantly on what has been called Human Geography's 'cultural turn' – will begin to frame an analysis of RAF recruiting images through discussing the imaging of space and place, issues to do with realism and reality, and the politics and duplicity of representation. Secondly, the chapter turns to a discussion of popular geopolitics and to parts of this sub-field which have added a 'specifically military dimension to the critical geopolitical literature on war and

representation' (Dalby 2008b: 439). Thirdly, the chapter will discuss the small amount of work that has been published outside of geography and critical geopolitics (namely political science) which has dealt with the military image and popular culture. Finally, the last part of the chapter will be given to analysing some examples of RAF recruitment images.

2.1. Geography and representation

As briefly touched upon, geography is a discipline which has traditionally privileged representation – the use, production and interpretation of texts and images – as a way to understand and explore geographical realities. The impulse to mirror, map and to make pictures of our immediate or imagined worlds has arguably resulted in a discipline defined by what can be seen, both in practical and philosophical terms. In this respect, geographers have long been interested in the history and historiography of geography's visual cultures. For example, much of what we can tell of the science and tradition of geography in the seventeenth century is indelibly bound up with the impulse to map, model and to account for the world in ways that reduced the distance between the inherent interiorities of scholarship and exteriorities of geography (Livingstone 2008). Similarly, what has been argued about geography, modernity, and post-modernity accounts for a discipline rooted in, marked by and coming to terms with its history as a primarily visual enterprise (Gregory 1994). More specific studies have underlined the necessarily visual, photographic nature of geography and Empire (Ryan 1997; Schwartz and Ryan 2006), the principally visual nature of national citizenships (Matless 1996), and the connections between environmental imaginations and representation (Burgess 1990), to name but a few.

The fact that the history of geography then – especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – represents a set of historically distinct but epistemologically connected 'gestures around the visual' (Matless 2003; Rose 2003), should not go unnoted. Indeed, a vital line of argument in this thesis – developed in the sixth, seventh and last chapters in particular – surrounds the problematic assumptions manifest in dominant, occularcentic visions of the world (Ó Tuathail 1996). However, to get to the main ambitions of this chapter: in coming to terms with the concertedly visual nature of geography's tradition, geographers have, since the 'cultural turn' (Barnett 2009: 134 and see also 1998), become concerned with what Duncan and Ley (1993: 4) call 'the coincidence between a representation and that which a society assumes as its reality'. In other words, such authors have suggested that texts, maps, photographs and drawings which are designed to represent geographical realities are always problematic, are never

value-neutral, and are embedded within, and a product of particular intellectual histories and traditions. But importantly, because representation, in these terms, is bound up with *reality* (the way we think about and live in the world), studying representation is also then the study of how immediate experience is mediated through structures and apparatus of power. The concern, then, is with the status and position of the image in-and-of itself, *and* with the image in relation to that which it purports to represent.

In an attempt to develop this critique, something which hailed from the cultural turn in human geography, we turn in this first section to critical studies of landscape. Although the military image as it is in RAF recruitment might easily be approached in various critical-visual ways (as indeed it will in later chapters), the study of landscape and the broader 'new cultural geographies' tradition offers some important insights as to the position of the military image vis-à-vis the three concerns/research questions set out at the mid-point of the last chapter. To begin in this task, in this first section we'll turn to the issues of spatiality, reality, power and duplicity. To be borne in mind, however, is that rather than trying to account for broader visual epistemologies, visual cultures or visualism *per se*, this section and chapter will use the tools of the landscape approach to develop a critique of RAF recruitment only and merely – after Schein (1997:660) – as 'symbolic, as representative, and as a representation'.

Spatiality

Geographical representations – in the form of maps, texts and pictorial images of various kinds – …are active, constitutive elements in shaping social and spatial practices and the environments we occupy (Cosgrove 2008: 15).

The analysis of visual images – as symbolic, as representative and as representations – has its roots in the interpretation of visual depictions of landscape in painting, photography and film (Blunt 2009). From the early empiricist work of Carl Sauer and the Berkley tradition, through to the new cultural geographies of the 1980s and 90s, landscape has been 'a basic organizing concept in Anglophone cultural geography' (Morin 2009: 286) just as it has been the forbear of notable 'reinventions' of the discipline of geography more generally (c.f. Price and Lewis 1993; Mitchell 1996 and related debate 2002 2003). In all, however, the study of landscape has always been patterned with concerns over the visual, and notably, with visual representations of space. The import of new cultural geography's approach to landscape is both philosophical and analytical, and it

is to these two discussions we turn to in order to define the relationship between representation and space.

Firstly, fitting solidly into the postmodern turn in geography, the approach to landscape espoused by writers such as Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (2007) involved, amongst other things, 'a reassertion of the significance and role of space in social theory and social process' (Dear 1994: 9). From the 1980s onwards, as Soja (2003: 11) notes, 'the hoary traditions of space-blinkered historicism [were] being challenged with an unprecedented explicitness by convergent calls for a far-reaching spatialization of the critical imagination'. Put differently, modes of enlightenment knowing which extolled the unproblematic transparency of language and imagery were, from the 1980s, being undermined by postmodern criticalities around 'facts as the ultimate givens of an account' (Duncan and Ley 1993: 5). For our argument, the significance of this is twofold. In the first instance, the opacity of modern visions of the world were being blurred, and replaced with 'partial, relativistic viewpoint[s] emphasizing the contingent, mediated nature of theory-building' (Dear 1994: 4). In terms of social theory then, a postmodern approach to landscape emphasises the always-embedded partiality of perspective; our versions of the world being fundamentally discursive and negotiable. In the second instance, in terms of social process, postmodern geographies underlined the new and emergent logic through which society was being organised. The logic by which societies expressed themselves spatially, then, from the 1950s or early 60s, was being irrevocably altered by the 'hyperspaces' of global capital (Dear 1994: 4; Jameson 1984).

The philosophical import of new cultural geography to our study of space centres on the recognition that space – imaged and imagined – is always partial, negotiable and 'mediated through various cultural institutions and practices, class and gender formations, as well as taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of history and progress'(Duncan and Sharp 1993: 473). But it also centres on the fact that space, and spatial expression, is changeable. Part of reconstructing human geography under postmodernism, then, was recognising that the construction of meaning (including representations of space) happens at the interface of new and changing spatial logics. Thus, part of our analysis of RAF recruiting images later in the chapter will involve recognising the partiality of the military image, along with its changing nature vis-à-vis changing geopolitical realities.

Insofar as the philosophical basis for postmodern approaches to space and representation begins to provide a foundation for analysing the imaging of space in RAF

recruitment, it lacks specificity. To remedy this, we turn to the analytical import of new cultural geography's approach to landscape, and specifically, to a brief discussion of maps, political power, space and scale.

A discussion of the spatialities of geographical imagery, as Harley (2007) notes, would be nothing without mentioning maps. Maps are scaled representations of the Cartesian real (Pickles 1991). They are representations of space, but only in the respect that they employ specific standardised taxonomies of iconographic and pictorial signification to interpret real spaces. Maps are thus visual and textual documents which use specific visual codes, but critically, 'are ineluctably a cultural system…and belong to the terrain of the social world in [which] they are produced' (Harley 1992: 232). Representations like maps don't just evidence the always-embedded partiality of spatial imaging, however, and in attempting to reflect reality, they lay claim to, and impose specific regimes of knowing-the-world that have tangible effects on lived experience (Duncan 2000). For example, much has been made of mapping and cartography as systems of knowledge and signification which enables the deployment of power; power over, for example, 'boundary making, or the preservation of law and order' (Harley 2007: 279). But, in their ability, as images, to do work, to become 'active' and have political force, we might say that one of the most important ways maps work is through their ability to 'confirm the ubiquity of [certain] political contexts on a continuum of geographical scales' (Harley 2007: 281). Literally, as part of a system of Imperial or political power, maps have the propensity to reproduce core scalar (geo)political assumptions around territory, control, conflict and the state. As Harley (2007: 282) continues, these scales:

> Range from global empire building, to the preservation of the nation state, to the local assertion of property rights. In each of these contexts the dimensions of polity and territory [are] fused in images which – just as surely as legal charters and patents – [are] part of the intellectual apparatus of power.

This intellectual apparatus of power, though twinned with the symbology of maps in this case, is a symptom of the broader 'rules of representation' (Duncan and Ley 1993: 2). Indeed, as Agnew (1993: 252) notes of social science, space has commonly been perceived as 'a board or backdrop across which social processes 'move' and are 'imprinted' or as a set of fixed 'containers' at particular scales for cultures and social processes'. Similarly, essential to the territorial and military expansion of European powers in the sixteenth

century was a 'chess-board vision of global space [which] made it possible to authorise and strategise new campaigns of geopolitical pre-eminence' (Hughes 2007: 980).

To summarise, the import of postmodern or new cultural geographies of space is both philosophical and analytical. In the first instance, the spatialisation of the geographical imagination from the 1980s onwards provides a foundation for our thinking about the always-embedded and partial nature of representation. This is a matter for space in particular because representation *comes from somewhere* and originates in particular places. But it also a matter for space because how space is theorised and represented is necessarily a product of (changing) social and (geo)political organisation. The import of these ideas is also analytical. When applied, for instance, to maps, or for that matter to any 'apparatus of power', we begin to see how spatial imaginaries of scale, of the nation, the state and politics are fused to, and articulated by representative media. Thus, when applied more specifically to the military image, it remains to be seen how representations like these scale and 'spatialize international politics in such as way as to represent it as a world characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas' (Ó Tuthail and Agnew 1992: 192).

Reality

Although it seems sensible to suggest that certain representations like maps or broader apparatus of power like social science, the state or Empire work to scale or spatialise our imaginations of the world, it is not enough merely to explain this through problematizing space alone. Remaining with maps for the moment, if as Harley (2007: 278) suggests, 'in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of human relations', there is more to be said about exactly how the signs and styles of representation work in this way. The remainder of this section is given to exploring how representations of space (and other such concepts) gain their power and how representation works via a coincidence between what is represented, and what is thought to be real.

As Duncan and Ley (1993) suggest, the intellectual project which surrounded the cultural turn involved, above all, a sustained attack on the aspirations of Western Enlightenment representational realism. As a style, but more importantly, as a philosophy of knowledge, realism is a will to know; but only when knowing is about representing 'accurately what is outside the mind' (Rorty in Rainbow 1986: 235). Structures of language

and representation, imagery and icons were thought, under the rational, occularcentric discourses of the Enlightenment, to be 'perfect, transparent media through which reality could be represented to understanding' (Duncan and Ley 1993: 4). Moreover, as others note, a domination of modern Western thought by the metaphorics of (mimetic, rational) vision (Ó Tuathail 1996: 69) conditioned and constituted the practice of statecraft and geopolitical thinking, just as it 'described the status and possibilities of the observer' (Crary 1992: 27).

Without rehearsing the necessarily partial nature of the Enlightenment tradition, it is argued that the power for representations to affect change – to condition and constitute (geo)political realities, for example – is borne of their capacity to connect image with truth. Literature, art, or human sciences working under the auspices of the realist tradition (or philosophy) should maintain that what is imaged is a natural, objective and reasoned copy of what is true and real. Part of the power of representation, therefore, surrounds its ability to reduce what is known and knowable about the world down to what is represented and representable. But this 'prison house' of representation, as Mitchell (1984) calls it, presents a dangerous politics. Namely, to use reading, language and iconography as the essential arbiters of what can be known has various implications for (geo)political consciousness. If what can be known and perceived about the world is inseparable from the conventions of a particular apparatus of power (i.e. the state, social science, the military), then what is im/possible in that world is inseparable from it also. Realism – as a style and a philosophy of knowledge – is thus ideological, for it passes off as natural that which is in fact cultural (Eagleton 1983).

For our analysis then, the military image in this initial discussion of 'realties' is primarily philosophical. Put differently, what this discussion does not do is provide us with the tools with which to analyse any such 'realist'-style recruiting images; even if they existed, realist recruiting images would only evidence various attempts at copies of the world. Rather, working within an antifoundational tradition of postmodern geography, it is possible to properly contextualise recruiting images which are, necessarily, part of a dominant apparatus of power (the state and the military). Specifically though, it allows us to negotiate the fact that a will and ability to represent the world through military images is always bound up with particular and possibly dominant regimes of knowing. In terms of political consciousness, this means that what is knowable about the world (its scales and spaces, what is im/possible in this world) is inseparable from these regimes of knowing.

And in terms of ideology, we are provided more ways in which to consider the cultural rather than natural constitution of concepts like scale, space and politics.

However, the discussion of 'realities' also has analytical import for this and the following chapters. The sustained attack on representational realism developed during and after the cultural turn saw many attempts at problematizing representation, all based primarily on the supposed coincidence between representation and reality. For example, some have taken issue with the fact that representing something is always a 'speaking on behalf of' Other peoples and places; a problematic process akin to political delegation (Duncan and Sharp 1993). Some have underlined the overwhelmingly masculine and ethnocentric 'ways of seeing' inherent to representing landscape and imaginative geographies (Rose 1993; Gregory 1991). But importantly, some have attempted to collapse the dichotomy between representation and reality, and in doing so, to denude representation of its 'natural' accountability. As Matless (1992: 44) suggests, one approach to postmodern geographies of representation:

> Treats the image as neither significant of an essence nor reflective of a more basic reality…representations, images, knowledges are suggested here as being highly concrete stuff…as constitutive, as what the world is made of, really.

Under this rubric, rather than being a mirror held up to reality, representation 'stands as a creative recombination and remaking of the world, its status neither below nor above that which has been drawn on' (Matless 1992: 45). Put more simply, imaginations of nature, place, history and the nation are not, just because they are represented, any more or less 'real' or valid than the 'reality' that they attempt to account for. Rather than being 'naturally' accountable and separate from the world, representation is part of how we experience reality. That representation is, and that representational practices are, *in and of the world* thus matters for two reason. Firstly, it aligns simply with the philosophical aspirations of a postmodern geography. By recognising that images, texts and documents are accountable for providing our ideas of the world necessarily involves an awareness of their always-embedded partiality. Furthermore, the Western Enlightenment 'hierarchy of truth' (Matless 1992: 44) which would have representation near the top as a mirror to reality is reordered; representation here becomes merely part of a wider realm of experience. Secondly – and most importantly for our analysis – that representations are in and of the world underlines their ability to stand as evidence both for the imagining *and* experience of things like space, place, nation and politics. By recognising that the military

image is embedded within particular apparatus of power then, and by understanding that the military image is *constitutive* of particular notions of space and politics allows us to consider the RAF recruiting image differently. What the military is, what it does and where it does it is might not, thus, be thought of as being accounted for 'naturally' and objectively through recruitment. Rather, military recruitment stands as evidence for how our ideas about the military and geopolitics are embedded, become active within, and are *experienced* as part of a mediatised 'geopolitics of the real' (Jones and Clark 2006).

Power and duplicity

Although, as discussed, representation gains its power, in part, through a supposedly natural coincidence between what is represented and what is real, not much has been said about the fundamental *unreality* inherent to representational practices. Whilst, supposedly, standing as natural and objective copies of reality, representation also gains influence through masking its embeddedness and masking its relation to apparatus of power. Indeed, as Duncan and Ley (1993: 4) suggest, 'for a society to maintain the illusion that its representations are natural representations it must conceal their historical specificity'. This concealment – what we will call the duplicity of representation – is of central concern to new cultural and postmodern geographies, and especially to studies of landscape. It is to the duplicity of representation we turn to next before summarising and moving on to a discussion of popular geopolitics.

Writing at the juncture between Marxism and postmodernism (c.f. Daniels 1989), many scholars of the new cultural tradition have underlined the necessarily ideological and duplicitous nature of representation and landscape. For our analysis, understanding why this matters begins with acknowledging that representations 'are social products, the consequence of how people, particularly dominant groups…create, represent and interpret landscapes based on their views of themselves in the world and their relationships with others' (Morin 2009: 209). Although from this we gain another insight into the always-embedded and partial nature of representation, what is important here is the relationship between dominant groups and 'others'. In having the will and power to represent the world (in formal landscape paintings, for example), it is suggested that 'dominant groups' mask the labour relations that went into the making of the landscape itself. Put differently, the power of representation lies, in part, with its ability to naturalise and mystify basic property relations (Cosgrove and Daniels 2007; Berger 2008). Here, representation is duplicitous; it is complicit in an imagining of a world which masks the visibility of (proletarian) labour,

and interpellates 'its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to the givenness' of iniquitous class relations (Mitchell 2002: 2). As Mitchell (1961:13) continues, representations of landscape – of space and place – connote an inherent invisibility; 'a near complete absence of visible labour'.

But, for our analysis, more important than *what* remains inherently invisible in representation is *how* this invisibility is achieved. For instance, in Berger's (2008: 103) study of European landscape painting, the rationalisation and naturalisation of land ownership became such because 'the special qualities of oil painting lent themselves to a special system of conventions for representing the visible'. Differently, Mitchell (1961) has suggested early 1900s Californian landscape was imaged photographically via a dominant, pastoral frame; a frame which necessarily left unseen the struggle of migrant workers. Put more succinctly, the duplicity of representation – the ways in which subject and object of images becomes natural and common-sense – is achieved through a conventional visual and aesthetic style (Cosgrove 2006). In this sense, because a study of visual a graphic tropes must be part of visual analysis (Barnes and Duncan 1992), it will be important to note the extent to which the military image is bound up with such visual and aesthetic and conventions. However, rather than seeking to make visible labour or class relations in particular, an inquiry like this might well go towards uncovering how the stylistic conventions of the military image are bound up with the common-sense givenness of things like state, space and territory.

In summary, along with the ability for representation to connote a coincidence between image and reality, representations do work, and become powerful because they are duplicitous. Landscape and representation, as Daniels (1989: 196) notes, '[do] not easily accommodate political notions of power and conflict, indeed, [they] tend to dissolve or conceal them'. In this respect, we must consider the extent to which the givenness of imaginations of scale, space and politics gain their power through *invisibility*; albeit an invisibility that might be undone if attention is paid to stylistic conventions and codes. But more broadly, what this initial discussion has done is highlight the opportunities available to us if we bear in mind the tradition of (Marxist)postmodern geography. Namely, in considering representations of space, we've learned how particular imag(in)ings of space might become dominant over time, but only as they are tied to specific apparatus of power (social science, the state, the military). In recognising the always-embedded, partial and social nature of representation, there is an opportunity to map the changing nature of representations (and so ideas of scale, space and politics) as they try to account, naturally,

objectively for changing social and geopolitical organisation: amongst other things this necessities a socio-historical approach to the military image. Lastly, in considering the problem of representation and reality, it will be important to bear in mind Matless' (1992) contention that representation need not be thought of as separate, or epiphenomenal to our *experience* of things like space, place and politics. In other words, what remains to be seen is how RAF recruiting images are tied into a broader palimpsest of experiences, perceptions and materialities which make up, and constitute the (geo)political.

Overall, what this review suggests so far is that whilst representations might well represent space and politics (visually, iconographically), they also stand as evidence for how things like space and politics have been imagined, naturalised, and how mediation through images might constitute immediate experience. However, this review only provides the foundation for thinking through what the military image is and does. For example, we've heard very little about how, exactly, representation might become constitutive of particular geographical or military imaginations. Otherwise, words like 'mediation', and more specifically, 'space', 'politics' and the 'national' have been used quite unproblematically so far. Along with broadening our understanding of what the military image is and does, the next discussion – *Popular geopolitics* – aims to shed light on some of these ideas and terms.

2.2 Popular geopolitics

Following the more general discussion of critical geopolitics in the opening chapter, what this section will do, in particular, is underline the special role representative and popular media play in 'the spatialization of international politics by core powers and international states' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 192). In this sense – in trying to be more specific about such imaginations as 'space', 'politics' and institutional 'apparatus of power' – we turn to popular geopolitics, or, the way by which geopolitical logics permeate 'popular culture, from visual media to news magazines and novels' (Ó Tuathail 2005a). In doing so, this section will also highlight why it is worth thinking critically about the presence of RAF and military recruiting as it exists in civilian cultures; in popular magazines, on television, or on poster hoardings. To do this, the discussion will outline the popular geopolitics of space and danger, nationalism and identity. But first, to introduce popular geopolitics, it will be sensible to spend some time on its origins, and also, the connections it shares with what we've called postmodern geography.

As Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1992) suggest, the ways in which the world of states, militaries and conflicts comes to make sense is an innately political process of representation. This process of representation – something which designates the world and fills it with particular dramas, subjects, histories and dilemmas – 'works by the active suppression of the complex geographical reality of places in favour of controllable geopolitical abstractions' (195). But as the previous discussion highlighted, some of these abstractions (particular logics of 'scale', 'space' and 'nation' for example) when tied to the problematic of representation, may become dominant, and moreover, self-evident as they are 'naturalised' by the workings of particular apparatus of power. Much of what critical geopolitics does best – as the previous chapter suggested – is provide a framework and set of tools with which to denaturalise what appears common-sense about geopolitical representations (Dittmer 2010). But, in that critical geopolitics has evolved since its inception in the 1980s and 90s, thinking through such a processes has meant looking more broadly at how and where the abstracted, natural and self-evident logics of geopolitics are produced and manifest. As discussed, this has involved presuming a tripartite typology of geopolitical reasoning (formal, practical and popular) (Ó Tuathail and Dalby 1998; Ó Tuathail 2005a), along with attempts to locate geopolitical agency beyond that of intellectuals and statecraft (Sharp 1996). For our analysis, the development of critical geopolitics has some prescience in this regard. Namely, in assuming a discursive, postmodern approach to geopolitics and the image, critical, and especially popular geopolitics, provides further impetus for thinking through the 'natural' coincidence between representation and reality, along with the contention that images might be constitutive of certain worldly realities. In discussing these two matters in turn, connections are sought between postmodern geographies of the image and the more specific analytical tools of popular geopolitics.

In the first instance, there is a case by which we can say that geopolitical scripts (representations of state, nation and danger, for example) work via a similar logic as those which insist upon a realist, or otherwise, occularcentric philosophy. Namely, the ability for geopolitics to work and seem self-evident is, in part, due to the propensity for geopolitical representations (maps, policy documents) to account, naturally, for what is real in the world. Indeed, this is what Ó Tuathail (1996) means when he suggests that certain regimes of Western, mimetic visualism may be held accountable for the constitution and conditioning of statecraft and geopolitical thinking. However, the authority for geopolitical representations to account naturally and realistically for the world is not only based on their

being part of a particular, mimetic visual culture singly. Rather, as we might read from Sharp (1996: 557), geopolitics works and becomes self-evident also because of the presumed boundary or 'division between the politics of international relations and the politics of everyday life'. Differently, because the theorisation and experience of what is real in the world is 'couched [respectively] in conceptions of the socio-political separation between high and low culture' (Sharp 1996: 557), the location of geopolitical agency remains solely ('naturally') in the hands of intellectuals of statecraft (Sharp 1993).[5] Summarily, just as authors of the cultural turn in geography might suggest that images gain their power, in part, through realism and mimesis, so scholars of critical geopolitics would suggest images are powerful also because they work via separation between the 'high' culture of statecraft, and the 'low' of everyday life. The power of representation here lies not only with the inevitability of 'high', state-centric versions of the world, but a negation of 'low', popular and quotidian cultures.

In the same way that writers like Matless (1992) have provided a postmodern critique of representation based on its constitutive nature, critical geopolitics has sought reconciliation between these two cultural spheres. In the second instance then, how popular geopolitics has achieved this, and where it shares commonalities with popular geopolitics, is in considering images as constitutive of our ideas of space, nationalism and identity, for example. Fundamentally though, for popular geopolitics, this has meant taking seriously the role popular media (magazines, films and comics) play in the scripting of global politics. Indeed, as Sharp (1996: 557) notes, part of debunking the myth that the production, reproduction and circulation of ideas about the world is confined to the 'high' cultural sphere of statecraft relies upon:

> A more complex model which understands the institutional structure of discursive production…Thus, in critical studies, the production of discursive practices of geopolitics should be investigated in locations that lie outside the formal arena of the state.

That popular geopolitics has championed the study of 'low' political cultures (those 'outside' the arena of the state) matters for two reasons; both of which point to the

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[5] NB. Sharp's (1993 1996) discussions of the socio-political division between high and low culture are primarily used as a critique of critical geopolitics' 'elite focus'. However, whilst based on Ashley's (1987) calls for an 'interpretation of the geopolitics that discipline geopolitical discourse in *practice* and theory' (Sharp 1996: 557 my emphasis), it is applied to geopolitics itself in this case.

constitutive nature of geopolitical representations, and which have relevance for our analysis of RAF recruiting.

Firstly, and most importantly, as Sharp (2000a: 333) suggests, low political cultures and popular media matter geopolitically because 'it is through institutions such as the media and education that people are drawn into the political process as part of various political discourses'. Simply, for any formal or practical geopolitical discourse to seem reasonable and legitimate, or for a particular foreign policy to appear sensible and be consensual, it needs to be broadly disseminated through popular media (Dittmer 2010). However, in that much of this dissemination is representational, it shouldn't be surprising that scholars of popular geopolitics would suggest that such a process, one that entails the 'transmission, circulation and reception of information and images is never a neutral [one]' (Dodds 2005a: 75). For example, much like we've heard with European landscape painting, geopolitical representations come to work through a coherency of medium, style, iconography and metaphor (Sharp 2000a; see also Dittmer 2007b). Moreover, as Sharp (2000a) explains, being not only wedded to stylistic and aesthetic conventions, geopolitical representations must also resonate with meta-level hegemonic cultural values. Importantly, these values – variously those of national identity and belonging – 'are drawn upon to define new [geopolitical] situations and their importance to individuals in the community' (Sharp 2000a: 334). In this sense, not only do 'low' cultural media help frame reactions to events which are the intellectual preserve of 'high-culture' foreign policy, but tie citizens indelibly *into* these events: geopolitics 'produce[s] the appearance of a conversation of which the reader is a part' (Sharp 1996: 559).

Secondly, as Sharp (2000a) continues – relating to the commensurability of high and low political cultures and to our discussing the constitutive nature of representation – inversely, 'high' cultures themselves are not immune from the circulation and change of ideas in the lower, popular sphere. Simply, because practitioners of statecraft and media elites such as film producers are bound to drawing upon hegemonic cultural values, their 'pronouncements [are not] somehow unaffected by the circulation of ideas and beliefs therein' (Sharp 2000a: 333). Although, as Dittmer and Gray (2010) suggest, popular geopolitics still remains predominantly focussed on the 'high' cultural, elite visions of media moguls and the like, it matters that 'geopolitical discourses can be formulated "from below" by grassroots discussion' (Dittmer 2010: 15). Specifically, considering geopolitical representations as constitutive of lived experience, it is important to recognise that certain images might arguably stand as evidence for the broader, hegemonic ideas of, for example,

space, place and danger. Recognising, then, a broader cultural context for specific images entails considering how a range of popular media (films, novels, military recruitment) work aesthetically and thematically to circulate geographical ideas similarly and coherently. It also entails considering the evidence for how such ideas change over time with the advent of new nationalisms, new threats or geopolitical orders. And also – as we'll see in the next chapter – it entails considering how popular geopolitical elites (in this case, military recruiters) need to be reactive to the expectations and beliefs of their target audiences.

In summary, what this preliminary discussion of popular geopolitics has done is to add some further detail to what we've called a postmodern approach to images and representation. In being more specific about 'apparatus of power', that has been considered – along with the duplicitous possibilities of representational realism – how geopolitical representations gain their power through a supposed separation between high and low culture. Simply, that the consumers of geopolitical representations (military recruits, for example) might be denied the thought that their engagements with such are fluid and effectual, provides the illusion that 'high', elite cultures provide a realistic, natural view of what is real. Connectedly, a demonstration has been given of how conceptions of nation and identity are drawn upon, are affected by, and tied into, pronouncements in popular media. Overall, however, we've seen – contrary to the 'high' cultural preserve of postmodern geography (landscape painting, maps etc.) – why it is important that popular media be considered when thinking critically about geopolitics. RAF and military recruitment is, necessarily, present in the 'low' cultural and popular sphere, and as popular media (in popular magazines, on television, or on poster hoardings). But, in that these sorts of media are constitutive, in that they colonise our personal experiences, should matter for our analysis because in doing so, they 'associate values and behaviours with various parts of the world [and in turn] influence the ways in which people interact' (Dittmer 2010: 16). In trying to be more specific about how popular media work in this way, and to foreground how RAF recruitment might work similarly, we turn to a further and more specific review of popular geopolitics.

Space and danger

Following Dittmer's (2010) suggestion above, the central problematic of geopolitics (as practiced by dominant states in world politics) demands that we ask certain questions about how space is imagined and represented (Ó Tuathail 1998b). In particular, it demands that we ask how global space is divided into blocs or zones of identity and difference, and

importantly, how these sorts of imaginations are used to spatialise global threats and to formulate strategies of response. In that some of these strategies of response involve 'militarist mappings of global space', part of answering such questions has involved 'challenging how [spatial, geopolitical] contexts are constructed to justify violence' (Dalby 2010: 281). What this brief section will do is review literature that has dealt with such issues – issues around space, spatialisation, danger and the military – and how it might be said that popular culture is a site wherein the individual is tied into discourses of military exceptionalism.

As Dalby (2008b: 440) suggest, 'dangerous spaces that need the heroic deeds of champions and defenders to keep their hazards at bay are…a recurring theme in popular culture'. Writing about the American, Cold-War-era, *Reader's Digest*, for example, Sharp (1993 1996 2000a 2000b) has convincingly demonstrated that the magazine was able to maintain a dominant representation of the Soviet Union based on it being a threat to the 'American way of life' (Dodds 2005a: 91). At a time when the 'great struggle' between the democratic West and expansionist East was at its most dominant and durable (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992), the *Reader's Digest* was thus able, importantly, to portray a 'vision of American political identity based on…an enlarged military presence in the wider world' (Dodds 2005a: 91-2; see also Campbell 1992). Similarly, critical scholars have also demonstrated the unique role film and cinema plays – from the Second-World War to the worlds of post-9/11 – in the imaginative arrangement of world dramas, actors boundaries and dangers (Power and Campton 2005; see also Ó Tuathail 2005b; Dodds 2005a 2008a 2008b 2008c and Virilio 1989). But importantly, as Power and Crampton (2005: 198) continue, films are distinct in that 'they provide a way of solving (geo)political uncertainty…through building moral geographies and making clear the lines between 'us' and 'them''. In this respect though, that film has a particular role as an 'assemblage through which geopolitical sensibilities emerge and are amplified' (Carter and McCormack 2006: 228) also has some pertinence for our analysis. For example, speaking of the West's '"War on Terror" and the remilitarization of political anxiety in the aftermath of September 11th "', Dalby (2008b: 439) suggests that filmic representations went some way to facilitating imaginations of global danger and the supposed necessity for warriors to fight in distant lands. Indeed, as others have noted, films often have the effect of reassuring publics that state militaries are capable of engaging with enemies in real-world conflicts (Wright 2007; Dodds 2008c). Focussing specifically on the trope of the warrior in films like *Black Hawk Down* however, Dalby (2008b) argues that such representations not only depict conflict and

military identities, but provide 'a moral vocabulary [with] which narratives of right conduct and the justifications for violence are situated'. At stake here, as Dalby (2008b) continues, is that the cultural repertoire of films often spills over the divide between imagined and real-world political discourse.

What matters for an analysis of military recruiting here is that the power of popular geopolitics, in the first instance, lies 'in the way in which it helps to create (often dramatically) understandings of events, national identities and relationships to others' (Dodds 2008b). In representing danger, difference and often war, popular geopolitical media like magazines and films spatialise and provide an interpretation of danger, difference and war as they purportedly exist in the real world. But more than this, as Lacy (2003: 614) suggests, popular geopolitics (in this case cinema) 'becomes a space where "commonsense" ideas about global politics and history are (re)-produced and where stories about what is acceptable behaviour from…individuals [are] naturalised and legitimated'. Be it the perpetuation of a belligerent, militaristic attitude towards cultural Others in the case of the *Reader's Digest*, or in the service of an imagination of righteous foreign wars in the case of *Black Hawk Down*, it is important that scholars have begun to question how popular media might go somewhere to informing individual responses to global events. Indeed, as we might read from Cynthia Weber (2006), it is at the interface of warfare, foreign policy and popular culture that we must start asking: who were we, who are we, and who will we be? That some have started to ask how popular representations of war might have inspired military recruits (c.f. Ó Tuathail 2005b; Power 2007) in these terms is encouraging. But as the first chapter outlined, there is much more that popular geopolitics might do to explore such a process.

Nationalism

As argued in the opening discussion of popular geopolitics, for ideas around space and danger to seem sensible, for them to frame individual responses, popular cultural media like magazines and film must resonate with meta-level hegemonic values. In other words, to make sense, ideas about the world must be circulated within and through cultural contexts which mean something to the audience and to the individual. That these contexts are commonly representational, and that they change over time in this regard is significant for framing an analysis of RAF recruitment. In this and the next section, we turn to discuss how popular geopolitics has approached these issues by looking at popular geopolitical studies of nationalism and identity.

As Dittmer (2005) suggests, popular culture is significant in that it is able to affirm and reproduce the popular consciousness of the nation state. Much like representations of space and danger, however, representations of nation (and recourse to the imagined values of nationalism) are inescapably part of popular geopolitics' role as a global geo-graph (Ó Tuathail 1996). For example, it is argued that the popular geopolitics of nation feed into the division of global space into blocs or zones of identity and difference; key to the expression of popular understandings of nation involves the division of the earth's surface into states, 'each on ostensibly independent, sovereign, equal and occupied by a discreet culture or nation' (Dittmer 2005: 636). Moreover, a master narrative of national myth, circulated through popular culture 'contains details not only of who belongs to the nation, but also what 'belonging' means and what the relationship is between those who belong and those who do not' (Dittmer 2007a: 403). Fundamentally, popular culture 'is one of the ways in which people come to understand their position both within and larger collective identity and within an even broader geopolitical narrative, or script' (Dittmer 2005: 626).

Critical geopolitical scholars have engaged with the issue of nationalism on this basis, and importantly, have done so in reference to iconographic and symbolic tropes. For example, focussing on postage stamps, Raento (2006: 602) has argued that depictions of maps, cultural achievements, and historical landmarks on stamps are used to convey 'the national elite's (and, depending on the openness of the stamp design process, the citizen's) understanding of their country's contribution to the world'. Most importantly, Dittmer (2005 2007a 2007b 2010) has detailed how the graphic imaging of the superhero Captain America in comic book form has, since 1940, stood for some of the changing meanings of the American nation and its involvement in foreign war. For example, early 1940s Captain America is seen to 'get by in a world of super-powered villains through his dauntless courage and commitment to continual training' (Dittmer 2010: 81). After the Second World War, when:

> Captain America's role as the embodiment of American values put him squarely in the middle of the politics of the time...with the American people torn between competing geopolitical scripts, there was pressure both for and against Captain America's involvement in the Vietnam War' (Dittmer 2005: 632).

In line with the shifting politics of the question, 'what does America mean?'(Dittmer 2007a: 633), Captain America (and the iconographies therein) are seen to change with the geopolitical times. For instance, 'the events of 9/11 provided an opportunity for Captain

America to return to its origins, with a clear geopolitical script' (Dittmer 2005: 637). By counterpoising images of Ground Zero against 'images of men in dark robes with long beards and assault rifles outside a cave', the comic 'sets up a clear dichotomy of insiders and outsiders…and of distant foreign intruders' (Dittmer 2005: 637). Summarily, through an imagining of what American nationalism is in a troubled world, popular media like the Captain America comics demonstrate how, looking at specific iconographies, we might make connections between 'ways-of-life', space, danger and the necessity of military force.

Although popular geopolitical studies of nationalism are useful in that they provide an insight into the iconographic tropes of nationalism, what is more important for the analysis to follow is how these studies account for *change over time*. For example, in Raento's (2006) work, it is through the differing iconographies of stamps that we might read the changing nature of the Finnish nation relative to Finnish-Russian relations in the late 1800s; as it celebrates a territorial nationalism prior to the Second World War; or as it commemorates is membership of the Council of Europe in 1989. Similarly, Dittmer's (2005 2007a 2007b 2010) studies of Captain America are useful, above all, because they account for the changing nature of America vis-à-vis its military engagements from the 1940s onwards. Because, as outlined above, a representational analysis demands a socio-historical approach, popular geopolitical studies of nationalism might well serve to frame this sort of analysis. But, in that these studies do not provide specific suggestions about how to map or account for change specifically (in relation to British nationalism as it is represented by the British military, for example), this analysis requires, and will require, further contextualisation.

As Sharp (2000a) suggests, although geopolitical descriptors (e.g. of space and danger) rely upon accepted models, metaphors and images (i.e. of nationalism), these accepted models are always a product of different countries geopolitical traditions. However, following Billig (1997), it is not the case that a nation's sense of itself changes wholesale and immediately upon the eventuality of geopolitical reordering (i.e. the end of the Cold War or the advent of post-9/11 politics). Rather, because the reproduction of nation and nationality is a daily occurrence, it must happen over time at the level of belief, habit and routine; at the level of the banal. Indeed, it is at the level of the banal – through stamps and their circulation or comic serialisation – that popular geopolitics engages with nationalism. But, in that a sense of national self might well change with the nation's imagined place in the world, it is through observing such banal nationalisms that we might account for the different representational strategies used to deal with geopolitical change.

Specifically, as Billig (1997) continues, it is possible to observe how nationalism becomes habit, and how these habits might relate to foreign or military policy, by considering it discursive and something which is responsive to 'danger' or 'threat'. Importantly, as Dittmer (2010; see also Dittmer and Larsen 2007) suggests, a 'soft', discursive flagging of nationalism is thus the preserve of states that are said to exist, are stable and that are not in imminent danger. On the other hand, those nations which 'do not have the luxury of sublimating their nationalist displays' (Dittmer 2010: 20) are, respectively, those whose nationalism might be under threat or otherwise embattled.

Summarily, in order to suggest a connection between geo-graphs such as space and danger and popular imaginings of nation, it leaves us to question exactly how representationally overt (or otherwise) particular military images are in terms of nationalism. In doing so, we will not only go some way to describing how particular nationalisms are *historically contingent* (bound to the prevailing sense of where and what in the world a nation is), but how an understanding of the military – what it is, what it does and where it does it – is formulated in reference to these same national imaginations (and visa-versa). Put differently, if a popular national imagination is '*any idea concerning the relation between one's own and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy*' (Dijkink 1996: 11 original emphasis), it remains to be seen how the feelings associated with Second World War or Cold War, or War on Terror, differ as they are represented in RAF recruitment. The analysis will ask, then, how RAF recruiting draws upon tropes of nationalism. But also, it will ask how nationalism itself is represented as a specifically military concern, or rather, if nationalism is represented as threatened and in need of defence.

Identity

Much of what we've heard about so far in this review is, at least implicitly, concerned with matters of identity and the individual. For example, in popular geopolitical studies of nationalism, belonging is formulated specifically in terms of what the nation means to the self (Dittmer 2007a). In Sharp's (1993 1996 2000a 2000b) work on the *Readers Digest*, it is made clear that what happens in the world is presented in such a way as to mean something to the individual, and furthermore, to draw individuals into political discourses. In our discussion of film, it was noted that popular geopolitics might go someway towards framing individual responses to global events, and to asserting a moral

framework through which to know what 'righteous' responses might be. In that RAF recruitment – and indeed any form of recruitment – must appeal to the individual, and to individual identities, popular geopolitical studies of identity matter in two senses. Firstly, they matter in terms of the consistent binary and dichotomous construction of identity (i.e. the construction of identity relative to what it is not), and secondly, they matter in the respect that identity is often interpellated or determined more or less in relation to the giveness of a particular geopolitical narrative (c.f. Mitchell 2002 on representation and identity interpellation). In this final short discussion of popular geopolitics, we deal with these two themes in turn.

Firstly, working similarly as a primary global geo-graph of identity and difference, it is clear that popular geopolitical media commonly represents identity as a territorial(ising) symbol; a symbol which participates in the construction of difference between one region and other regions (Dittmer 2005). As Dittmer (2005) continues, that millions of individuals are able to freely assume a common identity is a direct result of an oppositional, Self/Other discourse which pervades geopolitical scripts. Similarly, as Sharp (2000b: 27) notes, a traditional conception of political identity 'is not formed simply by the essence of what lies within, but, more importantly, what lies beyond the state boundary'. Where identity is commonly scripted in terms of a Self/Other, Inside/Outside dichotomy in popular geopolitical media, it is, then, especially important in terms of the construction of enemies and dangers. As Sharp (2000a) continues, during the Cold War, magazines such as the *Reader's Digest* constructed American identity with recourse to what lay beyond American territory, and also, with recourse to what America was morally, ethically and politically *not*. American identity was thus scripted and enforced through the representation, during the Cold War, of dangers and threats which were nurtured under the shadow of communism. 'Drug use, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, the breakup of nuclear family, the spectre of "big government" and a culture of victimisation…came to dominate the nexus of danger' (Sharp 2000a: 168).

Importantly, whilst the scripting of such dangers enforce the boundary between 'us' and 'them', the Other and the Same, they also 'present a clear image of how good citizens should act' (Sharp 2000a: 167). Geopolitical scripts of identity, in this respect, are represented as subject-specific dangers; dangers which mean something to the individual. Not unlike film, we get a sense here of how popular media tie space, danger and nationalism to individual responses to global events. Generally though, what is important for an analysis of military recruitment is that popular geopolitical media often reply upon

representations and imaginations of an enemy/Other. Consequently, that military recruitment might provide an opportunity to think through what a responsible (military) identity might be *in opposition to that which it is not* has some import, especially in our thinking about specific, historically contingent and imagined 'dangers' (and especially that of images of enemy Others).

Secondly, identity matters because popular media often interpellate audiences, or, deign what audience identities *must* be relative to strictures of particular, dominant geopolitical narratives. As Dittmer and Larsen (2007: 737) suggest, drawing upon Althusser:

> Audiences are interpellated by discourses that they can identify with. In this way, subject positions are constructed through the myriad discourses that we select and respond to. This selection is, of course, a restricted choice, as subjects are forced to choose from a limited array of identities put forth by…ideological state apparatus.

That these apparatus include those of popular culture is important because:

> When a subject acknowledges a call to a particular identity…they are beholden to certain ideological imperatives that are associated with that identity (Dittmer and Larsen 2007: 737).

In their study of Canadian nationalism and identity, Dittmer and Larsen (2007) thus suggest that popular culture (and in this case, the Captain Canuck comics) works to interpellate Canadian identities. However, it is important that these identities are attributable to geopolitical context (the war in Iraq in this case), and that they are then limited, in part, by the 'social space' afforded by Canada's diffident relationship with geopolitical discourses which are quintessentially American. Overall, it will be worth noting in our analysis of RAF recruiting, relative to the dominant scripting of space, danger and threat, and relative to changing geopolitical contexts, what kinds of identities are afforded by particular representations. Military recruiting is, as we shall see, about the individual potential recruit, and about providing the individual an opportunity to position themselves *relative* to the military. An analysis of RAF recruiting in this respect will enable us to comment on the connections between discourses of threat, danger and identity, and how particular geopolitical contexts afford different possibilities for military identities.

Popular geopolitics and the military image: a summary

In developing our discussion beyond the opportunities afforded by a postmodern approach to representation, this review of popular geopolitics has done a number of things. Namely, it has tried to be more specific about what we've called 'apparatus of power'. For example, we've seen how we might locate particular geopolitical narratives and pronouncements relative to the state, to media elites like film producers, and to a lesser extent, the military. Resultantly, representations, and particularly images in the popular media have thus been seen to run in parallel with, to enforce, and to reproduce, the spacings and territorialisations inherent to state-centric visions of the world. Much like postmodern approaches to the image, being critical of the associations between particular representations and apparatus of power involves recognising their always-embedded partiality. However, in going beyond this, popular geopolitics allows us to think in more detail about exactly how representations help to create understandings of world events, and how these events are made meaningful, and often personal.

An attempt has also been made to highlight the important role imaginations of the military play in this process. For example, it has been shown that representations of threat and danger are often bound up with the moral duty of individuals to think in particular ways about foreign policy and military action. In this respect – looking in more detail at the themes of space, danger, nationalism and identity – the review has attempted to make initial and tentative connections between the prospective military recruit and a palimpsest of scritps and imaginations which go towards informing the recruit *what the military is, what it does and where it does it*. However, that popular geopolitics might inform choices, actions and interactions, has special import not only for the analysis to follow, but for the thesis more generally. As it was argued at the beginning of the chapter, the military image is important because, potentially, it gives us an insight into how ideas and imaginations about the world become *active* at the interface between civilian and military cultures. Because RAF and military recruitment is designed to change attitudes towards, and encourage people to join, the military, it will be essential to comment on how, if at all, the popular geopolitics of recruitment might be said to inform choices and actions in this regard.

Following the emphasis that has been placed in this review on representations and imaginations of the military, the next discussion aims to be more specific in these terms. By reviewing literature outside of popular geopolitics which has dealt with the military image

– notably in political science, sociology and cultural studies – the next section aims to do two things. Firstly, it aims to continue to enable a critique of the military image as 'symbolic, as representative, and as a representation' (Schein 1997: 660). Secondly, it aims to foreground an analysis of the military image where such an image is considered 'active' and constitutive of the reality it purports to represent. The latter half of the following discussion will then be given to an outline of the remit and propositions of the analysis.

2.3 The military image and the frame of analysis

Although differing from critical and popular geopolitics in approach, studies of the military image outside of these sub-disciplines share many of the same epistemological and analytical suppositions. For example – turning to political science and International Relations (IR) first – the influence of postmodern theory on political science in the 1980s lead to what Beliker (2007) has called the *aesthetic turn*. Much like postmodern geography and critical geopolitics, an aesthetic international political theory is one that considers how 'representational practices themselves have come to constitute and shape political practices' (Bleiker 2007: 510). Furthermore, concerned with 'how reality is seen, framed, read and generated in the conceptualisation and actualisation of the global event' (Der Derian 1987 in Bleiker 2007: 531), IR and political science is keen to assuage the philosophical merits of mimesis in place of aesthetics. Consequently, aesthetic approaches 'embark on a direct political encounter, for they engage the gap that inevitably opens up between a form of representation and the object that it seeks to represent' (Bleiker 2007: 512). And it is in these terms that IR and political science have dealt with both popular culture and the military image. We deal with these two themes in turn.

In terms of popular culture, much the same as Sharp (1993 1996) on geopolitics, Grayson *et al*. (2009) note that within the discipline of IR, popular culture and world politics have often been conceptualised as being unconnected. This, as they put it, is:

> A reflection of the preference for IR to focus on the mechanisms, institutional arrangements, interests, bureaucracies and decision-making processes that constitute states, business and civil society. From this perspective, popular culture would only be important in so far as it could be shown to have *caused* some kind of effect within these formal sites of activity (Grayson *et al*. 2009: 155).

Much like the separation between the high and low cultures of politics highlighted by critical geopolitics (a separation that pervades not only the theorisation of politics, but its practice), an 'aesthetic', 'popular' IR is thus one that suggests that 'maintan[ing] a

categorical separation between politics and (popular culture) leads[s] to important dynamics being missed' (Grayson *et al*. 2009: 156). Attempts to address these dynamics have, to date, spanned the rise of celebrity politicians (Street 2004), film and cinema (Weber 2006; Boggs and Pollard 2008; Shapiro 2008) and political cartoons (De Sousa and Medhurst 1982; Diamond 2002), amongst others.

However, whilst the aesthetic turn in IR has prompted such studies, it is notable that many of them have not strayed far from our second theme – the military image. For example, studies in the political science/IR vein have engaged with war, photography and the media (Campbell 2003; Sontag 2004; Mirzoeff 2005; Butler 2005 2007), exhibition and the memorialisation of war (Luke 1997 2004), military games and gaming (Haynes 2006; Robinson 2012), and broader issues surrounding popular culture and militarisation (Davies and Philpott 2011). In these cases, as Campbell and Shapiro (2007) suggest:

> There is a new contested terrain of the image broadly understood as a social relation, with some aspects of visual culture aiding and abetting securitization and militarization and some serving as a domain of critical practice and counter-memory for the issues, perspectives and people occluded by securitization and militarization. Thus, visual culture is implicated in new military strategies, at the same time as it enables critical practices contesting those military strategies.

Thinking of the terrain of an image as bound up with an imagining of war, then, is also to recognise – as critical geopolitics does – that the military image is indelibly part of war as it is compelled by the state (Butler 2005), and that it legitimises certain practices of sovereignty (Campbell 2003: c.f. Shapiro 2004). Ergo, 'if we assume that the state has no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that bring it into being' (Campbell 2003: 57), the state has a vested interest in controlling, or playing a part in the production and circulation of the sorts of images which vindicate particular policies. Importantly, this control – what Campbell (2003) calls 'cultural governance' – represents a nexus through which the state's identity is defined, collective identities are formed, and through which enemies and dangerous spaces are identified. Much like critical geopolitics' concern with the scripting of particular places, identities and dangers through popular media then, political science and IR presents us with a broader context through which to think about the military image. But importantly, in terms of the potential military recruit, IR recognises the possibility that popular culture might go towards framing particular choices, actions and interactions. Indeed, as Grayson *et al*. (2009: 156) note, that:

Violent films or video games may not cause young men to go out and kill [is not to ignore the fact that] they may provide one layer in the complex continuum that congeals into deeply seated antagonisms towards particular others.

If political science and IR gives us more insight into how popular representation might be said to be 'active' and constitutive, sociological and cultural studies of the popular military image allow us to be more specific about the military image in terms of iconographic and visual tropes. For example, a small amount of work has been done on the figure of the soldier in popular print media. Focussing on news print in particular (Jenkings *et al.* 2008a; Jenkings *et al.* 2008b; Woodward *et al.* 2010: 211), such studies have suggested that the popular military image is:

A primary site for negotiation and articulation of civilian discourses seeking to ascribe meanings to soldiers and their activities. These discourses are specific to time and place in their detail and articulation, but refer back to wider historically-rooted narratives through which that figure [of the soldier] is understood within national cultures.

Ascribing meaning to what the military is, what it does and where it does it, as Woodward *et al.* (2010) continue, is done variously through iconographies of myth and heroism, and importantly, through the *absence* of prescriptive detail about place and identity. For example, the imaging of nameless soldiers in unidentified (although identifiably dangerous) landscapes arguably render what soldiers do, and where they do it, timeless though ultimately ambiguous. Also, the use of silhouetted soldierly figures (Roderick 2009: 81) draws upon a 'long-standing and well-established visual convention of treating the human shadow as a virtual 'index' for the inner qualities or essence of the individual'. Such ambiguity, both in terms of landscape and military identity matters, as Woodward *et al.* (2010) suggest, because their function is to homogenise conflict and the identities of military personnel. Such images make 'visual reference to heroic survival at the end of battle [just as they] smooth out the complexities of the conflicts they purport to represent, and the ambiguities and problematics within the moral frameworks that the stories they illustrate purport to engage with' (Woodward *et al.* 2010: 218). Summarily, some of the iconographic methods employed to represent the military in news media – specifically those which work through particular *absences* of prescriptive detail – work via timeless and mythic notions of what soldierly identity *is* and *should be*. The same conclusion might be applied to imaginations of 'danger' and 'conflict', with particular, embattled, landscapes working via entrained imaginations of *where* and *what* danger is.

Overall, it is clear from such studies that the smoothing-out of particular ideas of conflict (be they about place or identity) work via particular, dominant ideas of the world (i.e. historically-specific ideas of space, danger and identity). Focussing on the news media in this case is telling because it provides a sense of the meta-level system of values which circulate in the popular sphere and that make images like these meaningful. Consequently, as Woodward *et al.* (2010: 222) conclude; 'a photograph of a soldier is never just a photograph of a soldier'. Bolstering the arguments made throughout this review so far, the position and status of the military image in these studies is important in two respects. Firstly, it is important that we recognise that images of soldierly identity and of the spaces in which soldiers operate can define the public's consciousness and their understandings of armed forces (Jenkings *et al.* 2008a). The military image, in representing war, military identity and embattled spaces frames our understandings of what the military is, what it does and where it does it. But secondly, and most importantly for an analysis of recruiting is that images have the capacity to 'shape the possibilities for our responses to the conflicts they represent' (Woodward *et al.* 2010: 221-2). Throughout this review – not least in reviewing popular geopolitics – it has been suggested that representation, far from being epiphenomenal to our experiences of geographies and politics, is constitutive of the realities it purports to represent. Important not only for this chapter, it remains to be seen exactly to what extent we might say RAF recruiting images work in this way, are constitutive, and become active as they exist at the interface of civilian and military cultures.

Framing an analysis

Tying together the strands of the chapter so far, this review of work outside of critical and popular geopolitics neatly underlines some of the more important themes which will be taken forward to an analysis of RAF recruiting. For example, it has underlined the necessity to collapse the dichotomy between high and low culture, and has demonstrated the importance of popular, 'low' cultures in the production and reproduction of world politics. Furthermore, it has demonstrated in more detail how popular culture is in ways connected to apparatus of power such as the state. Connectedly, it has highlighted the role popular media play in the reproduction of ideas central to the legitimacy of state sovereignty, or of foreign and military policy. Such legitimacy – as we've heard throughout – is bound up with, and operationalized by, the scripting of the world into safe and dangerous spaces, by the interpellation of particular identities, and by the resonances these scripts, identities and imaginations have with meta-level ideas of nation, community and belonging.

However, most important for the analysis to follow, as it has been shown, is that particular imaginations of the world are tied, explicitly or otherwise, to an imagining of the military. Understanding what the military is, what it does and where it does it, as this review has demonstrated, is often then tied to ideas of what is 'right' or 'justifiable' in terms of foreign military policy as it is prescribed by the state. That such imaginations might then inform individual choices and actions, that they might shape the possibility for immediate responses is pivotal for an analysis of RAF and military recruiting. Although some scholars (notably in critical geopolitics) have begun to consider how popular geopolitical representations inform choices as to whether to join the military, the remainder of this chapter will attempt to be more specific in this regard, and will provide the foundation for asking more detailed questions of this sort in later chapters.

The following analysis is based on four propositions and lines of inquiry. Firstly, that to provide an imagination of what the military is, what it does and where it does it, RAF recruitment must represent the particular spaces in which the RAF have been, and are, currently active. Secondly, that the RAF must change over time in this respect and with geopolitical context. Thirdly, for RAF recruitment to become meaningful to the potential recruit, must appeal to the individual, and fourthly, that recruitment must be potent enough to inform individual choices and actions in this regard. In approaching these propositions, the following analysis is in two parts, and firstly, will deal with issues of space, danger and nation. Secondly it will look to issues of identity. In all, however, the analysis will attempt to account straightforwardly for dominant geopolitical imaginations, of space, place and people as they are deployed persuasively through recruitment.

2.4 RAF recruitment as representation

The following analysis draws upon two types of image; the print image, and the moving image.[6] In order to correctly account for the changing nature of RAF recruitment relative to its deployments around the globe, the discussion is predominantly based around three geopolitical 'eras'; the Second World War, the Cold War and the current era of (counter)insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Space, Danger, Nation

Like maps, landscape photography and painting, film or comic books, RAF recruitment relies on representations and imaginations of space. Providing the potential

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[6] See the more detailed discussion of methodology in the opening chapter.

recruit with an idea of what the military is, what it does and where it does it is something which has to be done explicitly in relation to space. Importantly though, representations of space in RAF recruitment necessarily change as they attempt to account for differing geopolitical contexts, particular 'dangers', and ideas of nation. To begin to explore this, we turn to our first example – (BPotS) *Sean Langrish* (figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Be part of the story (Sean Langrish) (2009)

Sean Langrish is part of a series of images – discussed in the opening of this thesis – released by the DLKWLowe (formerly DLKW) advertising agency beginning in 2009 which 'features real experiences of RAF personnel to give the public an idea of the huge range of opportunities available within the RAF' (DLKWLowe 2012). Capturing a wide range of RAF roles to date, the series is rendered in a characteristic graphic style reminiscent of war-themed, boys-own comic books. Much like these comic books, the BPotS series relies upon a striking graphic style and a storyboard which, using a mixture of 'real experiences' and graphic sketches, narrates the dramas of modern RAF combat. In *Sean Langrish*, for example, we follow an Aerospace Battle Manager as he works to arrange an air-strike for some embattled ground troops. Following the storyboard, we are able to surmise several things about what the RAF is and how it does it. For instance, we are given an impression of the RAF's air-to-ground support role, its technical capacities such as mid-air refuelling, the use of weaponry, communications and logistics. Importantly, we're also given an impression of particular socialities; the eventual outcome of this narrative is as much a product of sharp, individual decision-making as it is conducive of new comradeships.

Aside from what this image might tell us about technology or identity though, the way it represents space, and consequently, how it connotes danger, is worthy of discussion. For instance, although we are told specifically where this story is taking place (Helmand Province), it is not the specificities of place which are of foremost importance here. Rather, existing in sharp contrast to the suitably desert-coloured wash in the background, it is the story (the people, technology and drama) which takes precedence in this image. The distinction between a logical, controlled military narrative (storyboard) and hazy, indeterminate background might arguably connote the inconsequentiality of space here as it harbours the *more important movement of military things and people*. Furthermore, whilst an 'enemy' is referred to but never explicitly represented, it is clear that this is a space which contains, and requires military responses to, inherent danger.

Much like our earlier review of space, then, *Sean Langrish* is a good example of space perceived as a board or backdrop against which things and people move (Agnew 1993). Following Hughes (2007), it might also be suggested that this image is concomitant with a 'chess-board' vision of space; a space in which if strategic eminence is to be gained, pieces must be moved in particular ways, at particular times, for particular strategic reasons. As part of this vision, the 'pieces' of the game (the military narrative) are given centre-stage whilst the board (the Afghan landscape) fades in importance, never having its

edges or specificities defined. Consequently, this is a space that is made meaningful *only* because the military is present in it; its character is defined by enemy threat and military response. The specification of 'Helmand Province' is important here, but chiefly as a signifier which may be 'filled' with an imagination of military action. From this, we might argue that *what* the military does is far more important that *where* it does it. However, this is not to say space is not important *per se*. If, as Ó Tuathail and Dalby (1992) suggest, geopolitics is about the spatialisation and dramatic and typographical characterisation of particular places, then the space in which the RAF is currently active (here, Afghanistan) is a space ill-defined, simple, and meaningful only because it provides the stage for military people and things.

Although, as we shall see throughout the thesis, space conceived as an incidental backdrop to military operations is a common feature of modern RAF recruiting, it is not so common in earlier examples. Where recruiting insists on a more specific imagination of space, it is often tied to ideas of nation and to inherent the spatiality of military defence. For instance in *The RAF Covers the World* (figure 2.2), we see an example of recruiting from the Second World War in which the RAF roundel overlays the globe. Interpreted simply, we might say that this example points to a recurring feature of recruiting; the offer of travel and an opportunity to 'see the world'. A common theme across the archive, the offer of world travel is often directly linked to the mobility of the RAF (relative to the terrestrial forces), and to the fact that the RAF, at any one time, will have permanent bases overseas. For example, in *A Personal Service* (COI 1973a), a film which outlines the options available to those interested in ground-support roles, much is made of 'overseas deployments' – principally to RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus – and the 'leisure time that this will allow'. Similarly, in *A Matter of Choice* (COI 1965a), a film detailing RAF roles open to women, the viewer is again reminded of the benefits of the RAF's global reach, and as the narrator suggests:

> It's all a matter of choice. One girl chooses a career [in the RAF], another, marriage. Both agree on one point; that the world is a big place, well-worth seeing.

To suggest that the world is well-worth seeing, though, the RAF must be specific about what the world is, and what is in it. Returning to *The RAF Covers the World*, we might link the 'coverage' of the world by the RAF (both in text and image here) to a certain imagination of military omnipotence; the colours of the national flag being imprinted upon the world. However, more important for understanding the more specific representation of

space here is the orientation of the globe itself. Spanning Europe, Africa, the Middle-East and Japan, the image represents a 'world' which was militarily important to the British during the Second World War. Much like the British Imperial insistence on a central meridian through Greenwich (Monmonier 1996), *The RAF Covers the World* insists upon a world divided into zones of greater or lesser importance – the greater of these being those parts of the (visible) globe which harbour military threat, or otherwise, which are Imperially significant.
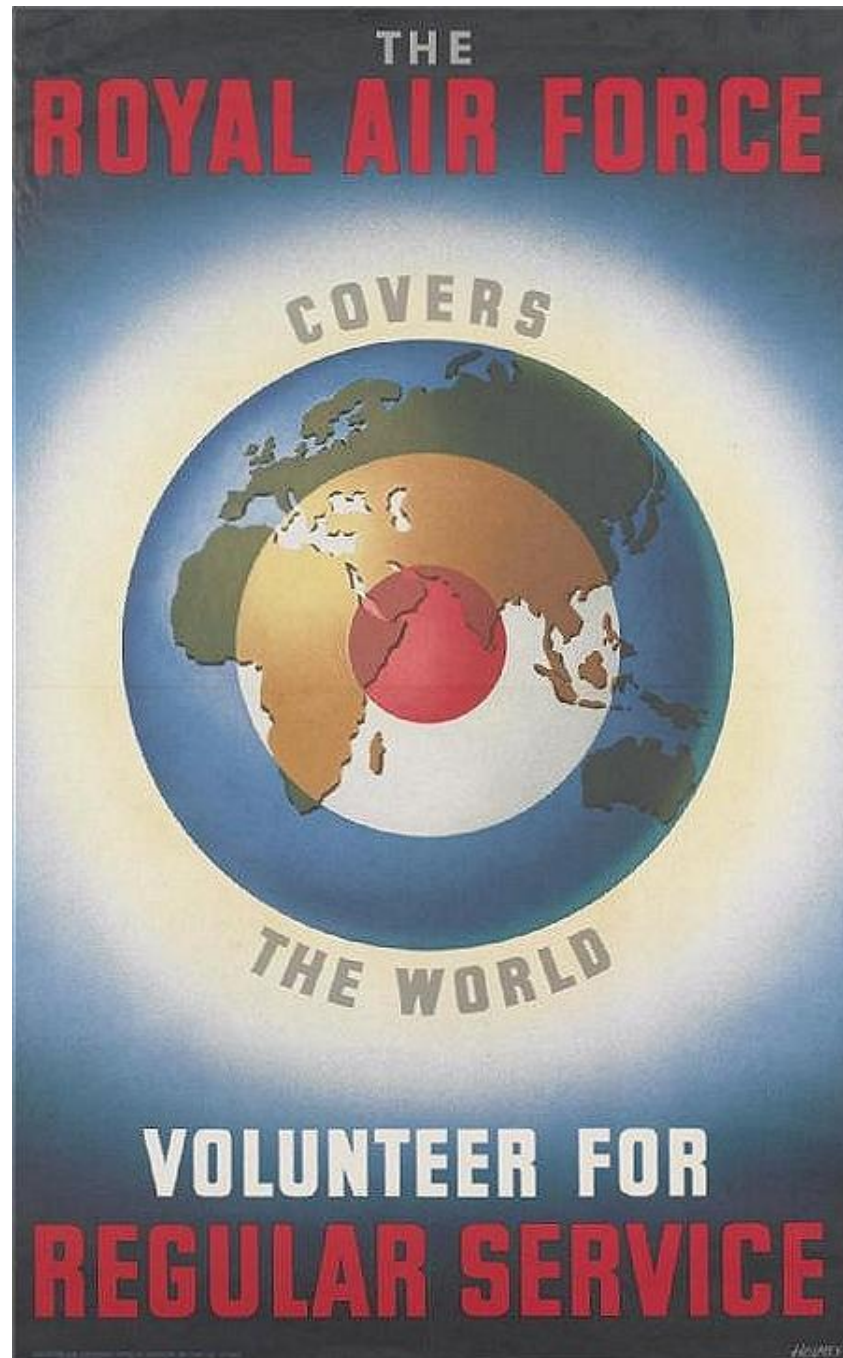
Figure 2.2 The RAF covers the World (c.1939-45)

Unlike *Sean Langrish* then, this image relies on specificity. In other words, it is important that these particular parts of the world are identified in order for sense to be made of the RAF's role in the Second World War. But importantly, we might argue that in being specific about where the RAF is active, this image *designates* place:

> To designate a place [though] is not simply to define a location or setting. It is to open up a field of possible taxonomies and trigger a series of narratives, subjects and appropriate foreign-policy responses' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 194).

That the response to this image might have been to join the military is an interesting, although ultimately unanswerable, proposition. However, it is more reasonable to question whether the designation of space in *The RAF Covers the World* might not trigger (because it represents those areas which are militarily significant) a set of narratives around threat, danger and necessity for military violence. Summarily, in being specific about the spaces in which the RAF is active, we might argue images like these provide a lens through which to interpret the world, and the RAF's role in that world. It is a lens, though, which opens up a set of suppositions about what the world is, what is in it, and arguably connotes an imagination of suitable (military) response. To explore this further – and in particular, the 'opening up' of strategies of response – we turn to some further examples.

In *Britain's Safety Curtain* (figure 2.3), we're provided another specification (designation) of place, but differently, are given a more straightforward geo-graph of military strategy. From 1950, *Britain's Safety Curtain* is an image which advertises roles in the Fighter Control Units of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and Volunteer Reserve. As we are told, 'Peace may well depend on there being a Radar safety curtain in the skies surrounding Britain. You can help put it up by joining a Fighter Control Unit'. Set to an image of RAF personnel operating radar and radio equipment and a map of the UK and Ireland, *Britain's Safety Curtain* provides a straightforward metaphor for understanding space and military strategy therein; radar technologies play a vital role in the defence of a space divided between 'inside' and 'beyond' the curtain. Moreover, rather than offering a medium for quick transit and 'power-projection' (Williams 2011), Britain's airspace is contiguous, something which merely 'surrounds' the islands.

Britain's "Safety Curtain"

... YOU can help put it up

Peace may well depend on there being a Radar safety curtain in the skies surrounding Britain. You can help put it up by joining a Fighter Control Unit of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Every Fighter Control Unit is manned by a large proportion of part-time volunteers. There is no more interesting way of spending your spare time. You work with the latest radar and radio aids, in company with people (many of them ex-airmen and airwomen) proud to be entrusted with so vital a task.

* ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE not only includes Fighter Control Units (men and women) but also Flying and Regiment Squadrons (men only)—all of whom train as complete units.

* R.A.F. VOLUNTEER RESERVE. Aircrew and ground staff (men and women) who carry out non-continuous training at the Reserve Centre nearest their homes. Flying training is done at nearby Reserve Flying Schools.

Join a
Fighter Control Unit

TO: AIR MINISTRY (DEPT. F.R. 61), ADASTRAL HOUSE, LONDON. W.C.2.
Please tell me (without obligation) how to join: (a) a Fighter Control Unit, (b) other spare time formations. (Cross out item not required).
NAME
ADDRESS
Give rank, trade, number if ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F.

Figure 2.3 Britain's Safety Curtain (1950)

What is important here for a post-war Britain is the defence of national space – of the 'inside' – rather than offensive capabilities 'beyond' this national space. Bound up with this imagination is, also, a notion of 'peace', one which is clearly prescribed in opposition to 'war'. And importantly, we get a clear sense here that peace and its continuation is an expressly military concern; something which the military simply 'does'. Aligning well with popular geopolitics' concern with space, we might argue that *Britain's Safety Curtain* presents us with a case of the imaginative arrangement of dramas, boundaries and dangers (Power and Crampton 2005). Of importance to a recently post-war Britain, is, consequently, the drawing up of boundaries between inside and out and of a national space which is defensible. Summarily, through the designation of place in these terms, the image attempts to make sense of Britain's uncertain role in the post-war world.

Remaining with the theme of nation, defence, and the designation of space(s), it is clear that during the forty or so years beginning at the time of *Britain's Safety Curtain* – the Cold War – RAF recruitment continues to try to make sense of Britain's role in the world. For example, in *The New Men* (COI 1965b), a film which advertises non-commissioned and officer ground-crew apprenticeships for younger recruits, we are given an insight into the requisite moral character of those tipped to defend the nation. Not unlike Sharp's (1993 1996 2000a 2000b) work on the *Reader's Digest,* much is made in this film of the RAF as a natural extension of 'British family values', and as a catalyst for youthful energy and independence. The 'new men' seen in the film who are 'facing a new and exciting life', are

ones versed in abstinence, dedication and resolve; the RAF is seen here as a corrective to the vagaries of an emergent 'rock-and-roll' popular youth culture. Importantly, though little is seen of the theatres of military operation in this film, it is made clear that the moral character of the RAF recruit (unquestionably British), is essential if one is to 'maintain Britain's position in the air'. Simply – as in many examples from this time – the RAF here attempts to make sense of the cultural make-up of its target audience, and provides an insight into the sorts of characters required in an uncertain, though technologically surmountable, world of quickly-changing conflicts and enemies.

In a different filmic example – *A Show of Strength* (COI 1983) – we are given a more explicit insight into the imaginative spaces of the RAF's Cold War. *A Show of Strength* uses footage from an airshow to demonstrate the contemporary role the RAF plays in military defence. In seeing flight displays interposed with short vignettes detailing the 'serious' operational role of particular aircraft, it is demonstrated that 'behind the show lies a steely, lethal potential'. Within these vignettes, we are told of the Sea King helicopter's rescue role and a humanitarian mission over Africa flown by the Hercules. We're also shown the Radar-scrambling capabilities of the Nimrod, told of the nuclear payload capacity of the Jaguar and see a Phantom patrolling the 'Northernmost edges of NATO's boundaries'.

As much as *A Show of Strength* provides the viewer a succinct tour around the RAF's range of operational aircraft, it also details the broadening scope of the RAF in a changing world, and betrays the latent (and always geopolitical) anxieties we might associate with the Cold War. For example, *A Show of Strength* represents the first reference (in the archival materials consulted) to the humanitarian and rescue roles of the RAF. The film also makes frequent reference to NATO boundaries and defence. As the narrator suggests:

> Airpower is the arrowhead, the deadly sharp point of NATO's attack capability, and in these paradoxical times, it's that capacity for instant attack that gives us our shield of defence.

Very different from the spatial and political imagination of *Britain's Safety Curtain*, though, we are presented here with a defensible space broader than that of the nation, one that accounts for new political alliances, new notions of inside and out, and of enemy and friend. For example, in one of the vignettes, we see a Phantom aircraft intercept a 'Russian Bomber' in NATO airspace. With a view from the Phantom cockpit, we're told: 'Stare

right back. Show 'em you've rumbled 'em, and they're all the more less likely to climb the fence as well'. A similar story line is present in the 1975 film *RAF Aerospace Systems Operator* (COI 1975). In this film we are given a tour around RAF Fylingdales radar base, and an introduction to the job of radar operator. The film reaches a higher pitch when an 'unidentified object' is seen on radar. Subsequently, two Phantoms are scrambled which eventually intercept a 'Russian "Bear" Tupolev Bomber caught, the narrator suggests, 'shall we say, slightly off course'.

Overall, some of the moral and political imaginations that we might anecdotally associate with Britain in the Cold War are clearly present in the military recruiting materials of the time. In *The New Men*, we're given an insight into the character and fortitude required by those who choose to serve their nation; albeit a nation finding its way in a changing world. In *A Show of Strength* in particular though, the divisive use of the airshow here is telling. Standing as a metaphor for the necessity to posture, project power and connote lethal ability, the film stands as a window into Britain's role as part of the proxy struggle between East and West (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992). Moreover, in being specific about what the RAF does and where it does it we are given a sense of the broadening role the RAF plays in the world. But with this, we are provided with a different imagination of space, danger and nation. Space, just as it was in *Britain's Safety Curtain*, is defensible, but differently so in that it is now associated with NATO's boundaries. Danger and difference are conceptualised along similar lines, with the RAF providing watch over the boundary – 'the fence' – between East and West, and responsible for shielding the West from the rest. Bound up with these ideas is an imagination of nation attributed to moral character – as in *The New Men* – and otherwise, a nation conceptualised in reference to the alliances and 'paradoxes' of the Cold War era.

In summary, these examples, being very different to *Sean Langrish* and many other contemporary images, are more specific in their designation of space. Simply, for these images to seem sensible, we might argue that they are required to resonate with the common-sense locations and natures of threat. Common to all examples so far, though, is the interpretation of the world through a specifically military lens, and furthermore, the prescription of world dramas as something in which the military, inevitably, must play a mediatory or intervening role. Returning to the Second World War, the final two examples in this section explore this theme in more detail, and outline cases whereby recruitment, rather than merely designating space, describes the role the military plays in altering how space should be perceived.

Figure 2.4 Our watch on the Rhine (1941)

In *Our Watch on the Rhine* (figure 2.4), we're given a pilot's-eye view from the cockpit of a Blenheim Bomber as it flies over Germany. As a moon-lit Rhine snakes to the horizon, we're told:

> For generations the Germans have looked to the Rhine to protect them from war. But the Rhine is a barrier no longer! Across it – night after night – the planes of the RAF are flying, seeking and destroying objective after objective.

A general advert for flying duties (most likely for bomber crews), this image extolls a common-sense version of the dangers and threats that faced Britain at the time. The enemy is clearly identified; the space in which it occupies is designated and subsequently targeted. We're also provided a sense of difference; the German 'enemy' is imagined simply and relatively to 'the young men of Britain', and it is *our* watch over the Rhine, rather than 'theirs'.

Most important in this image, though, is the perceived overcoming of spatial boundaries. The RAF is seen here – through airpower and sheer fortitude – to transcend the natural barriers which have historically protected its enemy from attack. Furthermore, we see a military not hindered by the place-bound nature of war, but one able to take war to where war is needed; one able to 'carry the war into the enemy's country'.

The transcendence of terrestrial space – and the particular spatial imaginary it promotes – is also present in other examples, notably *Raising Air Fighters* (COI 1938-9). A film which outlines the necessity for non-commissioned and officer pilots, *Raising Air Fighters* opens with shots of bi-planes set to a background of the cliffs of Dover. Watching intently from the lea of the cliffs are two young boys who stand in awe. As the narrator suggests; 'whilst previously we looked to the sea for undying glory…today the young heroes look upwards to the skies to the heroes that will write Britain's future'. Continuing on this theme, the narrator suggests (quoting Shakespeare's Richard II) 'The Royal throne of Kings…this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England must no longer be thought an island'.

Just as in *Our watch over the Rhine*, the necessity to raise air fighters for Britain's war with Germany is a necessity bound to the spatial imperative of new – or at least cutting-edge – forms of warfare: whilst the Rhine may be traversed by air, so might the British channel in this case. The significance of this for a study of the military-geopolitical imagination is twofold. Firstly, it is a definition of danger and threat as mobile, omnipotent

and unregarding; one not tied to the borders and boundaries of states or hitherto insurmountable physical geographies. Although it might not be so surprising that an airborne force would prescribe such an imagination, it is significant that this is a specifically military reading of space, one that is explicitly twinned to the 'necessity for warriors to fight in distant lands' (Dalby 2008b). Secondly, it is significant that representations like these rely upon historical and mythical tropes through which to interpret immediate events. Along with invocations of Shakespeare's England, *Raising Air Fighters* also compares the RAF's success over Germany to Nelson's victory at Trafalgar; as the narrator suggest, the RAF is the 'Navy of the sky'. A suitably convenient geopolitical fiction (Ó Tuathail 1996), this collapsing of myth, history and reality constitutes a conceptual remedy – bound up with ideas of collective memory and nationhood – for the trails faced in a dangerous world.

In summary, we've seen in this opening discussion that RAF recruitment relies on certain imaginations of space. From more modern examples, we've seen how space might arguably be inconsequential relative to the more important play of military things and people across dangerous landscapes. Furthermore, we've seen how recruitment might often be more specific in designating space when matters of nation and defence are at stake. Following from this, it has been demonstrated how imaginations of space themselves must necessarily change in the face of new geopolitical contexts, and relative to new transcendent airborne threats and opportunities. Put more simply, we've seen how RAF recruitment pertains to key geopolitical assumptions around danger, nation, threat and response, enemies and allies, and have begun to account for how these things change over time. In the next discussion, we turn to focus on identity, and how these assumptions might also prevail in the prescription (and interpellation) of useful military identities and individuals.

Identity

Although providing us a good idea of what the military is, what it does and where it does it, it is essential that military recruitment become meaningful to the *individual* to be effective. In other words, its message must be potent enough to tie the individual into particular versions of the world, and must matter to the individual if it is to inform choices and actions. Predominantly, like in *The New Men*, identity in RAF recruitment is aligned to broader, meta-level ideas (and epithets) of nation and national moralities. RAF recruitment is clear in its prescription of certain individual and personal attributes in this regard, but

because nation is a relative and inherently spatial idea (based on whose in and out, on 'within' and 'beyond'), understanding these prescriptions is essential to the broader project (i.e. the imagined what and where's of the RAF). The following analysis will provide a discussion of identity as it is represented in RAF recruitment, how it is based on relativism, how it prescribes the spaces and limits of nation, and how it might be said that it interpellates useful military identities.

RAF recruitment – across the archive – privileges courage, valour, selfless-service and duty to nation. For example, in *Raising Air Fighters*, both the young boys who watch the air spectacular over the cliffs of Dover and the pilots addressing the new airborne threat are 'heroes sustaining Britain's effort in the sky'. In *Sean Langrish* – just as in the whole BPotS Series – RAF personnel are seen to work logically, seamlessly, towards a greater goal in strange, dangerous lands. Whilst, straightforwardly, it might not be such of a surprise that RAF recruitment readily represents heroic identities, it is significant that these identities are often conceptualised in opposition – i.e. relative to what they are not. Importantly though, that identity is represented in this way often ties into broader imaginings of danger, citizenship, nation and masculinity. In reference to examples, we discuss these themes in turn.

In the first instance, heroic military identities are often used in RAF recruiting to connote a broader sense of the exotic, the dangerous and threatening. For example, in (BPotS) *Mark Bowden* (figure 2.5), we're provided the story of an RAF Regiment officer, who, in order to placate a local Iraqi village, organises a football match with villagers. In this image, we're provided straightforward image of 'hearts and minds', and a clear representation of *Mark Bowden* as a selfless, astute and caring warrior. However, when we look at the broader frame of this image, we see that these selfless and caring actions are being made only *in spite* of the inherently dangerous and threatening environment. Despite the fact that the village is 'known for ambushes', in need of 'stabilization', and despite the match being 'nerve-wracking' as a result, *Bowden* shows resolve and courage in this obviously dangerous place. Despite making 'new friends', the match is necessarily militarised, with tanks and helicopters on station, and, in the final frame, the villagers ambivalence continues despite *Bowden's* chivalrous efforts.
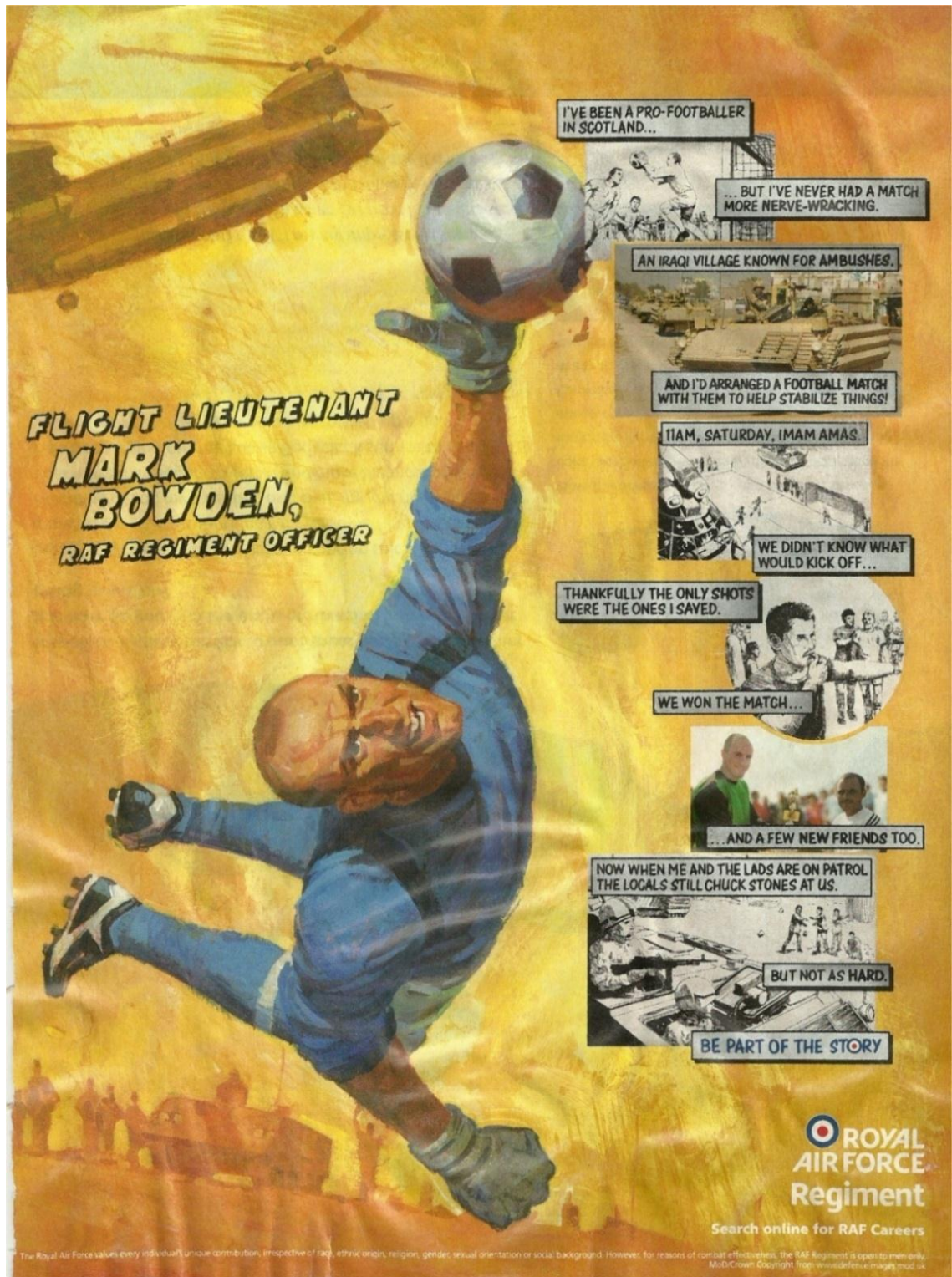
Figure 2.5 Be Part of the Story (Mark Bowden) (2009)

Arguably tying into the broader theme of counterinsurgency (of which we'll hear more about in chapter five), *Mark Bowden's* is an identity conceptualised in opposition. Namely, his 'lads' and he represent a common-sense version of Britishness which is put to the test in an unfamiliar, threatening environment. The simple codes of sportsmanship (fair-play, teammates and opponents, victory and defeat) are alien here as place and people

operate via a different, more duplicitous logic of ambush and petty violence. Much as this is a representation which links danger and threat to a particular place (Iraq), it is one of identity imagined not 'simply by the essence of what lies within, but…what lies beyond' (Sharp 2000a: 27). In this example, because the RAF is seen here to act benevolently *in spite* of its role as an aggressor, certain notions of RAF and Britishness are prescribed and reinforced. Also, we get a sense here, just as with *Sean Langrish* and the broader BPotS series that the tenets of an RAF identity would prevail irrespective of the specificities of place.

In a different example – the film *The Right Job For You* (COI 1984) – we continue to see the oppositional construction of requisite military identity. *The Right Job For You* is, thematically, representative of many filmic examples of this period. Namely, in order to provide the viewer a way to understand the range of roles available in the RAF, we follow a group of individuals through the recruiting process from their initial interest, their identifying a trade or specialisation, various tests and exams, and their eventual enrolment into the service. In *The Right Job For You*, we follow four potential recruits in their process of becoming ground crew apprentices. Along with stringent academic, problem-solving and medical tests, we see each recruit undergoing questioning about their character. In one case, a girl who is interested in an engineering apprenticeship is asked what she does as part of her social life, and moreover, whether or not she has a boyfriend. Fading out at this point to the narrator, we are told: 'The RAF takes a strict line on homosexuality: homosexuality, including lesbianism, is considered a serious offence'. In a different case, we see a man of Asian descent being questioned similarly. We hear the NCO recruiter ask; 'so, I see you were born in Kenya. And I see you're Sheikh. Why haven't you got long hair and a turban?' Following this, we're told that the RAF has strict rules on British citizenship, and it is clear in this case that this man's allegiances to the crown are a matter for concern.

In examples like these – ones that use the recruiting process as a figurative device – it is made explicit that 'not only will the RAF look for what is best for you, it looks for what is best for the RAF' (COI 1984). Simply, during the process of recruitment, the RAF is keen to identify individual talents and predilections, which, overall, will make for a better match between individual and RAF. However, through this process, we're also given a stark idea of what RAF identities *are not*, or *cannot be*. For example, particular, medicalised bodies will clearly not be suited to the rigours of service (something we'll hear much more about in chapter six); some social and sexual preferences preclude service; and importantly, any vagueness concerning nationality, citizenship, creed or colour – at least in

The Right Job For You – is treated quite seriously. Summarily, much like *Mark Bowden*, we're provided here a simple demonstration of what military identities *are*, but mainly through learning about what they *are not*. Fundamentally, however, because military identity here is tied to ideas of nation, citizenship and service to the crown, we're provided a sense of the moral, social predilections of a broader national identity. Because social and sexual preference, religion and national allegiance are personal matters, we are provided here an instance where discourses of nation are tied to the self. Whether you are fit (physically, socially, morally or politically) for military service is, thus, not just a matter of military service *per se*, but a matter of your alignment or otherwise to a particular idea of nation.

Remaining with examples from the Cold War, it is also clear that representation of identity provide us clues as to spatiality, and to the limits between 'inside' and 'beyond' national boundaries. As with *Mark Bowden*, *The Graduate in the RAF* (COI 1973b) provides us an insight into identity as a territorial symbol; a symbol participating in the construction of difference between one region and other regions (Dittmer 2007a). In *The Graduate in the RAF,* we are provided further discourse on identity, but this time, the identity of skilled, talented British university graduate. As the film narrator suggests; 'the RAF needs men of a certain calibre to recruit' – the graduate in this film is seen as smart, capable, 'with more potential than most'. Combining panning shots of the university campus with that of the RAF base and RAF Cranwell (the RAF's officer training college), the film neatly describes the benefits that come with RAF service; the RAF is seen here as a career in which the graduate may make full use of his (sic) superior abilities; the RAF 'like any other commercial organisation requires the trained mind of the graduate'. Along with such appeals though, the film makes much of the role RAF plays in modern conflict. Opening with a vignette of RAF radar personnel dealing with an 'incursion' into UK airspace (and the subsequent scrambling of Lightning fighter aircraft), the graduate and his skills are envisioned, explicitly, as part of a 'service that must be vigilant, and above all else, airborne'. More broadly, service is seen as pivotal if 'peace is to be maintained'. As the narrator continues: 'the RAF is our airborne peacekeeper bonding the Western alliance'.

Much like *A Show of Strength* and *RAF Aerospace Systems Operator* then, *The Graduate in the RAF* connotes a version of the world which imagines a union between the 'West' and NATO, along with a distinct divide between inside (the West) and out (the East). Moreover, the RAF is seen here as pivotal to the continuance of this union; its role scripted as to be the benevolent keeper of the peace. What is important here is that the

identity of the graduate is enrolled into this vision of the world. Just as the film appeals to the academic sensibilities of the graduate recruit, it is an appeal to envisage this identity relative to certain boundaries, conflicts and spatial imperatives. Moreover, much like Sharp's (2000b) contention that Cold War American identity was tied to a particular style of consumerism, a notion of 'success', of 'making the most of your degree' in *The Graduate in the RAF* is thus tied inexorably to a simple, inherently spatial, vision of the Cold War world. In summary, speaking to the origins of air force elitism, Paris (1993: 138-9) provides an apt commentary on this, the commensurability of air force identity, war and space:

> The claim for, and public belief in air force elitism…had its roots in ideas which surfaced in British popular culture well before the first aeroplane ever flew: ideas about the importance of the conquest of the air as a means to human progress; in the belief that the airman was a special kind of hero, and in the weapon which, once developed, would become the decisive factor in warfare…And above all, it offered the hope that there would be no more Western Fronts.

In all, that representations of RAF identity participate in prescribing what military identities *are not*, and therefore, what they *should be*, matters because these representations are enrolled into the scripting of a world divided into zones of threat and of greater or lesser danger. However, what remains to be discussed is how, exactly, RAF recruitment affords a connection between identity and the geopolitical. For this, we turn in the final discussion to matters of identity interpellation.

In *You must not let this opportunity pass* (figure 2.6), we're met with an appeal to all 'fit young men who can be spared from industry'. As the text describes, acquiring these men is paramount, for the 'days when to defend successfully were the most we could hope are over'; war now must be taken to the enemy via airborne assault. Fitting neatly into the tradition of Second World War recruiting, this image describes the necessity for particular forms of (offensive aerial) warfare and the penetrability of national or physical boundaries. Tying the individual into this narrative is achieved by framing the war as a personal concern; 'this war's outcome will affect you and yours', the text opines. This image also connotes a particular version of military identity. The silhouetted figure of the airman – a virtual index for the inner qualities of individual (Roderick 2009) – stands heroic amidst his aircraft ready, we must presume, to 'seize air mastery' over Germany.

Figure 2.6 You must not let this opportunity pass! (1941)

Although this image is rather less explicit about threat, danger and identity than others of the time, it nevertheless points to a broader theme across the archive. Namely, in being a direct and impassioned appeal to the self – 'you *must* not, *you dare not'* let this opportunity pass – it underlines the ability for recruiting to interpellate identities, or rather, to deign what identities must be relative to dominant geopolitical narratives. For instance, in *You must not let this opportunity pass*, the potential recruit is willed to align their beliefs, priorities and obligations to the necessity for warfare. In *Britain's Safety Curtain* a good way of spending one's free time would be to help maintain the shield defending Britain in an uncertain post-war world. And in *Mark Bowden*, if you consider yourself 'one of the lads', if you can sympathise with the codes of fair-play and comradeship, you might indeed be useful in certain dangerous and threatening situations.

Put simply, it is not enough for RAF recruitment only to represent particular identities. To be persuasive, recruitment must provide an interpretation of the *identity of the potential recruit*, to provide a way for the potential recruit to empathise with the characters or values being represented, and demonstrate that these values will be useful in times of war, or as part of RAF life and culture. Importantly though, drawing on Dittmer and Larsen (2007), in being willed to identify with particular representations, the potential recruit is thus restricted in certain ways. For instance, there is little room in *You shall not let this opportunity pass* – whether you desire to join the RAF or not – to adopt a critical or sceptical stance on Britain's air war, or to deny the fact the war affects *you*. Similarly, in *Mark Bowden*, the imperative associated with this version of Britishness is not one that allows us to question Britain's presence in Iraq, or to question the strain of 'Britishness' championed here.

Such identities are limited, as Dittmer and Larsen (2007), suggest, by the 'social space' afforded by particular dominant geopolitical narratives. Simply, in being willed to associate with certain versions of common-sense identities, the potential recruit is also willed to associate with particular versions of the world, with ideas of the moralities of warfare or the use of violence. These narratives are limited, in turn, because they are geopolitical; they espouse simple and dramatic readings of world politics and military affairs. Military recruiting, as we've seen, is all about the individual, and about providing the individual opportunity to position themselves relative to the military. But, in this respect, we might argue that these opportunities are bound up with the vagaries of dominant geopolitical discourse. *Being Part of the Story*, as the recent RAF campaign has it, is not just about being part of a team, an exceptional and professional fighting force, or about

being an outstanding individual. It is, by implication, about being part of a broader geopolitical fiction.

In summary, read through the popular geopolitical literature in particular, RAF recruiting represents identity in ways which variously connect to, bolster and operationalize dominant geopolitical narratives. In being relative and dichotomous in their construction, RAF identities tie into and help, for instance, spatialise boundaries between East and West, and assist in the construction of dangerous and threatening spaces. Fundamental to the popular geopolitical literature is, also, the connection between individual (audience) and representation. In this regard, we've seen in many cases that RAF recruitment is, above all, an appeal to the individual, but an appeal with is licensed only by the particularities of dominant geopolitical narratives. In the next and final discussion in this chapter, we attempt to locate these arguments and others within the broader context set out at the beginning, and importantly, highlight the limits of a representational approach to RAF recruitment.

2.5 Discussion: RAF Recruitment as representation

We began the analysis of RAF recruiting images with four propositions in mind. Firstly, that recruitment must image where the RAF is active, and secondly, that these images will change over time with geopolitical context. Thirdly, that recruitment must be meaningful and appeal in some way to the recruit, and fourthly, that recruitment must be persuasive in such a way as to inform individual choices and actions. Without wanting to repeat unnecessarily the points of discussion provided in the analysis, this final section will attend to these propositions in relation to the three themes set out at the beginning of the chapter. We discuss these in turn.

Firstly, we began the chapter by suggesting that the military image is important because it tells us something about the production, representation and consumption of specific military-geographical imaginations. Whilst the production and consumption of military imaginations will be attended to in later chapters, we've seen, if nothing else, that RAF recruitment represents specific imaginations of military life and culture, combat, identity, space, danger and threat. In kind, it has been shown that the primary necessity of recruitment – demonstrating what the military is, what it does and where it does it – is inherently geopolitical. In *Sean Langrish* and *Mark Bowden,* space, viewed through a military lens is insignificant, coded as threatening, dangerous, and merely the surface across which the military move. In examples from the Second World War, spatial imaginations are deigned according to the threats and opportunities afforded by aerial

combat. And during the Cold War, new alliances and new enemies result in new (spatial) imaginations of Other/Same, Beyond/Within. Imaginations of military identities, in turn, not only bolster such prescriptions, but arguably work to tie the individual (the potential recruit) inexorably into these discourses.

It is the changeability of geopolitical discourse with geopolitical context and the problematic of identity that brings us to our second theme; that of the military image providing an insight into how imaginations about the world become *active* at the interface between civilian and military cultures. Discussed in the review in terms of *the constitutional nature of representation*, a priority will be made throughout the thesis of trying to understand how representations of the world come to be lived, active, and much more than merely 'additional' or epiphenomenal to lived experience. Through the analysis in this chapter, some conclusions can be made about this. For instance, in tracking RAF recruitment as it changes over time (i.e. in relation to the differing geopolitical imaginations of the Second World and Cold Wars), it might be argued that RAF recruitment, rather than merely accounting for geopolitical realities, is part-and-parcel of these realities as they are lived. Although it is outside the remit of this chapter to assess the position of recruiting relative to broader popular geopolitical cultures, we must remember that recruiting *does work*; the very same images we've seen in this chapter will have, in part, persuaded people to join the military, and so, are images that *do work* as part of popular geopolitical cultures. That the versions of the world espoused in recruitment might, then, become *lived* in the real sense (through military service), is also to suggest that these versions of danger, threat and spatiality might also go someway to inform the lived experiences of civilians also.

Suggesting that RAF recruiting images might work in this way, though, is also compounded by what has been surmised about identity. Namely, in order to become meaningful to the potential recruit, recruitment, as we've seen, must provide instances where the audience might empathise with particular characters. In doing so, it also provides instances where the potential recruit might empathise with, or relate to, particular world dramas, dangers and boundaries. But providing the recruit a way to position themselves relative to the military in these respects – if we're to take Dittmer and Larsen's (2007) thoughts on interpellation seriously – is about more than just exposing audiences to particular ideas. Rather, by interpreting *a priori* what particular identities *should be*; by prescribing what moral actions are; what good citizenship is, recruitment attempts to suggest that the attributes of the warfighter are attributes broadly held; attributes that are always-already part of the potential recruit's identity. That we might say military images of

these type are *in and of the world*, and constitutive of the realities they purport to represent, is, thus, supported by the idea that recruiting images profess to be always-already *in and of the life* of the recruit.

Lastly, concerning the status and position of the military image and the discipline of geography, we've seen good evidence in this chapter for the representational 'means by which the mechanisms and strategies of military control [are] explained, normalized and naturalized' (Woodward 2005: 8). More broadly, by outlining how geographical knowledge might readily be disseminated by means of images we've also underlined the imperative to think critically about how this happens. In this chapter, the epistemological tenets of postmodern geography and critical geopolitics have been essential in this regard. However, in broaching subjects such as the constitutive nature of representation, or of the interpellation of identities, we reach an impasse, and approach the limits of a representational approach. For example, although good at detailing how imaginations are represented, a representational approach leaves gaps in our understanding of how certain images are produced and consumed. Summations around the identities of potential recruits, furthermore, lack clarity if we do not engage with these identities head-on. These sites – the sites of production, consumption, identities – are, as we shall see in later chapters, ones often implicated within geopolitical discourse. Moreover, the imaginations associated with RAF recruitment exist beyond representation; simply, the initiatives deployed by the RAF for recruitment are not confined only to images and text.

This chapter has aimed to provide a foundation for understanding the nature, extent and style of RAF recruitment when viewed through a critical geopolitical lens. In the following chapters, it will be demonstrated how the geopolitics of recruitment exist, and come to affect choices and actions, beyond images and representation. In the next chapter – *Mediums* – we turn to look at how RAF recruitment is *produced*, and how this process might also be implicated in sustaining particular military-political imaginations.

Chapter 3. Mediums

This chapter alters the focus of analysis from the image as 'symbolic, as representative, and as a representation' (Schein 1997:660), to the sites of image production. Written in the spirit of McLuhan's (1964; c.f. Craine 2007) *The Medium is the Message*, it moves to suggest that the geopolitics of recruitment are not only a consequence of production, but are intimately bound up with, and licenced by, the practice of production itself. RAF recruitment, although geopolitical in the sense that it represents particular versions of the world, becomes representational and comes to work through the administrative organisation of its production. Nested within a complex web of interests including the RAF, the COI, prominent global advertising and marketing agencies and creative consultancies, the production of RAF recruitment is, in kind, nested within specific sets of institutional, economic and ideological relations. These relations are manifest spatially, and as we will begin to explore in this chapter, along with the imagined geographies and politics of representation, RAF recruitment is a spatial practice, is done in place, and is experiential.

The aims of this chapter are to highlight RAF recruitment as an initiative which exists beyond images and representation, and to highlight that these initiatives are worthy of critical appraisal. The chapter is in four parts, and, beginning with a discussion of some empirical work carried out in conjunction with producers of RAF recruitment, the chapter tracks the requisite conditions under which the 'finished product' of recruitment (the poster, the TV ad) is imagined and realised. Set within the literature around the geographies, histories and cultures of advertising, the opening section invokes, in particular, Jackson and Taylor's (1996) notion of a cultural politics of advertising. Secondly, we return to some of the key themes identified in chapter two (among them, history and technology), and discuss how they have been affected by the practices, processes and logistics of production. Thirdly, we seek a broader context into which the production might fit. By briefly mapping out the history of connections between advertising, public advocacy and propaganda, the connections between war, conflict, and publicity and advertising are explored, and a working definition given to 'military recruitment'. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of advertising in place, and foregrounds later chapters which deal with RAF recruitment as it exists as a set of visual, material and embodied practices.

3.1 Producing RAF recruitment

> While media images are obviously important, they can never form the basis of a media politics in themselves. They must, alternatively, always be understood not simply as an object but a *process* as well – as *power* in *circulation* (Rosati 2007a: 1000).

Whilst we were given the sense in the last chapter that through recruiting, the RAF, in a way, *advertises* its military careers, it will be useful to begin this chapter with an explanation of why we might consider an advertising studies approach pertinent or useful in this case. Firstly, whereas popular geopolitics, in its earlier iterations, prioritised a critical reading of the production of geopolitical texts (Sharp 1993 1996 2000a 2000b; although see Coulter 2012), popular geopolitics currently trends towards the issue of consumption and audience interpretation (Dittmer and Dodds 2008; Dittmer and Gray 2010). This work represents a critical and vital challenge to how popular geopolitics is currently studied. However, the lack of emphasis on *production* here, as it will be demonstrated, leaves open the opportunity to engage directly with geopolitical images as they are conceptualised, literally 'put together' as a product, and deployed in the public sphere. RAF recruitment, as briefly outlined, involves a range of public, private and corporate institutions all of whom are implicated in matters of state advocacy and advertising. Furthermore, contemporary recruiting is an inherently creative and artistic medium – a 'branding exercise' as one producer of RAF recruitment puts it – and something which is ensconced within the creative and financial structures of the global advertising industry. Consequently, RAF recruitment represents an ideal opportunity to address this issue of production vis-à-vis popular geopolitics.

Standing alone, because popular geopolitics has not prioritised a sustained reading of production though, it provides no coherent framework to think through issues of production, and even less so the theme of advertising. To remedy this, the chapter engages with another seemingly neglected aspect of geographical scholarship; *advertising geographies*. Although seeing a resurgence of interest more recently (Mould and Joel 2009; Pike 2009a 2009b; Stiprian and Kearns 2009) adverting geographies are, notably, rooted in studies of popular media (Burgess and Gold 1985). Broader engagements with environmental meanings (Burgess 1982 1990), issues of place, locality and ideology (Clarke and Bradford 1989; Fleming and Roth 1991) and global economic and cultural change (Leslie 1995; McFall 2002) have all taken advertising (and production) as their point of departure. And part of what we've called the 'cultural turn' in geography in the

early 1990s also heralded studies of advertising which began to question such things as race, place and masculinity (Jackson 1994; and Law 1997; Taylor 1997), and importantly, the cultural politics of production (Jackson and Taylor 1996).

Looked at in more detail, a focus on advertising and production bears direct relevance to the aspirations of this thesis. For instance, the lack of advertising studies in geography, as Jackson and Taylor (1996: 356) suggest, is:

> Remarkable as advertising is an inherently spatial practice, playing a crucial role in an increasingly mediated world as part of the national and international expansion of markets; creating uneven patterns of demand across space; and striving for universality but constantly subject to local variations in meaning and interpretation. Advertising [furthermore] is frequently targeted spatially, at national, regional and local scales, as well as towards particular social segments and lifestyle niches.

Asking after mediated worlds, meaning, after how meaning is targeted to particular individuals, and above all, how these things are expressed spatially, must, as Jackson and Taylor (1996) continue, be a part of a *cultural politics of advertising*. This is a politics which asks: what are the 'common stocks of cultural knowledge into which advertisers seek to tap? [and] How stable are these over time and how do they differ from place to place?' (Jackson and Taylor 1996: 367). In summary, calling for a geography which is more sensitive to 'how ads are actually produced' (Jackson and Taylor 1996: 367) invokes a cultural studies literature which has found it useful to:

> Go behind the scenes, so to speak, to find out how and why ads get made in the way that they do, how much they cost, what considerations influence the 'creative people', and what advertisers think about their work and about their public (Dyer 1999: 12).

In this chapter, these sorts of questions are asked of RAF recruitment in order to develop the broader arguments made so far beyond that of a merely representational analysis. These questions are also asked in order to inquire how, exactly, the geopolitics of RAF recruitment are conceptualised, how recruitment 'gets made' into the final product, how common stocks of knowledge or imaginations are relayed, and how these change over time. Utilising ideas from popular geopolitics and advertising geographies, cultural studies of advertising (Williamson 1995; Dyer 1999) and new cultural geographies of media (Craine 2007; Rosati 2007a 2007b), the chapter aims toward a critical geopolitics of advertising, and is concerned with cultural politics, or the politics of the production of common-sense ideas about the world.

Drawing on two unstructured interviews with a former RAF Inspector of Recruiting, data gathered whilst in communication with advertising agencies holding current RAF or COI contracts, data pertaining to the RAF's commercial history, and examples from contemporary RAF recruiting campaigns, this initial section is divided into two parts.[7] Firstly, we begin with a discussion of how recruitment is organised and produced, and how the relationships between state and corporate producers influences the imaginations that might be associated with recruitment. Secondly, we further explore some recurring themes in recruitment – some which were identified the preceding chapter, and some that were not – and place them in the contexts of their production.

Organisation and production

RAF OFFICER RECRUITMENT ACCOUNT HANDLING STRUCTURE

ROYAL AIR FORCE
(Directorate of Recruiting)

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

J. WALTER THOMPSON COMPANY
James Goble (Director-in-Charge)

ACCOUNT HANDLING
Joanna Baldwin Account Director
Anthony Pettifer Representative

CREATIVE
Nick Shackleton – Creative Director
Geoff Weedon
Tony Tonkin

CONTROL
Carmen Boulton-Fowell

ACCOUNT PLANNING
Maggie Stanway
Donald Kerr

MEDIA
Basil Spice – Deputy Media Director
Mike Hall – Media Manager
Fiona Bower – Media Buyer

Figure 3.1 RAF Officer Recruitment Account Handling Structure (1981)

The production of RAF recruitment relies upon a relationship between the RAF, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the COI and associated advertising agencies. From the example of Officer Recruitment in 1981 (figure 3.1) we can see that the handling structure

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[7] The RAF's Inspector of Recruiting oversees recruiting as it is performed by the Directorate of Recruiting. Whereas the Directorate works directly in concert with the COI, MoD and Advertising Agencies, the Inspector's role is to audit these working relationships in relation to the success or otherwise of recruiting, and is responsible for aligning recruiting efforts to the 'bigger picture' concerns of personnel requirements.

of RAF campaigns involves a relationship between the RAF, COI and the advertising agency. We might begin here by discussing this structure, and the job each of these institutions do within the broader scheme of recruiting.

Firstly, it is the RAF, or the Directorate of Recruiting (DoR), which deigns what recruiting should be done and for what branches, trades and specialisms it should be done for. There is a direct relationship between the amount of recruiting done and the amount of personnel required in any one year, and the yearly audit and review of RAF personnel requirement - otherwise known as the 'Manning Plan' - is the base starting point for any recruiting campaign. Importantly, and in way of seeking connections between the practical geopolitics of the state and the popular geopolitics of RAF recruitment, the Manning Plan is variously influenced by operational commitments, party-political inclination and defence reviews. On the latter point, as my interviewee attested:

> Defence reviews, whenever they happen affect what the air force does, and the size of the air force. Finance is always a major factor and one of the main eating up of finance in any organisation is people. Therefore defence reviews either tend to push the numbers up or pull the numbers down, depending on what the imperative is at the time. If you are moving into a period of defence growth, you will take more people in; if on the other hand you're cutting back you'll look at ways of cutting it down. You just look at the size of the Royal Air Force from when I was serving [Inspector of Recruiting 1979-81], and it's just unbelievably small. I think it's just at 43,000. So the defence reviews are really the blueprint on which recruiting starts. What you are going to do, how you are going to do it, and what are you going to do it with. The with is on the one hand aeroplanes, technology etc., but you need people in the main to operate those, and even if you've got to a stage where we've got more and more unmanned drones etc., you've still got to have people to look after them engineering-wise, technically, and to operate them. But at less risk (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).[8]

Political will and the amount of money available to the military wholesale thus has a direct impact on recruiting and so what is visible to the potential recruit. The Manning Plan, as the excerpt above also demonstrates, is also, furthermore, ordained by the type of war being

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[8] Quotes used in this chapter are from an interview carried out with Air Commodore Forster on the Campus of Newcastle University on the 9th Jun, 2010. A separate, more informal discussion took place with this respondent at an earlier date (15th March, 2010). As this earlier discussion was not recorded or transcribed, it will not feature in this chapter in the form of direct quotes.

fought. In these terms, modern styles of military engagement have immediate impacts on personnel and skill requirement.

Secondly, and beyond the RAF and DoR, the COI is responsible for the management and execution of RAF recruiting contracts, and stands primarily as a bridge between the RAF and advertising agencies. Rather than being associated with the *production* of ideas, the COI might be thought of as managing their flow and economy. Answerable directly to the Minister for the Cabinet Office (COI 2010a), the COI is notably charged with the employment of specific advertising agencies, and so does the job of connecting specific RAF requirements, via prospects for economic viability, to the expertise of specific agencies. For example, the rise in online (viral, social, interactive) recruitment over the past ten years has, consequently, seen the diffusion of RAF contracts across a spectrum of agency expertise, with the COI employing many more agencies than would have been necessary for an off-line, print-based campaign in the 1970s. Differences between direct and indirect, branch and non-branch specific campaigns, along with the wide spectrum of recruiting formats, requires a minimum of six differently qualified agencies in order for the operation of recruiting more generally. However, as similar to the DoR itself, the position of the COI relative to government has various implications for the operation and presence of recruiting in the public sphere. As Mark Lund, the Chief Executive of the COI has recently commented:

> The government communications landscape is going through a period of significant change. There is still a freeze on non-essential government advertising and marketing and COI is in the process of downsizing our workforce by 40%.

> COI has always adapted to meet the requirements of government and the changing media landscape. We are involved in on-going discussions between the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the wider Government Communications Network to agree a model which helps deliver maximum efficiencies and effectiveness for government communications (COI 2010b).

Beyond representing the common-sense geopolitics of the RAF, RAF recruiting is also then a record of the institutional, political and economic pressures faced by those who are involved in its development. Contemporary and on-going RAF campaigns, whilst remaining operational, are facing freezes, with the difficulties in accessing the COI and agencies as part of the methodology related to respective freezes in campaign development.

There are several conclusions we might make, then, about the role the COI plays in the deployment of specific campaigns.

Firstly, whilst not limited by factors related specifically to the military (as is the DoR), the role played by the COI lets us envisage the connections between recruitment as a 'finished product' and current changes in government communication. Necessarily, for the purposes of this study, the absence of up-to-date RAF recruiting in popular mediums (discussed in the very opening of the thesis) is as important as its presence. The geopolitics of RAF recruitment, because of the conditions and conditionality inherent to its production, is thus limited by and answerable to the technical and bureaucratic means by which it can be realised. Much like McLuhan's (1964) thesis on the importance of medium in the transference of messages, we might go on to say that in this case that what we *can* know about the military is thus directly related to *how, where* and *when* we are able to know it. Thus, what can be known about what the military is, what it does and where it does it is not only a condition of requirement or a product of geopolitical context, but a symptom also of production itself, and of (financial, attitudinal) viability.

Lastly, we turn to a discussion of the role of advertising agencies in the production of recruitment. As briefly outlined, the role of the COI entails the management of contracts and relations between the DoR and the advertising agencies. Part of this task is the marriage of specific agencies with ideas and aspirations set out by the RAF and DoR, and further, to provide a platform on which rival agencies are able to bid and compete for contracts. As the archives of the agency formerly in charge of the RAF's online material – Lean Mean Fighting Machine (LMFM) – detail, the ideas on which recruitment campaigns are built come first in the form of a brief. For example, the idea which would eventually become the 'BY FAR' campaign of between 2007 and 2009 was initially posed as a short statement of requirement. As LMFM state:

> The RAF set the brief of creating a campaign that would reduce the perceived distance between their organisation and potential new recruits. Digital was identified as a key area to achieve this for the 16-24 market (LMFM 2010).

As we see, whilst the substantive content of the brief remains vague, the medium in which recruitment is to be done, along with the target demographic is far more specific. Agencies, refereed by the work of the COI, are matched to specific campaigns not according to their ability to conceptualise the RAF in any particular way, but according to their ability to operate in certain mediums and to target specific demographics. However, during the

creative process undertaken by the agencies, conceptualisations of the RAF – geopolitical imaginings of the role of the military – are nevertheless imputed into campaign design. The remainder of the discussion is given to exploring how this is done, and to understand how, through the creative process, the geopolitics of RAF recruitment are imagined.

As the LMFM archives further detail, in response to the brief set by the RAF, the BY FAR campaign was eventually designed to emphasise the (extraneous) extra-military benefits of RAF service. This, along with the use of technologies familiar to the target demographic, would reduce the distance between the RAF and the aspirations of the potential recruit:

> Our first aim was to create a positioning that unified the campaign for all roles being advertised. All advertising therefore started from the position that life in the RAF was "the most exciting life BY FAR." As recruitment for individual roles have their own set of demands, each [individual iteration of the] campaign then had the freedom to employ BY FAR as it was appropriate to them.

> The campaigns then approached recruits with a tone of voice that aimed to humanise the RAF and make it relevant to a younger and digitally-savvy market. The result was a broad range of ads that spoke to recruits in an appropriate and familiar way. This was a first for the armed forces and yielded great results in terms of potential recruits applications (LMFM 2010).

The BY FAR campaign unified a range of specialist roles by suggesting that, for example, RAF stewarding was the best service BY FAR; Airspace Managers had the best control BY FAR; and RAF life in general was the least 9-to-5 BY FAR.

The conceptualisation of the RAF in this way (in a manner suitable for public consumption) can only happen, though, via further collaborative work between the RAF and the advertising agency. The 'finished item', as it were, is a product of negotiation and the 'testing' of ideas posed by the agencies. If for example, an advertising agency intended to use images of military hardware, the RAF is often bound to providing the agency access to further experiences that might advance the design. As my interviewee recounted:

> I can remember Nick Shackleton [Creative at JWT agency; see figure 3.1] actually, he would have an idea. Look he'd say…we're going to use the Phantom [aircraft]. It's very sexy and how can we present it? And they'd come down and they'd get some pictures etc., talk to the Phantom, they'd talk to us [the RAF], they'd actually go to the stations, talk to the Phantom pilots, you know, that sort of thing, get the feel of it. And that would go

through a number of ideas before it went anywhere near publication (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

As we see further exemplified in figure 3.2, the production of RAF recruitment might be thought of as a process whereby campaign concepts are drafted, negotiated and refined. Furthermore, as the above quote demonstrates, insights into the role of the RAF – 'getting the feel of it' – are often based on physical experiences with military things and in military spaces. Upon being asked if the advertising agency staff, as part of the development of a campaign, went through the same 'idea journey' as the potential recruit, my interviewee suggested:

Figure 3.2 These things are sent to try us. Image in production (1981)

> Well, how many of these people [agency creatives] have had any experience? You know, the last thing they may have been doing is selling…tea bags and suddenly you're selling…the Royal Air Force, so you've got to make sure that they understand what the situation is, what the people are doing etc. So you've really got to brainwash them in a sense about what the system is. Which is why it's a good thing that they didn't keep on changing these people [agencies] because once you've got them…if they did this for four or five years they knew what…was going on, if you had someone else in after a year you're back into that process again (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

Whereas 'brainwashing' might be an overstatement of what we might rather call the *inculcation of creative talent by military means to military ends*, it is clear that to

understand recruitment, we must consider it not just a representation, but a practice. As McFall (2002) suggests, advertising producers might be thought of as cultural intermediaries who use their own experiences to construct imagery and form opinion. But, in these terms, just as proposed recruiting images are often vetted for their 'accuracy' by the RAF, so are the experiences and imaginations of the intermediaries that propose them. Simply put, to work with an agency who is versed in how the RAF desire to be portrayed is clearly a benefit. Alternatively, to work with an agency versed in 'selling tea bags' is to be 'back in the process' of informing the agency what the military is, what it does and where it does it. The difference here, of course, is that whilst the potential recruit is presented with this knowledge predominantly through images, advertising agency personnel are presented with it in person, and as part of an *experience* of military things and spaces.

In summary, we might think of the context in which the geopolitics of RAF recruitment are imagined as a 'chain of practices and processes by and through which geographical information is gathered, geographical facts are ordered and our imaginative geographies…constructed' (Craine 2007: 149). More simply, the geopolitics of RAF recruitment discussed in chapter two must originate and be produced somewhere. Their substance is a product of experience (experiences with military things and in military spaces), and just as it is a product of negotiation and debate between the RAF and advertising agency. We've also seen – in terms of the broader structure of recruiting – how recruitment is a product of relationships between state, the military and corporate enterprise. What remains to be discussed in more detail, though, is how these practices and relationships affect and determine the 'finished product' of recruitment (the poster, the TV ad), and thus the imaginations associated with them.

3.2 Contextualising geopolitical imaginations

In this section, we turn to explore the major thematic tenets of recruitment – some of which were identified in chapter two – and the extent to which they have been affected by the practices, processes and logistics of production.

History, *historicity and 'sowing the seed'*

The theme of history in recruiting, discussed in chapter two in reference to *Raising Air Fighters*, is an important part of recruitment design. As my interviewee recalled, during the Cold War:

> We [the DoR]…made a great ploy about history. I remember one, in fact I've got it framed at home; "The Battle of Britain is still being fought"…so it was appealing to people's patriotism…now, you couldn't sell Afghanistan as this sort of thing (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

In these terms we get the sense, as we did in chapter two, that the theme of history is being deployed to provide an imagination of warfare that is associated with more traditional notions of state and territory, one that is based on the imperative to particular, defensive foreign policies. Appealing to people's patriotism and the evocation of nationalistic heritages is, similarly in this case, a way of simplifying and rationalising politically convoluted and complex military matters. The suggestion that more modern conflicts might not so readily be represented via a recruiting of historicity though – and this is a common assumption throughout the interviews – allies again the theme of history to particular conflicts, to those that are a matter of the defence of immediate, national space.

Read through the lens of advertising, as Williamson (1995: 159) suggests, we might argue that historical advertisements in these terms are 'eternally poised between 'our' past and 'our' future'. 'History used as a referent, must refer to something's…or someone's…place in it, since the something/someone must replace the real content of history' (166). In kind, the evocation of historical naval warfare in chapter two, which is necessarily void of real context or content, leaves gaps which can be 'filled' by the idea of the RAF. Moreover, the idea of the RAF in this case is mythical – a convenient geopolitical fiction – whereby geopolitics is done by giving the RAF a time other than its own.

Beyond the representational use of historicism in recruitment, history and heritage takes on a different character, however, when allied to the broader engagement policies of the RAF. Simply, the extent to which a potential recruit knows something about the history and heritage of the RAF is most often the first thing a recruiter attempts to find out:

> [It] is what children know about the service. And one of the things we all knew about was the Battle of Britain, so you'd get this image of the fighter pilot etc. It's probably the wrong image anyway because very few of them are ever going to be fighter pilots, but they look for it.

> It's what people out there…understand by being in the services. If there's a family tradition, if they've had a father or grandfather or uncle who have perhaps been in the service, yes, it's helpful…You always asked if there was a family link to the services…and

often there's no one whatsoever, and they are perhaps the more difficult (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

As will be discussed in more detail in chapters four and six, beyond direct recruiting efforts (e.g. posters, TV ads etc.), RAF recruitment is articulated temporally, and part of tradition, memory and habit.

> Another aspect of the [DoR] staff, we had a series of what we called SLOs, schools liaison officers, and they went out and they weren't positively recruiting but they were raising the imprint, the profile of the Royal Air Force. Often this was for children who were quite young, the idea being that they saw somebody in uniform, they learned something about the RAF and at a later stage those seeds might germinate…It worked (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

Across a range of engagement strategies, some which are not 'formally' designed for recruitment (the RAF's school or Community Liaison), the idea of 'sowing the seed', of inculcating an idea of RAF and its role, takes its place alongside more explicit strategies. For example, in terms of the University Air Squadron (UAS) and Air Cadets:

> Of course the cadet forces are very important because there they do get exposed to the service and actually they go on camps etc. so they are a good recruiting source, but…you are not allowed to call these recruiting organisations…[you have to call them] Aviation. Not the military: flying and aviation. And you're not allowed to call the University Air Squadrons recruiting, but they are, no doubt about it (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

As Adey (2010) suggests, making the young body receptive to specific geographical contexts and spaces – the context of the RAF base or the space of the aeroplane for example – offers youths contact with the air, and allows for successful recruitment. Airmindedness and the mobilisation of the air-minded body, requires, however, the habituation of ideas, temperament and bodily movements. It is this habituation, instilled latently via indirect recruiting strategies such as Schools Liaison Officers, Air Cadets or University Air Squadrons which lends a temporal element to the production and practice of recruitment. Lending, in turn, a different character to the theme of historicism in recruiting, sowing the RAF seed through mere visibility or opportunities for experience suggest the articulation of recruitment not just spatially, but through time as it becomes part of tradition, memory and habit.

Institution, Occupation and skills provision

The theme of history in recruiting, however, because it is associated with particular types of conflict, changes with geopolitical context. As we have seen in chapter two, a thematic change might take the form of an emphasis on identity, on the opportunity for world travel, or on the relative freedom RAF life might provide (the 'extraneous', occupational themes of recruiting). Two themes worthy of note in this chapter (especially as it is seen in Cold War recruiting) are the representation of RAF service as an occupation rather than an institution (as a job rather than a duty), and the long-term career benefits of RAF skills provision. It is clear, in post-Second World War recruiting in general, that shifts in emphasis towards the RAF as an occupation and on skills are manifest in a change of tone from what the potential recruit can offer the RAF, to what the RAF can offer the recruit. As my interviewee described:

> Now, one of the great things…about the RAF, particularly for airmen and airwomen, but more for the men than the women at the time because women didn't have the opportunity to go into so many trades then, was the fact that they were getting a really first-class training. It was often the equivalent of doing an apprenticeship outside (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

However, whilst the promotion of the RAF as an 'employer' follows what is known anecdotally about military recruitment (in that specific areas of the country act as 'pools' for recruitment) the RAF brand is often at odds with the realities of service, or the realities of geopolitical context:

> You get areas like the North East where it's very difficult to get jobs and therefore the services find that these are very fertile recruiting grounds. But on the other hand, you get particularly in times like now, parents are very loath for their offspring to go into the armed services…It was the time of the Falklands and we had recruited, I think it was Sheffield, and for whatever reason a couple of the guys at Sheffield had been sent to the Falklands, and their Mothers came along to the recruiting office and said we didn't want them to join the Air Force to go and possibly be killed, we wanted them to get a trade, a career. [In recruiting] you have to be realistic without being discouraging (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

It is clear across the archive that post-Second World War and modern RAF recruiting works hard to promote the extra-military benefits of service (of job satisfaction and skills acquisition). The image or imagining of the RAF in these cases is often void of reference to

war, heroism or the Battle of Britain heritage which was often used in Second World War or early Cold War recruiting.

The significance of this for the debate is twofold. Firstly, that RAF recruitment changes with geopolitical context – with the immediacy or otherwise of danger or conflict – suggests that it might arguably stand as an 'index' for how danger and conflict is more broadly imagined in the public sphere. Secondly, and most importantly, it is significant because *even in the absence* of explicit references to danger and conflict, recruitment does not fail to be geopolitical. As the experiences of the two recruits from Sheffield demonstrate, a discourse of recruiting based on vocation and skills is still one that represents a version of the world which cannot fully account for its more violent reality. Summarily, whilst RAF recruitment might well change with geopolitical context, and according to the expectations of an audience who are more occupationally-minded, being provided an imagination of what the military is, what it does and where it does it remains explicitly tied to particular narratives of what the world is like, and almost as importantly, what it is not like.

Technology

A final theme that we might underline is technology. As we have seen in chapter two – particularly in *Sean Langrish* and *Mark Bowden* – technology in recruiting speaks for itself, and there needs to be little explanation of the power of machines to make sense of, and cut through, the spaces of battle. However, broadening the scope of analysis to the practice of production, we uncover some of the basis for this theme, and also a basis for widening the theme of technology in general.

Broadly speaking, even within the production of RAF recruitment, technology retains its sublime appeal. Upon being asked about the use of technology, and specifically, images representing missile warfare in the Cold War, my interviewee suggested:

> If you like, the new [Cold War] weapons were sexy. Because, you know, youngsters would see a picture of say a Lightning…the Phantoms and then the Tornados, these were great, it was the latest hardware and this is what I want to fly (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

The emphasis on 'the latest hardware', however, betrays the extent to which technology is an instrumental element in the division of recruiting between 'main' campaigns and 'branch specific' campaigns. As noted earlier in the chapter, and as we will go into more detail in the next chapter, recruitment is most commonly deployed at a branch-specific

level. Within a large 'main' campaign for example, individual branch recruitment remains separate whilst tied into a broader branding exercise: caterers offer the best service BY FAR; intelligence analysis have the best minds BY FAR, etc. Technology, or at least the idea of technology, is utilised accordingly:

> [Technology was used in recruiting] because…the technologies the youngsters were required to train in were changing the whole time. Consequently…to be in charge of recruiting [you had] to be well aware of the categories that people could be recruited into. For instance we went through a stage where we had something called flighline mechanics…and then they disappeared and you then started getting much higher levels of requirement in terms of technicians.

> Recruitment is linked to technology and how you fight wars, the technology you fight with. For example, in the seventies and eighties when there was a big emphasis on missile defence, there were big changes in manpower requirements which had an influence on how recruitment was done (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

The use of technology representationally and imaginatively in recruitment is linked, firstly, to the requirements of branch-specific campaigning. Although, as might be expected, the image of the aeroplane or jet is a commonplace motif, the advertisement of electrical engineering roles relies upon the imaging of their respective technologies. Secondly, the production of recruitment which images technology is one that is reactive to both internally decreed changes in force organisation and externally to the role technology plays in warfare. In foregrounding the discussions in chapters four and beyond, we might imagine then disrupting the general assumption that geopolitical imaginings of the RAF are flight-bound, or aero-centric. Recruitment, both in its representational and experiential form, relies on technologies other than the aeroplane. Terrestrial (RAF Regiment) weaponry and armament, medical in-field technologies and communication arrays, all, because they are tied inseparably to the way war is fought, play a role in the broader production and imagining of RAF recruitment. We might suppose, summarily, a multitude of technology-imaginations that bear a relation to the popular imagining and geopolitics of the RAF.

Technology also plays a part in the literal production of recruitment. Beyond the institutional and bureaucratic apparatus of production however, recruitment is necessarily a result of the changing technologies of advertising. First and foremost, modern technologies of recruitment are about speed and efficiency, and are used administratively to catalyse production.

Well, [between 1979-81] the computer age was coming in and computers were being used much more which was speeding things up…administration was improving all the time. As regards publicity, the main elements were I think posters that went out. We spent an awful lot of money on these firms [agencies] …and these [images] went out and also these things were put into the popular magazines…I can't comment on how they do it now, because technology has advanced so much (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

The influence of technology on recruitment production is, first and foremost, about medium, and the limits that are placed on a particular message by order of its form. Simply put, the media in which RAF recruitment is technologically able to be present in (from the poster in the 1940s to the electronic viral ad in the 2000s) might feasibly limit the scope of what is achievable in terms of imagination. For example, as we have seen, post-Cold War recruiting is notably void of the strong national and territorial tropes present in earlier examples. Although, we've discussed this feature of recruiting only in relation to the changing *imagined* spaces of nation, danger and warfare so far, the chapter moves here to suggest that changes to these imaginations might also be accountable to the literal *form* recruitment takes, and the methods used to produce it. As Rosati (2007a: 997) explains:

> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the previously territorially bounded national audience began to dissolve into a global one and national electronic cultural forms became 'deteritorialized' or detached from the terrain of the nation-state…when coupled with new communications technologies and the rise of huge global advertisement-driven conglomerates – compose a scenario where media are no longer the arbiters of national identity.

In these terms, whilst the technical *apparatus* of cultural production and advertising is deteritorialised, it follows that imaginings of state, identity and social meaning – because they are tied to the requisite *forms* which new media take – change, respectively, as the means of production shifts in its relation to state, space and nation.

Although this argument will be provided more context in the next section, it is enough to say that if we are to take seriously the production of recruitment, we must consider the form recruitment takes as a condition of its conceptual scope. Just as recruitment is conditioned by the limits of its institutional arrangement – its *viability* – the fact that recruitment is present in new mediums such as social networking must surely figure in our assumptions about the range and scope of its geopolitics. So, like the conclusions of the previous chapter, the popular geopolitics of RAF recruitment are not just a mirror for and reflective of practical and formal geopolitics. Rather, because they are

constituted via the technologies and apparatus of production, they are evidence for the *licencing* of the popular cultural and geopolitical imagination (Hughes 2007).

In summary, we've seen in this chapter how some of the key themes identified in chapter two, when seen through the lens of their production, might be developed, and might then shed light on the broader remit of recruiting practice. For example, the theme of history has been developed so as it accounts for the broader use of heritage and temporality in RAF engagement initiatives. Latterly, we've seen how technology – more broadly conceptualised – is implicated directly in the licensing of particular versions of the world. In the next section, we take these thematic developments and place them in a broader context. Namely, we seek more precedent for the power of medium to affect and licence message (i.e. the scope of imagination), and turn to a discussion of the histories of advertising, public advocacy and propaganda. In order to provide a foundation for later chapters, a definition is also given to 'military recruitment'.

3.3 What is recruitment?

> Arms and armaments are not the only weapons…ideas are weapons too (Bernays 1942: 236).

If we are to suggest then that the geographies and politics of RAF recruitment are not distinct from, and indeed are licenced by, the geographies, economics and politics of their production, it will be prudent to explore in more detail the histories which lead to this, the essential commensurability of politics, commerce and culture. Whilst it is relatively straightforward to make connections between advertising and recruitment in the respect that recruitment works via the same institutions and technologies of product advertising, a more thorough review betrays a series of more fundamental connections.

Commercial advertising grew, and in some ways became a credible profession, directly in response to the successes of war-time public advocacy and propaganda (Dyer 1999). However, and because, as O'Barr (2006: no pagination) suggests, 'public service campaigns…use the techniques developed for the promotion of commercial products for a purpose other than selling products and services', there remains no simple answer as to what, actually, recruitment is. Moreover, whilst 'advertising's central function is to create desires that did not previously exist' (Dyer 1999: 6), one might presume the desire for a product remains, however subtly, different to the desire to serve in the military. Summarily, there are little or no grounds on which to call recruitment singly commercial or political. A

secondary aim of this short discussion, therefore, is to generate a working definition of military recruitment.

'Appeals to reason and appeals to feeling' [9]

As Jackall and Hirota (2000:12) suggest of public advocacy:

> The rationalisation of advertising and public relations in the twentieth century was largely a product of war. The exigencies of two world wars and the long-term ideological struggle known as the cold war brought members of both occupations [statesmen and advertising magnates] into periods of sustained cooperation with officials from various governmental bureaucracies.

This cooperation, along with the 'maturation of the technological groundwork for the apparatus of advocacy' – advances in print, television, cinema, radio and telephony – made possible the 'goodwill and allegiance of the civilian population' (Jackall and Hirota 2000: 12). However, goodwill and allegiance in these terms is required to work both materially and ideologically. Just as we might suggest that advertising has a double role, acting as it does both to promote the functionality of capital and the mythical communication of need (Williams 1960), so public advocacy has both a material and ideological basis. Firstly, as Jackall and Hirota (2000) continue, war-time public advocacy was first and foremost about the functionality of military-industrial apparatus. Garnering consent, or gaining allegiance, was elemental to the production of weaponry, and we might presume also, the acquisition of (productive) military bodies. As similar to recruitment, early public advocacy in war time were then appeals to reason, whereby the oft cited Kitchener's 'Your country needs you', stands as a call for the requisite material sustenance of the military machine (Hiley 1997), and also then, to a rational patriotism. Secondly, and connected to this, public advocacy in war time was an appeal to feeling. In referring back to what in previous discussions we have called geopolitics, public advocacy is about the *idea* of bad/good, true/untrue just as it is about friend and foe, enemies, allies and the discursive creation of peoples, place and technologies:

> Advertising and public relations both take the dough of existing sentiment – the world as it is – and knead it into a form that lead people to think and especially to act in certain ways (Jackall and Hirota 2000: 32).

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[9] I take the sub-title here from White's (1939) study of *The New Propaganda*.

In this way, just like the nonmaterial basis for the production of consumer satisfaction (Williams 1960), public advocacy is about the manufacture of consent based on the allegiances of those who condone and produce it, and the conditionality of the apparatus of production. We have a precedent to connect recruitment with advertising here in that, although advertising is a mechanism by which capital is able to organise and ensure a market for its goods, public advocacy is a mechanism by which government is able to organise and ensure sovereignty and military defence. Although the simple historical connection between war, advocacy, advertising and recruitment is important, it is the essence of this connection that is more fundamental. Via the conditionality of its apparatus and the vested interests of its authors, the production of public consent involves the coercion of both thought and action. Not unlike recruitment, advocacy is concerned with the acquisition of materials (bodies, productive forces), and essential to this, (imagined) ideological consent.

Duplicity and propaganda

Consent, if is based on the conditionality, viability and partiality of production, and on the manufacture of allegiance (in thought and action), is gained via duplicity. The theme of duplicity stands here, as it did in the previous chapter, as a way of conceptualising the omissions, silences and biases of geopolitical representations. By any other name, however, the duplicitous nature of public consent might be called (and is sometimes used interchangeably with) propaganda.[10] The extent to which we might call recruitment propaganda rests, firstly, on its shared roots in the apparatus of advocacy, and notably, the shared use of the psychologies of persuasion (Finch 2000). Secondly, propaganda, because of its overtly political (and for that matter military) connotations, provides an alternative context in which to place the equally present *politics* of recruitment. Moving beyond the economic and logistical determinacy of an analysis of advertising, we move to consider further the erasures, biases and tactical omissions of that related to propaganda, and thus the potential imports to a study of recruitment.

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[10] The difference between advocacy and propaganda, as O'Barr (2006) suggests, is the difference between contexts of use: enemy advocacy is propaganda, whereas domestic advocacy is advocacy (although see Finch (2000) on efforts to 'rebrand' propaganda positively variously as 'truth' or 'psy-war' in World War Two). In other terms, whilst advertising (commerce) and propaganda (politics) both have histories that extend back beyond the wars of the 20th Century, their development into something we might call a forerunner of today's apparatus of consent was a product of what Jackall and Hirota (2000), above, call the technical apparatus of advocacy.

As White (1939: 11) suggests:

> Political propaganda has now become the chief internal weapon of governments, and it is employed not only to persuade a sufficient number of people that a particular course of action is expedient or right, but to keep a whole populations in a complete, and…perpetual emotional subjection.[11]

Propaganda, in the sense which we would associate it with the apparatus of advocacy, is a particularly modern phenomena. A feature of a total politics (Demm 1993) whereby the population is completely supervised through control of the press and economy, propaganda is also a feature of and necessity for total war. As Finch (2000: 372) continues:

> The distinctive feature of warfare, since the early nineteenth century, is not technology: rather, weapons of mass destruction are an effect, not a cause, of a deeper shift. The crucial variance from preceding wars lied in the fact that, during this century, wars have been between nations and not between armies...[this] drew the modern citizen into warfare in an unprecedented way.

Whilst not forgetting the essentiality of the acquisition of productive forces discussed in the preceding section, the kind of war waged in which propaganda plays a part is one in which the demand for munitions, equipment etc. requires the 'recruiting of the civilian population and the mobilisation of the entire economic resources of the state' (Qualter in Finch 2000: 372). The wars of the 19th century were wars not only in the real sense, but wars of ideas, and wars in which winning the minds of civilians was central to victory. Thus, the total politics of new forms of military engagement – those that were a result of inter-national conflict – necessarily altered, were constituted by, and was constitutive of, new forms of publicity and visual persuasion.[12] Whilst, just as with recruitment, we see here the

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[11] Although White (1939) emphasises the *internality* of propaganda, see Finch (2000: 371) on propaganda for used in conflict, which was 'aimed at enemy soldiers…to convince them that they should either disengage philosophically from the war aims…or that they should surrender'. A definition that doesn't incorporate the external nature of propaganda is aligned to the internality of RAF recruitment.

[12] I emphasise the idea of the co-constitution of modern warfare and the visual apparatus of persuasion because, as Williams (1960) suggests of advertising, the arts of persuasion cannot be decoupled from the ways in which they came into being and the work they do. In this sense, whilst it is possible to suggest that one was the forbear to the other – war was the catalyst for developments in media/media was a catalyst for war – this does not do justice what we might imagine to be a more complex relationship, one not based on causality.

connections between forms of conflict and forms of representation, there are other similarities and points of import worth exploring.

For instance, the importance of propaganda to modern forms of warfare, and particularly those of the 19th century, was in part due to the close working relationship between it and the new science of psychology. As Dyer (1999) notes, branches of psychology which focussed on 'instinct' and 'association' were as useful to the commercial advertiser just as they were to military recruiters in the First World War, with posters such as the notable 'Daddy, what did you do in Great War?' working to associate military service with family values, dignity and respect. However, similar to Williamson's (1995) thesis on the creation of myth through a politics of historicity noted above, the psychologies of propaganda have direct influence on perception, and in particular, on perceived space and on the perceived self. Just as a recruitment of historicity may mythically, geopolitically, alter the position of the RAF relative to the past, propaganda works to ensure certain positionings of the self relative to war. As Finch (2000:370) describes:

> The first thing for an analyst of public opinion, and hence, the shaper of public opinion, to recognize is the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself upon the scene of action. People will construct their own pseudo-environments, and their behaviour and attitudes, emotions and opinions will be based upon that construction…Propaganda, or psychological warfare, is dependent on creating a pseudo-environment that will form conditions through which people decide how to respond to warfare.

Far from being a glib use of spatial metaphor, attitudes which revolve around nationalism, heroism and valour, as discussed in chapter two, are often connected to the defence of immediate space, to territory and the nation-state. In these terms, the oft discussed idea of the geopolitical imagination is given literal precedent here through the role of war time propaganda. The geopolitical imagination – and despite the undeniably dubious relationship between 'the scene of action' and the 'picture of that scene' – is thus one that is scalar, reactive, and able to assess the impendence of war relative to the (equally imagined) self. Aligning therefore the production of recruitment within the history of its development sheds light particularly on the issue of geopolitical representations. Whilst we have so far assumed the interpellation of the subject (and so a latent imagining of who the viewer *should* be), we might move to suggest a more active relationship between the desired and actual effects of recruiting practices (to a direct imagining of who the subject *is,* constituted

by the work images do.) Above all, we have here further precedent for thinking through the ways that military recruitment (whilst sharing many of the traits of what we've called here 'propaganda') might indeed go somewhere into affecting individual choices and actions.

Towards a definition of military recruitment

Whilst in discussing the histories of public advocacy and propaganda we have developed a context in which to place the production of recruitment, we now turn to discuss a working definition. To summarise this part of the thesis so far: we have seen that thinking representationally about recruitment works in that we gain clues as to the imagining of geopolitics. Generally speaking, we have been able to surmise a set of key themes, motifs and strategies of representation which not only reflect practical and formal geopolitics (modes of warfare etc.), but are constitutive of it (or at least constitutive of its imagining). However, considering the limitations of a purely iconographic approach, the analysis up to this point lacks the scope to uncover what necessarily comes *before* representation i.e. the common stocks of knowledge and experiences that influence the imagining and production of representations. In this chapter, this imbalance has been addressed, and by drawing on literature around the geographies of advertising, it has prioritised a move away from considering just the text, and has enhanced a representational approach by demonstrating the production of recruitment, and furthermore, the histories of this production.

The production of RAF recruitment happens institutionally and economically, and via apparatus which variously licenses, limits and authenticates what can be produced, and the scope of its imagining. Not only is recruitment a record then of the institutional and economic apparatus which is inherent to its production, but it is also a product of it, being as it is an output of viabilities, aspirations and investments. Speaking just in relation to the creative work of advertising agencies, recruitment is also a product of experience. Advertising agency personnel go through a similar 'idea journey' as the potential recruit, with the RAF charged with providing the stocks of knowledge that producers draw upon. The finished product (the poster, the TV ad) is thus something which is imagined not only via common stocks of knowledge, but particular knowledge provided by military means, with military things, in military spaces, to military ends. Thematically, we have also seen the basis on which key recruiting ideas are borne out and brought to bear on the creative process. In particular we've seen how the themes of history, the military as an occupation and a skill and technology all have a central role to play in recruitment. However, and particularly in the cases of history and technology, an insight into production has allowed

us to develop these themes, and to understand how have evolved over time and are reactive to changes in warfare, changes in military/institutional structure, and changes to how advertising is institutionally organised. Amongst other things, these themes will provide a foundation on which we will build in later chapters.

Understanding the apparatus of advocacy – of which recruitment is inevitably a modern equivalent – has been the focus of this section, and we move now to tease out the major assumptions about what, actually, recruitment is. Defining military recruitment *qua* a history of the apparatus of advocacy requires stating two propositions. Firstly, military recruitment cannot be thought of as singly an act (a process) of advertising, public advocacy *or* propaganda. Secondly, advertising cannot be thought of as purely commercial, just as public advocacy cannot be thought of as purely civil, or propaganda political. Although it is necessary to suggest that recruitment draws heavily from, and is the historical symptom of, all three of these processes, it is not justifiable to align recruitment with any particular one. What might be necessary is a recognition that defining recruitment by the parameters set (representation, production), is nearly impossible, simply because the three categories on which we draw (advertising, advocacy, propaganda) have similarly porous conceptual and material boundaries.

It will perhaps be useful then to broaden the scope of our inquiry and to infer as to what exists beyond the production of recruitment, and to consider recruitment as an 'actually-existing' practice (beyond the realms of its imagining). As suggested by my interviewee, recruitment is about:

> Taking individuals, assessing them, persuading them, and making them fit to do a job (*Air Commodore Ian Forster. Ret*).

Indeed, as the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* suggest also*:*

> Recruitment is the process of having the right person, in the right place, at the right time (CIPD 2010).[13]

Although considering recruitment a practice tells us much about how geopolitical representations are imagined and made, it tells us much less about their deployment, or the experiences that might be associated with them when they are present in spaces. Furthermore, although we have come to understand how, representationally, recruitment is

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[13] Upon asking my interviewee the question 'what is recruitment?' – after noting the similarities between recruitment and commercial advertising – I was directed to the CIPD, of whom my interviewee is a member.

persuasive, we know less about in which ways recruitment 'assesses', individualises, or works as a process whereby potential recruits are aligned with the 'right places' and the 'right times'.

As a foreground to the remaining chapters, we might define recruitment so as we might take into account its broader experiential attributes; a definition which considers recruitment as, significantly, (although representational and practice-based) present in and part of space, place and culture. Military recruitment is *a practice whereby the military – via the institutions and economies of public advocacy and commercial advertising – procure personnel. Via persuasive means, recruitment works by propagating and fostering certain connections – either real or imaginary – between the potential recruit and the military. This is done explicitly and implicitly, directly and indirectly. Military recruitment is necessarily present in popular culture and in public places and thus is a medium through which the public see, learn and make sense of the military and its role*.

3.4 Discussion: advertising in place

If the limitations of a practice-based approach to military recruitment are based on its inability to account for how recruitment is deployed or experienced, it is in part due to the limitations of the chosen literature. The geographies of advertising, still confined to a small number of studies, inhibit what we can say about the geopolitics of recruitment, and how we might say it. Although providing a good way of looking at how recruitment is produced, how it connects to, and is a product of, wider institutional and economic apparatus, the histories of this apparatus, and an opportunity to connect advertising and geopolitics, the geographies of advertising remain, as Thrift (2000) suggests of critical geopolitics, transfixed with representation. For example, in many cases we are often only able, upon learning of how recruitment is produced, to comment further on the representational qualities of the idea in question. In discussing the theme of history for instance, we are only able interpret the working practices of producers via a more nuanced reading of history-as-representation (c.f. Williamson 1995). Adding layers of meaning to representations, however valid as a development of chapter two, as we have seen with the difficulties in defining recruitment, does not provide ways in which we might interpret how recruitment is articulated, or how it is experienced. The remainder of this final section is given to exploring a way in which the following chapters might address this absence.

Remaining with the theme of advertising, part of Law's (1997) contribution to this literature includes the recognition that geographers have made gains in studying

'advertising in place'. As opposed to 'place in advertising' i.e. 'how advertisers invoke real or imagined sites to create an appealing context for marketing a product or a service' (Fleming and Roth 1991: 281), a focus on how advertising is visually experienced as part of an everyday fabric has genuine import to a study of recruitment. 'Advertising shapes our imaginary landscapes, but it also shapes the settings we live in' as Law (1997: 22) describes. RAF recruitment, as a visual cultural practice, present as we have seen in print-form is also now widely articulated across popular electronic, interactive and social media. But, present from the advertising hoarding to the cinema, the printed page to the computer screen, recruitment is also visible beyond representations, and as something which is seen, observed in the spaces of the everyday. If RAF recruitment is a visual culture, it is also a culture of visibility. From the spectacular sight of the airshow for example, or the quotidian of the military parade, the high-street recruiting stall or a popular military-themed flight simulator, the RAF are present in place, form a backdrop to the (visually experienced) everyday, and are constitutive of everyday embodied and affective practices.

In the next two chapters we explore the cultural visibility of RAF recruitment, and move to recognise that 'visuality [or the enculturing of vision] is a pivotal assemblage in the production of contemporary geopolitics' (Campbell 2007: 357). In the first instance (chapter four), this will involve a discussion of practices of recruitment in a space of exception: the airshow. Through ethnographic studies of airshow and other events, the next chapter looks to how recruiting works alongside the self-evidently spectacular nature of the military, and importantly, working from MacDonald's (2006) notion of observant practice in particular, discuss *what it is to see* in military spaces. In this sense, chapter four will be about 'the acculturation of sight' (MacDonald 2009); about the ways in which seeing the spectacular is a way in which the citizen (potential recruit) is situated within the military geopolitics of the state. Secondly, this will involve an exploration of the more quotidian and taken-for-granted aspects of popular culture, which, because they are connected directly or indirectly with RAF recruitment, work as ways in which the military permeates the mundane. Moving amongst other things to consider practices of recruitment as militarisation, chapter five will look to mundane spaces (the computer screen, the mobile phone), and to an exploration of what 'images can *do* [affectively] in and through contemporary geopolitical structures' (Carter and McCormack 2010:104).

In conclusion, in providing insight into how recruitment is produced, we have done much to understand what comes *before* representation. However, in doing so, the parameters set limit us to what we can say about the actually-existing articulation and

iteration of recruitment (what comes after or beyond representation). In keeping with the theme of advertising, we change our focus again, what we look to here, following Tom Vanderbilt (1997: 128-9), is:

> The *advertised life*, an emerging mode of being in which advertising not only occupies every last negotiable public terrain, but in which it penetrates the cognitive process, invading consciousness to such a point that one expects and looks for advertising, learns to lead life as an ad, to think like an advertiser, and even to insert oneself in successful strategies of marketing.

The next two chapters explore the occupation by geopolitics of everyday terrains, attempt to understand practices of seeing and visualising the military, and thus, inquire as to how 'geopolitical power operates through sights and spectacles' (MacDonald 2006). Importantly, they attempt to understand how seeing teaches the potential recruit to think militaristically, and to successfully market themselves as useful military candidates.

Part 2. Visualising Recruitment

Chapter 4. The Spectacular

Swings and roundabouts and sticky drinks. Bombs and missiles and hot kerosene smells (COI 1983).

In attempting to move beyond a representational approach to recruitment, and to further detail the range of recruiting strategies employed by the RAF, we turn now to discuss the airshow. The airshow season in the U.K (between May and October) is used extensively by the RAF to promote its careers, and more generally to enable an engagement with the civilian public. Present at the airshow in the form of personnel, equipment, recruiting stalls and stands, simulators, aircraft and aircraft facsimiles, documents and various other promotional materials, the show provides a wide range of opportunities to engage with, experience and make sense of the RAF and its role. Being tangibly present in these ways clearly offers the RAF an opportunity that would otherwise be absent or lacking in its more formal (print- or screen-based) recruiting campaigns. Indeed, as will become clear, the airshow allows the RAF to be visible and experienced in ways which would not be possible by any other means.

Although this chapter will detail how the RAF is present at the show (its stalls, stands and promotional materials), and why this matters, it also looks beyond these more formal aspects of recruiting strategy, and considers the show also as a space, as an experience and as an aesthetic. The airshow, as Watson (2010) describes, relies, fundamentally, on the provision of spectacle. It is an event based on an ephemeral theatricality (Adey 2010) conducive of specific modes of voyeurism, is designed (spatially) in ways that afford sight and vision a prominent position vis-à-vis spectatorship, and arguably, enables the entanglement of commercial and state enterprise in such a way as to be a 'total environment' of consumption (Ley and Olds 1988).

The chapter will consider how the ephemeral, spectacular and visual spaces and experiences of the show might be considered tantamount to (or bound up with) recruitment, and how space and experience is used (and utilised) persuasively to inculcate particular ideas around what the military is, what it does and where it does it. The chapter is in four parts, and firstly, it will provide a history of the politics of airshows. Secondly, it will consider the space of the show. Beginning with the more formal strategies of presence used by the RAF, this section will finish with a discussion of the politics of airshow space. Thirdly, it will describe – drawing upon work by MacDonald (2006 2010), Crary (1989 1992 2000) and others – how the show is conducive to particular forms of vision, visual

techniques and spectatorship. Using Debord's notion of spectacle here as a starting point, a more uncompromising concept of spectacle as a condition of capital and culture is critiqued and developed in order to encounter the immediate sites, sights and experiences of the airshow. This section will end with a debate around how the airshow might arguably work to tie the citizen (the recruit) in to particular imaginations of the state (MacDonald 2006), of the military and of politics. Fourthly, the chapter finishes with a discussion, and foregrounds the following chapter which will continue to develop themes which pertain to the connections between RAF recruitment, geopolitics and visual culture. It will also finish with thoughts on how recruitment and its associated practices, materials and embodiments might arguably form a site within a nexus of militarisation.

4.1 A brief history of the politics of airshows

The aim of this section is to emphasise the importance of airshows for the constitution of aerial, geopolitical and military imaginations, how airshows have been integral to the evolution of airpower in general, and to provide a context in which to start thinking about the airshow as central to RAF recruitment in these terms. The more specific aim, therefore, is to highlight the importance of spectacular events for the formation of specific spaces and consciousnesses which are allied and conducive to imaginations of nationhood, military force and geographies and politics. Firstly, we turn to explore the spectacular history of the aeroplane, the airfield and the airshow; what Adey (2010: 56) might call the 'hard materialities' of the air.

Airshows and the evolution of flight

The technologies of flight, its mechanics and infrastructures, along with the superlative imaginations associated with it, are a product of the spectacular origins of aviation. From the first balloon and zeppelin fetes to early heavier-than-air flight, the spectre of aviation and particularly the aeroplane have enjoyed a special place in the popular imagination (Fritzche 1992). As Demetz (2002) notes, similar to the transcendent, machine-ideals of the Italian Futurists, early air-powered flight stood as an epithet for human progress. At least in Germany, the qualities of the aeroplane were:

> Deeply spiritual, as well as obviously practical, because it seemed to make possible a previously unknown freedom from earthly limits. Aviators took giant leaps that cleared physical confines, social labyrinths, and emotional prisons, notions of transcendence that myth-makers had imagined in the flight of birds since antiquity (Fritzche 1992: 1).

The 'giant leaps' of which the aeroplane bounded were, from as soon as five years after the Wright brother's milestone first flight (Watson 2010), made in spectacular circumstances, and were designed with pageantry and competition in mind. For example, at the prestigious 1909 airshow in Brescia, Italy (c.f. Demetz 2002), a range of aviators (professional and amateur) were invited to compete in their home-made flying machines for a range of prizes which centred variously on the longest, highest and fastest feats of aeronautical ability which would test both man and machine often to breaking point. With this and the famous trans-oceanic air races of the 1920s (Scheppler 1988; Glines 2001), it is certain that 'aviation, from the first, [was] a very public technology' (Edgerton 1991: 13) based on the besting of previous records, and on pushing the boundaries of possibility.

In this sense, it should be presumed that the development of the aeroplane *tout court* (in terms of engine technologies for example) was a product of spectacular trials under the gaze of an attentive public, with each pilot and mechanical crew fixed, necessarily, upon progress and innovation. Indeed, as Watson (2010) notes, beyond the development of new flight technologies, the RAF (being much involved in early air spectaculars) was saved from the threat of abolition – and was forced to innovate – in no small part due to the famous military air pageants of the 1920s at Hendon, London. Such was the co-determinacy of the evolution of aviation and the modern, spectacular event. However, and with the evolution of spectacular events in mind, it is clear that the necessary physical architectures and socialites which would foster a 'collective being-together at…displays' (Adey 2010: 61) were also as much a development of new types of pageantry as were flying technologies. Returning to a record of the Brescia airshow, Demetz (2002: 57) notes that the architectural organisation of the show centred on:

> The spacious grandstand, the upper level for the elegant people (unavoidable in a society marked by class distinctions), the lower part for the petit bourgeois, with a two-thousand-seat restaurant, a profitable franchise of the Bergamo Società dei Ristoranti Moderne.

Not least because Demetz' description of Brescia stands in stark similarity to the architectural and social organisation of its modern equivalents, the airshow represents the development of a space which 'created material and affective affordances towards more optimal forms of spectatorship as well as proper forms of society' (Pearman 2004 in Adey 2010: 66). Whilst not only decreeing certain forms of sociality and comportment, the airshow, importantly, afforded only certain techniques of vision, or, as Crary (1992 2000) might have it, visual attention. Moreover, beyond the architectures of the show, it is no

small coincidence that the development of airports – which play host to airshows and necessarily hold a similarly co-determinate evolution as flight and its spectacular nature – are spatially designed in order to optimize the viewing of spectacle (Adey 2008).

Summarily, with the co-determinacy of aviation, spectacle and the spatial and social means by which aviation is experienced, we might presume the airshow to be complicit in a certain politics which centres on the conflation of notions of (social, political, personal, technological) development, spatial organisation and the means of perception. Importantly though, it is this very conflation and co-evolution that has made airshow and spectacular events conducive of certain (geo)political imaginations; as Adey (2008: 32) suggests, from the watching-posts in the spaces of aerial theatricality, it is via the architectures of the show and of the airport that 'people [can] be instilled with political messages'. To explore this further, we turn to discuss the more explicit politics of airshows.

Airshows as political

As Fritzche (1992: 141) notes, it would be a mistake to ignore completely the effect that the 'machine dreams' ensconced within the progressive promise of aviation have on political expectations. In the first instance, the histories of airshows are littered with examples whereby aviation culture stands as an expression of political movements and national communities. Not least is this the case in European and especially Italian and German history. For example, the aeroplane, exemplar of the modernist and futurist aesthetic (Wohl 2005), was adopted by the Italian cachet of fascism, building upon Gabrielle D'Annuzio's earlier contribution to the rhetoric and imagery of flight (Wohl 2005; Demetz 2002). Similarly, between the two World Wars, it was the aviator that took the measure of progress in Germany (Fritzsche 1992) and who embodied national prowess, daring, and technical mastery.

Although it is quite straightforward to imagine the linkages between technological advancement, European inter-war economic and social revival, and projects of celebratory nationalism, it is the inherently theatrical and spectacular nature of aviation that marks out a specific politics of state power and imperial possibility (Fritzche 1992). This politics is neatly tied up in what Williams (2007) calls power projection; the effect of and means by which airpower is able to lay claim to specific territories. For instance, within the techno-nationalist discourse of inter-war German politics the aeroplane was used discursively to bolster territorial nationalism; as Fritzche (1992: 139) notes, 'it is worth considering the emotional pull that the notion "Made in Germany" [in respect of both the technological and

social aspects of aviation culture] exerted across political lines'. However, the projection of power brought on by these choreographed spectacles of statehood and nationalism also mark out the airshow as affording the projection of power over the *psychological* territories of the everyday. As Kong and Yeoh (1997: 216) explain:

> The impression of triumph and achievement [brought on by a high degree of display and theatricality], celebration and carnival can enter the realm of abstract consciousness beyond the immediate experience of witnessing the spectacle. The effect is therefore that ideological intent can invade the private realm of everyday life through the use of hegemonic means rather than force…spectacle and ritual become useful in attempting to understand the state's attempt to develop national pride, construct national identity and inculcate loyalty.

Of course, it is this very inculcation of loyalty, construction of self and of nation that is so important to military recruitment. But essentially, whilst the airshow certainly allows the projection of power immediately, physically and tangibly in the space of the show (through sight, sound and largess) this projection of power is also psychological. Through the organisation of space and the means of perception, the prescription of particular ways of seeing and spectatorship, and through sometimes overtly nationalistic displays of airpower and force, the airshow is a space in which showgoers are inculcated into certain versions of the world. These versions of the world, although specifically centred on the national in Kong and Yeoh's (1997) terms, might also, as we'll see, be conducive of ideas around space, danger, threat and the moralities of military combat.

This brief section has aimed to highlight the broader context into which the following discussion and analysis will fit. This context is, variously, the inherently and historically political nature of the airshow. Having identified two key themes here of *space* and *spectatorship*, the next two sections discuss these in reference to ethnographic work carried out at some of the U.K's prominent annual airshows.

4.2 Spacing the show

If the airshow is an event at which the hard materialities of the air coalesce around spectacle and fete, it is an event at which we see RAF recruitment materially expressed also. In this section we discuss how the RAF are formally present at the show, discuss how these presences are representational, and more-than-representational in character, and how airshow recruiting is able to materialise the branch-specific requirements of modern recruiting. Lastly, the section will highlight the problems that arise if we consider these

presences unconnected to the broader culture of the show. Specifically, towards the end of this section, we consider how the show *as a space* might arguably act towards inculcating imaginations of the military and of (geo)politics.

Representation and engagement

Figure 4.1 Sunderland 2010: Be Part of the Story (Clayton Hudson)

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In the tent of the RAF Reserves at the 2010 Sunderland Airshow, for instance, we see further iteration of the current BPotS recruiting campaign (figure 4.1). Here, in *Clayton Hudson*, we're provided a similar evocation of the RAF's involvement in a faraway, contemporary Middle-Eastern conflict; the hazy background space of Afghanistan plays host here to the logical and controlled military narrative of an intelligence analyst who provides the 'eyes and ears' of a convoy passing through 'hostile territory'. Here though, contrary to the BPotS examples already discussed, the 'enemy' is literally depicted; the familiar weaponry of the insurgent (the AK-47 and the RPG), along with a graphic rendering of insurgent apparel, is seen in sharp contrast to the hi-tech and regimented nature of the modern British military. Much like *Sean Langrish*, we're given a stark portrayal of the overcoming of danger and threat by military means, and the imperative feature of this image is the movement of military things and people in an inherently hostile space.

Although images like *Clayton Hudson* were a common sight at the time of study – being as they were part of on-going BPotS campaign – equally important at the airshow is the presence of other visual materials which attempt to account for the RAF's heritage and role in the world. For example, in the large 'Imagineering' tent at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT), held at Fairford in 2009, alongside the promotion of corporate involvement (BAE, Rolls Royce) in the construction and maintenance of the RAF's aircraft fleet, showgoers were provided an insight into the role the RAF has played in the employment of 'diverse cultures'. Present as large banners at points around the tent, these images told of the lengths to which, mostly during the Second World War, the RAF went to ensuring an effective fighting force and utilising to the full its colonial workforce. As one banner extolled, set against an image of the African continent:

> The Inspector General of the Royal Air Force reported in the autumn of 1942 that the RAF was not using native manpower to a sufficient extent in West Africa…The West African Air Corps [thus consequently] represented the first attempt by the Royal Air Force to employ native labour in a properly constituted corps...Experience showed [however] that native airmen required far more training and supervision than white men owing to their limited technical sense and initiative.

Along with this, much was made of the RAF's willingness to historically recruit and employ personnel from places such as Nigeria, India, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania and the Caribbean. Connectedly, this series of banners and graphics detailed the lengths to which

the RAF went in the war to recruit women into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in places like Egypt, Palestine, and from Assyrian and Greek populations.

Figure 4.2 Sunderland 2010: Medical Reserves current deployment map

Being not only confined to providing a historical imagination of the RAF's role in the world, visual materials at the show are used also to detail current deployments, and so, to evoke imaginations of 'real' spaces of combat. In many cases, individual branches of the RAF might use the smaller spaces of the show (tents, marquees) to present poster and pin-up displays of their personnel-in-action. For example, remaining in the 'Imagineering' tent, the RAF Information Communications Technology Technicians branch filled its space with a screen covered with photographic evidence of what its personnel do, and where they do it: from the testing of electronic circuitry on British air bases, to the erection of communications aerials in the Middle East, the showgoer is commonly provided images of RAF personnel as they do their job for the RAF in places across the world.

Remaining with visual materials, no more stark is the specification and imagination of 'real' spaces of combat than with the use of cartographic imagery alongside other materials which enable a specific imaginary of place. In the tent of the Medical Reserves at Sunderland airshow, 2010, for example, the showgoer was provided an insight into the role the medical support services play in current deployments in the Middle East. Mimicking a forward-operating field station, the Medical Reserves tent was lined with crash-carts and stretchers containing resuscitation dummies in combat fatigues; on display were defibrillators, tourniquets, bandages – all the paraphernalia of the modern military medical

services – introduced and demonstrated by the medical reserves staff.[14] Toward the endmost section of the tent, however, showgoers were informed as to the current deployments of the Medical Reserves through a cartographic representation of Afghanistan and Helmand Province (figure 4.2). Positioned alongside photographic images of injured combatants and alongside a mock-up IED victim (figure 4.3), there could be confusion as to the specific dangers posed by, and traumas caused as a consequence of being in, Afghanistan and Helmand Province.

Figure 4.3 Sunderland 2010: Medical Reserves IED victim

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[14] Showgoers here, normally children, were given the opportunity to be strapped to a crash cart and loaded onto an RAF ambulance and/or to have their head bandaged. The specifically material nature of the airshow in this respect will be discussed in chapter six.

To summarise this initial discussion: we've begun to gain an impression here of how the RAF is present at airshows. Present (representationally) in the form of posters, flyers, banners and other documents, and by means of stalls, stands and hoardings, these visual materials, though, pose no less problematic a case for a critical geopolitics of military publicity. For instance, in *Clayton Hudson*, the showgoer is provided a clear-cut vision of the dangers associated with operations in Afghanistan via a stark iconography of threat. Similarly, as the 'diverse cultures' banners at the RIAT demonstrate, the overcoming of racial and cultural difference through military service somewhat 'elides historically rooted colonial frameworks' (Sidaway 2010: 678). In the last instance – the Medical Reserves Tent – the commonly-practiced specification of place (through 'current deployment' maps) become problematic at the airshow as they are allied, either directly or indirectly, with often shocking evocations of combat.

Although the three examples above demonstrate simply and directly, for example, the designation of places – the imaginative opening up of places like Afghanistan via notions of danger and particular and 'appropriate' military responses – a purely iconographic analysis of such images only tells part of the story. What is pivotally important in these cases is *how* such images and visual materials are used at the show, and how they are arranged (spatially) to inculcate particular ideas and induce particular responses. Much like the discussions in the previous chapter, recruiting at the airshow, because it is spatially manifest as stalls, stands, banners and hoardings, can be usefully considered *advertising in place* (Law 1997; Fleming and Roth 1991). Simply, rather than taking as rote the use of spatial imaginaries in such examples, we should turn our attention here to the imaginative use of space in the creation of 'an appealing context for marketing a product or service' (Fleming and Roth 1991: 281). In other words, rather than relying only upon the iconographic geopolitics of RAF recruiting at the airshow, we should consider representation here differently, and as 'a set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated' (Duncan 2000: 704). The more-than-representational qualities of recruiting at the show, in these terms, warrants a brief discussion before we move on.

Firstly, as with the example from the Medical Reserves tent at Sunderland airshow, the arrangement of recruiting materials in particular ways acts to *frame* and contextualise particular images. The 'current deployment' maps of Afghanistan and Helmand Province, for example, gain credence from, and are authenticated by, the 'real' images of combat displayed close by, and by the IED victim dummy. Similarly, the use of *Clayton Hudson* much like a newspaper bill outside the Intelligence Reserves tent acts to frame the duties of

the personnel present, and to remind the showgoer of the dangerous realities faced by Britain's fighting forces. Secondly, the visual materials present in these cases prompt and encourage engagement. Placed alongside objects, interactive games and tasks, images here act merely as one component in a broader set of practices which go towards a particular imagination of what the military is, what it does and where it does it. Overall, however, in recognising that images do work at the airshow in ways similar to that of print-based campaigns is also to recognise that space and the arrangement of images, things and people in the space of the show is important. To unpick these assumptions, and to explore RAF recruiting at the show as a form of advertising-in-place, we turn now to the theme of branch-specific recruiting, and subsequently, to consider the show as a more general space of consumption.

Branch-specific recruiting and the show

One of the ways in which we might make sense of the arrangement of RAF recruiting at the show – and particularly that of *engagement* – is by considering the theme of branch-specific recruiting. The airshow, acting as it does to provide a showcase of what the RAF has to offer the potential recruit (and visa-versa), is arranged in ways as for the separate branches of the RAF to advertise the contributions they make to defence, and to allow the RAF to provide an idea of the attributes that make the ideal pilot, technical officer, regiment gunner or medical reservist etc. Importantly, the airshow offers the RAF something unique in this respect, and centrally, allows the RAF to advertise beyond the main print-based recruiting campaigns. As one Territorial Army recruiter at the 2009 Northumberland Show told me:

> So much advertising [recruitment] is done now on TV, the internet etc., and these presences [at airshows and large public events] are important because there are differences between promotion at these two levels; the larger promotion on the TV and the Battalion/Unit level. People are just not aware of what we do at a unit level. We're here [at the show] just to tell people that the Army isn't just infantry and shooting, but also about logistics, tech, desk jobs etc.

Although, historically, much of the RAF's 'main' recruiting campaigns were branch-specifically orientated (the period of the Cold War being one example), more recent changes to the organisation of 'main campaign' military recruitment in the UK have nearly exclusively been geared towards a homogenous message. Characteristically, in terms of the RAF, this has arguably entailed the use of the 'pilots and fast jets' image which has come

to dominate the popular imagination.[15] Summarily, that the airshow provides the military a way to counter the seemingly limiting effects of main campaigns has some relevance for how we might think through the significance of branch-specific presences at the show. More specifically, it contextualises the efforts to which the military goes to provide bespoke imaginations of, and enable tailored engagements with, individual RAF branches.

Figure 4.4 Waddington 2009: RAF recruiting stalls

For instance, as briefly discussed, the RAF is present at the airshow in the form of recruiting stalls and tents, static aircraft displays and guided aircraft 'walk-ons' all of which use visual materials for advertisement and engagement. The airshow allows branch-specific recruiting in this sense because it enables individual branches to be present separately in the form of a stall or stand. For example, at the Waddington airshow (figure 4.4), showgoers and potential recruits may have visited the awning of the Heavy Logistics Branch, a zone dedicated to the RAF Regiment, a combined recruiting van (at which, after a member of

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[15] One might argue that the popular, 'common-sense' image of the RAF as about pilots and fast jets has been somewhat compounded by the slogans of the main campaigns. For example, apart from the more recent 'be part of the story' slogan we often see reference to flight and airpower across the archive; for example 'You don't need to be a pilot to fly in the RAF', (c.1990-2000), 'Rise above the rest' (c.1980-90 'The RAF: Flying…and a career' (c.1970-80) 'Royal Air Force: Aerocrats' (c.1960-70), 'Fly with the RAF' (c.1940-50).

staff asked of your qualifications and interests, might direct you to the correct stall), or the RAF Intelligence tent, amongst others. For a study of recruitment, what is important is that each of these branch-specific presences provide something different (something necessarily divergent from the 'main' campaign message), and use visual images engagingly in different ways.

Building upon the theme of cartographic representation, for example, visitors at the 2010 airshow in Sunderland were provided the opportunity to play the role of an RAF Intelligence operative in a mock field-station (figure 4.5). Using 'real' cartographic and satellite imagery from the RAF's recent intelligence operations, showgoers were provided a pen and pad and were able to complete a fact-finding exercise aimed at identifying enemy locations. In the first instance, the Intelligence branch, here, provide an individuated experience which highlights the specific skills required and practiced by the Intelligence operative (counter to the main recruiting narrative). But, in doing so, they provide an insight into the use and interpretation of space by the military, and importantly, allow for these insights to be engaged with and performed. The problematic of the designation of space (after Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992) and of the distancing nature of satellite imagery are, thus, bound up (unproblematically) in an exercise which is designed simply to provide the showgoer an idea of what the RAF is, what it does and where it does it.

Figure 4.5 Sunderland 2010: RAF Intelligence mock field-station with cartographic and satellite imagery

Beyond this, though, the typically problematic (iconographic *and* engaging) nature of visual materials also allows us to comment further on what, in chapter two, was called the interpellation of recruit identities. Namely, presences such as the mock field-station and other branch-specific activities are very much about the advertisement of the skills practiced by, and required for, service within the branch. The skills required by an Intelligence analysis (thoughtfulness, repose, problem-solving) are, necessarily, very much different from those of the medical branch, the Heavy Logistics branch or of an Armourment Technician. Importantly, however, the airshow allows for the expression of these skills as part of the branch-specific presences. For example, at the RIAT the intelligence branch allowed showgoers to don a pair of headphones, to listen to radio instructions about enemy positions and to move magnetic strips containing vital data around a board which would, if completed correctly, identify the 'ambush point' of an approaching enemy. Similarly, the RAF Regiment at Waddington 2009 told of the 'Seven Sniper Skills' practiced and required by the Regiment sniper specialist (figure 4.6), and so, framed the opportunity to handle a rifle under the watchful eye of Regiment personnel.

Figure 4.6 Waddington 2009: The Seven Sniper Skills[16]

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[16] The small print here is significant. A section of the text reads, after detailing the seven essential sniper skills including map reading and shooting to kill with one shot, "RAF Regiment snipers are currently employed on

The context in which recruiting is done at the airshow is, thus, one in which the showgoer might tailor their engagements with the many branch-specific presences according to their personal interests. However, in this sense, recruiting at the show is also about allowing for a connection to be made between individuals, identities and RAF trades. Much like the theme of identity interpellation discussed in the second chapter, rather than being solely confined to the assertion of versions of the world, the testing of types of skill and aptitude in exercises such as the Intelligence analysis task at Waddington is an attempt, arguably, to suggest a connection between the abilities of the showgoer, and the abilities required by that of military service. Put more simply, the providence of skills-based and interactive tasks at the show – framed as they are in many cases as tests of knowledge, observation or problem-solving – enable the potential recruit to position themselves relative to the military, and to envisage the role they might play (not least because it is quite easy to be successful at the tasks provided). Read through Dittmer and Larsen's (2007) work on interpellation, however, we might draw a number of brief conclusions about this. Firstly, by being offered the chance here to play the part of an Intelligence operative, a Regiment sniper or bomb disposal expert, the showgoer is presented with a limited range of affiliations: if one is not suited to heavy-lifting and survival skills (as championed by the Regiment), one might certainly find a different skill-set more suitable (perhaps those required by Aerospace Managers). However, secondly, by being willed to associate with a set of common-sense attributes, the showgoer is limited, equally, by the social space afforded by the *ideas* associated with the military. Namely, the versions of the world espoused by the RAF, and which are thus performed by the showgoer, are indelibly tied to simplistic imaginations of danger and of foreign enemies, dominant hegemonic narratives of global war, and more generally, to the conscience-free deployment of military force. Lastly, and consequently, much like the examples of recruitment in chapter two, a focus here merely on skills - what you *can* or *might be capable of doing*, in the RAF – leaves little room to consider *why* your skills as an individual should be used to these ends or to any alternative.

In summary, we've seen in these latter examples how, through the use of visual materials to engage showgoers, the RAF provides versions of the world here which also work to tie the individual into particular ideas of personal efficacy, skill and aptitude.

Operations in Afghanistan against insurgent forces. Serving on the Field Squadron based at both Bastion and Kandahar. In addition snipers from the Regiment serve on the Special Forces Support Group in the global war against terror".

Because, in providing skill-sets from which the interested showgoer might choose, the RAF allows a simple connection to be made between what a showgoer might be good at, and the possible utilisation of this skill in a dangerous and threatening world. There are, however, a number of other conclusions to be made at this point. As an RAF recruiter at the Sunderland airshow in 2010 suggested:

> The RAF is like a town. Just think of any [job] you might have in a town, for example, dentist, doctor, and we have it.

In seeing that recruiting at the airshow is divided into branch-specific presences, this metaphor is useful in two senses. Firstly, although Adey (2010) suggest that airshows exist generally to stimulate interest in aviation, we've gained here a quite different impression of the possibility to become interested and engaged. Because – very much like a town in its organisation – the show is arranged so as to counter the homogenous message of 'main' recruiting campaigns, it would be more correct to say, at least in terms of the formal RAF presences, that the show stimulates interest in a range of different ideas other than that just of aviation. Although each branch of the RAF tells of its role in the world, each differs in emphasis, tone and reach. The use of maps at the Intelligence stall provides a very different imagination of military force than does the opportunity to handle a sniper rifle or mortar with the Regiment. Beyond providing only an idea of aviation here, the show enables an engagement with ideas around surveillance and covert (terrestrial combat) operations or the use of particular weapons systems in the 'War on Terror'. Each of which, is, necessarily, based on its own typology of core assumptions around danger, threat and space. Above all, this suggests that it will be important to be mindful in later chapters of how branch-specific messages might differ, diverge and exist alongside the 'common-sense' narratives of the RAF.

Secondly, we've seen here how recruiting at the show is arranged spatially to provide the showgoer a broad a range of experiences which pertain to the different branches of the RAF. However, with this, there are corollaries. Namely, in limiting our focus only to the formal RAF presences, we're unable to account for the broader landscape of the show, which, if the history of airshows is to believed, is more generally conducive to particular imaginations of nation and militaristic attitudes towards the world. This accepted, it is also notable that the formal presences at the airshow are, even according to the recruiters themselves, only indirectly linked to recruitment. As one RAF recruiter at the

South Shields branch of the Territorial Army (which was playing host to a combined Army/Navy/RAF recruiting effort on National Armed Forces Day, 2009) told me:

> Seen as we [the RAF] have forces across the world at the moment, it is important that we have a presence, and that we are seen by the general public. It [National Armed Forces Day] is not particularly about recruitment, but that would be a bonus.

Equally, as a recruiter at Waddington airshow suggested:

> It [the RAF airshow presence] is about general awareness-raising. You won't be getting people signing on the dotted line, rather it's about awareness.

In the final discussion of this section, we therefore move (literally and conceptually) beyond the formal recruiting presences at the show, and assess how, as a broader landscape, the show might be conducive to particular imaginations of geography, politics and the military. In doing so, we also move – as stated in the opening – to consider the airshow as a culture of militarisation.

Whither recruitment? The show as a space

Inquiring whether, as Adey (2010) puts it, the airshow acts as a 'subliminal persuader', an event which creates a public susceptible to a message and adjusted to an opinion, will take two forms here. Firstly, it will take the form of outlining how airshow space is arranged and divided to allow and/or limit access. Secondly, it will entail outlining how, because of these arrangements, we might think of the airshow as a spectacular landscape (Ley and Olds 1988); a space conducive of certain, partisan imaginations of the military and military defence. This section will finish by suggesting that although the airshow is as much about the 'ballet of sociality on the ground' as it is the 'dance in the sky' (Adey 2010: 61), it is the visualities of airshow spaces which are pivotal here in the performance of geopolitics. Firstly, though, we turn to describe what lies beyond the formal RAF recruiting presences, and to the show-as-landscape.

As is clear from a map of one of the larger annual U.K. airshows (figure 4.7), the airshow is comprised of an ensemble of static aircraft presences, corporate and commercial stalls, stands and shops, food outlets, municipal facilities and more formal military (including recruitment) compounds. Circumscribing until the next section the distinct verticalities unaccounted for in this image, airshow maps also betray a set of arrangements which draw up and divide space according to where showgoers should and shouldn't go, and importantly, where types of showgoers can go, and where others can't.
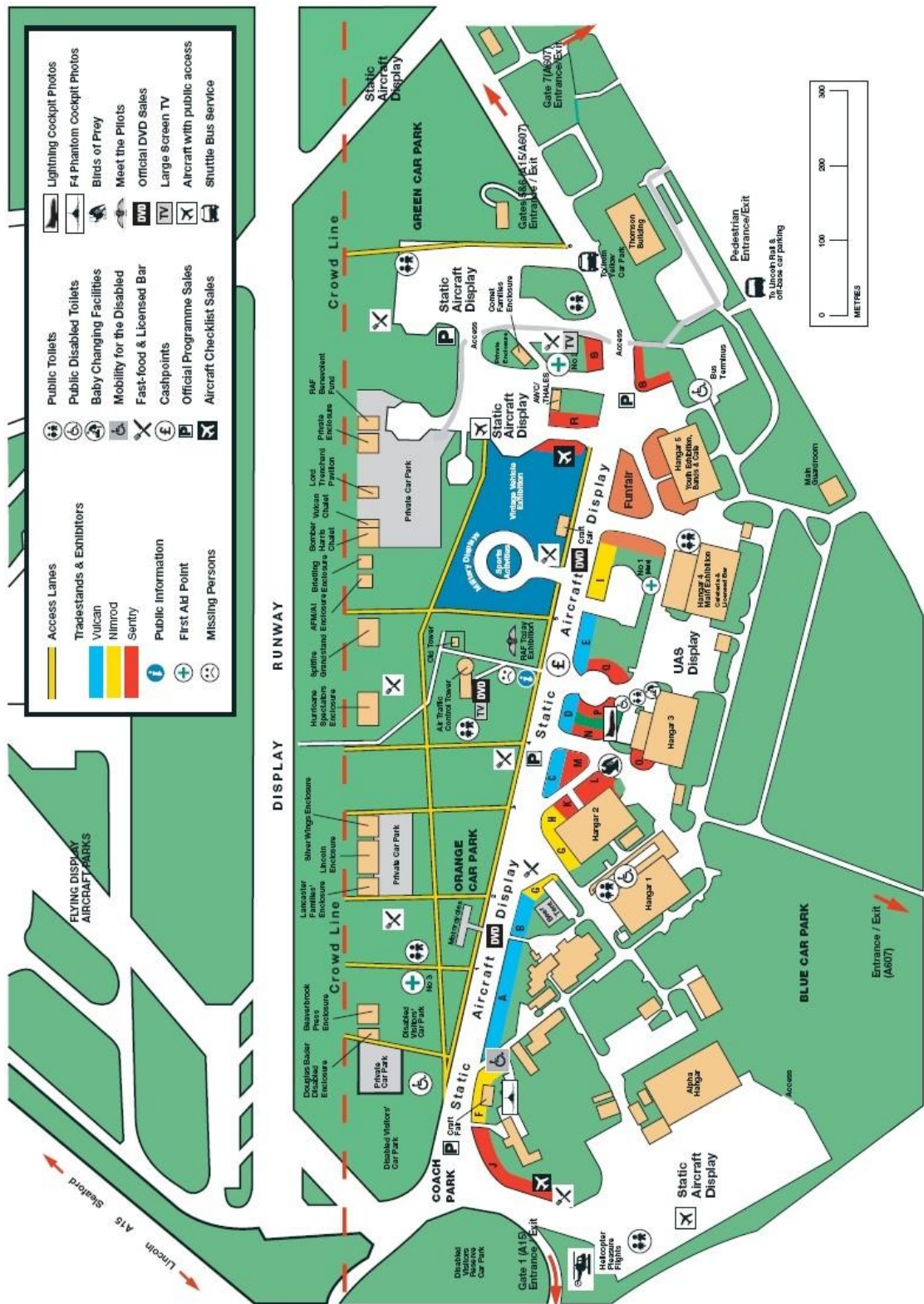
Figure 4.7 Waddington 2009: Showground map

We might begin to understand this by considering the most marked feature of the division of airshow space; the crowdline. The crowdline (shown in figure 4.7 in dashed red) formally exists to separate showgoers from the airfield and to demarcate the horizontal,

lateral and vertical limit of aircraft displays for reasons of safety (MAA 2010). In doing so, this line also marks out the limits of public accessibility and military control in this space. Namely, although airshows allow access to spaces usually barred to the public, those parts of the airfield which remain behind the crowdline are strictly controlled and always securitised. Separate to this though, that the crowdline offers the best view across the airfield and of the passing aircraft is clearly written into the space of the show. For example, ticketing for the Waddington airshows, whilst divided into the normal categories of age and concession, is also divided in respect of zones. These differently-priced zones – e.g. the 'Lancaster Families Enclosure', the 'Spitfire Grandstand' and the 'Bomber Harris Chalet' (figure 4.7) – offer levels of comfort, amenity and optical perspective according to their varying price. Situated along the crowdline itself, some with private parking, dining service and bars, these zones occupy the best viewing spaces available (with raised stands and a relatively central aspect), and are accessible only to those with valid zone passes. With the majority of showgoers confined merely to the 'open-access' spaces of the show, the zoning of airshows not only demonstrates the division of space according to levels of sociality and comfort (Demetz 2007; Adey 2010), but optical affordance (and more will be said of this in the following discussions).[17]

The explicit involvement of corporate enterprise in the zoning of airshows (for example, the 'Breitling' enclosure at Waddington which was twinned with the Breitling flight display team) allows us to comment on the wider organisation of show space. Namely, whilst the 'dance in the sky' at all airshows contains not only military but civil, corporate and charity-funded aircraft, so do terrestrial spaces of the show contain presences sponsored by manufacturing firms, defence companies and commerce. At Waddington airshow, for example, along rows of static military aircraft and on the dedicated access lanes across the airfield, one might take in views across the show whilst experiencing the 'perfect shave' courtesy of the Gillette mobile team. Differently, at Sunderland airshow 2009, visitors might have tested their aim and accuracy at the Army's paintball shooting range and their hand-eye-coordination with Nintendo at the Wii Sports Resorts tent.

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[17] The social architecture of the show, whist accounted for in the literature and seen in the landscape as part of zoning and 'private enclosure' ticketing is also written more generally into the commercialisation of show space. For instance, as part of the Fairford 2012 'Exhibitor and Trader' brochure (Airrattoo.com 2012a), retailers are provided a breakdown of the social profile of airshow visitors based on a classification of residential neighbourhoods (addresses gathered from ticket delivery requests). At Fiarford RIAT 2011, for example, 38.8% of visitors were 'Wealthy Achievers' and 9.2% 'Hard Pressed'. Overall, the profile suggests that visitors in 2011 were more than 20% better off than the U.K. average.

Figure 4.8 RIAT 2010: Airshow sponsors

Though it has been argued that spaces such as the airshow induce affective resonances between bodies, objects, environments and people through the management of touch, sensation and proximity (Bissel 2008; Adey 2010), the marked involvement of corporate enterprise in this (figure 4.8) is important. Along with the more predictable corporate and commercial presences at the show (Gillette, Nintendo, food and drink outlets), the shaping of space and experience by military defence firms and other retailers is altogether more problematic. For example, with little information of their involvement in global arms manufacture, firms such as Lockheed Marin, BAE, Northrup Grumman and QinetiQ often provide showgoers spaces of entertainment. At the RIAT, showgoers were provided a chance to meet 'Brains', a 10-foot tall BAE Systems robot which would shake hands with visitors and respond to simple problem-solving tasks. Amidst the corporate spaces at the RIAT, again, Lockheed Martin allowed showgoers to operate a flight simulation of their recent Merlin HM Mk1 Helicopter: younger visitors were encouraged to complete the 'TooBeez Challenge' – a practical puzzle designed to test to-be Lockeed engineers. And at Waddington, General Atomics, Cobham and BAE exhibited working versions of their drones in a large marquee and proudly extolled the military and civil applications of 'persistent presence'.

Figure 4.9 RIAT 2010: Crowdline apparel

Alongside these corporate presences, the landscape of the show is also marked by the presence of myriad retailers who specialise in military clothing (figure 4.9), games, models and modelling, or DVDs of past airshows and classic military aircraft. Summarily, if the airshow, as the opening section of this chapter described, works to 'create a public…who could be urged to believe…that sufficient…airmen shall be trained to fly without further delay' (Adey 2010: 59), the extra-military landscape of the show should rightly be thought of as complicit in this regard. Thought of simply, the types of corporate and retail presences at the airshow are certainly ones that work here via unproblematic, and unproblematised, assumptions around the role of the military. But more specifically, that evocations of state and military power at the show sit seamlessly alongside the promotion of arms companies, for example, indicates a particular landscape which we might interpret through the theme of consumption, and so link to the hegemonic effects of spectacular mass cultures.

As Ley and Olds (1988) argue of the similarly spectacular World's Fairs, the complicity of (partisan) big-business in the organisation of large public events are often bound to stratified admissions policies and a latent politics which is smoothed-over by the dazzle of spectacle. Taking issue particularly with the latter here, politics, commerce or

trade (seen above as recruitment, big-business and military-themed retailing) merely on their own do not normally constitute an environment primed, *pace* Adey (2010), to imbibe particular opinions. Rather, 'the dramatic expression of mass society', grandeur, 'spectacle, fantasy, and entertainment' (Ley and Olds 1988: 199) supported, sponsored and articulated technically and ideologically by an elite, are needed in ubiquity to 'enchant and divert the masses from more serious matters'. In this respect, taking into consideration the broader landscape of the show allows us to make one point of summary, and to pose a point of departure for the next discussion.

Firstly, in considering the extra- or beyond-military (i.e. recruitment) presences at the show, we've seen how the organisation of space indeed reflects the striving for 'proper forms of society' (Pearman 2004 in Adey 2010: 66), or, at least, the division of space along lines of class and privilege. Linked to this, the zoning of airshow space – be it through crowdline division or the specification of 'access lanes' of prescribed movement – marks the show out to be a space of (military/corporate) control, and an expression of the necessity to allow and/or block access. More importantly though, we've seen how the concomitance of state and corporate presences, whilst forming the landscape of the show itself, might arguably work to direct attention toward, or away from, particular ideas (in this case of the military and military power). Bound up, as Ley and Olds (1988) suggest, with the necessarily 'spectacular' nature of large public events such as these, the inculcation of particular ideas about the world should be thought a matter of social control and hegemony.

However, in that Ley and Olds' (1988) thesis is designed to enable a critique of the conceptual basis for links between hegemony, spectacle and social control (being a critique of the Frankfurt school), it allows us to make some useful modifications of this argument. As they suggest, speaking of the Expo 86 World's Fair, rather than suggesting that 'spectacle represent[s] the hegemonic values of an elite [which are] foisted upon a deluded mass public' (191), events such as these represent a fractured, negotiated power which is never absolute – something which does not appear without paradox and inconsistency. In this sense, although the wider landscape of the show works via a similar logic as do the recruiting presences (i.e. simple, unproblematic assumptions about the role and utility of military power), we cannot say that the control of space at the show is conclusively tantamount to the control of ideas. Whilst Ley and Olds challenge the assumptions of structural approaches to mass culture in this way by investigating showgoer perceptions, we might move on by doing something similar, and enquire as to the way airshows are experienced. In order, then, to question how ideas (about what the military is, what it does

and where it does it) are entrained as part of the spectacular airshow experience, we turn to the visual, and specifically, how techniques of observing here might be thought a 'means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies' (Crary 2000: 5). To foreground this, the next is a short discussion to pull out the visual threads of the airshow space.

Rejoinder: space and vision

In exploring some of the salient features of airshow space, a common theme emerges; that of the necessity to see (on the part of the showgoer) and the necessity to be seen (as an objective of the military, retailers and corporations). Alongside the spectacular sights above the showground, companies are encouraged to vie for the most visible spaces of the show (which are price-graded according to prominence), and as we've heard, there is a marked economy of access which, amongst other things, is bound to the affordance of visual perspective. Beyond this though, some of the retailer presences at the show begin to tell us something more fundamental about the experience of the show in this respect.

As will be explored in the last section of this chapter, there is an imperative to see and observe at the show which is bound to ideas of acquisition, focus, capture and detail. For example, at the RIAT, showgoers are encouraged to purchase a static aircraft display checklist to make sure they have seen all of the exhibits; each aircraft is given a number which corresponds to its make and model (figure 4.10). Along with the show's audio announcer who dutifully suggests in which direction to look in the sky for the best photo opportunities, the imperative to capture in detail the visual aspects of the show are also formalised through retail and consumption. Namely, a large proportion of retailers at airshows are sellers of cameras, binoculars, telescopes and tripods; the imperative to capture, own and see-in-detail the spectacular sight/site of the show being a necessary part of showgoing.

Figure 4.10 RIAT 2010: Does Dad know what this is?

Pointing not only, again, to the commensurability of state, national and commercial affairs at the show, the prominence of specific technologies/techniques of vision here will form the basis for the next discussion. In continuing to consider the airshow a culture of militarisation, and to think through its significance beyond the formalities of recruitment, work by MacDonald (2006 2010) and Crary (1989 1992 2000) in particular will be drawn upon to pose several interrelated questions. Firstly, the next section will ask how specific ways of seeing are entrained and insisted upon at the airshow, and how these ways of seeing might be related to ways of knowing about, and understanding what the military is, what it does and where it does it. Secondly, it will ask how (the insistence upon) ways of seeing are tantamount to subjectification, and thus, how visual practices tie the individual

into the political world of the state (MacDonald 2006). Lastly, it will consider to what extent seeing and sighting at the airshow might be thought militaristic in themselves, being all about targeting, tracking and capture.

4.3 Seeing the show

In attempting to assess the usefulness of a 'spectacular' conceptual approach to the airshow by detailing how the show is experienced visually, it will be useful to briefly theorise the 'spectacular' and how it relates to practices of vision. We've seen, in the first instance, via Ley and Olds (1988), the usefulness of Debord's (1992) notion of the spectacle in the way that it allows us to account for the commensurability, and thus effectiveness, of state and corporate presences at the show. In eschewing the more uncompromising critique of economic production inherent in Debord's analysis, Ley and Olds' (1988) work, though, might be naturally extended through a discussion of more recent work which encounters the (often militarised) politics of, and practices of seeing, the spectacular. Much like Ley and Olds (1988), Crary (1989) questions the conceptual use of 'spectacle' more generally: he asks, for instance, if the notion of spectacle is not, in fact, the 'imposition of an illusory unity onto a more heterogeneous field' (96). Similarly, MacDonald (2006) suggests that the concept of spectacle disclosed in Debord's work is curiously linear and non-reciprocal; something which casts the citizen-observer as the passive subject. To reach a standpoint at this stage, whereas Ley and Olds' (1988) Expo 86 was a fractured, inconsistent expression of political power, the concept of spectacle, in kind, is taken to mean a 'patchwork or mosaic of techniques [that] can…constitute a homogenous effect of power' (Crary 1989: 96).

Taking this standpoint, though, does not enable us to correctly identify, situate or understand the strategies, effects and requisite techniques of 'spectacle-power'. As Crary (1989: 98) continues, one of the more striking features of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* 'was the absence of any kind of historical genealogy'. Furthermore, this lack of historical specificity belies the extent to which 'spectacle' might mean different things and be differently effective at different times and in different places. The remedy for this here is twofold. Firstly, in order to correctly identify, situate and understand the *strategies* and *effects* of 'spectacle-power', one must account for the development of the history of spectacle as it is allied to the airshow. Achieved in part through the brief history of airshows in section 4.1, there is ready evidence for the historical development of the airshow-as-spectacle (in terms of airpower, and the organisation of space and spectatorship)

and its attendant politics (i.e. nationalism). What remains for an analysis of modern airshows is, thus, how these strategies and effects are played out in particular circumstances. Whilst a Debordian concept of spectacle might normally be less concerned with 'cultural events' than with *the* spectacle of an image-saturated world (Pinder 2009: 717), the concern here is the former, and with the particularities of events which display 'a high degree of display and theatricality' (Kong and Yeoh 1997: 216; see also Daniels and Cosgrove 1993). More specifically, it is with:

> Spectacle as it is used to inspire positive feelings of admiration and wonder…[and where it] connotes triumph and proclamations and achievements. [It] may be attained through the deliberate use of ceremony; the conscious construction of pomp; the creation of occasion and circumstances for celebration; and visual effects (Kong and Yeoh 1997: 216).

Secondly, to be able to move past a merely Deboridan concept of spectacle (and its attendant problems), one must account for the *requisite techniques* adopted or prescribed that mediate the experience of the show, and moreover, their politics. In other words, as MacDonald (2006: 58) puts it, we must 'question the agency that adheres to the spectacular'. As the final parts of the previous section detailed, there are several instances whereby the visual is prescribed as *the* way of experiencing the show. Where spectacle might often 'effect strong influence in the realm of social life and popular consciousness' (Kong and Yeoh 1997: 216), the focus here will be on the visual techniques – 'gazing, glancing, peeking, gawking, looking away' (MacDonald 2010: 274) – which serve as a means 'by which a perceiver becomes open [or otherwise] to control and annexation by external agencies' (Crary 2000: 5). Following MacDonald (2010), vision is political here in that whilst the showgoer *only sees what they look at* (c.f. Berger 2008), the management of what is visible at the show, and the management of how the visible comes to be seen, connotes a powerful tendency on the part of state and corporate enterprise to include or exclude things from the field of vision. Linking specifically to the inspiration of 'positive feelings' towards or 'admiration' of the military, the remaining discussion asks how the construction of particular visual subjects 'fitted to the task of spectacular consumption' (Crary 1992: 19) enables the objects of vision (aeroplanes, weapons, personnel) to assume a mystical and abstract identity; an identity which is based on core geopolitical assumptions and unproblematic notions of military service and culture.

Summarily, the questions this final section asks are: how is display and theatre used at the show to validate particular understandings of the military? How are visual techniques

prescribed at the show, and how might seeing-the-show be bound to certain (unproblematic, celebratory and valedictory) conceptions of what the military is, what it does, and where it does it? The discussion below is divided into two parts and, following the above theorisation of spectacle and vision, it will explore, firstly, *what* can be seen at the show, and secondly, *how* seeing is experienced, enabled and prescribed.

The airshow: what can be seen

If the previous discussions in this chapter has accounted for the 'ballet of sociality' (Adey 2010: 61) on the ground at airshows, this final discussion aims to account for the 'dance in the sky'. The modern airshow experience is, at root, a celebration of the aeroplane, airpower and the capabilities of national air forces. A day at an airshow is organised (temporally at least) around flight displays with a near constant programme of aircraft flypasts, acrobatics and special events such as mock bombing-runs. From the corporate-sponsored aircraft of the Breitling team, the charity-funded Vulcan Bomber of the 'Vulcan to the sky' organisation, to the state-sponsored military aircraft of various nations, for example, the showgoer is provided spectacular displays of technical ability, bravery and daring, but predominantly, a demonstration of military prowess. Military aircraft are seen to provide startling fetes such as vertical take-offs, high-speed, near-supersonic fly-pasts, and in the case of the RAF's Red Arrows, artful sequences of mid-air acrobatics. The airshow is also an explicit expression of patriotism and remembrance; the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) team is a recurring fixture across many modern U.K. airshows, just as it is present at many state occasions. And the airshow and its displays are an often explicit expression of political and military alliance; one is often reminded by airshow commentators – during spectacular fetes of aerobatics and the like – of the role individual aircraft have played as part of historical NATO operations or as part of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It should not be so surprising that the modern airshow is a superlative, enchanting evocation of military power, nation and political alliance. Neither should it be surprising that the military itself considers the show central to broader cultures of acquiescence and diplomacy. Indeed, written explicitly into the promotional materials of the spectacular 'public face' of the RAF (the Red Arrows), is a concern to:

> Promote the professional excellence of the Royal Air Force, assist in recruiting into the
> Royal Air Force, contribute to Defence Diplomacy when displaying overseas and support

wider British interests through the promotion of British industry by demonstrating the capabilities of its equipment and expertise (RAF 2012a)

That the airshow and the RAF's cultures of display, then, are bound to the more serious business of statecraft and diplomacy is indicative of the ways in which the show acts to entrain specific imaginations of geographies and politics. In the following discussion, we turn to explore this, and in outlining more thoroughly the show as an event, demonstrate how the show entrains (and utilises) particular imaginations of nation and alliance, global drama and difference, and war-time heritage.

Figure 4.11 Waddington 2009: Red Arrows

Of the things that can be seen at the airshow, spectacular evocations of nationalism and alliance are among the more explicit. For example, clothed in red, white and blue smoke-trails, the Red Arrows (figure 4.11), as the show commentator tells us, represent the 'Best of British'; the often muted fly-pasts of the BBMF (the Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane) are matched only by the solemn watchfulness which so often accompanies this typification of 'wartime Britain'; the emblematic Cold War aircraft – the Avro Vulcan – though lumbering in comparison to its modern equivalents, receives a cult-like following at the show, being as it is the Falklands 'war bird' and former carrier of Britain's nuclear

deterrent: the Vulcan, during the times that it appeared at airshows was accompanied by Holst's 'Mars: the Bringer of War', and seemed a stark and certainly nostalgic aesthetisisation of Cold War Britain.

Although, of the airshows visited for the study, the celebration of British nationalism (albeit filtered through the lens of military power) predominated, the category, qualifier and essence of 'nation' is articulated more widely. For example, in the lead up to the Fairford RIAT airshow, its organisers update its potential visitors on confirmed aircraft by presenting a list of nations who have accepted, not responded to, or who have declined the RIAT invitation (Airtattoo.com 2012b). (Declinations have followed this year from Chile, Cyprus and Latvia amongst others.) Even if a particular aerial demonstration is being performed by a civilian aircraft, but especially if the aircraft is of military origin, the announcer is always clear to comment on the nationality of body and machine. Nationhood is also expressed as a part of aerial demonstrations themselves; alongside the red-white-blue smoke trails of the RAF is the bright orange of the Dutch, the green-white-red of Italy and the red and white splash of the Patrouille Suisse. In simple and straightforward ways, the airshow in this sense is a national space. More specifically it is a space in which nationalism and national identity is allowed to 'condense and coalesce' (Adey 2010: 70), and a space in which common-sense and dominant political categories find their spectacular expression.

Bearing in mind, however, the concept of nationalism as it has been discussed so far in the thesis, the airshow is also a space in which dominant 'geo-graphs' (Ó Tuathail 1996) of nation (those of same/other, enemy/ally, inside/out and the relationships between them) resonate through spectacular evocations of military alliance. For instance, it is always made clear to the viewer (and listener) at the show that many of the daring pilots have been drawn from front-line military service; new Red Arrows team members have often 'just finished a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan'. As the show announcer dutifully informs the crowd of the symbolic meaning of different display formations, their narrative often makes use of the broader internationalism of current conflicts: as the enraptured crowd is told at Fairford airshow, 'the Red Arrows are proud to fly [at the airshow] alongside their coalition allies'.

Along with these more general evocations of nationalism (at least as they apply to a sense of collective military endeavour), the airshow also allows for more specific connections to be made between the immediacy of spectacle and imagined global dramas. For instance, as part of the Hawker Beechcraft display at Fairford, the crowd were treated

to the spectacle of the 'Khe Sahn' landing (a rapid-descent, short-runway landing which is designed to shield aircraft from enemy small-arms fire). Mastered, initially, in Vietnam by the Americans, the announcer tells us, 'the Khe Sahn was then used in Bosnia and Kosovo by the RAF, and is being used to great effect currently in Afghanistan and Iraq'. A more widely-used strategy to frame demonstrations by the RAF in particular is the reminder that, despite the glamorous nature of flight, it's important to remember the RAF's ground crews, 'especially with our current commitments in Afghanistan' (Sunderland airshow 2010). Lastly, no more were the geo-graphs of recent global dramas more stark than with the flight of the American B-52 Stratofortress at RIAT (figure 4.12). Here, as the announcer relayed, 'many of us [military personnel] have been privileged to witness the con-trails flying high over Afghanistan delivering welcome payloads on the enemy'.

Figure 4.12 RIAT 2010: B-52 and con-trails

The airshow, being a space conducive to the flamboyant aestheticisation and celebration of common-sense national politics, is also, then, a space in which the self-evident global geopolitics of conflict secure legitimacy in the immediacy of spectacle. Issues of national alliance, historical conflict-drama and the Otherings of the War on Terror here become literal, material and tangible with the twists, turns and loops of aircraft.

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Summarily, the airshow not only allows for the expression of unproblematic imaginations of military culture, but provides a space in which these imaginations find their spectacular expression in and through the watchfulness of showgoers. In order to explore this particular argument further, we turn now to the ways in which the show deals with the theme of war-time heritage. Notably, whilst the previous examples deal much with the way air displays are framed by the audio announcer the next will suggest ways in which the visual in-and-of-itself is central to the literalisation of military geopolitics.

Figure 4.13 Waddington 2009: Lancaster

As touched upon above, the airshows work as a celebration of nation and military endeavour in part because of their universal emphasis on war-time heritage. Alongside the BBMF, the appearance of the Avro Vulcan at a number of the airshows visited, demonstrations by various other historical aircraft like the Lancaster (figure 4.13) or the inclusion this year at Fairford of the 'Battle of Britain village' and the 'Vulcan Cold War Zone' (Airtattoo.com 2012c), the airshow readily indulges a nostalgia for certain versions of the past. This sense of nostalgia is often extended spectacularly though by the blending of old and new at the show. A common aerial fete is a joint display of the Spitfire and the Eurofighter Typhoon: the Spitfire is seen in these cases to lead the display, the much faster

Typhoon following, slowly, in a kind of deference to the mythic, defence-of-Britain qualities of the Spitfire.

The blending of old and new, present and absent at the show – following the earlier discussions of the concept of history in recruiting – works here, arguably, to entrain particular notions of military legitimacy. Different to the historicism of print-based recruitment, however, here it is the immediate *visibility* of old and new at the show which is generative of this effect. As Crary (1989: 103) argues, an effect of spectacle is that it works in ways that allows for 'hierarchies of power formations' to warp perceived reality and to imbibe it with collective historical memories. The emphasis, at the airshow, on the collectively-held national myths of the Battle of Britain and the Cold War, and moreover, their spectacular expression in aerial displays, is a case whereby the collapsing-in of myth, history and reality is materialised at the point of perception. As with the print-based examples used in chapter two and three, however, there is something to be said here for the use of myth to make sense of the immediate. As Crary (2000: 100) continues, speaking here of the 'messiness of visual perception':

> Ideas of things and events are never copies of external [visualised] reality, but are rather the outcome of an interactional process within the subject in which ideas undergo operations of fusion, fading, inhibition and blending with other simultaneously occurring presentations.

Simply, whilst it isn't surprising that national myth is celebrated at the airshow, it is that 'ideas of things' undergo operations of fusion and blending which is important for an analysis of geopolitics. Where the historical and new, the mythic and real of conflict, war and violence find their co-determinate expression at the airshow, showgoers are provided a perceptual space in which to conflate collective histories of war with current and on-going conflicts. More literally, the example of the co-presence of Spitfire and Typhoon lend a mythic, 'good war' (Crampton and Power 2005) national legitimacy to the use of modern technologies in the complex battlespaces of the present. Because 'the mind [at the point of perception] does not reflect truth but rather extracts it from an ongoing process involving the collision and merging of ideas' (Crary 2000: 101), the airshow represents a unique space in which ideas around the common-sense moralities of past conflicts are brought to bear on sights which are so readily, and explicitly, linked to contemporary war and geopolitics.

The airshow: how the seen becomes visible

In taking issue with the particularities of visual perception at the show, we move now to discuss some of the issues surrounding the prescription of visual techniques. As briefly noted above, the imperative to see at the show is prescribed in various ways. With the checklisting of static aircraft around the showground, the 'culture of capture' indicated by the prevalence of commercial outlets dealing in optics, and the instructive prompts of the audio announcers ('If you look to the left, be ready with your cameras'), the show insists upon forms of 'enraptured' gazing (MacDonald 2006). Drawing upon a further example, it is notable at some of the bigger shows (the RIAT and Waddington), the visual cultures of the airshow (and their attendant kinds of enraptured seeing) spill out of the airshow space, and across nearby, eye-shot-distance spaces (figure 4.13). For prices much less than those of airshow tickets, it is common to see nearby residents offering garden- or field-side views of the flying demonstrations and the arrival and departure of aircraft on the days before and after the show: the fact that these alternate spaces will deny their occupants the haptic sensualities of the showground, again, emphasises the essentiality of the visual vis-à-vis the celebration of the aeroplane, airpower and the capabilities of national air forces.

Figure 4.14 RIAT 2010: Park and view

To reach a general position on the role of visual prescription and the practice of 'enraptured' gazing at the show, we might return again to the role of the audio announcer. As Adey (2010: 66) suggests, the show announcer is 'appraised for caressing the spectator with intelligent details of the display whilst [at the same time] thrusting information down their necks'. As described, the announcer's role often involves the framing of sights in reference to 'intelligent details' of force deployment, use of weaponry or the global spaces in which the military are active. Whilst, *contra* Adey (2010), there is little evidence here for the forceful imposition of information upon the showgoer, the *means by which* information might be absorbed (i.e. centring overwhelmingly on the visual on visual capture), certainly reflects Adey's more sceptical appraisal. To develop this argument, the final discussion turns specifically to the practice of enraptured gazing at the airshow as it is expressed as a set of acquisitive photographic techniques.
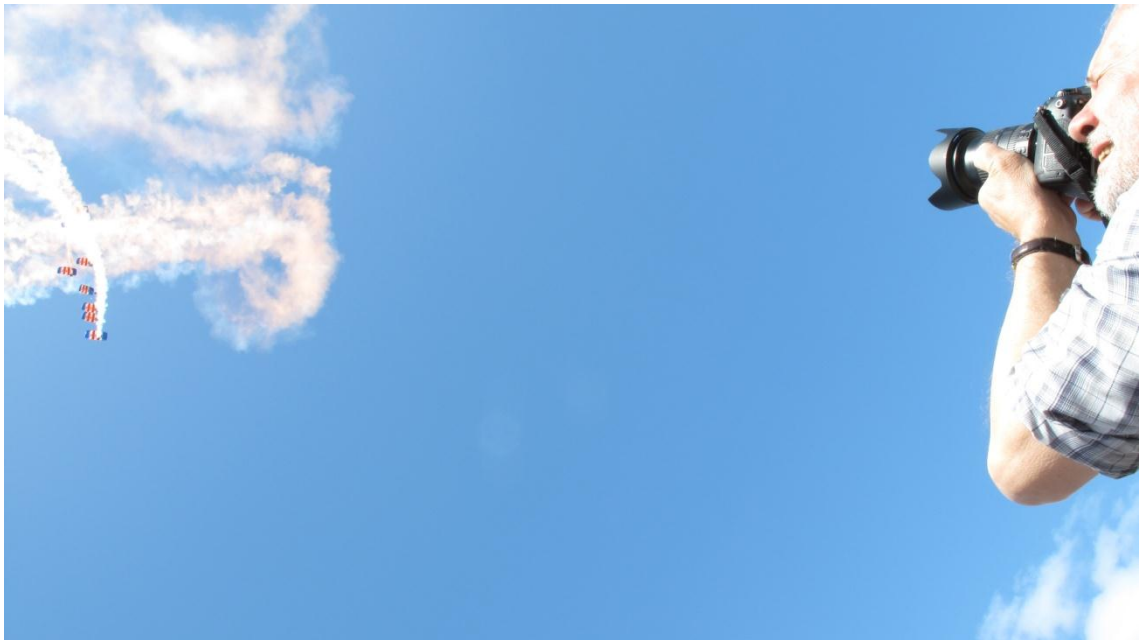
Figure 4.15 Waddington 2009: Camera-vision

Seeing the show, due not least to the framing of displays by audio announcers always as 'great photo opportunities', is often expressed as a need to acquire, photographically, what is seen. Upon looking out over a crowd of rapt showgoers is to see, universally, cameras, flip-cams, telephoto lenses, and connectedly, the performance of seeing by and through the photographic lens. Restricted not just to the camera itself, the imperative to capture and record spills over into practices of 'augmentation' (figure 4.16): many of the more keen photographers at shows choosing to enhance their ability to capture by way of ladders, boxes and other objects. The necessity for an elevated visual and

photographic perspective is clearly a priority for the show organisers more specifically: at RIAT 2010, the showground was being roved by a 'high camera Land Rover' – a vehicle which includes an extendable pole, atop which there was a camera controlled by the driver.

Figure 4.16 RIAT 2010: Augmented seeing

In the first instance, the necessity to capture and the acquisitive nature of seeing at the show might be explained straightforwardly by the desire to 'take home' a part of the show experience. Moreover, with improvements in, and the ubiquitous nature of, digital consumer imaging technologies, it might not be so surprising that the show attracts the types of visual practices which centre on photography. The 'take home' nature of the show is also inscribed into the consumer experience too, with many retailers dealing in DVDs of past airshows. Thinking more critically, and using the 'take home' visualism of the show as a starting point, there are a number of issues to be raised here around the prescription of visual techniques vis-à-vis the enraptured gaze. These issues are fourfold, and centre on the

'delimitation' and authoritativeness of the seen, a problematic around a manageable, predictable visual subject, the militaristic essence of visual capture, and, following MacDonald (2006), visual agency at the show.

Taking these issues in turn, the 'take home' nature of the show entails a certain relationship between the seer and seen, and notably, implies the authoritativeness of the latter. Namely, the airshow works, in part, because the military 'delimits' what is seen, and allows access to what is normally never seen. Aircraft, weapons and demonstrations of military force (things which exist and happen 'out there', beyond the purview of the civilian public) are brought into a regime of openness, display and tangibility. This speaks to a:

> Central paradox in the military strategy of the modern state;…that it [the military] must be transparent in order to be an effective deterrent and yet… sufficiently opaque to retain its competitive military capacity (MacDondald 2006: 67).

In this sense, the perceived 'openness' of the military at airshows results not only in an overall sense of privilege, but a more specific notion that what is seen must be captured, taken away and kept. The 'visceral truth' (MacDonald 2006: 68) of seeing (expressed and celebrated through the camera), the ability for the show to render the normally unseen visible, and furthermore, to grant it the continual status of a 'great photo opportunity', lends credence not only to what is seen, but also to also to the *imaginations* which are associated with it. Put simply, one might argue that seeing at the show is believing. Though this is not an argument for the purity of vision (c.f. Kearnes 2000), the airshow, here, represents a particular combination of the 'seeable' and 'sayable' which results in the prescription of the 'knowable'. Differently, whilst the airshow offers a delimited, tantalising and privileged (in)sight into the military, it is far more likely that the conceptual baggage associated with what is seen is thought of as tantalising, important, and moreover, unproblematic. Thus, the imaginations associated with sights (that of nationalism and the common-sense global geopolitics of military endeavour) – especially because they are consumed as part of acquisitive visual techniques – gain credence as they are performed, expressed and experienced at the show. Borrowing again from MacDonald (2006: 68), the 'enigma of vision is perhaps nowhere more present than in…an encounter with beauty or awe'. Importantly though, as Berger (1964 in MacDonald 2006: 68) suggests, such encounters, 'changes one's spatial sense, or, rather, changes one's sense of Being in space'.

The second problematic around the prescription visual techniques vis-à-vis the enraptured gaze centres on the manageable, predictable visual subject. As discussed, the spectacle of culture represented by the airshow requires, because it insists upon acquisition, 'a very specific form of seeing: participant observation' (Wharton 2007: 158). Much like Wharton's study of capital, spectacle and culture, the airshow:

> Requires not only presence and participation…[but] constant observation, representation and replication through the technologies of digital, phone and video cameras. Being there, and looking is not enough. The participant observer captures the spectacle on camera and video film and at the same time is captured by other participants whilst the media reports and represents the event more widely (158).

Above all, whilst it has been argued that the prescription of visual techniques at the show might entrain particular imaginations of the military, for a sense of the (geo)political to be 'instilled' (Adey 2008) in this way requires a visual subject versed in the etiquette of seeing-at-the-show. That the etiquette of seeing might define the limits of participation and produce certain visual subjectivities, however, is a central problem. As Crary (1992: 18) notes, the rationalization of particular forms of seeing and the making of the visual subject in time (and in place) amounts to a codification and normalisation 'of the observer within…defined systems of visual consumption'. Moreover, this codification involves definite relations of power. Namely, the insistence on, or prescription of, particular ways of seeing has the effect, firstly, of 'rendering docile' (Crary 1992: 15) the observing subject. Here, where camera-vision is dominant at the show, seeing spectacular things is limited to, and licensed by, that which is made possible by the camera. 'Docility' is manifest in the narrow range of visual techniques available to the showgoer (a docility which extends to the range of possible imaginations), and also, to the inability to see in subversive ways: unlike other large public events, the show is closed to subversive practices of vision.

Secondly, the power of visual prescription at the show, drawing on Foucault, is that it represents a range of 'local techniques for controlling, maintaining, and making useful multiplicities of individuals' (Crary 1992: 15). In prescribing the techniques of an observer fitted to the task of spectacular consumption, the show works, here, to (re)produce individuals suited to the task of acquisitive seeing and so adjusted to particular opinions about what the military is, what it does and where it does it. That Foucault (1995) writes around the production of useful individuals in terms of military training (the production of

useful military individuals) should not go unnoted.[18] However, the point here is that the visual regime of the show works to modify 'the productive, cognitive, and desiring capacities of the human subject' (Crary 1992: 3). More simply, through the specificities of seeing-at-the-show, individuals attuned to seeing in particular ways are thus attuned to particular conceptualisations of what is seen. In turn – thinking back to our earlier discussion of *what* might be seen – the show (re)produces individuals more open to particular imaginations of nation and alliance, global drama and difference, and war-time heritage.

A final duo of problematics around enraptured gazing at the show centre on the militaristic essence of visual capture, and a more general concern with the (in)possibility of visual agency. Firstly, whilst the practice of seeing the spectacular at the airshow is dominated, via the lens, by acquisition, there are questions to be raised around the commensurability of this, and the military gaze (seeing, acquiring, targeting). As MacDonald (2006: 57) suggests, 'to have a target in sight [in this case, an aircraft in spectacular throes] is to have already changed the relation between subject and object'. The relation here between subject (the rapt spectator) and object (the awe-inspiring military machine), though, is particular. Whilst the gaze of the spectator undoubtedly 'situates the observer in the world' (MacDonald 2006: 57), the specifically 'military gaze' allied to practices of targeted seeing at the show works, thus, to establish 'the political space of the state in a world of competing sovereignty' (57). Simply, the 'active looking' prescribed by airshow cultures reifies practices and cultures which reinforce, and that are commensurate with, optical practices central to military defence. Indeed, as MacDonald (2006: 57) continues, 'there is…an important relation between practices of looking and the control of territory'; the opportunity to see, and to be seen seeing in acquisitive ways, amounts in part then to a celebration of a faculty deeply central to the operation of military defence, and to the perpetuation of self-evident politics of the state.

Finally, with the relationship between (visual) subject and object in mind, it is worth finishing with a more general discussion of visual agency. Drawing again on MacDonald (2006), a central impetus in deploying an empirical approach to the visuality of geopolitics (as described in chapter two), is to counter a dominant narrative of Cartesian visualism which occupies critical geopolitical analyses of geopolitics. In this sense, approaching

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[18] And Foucault's thesis on discipline and the docile and manipulable body will be explored in more detail in chapter six in direct reference to the enrolment of the body in popular military cultures.

seeing entails considering geopolitical agency more 'diverse and diffuse than [the] singular figure of the theorist/tactician' (MacDonald 2006: 69), and involves exploring the 'active character of *observant practice*'. Although, as we have seen, the airshow does indeed allow the performance of enraptured gazing and its attendant politics, it is less clear to what extent the show allows for visual practices which are dissident or subversive. Put differently, although seeing at the show is active, embodied, and an expression of a particular politics of spectatorship, *seeing otherwise* at the show (looking away, glancing at something else) falls outside the limits set by airshow cultures. Much different to other large public events – say, a music festival, where one might look with disdain – the culture of the show negates practices of perception that might run counter to that of unproblematic enrapture. Whilst the central tenet of this chapter has been to explore this theme (the essential alignment of imagination and perception; the persuasive connection of the *what* and *how* of the show), the debate here is not so much to outline the possibility of dissidence, but to outline the possibility that perception might happen differently and otherwise.

As Crary (1992: 19) suggests, the project of 19th and 20th century modernism (of which the airshow was certainly a product) meant a 'dissociation of touch from sight'. 'The unloosening of the eye from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility', whilst rebuilding the observer and spectatorship, 'enabled…new objects of vision…to assume a mystified and abstract identity, sundered from any relation to the observer's position within a cognitively unified field' (Crary 1992: 19). As it has been argued in this chapter, the centrality of the eye and seeing to the airshow experience has been pivotal to the mysteries and abstractions essential to geopolitical imaginations. Be it a sense of pride in nation, an evocation of global drama or historical military conquest, the self-evidential logics of military life and culture find their expression in the watchfulness of rapt showgoers. However, to foreground the later chapters, in order to more fully account for the experience of military cultures, we shall turn to explore the cognitive field more broadly. Considering perception as it happens otherwise, in these chapters, will enrol the body and senses more expansively, and specifically, it will involve accounting for perception as it happens beyond the visual.

4.4 Discussion: the military, geopolitics and visuality

This chapter was in four parts, and to highlight issues on which to build in later chapters, there are some conclusions to be made. Firstly, in briefly reviewing the history of

airshows, we've seen how the development of the aeroplane has been intimately bound up with spectacular celebrations of nationalism and national military prowess. In this sense, the show is seen to work to inculcate particular versions of the world which revolve around the efficacy of military power, personal and national progress, and on the self-evident politics of the state. Central to this, however, has been the development and organisation of showground *space*, and the prescription therein of *spectatorship*. Drawing on Williams' (2007) notion of 'power projection' and Kong and Yeoh's (1997) 'psychological territories of the everyday', the analysis of airshows in this chapter was thus framed as an inquiry into how these two themes work and intersect, firstly, to constitute and enable recruitment, and secondly, to form a more latent culture of militarisation.

Taking issue with the former, in some senses recruitment at the airshow has been seen to work via similar means as would a print-based campaign. Images, maps, graphics and other visual materials are used here to portray past and current military operations in ways that label and designate the world *a propos* the rightful existence of militaries and military intervention. Importantly though, building upon the chapter two's emphasis on production and 'advertising in place' (Law 1997: Flemming and Roth 1991), representational strategies – because they frame and instigate *interaction* – should rather be thought of as a 'set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated' (Duncan 2000: 704). Moving away from an iconographic analysis, here, allowed for more to be said about the organisation of recruitment as it happens at the show. For instance, the creative arrangement of images and objects in the smaller spaces of recruitment allow for particular connections to be made between the personal aspirations/attributes of potential recruits and dominant military and geopolitical narratives such as the 'War on Terror'. Importantly, a concept of representation which takes into account practice also allows more to be said about the arrangement of recruitment more generally. For example, the show is a space in which the 'main' RAF campaigns (which often focus on 'pilots and fast-jets') can be delineated. The show, in this respect, enables engagement at a branch-specific level, and, essentially, demonstrates the importance of thinking beyond those geopolitical imaginations which centre on aviation and airpower.

In recognising that RAF recruitment becomes effective partly due to its distribution in the space of the show, the chapter also prioritised a reading of airshow-space more generally. Namely, it considered the show a landscape of consumption (and latterly, militarisation). Two main conclusions were reached here. Firstly, the broader corporate and consumer presences at the show work in tandem, and are complicit, with the imaginative

cultures of the show: at the airshow, state, military, corporation and commerce espouse concomitant notions of the world, and emphasise, again, the rightful existence of militaries and military intervention. Secondly, though, considering the show space more broadly evidenced the 'proper forms of society' (Pearman 2004 in Adey 2010: 66) and particular forms of spectatorship so central to airshows historically. Whilst spatial zoning and variable ticketing the show certainly divides along lines of social class and wealth, it also highlights the importance of spectatorship; the highly-priced zones of the show afford the best visual perspective, the standard ticket-holders resigned to lesser, though more ubiquitous, sub-crowd-line views. The necessity to allow and/or block access to particular places, along with the monopoly placed on the imaginations and resonances (Bissel 2008) associated with the military point to the final discussion, that of the concomitant monopoly placed on what is seen at the show, and the means by which the seen becomes visible.

Following MacDonald (2006: 68), it might be said that 'there is nothing 'obvious' about either sight itself or the processes which render…object[s] into subject[s] for visual experience'. In kind, in adopting an empirical approach to visuality at the show it has been demonstrated that seeing-at-the-show is tied to certain modes of spectatorship, which, by their very essence, render the objects of visual curiosity spectacular, powerful and unproblematic. In particular, the acquisitive, photographic nature of observing spectacular sights at the show renders what is seen (through the lens) exceptional, tantalising and ultimately beyond critique. Furthermore, extending Foucault via Crary (1992), the particularities of seeing-at-the-show entrain individuals more open to particular imaginations of nation and alliance, global drama and difference, and war-time heritage.

Drawing on Crary (1992) again, and to reach a conclusion, the latter part of this chapter has aimed to consider the problematic phenomena of the observer. The observer, as Crary (1992: 5) suggest:

> Is the field on which vision in history can be said to materialize, to become itself visible. Vision and its effects are always inseparable from the possibilities of an observing subject who is both the historical product *and* the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjecticfication.

As a culture and as a historical phenomenon, it has been shown that the observer at airshows is indeed a product of visual techniques designed with a spectacular, national politics in mind. The possibility to see at the show (along with the effects of seeing), in kind, are allied to the vagaries of state, corporate and commercial presences at the show

which elaborate very particular notions of the world, of the military, and of global dramas. These things accepted, we might add to Crary's account, though, a semblance of space. The observer at the show is, thus, not just a field on which vision in history materialises, but a field on which vision as it is expressed in *space* is allowed to materialise.

In the next chapter, we continue to take the spaces of RAF recruitment and popular military cultures seriously, and by exploring the visual cultures of online RAF recruiting games, move to consider the 'mundane' spaces of popular military cultures. Within this, and the remaining chapters, we take forward the assumption that, although the visual is central to the operation and articulation of geopolitics, there is much to be said about how 'vision is embodied and connective with other sensory registers' (MacDonald 2006: 55). Notably, we consider next the immersive, extra-visual, embodied and affective qualities of RAF gaming and simulation.

Chapter 5. The Mundane

If airshows act to entrain ideas about what the military is, what it does and where it does it (via visual means), they also work more simply as evidence for a broader spectrum of RAF public relations strategies that exist beyond the show. As noted in the previous chapter, within the promotional spaces at the show are presences, for example, such as RAF Community Outreach, the RAF Benevolent Fund, RAF sports and schools liaison teams, and the Air Cadets. Although these presences fit the assumptions of the last chapter (in that they delineate the main promotional campaign message), they provide a starting point for this chapter by implying a range of unspectacular, private sites of recruitment and promotion. For example, schools liaison teams at the airshow imply a set of practices which happen in and through spaces of learning; the air cadets – present at all airshows – imply the institutionalisation of 'airmindedness' in youthful spaces of vocation. In chapters three and four, RAF recruitment was considered a matter for everyday spaces of public consumption. The current and remaining chapters, however, turn their attention away from the public and spectacular towards these more private and individual spaces of RAF recruitment and popular military culture. Remaining with the visual and with the geopolitics of visual cultures specifically, this chapter will focus in these terms on the private spaces of online gaming.

As part of a sophisticated online careers website (RAF 2012b), the RAF provide potential recruits an insight into the life and culture of military service. Whilst offering a forum in which current recruiting campaigns can be aired and replayed, the careers site also allows users access to short documentaries, testimonials, fact-sheets and other interactive content. Amongst this content are electronic games which allow the user a chance to test their skills as virtual pilots, Regiment Gunners and suchlike, and variously, to see and experience what it takes to become a military professional. Much like the posters and pamphlets of chapter two and three, and the representational practices of chapter four, this chapter will demonstrate that these games perpetuate similar imaginations around conflict, danger and the identities of foreign peoples and places. But importantly, with the more-than-representational aspects of visual cultures in mind, the chapter aims to outline how the geopolitics of games and gaming are particularly relevant to recruitment and militarisation when one considers their immersive and affective qualities.

Conceptually, the chapter is based on several related threads of research in critical and popular geopolitics, cultural geography and critical IR. At its broadest, the following

discussion fits into a strand of popular geopolitics which considers geopolitics 'a visual practice involving emotion, habit and virtually, and not simply as a projection-room of popular, if contested, images' (Hughes 2007: 988; MacDonald *et al.* 2010). Here, much like the analysis of observant practice of the previous chapter, this chapter aims to question how 'representational practices…enact geopolitical formations' (MacDonald *et al.* 2010:15), and how 'visual culture and…visual practices…are enlisted in the development, deployment and resistance of geo-power' (Hughes 2007: 992). The essence of these arguments will be applied to three central problematics: the propensity for games to be particularly useful for military recruitment (Der Derian 1990; Haynes 2006; Stahl 2006; Power 2007; Shaw 2010; Hunteman and Payne 2010); the blurring of the virtual and virtuous in imaginations of warfare (Der Derian 2001 2003) and the consequent implications for 'understandings of war, peace and politics' (Salter 2011: 362); and the curious commensurability of state and industry in what Der Derian (2001) calls the military-industrial-entertainment complex (c.f. Lenoir 2003).

With reference to several empirical examples of online RAF recruiting games, the chapter deals with these problematics and conceptual moments, firstly, through a discussion of how game-based RAF recruitment is representative, and iterative of, specific imaginings of (battle) spaces and places, technologies and identities. Secondly, the chapter moves to suggest that game-based RAF recruitment might be thought of affectively (Shaw and Warf 2009), creating as it does specific screen-based geographies through which meaning and feeling is derived beyond representative content (Ash 2009). Again, as with the preceding chapter, in efforts to blur the boundaries between recruitment and militarisation, this section aims to think of gaming as a co-mingling between self and world (Shaw 2010), albeit a world shaped by and through military objectives, rationales and structures (Woodward 2005). Lastly, the chapter ends by assessing the significance of a representative and more-than-representative approach to game-based recruitment in relation to the militarisation of cultural space (Stahl 2006). As a site which facilitates the militarisation of both imagined and lived-in spaces, the chapter finishes with thoughts on how the remaining chapters might approach the personal, bodily and material politics of militarisation.

Overall, the chapter aims to suggest that games (as part of the online recruiting capacity of the RAF) are important because they allow for perception to happen otherwise and differently than would be the case with print-based, or public or spectacular promotional feats. Furthermore, because games are most commonly private, being as they

are screen-based and engaged with in domestic spaces, their capacity to entrain the dominant imaginations associated with recruitment in unique ways is worthy of study.

5.1 Gamescapes

Although far more basic than, say, large, corporately-designed military-themed first-person-shooters (c.f. Salter 2011), RAF recruiting games reflect many of the same thematic and visual architectures. For example, at the time of writing, RAF games are nearly exclusively based on recent or current conflicts and deployments (notably Iraq and Afghanistan). It should not be surprising then, like the wider international games industry which has a tendency to mirror 'real' world conflict scenarios (Power 2007) and 'to cast games as players themselves in [for instance] the War on Terror' (Stahl 2006: 112), that the RAF uses the nuances of the medium to represent their ongoing engagements in particular ways (c.f. Woodward 2005). Thematically, this is done simply through the providence of games which seek to put the player 'on the ground' in places in which RAF are currently operationally involved. Visually, on the other hand, game-based RAF recruiting works more abstractly through a familiar, popularly imagined, aesthetic register of desert landscapes, aerial and orbital camera imagery and grainy, first-person battle-footage. Although these architectures will be explored in more detail below, for an analysis of representative gamescapes, RAF games might be thought of for now as simplistic depictions of the world which 'assist in constructing particular places and types of spaces' (Hughes 2007: 989). The representational logics of military-themed games, particularly the 'contextualising or 'background' images' (Hughes 2010: 123) contained within them, along with the peoples (military and civilian) depicted, legitimise certain readings of current conflict. It is the aim of this opening section to suggest that it is through these digitally rendered worlds (with their concomitant omissions and duplicities), that military games become a logical instrument for military recruitment and consent (Shaw 2010).

Space/Place/Time

Like many of the examples of RAF recruiting so far discussed, game-based RAF recruiting is socially and historically context-specific. We have seen in previous chapters, for example, how imaginings of the military are expressed through dominant cultural, stylistic and aesthetic registers. We have also seen how what can be imagined through RAF recruitment is variously limited and licenced by a political-economic, socio-historical nexus of production. RAF recruiting games are little different, with the simplest and most straightforward expression of this being the limiting and licensing of contemporary game

narratives by the conflicts and contexts in which the RAF are currently involved. For example, at the time of writing, of the seven games available to play on the central RAF careers website, three explicitly refer to real-world conflict and humanitarian scenarios. Notable among these is *Afghanistan Reinforcement Operation* (ARO) (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Afghanistan Reinforcement Operation

In ARO, the player is asked to play the role of a Movements Controller in a forward mounting base in enemy territory. On screen, as the laptop in the 'control tent' flashes:

> You receive an urgent call stating that troops on the ground require immediate reinforcement. They require additional manpower, weapons, food, water, medical supplies and land replacement vehicles. Only one C130 Hercules transport aircraft is available on immediate readiness…can you fit everything in to one transport aircraft and make some tough decisions?[19]

To an audio background made up of desert ambiance and the sound of aircraft, the remainder of the game involves selecting from a cache of supplies, reacting to incoming intelligence, and prioritising which supplies should go where in the aircraft. Played against the clock, the game is completed when the player is happy that the right configuration of supplies has been selected and 'I'm ready' has been clicked. The player is then given a debrief, and a percentage score as to how well they did. A link is provided at this stage to the RAF Movements Controller job-description.

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[19] For quotes that appear in this chapter that relate directly to individual games, see the relevant figure in the front matter for details of reference.

Much like recruiting at the airshow, games such as ARO allow the RAF to delineate the 'pilots and fast-jets' narrative of big-budget recruiting campaigns, and to advertise branch-specific roles within the contexts (theatres of war) in which they might well take place. Unsurprisingly then, there is a good correlation between the types of roles represented in RAF games (technical and personnel support, airspace and battlespace control), and the types of roles being recruited for currently. In this sense, the context in which game-based recruiting happens is one which is decreed, simply, by current deployments and personnel requirements. However, just as games presumably help in the filling of personnel quotas, they also, as geopolitical texts, work to fill spaces and places with particular dramas and violences. It is arguably through the scripting of real-world places through 'core geopolitical assumptions about territory, control, contiguity and conflict' (Salter 2011: 36) that the RAF roles depicted gain their legitimacy (and so become realistic and worthy options for the potential recruit). One of the ways in which we might briefly think through these scriptings and legitimations is through the coincidence of passive and active representations within ARO and other examples.

Firstly, the passive elements of RAF games – simply, the spaces, places and landscapes in which an operation is played out – are noticeably concomitant with a familiar, mediatised aesthetic of war. As Gregory (2008: 10) notes, such representations (stark white-yellow desert landscapes, close-quarter urban spaces) 'have a legitimating force; they circulate through public spheres and to prepare audiences for war and desensitize them to its outcomes'. Furthermore, as Gregory continues, the reduction of a battlespace to a visual field 'is naturalized through the media barrage of satellite images and bomb-sight views' (11). Drawing thus from a familiar desert aesthetic and recognisable silhouette of Chinook aircraft, games like ARO gain their legitimacy not only through espousing a 'real'-world context, but by aligning their imagery with a broader, mass-media imagining of Afghanistan. However, the concomitance between games like ARO and broader imaginings of current, mediatised deployments extends beyond the aesthetic. Namely, it is through the active representative features of ARO – the ways in which (virtual) spaces and places are (virtually) inhabited and managed – that RAF games, thematically, render connections between places and regimes of feeling.
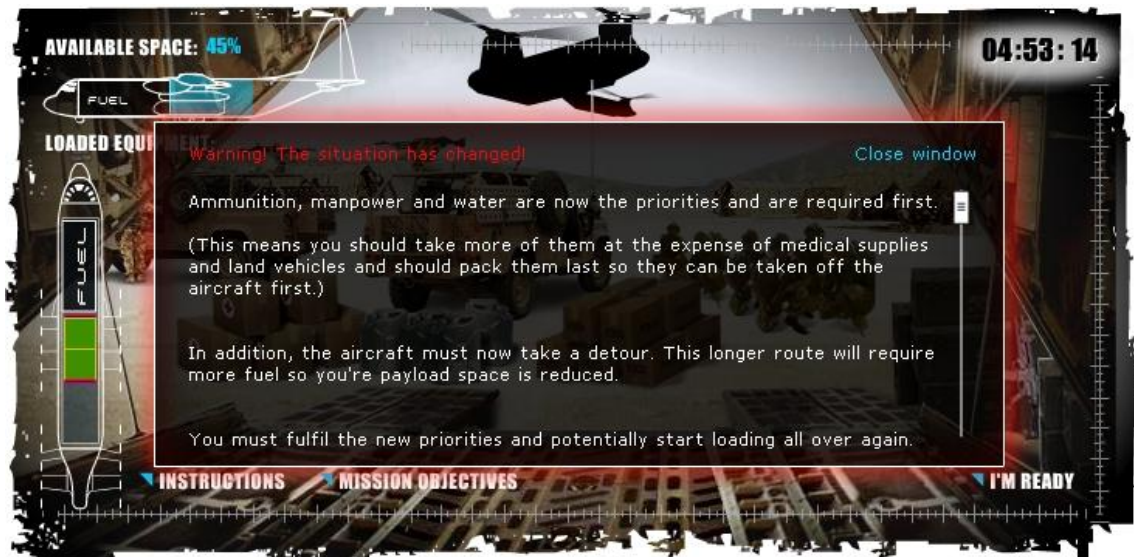
Figure 5.2 Afghanistan Reinforcement Operation: Situation Change

Along with the framing of ARO within the space of 'enemy territory', the testing of the player against the clock and providing an active, applied problem-solving activity, the game is interspersed at intervals with warnings that the 'situation has changed' (figure 5.2). The game prompts the player to rethink their choices in relation to a rapidly evolving, fluid and ultimately dangerous environment, and to consider these choices strategically vital. Invoking again the practical nuances of RAF games, ARO should be thought of as providing an insight into the day-to-day job of a Movements Controller. But, to enliven and legitimise the Controller's role in an imagined Afghanistan, we must see the Controller's world through a military lens. In other words, ARO relies, following Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1992), on designation; place (Afghanistan) is understood here only via a field of (violent, Othered) taxonomies, narratives, subjects and strategies responses which seem merely appropriate.

Through the representation of Afghanistan as a dangerous place; a place which requires (if success is to be achieved) the prompt and professional actions of dedicated military personnel, the RAF roles advertised gain credence, and are legitimised within the narrative of the game. However, if we are to recognise that games draw upon, and work via a mass-mediated aesthetic of war in order to represent the 'real' spaces of conflict, we must also consider other contexts through which game narratives themselves are legitimised, and the evidences for this in particular games. Simply, for the designation of place to work, games such as ARO and others must chime with the broader popular cultural aesthetic of war. The next two sub-sections briefly discusses this broader context, and considers RAF games thus reflective of new dynamics in contemporary warfighting (Salter 2011).

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Skill and Identity

Returning again to the socio-historical specificity of recruiting images, whilst it is clear that the thematic and aesthetic tropes used in recruiting are in most cases reflective of current operational commitments, they are also reflective more broadly of the way war is fought, technologically and culturally speaking. For instance, as we have seen in chapter two, the imagery of 1980's RAF recruiting is heavily influenced by the predominance of missile-warfare, and so also by a Cold-War proxy-politics. In a similar way, game-based RAF recruitment reflects the current predominance of both drone (and otherwise remote) warfare, and strategies for counterinsurgency. Although these types of warfare are necessarily representationally different, they are both expressed and actualised in and through thematic representations of skill and identity in game-based recruiting.

Figure 5.3 Battlefield Intelligence

Much like the emphasis on speed, efficiency and logistics in ARO, another game on the central RAF 'test yourself' games website – *Battlefield Intelligence* (BI) – challenges the player and potential recruit to interpret data and imagery, and to make vital decisions about prospective military strike targets (figure 5.3). Role-playing an RAF Squadron

Intelligence Officer, the player is asked in BI to support operational RAF forces that 'urgently need more information about a group of buildings that they suspect are being used by the enemy'. The player must choose from up to ten different pieces of intelligence (five 'imagery' and five textual 'intelligence') to inform them as to what function buildings A, B and C serve. After being selected as either an 'empty warehouse', 'chemical weapons facility', 'military command-post' or 'bus station', amongst others, the player must then 'brief the mission' and choose which buildings are to be targeted. After 'Go' has been clicked, the player sees footage of fast-jets and missile strikes (figure 5.4) before receiving a breakdown of their performance.

>> Rate this page   >> Embed this...   00:35:07

Figure 5.4 Battlefield Intelligible

Insofar as BI tests the potential recruit's capacity to interpret data, make decisions under pressure and against the clock, we see again the more practical alignment of recruit aptitude and branch-specific skills (during the breakdown of performance, we also see a link to the Intelligence Officer job specification). However, taken as 'a window into the geopolitical imagination' (Salter 2011: 262), games like BI betray a more fundamental and critical connection between skill-based assessment, simulation and the modalities of

modern warfare. For example, BI represents par excellence the imagining of 'desert…landscapes as little more than receiving points for…military ordnance (Gregory in Graham 2005: 6). That 'images from [this] video game are eerily similar to those broadcast from the UAVs in the Middle East' (Shaw 2010: 790) has implications though. Within the narrative of BI, for instance, there is no particular justificatory connection made between the suspicion that the 'buildings are being used by the enemy', and the inevitability of a high-level bombing strike. Little, either, is said about the inherent threat posed by 'a military command post', and, through design error or otherwise, the footage of fast-jets and missile strikes plays whether buildings are selected for bombing or not. As Gieselmann (2007: no pagination) suggests, by 'presenting the game war in the same way as the real war on television like a war in a computer game, both worlds become aesthetically married to each other'. It is this marriage that engenders, in games like BI, a performative relationship between landscape and violence. Put more simply, because landscapes like that in figure 5.3 are always-already receiving-points for military ordnance (because they are so frequently imaged as so), the military strike is always-already inevitable. Through an incomplete technical justification of offensive threat from the enemy, along with the performative aesthetic of high-level imagery, games like BI demonstrate a tendency towards what Barron and Huntemann (2004 in Power 2007: 273) call war 'without the consequences of context'. The landscape imaged/imagined, thus becomes what it is, and is coded only through a weaponised, bomb-sight (Gregory 2008) view-from-above (see also Adey *et al.* 2011). The significance of military skill in this representation is, then, the inherent emphasis on practical possibility only; the landscape depicted in BI is framed according to how war is fought rather than why it is fought (Barron and Huntemann 2004 in Power 2007).

What distinguishes games like BI from ARO and others, however, is not just their lack of consequences. Unlike ARO which specifies the fact that the reinforcement operation is happening in Afghanistan, BI *claims no specificity of geographical context*, and relies solely on aesthetics and thematics which promote the assumption that this particular operation is happening in Iraq, Afghanistan, or certainly the Middle East. For Shaw (2010: 795) 'video war games are often complicit in producing oriental representations and are thus transitional spaces in concert with wider military representations [the mass-mediatised aesthetic of war] and common senses'. It is this transitionality which renders sensible the 'visualisation [of space in BI] as both target and terrain' (Gregory 2008: 9); a space which, through air operations, reduces enemy spaces to

strings of coordinates and constellations of pixels on visual displays (Gregory 2008). What is at stake here is that through an 'anonymous topography of floating signifiers [deserts, minarets] that are tied to nothing and nowhere' (Shaw 2010: 796), Middle Eastern places are portrayed as being as suffused with perpetual war; as spaces of conflict that must be brought under Western democratic order through the virtues of militaristic skill, and military technology. In terms of RAF recruitment, there are two key and connected issues that arise through the representation of such anonymised and flattened topographies of violence. Firstly, through a lack of explicit realism in BI (we are not told that BI is happening in the 'real' world), any weight of realism is shouldered by the authenticity of its aesthetic and representational strategies; the weapons are real, the military lexicon authentic, and the topography 'littered with references to the Afghan landscape' (Power 2007: 281). Thus, secondly, insofar as BI is aligned with common-sense visualisations of Middle-Eastern conflict, the (role-played) role of the RAF Intelligence Officer is not only legitimised and resolved within the narrative of the game, but through reference to broader (geopolitical) discourses of war, and the way this war is fought.

Keeping the broader discourses of warfighting in mind, if we are to consider Shaw's (2010) oriental topographies seriously, it is important to highlight the more specific effect of these ideas on representations of culture and identity. As Shaw (2010) continues, crucial to creating a colonial imaginary is the simplification of the Middle-Eastern world and the flattening not just of topographies, but of cultural and ethical differences. In the first instance, in games like BI, we see this readily with the denial of a specific geography. However, we also in this regard see a stark difference between representations of soldierly identity and enemy identity. For example, made tangible through the inclusion of grainy, computer-generated images, and otherwise allowed to live through their skill and technical aptitude in the battlespace, the RAF operatives (and the player) are given identities in the BI narrative (c.f. Sisler 2008). On the other hand, the enemy remains irrelevant, unimportant and referred to only abstractly. The ideological work this does, as Shaw (2010: 796) comments, is important:

> It [the abstract representation of enemies in games] allows for a range of different consumers…from children to adults alike, to feel like participants – without attending the moral dilemma that the enemy might be just like them. It is the abstraction and dehumanisation of the enemy to a condition of anonymity that is crucial: the enemy becomes familiar yet unrecognizable, distant yet intimate, nowhere yet everywhere, virtual yet real.

Thus, tying into a broader narrative of 'post-9/11' games which allow the player to ''play through' the anxieties that attend uncertain times and new configurations of power' (Power 2007: 271), BI is relatively typical in its representations of enemy identity. However, in broadening out an analysis of representation with reference to the modalities of contemporary warfare (as we have done in this sub-section), there remain certain inconsistencies which might give us cause to revaluate this more stable conception of game-based identities. As Gregory (2008: 12) notes, war and its iterations (the military dispositif) are 'not coherent projects; they are fissured by competing demands and conflicting decisions, and they are worked out in different ways in different places'. In terms of the RAF and recruitment, we have only seen in examples so far roles based around aviation (flight facilitation, direction and support). Through a focus on other roles fulfilled by the RAF – the RAF Regiment in particular – we will begin to see how game-based recruitment further reflects, and is legitimised by popular imaginations of terrestrial combat (particularly that of counterinsurgency).

Skill, Identity and the Cultural Turn

The game *RAF Regiment Gunner* (RG):

Let[s] you experience real life situations that you might face as a Gunner in the RAF Regiment. You…receive information about your situation on the ground, your kit and the options available to you, before deciding on the correct course of action.

Based in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, RG allows the player to role-play three different scenarios faced by the RAF Regiment; Night Supply and defending an airbase; neutralising insurgent enemies, and; avoiding civilian casualties during other offensive operations. Much like ARO and BI, RG requires the player to make decisions about a particular situation against the clock in reference to satellite imagery and visual and textual data about intended targets. The game concludes with links to the Regiment job-description and a breakdown of recruit training. RG is also similar in its identification of military personnel and anonymisation of the enemy. However, where RG differs is in its representation of Afghan identities, its focus on the avoidance of 'civilian causalities' and generally, a prioritisation of sound moral and ethical actions.
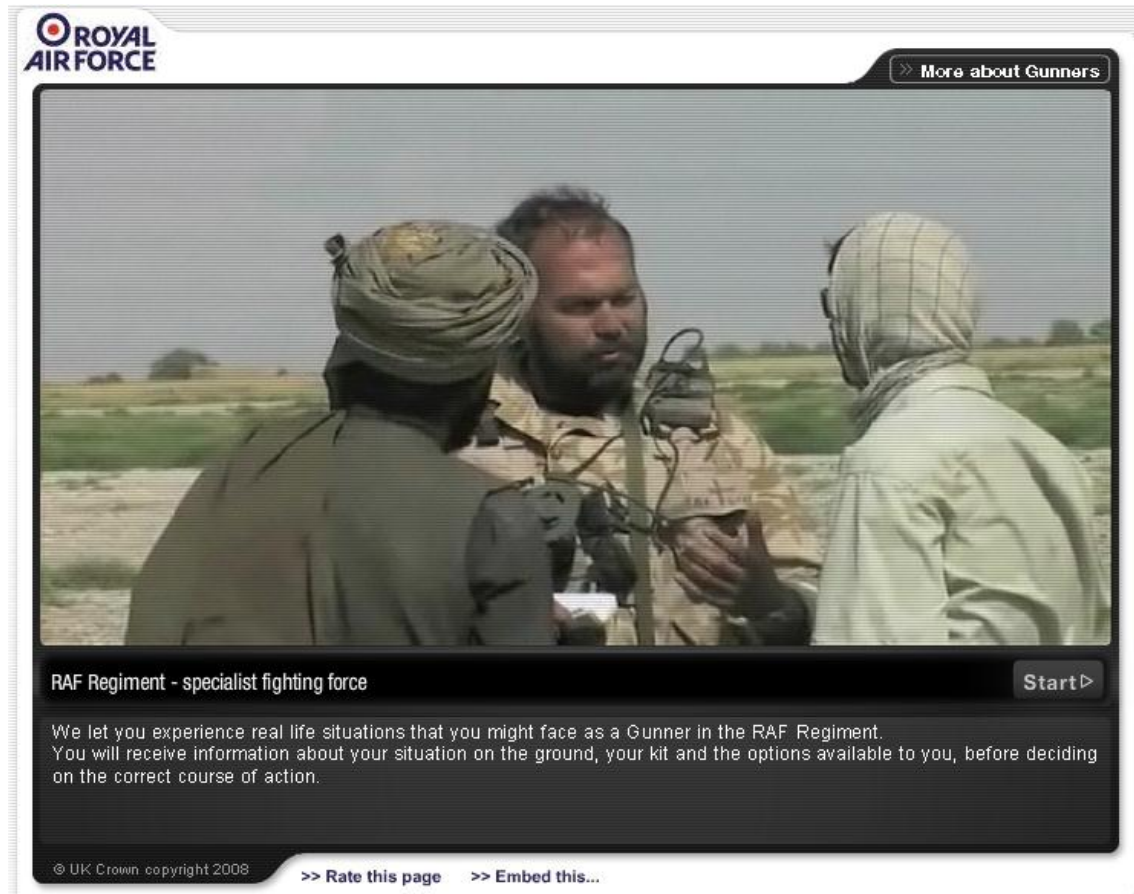
Figure 5.5 RAF Regiment Gunner

For example, in a prologue to the game (figure 5.5), RAF personnel are depicted in settings which are framed not just by the efficacy of military forces within spaces, but by the influence Afghan civilians have upon military presence (and visa versa). In section three of the game, furthermore, the player is tasked with 'taking out' a band of enemy insurgents. However, the insurgents are hiding close to an innocent Afghan family; the player's task being to choose the correct course of action to at once eliminate the enemy whilst protecting the civilians. The player is asked to choose from a range of weapons platforms (which are helpfully detailed in a pop-out window) to perform this operation. In direct contrast to games like BI, if the wrong weapon platform is chosen (figure 5.6), the player is informed not just of their transgression, but of the wider implications of such for the safety of civilians and personnel alike.

Figure 5.6 RAF Regiment Bomber

By focussing on what we might call the human geographies of counterinsurgency strategy, games like RG reflect what Gregory (2008) argues to be a shift in the realities (and representations) of contemporary war. Because of the complacent 'conviction that [the] occupation [of Iraq in 2003] would be mistaken for liberation and the consequent inability to comprehend the basis of insurgency' (Gregory 2008: 11), Western and Coalition militaries operating in the Middle East were 'in a high state of readiness for the wrong enemy'. Finding themselves immersed in an alien culture, in spaces in which the difference between enemy and civilian is not clear-cut, Western militaries in Iraq and Afghanistan had to develop ways of fighting beyond omniscient surveillance and 'bombing at the speed of thought' (Gregory 2008: 9). Namely, cultural awareness was at the heart of a new counterinsurgency doctrine. Although this doctrine – from first-person-shooter to first-person-thinker – exists as a revision to the technical fix of smart bombs and unmanned airstrikes, Gregory (2008) argues also that this 'cultural turn' in military affairs goes beyond the actualities of combat, and marks also a revision in how war is represented and simulated. In turn, games like RG emphasise cultural sensitivity (intelligent soldiering), and a departure from representations of the 'cities-as-targets' sort. At stake here for an analysis

of recruiting materials is a conflation of skill and identity whereby RAF (and player) skill is not only based on the use and utility of weaponry, but on a coincidence between the identities of a culturally-sensitive recruit and the identities of a (relatively more) complex native civilian population. In stark contrast to, for example, dispassionate and masculine cavaliers of the sky (chapter two), games like RG broaden our understanding of requisite RAF and military identities, and demonstrate clearly the correlation between the modalities of contemporary warfare, and their representation and imagining. Otherwise, although RG is still predominantly about how war is fought, the thematic negotiation of counterinsurgency though the simulated experience of a Regiment Gunner adds a sense of moral and ethical culpability to a military-technical possibilism.

In summary, through an analysis of game-based recruiting-as-representation, we have seen, firstly, how 'video gamers virtual prowess and enjoyment translate directly into real-world [military] suitability and success' (Power 2007: 279). Working primarily as showcases of what specific branches do, game-based recruitment aims to legitimise particular RAF roles by simulating 'real' world situations, explaining how success can be achieved, and enabling this to happen through the use of military technology in simulated spaces of violence. We have also seen how the coincidence of military skill, military identity and the (non)identities of enemy combatants and native civilian populations act in differing ways to reflect how (although not why) contemporary war is fought. However, a pervasive theme throughout the chapter so far is the legitimation of game narratives in reference to the broader mass-mediatisation of war. Thus, whilst the potential recruit is willed to make sense of the military through the specificities of particular game narratives, this can only be done if the narratives themselves are legitimised in relation to the broader discourses of popularly-imagined war. It is this fact, however, that makes departures from a sanitised aesthetic of unmanned airstrikes in games like RG relatively inconsequential. Because, as Gregory (2008) notes, the cultural turn (the new dynamics of warfighting: counterinsurgency) demands, and contains within itself its own legitimation, games which reflect these new dynamics represent but the latest stage in the re-enchantment of war (c.f. Der Derian 2001). Remaining analytically in this section within what Der Derian (2001) calls the military-industrial-entertainment complex has given us a good insight into the thematics of digitally-rendered worlds. However, enchanting as they are, these worlds are made intelligible only through a set of what Hughes (2010) calls representational logics. The remainder of the chapter is given over to an exploration of game-based RAF recruiting

beyond these logics, and to what various game-based doings, viewings and feelings (Lorimer 2005) might tell us about recruitment and militarisation.

5.2 Screenscapes

One of the things that mark video games out as being one of the most interesting fields in popular geopolitics, as Dittmer (2010: 105) argues, is 'the active, relational engagement of the player with the game environment'. Thus, as Salter (2011: 363) notes, beyond reading games as ''straight' mirror[s] of contemporary spatial strategies (of warfare, empire or colonialism), games also demonstrate the political relations of bodies to spaces'. In this section we move to consider three conceptual possibilities for thinking about RAF games which demonstrate the different environments, spaces and spacings involved in, and evoked by game-based recruitment. Fundamentally, this short discussion is about considering not just 'what images or visions show of the world, but also what images and visions do in the world' (Hughes 2007: 991).

Worlding: transitionality and games as geographical events

The worlds scripted in RAF games are, as we have seen, worlds suffused with violence, flattened spatial and cultural topographies encountered and managed through the variously capable actions of military professionals. But, as we have also seen, the characters within the games (Movements Controllers, Intelligence Analysts, Regiment Gunners) are seemingly transposed onto the identity of the player: you are a professional; a Regiment Gunner in a real-life situation. This transposition – part and parcel of the immersive qualities of games (c.f. Dittmer 2010) – denotes a particular tendency of games to provide spaces of simulation that allow ''interactivity' with particular types of events and places' (Hughes 2007: 991). More than just a (representational) scripting of worlds, games might arguably be thought of as geographical events; worldings which, through connecting the space of combat to the private space of play, inculcate certain sensibilities key to garnering consent.

To develop this idea further, it is useful to cite recent work in literary geography which has moved to consider the eventness of texts.[20] As Hones (2008: 1302) argues, literature is something with a geography; 'something which happens at the intersection of

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[20] And the connection between games and literature here is based on their typically representational qualities and the legacy of discourse- and text-based approaches used for each.

agents and situations scattered across time and space, both human and non-human, absent and present'. Furthermore;

> Text events are not only relational by nature and generated within social contexts to start with, but further only become publically accessible when subsequently articulated within the mediating context of a particular social situation. Performed readings of interpretations are thus produced in relation to at least two geographies, the first being the geography of the initial text event, and the second being the geography of the context in which the reader's experience of that event is later narrated (Hones 2008: 1302).

In terms of the 'initial text event', we might surmise here an interesting connection between the spaces of recruitment production (chapter three) and the spaces of game consumption. However, more importantly, we see here how the text (the game) collapses an imagined, narrated world into that of the existed-in world of the game event. As Shaw (2010: 792) argues (citing the psychoanalysis of Winnicott), objects and spaces are often used to 'transition between the inner world of psychic [immersive] fantasy and the outer world of objective reality'. These instances of transitionality are inherently playful in that the boundaries between each of these realms are blurred into a mixture of objects and sensations that are not quite 'self' or 'world' (Shaw 2010: 793). Through a unique hybridity between the narrative and the material (screens, computers), it thus possible to argue for the collapsing-into and enactment of gamescapes through immersive play. However, if indeed military-themed games are sites and spaces of worlding, they are, again, sites facilitated and cohabited by militaristic logics.

An example of this facilitation and cohabitation is found in Hughes' (2007) and Stahl's (2006) discussions of 'secret mission' digital wargame narratives. Through games that tap into a post-9/11 uncertainties:

> Prospects for peace are played off as unrealistic and naïve lip service, while the true role of the state is to conduct secret missions out of sight out of mind…wars beyond public view are necessary to preserve 'freedom' and [are] thus beyond criticism (Stahl 2006: 119).

As Hughes (2007: 990) puts it, secret mission narratives in this vein allow 'players to occupy positions [in the private, domestic spaces of the everyday] in which…they manfully perform the state's 'out of sight' work'. Through a collapsing-in of the discreetness of both narrative and lived-in game-space (the bedroom, the personal computer), narratives like

these are tantamount to a militaristic worlding of both imagined and perceived space.[21] Put another way, although gaming might always be thought of as a being-in-the-world event, it is the unique combination of militaristic narratives in wargames and private spaces which actualises a distain for diplomacy and a preference for force (Hughes 2007).

As Shaw (2010) suggests, the co-mingling between self and world engendered by games is always a political moment. But counter to Shaw, we might argue that, for the reasons discussed, playing war is more than just an invitation to a militaristic or colonial present. Rather, within the particular mediating social-come-narrative situations ensconced in gaming, players are inculcated into perceiving the real spaces of conflict in particular ways. However, in moving to discuss the more explicit role games play in altering or monitoring the perceptions of gamers (and potential recruits), we must understand that ideas such as 'diplomacy', 'force', 'honour' or 'glory' – because of the digital fora in which games take place – are also collectively and affectively experienced. It is to these shared, affective ways of actualising political sensibilities we turn to next, along with a discussion of the usefulness of collective experience for monitoring the capabilities of potential recruits.

Monitoring, or, the practical uses of affect

Whilst affect is a relatively established concept in critical geopolitics (c.f. Ó Tuathail 2003), it is less so in critical geopolitical studies of games. However, within the literature discussing games in this respect, there are marked parallels with both the empirical and conceptual directions of the chapter so far. As Shaw and Warf (2009: 1339) note, 'with their uniquely absorbing virtual worlds, video games have always possessed an affective impact above and beyond their on-screen representations'. Furthermore, in making a connection between the previous sub-section, thinking through affect tells that us that the 'relationship between the player's body and his or her gaming space is not a simple duality' (Shaw and Warf 2009: 1339). In virtual environments 'a quasi merger of embodied perception and externally transmitted conception happens at the level of sensation' (Hillis 1999 in Shaw and Warf 2009: 1339). Simply, the gaming event is one in which the senses, the body and the precognitive moments therein exceed attempts by discourse to abstract them (Lorimer 2005). According to Dittmer (2010: 95) affect (reduced to a holistic

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[21] Another example of this would be game-time as a temporal aesthetic which favours constant action as opposed to diplomatic reflection in the way that many military-themed games rely on lightning-quick reactions (Stahl 1996).

concept) marks the precognitive effects resulting from biosocial interactions in space; a 'vast background noise of influence through which conscious decisions are filtered in subconscious ways'. And it is this very interplay between the conscious interpretation and marking of the unconscious that suggests affect a useful lens through which to think about RAF recruiting.

To make sense of this background noise of influence, we use affect to 'designate the precognitive, unconscious, and embodied reactions to on-screen representations' (Shaw and Warf 2009: 1338). Marked through a 'hermeneutic of emotions such as surprise, fear, anger, disgust, contempt, sadness and joy' (Shaw and Warf 2009: 1338), thinking through affect is an attempt to make perceptible the potential for games to act upon us in ways that are at once both emotional, and more than emotional. These attempts, however, have led some to suggest – in cases where affect is linked to the political – that 'the discovery of a new means of practicing affect is also the discovery of a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful' (Thrift 2004: 58; c.f. Ó Tuathail 2003). By recognising that 'we live in environments that mediate the intentions of the powerful into our precognitive selves' (Dittmer 2010: 98) sheds light on, for example, the possibilities of precognitive affects in Hughes' (2007) discussion of the secretive spacings and investments of 'out of sight' military game narratives. More broadly however, this points to the critical fact that affect can be actively incorporated into game design through the manipulation of aspects of (representative, interactive) spatiotemporality (Ash 2010). For example, by changing the digital coding of grenade-launcher lethality, game designers concomitantly alter 'how various bodily states (such as frustration and anger and pleasure and pain) can potentially be produced and controlled through manipulating affective relations in the environment' (Ash 2010: 667).

To state clearly at this stage the more humble aspirations of this chapter, however, it is through the *collective* and *competitive* nature of many RAF games that we might posit a politics of affect in these cases. As Dittmer (2010) argues, one of the key iterations of affect is its contagious character. 'Affect is more than an individual's experience – it is something that circulates among people, through the…mutual experience of environmental cues…especially through the use of popular culture and the media' (Dittmer 2010: 94). Because, as Dittmer (2010) continues, gamers often fight the same enemies and experience the same affects, they bring into existence a community that is linked by the immersive virtual forum in which it takes place. It is to a discussion of RAF gaming forums and their specifically collective and competition-orientated nature that we turn to next.
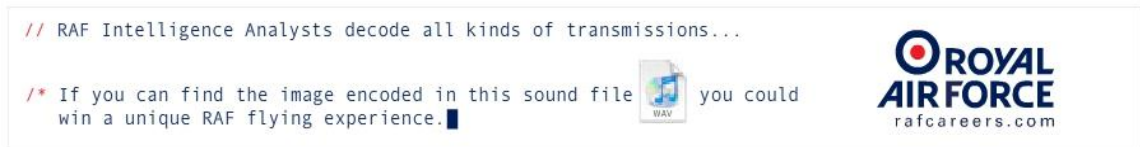
Figure 5.7 Intelligence Analyst leaderboard

Along with games on the under-18s RAF Altitude site which ranks named players according to their high scores, many gaming elements associated with the RAF careers website foster both a sense of collective endeavour and competition. For example, an interactive game designed by the Lean Mean Fighting Machine (LMFM) advertising agency – *Intelligence Analyst* (IA) (figure 5.7) – challenged players to:

> Find a code within an image, which was hidden away in a sound file entitled "Spectogram"…When played back the file sounded like a blanket of white noise. The solution -- hit upon by over 1,000 individuals, who were not provided with any clues -- was to convert said sound file to an image, using an application which was itself called Spectrogram. When the sound file was played using this software, an image of an RAF aircraft was revealed, upon the wing of which the entry code for the competition was written.

Although in this particular example there is no direct reference to an enemy, through the providence of competitive problem-solving tasks (associated with their respective branch-specific RAF roles) the effect of this game is pluralised. Ergo, through using the mutual technology of the computer, and widely-accessible file-types, the enactment and effect of this task is necessarily not confined to individual experience. In terms of thinking about the management and mediation of environments, there are two important issues here relevant to thinking through the effect of game-based recruitment.

Firstly, many of these more interactive RAF games (Intelligence Analyst included) require, as part of the competition, the release of personal data. For example, in a separate game again designed by the LMFM agency, *RAF Blog* (figure 5.8), the player is required to input their name, gender and an image of themselves to create a profile on a game forum. Drawing upon discussions in chapter three, in which we saw that the design of recruiting campaigns is directed towards particular demographics, it might be argued that the practical effect of building affect into gaming environments plays a role in the monitoring of campaign deployment. For example, through the *RAF Blog*, data might arguably be generated about the preference for game-based recruiting relative to gender. But more than this, as Dittmer (2010) suggests, many military-themed and military recruiting games are

often designed to identify talented individuals through their performance in the game. Part of this monitoring of individuals is a necessary reproduction of 'affective realism'; 'the [military] believes that those who perform well in the game will perform well in the [military]' (Dittmer 2010: 108). Thus, secondly, it might be argued that in examples like *Intelligence Analyst*, affectivities marked as apprehension, longing, and feelings of accomplishment and gratification are built into this game environment to give players the affective experience of [military service, albeit] stripped of danger, political context, and consequences (Dittmer 2010: 109). More specifically, the task of interpreting data, using ingenuities to decode it and submitting this data within the context of a competition affectively simulates the role of the Intelligence Analyst. As Ash (2010: 667) suggests, games designers must take responsibility for the 'affective relations (and thus bodies) that they (potentially) construct' in and through game environments. The affective sensibilities and bodies created by the collective virtual environments in RAF games – although they have the practical effect of providing a way to monitor potential recruits – might arguably result in bodies attuned to the affectivities of military service.

Figure 5.8 RAF Blog: personal particulars

Training: technics

However, if RAF games – beyond their monitoring potential – do indeed create bodies and sensibilities attuned to military service, this might also happen through a particular hybridity between personal and military computing technologies. As we have seen in Intelligence Analyst, the player is asked to use their knowledge and ingenuity to

solve an encryption through their abilities with digital software. However, designed, arguably, to simulate the practical and affective experiences of serving personnel, the game also draws upon the prevalence of Information Technology for fighting modern wars. This prevalence is also drawn upon in *CIS Ops* (Communications and Information Systems Operations) (Figure 5.9), a game in which the player was able to:

> Configure a Micro Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (MUAV) and deploy it on a reconnaissance mission to the RAF Brize Norton base. The MUAV was to retrieve information on the ICT Specialist role in the form of video, photography and documentation. The information was then sent back via email direct to the user who configured it. Each mission lasted for 13 days.

CIS Ops thus connects with several of the more simple themes discussed so far. Firstly, the game allows a connection to be made between the RAF and the potential recruit whereby learning about the military is individuated and personalised. Also, through a particularly open-ended narrative, the role of the game is to provide as much insight into RAF roles as possible, and furthermore, the specific skills required to be successful at the task map onto the requirements of the branch-specific role being advertised.

Figure 5.9 CIS Ops MUAV imaging: computers looking at computers

But unique to *CIS Ops* is the simulative coincidence between the technologies used to play the game and the technologies used by RAF CIS Operatives. Merely representationally, we see this coincidence through the framing of images via a covert

military aesthetic (figure 5.9). However, more fundamentally, *CIS Ops* at once blurs the distinction between simulation and reality and in doing so, adds a certain weight to the normally glib notion of 'seeing yourself in the RAF'.

As Dittmer (2010) suggests, many military-themed games serve as an explicit training ground for a future military career, embracing as they do the hybridity of the human and virtual. Notably, this is seen in a literal sense in games like *CIS Ops* in that the technologies used by the player (and the hybridity therein) are precisely the technologies and hybridities used by Intelligence-branch operatives. More simply, different to previous examples which introduce novel challenges which relate to RAF roles, *CIS Ops* works via the already-entrained sensibilities of the computer to reduce the distance between game and 'real' experience. As Stahl (2006: 113) notes:

> The arcade or home console no longer projects only a distant mock-up [representation] of military matters. War games are part and parcel of information-age warfare, merging the home front and the battlefield through multiple channels.

Games like *CIS Ops* represent, thus, a literal and material performance of particular 'interpretative strategies that sustain the antagonistic predicates for war' (Salter 2011: 361). More than just providing an opportunity for the imagining of military geographies and politics, *CIS Ops* works via the material and affective qualities of computer-experience which are already existent in the player. Part of information-age warfare, as Stahl (2006) calls it, is then the blurring of the boundaries between citizen and soldier. Games like *CIS Ops* provide a good exemplification of this in that the skills required for the normal, day-to-day usage of computers (networking, databasing, imaging) are the very same skills requisite for cyber, or covert, military operations. Summarily, we see here the emergence of geopolitical sensibilities (Power 2007) not only through the explicit providence of imagined narratives, but also through the sublimation and performance of essentially already-militarised strategies-for-being. One of the themes important for the final section – in which we briefly summarise and conclude – is, consequently, the presence of RAF recruitment with already-militarised popular material and bodily cultures.

5.3 Conclusion: domesticating militarisation

Through a review of non-representational approaches to military-themed games we have seen how a study of game-based RAF recruiting might be developed beyond Hughes' (2007) representational logics. Firstly, this has involved considering the event-ness of

games, and how, through the collapsing-in of imagined and lived-in worlds, the boundaries between imagination and perception are blurred. Secondly, this has involved detailing how RAF games are experienced collectively in digital forums and communities, and competitively. Summarily, apart from providing a means by which the potential recruit might be monitored, gaming collectivities, thus again, might be conceptualised through notions of contagious affect. Lastly, through considering in more detail the hybridity of the human and virtual in games, we have seen how RAF games might work via the (more-than-representational) affective logics of already-militarised popular cultures.

As Stahl (2006) suggests, the presence of military-themed games in popular culture is tantamount to the militarisation of cultural space. However, as we have seen, these spaces extend beyond the realms of the imagined, flattened topographies of the battlespace and into the spaces of the everyday. These everyday spaces (the bedroom, the personal computer) are brought into the purview of militarised cultures through the unique role games play in worlding, monitoring and training the potential RAF recruit. In terms of the specific role RAF games play in legitimising the military (hitherto considered a key process in making an RAF career tenable to the recruit), we might suppose that beyond the procurement of personnel, recruitment works to 'procure ethical cover for [military] interventions around the globe' (Dittmer 2010: 110). To reach some initial conclusions, it might be argued that this ethical procurement happens in two ways. Firstly, it happens through the legitimation of RAF roles within and beyond game narratives. As we have seen, the actions of characters (and players) within games are vindicated within the confines of game; the problem set is solved, lives are saved etc. Beyond this, the narratives themselves are legitimised through their referencing of broader discourses and visual economies of warfighting. Secondly, through the interplay between the imagined and immediate spaces of the gaming event, the flattened (spatial, cultural) topographies of the gameworld are brought to bear, and influence immediate perception. Insofar as it has been argued that many of the affects of gaming elude our abilities to describe them, along with the vested interest the military has in producing specific affects for the purposes of training, it might be suggested that military legitimation works via a range of affective dispensations towards, for example, perceiving space in particular ways, the pace, tempo and utility of violence, or the use of diplomacy.

However, some more general points might be made in reference to these conclusions which have relevance both for the conceptual and empirical matters at hand. In the final discussion, we firstly broaden-out the theme of gaming and unpack further the

breadth and nature of a unifying discourse of militarism in which it may sit. Secondly, we draw specifically on the non-representational analysis of gaming and, in reference to a feminist geopolitics of the body, foreground the remaining substantive chapters.

Broadening-out: beyond and between a legitimising military aesthetic

Throughout the chapter much has been said about the referentiality between military-themed games and a broader aesthetic or popular-visual discourse of war. For Gregory (2008), this discourse is reducible to the media barrage of satellite images and bomb-sight views which naturalise the (performative) targeting of specific (Middle Eastern) topographies. For Shaw (2010), video games sit alongside and are complicit with a mass-mediated aesthetic of war, within which, common-sense notions of conflict are circulated and reproduced. To reiterate, it has been argued that RAF games are complicit with this popular-visual discourse, and consequently, games are windows into the relationship between the practice of warfare and its mediation.

However, returning to the remarks made at the opening of this chapter, games are but one site (indicated by presences at the airshow) in which the promotion and mediation of RAF life and culture exists. Alongside games, RAF benevolent charities, sports, schools and community liaison teams, the Air Cadets and RAF and Air Museums, for example, represent, in a more holistic sense, the 'public face' of RAF publicity and marketing. In working towards a more refined definition of a popular discourse of mediation, it might be pertinent thus to site games in relation to this narrower popular spectrum. This might be done in two ways. Firstly, and in recognising the ready comparison between the production of recruitment (chapter three) and the consumption of games, more might be done in terms of tracking the development of aesthetic and thematic tropes through the political economies of production. Furthermore, much could be done to see how far play and simulation is privileged in, for example, RAF community liaison, and the significance of this for processes of learning and inculcation. More formally, it might be more straight-forward to map the (literal) connectivities between RAF game aesthetics and visual imagery rendered from real-world RAF operations. For example, we have seen in most games the use of real-world footage interspersed with more simply-rendered graphics. An interesting avenue of research, therefore, would be the presence of contemporary battle-footage (figure 5.10) in future RAF games and simulations, and, as such, the commensurability of reality and imagination in the media(tisa)tion of war.
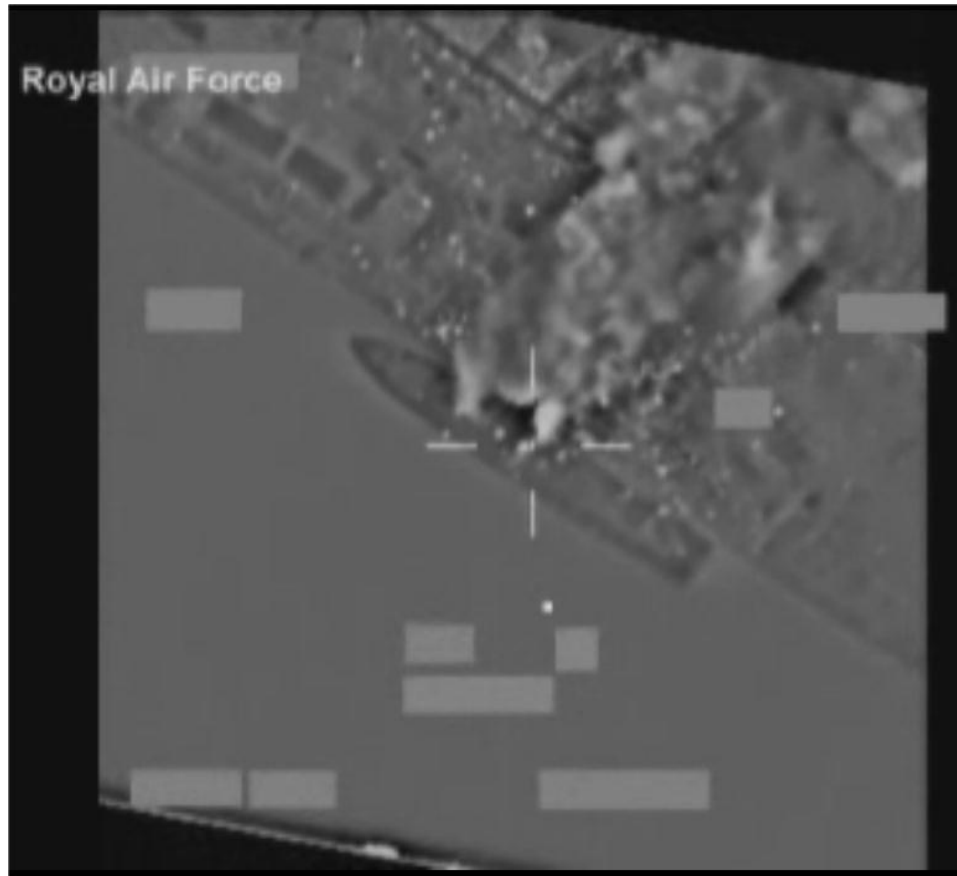
Figure 5.10 'Strike on Libyan Warship'

Secondly, insofar as we have learnt of the non-representational aspects of games and gaming, and in relation to a unifying popular-discourse of war, it might be useful to think through the affective economies of RAF recruitment and publicity. Connected to the prevalence of 'affect in understanding the multilayered nature of human thinking and, by extension, political behaviour such as waging wars' (Ó Tuathail 2003:857), much might be made of the specific unities of affect in RAF publicity.

However, by invoking both the universal nature of popular discourse and the particular, embodied affects of gaming events, we reach an impasse as to the realities of political experience. As noted in the opening of section 5.2, the main utility of thinking affectively about politics is that it provides a conceptual logic other than that of representation. And within this alternate logic, to invoke Salter (2011) again, there remains and opportunity for a situated exploration of the relation between bodies and spaces. The final section is devoted, thus, to further sounding the implications of the 'view from nowhere' (Harraway 1988) inherent to all unifying discourses of representation as opposed to the situated experiences of militarised bodies.

Focussing-in: materialising recruitment

Critical geopolitics, as Dowler and Sharp (2001) argue, whilst offering eloquent deconstructions of dominant political discourse, lacks a locative logic. Standing at an ironic distance, critical geopolitical commentators are confined to constantly critiquing the representations with which they engage (Dowler and Sharp 2001). Whilst fruitfully opening up the space of representation, there is thus little impetus to situate the nature and genealogies of a representational critique. So, much like Gregory's (2008) thesis on the naturalising tendencies of the mass-mediation of war, interpretations of geopolitics which privilege a totalising narrative of discursive mediation arguably have a tendency towards a God Trick that simultaneously allows the viewer to be both everywhere and nowhere (Harraway 1988).

One of the ways in which both the empirical and interpretative elements of political studies might be located more thoroughly is through a feminist geopolitics of scale and the body. In the first instance, feminist scholars have argued against the toltalizing (global discursive) ambitions of political geography, and call for theorisations that see the body, nation and global as indicative of the same processes rather than as different scales (Sharp 2007). Rather than conceiving of, for example, military games as reflective of, or testament to, a total visual culture of militarism, we might better think of them as grounded and translocal (Katz 2001), being, as they are, grounded within the bodily interactivities through which politics is actualised. And in the second instance, taking seriously the re-politicisation of the private sphere (as a site of translocal processes), means recognising that that the 'unruly body [read here as the body-emergent of the gaming event], is difficult to contain or sublimate within the logic of aesthetics…or the authentic' (Pratt 2006: 13). As we have seen through a discussion of the non-representational aspects of gaming, the body is a site of performance through which various (militarised) imaginings and spacings are brought into being. Inherent to a feminist geopolitics, as Dowler and Sharp (2001) argue, is the performance of geographical processes and geopolitical relationships at the scale of the body. Insomuch as the 'nation and international are reproduced in…mundane practices we take for granted [like gaming]' (Dowler and Sharp 2001: 171), the current study thus takes as its next direction the private sphere and the body as the primary site for recruitment and militarisation. As such, the following chapter – *Bodies* – shifts focus from the traditional spaces of politics (state, nation), and considers the body a surface on which political (and military) decisions and practices have tangible effect.

Part 3. Materialising Recruitment

Chapter 6. Bodies

In the preceding two chapters, the visual aspects of RAF recruitment were conceptualised in two different, though related, ways. In the first instance, through a focus on visuality, it was suggested that RAF recruitment comes to work via the prescription and practice of visual techniques. Here, the (geo)politics of recruitment were said to materialise and become effective at the point of visual perception. Moving from the public spaces of the show to the private spaces of the everyday (the bedroom, the personal computer), the visual was considered in chapter five, in the second instance, as a set of representational and more-than-representational practices which allow the geopolitical to become performed and affective. In this case, the collapsing-in of imagined and lived-in worlds through video game play works to blur the boundaries between imagination and perception. It was suggested here, furthermore, that geopolitics of RAF games – whilst certainly representational and iconographic – should be thought to work persuasively as 'visual practice[s] involving emotion, habit and virtuality' (Hughes 2007: 988). Importantly, out of these chapters emerge two issues of significance which will be dealt with in this chapter.

Firstly, by considering the more-than-representational aspects of the visual cultures of military publicity, we've been able to suggest that alongside its iconographic significance, RAF recruiting becomes effective insofar as it is 'a set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated' (Duncan 2000: 704). In chapter four, for example, the presence of texts and images in the space of the show was persuasive because they framed, and worked alongside, the shows more spectacular and experiential essence. In chapter five, it was suggested that recruiting games are effective because they entail a range of interactivities which work in ways to 'procure ethical cover for [military] interventions around the globe' (Dittmer 2010: 110). But with the explicit involvement of the *body* in these cases (visual perceptive capacities, haptic sense, respectively), the previous chapter finished with a call to consider the grounded, translocal (Katz 2001) and embodied actualisation of (geo)politics. Put differently, whilst it has been assumed, so far in the thesis, that there exists a pervasive, *a priori*, militarised culture which acts upon, instils and equips the potential recruit with the means to geopolitical consciousness, this chapter recognises that subjectivities are not merely blank affective topographies upon which discourse simply writes itself (c.f. Dowler and Sharp 2001). Rather, in taking seriously the limits of a representational (and visual-cultural) approach, this chapter starts with the assumption that to understand more fully the geopolitics of recruitment, we must

consider the corporal and embodied tenets of this military culture. Taking the conceptual limits of representation and visual cultures as its first starting point, the chapter will, in part, interrogate practices of recruitment as they happen on/around/within bodies.

A second issue of significance raised by the last two chapters was that of the referentiality between formal recruiting practices and a broader aesthetic or popular-visual discourse of war. For instance, in the last chapter, much was made of the aesthetic similarities between, and the resultant problems with, RAF games and familiar, common-sense, bomb-sight views of the Middle Eastern desert. Similarly, the chapter went somewhere to suggest that part and parcel of the recruiting game experience is a particular concomitance between the affective affordances of RAF games and the popularly perceived 'feeling' of battle. Overall, this theme is important because it points to the fact that military imaginations are not confined, nor a product of, the *internal* dynamics of military organisations alone (i.e. not solely decreed by official military publicity practices, like recruitment). Rather, military imaginations (those associated with ideas of space, place, violence and identity, for example) are products of a broader civil-military popular culture which, in part, defines what 'military' is, and what 'civil(ian)' is. The blurring and referentiality of civilian and military cultures is taken up here under the rubric of the *citizen-soldier* (Moskos 2001; Stahl 2006). Specifically, the chapter will consider how the body of the citizen (the potential recruit) is defined, marked and willed to perform in ways which confound presumed differences between the 'civilian body' and the 'military body'. Connectedly, it will be shown here how healthy and optimally-sized bodies are not only (imaginatively, virtually) enrolled into military service, but how these sorts of bodies stand as epithets for responsible, healthy citizenships.

In more general terms, then, the thesis at this stage continues to explore the empirical extent of RAF recruiting practices whilst at the same time employing novel conceptual avenues for the study of geopolitics. In particular, we remain here with the everyday and domestic (though at the level of the body), and take further issue with the limits of representation. The chapter is in four parts, and begins with an analysis of the RAF body as it is screened and tested for health, fitness and infirmity. This section will also outline more thoroughly the issue of the citizen-soldier body. Secondly, the chapter considers some of the more contemporary examples whereby RAF recruiting enters into everyday spaces and works to prescribe movements and habit. Thirdly, it will explore the performance of the RAF body at events such as the airshow, and lastly, finishes with a

discussion which will highlight the importance of the non-biological in the materialisation of recruitment.

6.1 Becoming RAF: the inscribed surface of events

It might not be such a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the military is fundamentally about bodies (how they are acquired, trained, used, damaged or lost). Whilst studies of the popular cultures of militarism have often focussed on the mediatised politics of counting the bodies of the dead and dying (Hyndman 2003 2007; Sontag 2004; Jenkings *et al*. 2012), the focus here is more specific, and looks to the 'procedure by which civilian bodies are transformed, or, more accurately, incorporated into military service and the principles of militarism' (Armitage 2003: 3). As a starting point, we remain for the moment with the more formal aspects of military inculcation whereby the civilian becomes military through the rigours of basic training. As Woodward and Winter (2007: 66) suggest, the manipulation of the civilian body starts early; 'the issuing of uniform [for example] begins the process of shaping the body…uniform restricts and shapes the body into particular postures and configurations'. Similarly, as Adey (2010: 26) remarks, speaking of the inculcation of air-mindedness in the 'subject-citizen' Air Cadet, youthful, nascent military bodies therewith were 'produced and manufactured bodies that had to be designed, preened, screened and developed into aerial subjects whose destiny it was to secure and defend the nation'. Through marching, drill, contact with the air through model-making and gliding experiences 'an *aerial life* [was] born through sets of associated practices…which had their own benefits in the training of character and, importantly, the 'capacities' desirable for their militaristic use' (Adey 2010: 27). Overall, the precursor to a *character* attuned to a militaristic outlook, it is argued here, is a 'particular kind of body: a body readied for performance, prepared for war; a body militarized and poised to step into action' (Adey 2010: 53).

Out of this introduction arise two themes. Firstly, there is that of Woodward and Winters' (2007) 'shaping' of the nascent military body combined with Adey's (2010) 'preening' and 'screening'. Put simply, for a body to become military, it must give in to particular corporal inconveniences and discomforts and, furthermore, open itself up to vetting and observation. Relating to a broader, Foucauldian notion of the 'body inscribed', what these accounts of military inculcation point to is the *governmental management* of the body (c.f. Schilling 2005). Namely, as an institution bound to a broader discourse of population management (including such things as the state, penal institutions, hospitals,

schools), the military exercises here the ability to *discipline* and *render docile* the body. In the first instance, as Foucault (1995: 25) suggests:

> Power relations [those that are granted to, and exercised by, the military in this case] have an immediate hold upon [the body]; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.

The wearing of uniform, the performance of drill, manoeuvres and other physical tasks are cases, then, whereby 'the body itself [becomes] a discursive product of power/knowledge and shifting forms of political investment' (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 29). Put differently, the body upon being trained and inculcated becomes 'the inscribed surface of events' (Foucault 1995: 147), something which becomes imprinted with (and so allows for the identification of) the discourses that lead to its imagining.

In the second instance though, the inscription of the body (willing it to dress, exercise and perform), in Foucault's (1995) terms, can only happen if the body is first rendered docile and analysable; 'docility [he suggests] joins the analysable body to the manipulable body' (136). Ergo, the preening and screening of military bodies is bound to a 'profusion of taxonomies, tables, examinations, drills, dressage, chrestomathies, surveys, samples and censures' (Turner 1984: 160), and moreover, to the identification of 'good' and 'bad' bodily matter through a pervasive clinical gaze that emerges with the institutionalisation of clinical medicine, criminology, sociology etc. (Williams and Bendelow 1999). The body, in these cases, needs 'to be made intelligible: it [needs] to be comprehended as it work[s] in action' (Adey 2010: 42). Summarily, in attempting to understand recruitment as it happens on/around/within bodies will involve considering its 'shaping', 'preening' and 'screening', for it might be said that a 'body becomes a useful [military] force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (Foucault 1995: 25).

The second theme that arises from this introduction is that of the military body as it stands for epithets of citizenship, and the 'moral character and aptitude to serve the nation' (Adey 2010: 42). A common theme in the literature, and something which will be important throughout this chapter, is not only the shaping of the military body for combat (Peniston-Bird 2003), but the *ideal* of the military body as it 'is inextricably linked to desirable values and ideologies' (Adey 2010: 27). There are several variations on this theme which will be important, and to start with, we might begin with Woodward's (1998) discussion of the body of the new recruit. As she suggests, whilst the:

> Ritual and literal stripping off of civilian identities [at the point of basic training mark] the
> construction of the body of the soldier…It also creates a new relationship with the space in
> which it acts (Woodward's 1998: 292).

These spaces are commonly rural, as Woodward (1998: 292) continues, and play host to the 'endless repetition of the basics of being a soldier – drill, weapon training, fieldcraft, map reading, first aid, nuclear, biological and chemical warfare defence and military education'. Ways of actually *doing* military identities thus usually happen in the 'cold, wet wilderness [or otherwise] challenging location[s] against which the solder-recruit is pitted, and in response to which the skills and identities of the solder-to-be are constructed' (Woodward 2004: 119). Although these examples work as neat cases of bodily production and subjectification, they also signify a more important relationship though between the body and the environments which create it (and visa-versa). As Woodward (1998) suggests – talking again of rural training – the 'countryside produces the soldier's body, which in turn is reinscribed and projected back onto the countryside': here, because the countryside is a dangerous demanding place, it is useful for training soldiers; because the countryside is used to train soldiers, it is dangerous and demanding. In what Longhurst (1997) calls a complex feedback relationship between bodies and environments, what we see here is the inscription, preening and production of the body in the context of broader, eminently changeable discourses of 'nature', 'environment' and the 'rural'.

Whilst the imaginative feedback between the inscription of the body and the imagining of the environment are undoubtedly important, this example is merely analogous to the main issue here. Whilst Woodward (1998 2004) is interested in rural space, more important for a study of RAF recruitment is the feedback between the body and (*often imagined) political, social and cultural spaces* (i.e. that of the nation). Linking back directly to the opening discussion of the referentiality between recruiting practice and more broadly imagined popular aesthetics of war, imaginative constructions of the military body may usefully be thought then 'less in terms of the internal dynamics of military organisations themselves, but rather in terms of their role in cementing [through popular media in particular] specific social conceptions of the citizen' (Jenkings *et al.* 2011: 40). As Peniston-Bird (2003: 43) suggests;

> The transformation of the body in order to ensure it was fighting fit was cast [in the Second
> World War] as a moral obligation, not merely as more efficient, providing evidence of
> active citizenship…The Armed Forces, and by extension, their definitions of physical

fitness, set the standards against which the individual…whether within or without the Forces, was measured.

Even at the level of the civilian job-market, where an employer might be impressed by the brisk movements, courtesy and discipline entrained through part-time military hobbies (Adey 2010), the blurring of the lines between citizen and soldier (Moskos 2001) points, inexorably, to a 'larger social militarization [and to the] recoding of the social field with military values and ideals' (Stahl 2006: 125). However, 'a body militarized and poised to step into action [is one that is, at the same time] a citizen-body, attaining stronger links with the body of the nation' (Adey 2010: 53).

Summarily, with the clear evidence that military bodies aren't just military bodies (standing as they do, referentially, for ideal conceptions of the environment, the rural, citizenship and nation), what an analysis of RAF recruiting will seek here is the body of the mediated (and in the latter parts of this chapter, the performed) 'soldiercitizen' (Flint 2008). For, as Flint (2008: 350) suggests:

> The soldier (facing the external enemy) must be created at the same time as the citizen (the internal subject). In fact, the two are inseparable. The hyphen in citizen-soldier is misleading. The role of the enemy in creating the subject means that the subject is a soldiercitizen. The focus is simultaneously offensive to allow for the construction of soldiers to fight the wars of the hegemonic state and defensive in creating particular ideas of the citizen in civil society.

Put more simply, asking questions about the military body is not just a matter of asking after modes of production and subjection. Rather, it is about asking how conceptions of citizenship and nation are bound to the *ideal* of the military body; how this phenomenon is mediated, and is allowed to materialise, through recruitment and promotional activities, and resultantly, how this explicitly militarised conception of the soldiercitizen is used to persuade people to join the military.

From this introductory discussion, there are thus two themes which will form the basis for analysis; first, the military body as it is made to be productive and subjected, and secondly, the military body as it stands as epithets for citizenship and nation. Though these themes will form the basis for the remainder of the chapter, in this section (6.1) they are applied to an analysis of RAF recruiting films from between 1938 and 1973, and excerpts drawn from the RAF's current online recruiting materials.

Inscribing the citizen-soldier/soldiercitizen

An almost ubiquitous part of RAF recruiting across the archive is the insistence on a healthy, fit and active body as a prerequisite for enrolment. Although not always used thematically in individual recruiting posters, videos or games, the healthy, fit and active body is a constant undercurrent. Interpreted simply, that particular types of bodies are required for, or blocked from, the RAF matters because 'work in the RAF can be physically demanding' (RAF 2012c): the pilot's body must be of a certain height and must be capable of seeing without glasses; the RAF Regiment body must be male and must be capable of lifting a load of a particular weight; the RAF body in general must be able to do a certain number of press-ups, pull-ups, must be able to run a certain distance, and must not be averse to particular foods, substances or materials (RAF 2012c RAF 2012d). An immediate point of contention here (something that is dealt with more generally throughout the chapter) is that the RAF body is one that is produced by and for the purpose of war, and by standards dictated by military prerogative. A more specific contention which will be dealt with here is how the RAF body is seen to be preened, screened and vetted according to these standards, and how this is mediated through recruitment.

As the film *Raising Air Fighters* (COI c.1938-9) suggests, all new RAF recruit hopefuls need to pass a 'rigorous medical examination' prior to acceptance. *Rising Air Fighters* (as described in chapter two) details the routes open to men interested in RAF flying duties; it is, as the narrator suggests, 'a survey of Britain's effort in the air'. Emphasising the importance of airpower to the defence of Britain, the film follows a number of candidates as they progress through the RAF's selection procedure for officers and for short service commission airmen. As part of this process (and this is especially the case for the older men who are candidates for the short service commission), we see recruits undergoing medical checks; a doctor in a white coat circles a candidate who is seated and bare-chested – his seated posture is corrected by the doctor (a straight back is preferable) who then listens intently to the candidates breathing and heart-rate by means of a stethoscope whilst the candidate raises and lowers his arms. As the film progresses, we see candidates seated and blindfolded in 'link' trainers (a forerunner to modern flight simulators). The task set to the potential recruit is to follow instructions, to twist dials and pull levers; the accuracy of their movements is plotted by the link trainer onto a length of paper which is then compared to an ideal flight plan. One of the successful recruits (Cadet Coburn) – after passing his medical and flight tests – is seen peering into a mirror in his

new RAF uniform: as the narrator opines; 'yes, and not a bad looking chap either – not all his conquests will be in the air'.

Whilst we see, in *Raising Air Fighters*, a good evocation of the body as it is made intelligible (preened and screened); as it is rendered docile and analysable in the face of sovereign authority; and as it is watched over by a pernicious medical gaze, we're also provided a sense that the RAF require different types of bodies for different sorts of roles. For example, Cadet Coburn's selection is orientated more toward flying capabilities (he's young, virile, and we get a sense that he need not undergo rigours physical checks), whereas those older men who are applying for short service commissions are vetted more heavily for deformity, illness and incapacity. RAF bodies are thus marked, inscribed and forced to carry out tasks in ways that classify bodies as 'bad', 'good', 'better'; classifications which mark out bodies as fit (or not) for particular roles. We see this in the COI (1973c) film, *Could This Be You?* (CtbY). In CtbY, we follow 'Joe', a timid young man who is seen to linger outside an RAF recruiting office looking dreamily into the window, but who makes a getaway when the NCO recruiter beckons him inside. After seeing a mobile RAF recruiting van in town, Joe plucks up the courage to speak to a recruiter and the remainder of the film details Joe's journey through the options available to him (RAF trades, non-commissioned ground roles), and to his eventual recruitment as an engineer. During this process, Joe gradually sheds his scruffy clothes, motorbike and long hair, and toward the end of the film, is seen to make his last appearances at the office in a suit.

CtbY is a film which focusses, thus, on non-flight, flight-support roles and is an advertisement for the 'forty people who are needed for every one pilot'. Though Joe is changed by his experience with the RAF, he's certainly not pilot (or Officer) material. In terms of the healthy, fit and active body of the RAF recruit, Joe is seen here to make up a certain type of body which, whilst *able* to serve, can only serve on the ground: as the narrator, in CtbY suggest, 'contrary to the popular belief, there are only a few cases where there is a bar to candidates [who have physical deficiencies or medical conditions which preclude service]'. Though Joe is not seen to suffer from ill-health, it is made clear in CtbY that because he is interested in the RAF trades – mechanical engineering etc. – the elite requirements of pilots (including high levels of fitness, 20/20 vision) should not be a concern. Put differently, whilst the RAF here is making a statement about the openness of its recruiting policies, it is, at the same time, producing (imaginatively and literally) bodies which are categorised or classified as 'elite', 'good' or 'precluded', and, resultantly,

classifying these bodies as useful or not for particular roles. Though we saw in *Raising Air Fighters* the means by which these classifications are operationalized as they mark and make the body intelligible, there is more to say about where exactly the classificatory standards used by the RAF come from, and their attendant politics.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

BMI is a correlation of height and weight. Candidates who do not meet the minimum and maximum BMI criteria will not be accepted into the service. The BMI standards acceptable for entry into the RAF are:

Age	Male and female minimum	Male and female maximum	Male maximum with additional assessment	Female maximum with additional assessment
18 +	18	28	32	30
16 to < 18	17	27	27	27

Figure 6.1 RAF Body Mass Index

The categorisation and classification of RAF bodies in recruiting materials (i.e. whether certain bodies are suited or not to military service) is an important site where more broadly-held (i.e. beyond-military) assumptions about 'good' and 'bad' bodies are inscribed upon the potential RAF body. None more is this so than with the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) measurement to assess the suitability of individual bodies (figure 6.1). Along with minimum standards of fitness – whether individuals can do a certain number of press-ups, pull-ups etc. – BMI, a correlation of height and weight and 'the dominant means of defining and diagnosing obesity in national and international public health policy' (Evans and Colls 2009: 1015), is used as a measure on the RAF careers website by which potential recruits might assess *themselves* prior to entering the recruitment process. The use of BMI by the RAF, here, is particular, because whilst every other measure of the body is negotiable (if you're colour blind, for example, there might still be a role for you), BMI is an immovable standard. In attempting to consider further the inscription and intelligibility of the military body as it is mediated through recruitment, there are three points of debate that centre on this element of the contemporary RAF body.

Firstly, we see in the use of BMI an evocation of Foucault's (in Turner 1984: 160) notion of the body-made-intelligible through 'taxonomies, tables…samples and censures'. The body is subjected here through the imposition of a dominant and internationally-

recognised index which, adjusted for the RAF's purposes, is used to assess whether particular individuals are suitable for military service. Though we'll see a starker example of this later in the chapter, the BMI index encourages the potential recruit to situate their body, essentially, 'on a continuum between underweight and morbidly obese' (Evans and Colls 2009: 1051). Along with this, however, and secondly, we see here a distinct *medicalization* of those characteristics of the body (height and weight) which are a correlate of the BMI score. (The BMI table in figure 6.1 is found under the 'Health' section of the site, rather than under 'Fitness'.) Whilst the RAF does provide a list of medical conditions which preclude service (c.f. RAF 2012d), it is not made clear why a correlation of height and weight should be considered a health concern. Through the 'complicit power of numbers' (Evans and Colls 2009: 1052), the RAF is thus perpetuating the 'seemingly unquestionable truth about the dangers' (Colls and Evans 2009: 1011) of bodies that are too large, or too small. Thirdly, and drawing further upon the emerging literature on the geographies of fat (c.f. Evans 2006 2010; Hopkins 2008 2011), the use of the BMI measure falls foul of the assumption that the BMI index is 'capable of telling truths about bodies through measurement' (Evans and Colls 2009: 1052). For example, the BMI index is incapable of accounting for the types and distribution of internal bodily tissues. This amounts to the assumption that large and (probably less often) small bodies are inherently 'bad' (or substandard), and generally ill-suited to activities that require exertion. More fundamentally though, in the case of RAF recruitment, BMI is used here as a 'truth'-telling measurement of the usefulness and worth of the potential recruit: that a candidate might pass all of the fitness tests and still fail the BMI measurement should imply here the RAF's bias towards bodies of particular shapes and sizes.

The soldiercitizen: 'fit for health, fit for ops, fit for life'

Whilst BMI is a particular, though significant, example in the subjectification and inscription of RAF bodies, it has wider import for this chapter. Namely, it implies a broader, civil discourse of body size which the RAF is seen here to draw upon, and which, thus, confounds the difference between the healthy, fit and active *military* body, and the healthy, fit and active *civilian* body. As Evans and Colls (2009: 1052; see also Colls and Evans 2009) recognise, BMI (and its use in particular contexts) is 'a strategy which exemplifies a particular moment in public health policy in which dominant social, political, medical and moral discourses of fatness are mobilised and materialised around…bodies'. This moment, as Bell and Valentine (1997: 29; c.f. Hopkins 2011) suggest, connects to a wider set of oppressive, exclusive and marginalising dominant discourses within many

western societies where 'the fat body is understood to be unhealthy, ugly and sexually unattractive'. Simply put, whilst it may seem common-sense in many ways for the RAF to classify bodies via an internationally-accepted index, the use of the BMI here means that the broader (civil) politics surrounding BMI and discourses of oversize bodies are imputed into the RAF's preening and screening policies.

The most direct instance where the RAF suggest a connection between requisite BMI standards and this broader discourse is seen at the airshow: at Waddington, 2009, materials present at a 'body composition assessment' exercise (to be discussed in more detail below) suggested that the use of the BMI by the RAF is linked to the fact that '1 in 4 UK adults are obese and 3 in every 4 adults are overweight. The UK is the most obese nation in Europe and the second most obese nation the developed world' (figure 6.7 below). Here, the RAF – by association – is suggesting that the requisite levels of health and fitness expected of recruits tie into an important *civil* discourse of health: the military body which is suited to combat is, at the same time, a body which is (because it is a product of the BMI) medically and morally acceptable in a wider (civil) sense. Equally, and by association, bodies which are medically and morally acceptable in the face of a growing epidemic of obesity are classified as suitable for combat. We see through the use of BMI to classify the RAF body a case then of the *soldiercitizen*; an entity defined not by military or civil discourses alone, but by a discourse of the body which seemingly conflates in this case the 'ideal' body with the 'military' body: bodies which are *militarily ideal* are, at the same time, bodies which are *ideally military*.

To summarise: a mantra which is commonly associated with the measurement of bodies in the RAF is *'fit for health, fit for ops, fit for life'* (RAF 2012e). In briefly reviewing examples where the RAF body is preened and screened for health and fitness, we've seen how – mediated through recruitment – the RAF body is subjected to a medical gaze and prompted to carry out tasks which render it analysable. Being 'fit for ops' here is a matter of docility in the face of specific powers which are bound to classify in order to allow or block access to a military life. More importantly though, we've seen in this first section the extent to which, through the use of the internationally-recognised BMI, the body of the recruit is a product not just of military prerequisites, but a wider medical and moral assumptions about acceptable bodies. Whilst the use of the BMI by the RAF is problematic in itself (considering the critical work on the BMI), what this points to is a 'larger social militarization [and a] recoding of the social field with military values and ideals' (Stahl 2006: 125) *and visa-versa*. Here, being 'fit for ops' is very much the same as being 'fit for

[civilian] life' (RAF 2012e): the referentiallity in this case between ideal military body and ideal civilian body means a responsible citizen-body is at once suited to a healthy, active citizen life *and* suited to forms of military service.

Becoming RAF, so far in this chapter, has been discussed through a focus on those elements of recruitment which happen on/around/within the *mediated* bodies of fictitious recruits, and otherwise, on policies which subject and inscribe the body of the potential recruit. In the next two sections, the chapter changes focus and looks to how the prescription of ideal RAF bodies enters into everyday spaces and works to prescribe movements and habit, for, as Colls and Evans (2009: 1016; see also Hopkins 2011) suggest, part of critiquing bodily assessment entails 'interrogat[ing] the embodied practices of measurement when they are materialised within…spaces' and around individual bodies. Taking forward, in particular, the debate around the soldiercitizen, the section begins with some examples and a conceptual review which will frame the bodily aspects of RAF recruiting as a *technology of the self*.

6.2 Being RAF: technologies of the self

Although the previous section outlined the ways in which the RAF body as it exists as a stable representation (insofar as it is part of recruiting films involving fictional characters and online content), this section will consider how similar materials come to work on/around/within *literal* bodies. This discussion will start by further outlining the RAF's online recruiting materials which focus on fitness. As the RAF's fitness page (RAF 2012c) (figure 6.2) suggests, part of a recruit's application to the RAF involves a mandatory Selection Fitness Test (SFT). Because of the various roles and entry routes into the RAF, the SFT is divided into gradations of requirement; Officers will require higher levels of fitness than Non-Commissioned aircrew; potential RAF Gunners bound for the Regiment are required to have a minimum fitness levels regardless of age. Native to all SFTs are sit-ups, press-ups, timed distance or multi-stage runs.

Though detailing a part of the recruiting procedure that happens, necessarily, *after* a candidate has been persuaded of the benefits of an RAF career, the RAF's fitness page has some import to a discussion of the soldercitizen body, and the ability for recruiting materials to act upon literal bodies. Namely, as the page suggests:

> If you don't meet required standards [of the SFT], you will have to wait at least six months to re-register your interest with the RAF (subject to your continuing eligibility), and by this

time, role availability may have changed. So it's really important to familiarise yourself with the requirements and work on getting fit as early as possible (RAF 2012c: no pagination).

Where we might expect those interested in joining the RAF to make sure they meet the required standards of the SFT before they complete it, the fact that potential recruits are prompted to *familiarise themselves* to and *get fit as early as possible* denotes a feature of recruiting whereby bodily assessments work on/around/within mundane *civil* spaces (the private gym, the running track, the civilian body). The fitness page goes on to outline the 'protocols' which every hopeful will be tested on: through photographic examples of press-ups and sit-ups, the RAF outline the correct postures and performances which will lead to success in the SFT. 'Getting fit as early as possible' here, because it notionally entails the adoption of fitness regimes by civilians which are used to assess the body for combat thus marks a further instance where the lines are blurred between soldier and citizen. In this section, we explore some of the more explicit examples whereby the promotional materials of the RAF act in this way. Importantly, however, and in trying to move beyond a conception of bodies as docile and simply receptive to the agitations of subjection and analysis, the section outlines ways in which essentially militarised practices of bodily improvement might come to be affected willingly by the self.
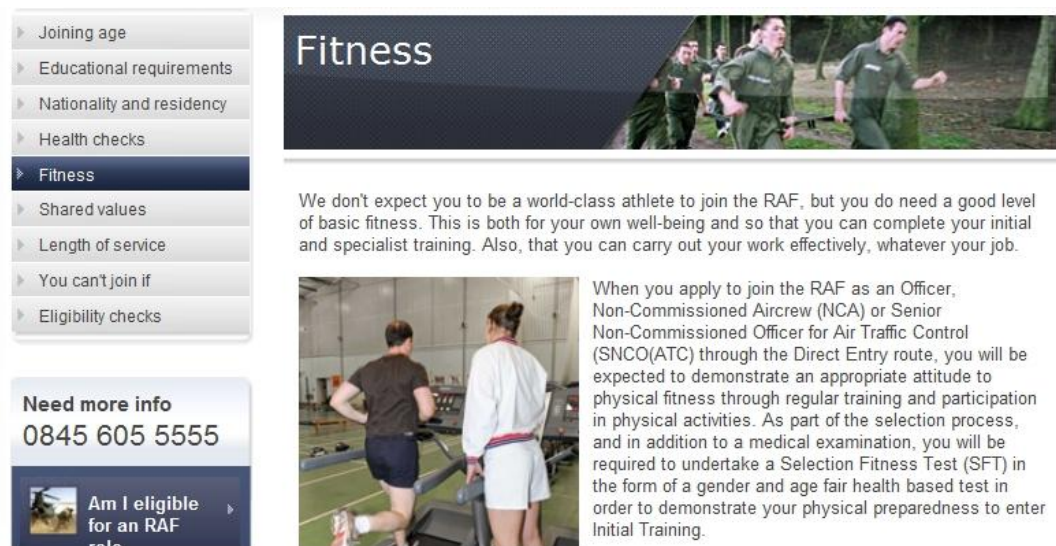

Figure 6.2 RAF fitness

Technologies of the self

Speaking at a juncture in Foucault's writing on the body and discipline, Williams and Bendelow (1998) suggest that whilst his thesis on the inscription of docile bodies

accounts well for the historically- and institutionally-specific production of bodies, it does this not without a certain determinism. Namely, to assume that the body is 'a ready surface or blank page available for inscription', as Butler (1989: 603) notes, 'implies a power that is necessarily *external* to the body' (my emphasis). Thinking merely in terms of the 'body-inscribed' (as we have done so far) has two key limitations for the aspirations of this chapter. Firstly, much of what the chapter aims to achieve centres on the perceivable commensurability of civilian and military bodies and bodily ideals (and the concurrent issues this raises for the theme of militarisation): considering the military powerful, though fundamentally *external* to the bodies it affects, does little to further this debate. Secondly, and connectedly, thinking via the body-inscribed tells us little about how the transformation of the body becomes the *obligation* of individuals, and how individuals (through things like the SFT preparation tests) are enabled to affect change on/around/within their *own* bodies. In attempting to address these limitations, and in following the feminist geopolitical frame set out at the end of the previous chapter, we consider bodies here 'sites of performance in their own right rather than nothing more than surfaces' (Dowler and Sharp 2001: 169).

The conceptual framework which will allow for this analysis is drawn from Foucault's (1994) *Technologies of the Self*. As Foucault (1994: 224) suggests, there are four technologies of power which act upon the body, and which constitute, or result in, particular 'truths' which 'human beings use to understand themselves'. These are, as Foucault (1994: 225) continues:

> (1) Technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things: (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification; (3) technologies of power which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, and objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

Though we have seen so far in this chapter evidence for those technologies of power which 'determine the conduct of individuals [in order that they should submit to] certain ends', the focus here is on the fourth technology. Specifically, it is with how the RAF's recruiting materials allow for the assumption that being militarily fit (prepared for initial fitness tests) might enable individual bodies to be 'fit for life' (i.e. a non-military life). Equally, the focus here is on how the RAF provides materials which allow individuals to effect by their own

means – in civil and domestic spaces – changes to their fitness and bodily composition. The following discussion draws on three examples: a recruiting film from 1974 which details the benefits of the Air Cadets as a 'training for life'; a further example of preparatory fitness training focussing on the RAF Regiment Gunner fitness programme; and the 'RAF fitness challenge' – a range of activities (not explicitly labelled as recruitment) which allows for the entry of militarised fitness regimes into the spaces of the everyday.

Affecting change, transforming the self

As the film *Training For Life* (TFL) (COI 1974) details, the activities open to those who join the Air Training Corps (ATC) (the cadets) will not only lay the foundations for a possible career in the RAF, but will provide the necessary physicality and character essential for a well-rounded (civilian) life[22]. In TFL, we follow two young boys who, at the beginning of the film, are clearly bored with their lot in life. Whilst out fishing, though, the boys witness the spectacle of a glider coming into land in a neighbouring field. In running to investigate, they see an Air Cadet of comparable age and an older RAF instructor disembark the glider. The boys are evidently excited about what they have seen, and the remainder of the film details the boy's experiences of locating, joining and becoming upstanding members of their local ATC branch. As with CtbY, through their experience with the Corps they gain confidence, self-respect, are seen to become active members of their community, and are visibly smarter individuals by the end. In the final sequences, the boy that has been most changed by his ATC career so far is seen coming into land in a glider: upon seeing two younger boys approach him and his instructor, his instructor suggests: 'Don't be too hard on them Bob, remember how you started'.

TFL, in terms of our discussions of the RAF body and the soldiercitizen, is significant in two senses. Firstly, TFL sits within a broader context of (and provides evidence for) policies of military inculcation via youth movements. As Adey (2010: 37) suggests, one of the primary ways successful recruitment continues is the existence of movements like the ATC which 'offer youths contact with the air'. Just as in TFL, 'the

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[22] The portrayal, in TFL, of the ATC, which is a depiction of what is now called the Air Cadets, requires some clarification. The ATC is currently a wing of the RAF which allows military training as part of a university degree before entry into the service after graduation. The Air Cadets is a youth movement (much like the Scouts) which fosters interest in aviation and exists separately from any other institutional structure. The chapter does not offer an explanation for the change of terminology since 1974, but recognising TFL as a portrayal of the Air Cadets (as opposed to the modern ATC) becomes significant in later discussions (see footnote 23).

promise of air experience was one of the main ways…youths and cadets [are] recruited' (Adey 2010: 37): Bob, the more enthusiastic of the two boys in the film was seriously considering the RAF scholarship scheme toward the end of the feature.[23] Whether or not youth movements result in higher numbers of 'recruitable' individuals, however, is not the central point here. Rather, the point is that as a movement which is negligibly related to consequent military service, the ATC is a space in which the *ideals* which at once stand as exemplary for a future military career are conflated with those that will result in a successful and responsible civilian life. This point is exemplified when Bob's mother – concerned with the fact that all the ATC is doing is preparing him for a military life (she is wary of this) – pays a visit to the ATC hut and is provided a tour around the facility: 'we're not run by the military [suggests the leader], we're mostly civilians'. Providing much more than just 'contact with the air' (which includes, in TFL, navigation, map-reading, communications, trips to RAF Kinloss) the ATC is seen here to provide Bob and his fellow Cadets training in fire safety, first aid and basic mechanics and electronics. Concluding the film, the narrator suggests that 'the ATC offers training if you want a life in the RAF. But also, as a basis for a trade or profession, the training cannot be bettered. In fact, it's a training for life'.

Secondly though, noting the broader context of youth movements and the seemingly universal applicability of ATC values to the military and civilian world, should not, however, belie the extent to which the *body* is central in this process. In providing more than just flying and contact with the air – as Bob and his friend soon find out – the ATC offers 'all kinds of sports, outdoor pursuits and adventure training'. As part of their experiences in the film, the Cadets visit the Adventure Training Centre in the Lake District. Here, Cadets are seen camping, hiking, rock climbing, swimming and sailing; these activities, as the narrator tells us, are not only fun, but are essential so as 'you're fit and able to take care of yourself'. Here the 'flesh of the aerial youth', as Adey (2010: 41) might have it, is learning 'mastery and awareness of themselves, before [it can be] extended outwards towards their troop, squadron and eventually the nation' (Adey 2010: 45). The example of the ATC thus demonstrates the ways in which 'youths [are] made to be aerial *and* better citizens' (Adey 2010: 45 my emphasis). As Cadets are able to affect, by their

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[23] By definition, the modern equivalent of the ATC (which is the Air Cadets) is not a formal recruiting mechanism, being as it is an organisation designed merely to 'promote an interest' in aviation and the RAF (c.f. RAF 2012i). However, as my respondent in chapter three noted, there should be no question as to the extent to which – however informally – Air Cadet movements *do* work as pools for RAF recruiters.

own means (and with the help of the ATC), changes in their outlook, physicality and self-respect, they at once become militarily ideal, and at the same time, prepared for a responsible civilian life.

Though providing evidence for the youthful cultures of the soldiercitizen and accounting for the continuing inculcation of 'airmindedness' through the ACT and Cadet movements, there are more direct examples of the RAF body as it might become expressed as a technology of the self. One of these is the provision at events such as the airshow of take-away military fitness programmes. For example, similar to the RAF's online fitness page, the *Get ready RAF Regiment potential Gunner acquaintance course* (PGAC) (figure 6.3) is a 20-page booklet which outlines the rigours of the 3-day physical test which assesses the suitability of candidates for the RAF Regiment. As the booklet suggests:

> Before you can join the RAF Regiment, you'll have to pass a three-day Potential Regiment Gunner Acquaintance Course (PGAC). And once you've passed the test, you'll need to stay fit so that when you join, you'll do well on the 22-week course for trainee gunners (3).[24]

Whilst outlining the 'head-to-toe medical and skeletal assessment', the 'intro to military life', and the 'open forum' where candidates can ask questions about the RAF (all of which are part of the 3-day assessment) the PGAC booklet is important because it provides a 4-week *pre*-training regime which has been designed to prepare potential recruits for the PGAC. This programme:

> Has both aerobic and muscular endurance exercises, as well as flexibility advice, so it will quickly develop your all-round fitness. It's simple to follow and doesn't need any specialist equipment or gym membership. We've also made sure it isn't a massive time commitment, so you can fit it in around work or study.

The programme asks candidates to follow a regime of push-ups, sit-ups, runs and sessions of bicycling and swimming. Each of these activities is diagrammed in the booklet (the figure of a man is seen preforming stretches and activities) so as candidates might correctly achieve the correct postures and positions.

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[24] As with chapter five, for quotes that appear in this chapter that relate directly to individual images, see the relevant figure in the front matter for details of reference.

Figure 6.3 RAF Regiment potential Gunner acquaintance course

PGAC, because it is a programme of bodily exercises which prompts the 'conditioning of muscular consciousness' (Adey 2010: 45) *before* formal military assessment, and because the 4-week programme is designed around a civilian life, is a further, straightforward, example whereby the ideal of the military body is extended on/around/with civilian spaces and bodies. Moreover, there is the sense in PGAC (similar

to TFL), that the programme will be useful not only for military service, but for an active, healthy civilian life: the booklet concludes with diet suggestions and warnings about the perils of smoking and drinking. As a prospective technology of the self, the PGAC works by making a simple connection of coincidence, then, between the healthy body, and the body which is suited for combat.

PGAC, whilst a good example of the key issues in this chapter, is significant though mainly because of its *format* and *availability*. Where the potential recruit would have to be seated in front of a screen to see TFL (perhaps in a school), the PGAC booklet is designed to be picked up at recruiting and promotional events and taken away into the home (indeed the copy of PGAC used in the chapter was taken from the South Shields TA centre on Armed Forces Day, 2009). The availability of materials such as this, and so their ability to be present in the mundane spaces of the everyday, points then to a particular mechanics of recruitment which targets the body: to affect change in the body of the potential recruit, the technologies that might allow this (documents like the PGAC) must be around the body in question.[25] In the final example of this section, this theme will be explored in more detail, and to do so, it will turn to another prospective technology of self which, whilst equally mundane, is arguably more pervasive.

As the RAF Careers website asks (as part of its 'Life in the RAF' section) (RAF 2012f: no pagination):

> Are you ready to take on the RAF fitness challenge? Sports and exercise is a massive part of forces life, so we're well qualified to help whip you into shape for 2011...RAF personnel are required to reach and maintain a good level of fitness throughout their career, and by following our expert advice, you can do the same.

Much like the examples we've seen so far, the RAF's online 'Life in the RAF' and fitness challenge in general demonstrates the high levels of fitness required by their serving personnel. Furthermore, it suggests that if you're into sports, the RAF is the job for you: 'With over 45 sports clubs available in the RAF there's more motivation to keep your fitness levels up'. However, much like the previous examples, there is a reasonable amount of 'blurring' between the fitness levels required by serving personnel, and the applicability

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[25] And the next chapter will detail more specifically the politics of recruiting materials as they find their way into the home.

of the RAF's fitness programmes for civilians: the RAF can 'whip you into shape' for the new year; *you* can maintain the good level of fitness just like those in the RAF.
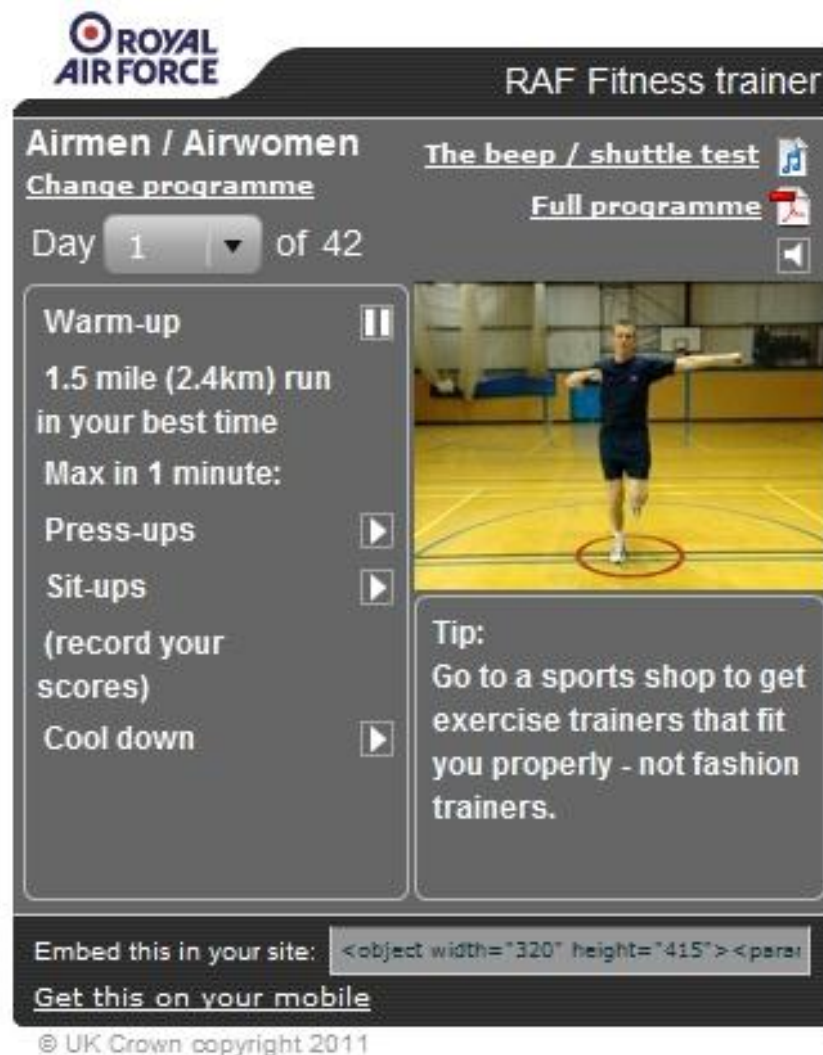
Figure 6.4 RAF Fitness Widget

Where the RAF's 'Fitness Challenge' is particular, though, is in the technologies it uses to enable the potential recruit, or rather, the civilian, to achieve military fitness. For instance, a feature of the Fitness Challenge page (RAF 2012f) is an 'exercise myths' video which demonstrates methods by which one might exercise correctly and avoid injury: as Corporal Simon Wray – on of the videos announcers – suggests, in training to send people out to places like Afghanistan, he's qualified to talk about physical fitness and injury. Most important for the discussion here though is a set of training tools available via the fitness challenge page which enable the budding citizensoldier to design their fitness programme around a hectic schedule, to track their progress, and to receive helpful hints on staying focussed. For example, the 'fitness widget' (figure 6.4) allows one to interactively follow a

42-day fitness programme via computer, a personal website or mobile phone. The fitness widget, which can be set to various difficulties as per the physical demands of Officers, NC Aircrew, Gunners, etc., allows one to view (in an embedded screen) the correct postures for sit-ups and press-ups and includes an audio file for the 'bleep-test' assessment. To accompany the fitness widget, the RAF also provide a 'Progress Tracker' (RAF 2012g) which – amongst other things – includes a 'text trainer' through which users receive daily messages on their mobile from a virtual RAF PT Instructor for encouragement. Along with fitness, the RAF also make it clear that 'healthy living' is paramount to success if the fitness programme is to work (RAF 2012h): so as not to 'destroy your efforts', one must stop eating take-aways, drink plenty of water, and get rid of certain things in your fridge.

The RAF Fitness Widget and its allied features are significant in three ways, and demonstrate some of the key issues in this chapter (not least that of the 'technologies of the self'). Firstly, we're provided here a straightforward example of the referentiality and blurring between the ideal military body and the ideal civilian body. Similar to that of the BMI as a measure of useful military bodies, there is a particular commensurability in the RAF's fitness materials here between what the military body *should be*, and what should be strived for in *all* bodies. The body which is mediated to us in these materials, thus, is that of the *soldiercitizen*: with little perceivable difference between being 'fit for ops' and 'fit for life', the ideal military body is being created here – following Flint (2008) – at the same time as the ideal citizen body. Secondly, these effects are compounded particularly in these cases because the RAF's fitness materials *are not explicitly framed as recruitment*. The 'Fitness Challenge' – whilst clear in outlining the physical demands of military service – does not try to persuade one of the benefits of military service. Rather, it is an attempt at outlining the benefits of a fit and healthy body, which, merely coincidently, is a body suitable for the military. Thirdly, the RAF 'Fitness Challenge' is important because it is a technology of the self, and points to the ability of the RAF body-ideal to materialise on/around/within individual bodies. Considering the format and availability of the 'Fitness Challenge' (the personal computer, the mobile phone), and it's easy negotiability, it is straightforward to suggest here that through such materials, the RAF is allowing individuals to perform a 'certain number of operations on their own bodies' (Foucault 1994:225). Justified as a set of tools by which to achieve general fitness (rather than particular, military, fitness), the 'Fitness Challenge' is a means by which individuals might attain certain goals in lea of a body-ideal which is both military and civil.

In summary, by moving beyond the body as a mere surface external to that of the (disciplining, analysing) powers which act upon it, we've revealed a set of spaces on/around/within which the ideal of the military body materialises and becomes performed. These spaces are at once domestic (the home, the gym), and personal (the body, bodily composition), and resultantly, it should be said that the body which is bound to the ideal of the soldiercitizen is one that becomes effective (if one accepts the RAF 'Fitness Challenge') as a set of potential movements, postures, habits, routines and abstinences. In order to explore the specific materialisation of the RAF body more thoroughly, the next section looks to RAF bodies as they are performed *in the immediate*. Whilst examples like TFL and the 'Fitness Challenge' only explore the *possibility* of the performed RAF body, this final section looks to examples – notably from the airshow – of the literal RAF body in action.

6.3 Doing RAF: generating excess

As events which allow the RAF to be tangibly present in public spaces in a recruiting and promotional capacity, it shouldn't be surprising that the airshow is used by the RAF and the other military services to extoll the virtues of the healthy, fit and active body. Through such things as climbing walls and shooting galleries, healthy-eating cook-offs, various competitions which test strength and agility, and body assessments, the airshow is a space in which the military body materialises in specific circumstances, and is performed as it is willed to excess. As Adey's (2010: 26) discussion of the military body implies, whilst the discursive and iconographic tenets of the aerial/military body are important, a foundational concern should be how the military body *becomes* 'through a host of different ways of *doing*'. Furthermore, as Adey (2010: 26) continues, airshows and other public performances which are facilitated by the military encourage 'mobile practices' and 'actions' which are 'deliberately generative of an excess beyond that of quantifiable docility' (Adey 2010: 42). In this final section then, we turn to explore the airshow in its role as facilitating the *generation of excess*. Moreover, in attempting to move further away from a body as a mere surface of events, and external to powers which act upon it, this section looks to the assessment and classification of bodies in and through acts of performance. It will also consider further the theme of the citizensoldier, and the referentiality of ideal military and civilian bodies as they materialise in particular circumstances at the show.

Figure 6.5 Sunderland 2009: Doing military

Climbing, eating, being assessed

As figure 6.5 details, the airshow is an event which encourages participation, physical and bodily engagement, and excess. From the Territorial Army bouncy-castle which offered the chance for participants to use their agility to negotiate obstacles whilst avoiding a large swinging ball; an RAF Regiment pull-test which assessed strength and

speed by means of a rope on a pulley system; to the opportunity to operate plant equipment with the Army in order to clear a faux mine-field, physical participation at the show centres on strength, agility and fortitude in the face of (imagined and sometimes literal) extremes. Not least is this the case than with the almost ubiquitous presence at airshows of climbing walls (figure 6.5).

Used by all military forces and military cadet organisations, the military use walls to 'challenge' showgoers to a physical test which is intended to shock, intimidate, and most importantly, assess. Despite their modest height, the walls are labelled as death-defying tests of endurance; participants are often tied-on simultaneously and tasked with racing each other to the top; the crowd is encouraged to cheer the participants on, and the winner is awarded some form of military-branded paraphernalia. Much like many of the branch-specific presences at the show, interpreted straightforwardly, the use of climbing walls by the military enables a simple connection to be made between the particular physicalities of military service and the branch that is being advertised. For example, used by the Air Cadets with their focus on outward-bound pursuits, the RAF Regiment, TA and Army with their emphasis on physical strength and endurance, the walls are less prevalent in the advertisement of technical roles such as Bomb Disposal or Intelligence. In this sense (and in relation to the conclusions made in the previous chapter) bodies which excel at climbing are notionally suited to more physically demanding military roles, and visa-versa. More important to the discussion, however, are the imaginations which are associated with the act of climbing itself. For instance, the climbing experiences at the show are often, and literally, labelled as existential challenges: the Air Cadets might advertise their wall by asking; 'can you conquer the Air Cadets wall? The Marines, notably, use the reverse of the wall structures to imply that the climbing challenge requires the correct 'state of mind'.[26] Overall, the superlative imagination of ascent, bound as it is to the conquering of fears and the requirement of physical strength, are at once materialised and embodied here at the point of engagement with the rock face. The body-ideal which is associated with climbing (connected variously to military roles) thus finds its expression in these circumstances.

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[26] Climbing walls are a common feature of military recruiting internationally. In the case of American Army recruitment, however, the existential challenges of climbing are more explicitly stated, with words and phrases such as 'Selfless Service', 'Honour', 'Integrity' and 'Personal Courage' painted onto the rock face itself. See http://www.army.mil/article/43450/ (Last accessed, 25/06/12). Further work on the public face of military recruitment might well use climbing wall experiences as a starting point, their mobility (in being able to fold down into trailers) allowing them to be present on city streets and in shopping centres.

Figure 6.6 Sunderland 2009: Fit for life cook-off

An example of physical and bodily engagement at show that brings into question the theme of the soldiercitizen in particular is that of the Royal Navy Marine's 'Fit for Life' cook-off (figure 6.6). Present yearly at the Sunderland airshow, the Marine's cook-off allows the military to demonstrate the necessity of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle as it applies both to the rigours of service and day-to-day life. The 'fit for life' van enables the Marines to demonstrate the cooking of a number of healthy meals, instructions for which are projected via loudspeaker to the onlooking crowd, and the preparation of which is televised in wide-screen via the 'food-cam'. Samples of the meals are handed out to the crowd after each meal is completed, and showgoers might leave with pamphlets and other materials so as they might recreate the dishes that were demonstrated.

The Marine's 'Fit for Life' cook-off is at once a clear evocation of the need for healthy bodies for combat and a case where the military body comes to stand for a civilian ideal. In the first instance, the chef (who is a serving Marine) is often heard to make direct connections between diet and the vagaries of combat: one is told that 'this is the type of food you need to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan'. Here, with the invocation of common-sense notion of current conflict, a sense of danger and imagination of combat are legitimised and authenticated by the need to eat healthily and be fit-for-task. In the second instance though, the cook off – branded as it is as a 'fit for life' exercise – is a clear case of the commensurability of being fit-for-task, whilst at the same time, fit for a civilian life. Different to the RAF 'Fitness Challenge', though, the cook-off enables a direct

materialisation and performance of the soldiercitizen body: in participating, in tasting the meals that are prepared, the body of the showgoer is altered literally as it *does* healthy eating and healthy living.

Figure 6.7 Waddington 2009: Body Composition Assessment

A final example – one which provides the clearest possible crystallisation of the range of themes discussed in this chapter – is the RAF 'Body Composition Assessment' (BCA) which was present at Waddington airshow, 2009 (figure 6.7). The BCA was part of a large RAF recruiting presence at Waddington, and was not allied to any particular branch (though the personnel supervising were RAF Regiment). Centred on a physical test which pitted showgoer against showgoer in a competition, the BCA was also explicitly advertised as an assessment of the body. Flanking the space in which the competition was held were a number of banners which encouraged competitors (before they were to compete) to locate their body on a BMI scale: suggesting that 'from 1 Oct 07, all RAF personnel will have a BMI and WC [waist circumference] measurement taken at the beginning of their fitness test', the RAF here are clear to connect the requisite standards of the military body to the medicalised discourse of the BMI. Indeed, as the banners read, 'Body Mass index…and Waist Circumference…measurement offer a simple, but very effective way of determining your body composition and identifying your level of risk'. 'Risk', here, is that of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, 'various cancers' and Alzheimer's – all of which are a potential product of obesity: the BCA is, then, a clear marker of the RAF's preference for bodies of particular shapes and sizes. Furthermore, as a strategy for preening and screening the potential recruit, we're provided here, again, a conflation of the ideal military body and the ideal civilian body at the point of a broader discourse of the medical and moral markers of oversize bodies.

Figure 6.8 Waddington 2009: Performing the Assessment

As a presence and event which was designed to 'assess' the body of the showgoer, and as something which certainly *generated excess*, the BCA is significant in a number of ways. As a way of making the body intelligible through 'taxonomies, tables…samples and censures' (Turner 1984: 160), the BCA (through its use of BMI) is a good example whereby the body is marked, inscribed and tasked with performing by order of a particular classificatory system. Moreover, as the BCA reminds us: 'The RAF expects you to be: fit for health, fit for operations, fit for purpose: In the process you will be: fit for life' (figure 6.7). In performing at the BCA, the competitor is at once demonstrating their suitability for military service, and at the same time, demonstrating the character, aptitude and body composition required by that of a fit, healthy and active *civilian* body. Importantly though, the BCA becomes (as it is performed) also a particular technology of the self. Simply, with the assistance of the RAF, and because of its competitive element, participants in the BCA effect by their own means and willingness, performances which demonstrate their bodily composition. Furthermore, because the BCA is present in a way so as to allow others to observe performance, the impetus to 'preen' and 'screen' becomes part of the act of observation. Not only is it the military that is assessing the suitability of bodies at the BCA, rather it is the military, and competitors, and observers.

Overall, in exploring three instances where the discourse of the RAF (and military) body 'are mobilised and materialised' (Evans and Colls 2009: 1052) at the airshow, much has been done here to explore the RAF body as it is expressed in the immediate. As Adey (2010: 26) suggests, though a 'public flag-waving' sort of nationalism marks a useful outcome of the airshow, the underlying intention of the show is the spectacular observation of 'entrained bodily movements'. As we've seen here, the performance of capacities 'desirable for…militaristic use' (Adey 2010: 27) are at once the same as capacities 'linked to desirable values and ideologies, especially of [a responsible, healthy] citizenship'. Aerial life, as Adey (2010: 52) continues:

> Was not inspired through the symbolic representational practices of the aviation spectacle, or the specified practices of observing, but it came about through the practices that composed these representations; through the mobilities that made up the parades, displays and films.

In a similar way, we've seen in this chapter that whilst the practices that compose representations (health assessments in *Raising Air Fighters*, the RAF 'Fitness Widget', for example) are important in the mediation of the RAF body, it is the *doing* of these

representations and interactivities that is more important. In the final discussion, we apply these conclusions to some of the aspirations set out at the start, and consider where a critical geopolitics of military cultures might go considering the concertedly material and bodily nature of RAF publicity.

6.4 Discussion

This chapter has aimed to account for how the body is mediated through RAF recruitment. A further set of aims has been to describe how the RAF body becomes inscribed, assessed and analysed, how policies of promotional work become obligatory as technologies of the self, and how the RAF body is seen to materialise and become performed in the space of the airshow. Accordingly, it has suggested that the RAF body is mediated through a range of these means. For example, the body as it is represented in RAF recruiting is often a body analysed, docile, made intelligible and made to carry out certain procedures. As technology of the self, RAF recruitment is seen to have the potential to work more literally on the body through features such as the RAF 'Fitness Widget'. Finally, as an ideal which materialises in specific instances through bodily performance, the RAF body is seen to become through various acts of doing (particularly at the airshow).

At the start of the chapter, two issues of significance were raised, and through a further discussion, these will be added to in ways. Firstly, the issue of representation was highlighted. In chapter five, it was noted that beyond its iconographic significance, RAF recruiting become effective insofar as it is 'a set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated' (Duncan 2000: 704). In this chapter – as with the interactive and affective role of games – there is indeed more evidence for thinking of representation (at least when it applies to the wider gamut of RAF promotional practices) as a range of more-than-representational practices by which the ideal military body is allowed, and enabled, to materialise. Moreover, in considering the performed and performative potential of body-orientated RAF media, the impasse between an external power (representation) and the body of the recruit was broken down. Here, the tenets of an ideal military body don't exist *a priori* the blank subjective topography (c.f. Dowler and Sharp 2001). Rather, the RAF body is something which – because it materialises in particular circumstances – is embodied and actualised at the point of its performance.

A second issue of significance was the referentiality between what might be considered singly military discourses, and those discourses which are presumed to be confined to the civilian sphere. In chapter five, this theme was considered by way of the

referentiality between the aesthetic registers of RAF gaming, and the broader aesthetic of a popularly imaged modern warfare. In this chapter, this referentiality was engaged with via the body of the *soldiercitizen*. Through the use of BMI in particular, but also through examples such as the BCA, it has been demonstrated – following Peniston-Bird (2003) and Jenkings *et al*. (2011), amongst others – that a 'body militarized and poised to step into action [is one that is, at the same time] a citizen-body, attaining stronger links with the body of the nation' (Adey 2010: 53). The responsible, fit and healthy RAF body has been shown to be one-and-the-same as the responsible, fit and healthy civilian body, with the consequence that there is a particular 'recoding of the social field with military values and ideals' (Stahl 2006: 125). Whereas, in this chapter, there has been a constant, undercurrent assumption that the RAF's policies towards the body are merely a necessity (the RAF, after all, requires capable bodies to fulfil its task in defence), an important conclusion is that in the deployment of these policies, elements of social fields become commensurate with those of the military. Fundamentally though, the chapter has demonstrated that it is in/around/within literal bodies that this blurring of the civil and the military materialises.

In taking these two issues further, and with materialisation and the material in mind, the final substantive chapter takes as its starting point a further range of physical and material encounters which make up RAF recruitment. Whilst this chapter has gone some way to exploring the physical and material as it applies to health and fitness, the next will consider the use, deployment and affordances of the RAF's material cultures in a more general sense. Specifically – and in relation to the themes of recruitment and militarisation – the next chapter will explore the:

> Constitutive nature of material processes and entities in social and political life, the way that things of every imaginable kind – material objects, informed materials, bodies, machines…help constitute the common worlds that we share (Braun and Whatmore 2010: ix)

Chapter 7. Materials

Is matter an object interrogated (and so enlivened) by subjects who stand, as it were, before it, already thoughtful and probing? Or does the material world interrogate us? Does it question and demand, press us into submission, or weigh us down through its density, obstinacy, and persistence? (Anderson and Wylie 2009: 323).

Now I have to say I am already on bad terms with the inanimate world…what is it with objects? Why are they so aggressive? What is their beef with me? Objects and I, we can't go on like this. We must work out a compromise, a freeze, before one of us does something rash (Amis 1987: 32).

Much like the previous two chapters, and the latter half of the thesis more generally, this chapter is concerned with two strands of debate. Firstly, it is concerned with the contention that practices of RAF recruitment amount to, and play a role in, processes of militarisation. For instance, whilst RAF games were shown to be distinct from other military games in being explicitly framed as recruiting tools, they nevertheless draw upon broader aesthetic and thematic registers associated with the popular imaging of war. Similarly, the RAF body in its mediatised format is difficult to distinguish from the body-ideal present in the wider civilian sphere; here, following debates around the citizen-soldier, this points to a 'social militarization [and the] recoding of the social field with military values and ideals' (Stahl 2006: 125). In both cases, importantly, we have thus seen a marked commensurability between those representative and discursive structures, and performed and embodied actions which, formally, stand apart as either non-military or military in origin. Otherwise, because the thematic tenets of recruitment (for example, space, history, identity and the ideal military body) do not differ from those present in the popular cultural 'military normal' (Lutz 2009), it has been argued that more than just reflecting popular military discourse, RAF recruitment is *constitutive* of this discourse.

However, in exploring the constitutive nature of RAF recruitment and publicity in this respect, we come to the second strand of debate; that of concepts and their critical utility. As we have seen in successive discussions so far (through parts one, two and three of the thesis), beyond the representative matter of recruitment lie a set of visual, affective, embodied and performed acts through which the geopolitics of recruitment come into being. By shifting the *scale* at which we assume power to operate and geopolitical scripts to be staged (from the textual and representative to the visual cultural, private and performed), we have shed light on these acts, and so allowed a more nuanced understanding of military

recruitment and militarisation in its capacity to alter and change perception, countenance and bodily disposition. Latterly, in chapter six, this involved employing a constructivist-feminist approach to the body. More generally, however, the shifting of analytical focus between epistemological standpoints particularly in chapters five and six has been done in order to expose what Dalby (1996) has called the politics of writing critical geopolitics. Alongside allowing other and essential things to be said about the empirics of recruitment, this has arguably given credence to the contingency of critical geopolitical analysis (Müller 2006); namely, that a focus on representation or vision alone might not account at the right order of detail for the little things (Thrift 2000) which bring the geopolitical into being. It is from the intersection of these two debates – the recruitment/militarisation and the contingency of critical geopolitical analysis – that this chapter proceeds. In doing so, our focus turns now to the material cultures and materialities of RAF recruitment.

Figure 7.1 Sunderland 2010: The power of stuff

Just as it has been argued that airshows stand as good indicators of the range of public relations strategies employed by the RAF (chapter five), they also demonstrate the profoundly *material* experience of recruitment. The airshow – although something which has been conceptualised primarily visually until now – is all about what Miller (2010) calls *stuff*. From the presence of large aircraft and their sounds and smells, to the micro-topographies of the airbase (the texture of airstrip concrete); from stuff which can be handled (weapons, figure 7.1), climbed, eaten, bought, or collected for free (models, keyrings, pens, documents), the airshow is inherently materially profuse. Beyond the

airshow, however, this profusion continues. From the composition and conduct (Dewsbury *et al*. 2002; della Dora 2009) of a collection of RAF recruiting posters, for example; the material exchange-value of an advertiser's creative potential; to the tactility of computer-gamer's keyboard, RAF recruitment is, before any of our attempts to theorise it, existent and experienced materially.

The very ordinariness of stuff in these contexts though – i.e. the obviousness of the immediately material experience of things – is fundamental to this chapter. Particularly, the ordinariness of stuff has important implications for the two strands of debate; the nature of militarisation and the contingency of critical geopolitical analysis. Firstly then, concerning militarisation, and following Miller (2005: 5):

> Objects [stuff] are important not because they are evident…but often precisely because we do not "see" them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so.

Connecting with debates in cultural geography, cultural studies and anthropology, the chapter takes seriously the power of obvious and often elusive material arrangements to generate information (Law 1999), perceptive capacities and dispositions. By exploring in more detail particular empirical examples of how recruiting materials are engaged with, the chapter attempts to uncover the determinacy of materials in terms of militarisation, and otherwise, the 'material ways in which power relations [therein] are lived and experienced' (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004: 672).

Secondly – and towards a further exploration of the contingency of critical geopolitical analysis – it will be argued here that beyond the determinate power of military stuff to act and animate particular militaristic dispositions, the *conceptual passivity* of stuff (or rather, the passivity with which it has been studied) has implications for current and future critical geopolitics. As most accounts of material culture suggests, a focus on the inanimate things which exist and partake in our everyday inherently involves a critique of the Western 'dualism of subjects and objects, of people on the one hand and things on the other' (Knappett 2002: 98). Furthermore, much like Müller's (2006) critique of critical geopolitical analysis (particularly that of discourse and the subject), thinking seriously about materiality is to recognise that 'things [stuff] exceed both the proliferation of environmental subdisciplines and the tired theoretical resources of '(social)

constructionism' and '(natural) realism' that have greeted them' (Whatmore 2002: 1; c.f. Fitzsimmons 1989). For the current study therefore, recognising that to cheat matter out of the fullness of its capacity (Barad 2003) through a reductive conceptualisation of matter as exterior to, or as merely a product of the political or social is to do an injustice to its forcefulness. This chapter, working with the parallel concerns of critical geopolitics and studies of material culture, thus works from the supposition that the stuff of recruitment (simulators, sounds, weapons, documents) are not just an *end product* of, or supplementary to (geopolitical) power relations, but as active and originary within such (Braun and Whatmore 2010). Something which will inflect through the empirical discussion to follow, is, as Braun and Whatmore (2010: xiii-xiv) continue:

> Taking nonhumans – energies, artefacts, and technologies – into account in the analysis of how collectivites are assembled, understanding these less as passive objects or effects of human actions and more as active parties in the making of social collectivities and political associations.

Like the previous discussion of RAF bodies, this chapter will not attempt, following Miller (1998: 6) a 'general theory of the object world as an abstract set of relationships to be applied indiscriminately to a plethora of domains'. Neither does it try to account for an endless proliferation of criteria of mattering (Miller 1998). Rather, through a discussion of the materiality of two specific domains – the airshow and the home – more light will be shed on how RAF recruitment is done and is experienced, and some conclusions made as to what this might mean for critical geopolitics. In order to account for these two domains, the chapter is in three parts. Firstly, we return to the airshow, and explore how the things available to the showgoer to touch, wear, collect and carry are powerful in their capacity to legitimise the military, and to valorise militaristic ways of being and knowing. Furthermore, we will follow some of these material(itie)s 'home' from the airshow, and provide some thoughts on the extension of essentially militarised matter within the domestic sphere. Secondly – following on from discussions of autoethnography in the opening chapter – I will reflect upon the social life and vibrancy of the stuff which has accumulated in my work and living space which attest not only to my prior presence at airshows, but to my identity as a military researcher. Finally, some thoughts will be provided on the propensity for materials to act within military cultures, and the implications of this for what Nicley (2009) calls a *thick* critical geopolitics. Again, as with the previous chapter, much will be made throughout of the specific materialisations of RAF recruitment is in this respect. In these terms, what is a stake here more generally is the emergence of

military ideals and militarism not just via their performances in particular spaces and circumstances, but in concert with particular materialities. Overall – much like all of the chapters in this thesis – this chapter continues to explore the empirical extent of RAF recruiting whilst employing different conceptual lenses with which to try to understand it. Being slightly different, though, this chapter is consciously open-ended and presumptuous. Specifically, it is an exploration of the possibilities which might come with a material critical geopolitics of militarism.

7.1 The power of stuff: from the airshow and home again

As it was shown in chapter four, the airshow is a space in which what can be known about the military (either as part of RAF recruiting or otherwise) is heavily managed, and is infused with a certain politics of spectacle and visibility. Notably, in framing the airshow through literatures around observant practice so far, the politics of experience in this respect has predominantly been conceptualised as a visual matter. Equally, a focus in chapter five on the visual cultures of games, again, emphasises the visual and discursive. This section aims to highlight and introduce – in reference to a range of examples – the 'blind-spots' of these approaches, and the inherent perceptual hybridity of being in military spaces, and interacting with military things.

Static, in-situ stuff: the politics of perception

As discussed at various points throughout the thesis, the airshow is a space in which a range of material things are present in profusion. Even within our primarily visual analysis of the airshow in chapter four, the materiality of the airshow is apparent in, for example, the organisation of airshow space, the physicality of simulators, optical devices which enhance the experience of the show, or the apparatus used to test the body of the potential recruit. However, beyond the examples already explored, there is a further range of presences that act upon the showgoer differently (which, it might be argued, do the job of recruitment differently). These presences might well be categorised for now as static, or in-situ, stuff. The following discussion will provide an outline of these presences, which will be followed by an analysis.

Figure 7.2 Sunderland 2009: Walk-on

In all cases, the airshow enables an engagement with military hardware physically through guided tours around operational aircraft (figure 7.2). Once inside aircraft, the willing occupant (usually a child who has queued for a time) is shown around the aircraft controls, and is able to flick switches, move the yoke, and ask questions of the serving personnel who accompany them. Beyond aircraft, these 'walk-ons' extend to other operational military hardwares (which have been alluded to in various parts of the thesis) such as ambulances (where the showgoer might be strapped to a bed) or a tent which is organised similarly as it would on operations (in which one is able to sit at a cartographers desk, or turn the dial of a radio, for example). These presences differ from much of the other 'interactive' things at the show because they are not formally or materially designed for the purpose of recruitment or marketing. For instance, a facsimile (plastic and fibre-glass imitations of real aircraft), although open to being 'walked-on', are objects specifically designed to be a platform for recruiting, being a simple extension of a recruiting stall. Similarly, an electronic RAF flight game is an explicit attempt to simulate the experience of flight for the purposes of engagement, rather than being a simulation used for military training. However, although objects at the airshow designed for 'walk-ons' do prescribe particular material engagements, more important for the discussion here are smaller, explicitly military hardwares which provoke engagements we might interpret to be fundamental to processes of militarisation.

For instance, equally present at airshows is a profusion of stuff that can be touched, picked up and handled. In a tent belonging to the RAF Reserves at Sunderland airshow, for example, was a table laden with food ration packs, cooking equipment, gasmasks, camouflage face-paints, torches and maps (figure 7.3). Differently, the Aeromedical Reserves might present a range of life-saving equipment, the RAF Regiment, survival and backwoods tools. The showgoer is also able in some circumstances to try on items of military clothing – for example a helmet, bullet-proof jacket or combat belt and rucksack. Importantly, alongside these more innocuous objects are weapons – rifles, RPGs, pistols – which, similarly, can be picked up and aimed, cocked, and the trigger pulled to hear the click of the firing mechanism.

Figure 7.3 Sunderland 2009: RAF Reserves tent

In parallel with some of the more long-running themes of the thesis so far, the availability of these types of materials to the showgoer might not be so surprising considering the branch-specific nature of recruiting at the airshow. Simply, the stuff freely available for the showgoer to handle relates specifically to the branch that it is, in part, helping to advertise. Having your head bandaged with white gauze, for instance, is a physical experience which relates to the medical branches of the RAF; finding your focus in the sight of a sniper rifle, something related to the RAF Regiment. But more fundamentally, the immediacy and intimacy of these types of things and their affordances point to a radically different type of cognisance than that afforded by, for example, a

recruiting video. And this difference lies in the ability, firstly, for materials to be relatively powerful (i.e. powerful in relation to other materials).

As Miller (2005) suggests, the power of objects to imbue particular ideas rests on the relationship a particular object has with a person or institution. This relationship, he suggests, gives the latter fixity and solidity, along with the right to claim the object 'an instrument in its own self-creation' (Miller 2005: 18) and evidence for its authority over particular ideas and principles. As simple as this analysis may be, we might rightly apply this interpretation to the materiality of the airshow. For example, it is undeniable that the power or legitimacy of the military at this type of event is primarily expressed as a physical presence; a dominant and spectacular immediacy and a monopoly over the use and mastery of particular materials, objects and technologies. Through various means, as we have seen, these materials (i.e. aircraft) are imbued with particular, political, social and historical imaginations, which in turn solidifies the role the military plays within a particular narrative of politics. However, this does not explain the potential of these smaller, in-situ presences at the airshow. As Miller (2005) continues, the power of materials to effect particular politics and socialities rests on their position relative to other materials. More simply, 'the mode by which certain forms [ideas] or people become realised, often at the expense of others' (Miller 2005: 19), is because *some things matter more than others*.

Namely, to return to the stuff of the airshow, the sheer (and often haphazard) availability of small(er) objects − a paraffin burner, a foiled ration pack, a length of parachute cord − stand in stark contrast to the relatively more forceful materiality of a fast jet or a mock bombing run and explosion on an airfield. But, as we have heard, it is exactly this sense of the unspectacular − i.e. the 'capacity for objects to fade out of focus and remain peripheral to our vision and yet determinant of our behaviour and identity' (Miller 2005: 5) − which matters most. Drawing on Anderson and Wylie (2009); along with the relatively more forceful materiality of the spectacle, which entrains a predisposition to a detached gaze, these sorts of objects afford particular engagements which provide different ways of knowing about the military. As they suggest:

> Matter is understood primarily in terms of the array of our embedded concerns, as a matter of engaged perception…corporal perception and sensation is thus an incorporation of matter in to the connective tissues and affective planes of a body subject whose ambit is involvement and engagement (Anderson and Wylie 2009: 324).

Ergo, acting very differently to the more predominant, detached visual imperative of a fly-past for example, static and in-situ stuff at the airshow entrains a differently engaging experience of military things, and military ideas and knowledges. Beyond the mere availability of military things exist showgoer's equally unspectacular engagements with, and experiences of them: the weight of a rifle or a bullet-proof jacket, the texture of mottled hessian, the smell of rubber in an inflatable life-raft, or the black marks left behind after wearing a gas mask (figure 7.4). All of which point to particular, unique instances of knowing and becoming at the interface between people and things.

Figure 7.4 Sunderland 2010: Gas Mask

To explore these ideas further, and to be more specific about what these types of things and experiences might mean for recruitment and/or militarisation we turn, secondly, to the politics of perception within the material domain of the airshow. To return to Law's (1999) discussion of materiality and spatiality, materials (including objects and bodies) come together and interact to produce information. However, rather than thinking of the information generated at the airshow between, for example, a rifle and the hands that hold it as being discursively predetermined (e.g. a rifle as always being associated with or evoking imaginations of, say, British operations in Afghanistan), we might rather think of it as *originating locally*. To reiterate one of the key suppositions of material culture studies, interactions between things and bodies are not a product of determinate structures of power, but are originary (Braun and Whatmore 2010). As Barad (2003: 823) suggests:

> Material conditions matter, not because they "support" particular discourses that are the actual generative factors in the formation of bodies but rather because *matter comes to matter* through iterative interactivity of the world in its becoming.

The implication of this for our empirical detail is threefold. Firstly, as Anderson and Wylie (2009: 325) note, 'there is no question [in circumstances like these] of an a priori thoughtful or competent body subject whose eyes and hands animate a lumpen materiality, or infuse it with meaningful significance'. Rather – just like the material apparatus used to test the body of the recruit in the last chapter – meaning and significance originates in instances of material contact (through recognising the texture, tactility and temperature of gun metal for example) at the juncture between materials and inquisitive (social, performative) behaviour. What can be known about these kinds of materials (or, for that matter, any material) happens at the point of touch; happens *a priori* knowledge of functionality and, equally, does not exist meaningfully before it comes into contact with the body. Whilst this sense of originary materiality – that is, material experience as not merely supplemental to discourse – is useful in getting grips with the base nature of material perception, it does not get us very far in thinking through how such objects work politically though, or as useful for recruitment. For this, we turn to the *framing* of materials at the airshow as militarily functional.

Secondly then – and in becoming political, and as useful to recruitment – in-situ objects at the airshow are often framed as militarily useful or functional, and as such, their properties and originary interactivities are *enrolled* (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004) into certain imaginations of military action. For example, as innocuous as a packet of tissues or

a sachet of coffee might be in other contexts (figure 7.3), it takes the presence of these objects at the airshow, their presence there in a tent, and in which their introduction by recruiting staff as 'standard ration allowances' to make them specifically military tissues and coffee.

Figure 7.5 Sunderland 2010: "Don't aim at me. I'm your ally"

Differently, the framing of 'walk-ons' and opportunities to touch and handle objects by texts and images, or more importantly, input from serving personnel on how and where these particular things are used, licences and constrains the originary experience of materials by measure of their military usefulness. For instance, upon holding up and aiming a rifle, one is told by the supervising personnel; "Don't aim it at me, I'm your ally" (figure 7.5). Similarly, at the point where a showgoer is wrongly shouldering a rocket launcher, they are told; "No, hold it like this. *This* is the business end".

And the propensity for stuff at the airshow – along with their resultant material experiences – to be enrolled into specific ideas of military functionality spans to the more critical realm of imagined geographies and politics. For example, the discomfort of a flak jacket is framed as necessary, that is, if one is to be protected from Improvised Explosive Devices in Afghanistan; a high-calorie plate of food at a military cook-off stall is demonstrative of that which one might need to "face the Taliban"; the heaviness of a bergen and rifle must be imagined "at fifty degrees Celsius in Iraq" . In this sense, through the enrolment of material encounters into specific imaginations of military usefulness, and furthermore, their usefulness within particular imagined situations, such originary

experiences 'can therefore come to be creative of both new modes of conduct…and forms of political consciousness' (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004: 671). Put differently, because 'sensing towards the world implicates the body in a worlding that re-organizes conceptions of space and time' (Manning 2007: xiii; Braun and Whatmore 2010), these sorts of experiences – framed specifically militarily at the airshow – are generative of 'relations of exteriority, connectivity and exclusion' (Barad 2003: 818): concepts which, notably, map well onto notions of friend and foe, of Other(s) and dangerous spaces, or the functionality and legitimacy of lethality. Simply, material objects are useful at the airshow for recruitment because they provide opportunities for immediate, hybrid (visual, haptic etc.) experiences of things which, because they do particular jobs for the military, or exist in spaces alongside the military, entrain some specifically military imaginations. And so it should be suggested, in allowing for instances, for example, whereby the weight of battle can be shouldered, or the texture of defence felt, RAF and military recruitment here is enabling the formation of a specifically military consciousness (through things, of people, places and events). Moreover, we are able to see what this means for the potential recruit, in that because:

> Things [rifles, flak jackets, bergens] are created in history or in imaginations, we can start to understand the very process which accounts for our own specificity, and this understanding changes us into a new kind of person, one who can potentially act upon that understanding (Miller 2005: 9).

Thirdly and lastly, although this section has been predicated in the spirit of those material culture studies which suggest materials and material encounters as more than just appendages to discourse, an issue remains as to the power of what we've called *framing*. Namely, if materials and material encounters are beyond the discursive, how do we think through, conceptually, the framing of objects specifically militarily? Drawing again on Barad (2003: 823), although matter comes to matter through iterative interactivity:

> The point is not merely that there are important material factors in addition to discursive ones; rather, the issue is the conjoined material-discursive nature of constraints, conditions and practices.

In this sense, although the precise, originary *experience* of materials at the airshow is not beholden to discursive structures, the constraining, conditioning nature of the airshow (the framing of objects as having particular military functionalities, the co-presence of military spectacle) acts to determine these experiences in particular ways. Recognising this, the

intertwining of materials and discourse allows, of course, for us to think counter-factually, and to assume that if a particular object was present in a different context, it might not take on a (transformative) military hue. Otherwise, the immediate transparency or given-ness of a thing (Barad 2003) does not exist before the potential for it to become what it is within particular spaces and framings. This, again drawing on one of the major conclusions of the last chapter, points to the determinacy of specific circumstances and spaces in the formation of military consciousness and identity. But more importantly, we begin to see in this 'some kind of consistency between…different registers of materiality within particular conditions of power' (Miller 2005: 19). Namely, our thinking through the material, generative power of the military should not just be confined to static, in-situ things at the airshow, but might be thought of more broadly. For instance, along with the power of objects (rifles, bergens) to effect imaginations and responses, one may well consider the effect the sound of an aircraft, or the music or voiceovers that accompany them, have similarly. Or differently, one might consider the architectures of comfort at the airshow – i.e. the ubiquity of observing the show from cars (Adey 2010) – or the more general differences between separate airshow events as acting specifically materially, and as concomitant with a politics and sociology of spectatorship.

More importantly however, in thinking about a consistency between registers of materiality at the airshow, and in being specific about the spaces in which they operate, one may readily consider other, more mobile objects and their capacity to move across, register, and be effective within different material domains. In the following discussions, we track some of these more mobile objects as they move from the airshow into the home.

Mobile, mundane stuff: the airshow and home again

Just as profuse as what has been called static, or in-situ stuff at the airshow then, is what shall be called mobile, mundane stuff; stuff that can be bought or collected for free, which is sometimes handed out, and importantly, which is then carried home. Ranging from the more formal airshow programmes, or aircraft checklists (chapter 4) which are acquired at a price, to stickers, pens, keyrings and lanyards which are free, it will be argued here that these types of things are powerful in two ways. Firstly, acting symbolically, these kinds of things again enrol orginary material experience – through the imperative of social performance – into particular imaginations of military identities. Secondly, acting as functional objects, it will be argued that some of these things have the power, again, to

valorise other, relatively more important military materialities, and otherwise, to create linkages between imagined military utilitarianisms and domestic practicability.

Figure 7.6 Sunderland 2010: Boxes of things (pens, stickers)

In the first instance, if, as discussed, the framing of different materials at the airshow constitutes a particular condition of power, one of the ways in which this power manifests itself is through a (symbolic) politics of display, fostered via a marked culture of consumption and acquisition. Although we are already familiar with some of these ideas –

i.e. the theatricality of fitness performances in chapter six, and the co-presence of the corporate and the military in chapter four – there remains something to be said about the specific materiality of such instances in relation to identity formation, amongst other things. Namely, the airshow is a space in which a host of mundane, simple objects are able to be acquired and worn around the body, or picked up and carried (figure 7.6 and 7.7). Just like the aircraft 'walk-ons' and in-situ objects, however, the airshow is particular in its ability to connote the acquisition and consumption of things as the *normative way of being a showgoer*. For example, RAF recruiting stalls are set up so one might take away pamphlets, posters, keyrings and pencils. If undecided as to which pamphlet is most important, recruiters often simply provide a plastic bag full of all the materials they have on offer. Similarly, recruiters might accost the showgoer directly and hand out, or place on their clothing a sticker representing an aircraft, slogan, or branch of the RAF. So prevalent is the imperative to receive, acquire and consume particular materials here that during the latter hours of an airshow it is quite easy to predict where an individual has been at the show according to the colour of or symbol on their plastic bag; according to whether their child's face is painted with camouflage colours; or what lanyard, toy, sticker, or item of clothing is on or around their body. However, as with the previous discussions, there remains something to be said about how these things work as recruiting materials, or otherwise, to promote specific ideas about the military. It is to these matters that the remainder of this section (and the remainder of the chapter) is given.

Figure 7.7 Sunderland 2010: Aeromedical Reserves: This is how this works; take a sticker

Considering again the way in which materials have the propensity to afford particular consciousness and action, materials arguably work here to legitimise and solidify particular social behaviours which are concomitant with the airshow as a condition of power. In its most simple sense, we see this in the ability of such materials to act symbolically, as an outward expression, firstly, of the imperative of consumption. As Belk (1988: 145) suggests:

> Possessions can…symbolically extend the self, as when a uniform or trophy allows us to convince ourselves (and perhaps others) that we can be a different person than we would be without them.

Taking heed not particularly yet of the *different* person which may become through materials, it is rather the performative and symbolic act of engaging with, collecting and wearing objects like stickers and bags which mark out their collector as an active participant in the culture of the show. Whilst not only affirming to one's self that you are behaving in a normative manner in this regard, it is, arguably, a condition of the show that materials afford (or en*frame*) a collective and social ethos of collecting and displaying things as a way of being active in this context (c.f. Moutu 2007). Furthermore, this literal extension of the self – afforded through the material culture of the airshow – is expressed in some circumstances as a more specific valourisation of military identities and ideals. For example, the wearing of camouflage face paint by a child, because it connotes an originary material experience, possibly which was framed by the military imaginations as to the military functionality of camouflage etc., is an outward manifestation of the show's ethos of consumption as well as a symbol of an experience which (framed militarily) is essentially militarised. Similarly, the highly popular 'Future Pilot' stickers (worn extensively at airshows by children and adults alike) (figure 7.8), is an outward manifestation of a culture of consumption and acquisition, but more importantly, a symptom of the more general trend towards a simplistic interpretation of what the RAF does, packaged as an equally simple expression of individual identity and (potential) achievement.

Figure 7.8 All airshows: Future Pilot stickers (collected at Sunderland)

Summarily, the airshow, through its emphasis on material experiences and cultures of acquisition and consumption insists upon the presence of objects on or around the body as a social marker of one's identity as a showgoer. However, because some of these objects connote an originary experience of the military, or otherwise, a symbolic expression of military legitimacy or values ("Future Pilot"), the material culture of the show is necessarily complicit in a (beyond visual, haptic, social) 'sense making' of what the military is and does. Drawing on Knappett (2002), what we see here is the co-dependence of behaviour and artefact. For example, it is not significant that the desire to 'be a pilot'

exists before a sticker says so. Equally, it is not so that a sticker exists merely because people have a desire to 'be a pilot'. Rather, within the specific material culture of the show, to want to be a pilot, and to wear a sticker which says so, is not only an acceptable part of what a showgoer (normatively, socially) should be doing, but is something which because of the presence of the military at the airshow, is given credence and imbued with imagination. And again, we see here the inherently essential role *things* might play in forging certain potentialities (vis-á-vis the potential recruit) to think and imagine particular things about the military. Indeed, as Sofaer (2007: 2) suggests, in having:

> Powers of transformation…qualitatively changing understandings of the world…objects have the power to turn savages into gentleman, the serious-minded into fools, and artists into impresarios. They can deliver impressions of modernity or of tradition, forge class aspirations and political identities.

Secondly then, we move to a discussion of how mundane, mobile objects (at and beyond the airshow) have certain functionalities, and how they are powerful in this respect also. Returning to the contention that the airshow is a material culture (i.e. a condition of power or a field of social action), a question remains as to the way in which social actions (acquisition, consumption) are enrolled into, or entwined with the more discursive 'worlding' (imagining, and being enthralled with what a pilot does) which is necessary for recruitment. If we are to consider the consumption of objects classically, i.e. as commodities, we arrive at an interesting juncture here. As Maycroft (2004: 714) suggests:

> The separation of the spheres of production and consumption results in a commodity form devoid of physical clues as to the social relations of its production and this vacuum of meaning is of immediate advantage to capital as the exploitative relations of production are hidden from view.

Although, of course, we are not dealing with production in this chapter, there is a marked similarity here between what has been suggested to be an essentially duplicitous relationship at the airshow between the object and 'meaning'[27]. Namely, the ability for objects (as commodities) at the airshow to entrain specific imaginations about the military is inherent to their position within a material culture of consumption. Put differently, the commodity form of materials at the airshow is of immediate advantage to the military (in terms of promotion and marketing) because the 'vacuum of meaning' left behind by the

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[27]And there is more than just a passing coincidence here between the duplicity of objects (as commodities) and the duplicity of representation in the second chapter (i.e. Cosgrove and Daniels, 2007).

imperative to consume is, essentially, filled with specific imaginations about the role and legitimacy of the military. However, different to the static or in-situ presences, which are *framed* as specifically military things, it is arguably in some cases the *form* of some mundane, mobile airshow objects which act powerfully in this respect to entrain, again, ideas about the military (or otherwise, to act powerfully in relation to military imaginations). Specifically, there is something to be said here of airshow objects in their capacity to be *useful*, and to have *functionality* beyond the symbolic.

Figure 7.9 Some symbolic and functional things (collected at various Airshows)

In considering the functional form of many mundane, mobile objects given out free at the airshow (figure 7.9), we come to three points of discussion. Firstly, as with many of the static, in-situ objects which can be interacted with at the airshow, we might argue that the functionality of free objects – pens, key rings, lanyards – works in concert with some sort of imagination of the military as pervasively functional itself. More simply, the military provide free, *functional* objects because they wish to present themselves as a functional organisation which does a primarily practical job. Tying in with this supposition, drawing on Miller (2005) again, we might say that the military uses objects in these cases to provide itself fixity and solidity (i.e. the object as a tangible reminder and enforcer of the military's existence). But moreover, alongside this fixity and solidity, the *form* of the object as having practical properties enables the military to have authority over particular ideas of

itself (i.e. as functional and as doing a practical job). However, and if we are to follow any further Miller's (2005) thoughts on the power of things in this regard, we again reach the idea of *relative* materiality, and a more critical notion of how functional materials are powerful. Namely – again just like the in-situ objects – we might say that in order to entrain this imagination through objects, the materiality of the military has to be imagined to be *relatively* more powerful than the objects themselves: put differently, although these objects are practical and matter, they *matter less* than the practicability of the military. In so doing, the 'vacuum' created by the object being positioned within the (consumerist) material culture of the airshow is 'filled' with certain imaginations which are a product simply of the *form* (the functionality) of the object. However, and in taking a more inherent property of the functional form of some airshow objects more straightforwardly, we reach our second point of discussion; namely, functionality as evidence of the multiple spaces in which airshow objects (be they functional *or* symbolic) might, after the airshow, be present.

Figure 7.10 I've been to the airshow (Home, after Sunderland Airshow)

Although much has been made so far of the specific space in which our objects are, and become, powerful (the airshow), the functionality of some airshow objects points to their being useful (and powerful) beyond the airshow, at home, or at work: an RAF pen affords the ability to write; an RAF key ring holds keys; a Typhoon poster might be tacked to a bedroom wall. Indeed, although we've argued that the airshow does work as a field of action in which objects are co-determinate of the (normative) behaviour of the showgoer, the very availability of objects at the airshow in plastic bags, in sealed packs etc., points to the inherent, or desired mobility of these objects, and more importantly, to other, domestic and personal fields of action (figure 7.10). Our third point of discussion then is that although the airshow gives us a space in which to find out where some recruiting materials come from, and their specific (symbolic, functional) powers therein, remaining at the airshow as a site of analysis limits what we can say about the broader power of recruiting objects. Without knowing how recruiting objects afford specific and personal material experiences beyond that observed in the space of the airshow, it is impossible to get a fuller account of their power. In the next section it is to these other fields of action that we turn.

7.2 Homespace/workspace: the social life of (vibrant military) things

In turning to different fields of action – what we have previously called different material domains – we focus specifically in this section on the presence and power of recruiting objects in the home and at work. Predicated on what Miller (1998) suggests to be the power of objects to matter in private as well as in an open social context, this section, notably, will focus on *my own* experience of recruiting and military objects, their propensity to accumulate, and be functional in the home, along with their power to act vibrantly in, and through my work as a military researcher. Fundamentally then, this section is about what 'people [I] actually do, and in particular do with things' (Miller 1998: 12). Thus, methodologically, this section draws upon a tradition of material ethnography (Miller 1998; Geismar and Horst 2004) and autoethnography (Butz and Besio 2009) inflected through methodological thinking around the cogency and relationality of things in the formation of power and ideas (Sheehan 2011). The first part of this section is given up to a self-consciously descriptive exploration of how recruiting materials have accumulated, and have become useful in and around my home and workspace. The second part details how these objects tend to become normal, immaterial in ways, but more importantly, forceful in my work as a military researcher. This section is not, however, meant as an over-reflexive exploration of my own experience of things. Rather, *standing as analogous to the experience of the potential recruit*, it will be argued that the way and manner in

which materials act, and have acted in my home and workspace gives us some insight into the way in which objects might become useful for recruitment, or as key in processes of militarisation. Otherwise, it will be argued that, for a *material* critical geopolitics, care must be taken to account not only for the situated materialities of politics and power, but of the role materials (stickers, posters, toys, documents) play in matters of critical scholarship and researcher positionality.

I've been to the airshow: cultures of collecting, memory and functionality

Aside from my engagements with in-situ objects at the airshows that I visited as part of my research, I felt it imperative to collect mundane, mobile objects as often as it was possible. Initially though – at the first airshow or two when my work was still predominantly focused on a visual and textual analysis – my bag seemed to end up full mainly of recruiting pamphlets and documents; the type of documents that would advertise specific trades in the RAF and the like, but more importantly, documents that matched my aspiration to provide an analysis of how recruitment is done representationally. In this sense, many of my early experiences of materials at the airshow were aligned to the scope of my thinking at the time. But the fact that many of these documents were similar, or the same across all of the airshows, and due to their dormancy after the airshow either at home or in my workspace, I found myself placing less of an emphasis on collecting paper-based materials, and more on the other (mundane, mobile) things that were available at the show.

This emphasis – although I think again determined by my changing research ideas (i.e. my growing interest in materiality and militarism, *things*, and the doing-ness of the show) – was as much a symptom of the sheer range of things available here and their variety. From posters to badges, pens, pencils and key rings, mousemats, lanyards, golf-tees, bags, diaries, booklets etc., the materials available at the show presented a way of consuming and acquiring a range of things that, I thought, were pivotal to my research. Consumption and acquisition; leaving the airshow with a bag heavy with things in their plenty not only marked me out as a researcher sensitive to the nuances of the phenomena, but one who was *literally doing* research as I collected (i.e. my bag was not only heavy with things, but heavy with the potential of a critical, conceptual breakthrough). Ergo, these objects, when I got them home, or to work, would be spread out on a desk and interrogated for clues as to how RAF recruitment worked; the more objects then, the better. Moreover, an item which I'd never seen before at the airshow, simply because it was new and different to all my other collected items, would be especially helpful to me as I got down to the

business of thinking about the military. The airshow thus acted – at least in terms of materials – to separate the act of consumption from the more tricky business of interpretation. Thinking of the potential recruit here, the act of consumption (which as we have seen, carries with it a set of predilections towards specific ideas of the military), and the effect this consumption has, remains separate from more considered, logical reflection on what these objects do as part of, and as a result of, their acquisition.

This is not to say, however, in my collecting of such objects I was critically disengaged. I was quite aware, for example, of the strange irony inherent to a Lockheed Martin googly-eye toy (figure 7.9), or the enthusiasm with which some showgoers engaged with some in-situ, weaponised objects. Similarly, the broader culture of the airshow was immediately unnerving to me as a critical (military) researcher for reasons which might have become clear through discussions in chapter four in particular: the open valorisation of the military twinned to an overtly simplistic imagination of military force; an equally celebrated co-presence of military and big business (cosmetics brands, jewellers, arms companies), and the marked stratification of spectatorship via zoning, VIP areas etc. All very different – socially, culturally, and materially – from the large public events to which I am used. But importantly, although the material objects (both symbolic and functional) that have accumulated around my home and workplace have not worked powerfully enough, I believe, to compromise a requisite criticality inherent to the traditions on which I draw, they have, nevertheless, had a propensity to remain visible and used. And this propensity is tied to airshow objects to evoke memory and feeling.

In all but one case, my airshow visits were family days-out, and more importantly, family days-out that the exhibition of posters, or the use of particular airshow objects remind me. In putting up a poster of the Waddington airshow for example, although central to my role as a student studying the military (to be discussed below), I am at the same time memorialising the time I spent with family at this airshow. Similarly, whilst the photographs I talk to in this chapter and chapter four are primarily research-based, they are also a reminder of the same. In being present in a symbolic way, these types of objects (through some of their inherent functionalities as objects to be seen, put up, and displayed) thus act not only as objects of analysis and critique, but as evocative objects; reminders of the experience of the show. In acting so, it might be suggested that in thinking of the potential recruit, beyond the object's primary utility (as a symbolic or functional thing), and despite the formal *attitude* the owner might have towards it (i.e. my essentially critical attitude), airshow objects might arguably have the ability to evoke memories which

originate within a particular condition of power. The force of objects here, we might suggest, is in their ability to memorialise and evoke those originary experiences, which, as we have seen, entrain some specific dispositions towards consumerism, and therein, particular imaginations of the military.

And the propensity of airshow objects to accumulate in spaces visible to me extends also to their ability to get used, wear out, and generally to become part of everyday life. For example, at home, my circular mouse mat is circular because it is modelled after an RAF roundel (figure 7.11); although having exhausted the ink in one of my RAF pens at work, I have one-and-a-half remaining RAF pencils; whilst the RAF diary I acquired has gone unused and is filed away, my RAF calendar (which remains unopened through lack of any fixing-point at my desk) serves as a good poster.

Although the specific details of how my RAF and military objects are used, or have worn out or become unfunctional might go on into more detail yet, the essential point is that these objects have come to matter in my day-to-day, have punctuated various work or domestic patterns, and are broadly generative of work and sociality. But in being generative in this way, we might argue that objects here have a power to act forcefully in terms of the *things they say about me*. For example, part of my RAF object collection, as discussed, is present, displayed and used at work. Although some of this is in part due to the fact that these things are inherently useful (an RAF pen is useful when there is no other pen available, regardless of its emblem), these objects play a role in a different condition of power; a postgraduate office within an academic culture of research. Specifically, in wanting to surround myself at work with the things which are relevant to my research, I not only provide room for the more formal job of contemplating how these things relate to my ideas, but I assert myself as a military researcher (or at least someone who is interested in the RAF). In doing so, these things prompt interest from colleagues. For example, some have asked me, upon finding out about my research: 'so are you interested in going into the military after you complete?', or similar questions that inquire as to my personal attitude and relationship to the military which are, necessarily, a consequence of the ephemeral presence of things around me at work.

Figure 7.11 Mousemat (collected at Sunderland Airshow)

Summarily – and thinking again about the potential recruit – the RAF things that become displayed or used in the workplace or at home, whilst arguably having primary functionalities and usefulnesses are, secondarily, generative in some social situations of presumed relationships between the owner and the producer of the object (the military). Here, far more than just being symbolic, it is the very fact that the type of objects used by the RAF for recruitment are functional that they are able to work themselves into the mundane, routine and everyday spaces in which they become active. Just as my recruiting objects have said something about me as a military researcher (or at least someone who is positioned somehow in relation to it), objects which adhere to the potential recruit might say something about them, and furthermore, to act in way to express something latent to themselves.

In this brief discussion we have sketched out three possible and analogous ways in which recruiting objects might work to afford, and adhere to particular ways of being that align to the tenets of military recruiting. Firstly, through the particular culture of the

airshow, along with object form, recruiting and military objects are prone to accumulate in the home and at work. As we have seen through Maycroft's (2004) ideas on objectness though, the nature of this 'collecting culture' tends to obscure some of the realities which lie not only behind the object's production, but its place within a broader condition of power and control. Secondly, because of the originary nature of the show in terms of material experience, objects, once they are at home, stand to memorialise these experiences, which, again, originate within a particular condition of power. Thirdly, because these objects tend to find their way into day-to-day routines and spaces, they might talk as much of their owner as the owner does of themselves. However, in providing this discussion, there arise a related set of concerns around the presence of things as a prelude to critical military research. Put as a question: If indeed the mundane, mobile objects of which we have spoken in this section are powerful in the ways suggested, what implication does this have for 'objective', non-partisan critical research? Differently, how do the specific materialities of military things affect or determine the role of the critical military researcher? It is to these questions we turn briefly to next before concluding.

I'm a military researcher: the vibrancy of things

As Hyndman (in Jones and Sage 2010: 317) suggests, less than being a 'theory of how space and political intersect than a mode of interrogating and exposing the grounds for knowledge production', critical geopolitics is as much about the contingency of concepts, and the effect this contingency has upon what we can say about the world. Tying into a broader, and ongoing, debate in critical geopolitics around the 'writing' of geopolitics itself (see Dalby 1996 2010; Müller 2008; Müller and Reuber 2008; Boedeltje 2011, for example), the claims of critical theory (including those of critical geopolitics) perennially raise 'questions of the politics of scholarship and the relationship between academic activity and practical politics' (Dalby 1996: 655). In terms of work at the intersection of critical geopolitics and critical military studies, the links between academic activity and the contingency of concepts are most problematic in this sense when we consider the 'weak normative engagement [which critical geopolitics has] with the social institution and practices of warfare' (Megoran 2008a: 473; c.f. Megoran 2008b). Whilst, as Dalby (2010: 281) suggests, key to critical geopolitical scholarship is 'challenging how contexts are constructed to justify violence', there is an argument to suggest that more should be done to understand how scholarly practice – and critical studies of the military in particular – is bound to the conditions of power and control inherent to military institutions. A suggestion

here would be that a study of material culture and materiality, in particular when it relates to the positionality of the military researcher, would provide new directions in this regard.

As Brown (2001: 4) suggests:

As [materials] circulate through our daily lives we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about *us*), but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through objects because they are codes by which our interpretative attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts.

In continuing to reflect on my own experience as a military researcher, and on the propensity of military objects to become significant in and through my work, the ability for certain of my collected objects to disclose meaning about my identity and scholarly task bears some relevance to the matter at hand. Not least was this the case during a session of the Association of American Geographers in 2011, at which – speaking to the theme of airshows and visuality – I couldn't escape the irony of my sitting on the panel table and taking notes with a BAE Systems pen (collected at the Waddington airshow, and taken with me to the conference hurriedly as I realised my usual fountain pen might well be confiscated at the airport – if taken in hand luggage – due to its blade-like qualities). Speaking at a session entitled 'Military Violence and Militarisation: Conversations in the Conflict Zone', more than ironic, it was almost annoying to me that an object connected to an institution and a discourse of power which my work attempts to be critical of – through its obstinacy, ordinariness and power to accumulate and become useful – might somehow belie an uncritical affiliation of mine, or denote an affection for the military and militarism. This sense was compounded, at the end of the session, when a US Air Force pilot, who had attended the session singly so she could hear about UK airshows, begun to question me on possible comparative work between these, and US airshows.

Whilst this episode (brought on explicitly by the forcefulness of a banal object) might well betray certain over self-consciousness on my part, it points to something larger. Namely – in the form of a question – how might 'little things' (Thrift 2000) like pens, posters, flags, and keyrings which accumulate in the critical military researcher's domestic and work space enable a more reflexive and responsible approach to the 'big things' (MacDonald in Jones and Sage 2010) like the military, state-sanctioned violence and war? The chapter will not attempt to answer this in full, but is worth stating that whilst materials work persuasively as part of RAF recruiting cultures, the particular materialities of military research should be of concern. More specifically, although certain objects might 'say'

things, symbolically, about the military researcher (as my BAE pen might have said about me), fundamental to the task is understanding that objects can become 'active parties in the making of social collectivities and political associations' (Braun and Whatmore 2010: xiv). The task is at once empirical and epistemological. In the first instance, it is about taking seriously matter, objects and things as they work in and through political and militarised cultures. In the second, it is about continuing to extending the conceptual remit of critical geopolitical and military scholarship so as it might account for things that sometimes seem immaterial. The task and responsibility of geopolitical analysis, then, should not only be one of challenging *normativity* ((Megoran 2008b), but one of challenging (the inherently related theme of) *normalness*. For, as it has been shown in this chapter, the very normalness of things is powerful as it comes to materialise in popular military cultures, and through 'critical' scholarly work.

7.3 Discussion: towards a material critical geopolitics?

This chapter has considered how what the military is, what it does and where it does it becomes imagined, sensible and tangible as it exists as a popular material culture. A central, and often intentionally deployed, part of RAF recruitment is the opportunity to engage with materials at events such as the airshow. Here, as it has been discussed, 'in-situ' objects such as operational aircraft, weapons and ordnance are generative of originary experiences which, framed militarily, act to entrain particular imaginations of the military and of (geo)politics. It was suggested, furthermore, that the 'mobile' stuff of the show (stuff that can be picked up and taken away) works similarly because of its relative materiality and the status of many of these things as consumer objects. Drawing on Miller (2005) again, there is a consistency in these cases between registers of materiality and conditions of power. Simply put, promotional events such as airshows are central to the availability and distribution of particular things, and their subsequent enrolment into particular ideas/feelings/affects. Considering the material cultures of the airshow is not the whole story though, and the chapter went on to consider the vibrancy of things as they tended to accumulate at home and at work. In these cases, my own experience of things as they tended to accumulate and become useful around the home, and at work, stood as analogous to the experience of the potential recruit. In being able to *say things about me* (and possibly the potential recruit), and to become useful, these popular militarised cultures (along with the imaginations that imbue them) are given form and become functional.

An important debate which related to my own experience of the material cultures of RAF recruiting was the ability for objects – as they accumulate and become useful – to imply a broader problematic around militarisation in and the contingency of concepts. An effort has been made throughout this thesis to assess the usefulness of particular concepts in exploring the empirical extent of RAF recruiting, and so by implication, a broader range of popular military cultures. Via a focus on representation, visual cultures, visuality and the body, this final substantive chapter has explored the usefulness of a *material cultural approach* to the military and geopolitics. Furthermore, in doing so, the chapter highlighted how a material cultural approach might be extended to debates particularly around the 'critical' in critical military and geopolitical research via concerted explorations of positionality. In the final chapter of the thesis, we pick up this strand of debate in particular, and aim to outline some possible future research directions.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with the geopolitics of RAF recruitment and with the possibilities of a critical geopolitical approach to popular military cultures. It has argued that in order for it to be persuasive, RAF recruitment must provide a sense of what the military is, what it does and where it does it, and has explored a range of ways in which recruitment achieves this. By way of conclusion, what this final discussion will do is draw together the numerous strands of debate which have developed as part of the previous six chapters. The chapter is in four parts, and is structured around the three concerns/research questions that were set out in chapter one, and will finish with an vignette and conclusion which re-emphasises the importance of thinking critically about common-sense popular and everyday military cultures. Though this chapter is primarily designed to underline the findings of the thesis in general terms, reference will be made in places to some possible future research directions, particularly as they might develop out of discussions in chapter six and seven. Connectedly, running through this final part are the three overarching conceptual and empirical themes – *representation, visuality, materiality* – which have provided the structure of the thesis. Much like the thesis as a whole then, this conclusion aims to state findings as they relate to the geopolitics of RAF recruitment, and at the same time, assesses the usefulness of conceptual frames and methodological approaches offered by the literatures consulted.

8.1 Imagining RAF recruitment

Firstly, the predominant and most straightforward concern of this thesis was to identify in RAF recruitment the sorts of tropes, scripts and designations which pervade geopolitics. More specifically, it was concerned with the extent to which recruitment draws upon imaginations of space, danger, nationalism and identity, how it designates particular places as the sites for particular military responses, and how the spectre of *airpower* figures relative to these broader tropes by way of it offering a unique battlespace technology. In that there are three points of discussion here, the following will deal with these in order.

In the first instance then, if nothing else, the thesis has provided evidence that RAF recruitment draws upon various dominant and recurrent geopolitical imaginations. Discussed throughout the thesis, but especially in chapter two, in order to present a viable vision of RAF life and culture, recruitment makes sense of the world through abstract spatial logics which, whilst denoting the omnipotence of the RAF and the British military, mark out spaces as dangerous, violent and threatening. In the BPotS series, for example,

where there is often an absence of place-specific detail, the spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq are rendered unstable and ominous: spaces which are the common-sense contexts for military presences, and spaces which provide *merely the context* for the professionalism and deadly precision of the RAF. Imaginations of space and danger are also twinned to a sense of nationalism in some cases, with the RAF's post-Second World War and Cold War recruiting providing a stark vision of defensible spaces, and of the necessity to militarily protect the 'insideness' and 'outsideness' of Britain's and NATO's borders. With the oppositional constitution of 'Britain' and its safety in mind, recruiting also deploys particular notions of identity, and works to tie morally correct individual actions to these broader narratives of conflict. Here, the identity of heroic characters (and, by interpellation, the identities of potential recruits) stand as epithets for the national fortitude necessary to enable a victorious military outcome. Identity is also used to bolster visions of an oppositional global politics, in some examples, by making explicit connections between a particular national character (one that is quite easy to associate with) and a sense of 'what it takes' to make a difference in a fractious world of danger and conflict.

To these observations, though, the propensity for RAF recruitment to operationalize these imaginations through techniques of historicism should be added. Working via the national myth of the 'Battle of Britain' sort, for example, the imaginative aspects of RAF recruitment often rely upon taken-for-granted geopolitical logics which, when applied to contemporary and immediate conflict, lend a semblance of order to often complex foreign policies. In examples such as *Raising Air Fighters* (COI 1938-9), a national myth of the Battle of Trafalgar is used to make sense of the new, airbourne, nature of warfare, and of appropriate responses. Similarly, at contemporary airshows, the Battle of Britain and its symbolic economies (the Spitfire, Lancaster and Hurricane) are used in ways to legitimise the use of a far more lethal arsenal of Eurofighter fast-jets in the spaces of the global War on Terror. And where the production of Cold War recruiting was done in mind that '*the Battle of Britain is still being fought*' – as my interviewee recounted – it is certain that RAF recruiting is as particular in its reliance on nostalgia as it is evocative of a geopolitics rooted in the imaginative innocence and simplicity of conflicts past.

Where these geopolitics come to matter though is where they imply a set of requisite responses, both to places and events, and from the potential recruit. Running through this thesis has been the contention that to represent particular places (as RAF recruitment does), is to not only 'define a location or setting [but to] trigger a series of narrative, subjects and appropriate foreign policy responses' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992:

194). RAF recruitment, in turn, has been shown not only to represent space and place (their variously dangerous essences, etc.), but to provide an imagination of appropriate military responses. Seen most starkly in Second World War and Cold War recruiting, the RAF makes a connection between the defensible spaces of Britain and Other spaces beyond, and the necessity of military action therein/thereabove. More abstractly, in chapter five and as part of RAF gaming, through an all-too-familiar bomb sight aesthetic of the Middle East, the 'appropriateness' of military response was, it was argued, *already built in* to the aesthetic of game war; the spaces in which the RAF are currently active – by order of their being represented – are always-already the target for military airstrike.

However, the designation of space and place is not the only site where the inevitability of military involvement becomes sensible as it is tied to representation. The site of *identity* has been shown to be influenced in this way also. Drawing on Dalby's (2008b) suggestion that military-themed popular media often portray a sense of the right and proper *individual* responses to global conflict, RAF recruitment readily assumes a connection between war and self-aspiration. In *You Shall not Let this Opportunity Pass* (figure 2.6), for example, the air war over Germany matters because it affects 'you and yours', and in chapter three, a discussion was had about the ability for recruitment – because it is indistinguishable from the persuasive arts of propaganda, public advocacy and advertising – to be an appeal to the *self* as much as it is an appeal to one's state or nation. Partly through the technique of identity interpellation (providing the potential recruit a narrow 'social space' in which to understand the meaning of images), recruitment should be said to work not only by asserting the limits of what is *knowable* about the world, then, but by asserting the limits of what is *doable* in, and because of, that world.

In the third instance, RAF recruitment has been shown to be geopolitical because of its emphasis on an imagination of *airpower* and its utility. Bound up with the ethereal promise of aviation is it stands as an epithet for human progress, and because of its utility for transcending terrestrial boundaries and offering a unique battlespace technology, airpower has often figured as central to the imaginative work of recruitment. In terms of the appeal of RAF life and service, airpower is often used as a metaphor for the limitless (extrinsic) possibilities of service: through a number of different taglines (see footnote 15), the RAF has always used the imaginative power of flight to advertise the possibility of excellence. Flight and airpower have also seen to be potent, and adaptable, metaphors for the use and utility of technology in battle. For example, where the cutting edge technology of the Cold War RAF is put to use defensively as part of vast radar and rapid-response

networks which maintain NATO's borders, the contemporary technologies of the fast-jet are used to project power with precision in the dangerous spaces of the Middle East. Though airpower is only part of how the geopolitics of RAF recruitment is represented, it points to a key theme which has a broader resonance. Namely, a central feature of recruiting is an understanding of the military based on *what* it can do, rather than *why* what the military can do should be done: airpower is the 'Deadly sharp point of NATO's attack capability' (COI 1983) despite murky Cold War politics; the RAF arranges 'precision strikes' in the Middle East, despite evidence to the contrary. Following Barron and Huntemann (2004 in Power 2007), recruitment, therefore, allows a limited engagement with the root necessity for the use of lethal military force, and we might add, even less engagement with its consequences. Recruitment is about possibilism, both in terms of the military and at the behest of the potential recruit, and allows no room to begin to question the taken-for-granted worlds of the state, militaries and military violence. The spectre of airpower has been shown to be central to this perception of the world.

Though airpower is, then, a central part of RAF recruitment, an emphasis has been put in this thesis on other imaginaries which pattern the RAF's branch-specific campaigning. With a large part of recruiting aimed at non-flight roles (roles in the Regiment, communications and logistics for example), it shouldn't be said that RAF recruiting is singly persuasive because of its nature as a force bound to project power in the air. Though the different, terrestrial, imaginations of war present in recruiting will not be rehearsed here, the theme of branch-specific recruiting is important namely because it emerged in the thesis at a point where the *literal* practices of recruitment were said to become effective at events such as the airshow. Insofar as an effort has been made throughout to differentiate the representative of recruitment from the visual and material, the next discussion turns to some conclusions around the lived-in and experiential cultures of recruitment.

8.2 Becoming, being and doing RAF recruitment

The second concern set out in chapter one was try to understand recruitment as it happened as an experience at events such as the airshow, and as a visual, bodily and material culture. In this way, the second and third parts of the thesis explored recruiting as it became effective (or at least geopolitical) as a visual practice (chapter four), as an interactive and affective technology (chapter five), as it worked to inscribe and prompt bodily movements and dispositions (chapter six), and as it exists materially, and as a

material culture (chapter seven). Insofar as parts two and three imply a radically different notion of the what/where/how of geopolitics (particularly as it exists beyond representation), there is a concluding discussion to be had which shall centre on the nature of the 'geopolitical' as it seen to be present in these different domains.

Firstly, where this thesis has been concerned to understand *what can and cannot be done with images, both from the point of view of the RAF recruiter, and from the point of view of the critical geopolitical scholar*, an emphasis has been put throughout on the ability for representation to matter beyond iconography. For instance, in exploring how recruitment is produced, chapter three necessitated thinking about representation as a set of practices and engagements which work to 'enact geopolitical formations' (MacDonald *et al.* 2010:15). At the airshow, for example, the persuasive images of recruitment become effective in the way that they frame more interactive engagements with people and things, and as they are used to make up the visual fabric of the show. With RAF games and the ideal military body, moreover, the electronic image was shown to be significant as it prompted feelings, movements and habits. And in the preceding chapter, the image was seen to be significant insofar as its material form has the propensity to accumulate in domestic spaces. The representative qualities of RAF recruitment matter, firstly, then, because they have been shown to perpetuate the common-sense narratives, boundaries, differences and dangers which are central to the imaginative tenets of geopolitics. However, and secondly, where representation is particularly useful is when – in its broader guise as a set of practices – it constitutes recruitment as it *becomes* and is *done* at the point where it is engaged with and is affective. The engaging and literal aspects of the RAF's representational cultures, though, have been shown to be no less imaginatively forceful, with narratives, boundaries, differences and dangers given literal form as they are engaged with in spaces such as the airshow, or in the home via the computer screen and mobile phone.

A second point of discussion is the way recruitment (and its more specific relevance as a point in a nexus of militarisation) exists as a visual and material practice. In chapter four, for example, it was shown that whilst the more formal recruitment practice is a central part of airshow cultures, the show's broader aesthetic and perceptual affordances do much to entrain specific imaginations of the military. Through the prescription of particular ways of seeing and sensing, the airshow is an event at which understandings of the military are given literal precedent in and through the perceptive capacities of the showgoer. More specifically, through the show's emphasis on historicism, the mythic spatial and moral

certainties of conflicts past are brought to bear on immediate and ongoing conflicts through the ephemerality of spectacle. An originary experience of military things at the airshow (weapons, bergens, ordnance), furthermore, is constitutive of imaginations of lethality, but only as these imaginations exist alongside perceived notions of Otherness, difference, enemy and ally. Overall, recruitment has been shown to be something which is practiced, performed and *done* in more-than-representational ways. For notions of the geopolitical, it is enough to say that where critical geopolitics exists at a confluence between cultural geographies and methodologies toward the everyday, there is much more that might be done to explore the literal and lived-in cultures of popular militarism and militarisation.

Following this, a connected point of discussion should be the range of spaces in which the geopolitics has been assumed to operate. Via a feminist reading of geopolitics, an effort has been made throughout this thesis to revaluate the scale in and through which the geopolitical is said to come into being. From the imaginary in chapter two, the public in chapter four, to the private and bodily in chapters six and seven, it has been shown that the geopolitics of recruitment comes to work because it is effective in and through a range of literal spaces. Understanding what the military is, what it does and where it does it, has, thus, necessitated an understanding of the *actual* where and what of popular military cultures as much as it has the imaginative locations/locatives of military worlds. Though critical geopolitics is beginning to concern itself with the immediate *geo* of geopolitics (its place-specific 'thinkness' as Nicley (2009) might have it), a similar conclusion must be reached here around the necessity to further understand the literal and lived-in cultures of militarism and militarisation. Namely, in order to more fully understand how, in particular, popular geopolitics comes to be sensible, critical geopolitics must continue to grapple with the conceptual and methodological opportunities posed by that of cultural geography and more forward-thinking political geographies (and in particular, feminist geopolitics and those which are ethnographically-informed).

8.3 RAF recruitment, consciousness, and perspective

The final point of concern set out in the opening was based on the extent to which the imaginative elements of recruitment are made possible by the association of recruiting with the political world of the state (and so the dominant ways-of-knowing that bring it into being, and enable its perpetuation). More specifically, this concern centred on how the practice of recruitment evidences a particular consciousness of the world and normative perceptive capacities. The questions implied here have been asked of three actors in this

thesis; the RAF recruiter, the potential recruit, and the critical geopolitical researcher. In this penultimate discussion, some conclusions will be provided for these actors in turn.

Firstly, and insofar as chapter three provided a brief encounter with the practical geopolitics of recruitment, the *production* of recruitment should be said to work by means of a particular way of seeing and knowing. Much like the practitioner of statecraft, the RAF recruiter is one who ensures that recruitment – via institutions such as the MoD, COI and advertising agencies – reflects the foreign and domestic affairs of the state and military. The propensity for recruitment to represent the world and its peoples in particular ways is, then, a result of the recruiter's will and ability to know the world. As detailed in chapter three, knowing the world (for the agents of recruitment production) is a matter of employing objective and detached empirical observation – a type common in geopolitics (see Dalby 1998) – of the military's affairs around the world in such a way as to promote the straightforward necessity of military manpower. Put a different way, we're given the sense in chapter three that because RAF recruiters are, formally, military personnel, the dangers posed by the Cold War, for example (figure 3.2) are not matters for debate: the world in which the RAF is active simply *is* a world which is dangerous and in need of defence. Extended to the experience of the advertising agency creative, who is often required to visit military spaces as part of the creative process in order to 'understand what the situation is' (chapter three), it is clear that the recruitment is also a product of particular, first-hand and empirical experiences with the military.

Though an investigation of the ways-of-seeing inherent to recruitment production weren't a primary aspiration of chapter three, the comments we can make on this issue point to something more fundamental. Namely, regardless of the specificities of the creative process, the knowledges that are drawn upon to produce recruitment, and the ways of knowing the world which enable it, are inexorably *military knowledges*. It can be concluded then that the geopolitics of recruitment work, in part, because they are tied to the logic of, and are situated in, the practical work of states, militaries and foreign policy. Recruitment, therefore, is a direct product of the normative assumptions and common-senses which enable the state and its military to be reproduced and perpetuated over time.

Moving from the agents of recruiting production to agents of consumption (the potential recruit), the thesis has made an attempt to account for how the more-than-representative elements of recruitment insist upon ways of knowing and perceiving which, in ways, compound the imaginative force of recruitment. For example, at the airshow, the

prescription of visual techniques (enraptured gazing, photographic capture), has the effect, in the first instance, of limiting the possibility of subversive practices of seeing which would, in turn, lead to subversive ways of understanding the military and its role. Furthermore, much like RAF recruiting games which enable the performance of a strategic, bomb-sight view from above, the insistence on targeting, acquisition and capture at the show aligns recreational practices of vision with those which are used militaristically in spaces of war. Moreover, a cognisance of the military which is engendered through material engagements with the 'stuff' of the show is limited, in turn, by the imaginations that become associated with them, and the framing of material things as lethal, or at least militarily useful.

A general conclusion that might be made about the affordance of perception, then, especially as it happens at the airshow, is that the potential recruit is limited in the way that they might perceive and come to understand the military. An event and space which is heavily managed, the show allows only certain types of seeing, and affords only certain types of engagements with the material cultures of promotion: the showgoer is one who, after MacDonald (2006), is poised at the paradox between the military's need to be seen, *but not to be seen too clearly*; the blind-spots of seeing and sensing at the show are smoothed over, spectacularly, with a fuller range of ways of seeing and knowing closed off. In this way, where an emphasis has been put on the place-specific *geo*-politics of RAF recruitment, the space of the show should be considered a 'total environment' (Ley and Olds 1988) of militarisation, where imaginative and perceptive capacities central to common-sense understandings of geopolitics are allowed to condense and be performed as part of normative showgoer behaviour. Providing opportunities to see and sense in particular ways is clearly written into RAF and military recruiting policies, and it is through events such as the airshow that a predisposition toward an unproblematic imagination of militaries and their activities are perpetuated and reproduced.

Lastly, of the perceptive capacities of the critical geopolitical researcher: whilst critical geopolitics is clearly sensitive to the 'potentially paralyzing contradiction' (Sparke 2000) that, through research, a common-sense geopolitics or visualism becomes re-introduced to critical pronouncements around geopolitics, this thesis has attempted to address this concern through a situated and reflexive auto/ethnographic approach. In picking up the brief discussion of researcher positionality given at the outset, and discussions in the latter part of chapter seven, there remain issues, though, around critical geopolitical research as a situated, methodological practice. For example, whilst some of

the information drawn upon in this thesis has been gathered from military sources (archives, interviews), the extent to which the military institution has gone somewhere toward structuring the knowledge that has been produced here is something that remains unclear. More fundamentally, whilst 'becoming the phenomenon' (Laurier 2003) of the airshow visitor necessarily entailed thinking critically about practices of (photographic) seeing, much of this critique was only enabled via similar, photographic documentation of the airshow. And lastly, where the 'stuff' of recruitment is able to accumulate in and around the home and workspace, it also has a propensity to (potentially) symbolise an uncritical attitude toward the military.

Where these specific questions will go unanswered here (being as they are prompts), one of the suggestions of this thesis is that there is an opportunity for a critical geopolitics of the military where it is studied ethnographically, autoethnographically, and where it engages with material cultures in particular. As it was demonstrated in chapter seven, the ability for the 'stuff' of recruitment to imply and give form to the imaginative aspects of popular military cultures is matched by their being engaging, enthralling, and generative of sensation and feeling. Where critical geopolitics is beginning to expand its cultural sensitivities, and where it engages with work by feminist geopolitical scholars and scholars of affect and emotion, a more concerted effort to interrogate the 'thingness' of geopolitical cultures should figure in future critical geopolitics. This should not be useful only for studying events such as airshows, but more widely applicable to the cultures of critical military research. In this way, trying to understand the task and responsibility of critical geopolitics might well include efforts to understand not only what we can say about military things, but what military things say, and reveal, about us.

8.4 Conclusion

On the 9th of July this year, Stephen Twigg, shadow education secretary, and Jim Murphy, shadow defence secretary, wrote to the *Telegraph* newspaper to outline their vision for the future involvement of the British Armed Forces in schools (Twigg and Murphy 2012). They suggest that:

> We are all incredibly proud of the work our Armed Forces do in keeping us safe at home and abroad. They are central to our national character, just as they are to our national security. The ethos and values of the Services can be significant not just on the battlefield but across our society, including in schools (no pagination).

Practically, Twigg and Murphy call for the widening of access schemes in schools to allow cadet recruitment; new schools with service specialisms; the use of military advisors and reservists for physical education and other curricula, and; a rebalancing of military involvement particularly as it is absent from the majority of state schools. The military excels, they suggests, at entraining a 'service ethos': 'responsibility, comradeship, hard work and a respect for public service' are all values which the military might be best equipped to teach. In no way, however, do they suggest this will end in 'boot camp' style schools, 'nor [are these schools] about recruitment'.

Where this example points to a (potential) encroachment of the military practically and imaginatively in and through various scales of everyday life, into attitudes, temperaments and bodily habits, it is rather useful in outlining the scope and aspirations of this thesis. Namely, whilst 'not explicitly' aimed at recruitment, the further involvement of militaries in schools will undoubtedly involve outlining, simply and straightforwardly, what the military is, what it does and where it does it. Much like the airshow then, whilst 'signatures on the dotted line' are beyond its function, the prescription, inscription and performance of a military-themed, common-sense 'national character' must surely feature as part of the syllabus. Moreover, in line with many of the discussions of militarisation in this thesis, there is a curious assumption present here that the very same ideals essential to the deployment of lethal force are those which are applicable to the civilian body politic.

RAF recruitment is geopolitical, and whilst there may be differing conceptions of what 'critical' geopolitical work entails, it has been shown here that recruitment – much like Twigg and Murphy's vision for schools – is part of a broader culture which accepts, valorises and perpetuates an unproblematic imagination of what the military is and does. Central to these imaginations are assumptions about space, place, danger and nation, and the role that the RAF plays in far-off, and sometimes not so far-off, conflicts. Recruitment (and popular military cultures) works at the level of imagination, temperament and habit; it works to prescribe perception; it exists in what we see, comes to be sensible through how we see, and matters as it becomes im/material in and through the things that collect around the home. 'Being part of the (RAF) story' doesn't just entail the possibility of military service. It entails accepting that you are part of a pervasive, militarised and geopolitical fiction which plays a role in structuring knowledge about the world, and in prescribing how that knowledge becomes known.

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