

**Embedded Online:
Iraq War Documentaries in
the Online Public Sphere**

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of Martin Culloty.

...
*I go back beyond the old man
Mind and body broken
To find the unbroken man.
It is the moment before the dance begins.*

*Your lips are enjoying themselves
Whistling an air.
Whatever happens or cannot happen
In the time I have to spare
I see you dancing father*

Brendan Kennelly (1990) 'I See You Dancing Father'

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the democratic and pedagogical roles of Iraq War documentaries in the online public sphere by synthesizing critical perspectives on war media and documentary film. The 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq gave rise to an unprecedented profusion of war documentaries, many of which are now freely available on dedicated documentary-viewing websites. These websites function as knowledge resources archiving content produced over the course of the occupation and as transnational reception spheres allowing the claims of individual films to be contested or endorsed from multiple perspectives. Consequently, the traditional functions of the war documentary - as advocacy, reportage, and critique - are challenged and reframed in a transnational context. Within the “new war media ecology” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010), documentary-viewing websites also call into question certain foundational assumptions of war media research such as the critical opposition between mainstream and alternative content and associated claims about the impact of mainstream media framing on public-opinion. To examine these issues, three levels of analysis are employed: a content analysis of eleven documentary-viewing websites establishes which Iraq War documentaries are circulating online; a textual analysis of six prominent films critiques their public sphere roles in reference to their thematic, ideological, and aesthetic constructions; and, finally, a reception analysis of user-comments on the largest documentary-viewing website, *Top Documentary Films*, evaluates how users contest or endorse the credibility of individual films and filmmakers.

Although most of the Iraq War documentaries found online are highly critical of the war, this opposition is manifest in complex ways and relies on varying textual strategies for remediating war representations. With an emphasis on electoral politics, activist films articulate a narrow form of war opposition by appealing to the victimisation of the American subject under the Bush administration. In conjunction with transnational user-comments, however, these films also support a foundational reflection on patriotism during wartime. Documentary war reports call on the evidential power of on-the ground footage to frame fragments of the unfolding conflict for Western viewers. The online archiving of these piecemeal perspectives then undermines institutional efforts to commemorate the war in a particular way. Documentaries about war information and media utilise leaked and suppressed information to set different modes of war mediation against each other. While this strategy allows filmmakers to challenge official accounts of the war, it also reflects practices found in amateur conspiracy films. The study finds that viewers’ prior convictions, along with their pre-established trust in particular filmmakers and institutions, play a significant role in their willingness to accept the credibility of individual films. In this way, the transnational reception sphere frequently challenges the assumptions of film representations and brings together diverging perspectives on war. However, in the absence of editorial oversight, users are left to make their own distinctions between competing documentary claims. Consequently, documentary-viewing websites have an ambiguous relationship with documentary’s status as a “discourse of sobriety” (Nichols 1991). In an accelerated and highly partisan war media environment, the inherent tension between the free flow of content in the public sphere and the quality and veracity of this content calls for continued reflection on the dynamic relationship between traditional media content and emergent media practices.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq 2003-2004
FAIR	Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HBO	Home Box Office
HUAC	House of Un-American Activities Committee
IDA	International Documentary Association
IDFA	International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
ISIL/ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria
MFSO	Military Families Speak Out
MOAB	Massive Ordnance Air Blast / ‘Mother of all Bombs’
MP	Military Police
MSNBC	Microsoft National Broadcasting Corporation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSA	(US) National Security Agency
ORHA	Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, Iraq
PBS	Public Broadcasting System
PIPA	Program on International Policy Attitudes
PNAC	Project for a New American Century
RRS	Rich Site Summary
TBIJ	The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, London
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 by US and Coalition Forces gave rise to a profusion of war documentaries. While researching this thesis, over 200 Iraq War documentaries and documentary series were found to have been made between 2002 and 2013.¹ In many respects, the concentrated output of Iraq War documentaries is unprecedented; only two feature-length Vietnam War documentaries were released in the four years between the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the launch of the Tet Offensive in 1968 (Arthur 2006:19). By contrast, fourteen Iraq War documentaries were released commercially within three years of the invasion leading Drake Stutesman (2007:7) to identify the emergence of “a mini ‘Iraq doc’ industry”. Beyond the cinema, many more documentaries were produced for various national and global television networks, distributed on DVD by advocacy groups, and released directly online by amateur and low-budget filmmakers. In this introduction, I argue that the volume and range of Iraq War documentaries reflects both the increased mediatisation of war and the renewed salience of documentary as a form of political communication. By synthesizing critical perspectives on war media and documentary film, this study examines the public sphere functions of Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites ten years after the invasion.

Over the past decade, a number of factors have boosted the production of political documentaries. The commercial success of films like *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore 2004) and *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim 2006) helped to popularise political documentaries (McEnteer 2006; Mintz 2005) while the growth of documentary film festivals has created an international market for films addressing social-political subjects (De Valck 2007; Iordanova & Torchin 2012). At the same time, the use of documentary as a mode of in-depth war reporting has been augmented by increased competition in the global 24 hour news market (Cushion & Lewis 2010; Rai & Cottle 2007) and by the expansion of print media outlets into online video. More broadly, cheaper production and distribution technologies have greatly increased the viability

¹ This list was compiled from web searches, references in the literature and press reviews. The number of films on the websites surveyed for this study is significantly lower as they do not include all the television documentaries, non-English language films and short documentaries released online about the war.

of low-budget filmmaking by amateurs, advocacy groups and conspiracy theorists (Chanan 2005; Hight 2008; Kahana 2008; Sunstein & Vermeule 2009). Much of the resulting material is now freely available through popular video-sharing websites like *YouTube* and *Vimeo* and on dedicated documentary-viewing websites like *Top Documentary Films*. As one of the largest and most prominent free documentary-viewing websites, *Top Documentary Films* provides access to over eighty documentaries relating to the war (see Appendix A). Consequently, to search online for Iraq War documentaries is to encounter a wide variety of transnational content that has been uploaded, shared and discussed by individual Web users.

The production and online availability of these diverse documentaries is a significant development in war media. Historically, the production of war documentaries has been the preserve of governments and major media corporations able to draw on considerable financial and technological resources. Although the advent of lighter and cheaper recording technologies in the 1960s aided the production of independent war documentaries, notably by Leftist filmmakers, distribution was often confined to art-house cinemas and activist networks. Despite the unparalleled commercial success of *Fahrenheit 9/11* in 2004, cinematic distribution for documentaries has remained severely restricted. Even an acclaimed Iraq War documentary like *No End in Sight* (Ferguson 2007) received only a limited theatrical run confined to select cinemas in major cities.²

Although the direct-to-DVD market has allowed independent and micro-budget documentaries to target niche audiences (Knight 2007), it is online distribution, both officially and unofficially, which has made documentaries accessible to the widest number of people. The current “golden age” of documentary production (Hynes 2012; Kellner 2010) is then complimented by a more radical golden age of documentary accessibility for viewers. The current availability of critical war documentaries also stands in contrast to the previous power of distributors to restrict access to controversial films. During the Vietnam War, for example, Columbia Pictures refused to distribute Peter Davis’ *Hearts and Minds* (1974) while the BBC

² Documentary distributors often target the minimal requirements for awards qualification. Qualification for the Academy Awards, for example, requires that documentaries have had a seven day release in New York and Los Angeles along with a film review in either *The New York Times* or *The Los Angeles Times*.

declined to air Peter Watkins's anti-nuclear film *The War Game* (1965) for twenty years (see Chapman 2006).

Against this historical context, I argue that documentary-viewing websites serve a significant public sphere function by accumulating and making freely available a diverse range of films, which are further opened up to international perspectives through user-comments and online reviews. In this way, documentary-viewing websites function as both a knowledge-resource, which archives content produced over the course of the war, and as a transnational reception sphere, which allows the claims of individual films to be contested or endorsed. However, the value of documentary-viewing websites as a knowledge resource needs to be affirmed through a critical analysis of the content. It is now insufficient, I argue, to make assumptions about the nature of content based on ideas about mainstream, alternative, or online distribution processes.

From a theoretical perspective, digital media phenomenon like documentary-viewing websites call into question the opposition between mainstream and alternative content which has underpinned much work on both war media and documentary film. In particular, the theoretical construction of alternative media as a positive foil to mainstream content requires revision in light of the online proliferation of misleading and unverified content while online media more generally raise questions about how users evaluate and contribute to frames of content credibility.

Although the online accumulation and reception of Iraq War documentaries does not offer conclusive evidence about how these issues will be resolved, the trends observed over the past ten years of war documentary production do give some indication of the renewed roles of the documentary in the war media public sphere. While drawing on the many framing studies of Iraq War news media along with studies of Iraq War documentaries within activist networks, this study adopts the broader lens of public sphere communication to re-conceptualise the functions of the war documentary in an online context. These functions are addressed in three key areas: documentary activism, war reporting, and information-media critique. As a preliminary context for assessing these roles, this chapter outlines the various ways

in which war has become increasingly mediatised and considers the consequent fracturing of traditional models of war media communication.

Iraq and the Mediatisation of War

The Iraq War unfolded in a new era of irregular warfare and in a period of rapid transformations across the media system (Rid and Hecker 2009). Between the March 2003 invasion and George Bush's declaration of "mission accomplished" two months later, "there were more primary media sources and diversity of images and opinion than in any other previous war" (Kellner 2010:199). The ensuing eight-year period of occupation³ further coincided with the rising prominence of social media, most notably video-sharing platforms, and major re-alignments within the traditional media system.

The increased mediatisation of war, however, is not simply about the volume of coverage but the multiple and overlapping media modalities which now shape how war is relayed. As intelligence agencies, governments and militaries compete with insurgents, activists and civilians to shape and define conflict narratives, the media are now "indisputably an instrument of war" (Payne 2005: 81). In these conditions, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin (2010) identify a "new war media ecology" typified by the production of content from disparate sources and its unpredictable re-mediation across various platforms by media amateurs and professionals. The onset of digital technologies has then brought into question the capacity of governments and militaries to control media narratives. Nevertheless, in the months preceding the Iraq War, the power to define the war narrative within the US and, to a lesser extent, within the UK resided firmly with the military and intelligence services.

Mediatisation of the Military: Traditionally, governments and militaries have held the greatest power to define public perceptions of war and there exists an extensive literature on the propaganda campaigns that accompanied every major war of the past century. An intensified effort by Western militaries to control the media is

³ Although US troops officially withdrew from Iraq in December 2011, a "small army" of private military and administrative personnel remained (Greenwald 2011). With sectarian violence currently approaching the peak levels of 2006-2007, Iraq remains in conditions equivalent to civil war.

generally credited to the protracted Vietnam War (1956-1975) and, more specifically, to the lasting impression that US public support was “lost” due to television coverage of atrocities and the returning caskets of fallen soldiers (Shaw 2005; Carruthers 2011).⁴ In subsequent conflicts, media management constituted a key aspect of military strategy with General Tommy Franks, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan and subsequently commander of Operation Iraqi Freedom, devising a military doctrine comprising four fronts: political, military, intelligence, and media (Schechter 2004).

The increased “mediatisation of the military” (see Maltby 2012a) has been assessed from a number of angles including the use of public-relations campaigns as a military strategy in irregular war (Hiebert 2003; Rid & Hecker 2009); the media management of war narratives (Gowing 2011; Kumar 2006; Maltby 2012b); the embedding of journalists with troops (Ignatius 2010; Lindner 2009; Pfau et al. 2004; Tuosto 2008); the orchestration of media events like the fall of Saddam Hussein’s statue (Major & Perlmutter 2005); and the treatment of war as “a product to be launched and rolled out” (Schechter 2004: 26). The latter is perhaps best exemplified by the “shock and awe” invasion of Iraq which has been further assessed for its packaging as a high-concept spectacle for rolling-news broadcasts (Compton 2004; Jaramillo 2009; Kellner 2004).

The military has also encouraged a renewed sense of cultural militarism dominated by patriotic calls to “support the troops” (Bacevich 2005; Carruthers 2011; Ivie 2007; Stahl 2009). While the call to patriotism goes hand in hand with states engaged in warfare, as a rhetorical manoeuvre it also works to restrain criticism of the state at war (Stahl 2009). As the military historian Andrew Bacevich (2005) argues, the conflation of the military at large with individual troops effectively eliminates critical reflection on the use of war as a tool of foreign policy. Strident calls to support the troops are then paradoxical insofar as they silence efforts to forestall loss of military life by branding those who question military actions as unpatriotic dissidents (Carruthers 2011). Craig Murray et al. (2008) observe that while anti-war protesters

⁴ A number of media analysts have contested the assumed link between media coverage and declining public support for the Vietnam War as the news media largely reflected official positions and rarely articulated anti-war perspectives (see Hallin 1986; Wyatt 1986, 1995).

received some favourable coverage in the British press prior to the Iraq invasion, a “support our boys” consensus ensued once the war began thereby regulating the anti-war movement to what Daniel Hallin (1986) has called the “sphere of deviance”.

During the Iraq War, the process of embedding seemingly independent journalists with the military augmented the focus on troops over and above the broader strategies and consequences of the war. As embedded reporting by television journalists and documentary filmmakers brings the viewer into alignment with the “gun-sight perspective” of troops (Lebow 2012:41), it has been heavily criticized for presenting a one-sided and de-politicised view of the war (Allan & Zelizer 2004; Boyer 2003; Carruthers 2011; Ignatius 2010 Knightly 2004; Kumar 2006; Kuypers 2005; Lindner 2009; Pfau et al. 2004; Tuosto 2008). In these circumstances, former BBC war correspondent Martin Bell (2008: 221) proclaims “the death of news” as “embedded reporting is so limited in scope that it serves as little more than a recruiting movie. Wars which are fought among the people are no longer reported from among the people.” For Martin Shaw (2005), this new Western model of media management, in conjunction with a warfare strategy based on air-power, has established a situation in which civilian casualties are not an issue for the news media and military casualties can be contained to a number that public opinion tolerates.

Pro-War Media Bias: Many critics attribute the success of the military-government narrative to the complicity of the mainstream news media (DiMaggio 2010; Entman et al. 2009; Robinson & Taylor 2010). Perhaps the most damning criticism of the news media is that government claims about the Iraqi regime went uncontested. Consequently, a study of US public perceptions in the summer of 2003 found that 60 per cent of respondents held at least one of three misconceptions about the war: that there was evidence of a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda; that WMD had been found in Iraq; and that world opinion supported US actions (Kull 2004). The prominence of such misinformation has brought into question the close relationship between the intelligence services and journalists (Dover & Goodman 2009).

An over-reliance on official sources has been noted as a general characteristic of the mainstream media’s coverage of conflict (Andersen 2006; Chouliaraki 2005; Herman

& Chomsky 1988; Hoskins 2004; Rojecki 2008). By drawing exclusively on sources already in favour of war, media reporting then constitutes a de facto approval of the resort to war.⁵ Apart from ideological motives, the replication of pro-war frames is further attributed to the influence of news routines (Chouliaraki 2005) and to the military's packaging of "war programming" for adoption by the news media (Altheide & Grimes 2005).

In the wake of 9/11, American journalists also came under intense pressure to be patriotic resulting in the largely uncritical replication of Pentagon lines (DiMaggio 2010). When *MSNBC*, owned by US military contractors General Electric and Microsoft, removed journalist Phil Donahue in February 2003, an internal report revealed the company's fear that Donahue's show would provide "a home for the liberal anti-war agenda at the same time that our competitors are waving the flag at every opportunity" (cited in Croteau & Hoynes 2006: 178). A competitive patriotic impulse thereby confined dissenting voices to the margins where they were "denied the kinds of 'respectability' that a major media outlet can confer" (Schell cited in Kumar 2006:49).

More broadly, media reporting of US foreign policy is limited by the fact that media organisations tend to be allied to the political parties and follow a narrow conception of balance as being the perspectives of these parties (McChesney & Nicholas 2010). With both Democrats and Republicans supporting the Iraq invasion, there appeared to be little political dissent on the issue. Within this narrow and highly skewed conception of objectivity,

Journalists who question the basic assumptions and policy objectives and who attempt to raise issues no one in either party wishes to debate are considered 'ideological and 'unprofessional' (McChesney & Nicholas 2010: 46).

Furthermore, once a war has begun, the media can claim they are fulfilling journalistic ideals of balance and objectivity by analysing the government's ability to achieve its stated goals (Mermin 1999). Reporters thereby offer critical analysis of an apparently settled policy debate.

⁵ In a 2008 article, *New York Times* journalist David Barstow revealed that many of the military analysts offering seemingly objective expert perspectives on the possible invasion of Iraq were linked to military contractors "as lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants."

In a study of war coverage between 2003 and 2007, Robert Entman et al. (2009) identified three primary features of news coverage which inhibited understanding of the unfolding war: “habitual deference” to official sources regardless of on the ground conditions; the isolation of individual war policies from each other resulting in “accountability gaps”; and, the eventual declining news value attached to casualties and other consequences of the war. As the war continued, the misreporting of events and the general neglect of Iraqi casualties as a news story is reflected in the fact that polls in both the US and Britain find that public estimates of the Iraqi death toll are staggeringly low (ComRes 2013; Kull et al. 2006).⁶ By 2008, coverage of the war accounted for just three percent of US network television news and one percent of cable network news (Ricchiardi 2008).

Dissent and Alternative Perspectives: Outside the United States, the preamble to the Iraq War instigated unparalleled levels of opposition. According to the French political scientist Dominique Reynié, some 36 million people took part in almost 3,000 world-wide anti-war demonstrations between January and April 2003 (Acharya & Katsumata 2011). Writing of these protests in the *New York Times*, Patrick Tyler (2003) designated “world public opinion” to be the new superpower rivalling the hegemony of the US. For others, the sheer scale of the opposition appeared to form the bedrock of a global public sphere (Castells 2008; Reese 2011); albeit one that failed to prevent the invasion (Shaw 2010). Many critics partly attribute this failure to the sidelining of global protest movements and oppositional voices by British and American mainstream news outlets (McQueen 2008; Robinson & Taylor 2010).

Since the invasion, the news media entered a period of rapid transformation with shifts in network news production (Klinenberg 2005) and, most notably, the emergence of Arab news outlets (Lynch 2006; Mellor 2005; Seib 2009). The “soft power” (Nye 1990) of British and American global news networks is now rivalled by government backed English language TV services from China (*CCTV*), Russia (*RT*),

⁶ Estimates of the Iraqi death toll vary considerably and have proved highly controversial. A report in the *Lancet* medical journal (Burnham et al. 2006) has placed the figure at over 600,000 between March 2003 and June 2006 while the more conservative Iraq Body Count estimates less than 200,000 civilian casualties between March 2003 and March 2013. In the ComRes (2013) poll, 59% of respondents estimated fewer than 10,000 Iraqis died as a result of the war

Qatar (*Al-Jazeera*), France (*France24*), Iran (*Press TV*) and, most recently, the privately funded *i24* from Israel. *Al-Jazeera*, in particular, has offered highly-critical accounts of the US War on Terror by openly describing the Iraq War as an illegal invasion and broadcasting graphic pictures of Iraqi casualties (Kellner 2004; Lynch 2006).⁷ In response, US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz accused the station of "false and very biased reporting that has had the effect of inciting violence against our troops" (cited in Miles 2005:299). When *Al-Jazeera's* Baghdad bureau was bombed in April 2003, following the bombing of its Kabul bureau in 2001, the station accused the US of deliberately targeting its journalists; these events are recounted in the documentary *Control Room* (Noujaim 2004).

At a more grounded and dispersed level, mainstream news has been challenged by the emergence of "digital war reporting" (Matheson & Allan 2013) and media activist websites (Kreider 2007; Pickerill 2006) engaging in what Alex Bruns (2005:8) calls "gatewatching". Developing upon Marshall McLuhan's work, Burns examines how "anyone with access to the Web can be an editor, a contributor, a collaborator, a participant in the online news process". Taking inspiration from Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) "propaganda model", watch-dog media groups like *FAIR* in the US and *Media Lens* in the UK have extensively monitored Iraq War reporting in the mainstream media. *Media Lens* additionally encourages its readers to contact newspaper editors and broadcasters about the perceived bias of their war reporting.

With the advent of social media and video-sharing websites, Iraq became the first 'YouTube War' (Cox 2006) resulting in a remarkable escalation in the volume of war content circulating in the public sphere. This content includes "war blogs" (Kaye & Johnson 2010) and online videos by activists (Edwards & Tryon 2009), soldiers (Christensen 2008; Andén-Papadopoulos 2009, 2009b), and jihadists (Bolt 2012; Conway & McInerney 2008) as well as alternative news sites and conspiracy networks (Sunstein & Vermeule 2009). In these ways, online video had dramatically shifted forms of documentary production and distribution. Iraq War veterans, for example, have produced a number of documentaries about Fallujah (see Appendix B)

⁷ In addition to *Al Jazeera*, there has been an increase in funding for Arab documentaries by the Doha Film Institute and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture in Beirut.

by drawing on personal footage filmed in Iraq and crowd-funding websites like *Kickstarter*.

In recent years, *YouTube*, which was acquired by Google in 2006, has also become a mainstream source for news and politics (May 2010). Traditional news broadcasts relating to the Arab Spring uprisings have regularly featured “witness” videos posted online even though the source of this content and the precise nature of what is happening are often unverified (Howard & Hussain 2011; Khondker 2011). At the same time, the rapid circulation of Invisible Children’s misleading short-film *Kony2012* (Russell 2012) reflects the power of social-change pseudo-news to reach a global audience.⁸ Consequently, there are prominent concerns about a crisis within traditional news (Freedman 2009) and about the credibility and ethics of citizen journalism (Franklin 2013; Jenkins 2009).

The Image War: Much of the American objection to *Al-Jazeera*’s war coverage focused on the station’s depiction of civilian war casualties. By largely avoiding images of war casualties, US “broadcasters showed a war devoid of blood, dissent, and diplomacy, focusing instead on a sanitised version of combat” (Aday, Livingstone & Herbert 2005: 3). Yet, efforts to sanitise war imagery, whether out of an ethical sense of taste or patriotic self-censorship, are at odds with the current media environment. Since the Iraq invasion, extremely graphic images of war violence have become commonplace online.⁹ Terrorist and insurgent groups have turned to online media to garner support and attention through the branding of suicide bombers as martyrs (Hafez 2007) and the use of hostage and beheading videos to create world media events (al-Marashi 2004). As outlined in subsequent chapters, documentary-makers also call on graphic images of war violence, especially wounded children, to criticise the war.

However, much of the most contentious imagery was produced by Coalition soldiers themselves. The phenomenon of soldier-media saw troops document their

⁸ *Kony 2012*, about the plight of child-soldiers under the Ugandan rebel-leader Joseph Kony, reached over 100 million views on *YouTube* within six days of its release (Kanczula 2012). While the film calls for intervention in Uganda, Kony had fled the country six years previously.

⁹ A gruesome demonstration of this trend emerged in May 2013 when a video of a Syrian rebel removing and biting into the organs of a government soldier circulated widely online.

participation in the war through blogs, photography and videos (Andén-papadopoulos 2009; Christensen 2008; Kennedy 2009). Although the Pentagon initially encouraged troops to engage with social media, controversy about graphic and “off message” content led to restrictions (Carruthers 2011). Since their publication in 2004, the private photographs of US MPs (military police) engaged in the abuse and torture of prisoners at Abu-Ghraib have come “to stand for, or represent, the entire war” in Western public consciousness (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010: 6). While there has been much reflection on the private character of these pictures (see Neroni 2009), the US military has also been unable to prevent its own classified material from entering the public domain. In 2010, the whistle-blowing website *WikiLeaks* came to public attention with the release of a classified video, dubbed “*Collateral Murder*”, depicting the in-camera view of a Baghdad air-strike on Iraqi civilians.¹⁰ *WikiLeaks* subsequently published over 390,000 US Army field reports as the Iraq War Logs. *Channel 4*’s ‘Dispatches’ in conjunction with the Bureau for Investigative Journalism then analysed this content in the documentary *Iraq’s Secret War Files* (2010), discussed in chapter six.

Regarding the sudden and unpredictable appearance of new war information, Ingrid Volkmer (2008) describes the Iraq War as a global media event,

Which is regularly being brought back to worldwide attention through what we might call ‘reciprocal’ events which enforce and highlight the overall narrative as a globalized collective ‘world’ experience (Volkmer 2008: 92-93).

Within these shifting parameters, there are prominent notions of an uncontrollable “information war” (Snow 2011) typified by fears of online radicalisation (Conway 2012; Halverson & Way 2012) and increased “cyber-security” threats (Cavelty 2007) along with expectations of renewed democratization and accountability (Castells 2011; Gowing 2011). While the Iraq War does not provide any clear indication of how these shifting parameters will be resolved, the protracted nature of the conflict and its diverse media coverage presents an interesting case for assessing the fracturing of traditional models of war media and the way documentary forms are now integrated into the wider flows of war communication. In particular, it would

¹⁰ Interestingly, a transcript of the video leaked by Bradley/Chelsea Manning had already been published by David Finkel (2009) in *The Good Soldiers*. The video remained classified although information about the incident had been disclosed.

seem that it is now much more difficult to maintain a simple opposition between mainstream and alternative media as both intertwine in complex ways.

The Fracturing of War Media Models

Certain theoretical frameworks of political communication have dominated scholarship on war media: Daniel Hallin's conception of journalistic spheres outlined in *The Uncensored War* (1986); Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) political economy model of the corporate media's propaganda function; and Robert Entman's (1993) effects framework of media bias and framing. Although they vary in their conceptions of how the media influence public opinion, the central claim of these models is that the US mainstream news media are institutionally biased in favour of elite political perspectives resulting in foreign policy coverage that is largely compliant with government and corporate interests.

These models have been foundational to the many studies of Iraq War media referenced in the preceding section and also provide the critical basis for much of the documentary activism and political critiques discussed in subsequent chapters. Most typically, the application of these models, and their theoretical derivatives, has focused on the performance of a discrete mass medium within a national setting or on a comparative analysis of a medium across national contexts. However, these models of media performance were devised in an era dominated entirely by national mainstream state and/or corporate media. Although the digital media environment does not cancel out the operation of power identified in these models,¹¹ it does significantly re-align the parameters in which the identified power-structures operate. The following brief outline of major models of war media performance identifies how the relationship between war and media has been conceived in order to better understand how contemporary media practices have ruptured these structures.

Models of War Media Performance: Daniel Hallin's (1986) *The Uncensored War* provides an extensive study of how American print and broadcast media covered the Vietnam War. Contrary to the notion that the uncensored media played a

¹¹ As Anthony DiMaggio (2013) argues, efforts to "manufacture consent" on intervention in Syria in 2013 replicated much of the pro-war media reporting before the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the 2011 military intervention in Libya.

significant role in opposing the war, Hallin indicates that the media was largely supportive of the war until 1968 when there emerged internal division among the political establishment. The media then reflected these diverging elite positions while continuing to ignore anti-war voices. Significantly, Hallin argues that war coverage was out of step with public opinion and, as such, should not be credited with shifting the public mood.

To conceptualise these conditions, Hallin (1986: 116-117) identified the operation of three journalistic spheres: when the political establishment is in agreement on war policy, journalists operate in the “sphere of consensus” and support the war without feeling “compelled either to present opposing views or to remain disinterested observers”. Once the political establishment becomes divided over war policies, journalists call on notions of objectivity and balance to report these elite positions within the “sphere of legitimate controversy”. Alternative views, such as those espoused by the anti-war movement, remain in the “sphere of deviance” as journalists play “the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge the political consensus”.

W. Lance Bennett’s (1990) “indexing hypothesis” similarly argues that journalists index a range of political views related to those espoused by government and thereby reflect government positions on policy issues. The premise that journalists are ideologically biased towards government and elite political positions has been re-affirmed by major studies of war reporting in the post-Vietnam era (Mermin 1999), during the War on Terror (Holsti 2011; Zelizer & Allan 2011) and in studies of “news cultures” more generally (Allan 2004).

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s propaganda model takes a broader view of the influence of corporate-market forces on both the news media and foreign policy. In *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), Herman and Chomsky argue that the mainstream corporate media “manufacture consent” for US foreign policy by espousing the agenda of political elites and by rejecting perspectives contrary to these interests. In this process, the news media is influenced by five key filters: *corporate ownership* allies media organisations to other profit-oriented corporations and thereby calls into question the media’s

assumed role as a watch-dog over elite interests; *reliance on advertising revenue* further undermines the media's capacity to hold commercial interests to account while discouraging programming "with serious complexities and disturbing controversies that interfere with the 'buying mood'" (Herman & Chomsky 1988:17); *reliance on official sources* provides the news media with a consistent flow of information but also enables government and corporate public relations managers to spin stories in their own favour; an aversion to *flak* or negative feedback discourages coverage of controversial subjects; and institutional *ideology* such as the fear of communism in the Cold War era or, more recently, the fear of Islamic terrorism, justifies foreign interventions as necessary for US national interests.

In presenting this analysis, Herman and Chomsky go beyond assessing the performance of the news media to critiquing the legitimacy of US foreign policy (Herring & Robinson 2003:555). In this way, the model places greater emphasis on the ideology of capitalist democracies than on journalistic practice. The propaganda model is also reflective of the broader critical consensus emerging in the 1980s about the inadequacy of mainstream corporate news for democracy and the corresponding need for counter-hegemonic alternatives (Gitlin 1980; Schudson 1995; McChesney 1998, McChesney & Nichols 2011). As Edward Herman (1996: 120) asserts, "alternative media, grass roots information sources, and public scepticism about media veracity" function as important limits on the effectiveness of mainstream media propaganda.

Regarding the applicability of the propaganda model outside the US, Colin Sparks (2007:78) argues that the model needs to be extended and refined to accommodate the greater diversity of sources and opinion found in capitalist democracies "where the political spectrum is wider than in the USA." There has also been much discussion on the enduring relevance of the propaganda model for the contemporary political and media environments (Herring & Robinson 2003; Rampton 2007; Pedro 2011). Nevertheless, it has proved highly influential on studies of US news media performance prior to and during the Iraq War (Freedman 2009; Mullen & Kaehl 2010). In keeping with the central tenants of the propaganda model, these studies emphasise the growth of corporate conglomerates and the close relationships between US military contractors and mainstream media outlets.

Robert Entman's (1993, 2004, 2007) seminal notion of media framing encapsulates the role of media bias on public opinion. Framing involves selecting and highlighting certain "facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman 2004:5). In this way, framing fulfils four functions: defining problems, specifying causes, conveying moral assessments, and endorsing remedies. On the assumption that media framing has a direct impact on public opinion, Entman's effects framework has been applied extensively to media coverage of the War on Terror. Framing studies, for example, have indicated that US news media coverage of water boarding no longer designated the practice "torture" once it was officially employed as a US interrogation tactic (Desai 2010) and that the Abu Ghraib scandal was typically framed as an isolated case of "abuse" rather than as a reflection of systematic practices (Bennet et al. 2006).

Regarding the Iraq War, there have been many framing studies of print reporting and television news coverage in the months preceding the invasion. These have typically focused on national media contexts; in particular the UK (Cromwell & Edwards 2006; McQueen 2008), the US (Altheide & Grimes 2005; DiMaggio 2010; Esser 2009; Kellner 2004); and other, mostly European and Arab, nations (Chouliaraki 2005; Dimitrova & Strömbäck 2005; Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern 2007; Van Dijk 2005). Such studies typically reaffirm the elite thesis while noting the presence of what Piers Robinson et al. (2010:1) call "pockets of resistance".

In addition to these key frameworks, critics have observed certain long-standing trends of war media whereby the mainstream news media is "mobilised" by conflict narratives rather than peaceful alternatives (Bennett 1990; Wolfsfeld 2004; Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010). Johan Galtung (2002, 2006), credited with defining peace studies as an area of academic study, identifies four major characteristics of news media coverage of conflict that mitigate against diplomatic resolutions: the de-contextualisation of violence; the reduction of complex interests to a simple binary of opposing perspectives; a manicheanistic characterisation of good and evil; and a de-

contextualised emphasis on acts of violence rather than the structural context of violence.¹²

The underlying assumption of these models of media performance is that there is a direct link between mass media content and public opinion formation. However,

If you cannot identify which media people were exposed to that contained information about the 2003 Iraq War, for instance, it becomes impossible to justify claims about which media might have influenced their opinion about the war (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:186-187).

As the Iraq War coincided with the widespread adoption of social media technologies, it is unsurprising that studies of the pre-war media phase and its immediate aftermath remain focused on the trends of traditional media. As the war developed, however, the ubiquity of mobile and digital media has called into question the capacity of mainstream media to set and frame the news agenda and, consequently, the applicability of existing theoretical paradigms to the current media environment.

The New War Media Ecology: In outlining the parameters of “media 2.0”, William Merrin (2009:18) argues that digital technologies have fundamentally transformed “all existing technological, institutional, political and economic media structures.” The scarcity of institutionally produced content, which previously defined mainstream media, has now given way to a multiplicity of competing forms and structures:

The broadcast-era was dominated by large institutions mass-producing information and products for mass-distribution and mass-consumption. Today in place of a top-down, one-to-many vertical cascade of products from centralised industry sources we discover bottom-up, many-to-many, horizontal, peer-to-peer communication. ‘Pull’ media challenge ‘push’ media; open structures challenge closed structures; micro-production challenges closed-access, elitist, hierarchical professional structures (Merrin 2009:22).

Although traditional forms of print and broadcast media remain influential, mainstream institutions have been forced “to find new ways to monetise their products and reach audiences whose behaviour and expectations have fundamentally shifted” (Merrin 2009:23). It is still unclear how effective these strategies will be in maintaining the power of mainstream media institutions while networked forms of

¹² As a progressive alternative to these news media trends, Galtung and others have proposed a model of “peace journalism” (see Hackett 2006).

online communication continue to disrupt the capacity national media outlets to define the news agenda and to determine what is consensus, controversial or deviant.

As Ralph Berenger (2006: 24) argues in *Cybermedia Go to War*, “the Internet is no respecter of national borders, of time, or, for that matter, unquestioned patriotism or nationalism”. Consequently, while conflict narratives were previously “selected and ‘scripted’ by national broadcasters and their gatekeeping practices”, wars are now mediated through a variety of platforms in a decentred “globalised public space” amid shifting “cultures of proximity” (Volkmer 2008:92). Documentary-sharing websites exemplify these shifting cultures of proximity as national media content is brought into the transnational public sphere and the traditional notion of an audience is dispersed among an amorphous collection of users.

In outlining the parameters of the “new war media ecology”, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin (2010:9) similarly argue that efforts to define war narratives are disrupted by the entirely unforeseeable emergence of new information. The leaking of classified material and the rapid spread of this content online, as with the “*Collateral Murder* video, epitomise the unpredictable flows of contemporary war communication. In this way, the diffusion of war “through a complex mesh of our everyday media ... creates immediate and unpredictable connections between the trinity of governments, military and publics, forcing each to find new ways to manage information about war” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:18).

These evolving conditions fundamentally disrupt long-standing theoretical conceptions of war and political communication. In particular, they call into question the assumed opposition between mainstream and alternative media content. Although definitions of alternative media vary, what is alternative is typically understood for its oppositional and minority stance (Atton 2001). In addition, alternative media has often been characterised as innately positive because it has functioned as a foil to the monolithic power of the mainstream media. Christian Fuchs (2010:182), for example, defines alternative media as “critical media” which, “questions domination, expresses the standpoints of the oppressed and dominated groups and individuals and argues for the advancement of a co-operative society.” However, as definitions of

mainstream and alternative media are often specific to a time and a culture (Tsfati & Peri 2006), it becomes more tenuous to draw these distinctions in a globalised media environment. There is then a greater need to interrogate the claims of apparently oppositional texts from a broader international perspective.

Current practices also undermine any simplified opposition between mainstream and alternative media; a notable example is the collaboration between the radical non-profit *WikiLeaks* and the mainstream press, in the form of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, to publish the US military's war logs (Madrigal 2010). Furthermore, as alternative and citizen media proliferate online, it is now more difficult to ignore the influence of ideological bias and vested interests on alternative content. In rejecting the conceptual opposition between mainstream and alternative news media, Tony Harcup (2013:4) identifies a "continuum of practice" and calls for greater emphasis on the ethics of journalism more generally. He thereby replaces pre-defined ideas about the value of media-forms with case-specific assessments of credibility and integrity in media practice.

Theoretical claims about the influence of news media framing on public opinion are also undermined by the fact that it is now much more difficult to assume a link between mass media institutions and distinct audiences. The difficulty of identifying audiences is compounded by the fact that, as sources of news and opinion have rapidly multiplied, what counts as news for members of the public is no longer defined by the news organisations or by academics and critics (Russell 2007, 2011). In *Networked: A Contemporary History of News in Transition*, Adrienne Russell (2011) argues that current practice,

Sees publics acting as creators, investigators, reactors, (re)makers, and (re)distributors of news ... where all variety of media, amateurs and professional, corporate and independent products and interests intersect at a new level (Russell 2011:1).

On this account, the concept of journalism has been expanded to include opinion pieces and cultural expressions that contribute to an understanding of news. In this regard, there has been considerable interest in the political news value of satirical comedy shows (Day 2011; Gray, Jones & Thompson 2009), blogs (Kaye & Johnson 2010) and online video (Christiansen 2008).

Just as notions of news media have changed, an understanding of documentary has also been re-aligned by the growth of online video. A study by the Pew Research Centre's Internet & American Life Project (Madden 2009) found that online video viewing has grown among all demographics and outranked other online activities like social networking and downloading podcasts. In this context, Patricia Zimmermann (2007:67) argues that notions of what's mainstream, experimental, or even documentary are now outmoded categories and calls for the "reverse engineering [of] ideas about independent and oppositional media into a concept of public media". There is then a greater need to understand the shifting dynamic between traditional documentary and emerging digital video formats within the broad flows of war communication.

In his editorial "Death of a Single Medium", Andrew Hoskins (2013) notes that recent studies of war media tend to emphasise the dichotomy of established and emergent media while remaining over-reliant on early media methodologies like content analysis. Instead, he argues, that "the mediation of war is a matter of an ongoing set of dynamics: remediation, translation, connectivity, temporality, reflexivity, across and between media and their multiple modalities" (Hoskins 2013:4). Documentary production about the Iraq War and the documentary-viewing websites which accumulate these films reflect these complex processes. Nevertheless, the notion of an oppositional national public sphere has framed much thinking on Iraq War documentaries. The following section briefly outlines the existing literature on the public sphere roles of Iraq War documentaries and introduces the documentary-viewing websites which form the basis of this study.

Iraq War Documentaries & The Public Sphere

Stylistically and thematically, Iraq War documentaries have progressed through a number of broad phases including *vérité* style portraits of soldiers and civilians; analyses of US foreign policy and news media coverage; examinations into occupation strategies and veteran health-care; and reflections on the war's "legacy" (Aufderheide 2007; Bondebjerg 2009; Carruthers 2007, 2008a; Kellner 2010; McGrath 2009; Musser 2007). The vast majority of the films found on the websites surveyed for this study are highly critical of both the war and US foreign policy more

generally. Within the literature, a number of these films have additionally been assessed for their opposition to the mainstream media and for their function as activism.

For Susan Carruthers (2007:12) Iraq War documentary-makers “have stepped into the judicial breach...to hold the architects of the ‘war on terror’ to account”. Charles Musser (2009:10) similarly credits the impetus behind Iraq War filmmaking to “a largely compliant mainstream media [which] handed independent documentary filmmakers and journalists a more crucial, broad-based role.” Musser (2007:12) further contends that documentary filmmakers have sought to articulate “film truth” by exposing the falsity of “state-media truths” about Iraq.¹³ On this basis, Robert Greenwald’s 2003 film *Uncovered*, later updated to *Uncovered: The War on Iraq* (2004), promises to reveal “the whole truth about the Iraq War” while Charles Ferguson’s *No End in Sight* (2007) is framed as “the ultimate story from the occupation’s insiders”. Consequently, despite its own inherent problems with claims to truth and transparency, documentary has been mobilised as a means of establishing facts obscured or simply ignored by the news media.

A number of writers have also assessed the role of individual Iraq War documentaries in constructing activist publics. With an activist ethos on democratic renewal, many American filmmakers have encouraged people to host screenings in their local communities and to engage in post-viewing discussions (Aufderheide 2007; Christensen 2009; Tryon 2011; Whiteman 2004; Zimmermann 2007). With these practices in mind, Mathew Nisbet and Patricia Aufderheide (2009) have put forward a research agenda on documentary “forms functions and impacts” while David Whiteman (2004) proposes “a coalition model of the political impact of documentary film and video”. These research agendas typically focus on the use of documentary by, and the distribution of documentary within, micro activist networks rather than the broader issues of epistemological value and transnational reception addressed by this study.

¹³ Regarding film truth, Musser has in mind the paragon of *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) whereby Errol Morris’ film affirms the innocence of a man previously convicted of murder.

An underlying assumption of much discussion on critical war documentaries is that they function, or should function, as expressions of the anti-war Left. In his article ‘What Current Documentaries Can and Can’t Do’, Bill Nichols (2007) argues,

It is not the primary task of such films to build a Left movement in America; that responsibility lies elsewhere. Until that responsibility is taken up, however, the triumph of the political documentary will remain a great achievement well worth celebrating but not the political victory that will turn the tide of recent events from their catastrophic direction (Nichols 2007:86).

Nicholas would seem to have in mind Vietnam War documentaries like Emil De Antonio’s *In the Year of the Pig* (1968); an explicitly Marxist film which speaks to the historical moment of the 1960s counter-culture. The historical moment for Iraq War documentaries, however, is considerably different. As Adriana Huffington commented in 2005, the nature of opposition to war has become much more complex,

Unlike Vietnam, opposition to the war in Iraq is not being driven by the ‘make love, not war’ crowd. A growing number of voices are being raised — and asking whether the ongoing disaster in Iraq is draining precious resources from the war on terror (remember that?) and efforts to secure the homeland. So this is not war vs. peace; it’s war vs. security (Huffington 2005: online).

Consequently, as explored in chapter four, it need not be assumed that documentaries highly critical of the war are arguing from a straightforward anti-war or leftist position.

Interestingly, with the expectation of *Rush to War* (Taicher 2004), Iraq War documentaries rarely articulate or explore an explicitly pacifist or anti-war position. Instead, they variously argue against the war in terms of American democracy and national security and in broader terms of corporate corruption and inequality. In any case, critical or oppositional war documentaries are also part of the broader structures of war and media communication and, as such, their frames of war require the same level of interrogation applied to news and entertainment media. Referring specifically to American documentaries, Jeffrey Geiger (2011) questions the implicit theoretical assumption that documentaries function as a sober antidote to Hollywood fiction because documentaries are also part of the mythologizing media which idealise and “project the nation”. This historical role of the war documentary in projecting the nation is discussed in chapter two.

Finally, many observers have noted that films and documentaries about the Iraq War have failed to attract significant numbers at the box office (Arthur 2006; Carruthers 2008b; Toffoletti & Grace 2010). For Susan Carruthers (2008b:71) the “disappearance of the war audience” represents a “collective resistance [to the] responsibilities of citizenship” and a “yawning public aversion” to images “of, from, or about US engagement with Iraq”. However, in contrast to the focus on high-profile nation-wide releases, Jonathan Kahana (2008) argues that,

The more interesting phenomenon was the distribution of documentary themes and dispositions across various levels of the culture, from the capital-intensive preserves of network television and the contemporary art scene to the cottage industries and desktops of non-professional film making (Kahana 2008:238).

The sheer volume of documentaries about Iraq, coupled with the rise of many first-time filmmakers utilising alternative distribution platforms, would seem to suggest that the “war audience” has turned to production, content sharing and alternative sources of access. It is these processes which also push the notion of a war audience into a more dispersed conception of a transnational public typified by documentary-viewing websites.

Documentary-Viewing Websites: Taking advantage of the increased capacity to stream audio-visual content, documentary-viewing websites first appeared around 2003 but did not gain prominence for a number of years. In August 2013 eleven documentary-viewing websites were surveyed for this study; for an overview of these websites, including their global search rank and user statistics, see Appendix C. Unlike *You Tube*, these websites do not host content; instead they embed content that is already available online whether unofficially on sites like *YouTube* and *Vimeo* or officially on media players such as those run by *Channel 4* or *PBS*. Embedding content in this way allows the website-owners to circumvent copyright laws and to avoid the costs associated with hosting large volumes of content. Users are then invited to alert administrators to available documentaries although each website carries a disclaimer offering to remove copyright material if requested.

These websites were typically set-up by individuals who describe themselves as having a passion for documentaries as a broad educational genre. Alternatively, the more basic *911docs* is focused exclusively on the War on Terror and has drawn traffic largely from Pakistan and the Palestinian Territories. Other websites reflect

varying stages of development and monetisation with *Top Documentary Films*, for example, operating a film “store” linking to *Amazon*. Web-traffic predominantly emanates from a spread of Western nations although the websites, along with the user-comments, are overwhelmingly Anglo-phone. Much of the documentary content is similarly pitched at an English-language audience whether made originally in English, re-dubbed into English or given English sub-titles by users.

Typically, the embedded documentaries are categorised into major themes like war, history, and religion although, as with video-sharing platforms generally, “there is no consensus or standard practice yet for tagging or categorizing videos” (Clark 2007:4). Consequently, while each of the analysed websites has a broad military/war category, it is unclear how each website tags content or distinguishes between categories like activism and conspiracy. In addition to these categories, the websites operate search and browse facilities and feature recommended films on the home-page. When selected, a documentary is usually accompanied by a brief summary taken from the official press-release and a forum for user comments. *Documentary Network* additionally compliments its category of war documentaries with a document on war propaganda films while *911 Docs* provides information on how to source Creative Commons footage.

The range of Iraq War documentaries available on these websites (see Appendix D) is strikingly diverse. The documentaries traverse the course of the war with the earliest entries from 2003 and the most recent content marking the ten year anniversary of the invasion in 2013. They also encompass a wide range of distribution platforms including content originally released in the cinema, on national, global and cable television, on DVD and documentaries released directly online. While documentary content is predominately feature-length, there are also short-films, TV series and, occasionally, talks and lectures. Although much of the content is professional, in that it was produced by traditional media organisations or established filmmakers, there is a notable quantity of amateur content produced by individuals or advocacy groups like the various “9/11 Truthers” conspiracy groups.

The largest of these documentary-sharing websites, with a database of over 2,100 films, is *Top Documentary Films*. This website also has the largest number of Iraq

War documentaries retuning over eighty films in an “Iraq War” search. *Top Documentary Films* was launched in April 2007 by “Vlatko”, an East-European webmaster, who describes the origins of the website as follows on the About page:

It all started some time ago when I ‘fell in love’ with documentaries in quest for more knowledge. I then started searching for documentaries and found a whole bunch and decided to put them all on this site....In a short period of time [*Top Documentary Films*] became very powerful alternative educational resource and a very busy place thanks to visitors who obviously (according to stats, comments and tons of emails) like it.

In disavowing an editorial role over the website’s vast range of content, Vlatko reminds users on the home-page that,

A documentary, after all, can tell lies and it can tell lies because it lays claim to a form of veracity which fiction doesn’t. Some of the documentaries are made just to discredit some particular person, party, organization, system etc, but most of them here on [*Top Documentary Films*] are non biased, without prejudice and worth watching.

The website operates an open forum run by *Disqus*, allowing registered users to add comments, which appear beneath the viewing box. According to Alexa’s web traffic data, the majority of *Top Documentary Films* traffic comes from the US, Canada, the UK and Australia and the most frequent users are aged in their twenties and thirties.

The Iraq War documentaries on *Top Documentary Films* include high-profile cinematic releases like *No End in Sight* (2007)¹⁴; films by the global news networks like *Al-Jazeera*; films by national broadcasters, particularly from the UK, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Australia; independent activist films, especially American films that were originally released on DVD like Robert Greenwald’s *Iraq for Sale* (2004); and finally amateur conspiracy films released directly online like *9/11 Intercepted* (2005) by “Pilots for Truth”. Judging by the user-comments (see Appendix E), the majority of these films were uploaded in the past four years.

Rationale and Chapter Outline

This study assesses the accumulation and reception of Iraq War documentaries on *Top Documentary Films* as a form of public sphere communication. It is maintained that documentary-viewing websites serve a significant public sphere function by

¹⁴ Interestingly, the most high-profile film *Fahrenheit 9/11* did not feature on “Iraq War” search returns on any of the websites.

accumulating a diverse range of war documentaries, which are further opened up to international perspectives through user-comments. By synthesizing critical perspectives on war media and documentary film, the study provides a detailed analysis of Iraq War documentaries and their accompanying user-comments on *Top Documentary Films*. This content was analysed ten years after the invasion in August 2013.

On the basis that online platforms have become a primary source for accessing media content and for information-seeking more generally, this study conceives documentary viewing websites as knowledge resources. An online search for an “Iraq War documentary” brings the user into contact with archives of content amassed on websites like *Top Documentary Films*. While studies on the public sphere roles of documentary have largely focused on the nation-state or on community-level activism, documentary-viewing websites assume an amorphous public of transnational viewers seeking out documentary content. Although it is not possible to link the availability of films online to actual viewing figures, documentary-viewing websites do offer a good indication of which films are circulating online and are thereby more likely to be viewed by someone seeking out an Iraq War documentary. Of the eleven documentary-viewing websites surveyed, *Top Documentary Films* has the highest rank in *Google* search returns and the largest body of war documentaries. For this reason, it is used as the primary case study when analysing user-comments.

As interest in documentary has grown over the past decade,

It has achieved a much greater visibility within international media studies...The ‘documentary’ category’ has moved out from its rather marginal position as a topic of study (crudely put – too aesthetically fancy for media sociology, too messily referential for mainstream film studies) to a more acknowledged space (Corner 2002:139).

Nevertheless, much of documentary theory has been consumed with the categorisation of modes and forms of documentary, often assuming that there is a chronological development of styles rather than a simultaneous blend of practices (see Bruzzi 2000). By addressing what is being classified and shared online as a war documentary, this study follows David Hogart’s (2002) call for a functional and pragmatic understanding of documentary that avoids essentialist claims about the

nature of the documentary text and teleological claims about the purpose of the documentary enterprise. This is particularly relevant at a time when notions of what counts as documentary are changing (Zimmerman 2007; Austin & de Jong 2008). In this regard, Greg Philo and Mike Berry (2011), working within the tradition of the Glasgow Media Group, argue that there is a growing need to understand the dynamic relationship between media content and contemporary audience practice. Studies of documentary audiences such as Thomas Austin's *Watching the World* (2007) have largely focused on commercial releases and the literature on Iraq War documentaries is also heavily biased towards commercial releases and high-profile films. By focusing on films that audience members have chosen to share and view online, this study addresses a broader range of documentary work, which reflects the fact that user practices cut across the categorisations defined by both academia and industry.

Furthermore, as documentary and documentary-like formats play an increasingly prominent role in news media, it is also fruitful to assess the war documentary within the broader lens of political and public sphere communication. As public sphere communication, documentary-viewing websites potentially deepen an understanding of the war while undermining the ideological operation of national media in two key ways: firstly, as knowledge resources the websites archive a wide range of content on different aspects of the Iraq War over the past ten years, which offsets the claims of any individual film. Secondly, the individual film is pushed beyond its original distribution context to a broader transnational public and these international perspectives and evaluations are made known through the informal user-comments. However, as with new media more generally, it is unclear how the inevitable tension between media production costs and users' expectation of free content will impact upon quality or how users now evaluate the veracity or worth of different forms of documentary. Iraq War documentaries provide an instructive case to examine how these tensions are unfolding as the period of the Iraq War traverses many of the upheavals in the media system.

Research Questions: The primary research question guiding this study is: how do Iraq war documentaries on documentary-viewing fulfil the democratic and pedagogical roles of documentary? To practically address this question, it is broken down in the following three areas:

- What documentaries circulate online?
- How do these films textually construct the war to address viewers?
- How do users frame and evaluate these representations in their user-comments?

These questions are addressed through three levels of analysis: first, a content analysis of eleven documentary-viewing websites conducted between August 3rd and 8th 2013 establishes which documentaries are circulating online and identifies their original production and distribution contexts; second, a textual analysis of six representative films assesses how war documentaries function as activism, war reporting, and information-media critique; and third, a reception analysis of user-comments on *Top Documentary Films* evaluates how users additionally frame film-meaning by questioning or endorsing the credibility and value of film representations.

Chapter Outline: This introductory chapter contextualises the current war media environment in relation to Iraq and identifies fractures within the dominant models of war media. The chapter also provides an overview of documentary production about the Iraq War and outlines the largest documentary-viewing website, *Top Documentary Films*, and its database of over 80 Iraq War documentaries.

Chapter two, Review of Literature, presents a theoretical context for assessing the public sphere roles of Iraq War documentaries and their online distribution via documentary-viewing websites. Part one examines the technological and institutional conditions that have shaped the historical development of the war documentary. While outlining the gradual move from state-controlled to independent documentary production over the past century, this overview highlights three key functions of the war documentary: advocacy, reportage, and memorialisation. This discussion also foregrounds highly influential films as well as certain stylistic and thematic continuities that inform the subsequent analysis of Iraq War documentaries.

Part two examines theoretical perspectives on the public sphere roles of documentary focusing specifically on conceptions of documentary's democratic and pedagogic functions. The democratic functions of documentary have primarily been conceived by mapping modes of production onto notions of mainstream and alternative public

spheres. In contemporary practice, however, these distinctions often collapse into each other as evidenced by the range of films accumulated on documentary-viewing websites. The role of documentary as a form of public pedagogy is then examined in relation to the complex ethical dilemmas that arise from documentary's dual status as a mode of truth-telling and story-telling. These dilemmas are amplified in Iraq War documentaries as filmmakers frequently adopt adversarial positions and attempt to persuade viewers of the merits of one perspective over another.

Part three contextualises the online distribution and reception of Iraq War documentaries in terms of how ancillary material like press reviews and user comments seek to frame film meaning. In particular, it is argued that the transnational nature of documentary-viewing websites opens up individual films to a broader range of perspectives than that anticipated by their original context of production. More broadly, the accumulation of films on documentary-viewing websites is conceptualised in terms of an online knowledge network and related to prominent theoretical fears and expectations about the democratic value of online content and information-seeking practices.

Chapter three, Methodology, outlines the methods used in the study and assesses their merits and limitations in relation to the methodological difficulties posed by digital media. With a research design based on a case study analysis of documentary-viewing websites, the chapter outlines the process of identifying eleven of the most prominent free documentary websites and the process of analysing these websites through content analysis. Based on this information, six documentaries are selected for detailed textual analysis. These films are chosen for their online prominence and representativeness of broader content. The film analysis follows Greg Smith's (2009) segmentation method of documentary analysis which aims to account for the activity of viewers in processing film information. The reception analysis of user-comments on *Top Documentary Films* then assesses how the attitudes and preferences of website users can extend or re-frame film meaning.

Chapters four to six present close readings of six war documentaries drawing on relevant analytical frameworks. The chapters are organised thematically to reflect the thematic roles of the war documentary as activism, war reporting, and information-

media critique. In each chapter, three levels of analysis are incorporated: a content-analysis presents a thematic overview of the range of war documentaries available; in reference to the theoretical literature, a textual analysis of key films assesses documentary strategies and forms; and a reception analysis of user-comments explores how the films have been framed and evaluated by website users.

Chapter four, *Activist Documentaries and War Opposition*, contextualises the complex nature of activism in relation to the Iraq War and the War on Terror. The apparent weakness of the anti-war position is then set against the effort of documentary-filmmakers to target American viewers as voters. Focusing on *Hijacking Catastrophe* (Earp & Jhally 2004) and *Iraq for Sale* (Greenwald 2006), the chapter examines how filmmakers articulate war opposition by appealing to the victimisation of the American subject and the debasement of American democracy by the Bush administration. As these alternative films articulate a limited form of anti-war activism by seeking to condemn the Bush administration rather than the broader structures of war, I argue that the anti-war status of seemingly alternative films needs to be affirmed through analysis rather than assumed from their oppositional stance. The chapter concludes by assessing how online transnational reception can extend the value of individual activist films by supporting a foundational reflection on the meaning of patriotism.

Chapter five, *Documentary War Reporting*, contextualises on-the-ground productions in terms of the noted difficulties faced by journalists and filmmakers working in a volatile irregular war zone. As the documentary reports found online are primarily television productions aimed at Western audiences, the chapter assesses how filmmakers present on-the ground footage as evidence of conditions in Iraq and simultaneously ascribe levels of agency to Iraqi subjects. These issues are explored in reference to *RAI 24's Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* (Torrealta & Ranucci 2005), which claims to substantiate allegations of war crimes in Fallujah, and *Channel 4's Iraq the Women's Story* (Campbell 2006), which assesses the impact of the war on women across Iraqi society. Finally, the chapter assesses the legacy documentaries which marked the ten year anniversary of the invasion as efforts at foreclosing the need to report an ongoing conflict. These efforts to memorialise a particular historical narrative of the war are then set against the online open-archive

of films which preserves the multifaceted documentary perspectives that have been produced since the beginning of the war.

Chapter six, *Documentary and the Information-Media War*, assesses how documentary makers have responded to the suppression of war reporting and to the subsequent leaking of war information to present critical narratives about the war. *The War You Don't See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010) appeals to de-classified and suppressed information to challenge the mainstream news media for its biased portrayal of war while *Iraq's Secret War Files* (2010) investigates the database of war logs released by *WikiLeaks* to interrogate the US military's official pronouncements on the war. In both of these films, different forms of war mediation are set against each other to re-interrogate the meaning of war information. The chapter concludes by assessing how amateur conspiracy films reflect an extension and distortion of investigative war documentaries by calling on notions of mainstream media bias and counter visual evidence to oppose official narratives. It is argued that the rise of conspiracy films further complicate an already simplified distinction between the alternative and the mainstream.

Chapter eight, the Conclusion, summarises the main research findings and reassesses the roles of the war documentary in the online public sphere. It is argued that the broad multi-faceted scope of online archives like *Top Documentary Films* facilitate a deeper understanding of war by presenting by a piece-meal account of various aspects of the war. However, the lack of editorial oversight, whereby there is minimal effort to ascertain the credibility of different documentaries, potentially inhibits the pedagogical value of these websites. There is an inherent tension then between the free flow of content in the public sphere and the quality and veracity of this content. Issues of credibility are also shown to be central to the contemporary war documentary as they attempt to contest official or consensus war representations with their own counter-representations. In this regard, filmmakers mobilise varying textual strategies of remediation that simultaneously undermines and reasserts the power of the image to communicate war information. In an accelerated and highly partisan war media environment that utilises multiple forms of war representation, the study identifies the need for greater reflection on the dynamic relationship between traditional media content and emergent media practices. The study also

points to further areas of research regarding the relationship between war documentaries and their online distribution and reception.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To present a theoretical context for assessing the public sphere roles of Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites, the following review of literature is divided into three parts examining the historical roles of the war documentary, conceptions of the documentary public sphere, and the public sphere parameters of online film distribution and reception.

Part one examines the technological and institutional conditions that have shaped the historical development of the war documentary. While outlining the gradual move from state-controlled to independent documentary production over the past century, three key functions of the war documentary are highlighted: advocacy, reportage, and memorialisation. These functions are then related to contemporary practices in reference to the range of Iraq War documentaries found on documentary-viewing websites. The historical overview also foregrounds highly influential films as well as certain stylistic and thematic continuities that inform the subsequent analysis of Iraq War documentaries.

Part two examines theoretical perspectives on the public sphere roles of documentary focusing specifically on conceptions of documentary's democratic and pedagogical functions. The democratic functions of documentary have primarily been conceived by mapping modes of production onto notions of mainstream and alternative public spheres. In contemporary practice, however, these distinctions often collapse into each other as evidenced by the range of films accumulated on documentary-viewing websites. The role of documentary as a form of public pedagogy is then examined in relation to the complex ethical dilemmas that arise from documentary's dual status as a mode of truth-telling and story-telling. These dilemmas are amplified in Iraq War documentaries as filmmakers frequently adopt adversarial positions and use persuasive strategies that approach the territory of manipulation and misinformation.

Part three contextualises the online distribution and reception of Iraq War documentaries as part of a wider process of film communication. Reception studies posit that film meaning is shaped by a range of ancillary material like press reviews

and user comments that seek to frame film meaning prior to and after viewing. This discursive perspective extends the pedagogical value of film viewing to the more active process of engaging with and reflecting upon varying perspectives on the text. More broadly, the accumulation of films on documentary-viewing websites is conceptualised as a knowledge network whereby the act of film viewing is preceded by a process of searching for and selecting documentaries to watch. This paradigm of the active online user is then related to prominent concerns and expectations about the free-economy of online content and the global public sphere.

Part One:

The Historical Roles of the War Documentary

Within film studies, the war documentary has generally been sidelined in favour of its fictional counterpart or treated as a comparative to fiction film. This is evident in major studies of World War Two films (Basinger 2003; Doherty 1993; Jeffords 1994; Slocum 2005); Vietnam War films (Anderegg 1991; Neale 1991); and the growing body of work on War on Terror films (Der Derian 2009; Gates 2005; Kellner 2010). In documentary specific studies, the war documentary is often contextualised in terms of the wider historical practices of an era, movement, or filmmaker (Barnouw 1993; Barsam 1992; Ellis & McLane 2005; Leyda 1983; Manchel 1990) or subsumed within the broader historical category of political documentary (Bensen & Snee 2008; Chanan 2007; Christensen 2009; Kahana 2008; McEnteer 2006). Historical studies of war media further contextualise the war documentary in terms of the wider levels of propaganda or censorship surrounding a particular war (Anderson 2006; Carruthers 2011; Hallin 1989; Pornay & Spring 1982).

As a comprehensive history of the war documentary is beyond the scope of this study, it presents instead a selective outline of how the war documentary has been employed for advocacy, war reportage, and war memorialisation. Based on a study of the literature on war documentaries, these overarching categories were chosen to reflect the historical and contemporary functions of the war documentary. For the sake of coherence, these historical roles are outlined chronologically rather than thematically covering the period from the Spanish-American War to the post-

Vietnam era; more recent developments are discussed in part-two in relation to the documentary public sphere. The following overview also pays particular attention to American documentaries as they provide a historical and cultural background for analysing Iraq War documentaries.

Early Film and World War One

From its infancy, film was employed to make highly partisan comments about war. James Stuart Blackton's Vitagraph Studios were responsible for one of the earliest known examples of film propaganda: the self-descriptive *Tearing Down The Spanish Flag* (Blackton 1898) was filmed in New York days after the outbreak of the 1898 Spanish-American War in Cuba. A complimentary version, *Raising Old Glory Over Morro Castle* (Blackton & Smith 1899), completes the gesture by raising the American flag over a painted Cuban background. These efforts at provoking outrage at the Spanish while extolling the glory of America neatly complimented the yellow journalism of Joseph Pulitzer and William Hearst. Much like the boost in newspaper sales, Charles Musser (1994) credits the Spanish-American War for reviving the commercial fortunes of the burgeoning film industry which was beset by conflict over patents. In successive decades, war would continue to provide a major boost to documentary film-making.

Although no films were made in Cuba, many re-enactments and fabricated scenes were presented as "actuality films" (Musser 1994; Sklar 1975; Westwell 2006). Similar war scenes were produced about the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) with a notable increase in actual war footage.¹⁵ Foreshadowing the rise of embed documentaries over a century later, these early films focus primarily on the soldier such that "the imaginary warfare of the cinema was represented as the sum of heroic actions carried out by a handful of individuals" (Sorlin 2012:353). For all the symbolic simplicity of these short films, their

¹⁵ Blurring the boundaries between documentary footage and scripted re-enactments became a strategic means for filmmakers to comment upon war as in Cold War propaganda films, Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Battaglia di Algeri/The Battle of Algiers* (1966) and, more recently, *The Road to Guantánamo* (Whitecross & Winterbottom 2006) which integrates interviews with former Guantanamo Bay detainees into the scripted drama.

definitive appeals to triumphant patriotism would become a hallmark of the war propaganda film, which took shape during First World War (1914-1918).

As the war interrupted European film production, Pathé and its various national subsidiaries produced newsreel films about the war across Europe. The propaganda agencies of the warring states, however, were slow to capitalise upon film. Pierre Sorlin (2012) attributes this hesitancy to the expectation that the war would be short while Susan Carruthers (2011) further identifies a snobbish attitude among the elite towards the popular medium. Nevertheless, in response to Germany's propaganda initiatives and spurned on by the press, Britain began sponsoring documentary filmmaking both for public exhibition and historical record (Barsam 1992). Ultimately, the propaganda documentary, "proved useful for political and military interests when it came to reaching a broad segment of the population and creating consent or encouraging rejection of the real or imagined enemy" (Stern 2000:65).

War scenes relayed from the front also proved remarkably popular with audiences and allowed governments to fortify "a sense of identification between civilians and soldiers" (Carruthers 2011:61). A typical film of this sort is *The Battle of the Somme* (Malins & McDowell 1916) which chronicles the British Army's preparation for and entry into battle. Despite its great success with paying audiences, public controversy over its graphic depiction of casualties prompted the War Office to censor subsequent documentaries for images of dead or severely wounded soldiers (Reeves 1997; Carruthers 2011). Such reactions exemplify the divided nature of public attitudes towards graphic images of war. As Susan Carruthers explains,

The Battle of the Somme fuelled the anti-war convictions of some while gratifying the anti-Germanism of others...Audiences in some neutral countries were left unmoved; bored by what Britons found variously gripping, inspiring, or galling. In the United States, by contrast, the film was censored after complaints that its horrors were impacting recruitment in a harmful way (Carruthers 2011: 61).

While governments and advocacy filmmakers have continued to tailor the use of war images to suit the public mood (Carruthers 2011; Cooper & Holman 2008; Lacyo 2009), it would seem that online reception potentially disrupts this process by opening up the war documentary to the diverse perspectives of the transnational public sphere. In this way, notions about the authenticity and veracity of

documentary images may be flagged for attention across different regional and ideological contexts.

Although silent, combat documentaries like *The Battle of the Somme* promised to reveal the “reality” of the war experience. War films thereby “provided an ‘illusion of reality’ at a time when it was generally believed that the camera could not lie” (Sanders & Taylor 1982:155). Donald Thompson’s 1916 documentary, for example, was titled *War As It Really Is*. This trope of revealing the reality of war has endured as a key framing device for on-the-ground war documentaries as successive eras of warfare came with the promise of more realistic footage whether through the addition of sound, colour or increased proximity to the action. During the Iraq War, it was footage filmed by the soldiers themselves that was frequently hailed for its “front-line” veracity. To make *The War Tapes* (2006), for example, Deborah Scranton supplied soldiers with digital camera prior to their deployment and framed the resulting compilation as “the story that 2,700 embedded reporters never could” tell.

With a similar framing rhetoric, the documentaries discussed in chapters five and six set the perspectives of footage filmed by Iraqis and independent reporters against official accounts of war and news media perspectives. Notions of truth then emerge not from the individual image but from the gaps and overlaps between different kinds of war representations. Nevertheless, the assumed relationship between the cinematic image and the reality it claims to reveal has occupied much documentary theorising with varying representational strategies defined as efforts at “claiming the real” (Winston 1995). In addition to offering apparent images of the real, however, war documentary filmmakers have also fashioned war narratives that skirt the boundaries between truth-telling and story-telling.

Prior to US entry into the First World War, over two-dozen documentary “war pictures” were distributed (Abel 2010; Axelrod 2009). Most of these comprise war scenes shot on the front by correspondents or versions of European films re-edited to comply with censorship regulations (Geiger 2011). Beyond war footage, advocacy films like *The Battle Cry of Peace* (North & Blackton 1915) and *The Nation’s Peril* (Terwilliger 1915) campaigned to draw America out of its isolationism by

amplifying fears about an invasion of the country (Brownlow 1979). Based on the book *Defenceless America* (1915) by the munitions manufacturer Maxim Hudson, *The Battle Cry of Peace* highlights America's "unpreparedness" for attack and argues for the expansion of the American military while dramatising the invasion and subjugation of New York by an unnamed foreign army.

Although only fragments of the film remain, a detailed and highly critical review in *The New York Times* (Anonymous 1915) dismisses the film as artless propaganda and highlights the "rough" treatment of the pacifist position and "the accent of authority" attained through the on-screen presence of various generals and references to notable figures like Theodore Roosevelt. In a widely publicised article, Henry Ford also attacked the film for its scaremongering in the service of Hudson's war profiteering (Wik 1972). While most of the documentaries on *Top Documentary Films* are critical of the War on Terror and the Iraq War in particular, some right-wing advocacy groups have continued Hudson's practice of war-mongering through documentary. The pro-Israeli Clarion Fund, for example, engages a deeply anti-Islamic rhetoric to argue the need for war with Iran and other Muslim nations in films like *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West* (Kopping 2005) and *Iranium* (Traiman 2011). Such films reflect the extent to which documentaries have become tools for advocacy by interest groups. This is perhaps the most notable trend of contemporary war documentary production as national broadcasters no longer dominate war film-making and the state has largely abandoned documentary since the height of propaganda film-making during the World Wars.

Following US entry into World War One in 1915, George Creel, head of the Committee on Public Information, conceived of propaganda as a means to spread "the gospel of Americanism to every corner of the globe" (cited in Doherty 1993:88). Films were thereby targeted at the American public as well as foreign audiences. In the attainment of this goal, the war aided the American film industry in two ways:

First, the American film industry finally drew positive attention from government and big business, and second, the decimation of European filmmakers created room for the industry to expend its dominance to the far corners of the world (Mahar 2012: 85).

While Creel conceived of film as a means of "advertising America", his idea was largely left undeveloped after the war. It was in Soviet Russia after the 1917

Revolution that documentary emerged as a powerful means to proselytise a national cause.

Soviet Film and the Inter-War Years

With the nationalisation of the media, and Vladimir Lenin's endorsement of film as "the most important art", documentary was employed as a persuasive form of Soviet journalism by major theorists of the form like Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. To mythologize the recent birth of the Soviet state, documentaries like *Anniversary Of The Revolution* (Vertov 1919), *History Of The Civil War* (Vertov 1921) and *The Fall Of The Romanov Dynasty* (Shub 1927) compiled historical narratives through the selective re-purposing of archive footage. Developing upon Eisenstein's principle of montage, the Soviet compilation film shifted the focus of documentary from the evidential power of newsreel to the discursive power of editing (Ellis & McLane 2005; Hicks 2007).

In *The Fall Of The Romanov Dynasty*, Esfir Shub re-contextualises archive footage of the Romanovs by juxtaposing images of the imperialist aristocracy at play with footage of imperialist subjects at war in Europe. Even though the soldiers depicted in the film were not Russian, Shub uses this footage to establish the corruption of the Russian social order. The film then cuts to the title '1917' with Lenin agitating to pull Russian troops from the war. As Jay Leyda (1983: 224) observes Shub was highly attune to the implication of individual shots and through "the juxtaposition of these 'bits of reality', she was able to achieve effects of irony, absurdity, pathos and grandeur that few of the bits had intrinsically."

The archive compilation film, neatly defined by Leyda (1964) as "films beget films" proved highly influential. In America, in particular, its influence is evident in the "synthetic documentaries" by 1930s Leftist filmmakers, Frank Capra's World War Two propaganda series *Why We Fight*, and the "document-dossier" approach of Red Scare retrospective and anti-war Vietnam films. With its capacity to critically reconstruct historical narratives, the compilation film is particularly suited to political advocacy:

Almost by definition historical, and often a vehicle for war documentaries, the compilation film has traditionally been employed by political filmmakers on

both the left and right. Historical material, when used in combination with contemporary narration or interviews, has a malleability and potential for credibility and authority available to a range of polemic strategies in both content and aesthetic structure (Dornfeld 1990:283).

In more contemporary terms, Jeremy Hicks (2007:4) argues that “Vertov’s reflexive and partisan films are of great relevance to an age more suspicious of documentary’s implicit claims to objectivity”. Consequently, Amber Day (2011) argues that the satirical and ironic repurposing of media content has become a cultural form of dissent as evidenced by documentaries like *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore 2004) and *WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception* (Schechter 2004) and comedy-news programmes like *The Daily Show*. Opposition then takes the form of parody rather than a direct articulation of a pacifist or anti-war position.

Between the World Wars, a number of notable independent filmmakers, often associated with the recently established documentary schools, produced anti-war films. The silent twenty-minute film *Hell UnLtd* (McClaren & Biggar 1936) combines diagrams, animation, live action, and quotes to agitate against war. Many of the highlighted topics remain enduring concerns of anti-war documentaries: excessive budgetary spending on armaments; profiteering by the arms industry; mass media dissemination of pro-war propaganda; the assault on civilian populations and the corruption of international treaties. Through animation *Hell UnLtd* pictures war as politicians playing chess with their arsenal while dramatised scenes depict civilian populations terrorised by aerial bombs and mustard gas. Viewers are urged to “act now” by campaigning to parliament, demonstrating, and if needs be, striking because “mass resistance is better than mass murder”. In the final scenes, the working world grinds to a halt and the population, previously terrorised, sleep soundly in their beds.

Such appeals to the brotherhood of man and the unity of the masses are also found in films calling for humanitarian intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Co-funded by aid organisations, *Heart of Spain* (Kline & Korvin 1936) presented the war not as a fraternal conflict but as a fight between good (the Republicans) and evil (the Nationalists). On this basis, the film, which was never released in Spain, criticises foreign neutrality and calls for intervention on the Republican side. Like *War UnLtd* the film relies heavily on provocative images of civilians, especially children, terrorised by war. *The Spanish Earth* (Ivens 1937), written by John Dos

Passos and Ernest Hemingway, argues a similar case for American intervention while openly engaging the American Left. However, in place of destructive images of the war, the film endorses the possibility of a peaceful future in Spain based upon agricultural reform. In many respects, these anti-war films are the precursor to the celebrated counter-culture war documentaries of the 1970s and to films like *Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo* (PBS 1994) and *Veilles d'Armes* (Ophüls 1994), which argued the case for humanitarian intervention in the Bosnian War (1992-1995). As discussed in chapter four, activist documentaries about the Iraq War rarely articulate a clear anti-war position. Instead, they primarily target American viewers as voters and this focus on domestic electoral politics comes at the expense of critiquing war as a tool of foreign policy. At the same time, however, provocative images of death and destruction remain the primary means of critiquing war.

Propaganda & World War Two

Documentary film was extensively used as an “idea weapon” (Geiger 2011) preceding and during the Second World War (1939-1945). For the Nazis, cinema was as a tool for “the nationalisation of the masses” (Mosse 1991a:1) giving rise to Leni Reinenthal’s deification of Hitler and the Nazi state in *Triumph of the Will* (1935). The Ministry of Propaganda also attempted to counter claims about the regime among international audiences through films like *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews* (Gerron 1944) which presents a staged view of Jewish “resettlement” at Theresienstadt concentration camp.¹⁶ In Britain, where the Nazi threat was a tangible reality, propaganda films appealed heavily to patriotism and national unity giving little attention to the destructiveness of war or to vilification of the enemy (Ellis and McLane 2005). It was in America that documentaries were again charged with persuading both the troops and the public of the need to join another European war.

As with World War One, the Second World War was a high-point for American documentary filmmaking. Although Jeffery Geiger (2011) argues that it was fiction films which best fulfilled the propaganda function, it was documentary that attained new levels of recognition. Established Hollywood filmmakers like Frank Capra, William Wyler and John Huston enlisted in the armed forces and turned to

¹⁶ Upon completion, the director and much of the cast were sent to Auschwitz.

documentary often for the first time. As a precursor to the Iraq War's embed documentaries, Huston's *The Battle of San Pietro* (Huston 1945) and Wyler's *The Memphis Belle* (1944) were filmed alongside US Army regiments. Capra's *Prelude to War* (1942) was one of five allied war documentaries to win the inaugural Best Documentary category at the 1943 Academy Awards; a category comprised entirely of twenty-five short and feature length works of Allied propaganda.

Commissioned by the Office of War Information, Capra's series of seven films, *Why We Fight*, was originally made as a set of orientation films for the troops. To counteract America's previous non-interventionist policy, the films were then released to the public. Accordingly, the *Why We Fight* films promote the need to ally with Britain, the Soviet Union and the Chinese while demonising the fanaticism of the Japanese and German enemies. Capra (1971:325) later described his films as mounting "a counterattack" against *Triumph of the Will* (1935) scenes from which appear frequently as evidence of Nazi ideology.

In common with the propaganda films of other nations, the *Why We Fight* series appeals heavily to notions of national unity and greatness while stressing the grave threat posed by the enemy. As Jeffery Geiger (2011) argues documentary has played an important mythologizing role in "projecting the nation" by defining what is and isn't representative of American values. *War Comes to America* (Capra 1945), for example, presents the Axis powers as a direct threat to the "idea" of America, which is defined for its freedom and equality. Notably ignoring the Civil War (1861-1865), American history is idealised as a narrative of unity and freedom stretching from the first settlements to the contemporaneous ethnic diversity evidenced by the make-up of the armed forces.

In her extensive study of World War Two fiction films, Jeanine Basinger (1986) has identified the prominent plot trope of ethnically diverse soldiers overcoming difference for their common American cause. The PBS documentary *Life and Death in a War Zone* (Doganis & Macrae 2004) presents an interesting ideological twist on this trope by affirming the virtues of US intentions in Iraq through second-generation military personnel from Vietnam and Korea. The children of those who experienced America's previous wars are thereby shown to be fully assimilated into American

life while a Native American additionally links his work in Iraq to the Cherokee tradition of “training warrior and healers”.¹⁷

While World War Two documentaries appeal heavily to American unity, they also define the enemy in reference to American values. *Our Enemy: The Japanese* (1943) presents the Japanese as a peculiar and fanatical people who are “as different from ourselves as any people on this planet” while *Japanese Relocation* (1943) defends the forced interment of Japanese-Americans as being in accordance with the best principles of American democracy.¹⁸ While the Japanese are demonised as irredeemably abhorrent, certain German qualities are found praiseworthy. In *Here Is Germany* (Capra 1945), German modernity and industry are much admired while the people, who “look pretty much like the folks back home”, are praised for their education, culture and diligence.

In an interesting turn for what would become the effects school of mass communication research, army psychologists studying the persuasive effects of the *Why We Fight* series concluded that while troops learned about the context of the war in Europe, the films did not alter their motivation towards fighting and potentially dying for it (Hovland et al. 1953). Nevertheless, the impression that propaganda documentaries were a useful tool for government advocacy remained and was employed extensively during the Cold War. Consequently, documentary, which had previously promoted the need to ally with the Soviet Union, was now used to amplify fears about the Soviet threat to America’s “way of life”.

Propaganda, however, was generally deemed incompatible with democratic values. The use of propaganda then had to be justified by amplifying the threat of the enemy’s propaganda. In *The War for Men’s Minds* (Legg 1943) propaganda is described as “this strange other war” being fought “all around the globe”. As Hitler’s “favourite weapon”, propaganda is the distinguishing forte of anti-democratic nations

¹⁷ This effort to transform the transgressions of previous conflicts into a narrative of American inclusivity brings to mind Noam Chomsky’s (2011) observation that the US military names its weapons - Apache, Blackhawk, Tomahawk - after the Native American victims of state extermination policies.

¹⁸ Ironically, Capra’s work of anti-Japanese propaganda, *Know Your Enemy* (1945), was released the week Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. It was then withdrawn and not shown publically until 1977.

like Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, China, and Japan. In response, the democratic nations are compelled to resort to propaganda to “conquer men’s minds for their own great cause: the cause of human freedom everywhere”. In other words, the democratic states must sometimes be undemocratic for the sake of democracy. In essence, this argument serves as an apology for the propaganda that defined the Cold War.

The Cold War & Vietnam

At the height of the Red Scare, fuelled by Senator McCarthy’s House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), fiction films like *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (Douglas 1951) and *The Red Menace* (Springsteen 1949) were partly shot in a documentary style with an authoritative narrator asserting that the dramas were based on real cases. *Red Snow* (1952) further integrates documentary footage into its fabricated tale of suspicious activities at the Bering Strait. Much like the portrayal of the Germans and the Japanese in the previous decade, communists are demonised for their off-kilter or “unAmerican” character traits (Roffman & Purdy 2010).

Information films on the theme of “how to identify a communist” reinforced the notion of an internal threat to the American way of life. *Communist Blueprint for Conquest* (1956) outlined the cunning nature of communist indoctrination tactics while *Red Nightmare* (Waggner_1962) dramatised a communist take-over of an American town thereby echoing *The Battle Cry of Peace* from 1915. These concerns were also explored in advocacy documentaries like *The Hoackers* (Hoffman 1952) and *Anarchy, USA* (1966). The latter film, by the right-wing John Birch Society, further implicated the Civil Rights movement in a communist plot for world domination. In these films, liberal thinking, homosexuality or any kind of liberal activism are subsumed into the general hysteria over the perceived communist threat. As Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy (2010: 186) explain, “like HUAC, these films rely on their own internal logic which betrays a tendency towards the very totalitarianism that they are supposedly combating.”

As the popularity of television developed in tandem with Cold War tensions, it was the small-screen rather than cinema which became central to the promotion of the Cold War consensus. Proponents of this consensus,

Professed a fierce belief that their government and private American institutions comprised the greatest counterpoint to Soviet power, and they defended their practices as necessary to democracy's survival (Bernhard 2003:4).

The post-war period also saw a significant rise in corporate sponsorship of documentary while news media outlets, with their dependence on advertising, were mindful to regulate the content of broadcast documentaries (Barnouw 1993: 219). George Creel's idea of using documentary to promote positive images of America abroad also resurfaced with the networks encouraged to make and distribute more documentaries with a pro-American slant (Curtin 1995; Selznick 2008; Barnow 1993). Erik Barnow (1993:227) cites the example of NBC's *Angola: Journey to a War* (Young 1961) which was re-edited to remove scenes revealing that the Portuguese were using American-manufactured napalm to quell the Angolan uprising.¹⁹

At the same time, the emergence of cheaper and lighter cameras in the late 1960s boosted filmmaking by politically active and marginalised groups (Boyle 1997). These independent filmmakers directly challenged the Cold War consensus by exposing and parodying the absurdity of Red Scare hysteria (Rollins 2004). Notable among these documentaries are *Point of Order* (1963) and *McCarthy: Death of a Witch Hunter* (1971) by Emile De Antonio and *The Atomic Café* (Loader, Rafferty & Rafferty 1982). By 1983, *Seeing Red* (Klein & Reichert) presented an oral history of the American Communist Party and was one of the first documentaries to take the party's political interests seriously.

As the Cold War developed, with proxy wars of communist expansion and containment, it was the protracted Vietnam War (1955-1975) which proved to have the most divisive impact on American culture and its political and military institutions (Beattie 1998; James 1990). For Michael Arlen (1982) Vietnam was the first "living-room war" and it was in the American living room that Arlen and others believed the war was lost due to graphic, seemingly "uncensored", coverage of atrocities and suffering (see Hallin 1986). Unlike World War Two, the Vietnam War did not produce a significant output of government propaganda films which Charles

¹⁹ Daniel Hallin (2006) has explored these issues in greater detail in his study of American news television and the public sphere, *We Keep America on Top of the World*.

Musser (2002) attributes to the hesitancy of President Lyndon Johnson and the rise of television.

Documentary was more frequently employed by independent filmmakers utilising the greater accessibility of recording technologies. Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane (2005) note that the Vietnam War was central to the golden years of 16mm filmmaking with approximately 400 film and television documentaries about the war held at the Library of Congress.²⁰ Among these is *Winter Soldier* (1972) by the Winter Film Collective which chronicles the testimony of Vietnam War veterans and stands a precursor to the phenomenon of “soldier-media” during the Iraq War. In fact, a number of filmmakers have critiqued the Iraq War by returning to their personal memory of Vietnam as in *American Holocaust: Before Iraq...There Was Vietnam* (Claiborne 2008) and *My Vietnam, Your Iraq* (Osgood 2011). Alternatively, the conservative film *No Substitute For Victory: From Vietnam To Iraq* (Slatzer 2006) refutes the comparison between the Iraq and Vietnam wars.

Perhaps reflecting the French colonial interest in Indochina, it was French and European filmmakers, however, who were involved in the earliest efforts to document and critique the Vietnam War. *La Section Anderson/The Anderson Platoon* (Schoendoerffer 1967) and *Face of War* (Jones 1968) focused on the day-to-day experience of American G.I.s while *La Sixième Face Du Pentagone/ The Sixth Face of the Pentagon* (Marker & Reichenbach 1968) observed the growing anti-war movement in America. These documentaries thereby established the twin-sites of the war being fought in Vietnam and “at home”.²¹ Joris Ivens, a veteran of political filmmaking since the Spanish Civil War, joined Chris Marker and other French New Wave filmmakers to make *Loin du Vietnam/Far from Vietnam* (Ivens 1967) and *Le 17e parallèle: La guerre du peuple/ The 17th Parallel: Vietnam in War* (Ivens 1968) in conjunction with local Vietnamese filmmakers. Over forty years later, the film inspired the collaborative effort *Far From Afghanistan* (Gianvito 2012) which marks ten years of war in that country. Much like the earlier works about Vietnam, the film is billed as an exercise in reflection and international solidarity with the local people.

²⁰ Soldiers also brought 8mm camera to Vietnam but the resulting films were largely for personal consumption and styled as “holiday home-movies” (see Westwell 2008).

²¹ Glenn Silber’s documentary about the anti-war movement in Wisconsin is notably titled *The War at Home* (1979).

During the Iraq War such collaborative efforts took on a more pragmatic form as Western media outlets and activist organisations relied on local filmmakers to provide reports about conditions outside zones deemed safe for Western journalists (see chapter five).

In America, Vietnam became a defining cause for Leftist and critical filmmakers whose work had been sidelined by the “the political rigidities of the Cold War” (Musser 2002:114). Typically, these “document-dossier” films relied on archive appropriation and counterpoint testimony to de-legitimise the war. The resulting compilations functioned as projects,

Of historiography through a two-stroke process that places in tension ‘present tense’ interview material and archival footage scavenged from diverse sources. Visual documents from past and present are thus allowed to interrogate one another (Renov 1990:261-262).

Perhaps the most celebrated documentary of the Vietnam era, *In the Year of the Pig* (de Antonio 1968) directly challenged prevailing myths about the context of the war by presenting a history of post World War Two Vietnam in which Ho Chi Mihn is a clear patriot. Adopting a framework similar to Emile de Antonio’s, *Hearts and Minds* (Davis 1974) contrasts official statements by the administration and the military with on-the ground footage of Vietnam to mock the notion that the US were fighting for the “hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese people. Although criticised by Antonio for being “both heartless and mindless” in its dearth of political context, the film plays heavily with the ironic use of patriotic music and the satirical treatment of policy officials. Such techniques and tone are a notable influence on Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* with Carol Wilder (2005) describing both films as “arguments from irony”. More broadly, the textual strategy of interrogating the present through archive footage is fundamental to Iraq War documentaries critiquing both the Bush administration and the mainstream media and to low-budget documentaries advancing conspiracy theories about 9/11 and the War on Terror (see chapter six).

Remembering War

Arising from cultural studies, the study of memory, and its intersection with visual culture, has recently developed as a vibrant area of research (Kilbourn 2013; Grainge 2003; Guerin & Hallas 2007; Hoskins 2007, 2011; Rabinowitz 1993). Citing

Maurice's Halbwach's concept of "collective memory", John Storey (2010: 74) observes that acts of public memory enable us to "remember what we did not experience first-hand." Similarly, Alison Landsberg (1995:175) has described "prosthetic memories" as "memories which do not come from a person's lived experience in any strict sense" but from mediated accounts such as those offered by war documentaries. Such memory acts, however, have proved deeply selective. Through repeated invocation in both popular culture and political rhetoric, the World Wars and the Vietnam War have become master-narratives of war discourse while "small wars" and "indecisive conflicts", like the Korean War (1950-1953) and the various post-1945 uprisings against British rule, have largely been forgotten (Carruthers 2011:256).

It is important to analyse how wars are memorialised in popular culture as it is these memories that are carried forth into the next war. A number of analysts have observed how George Bush's War on Terror rhetoric appealed heavily to the notion of World War Two's "greatest generation" (Bostdorff 2003; Noon 2004; Stahl 2008); an ideal of unity and patriotism endlessly recycled in popular film and documentary (see Rose 2013). In his memoir about the 1991 Gulf War, Anthony Swofford (2003) states that it was pop cultural representations of the Vietnam War that informed the soldiers' perceptions of what war would be like. On this basis, Tony Grajeda (2007) argues that the antecedent of films portraying US troops in Iraq, like *Gunner Palace* (Tucker & Epperlein 2004) and *Occupation: Dreamland* (Scott & Olds 2005), are not previous war documentaries but fiction films like *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola 1979) and *Platoon* (Stone 1986) because they serve as cultural reference points for both the documentary-makers and the participants.

It was in the aftermath of World War Two that many notable documentaries first struggled to define the meaning of past wars. These documentaries variously serve as evidence of war's destruction, elegiac acts of remembrance and humanitarian appeals for peace. Regarding the Nazi Holocaust, Jean Baudrillard (1994:49) defined memory projects as an ethical duty because "forgetting extermination is part of extermination." The Holocaust, however, remained a complex subject for representation as "documentary films by survivors as well as those of later

generations have stirred enormous controversies over whether or not the arts have the ability to capture the essence of the horror itself” (Manchel 1990: 289).

Quite apart from the problem of visually representing the Holocaust, the question of how to contextualise it proved most contentious in the immediate aftermath of the war. Having released some footage of the liberated concentration camps in 1945, the British and American Ministries of Information sought to compile documentaries for the German denazification programme. Produced by Sidney Bernstein with Alfred Hitchcock as an advisor, the resulting films, later known as *Memory of the Camps* (Bernstein 1945/1985) and *A Painful Reminder* (Bernstein 1945/1985), were withheld from release and remained unseen until the 1980s. Citing Hitchcock’s establishing shot, which pans past German children at play to a barbed wire fence of flesh and bone, Paula Rabinowitz (1993:121) argues that “it was the narrative established by the pan - the heart of darkness beating within the German people - more than the footage of the camps alone, which was potentially damaging to the post-war alliance”. In this way, invocations of the past are tailored to the concerns of the present.

Moving beyond expressions of horror at the extent of Nazi crimes, Alan Renais’ *Nuit Et Brouillard/Night and Fog* (1955) reflects on the depths of the human capacity for violence to imply that such slaughter could occur again while Claude Lanzmann’s epic production *Shoah* (1985) preserves nine and a half hours of witness testimony. In *States of Emergency* Patricia Zimmermann (2000:103) argues that these independent post-war productions were able to “de-mobilise war imagery” and reclaim “imagination and resistance for those incarcerated in the camps.” At the same time, these documentaries “ask audiences to think about their place in the films’ meanings as well as their responsibility to the past and its interpretations” (Rabinowitz 1993:119). Historical war documentaries of this period are often composed as elegies for the lost generations. The haunting quality of *Nuit Et Brouillard* is also evident in Frederic Rossif’s compilation film *Mourir à Madrid/To Die in Madrid* (1963) which laments the suffering of the Spanish Civil War and the tragedy of Spain as a lost country under General Franco. Marcel Ophüls’ two-part documentary about the French Resistance and Vichy collaborators, *Le chagrin et la pitié /The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969), heavily invokes the tragedy of the French war-

time experience while the BBC's 26 episode *The Great War* (1964) drew on the work of war poets like Wilfred Owen to retell the story of the First World War as a memorial to the dead (Hanna 2007).

For all their references to the "horror of war", such commemorative efforts often glorify war by idealising notions of honour and sacrifice for the nation.²² Regarding the First World War, Geroge Mosse (1991b:9) has identified the emergence of a "myth of war experience", which transformed the brutal reality of trench warfare into a sacred tale of national sacrifice. Such myths are sustained through a cultural predilection for anniversaries and commemorations.²³ Television, in particular, has played a significant role in shaping the memorialisation of specific wars while simultaneously regulating public attitudes towards war generally. Consequently, while *The Great War* invited British viewers to pity and sacralise the dead of the First World War, Peter Watkins' BBC docu-drama *The War Game* (1965) envisaged a contemporaneous nuclear war in which the "living will envy the dead". In place of poetry the film outlines blunt facts about the mass carnage following the bombings of Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Scheduled to be broadcast in August 1965, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, the film was withheld from British television until 1985. The inhumanity of the Great War was then deemed an appropriate subject for television while the inhumanity of the contemporaneous nuclear-threat was not (see Chapman 2006; Shaw 2006).

Following the example of *The Great War*, television, particularly public service television, produced numerous prestige projects of documentary war history such as the ITV's *The World at War* (1973-74), a 26 episode series chronicling World War Two; Gwynne Dyer's *War: A Commentary* (1983) commissioned by the National Film Board of Canada, and Ken Burns' PBS series *The Civil War* (1990). Accordingly, it is on television that war history has been publically recycled and defined as memory. In this regard, James Chapman (2007:13) has argued that "the

²² As an alternative to commemoration and in reference to his own films about the history of Northern Ireland, Desmond Bell (2013:54) argues that documentaries about conflict can "interrogate history" in the interests of the present by engaging a range of material and forging links between former adversaries.

²³ To commemorate the First World War, the BBC unveiled an epic plan for four-years of "centenary season" programming encompassing 2,500 hours of archive and newly commissioned content.

further the Second World War recedes into history, the more ubiquitous it becomes on British television screens.”

As the production and distribution of war documentaries now unfolds in tandem with conflicts, there is an apparent crisis of war memory as television pre-empts history through the rapid consumption of contemporary events and the recycling of past events (see Hoskins 2007). An emblematic case was the March 2003 rescue of the captured Private Jessica Lynch, which was greatly exaggerated in media reports to transform “the traditional captivity narrative into a new form of imperial myth making, obliterating hierarchies of race, gender, and class at home, while setting Lynch in a foreign land where she was threatened by male, Arabic soldiers” (Tucker & Walton 2006:311). As part of this myth-making, *NBC* aired *Saving Private Lynch* (Boyd 2003), a documentary modelled directly on Steven Spielberg’s World War Two fiction film *Saving Private Ryan*.

In their study of war iconography, John Tulloch and Warwick Blood (2012) observe that the news media construct icons of war that are replicated across successive conflicts. They argue that the familiar iconic images of war heroes, victims and villains are neo-colonial constructions that seek to defend and justify Western foreign policy. The impulse to recognise and recycle “instantly iconic” images, often drained of their context, is part of this process. Images of abuse at Abu Ghraib or the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue then become iconic elements of simplified narratives. As Barbie Zelizer (2004:164) argues, such images are effective vehicles for memory because they are easily related to a set of similar images “that reduce complex and multidimensional phenomena into memorable scenes”. When the US military orchestrated the toppling of Hussein’s statue they created a media scene which played into the memory of similar scenes depicting the fall of tyrannical regimes. Zelizer argues that visual memory works through the “subjunctive voice” that connects an image to other artefacts but also to the attitudes of different viewers. In the process, “images that might not be inherently uncertain, hypothetical or emotional become so due to the attitude of spectators”. The capacity of documentary-viewing websites to function as knowledge resources which place individual documentaries alongside alternative viewpoints and alongside the diverse attitudes of

users would seem to be a significant counter to the media events portrayed in broadcast media.

In our current age of “ubiquitous media” (Featherstone 2009), the pressure to define and memorialise war has greatly accelerated. Since *Baghdad In No Particular Order* (Chan 2003) portraying daily life in Baghdad in the months before the war, documentaries have tracked the Iraq War by exploring the lives of Coalition troops and Iraqis, by investigating and critiquing war policies, and, inevitably, by reflecting on the meaning of the war. The latter, in particular, highlights the ease with which an on-going conflict may be converted into a more palatable past event. Television documentaries marking the ten year anniversary of the Iraq invasion in March 2013 largely treated the Iraq War as a past event belonging to the Bush-Blair era and attempted to bracket-off the decision to go to war from the ongoing violence in Iraq. These include *MSNBC’s Hubris* (2013), which reaffirmed the newfound media consensus that the war was a folly arising from neo-conservative “hawks” and the *BBC’s The Iraq War* (2013) and *The Spies Who Fooled the World* (2013). The latter film, the title of which is distinctly at odds with the Iraq War’s status as the most protested war in history, attempts to shift the ultimate blame for the war away from British and American politicians to Iraqi “sources close to Saddam Hussein”. Chapter five explores how such institutional efforts to re-define war are subverted by documentary-viewing websites while also acknowledging how the post-modern flux of war images and narratives challenge and complicate notions of credibility and authority.

Conclusion

By contextualising Iraq War documentaries in terms of historical practices, this study counteracts the tendency to overemphasise the distinctiveness of digital media. In terms of the war documentary’s strategic aesthetics, there is a clear line of influence from 1920s Soviet propaganda films through activist films of the 1970s to contemporary digital compilations about Iraq. In terms of argumentative rhetoric, there are also thematic continuities in the war documentary’s appeals to the nation and patriotism; to enemy-others within and outside the state; to the inhumanity of war; and to the memory of past wars. In this regard, images of war violence have

been a mainstay of the war documentary's effort to affect viewers emotionally for varying political ends. Propaganda in the war documentary is also shown to take varying forms whether through misinformation, suppressed information, overt ideology or more nuanced efforts to naturalise a set of beliefs or practices. These perspectives are valuable for they point to the fact that the debates taking place within and about Iraq War documentaries speak to the mediation and memory of previous wars.

At the same time, however, the cultural salience of documentary as a means of commenting upon war has changed considerably over the course of the past century. Historically, the public roles of the war documentary, whether for advocacy, war reporting or memorialisation, have been tied to issues of technological access and resources. With advances in lighter and cheaper equipment, there has been a gradual move away from state controlled propaganda films, typified by documentary production during the World Wars, to highly-critical productions by independent filmmakers. The rise of digital media technologies at the turn of this century has greatly accelerated this trend as is evidenced by the unprecedented volume of amateur and independent documentaries critiquing both the Iraq War and the War on Terror.

As documentary production now engages such a wide variety of forms and styles, it is difficult to address the contemporary war documentary as a single entity. Iraq War documentaries encompass multiple levels of cultural production ranging from high-status theatrical releases through television productions to the micro-activities of activist and amateur filmmakers using alternative avenues of distribution. As these forms are brought together online, it would seem that the differences between them are equalised, at the very least in terms of access. Yet, while the democratisation of production and distribution has greatly increased the diversity of war documentaries and, as such, undermines ideological efforts to define war, the abundance of competing perspectives pose significant questions about how documentaries function in the public sphere when removed from their traditional distribution networks. The following section contextualises these developments within theoretical conceptions of the political documentary's democratic and pedagogical functions within the public sphere.

Part Two: Documentary & the Public Sphere

The concept of a public sphere, whereby private citizens freely participate in public discussions, has infused much thinking about the operation of democratic societies. Most contemporary conceptualisations of the public sphere are derived from Jurgen Habermas' (1974) study of an 18th century bourgeois public sphere and its subsequent 'refeudalisation' through corporate interests. Through refeudalisation, Habermas argues, the corporate mass media offer only the illusion of participation in rational public debates. This historical account has been criticised for idealising rational argumentation and a 18th century cultural phenomenon that was "composed of narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men" (Calhoun 1992:3). Nevertheless, the abstract principles of a public sphere - access, participation, and engagement - have endured as key analytical concepts for assessing the democratic function of the media. Since the 1990s, there has been renewed interest in the public sphere in light of the apparent democratisation of communication afforded by the Internet and digital technologies.

Much like news journalism and public-service broadcasting, it is generally assumed that documentaries contribute to the public sphere of critical reflection and opinion formation. Echoing Jurgen Habermas' (1974:49) description of the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed", Patricia Aufderheide (2007a:5) argues that documentary is "part of the media that help us understand not only our world but our role in it, that shape us as political actors". On this basis, John Corner (2009a: 48) argues that "the functions of documentary work have been at least as important in its history and generic identity as its forms."

The precise nature of how documentaries function within the public sphere is a matter of debate and is most likely specific to individual films and their contexts.²⁴ Within the literature, two broad conceptions of a documentary public sphere are evident: the first has largely focused on mainstream television and its relationship

²⁴ David Whiteman (2009: 457), for example, argues that policy documentaries "working" within issue-networks "can alter the agenda of activists and policy makers, stimulate research to support policy change, and then help implement that change."

with the national public of formal politics while the second has focused on independent activist films and the formation of oppositional publics. In their original production contexts, Iraq War documentaries reflect both of these constructions. As they accumulate online, however, these films are pushed beyond the political public of the nation-state into a looser globalised public sphere. From this broader perspective, the act of viewing documentaries may be understood for its epistemological value. Over the years, a number of critics have appraised the pedagogical value of film form for its capacity to stimulate reflection and contribute to what Peter Dahlgren (2005, 2009) has called “civic cultures” of engagement. As pedagogy, however, documentaries raise further ethical questions about the way filmmakers represent subjects and present information in their efforts to persuade viewers. These concerns underpin the analyses of Iraq War documentaries in subsequent chapters.

The Democratic Functions of Documentary

Although Habermas’ historically contingent account of a bourgeois public sphere has been criticised for its idealist presumption of rational actors seeking the best public outcome (Mouffe 1999), the notion that the press and broadcasters serve, or ought to serve, as a “fourth estate” overseeing the democratic process has endured as a concern of media theory and practice (Curran & Seaton 2009; Dahlgren 1991, 2005, 2009; Garnham 1992). Within political communication, the concept of a public sphere is employed as both a normative ideal of society’s democratic character and as an analytical category allowing media performance to be assessed (Dahlgren 1991).

The role of documentary in this sphere is generally conceived in terms of a film’s capacity to address and construct publics. For David Chaney (1993:128), it is the presumption of public relevance that gives documentary its distinctiveness as a genre because “the audience is engaged as members of a collective who have some right to feel responsible for or involved with the individuals whose story is being told”. In relation to Iraq War documentaries, Patricia Aufderheide (2007b) observes that these films,

Inevitably take a position on what the problem is, and what needs to be done about that problem, and they exist in public consciousness to the extent that

they make that case persuasively to people who become members of the public. (Aufderheide 2007b: 64).

The public, however, is a mutable concept which shifts according to distribution and reception contexts. When Aufderheide describes the public of Iraq War documentaries, it is implicitly assumed that this public is American. It is far more difficult, however, to assume a geo-political public in terms of the amorphous viewership accumulated through online viewing. In this way, online practices undermine the traditional conceptions of mass media forms and their relation to distinct publics and audiences.

A mainstream public sphere has typically been conceived in terms of the geographical overlap between national political structures and mainstream media outlets. Alternatively, a number of critics have challenged the hegemonic character of the mainstream public sphere by pointing to the operation of micro-publics in the form of counter-spheres (Fraser 1992), proletarian spheres (Negt & Kluge 1993) and the fragmentation of the national public sphere into issue-focused “sphericules” (Gitlin 1998). Regarding documentary, further distinctions between the mainstream and the alternative have been drawn in terms of technology and modes of production. Broadcast documentary is then associated with the mainstream public sphere while low-budget independent films are understood to operate within alternative or oppositional spheres. In recent practice, however, it would seem that these spheres overlap in complex ways.

The Mainstream Public Sphere & Broadcast Documentary: Since the mid-twentieth century, documentary production has been heavily reliant on funding and commissioning by television broadcasters. The enduring significance of broadcasters for documentary production is reflected in the predominance of Iraq War documentaries originally produced for television on *Top Documentary Films* (see appendix A). By 2004 the worldwide business in television documentary added up to \$4.5 billion in annual revenue (Aufderheide 2007:4). Although some observers have since noted the decline of investigative television documentaries in favour of reality-TV formats and lifestyle documentaries (Bondebjerg 2009; Hill 2007),²⁵ war

²⁵ In 2012, funding for PBS programmes such as ‘POV’ and ‘Independent Lens’ was reduced significantly by the National Endowment for the Arts (Jensen 2012).

documentary production has been boosted by the growth of 24 hour global news channels and niche broadcasters like the *History Channel*. In addition, US cable networks like *HBO* and *Showtime* have also begun to showcase what A. William Bluem (1965) has called “prestige documentaries”.²⁶

While there has been a greater tendency for private funding in the US, elsewhere documentary production, especially documentary journalism, has been dominated by national broadcasters and public film funds. The approximation of public service broadcasting to the conditions of a national public sphere has been a subject of much consideration (Curran & Seaton 2009; Dahlgren 1991; Garnham 1992; Keane 1995). As Kari Karppinen et al. (2008) explain, although the

Practices of public service broadcasting have historically never corresponded to the ideal public sphere... public service broadcasting can be presented as the institutional space which is best able to realise the principles of communicative action in the public sphere: freedom from commercial pressures, undistorted communication, consensual procedures, rational debate and at least ideally the expression of social unity (Karppinen et al. 2008:12-13).

However, while political documentaries regularly feature in prime-time slots with high-production standards reflecting what John Caldwell (1995: 160) calls “event-status programming”, commissioning editors also hold power to determine what documentaries are made and when they are aired. As outlined in the previous section, the capacity of broadcasters to censor certain political documentaries while promoting others is emblematic of this institutional power. Consequently, by the late 1990s, Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski (1998:19) identified television’s “stranglehold of institutional exhibition practice” as a major obstacle for documentary filmmakers.

Since the 1990s, the notion of a national public defined by broadcast television has fragmented with the introduction of satellite television and, more recently, the migration of media content into online formats. There has been much reflection on the multi-media reinvention of broadcast television (Bennett 2008; Murdoch 2010; Strange 2011) with programming now pushed “beyond primetime...by technologies, distribution possibilities, advertising practices and audience behaviours” (Lotz

²⁶ *HBO* has produced a number of Iraq War documentaries including *Alive Day Memories* (Alpert & Goosenberg Kent 2007), *The Boys from Baghdad High* (O’Mahoney & Winter 2007) and *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Kennedy 2007).

2009:35). John Caldwell (2003:135) argues that the breakdown of the broadcast media paradigm has fundamentally disrupted the institutional logic of television; in place of television schedules organised around sequential viewing patterns, television networks now attempt to “bring new forms of rationality to unstable media economies” by attracting users rather than viewers to content. *Channel 4*, for example, operates a *YouTube* channel in addition to its video-on-demand player which makes its archive of programming accessible to users outside the UK.

Online delivery has also transformed the conception and temporal format of television documentaries. *PBS*' four-and-a-half hour documentary *Bush's War* (Kirk 2008) was made freely available online both in full and in 26 thematic segments. Embedded on the *PBS* player, the documentary is accompanied by extended interviews, reporters' dispatches, maps and timelines which push documentary beyond the frames of the film-text into a “transmedia” construction (Tryon 2011). In this way, the television documentary's audience has diversified into dislocated users who no longer passively receive audiovisual content but instead search for and act upon documentary content often beyond the bounds of the nation state. These conditions exemplify Todd Gitlin's (1998) view that the institutionally defined public sphere has fragmented into isolated “public sphericules”. Furthermore, as people now actively seek out documentary content, David Whiteman (2009) argues that the political value of documentary rests with its function within active “issue networks” rather than the broader goal of public opinion formation assumed by the broadcast paradigm.

Yet, while the trend is for increased audience fragmentation, for a brief period global satellite news was heralded for its capacity to formulate a transnational public sphere. Proponents of the “CNN effect” held that satellite broadcasters like CNN could drive policy by appealing to public opinion which would then compel governments to act. Proponents of the CNN Effect thereby presupposed the “Enlightenment assumptions of a public sphere in which knowledge begets empathy begets constructive action” (Brink & Oppenheimer 2012:4). In practice, however, the rhetoric surrounding the CNN effect lacked substantial evidence and masked more ideological interests. As Susan Carruthers (2011) observes, both CNN and the US military benefited from claiming that the US intervention in Somalia in 1993 was in response to the “real

time” coverage of the developing humanitarian crisis. The contemporaneous Bosnian War (1992-1995), however, exposed the falsity of this humanitarian rhetoric as live coverage of the protracted Siege of Sarajevo induced only “indifference” from the international community (see Keenan 2002). As the CNN effect was premised on idealist, and ultimately vacuous, claims about the relationship between news images, public opinion formation and eventual political action, Nik Gowing (2011) urges scepticism about claims that digital media is now fulfilling this public sphere ideal.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union appearing to signal the “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992), the CNN effect also assumed as stable a world dominated by the United States and attributed unverified levels of power to the Anglo-American domination of global news. In the past decade, the later assumption has been severely undermined by shifts in the international media system:

There is now a proliferation of 24/7 trans-national and trans-cultural multi-media platforms each pumping out a massive flow of ‘bearer of witness’ reporting that is often of dramatically variable quality...While largely well known, none of them can legitimately claim a monopoly of brand, reputation or loyalty in the way originally implied by a ‘CNN effect’ (Gowing 2011:14).

Moreover, within this highly competitive market, documentaries can reflect more complex and nuanced ideological operations. *The Unending War* (Unknown 2005), for example, on Iranian *Press TV* examines the anti-war feeling of Iraq War veterans and covers much the same ground as independent American films like *The Ground Truth* (Foulkrod 2006). Yet, while *The Unending War* appeals directly to Americans by “giving voice” to veterans and by working within the patriotic rhetoric of “supporting the troops”, it also compliments the broader flow of *Press TV*’s anti-American and anti-Western output by highlighting the US military’s poor treatment of its veterans and its mistreatment of Iraqis. Such “strategic narratives” constitute the “soft power” of the 21st century” (Roselle & O’Loughlin 2014:71) Consequently, from the perspective of an international public sphere, it may be observed that the meaning and function of documentary content shifts across national contexts and as filmmakers and broadcasters exploit these contexts for their own ideological purpose, notions of mainstream and alternative content often collapse into each other in complex ideological ways.

The remediated “spreadability” (Jenkins et al. 2013) of digital media texts is also challenging the distinction between the mainstream and the alternative. While mainstream media institutions have grown around values of ownership and authorship, user-generated content values sharing and re-editing. Although, documentary-viewing websites do contextualise the origin of a film, on *YouTube* documentaries are more often remediated without any reference to the original source. In addition, portions of films are extracted, relabelled and given new synopses all beyond the control of the original content creator. In this way, texts move through different spheres of mainstream and alternative networks picking up additional frames along the way. To take an illustrative example, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* (2005), discussed in chapter five, originally aired on mainstream Italian state television but was then taken up by the alternative American news programme *Democracy Now*. The English-language version of the film has since been shared extensively online featuring in anti-nuclear, anti-war, and conspiracy networks. In these loose issue networks, portions of the film are extracted and connected to other texts. In this context, it is likely that viewers first encounter a documentary in radically different interpretative contexts that potentially influence their perceptions of a film’s legitimacy.

The Alternative Public Sphere & Independent Documentary: In recognising both the conceptual limitations of the Habermasian public sphere and the hegemony of the mainstream media, there have been many efforts to chart the grounds of alternative or counter-hegemonic spheres of opinion formation and political action. Alternative media have been difficult to define due to their diverging approaches to production (Downing 2003) and their particular relation to cultural contexts (Coyer, Dowmunt, & Foutnain 2007). Nevertheless, for David Sholle (1995:22), “several types of alternative media can be distinguished according to their self-defined practice in relation to the dominant media and to their audience”. Michael Chanan (2005), for example, examines how low-cost video has enabled Argentinean filmmakers to raise and explore issues underrepresented or ignored by corporate and state media. The origins of such alternative documentary practice may be traced back to the 1960s when the confluence of cheaper recording technologies and counter-culture activist groups gave rise to the prospect of “emancipatory communication” forms (Enzenberger 1974; Negt 1980).

Under the umbrella of *Guerrilla Television*, various counter-culture groups allied the availability of consumer video-cameras to “a resurgence of interest in the artist's social responsibility” (Boyle 1992:67). While the resulting documents of “street life” were often more artistic than political in focus (Trend 1993), the contemporaneous growth of community television enabled local groups to organise and address their social and political concerns. Since 1969, public access television in the US extended these goals by “stressing grassroots organisation, community outreach and providing voice to diverse groups within the community” (Sholle 1995: 22). Formed in 1986, the New York based *Deep Dish Television* further expanded the reach of community television to “create a national sense of community among activist television producers and public access stations” (Pierce 2003:115).

During the 1991 Gulf War, a *Deep Dish* collaboration of community television groups broadcast critical takes on the mainstream media's war coverage and gave voice to anti-war protestors. Twelve years later in response to the “shock and awe” invasion of Iraq, *Deep Dish* invited artists and filmmakers to contribute to the twelve part series *Shocking and Awful* (2005). Framed as a “grassroots response to war” by over 100 independent producers, the series featured “the voices of Iraqis, international anti-war activists and U.S. military personnel speaking off the record to non-embedded, independent journalists” (Zimmerman 2007:70). In terms of alternative emancipatory communication, successive technological developments have then enabled greater collaboration across and between national lines. The feminist anti-war collective *Code Pink*, for example, complimented its protest activities by commissioning a team of Iraqi videographers to film within Fallujah, a city off-limits to Western journalists. The resulting documentary, *Fallujah* (2005), was then broadcast and released by *Deep Dish*.

While successive technologies of production have boosted the viability of independent filmmaking, alternative avenues of distribution have been equally important for the formation of counter-publics. Developing upon VHS, the direct to DVD market has allowed independent and micro-budget documentaries to find their audiences which are often centred around issue-driven or special interest topics (Christensen 2009; Ramsey 2007; Tryon 2011; Whiteman 2009; Zimmermann

2007). As Christian Christensen (2009) argues, political filmmakers can now bypass the gate-keeping of film distributors and theatre owners by encouraging people to host DVD screenings in their local communities and to engage in post-viewing discussion. Through such “guerrilla-distribution” (O’Hehir 2006) Robert Greenwald has targeted Iraq War documentaries at community groups, schools and churches. However, Greenwald has since indicated that shorter and more frequent online video contributions are more valuable to political activism than feature-length pieces which become quickly outdated (Goldberg 2003; Stelter 2009; Tryon 2011).

Apart from alternative modes of production and distribution, James McEnteer (2006: 61) takes a more explicitly ideological view of alternative documentary content to argue that the primary function of political documentary is “to tell stories that undermine or refute the socio-political consensus proposed by majoritarian media”. While McEnteer has in mind the failings of the US news media in relation to the War on Terror, this common understanding of political documentary’s democratic function is problematical insofar as it rejects outright the possibility that the mainstream media might have something valuable to offer while upholding opposition as valuable in itself regardless of content or the context of an issue.

Jonathan Kahana (2008: 9) similarly argues that the democratic value of (American) political documentary rests with its ability to make visible “the invisible or ‘phantom’ realities that shape the experience of the ordinary Americans in whose name power is exercised and contested”. Yet, Kahana (2008:333) also acknowledges that political documentaries can inhibit democratic values by employing “a casual and subjective attitude to public facts” within an alternative “public sphere of suspicion”. Citing the “foreshortening of the social horizon” in online conspiracy films like *Loose Change* (Avery 2005), Kahana argues that contemporary documentary practice exemplifies “the idea that the postmodern present is a period of collective confusion about how to act”. This problem is compounded by the free flow of unverified and misleading online content.²⁷

²⁷ In 2012 the documentary *Propaganda*, purporting to be an authentic North Korean film smuggled out of the country by a translator, was submitted to the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) and later released online. Although subsequently revealed to be the work of New Zealand artists, the film continues to circulate online accompanied by its original fake synopsis.

In this regard, Carl Plantinga (1997) has convincingly argued that the democratic function of documentary is fundamentally tied to notions of truth and credibility,

Nonfiction [films] make assertions about actuality, the reliability of these assertions is essential to their usefulness in the community. Only if discourse meets inter-subjective standards of truth-telling can it be useful for the diverse functions it performs in a democracy (Plantinga 1997:219).

Truth-telling, however, is often side-lined within a media culture of incessant postmodern remediation and within a political culture characterised by partisan advocacy and ad hominem attacks. Writing in 1992, Michael Rabiger envisaged the increasing independence of documentary from news journalism and the rise of auteurist filmmakers producing speculative documentaries. In many respects, the “openly auteurist and sometimes defiantly partisan” (Higgins 2005:21) work of filmmakers like Michael Moore exemplifies Rabiger’s prognosis. Yet, in spite of its controversial approach to facts and truth-telling, Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* was the first documentary to gross over 100 million dollars at the US box office and the first documentary to win the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

Seemingly alternative political documentaries have now become high-profile and high status through the work of auteur-filmmakers like Michael Moore, Errol Morris, Charles Ferguson, Alex Gibney, and Eugene Jarecki; each of whom made a documentary about the Iraq War and the War on Terror.²⁸ Far from being sidelined to the niche audience of public-access television, this work is often celebrated at international film festivals, which serve to further promote the distribution of the films. Since 2000, over 20 documentary film festivals have been added to the international festival circuit many of which are explicitly concerned with politics and human rights (Iordanova & Torchin 2012).²⁹ More broadly, Patricia Aufderheide (2005: 24) cautions that as documentary becomes part of the popular mainstream, “it also becomes part of the overheated entertainment marketplace. The same profit pressures that have lowered standards in news production and raised the ante for shock, sex, and violence in mainstream television and film are now being applied to documentary.”

²⁸ In contrast to the mainstream appeal of contemporary documentary, Patricia Aufderheide (2007a:3) notes that those marketing Errol Morris’ *The Thin Blue Line* in 1988 deliberately downplayed its status as documentary in order to attract a wider audience.

²⁹ A number of writers have turned their attention to the significance of film festivals and their relation to notions of place, prestige and geo-politics (De Valck 2007; Elsaesser 2005; Iordanova & Torchin 2012; Shapiro 2008).

As the grounds of access to mainstream and alternative content are equalised, it would seem that greater attention needs to be focused on distinguishing between different kinds of oppositional content and their relation to democratic functions. Although all are oppositional in the sense of opposing the mainstream media consensus on Iraq, there is considerable difference between high-profile theatrical releases like *Fahrenheit 9/11*, low-budget films targeted at grass-roots political action like Robert Greenwald's work, and the more spurious content that is made and shared online by conspiracy enthusiasts. Furthermore, the nature of the opposition advocated by these films needs to be assessed through analysis rather than assumed from production or distribution contexts. In the following sections, the problematical relationship between media content and truth is further explored in terms of a filmmaker's responsibility to viewers and subjects.

Spectatorship & the Pedagogical Function of Documentary

The evocative power of images has occupied an ambiguous but central role in conceptions of public opinion formation since Walter Lippman (1922:30) first defined public opinion as "the pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, their purposes, and relationships". From an alternative perspective, in *The Public Sphere and Experience*, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) challenge the institutional conception of the Habermasian public sphere for being largely confined to professionals and removed from the everyday experience of citizens. It is in informal social settings like the cinema that Negt and Kluge identify the operation of an alternative "proletarian public sphere". Mindful of the activities of ordinary citizens, a number of writers have recently re-evaluated the public sphere to consider the central role of spectatorship for critical reflection and the development of what Peter Dahlgren (2005, 2009) calls "civic cultures" of engagement.

In *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship*, Jeffrey Green (2010:32) argues that the theoretical conception of the "participating citizen who discusses, acts, joins protests, [and] takes a stand" is too restricted in its applicability to the activities of most citizens. On the basis that most people experience politics as

spectators and do not have clearly defined views on arising issues, Green proposes replacing the central notion of “the people’s voice” with a concept of “citizen spectators”. Green’s transformation of the spectator from a passive figure to one of power is particularly relevant to an era in which images are ubiquitous and this ubiquity necessitates on-going choices about what to watch and how to watch it.³⁰

With a greater focus on media activism, Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples (2002) similarly propose the concept of a “public screen” as a companion to the Habermasian public sphere. Citing the use of media in the 1999 World Trade Organisation protests in Seattle, DeLuca and Peeples argue that,

In comparison to the public sphere’s privileging of rationality, embodied conversations, consensus, and civility, the public screen highlights dissemination, images, hypermediacy, publicity, distraction, and dissent (DeLuca & Peeples 2002:125).

This re-conceptualisation of the public sphere as a realm primarily constituted by spectatorship compliments the work of film and documentary theorists who have argued that the narrative and aesthetic constructions of film form can help frame and deepen social and political understanding.

In *Cinematic Geopolitics*, Michael Shapiro (2008) argues that filmmakers with a “critical” intent can employ a “geopolitical aesthetic” to formally challenge the political imagination of viewers to create a “disruptive effect”. Drawing on the film theory of Giles Deleuze, Shapiro (2008) maintains that film form can “de-frame” subjectivity which enables the viewer to transcend her own subjectivity and “see” the critical perspective of the film-world. In this way, a sustained engagement with a film or documentary narrative stands in contrast to the rapid cycle of 24 hours news which leaves viewers with “no time to think” (Rosenberg & Feldman 2008). More broadly, the value of documentary, including its attraction for audiences, has historically been understood in terms of the pedagogical significance of film viewing. This understanding, however, raises problematical questions about the ethics of documentary filmmaking and its relation to truth-telling.

³⁰ From a broader historical perspective, Dan Hind (2010:39) contends that Habermas’ account of the eighteenth-century public sphere is more accurately an account of an audience merely “flattered with the title of public”.

Documentary as Instruction: Since filmmakers and critics first began to use the term “documentary” to designate a distinct practice, “it has been understood as a form of democratic and social pedagogy” (Kahana 2008:1). Working within the 1930s British documentary film movement, pioneer filmmaker John Grierson (1936/1966:194) argued that documentary “is much more suited to the specific purpose of education than any of the other arts. It can really bring the outside world alive to the growing citizen”.³¹ In conceiving documentary as such, Grierson shifts the meaning of the term documentary away from notions of factual or authentic records back to the Latin origin of “docere” meaning to teach (Rothman 1997: 4). A number of theorists have taken up this idea when addressing both the appeal of documentary for viewers and the particularity of documentary as a communication genre. Bill Nichols (1991:178), for example, defines “epistophilia”, or “pleasure in knowing”, as a primary attraction of documentary for audiences while Elizabeth Cowie (2011:15) conceives of documentary as a “radical film form” which offers “the pleasure of the specular as access to knowledge”.

While some theorists have criticised the influence of Grierson for idealising a didactic form of documentary at the expense of poetic and artistic concerns (Beattie 2004; Bruzzi 2000), Grierson’s instructional understanding of documentary is more fundamentally premised on a claim about the duty of documentary filmmakers towards their subjects and audiences. He writes:

The surest way to apprenticeship in documentary is a good degree in political science or economics. I have often been taken to task for this. I have been told that artists do not come out of libraries, and that, all too often, academic abilities are analytical and exclusive of the aesthetic or creative powers. I answer that if you do not know what you are looking for you will not find it (Grierson 1946:92).

Grierson’s understanding of documentary is then deeply ethical and captures an enduring concern for documentary filmmakers and theorists. In his online essay ‘What to do about Documentary Distortion?’ Bill Nichols (2006) identifies the need for “a code of documentary ethics” that focuses on “the well-being of both film subjects and actual viewers”. Regarding the filmmakers’ responsibility to viewers, Nichols believes “an ethical documentary practice honours reason as fully as possible

³¹ There are clear parallels here between Grierson and the founder of the BBC John Reith who defined the purpose of the national broadcaster in terms of the “socially useful” goals of informing, educating and entertaining the British public (see Bjørn Sørensen 2009).

by using accurate claims and known truths while knowing it must exceed the bounds of logic to achieve persuasive ends.”

Documentary theorists, much like documentary filmmakers, vary in their conception of how best to balance the twin-goals of honouring reason and achieving persuasive ends. For John Corner (2009b:21), it is precisely because a documentary makes assertions about actuality that is it “self-declaredly in the ‘knowledge-business’ [which] relates it much more directly to the knowledge systems rather than the art systems of society”. More stridently, Brian Winston (2005:183) argues that the claim to represent actuality implies an imperative to be truthful and ethical while the “parallel desire to be allowed to be ‘creative’ permits a measure of artistic ‘amorality’”. On this understanding, documentary filmmakers ought to be subject to the same standards of honesty and objectivity ascribed to, though not always employed by, journalists and academics.

Alternatively, a number of writers argue that the truth-value of documentary is relative to the democratic goal of mobilising “a subject of agency” (Rabinowitz 1993) or, more specifically, deactivating “the mass mediated panics that the commercial media propagates” (Zimmerman 2007:72). On this basis, Linda Williams (2005) argues that,

The truth figured by documentary cannot be a simple unmasking or reflection. It is a careful construction, an intervention on the politics and the semiotics of representation...documentary can and should use all the strategies of fictional construction to get at truths (Williams 2005:72).

Taking up this view Bruce Bennett (2008: 121) observes that “the truth-value of documentaries is that they can work to challenge, contradict, qualify or affirm univocal truth claims already in circulation”. On this basis, Jeffrey Chown (2008:458) contends polemical Iraq War documentaries are “a new genre for new realities”. Documentary truth is then a relative concept defined not for the facts that may be established but for its relation to the misleading distortions already circulated by politicians and the news media. This understanding, in other words, allows that one distortion can somehow justifiably counteract a much bigger distortion.

The parameters of this problem vary according to the purposive context of individual films. Williams, for example, frames her discussion of documentary distortion in

terms of Errol Morris' use of reconstruction to prove a man's innocence in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988). The same reasoning, however, applies to any perceived injustice or deception a filmmaker wishes to address. In their efforts to demonise George Bush prior to the 2004 US presidential election, films like *Hijacking Catastrophe* (Earp & Jhally 2004), discussed in chapter four, are driven by a "campaign rhetoric" (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles 2008). Consequently, the explorations of 9/11 and the War on Terror offered by these films are tailored specifically to discrediting George Bush as a man and as a political leader. More obviously, conspiracy filmmakers justify their questionable representations of known facts on the basis that they are in pursuit of a greater truth that is apparently suppressed by the mainstream media. Without a basis in what Carl Plantinga (1997:219) calls "inter-subjective standards of truth-telling", it becomes extremely tenuous to assert that some distortions, or "contingent truths" (Williams 2005), are valuable while others are not.

That is not to imply that documentaries can attain pure truth as film constructions inevitably involve a negotiation between what is known or can be ascertained and how this knowledge is interpreted and represented onscreen. As Stella Bruzzi (2006:6) observes if "the ideal of the pure documentary uncontaminated by the subjective vagaries of representation is forever upheld, all non-fiction film is thus deemed to be unable to live up to its intention". Acknowledging the inability of documentary to disclose objective truth, however, does not automatically mean giving up on the value of objectivity as a standard of value. To do so, undermines the status of documentary as a form of knowledge production and dissemination while limiting the democratic value of documentary because partisan films "risk speaking only to those audiences already sympathetic to their political views...and [miss] an opportunity to engage with a diverse audience who may represent a range of political views" (Borda 2008:56).³² These varying perspectives on the pedagogical value of documentary hold in common a belief that documentary can promote understanding and critical reflection. However, to fully understand what is involved in this premise necessitates further analysis of how the aesthetic constructions of film form work to affect viewers in a particular way.

³² In this context, Jennifer Borda (2008) examines the "conservative agit-prop" films, which were inspired by Michael Moore's attack on George Bush in *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Documentary and Persuasive Affect: Much of documentary theory has been consumed with the categorisation of modes and forms of documentary (see Nichols 2010). As an alternative to essentialist definitions, Michael Renov (1993) argues that documentary may be defined for its discursive function.³³ In this functional understanding, the purpose of a documentary becomes a significant part of the understanding of the text. As outlined in part one, the war documentary is rarely simply explaining war but is instead doing so for some broader purpose; whether to motivate troops as in Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series or to agitate against war as in Emile de Antonio's *In The Year of the Pig*. The construction of the documentary text is then guided by the effort to persuade and affect viewers in the service of some broader goal.

To this end, political and historical documentaries frequently employ talking-heads and voice-over narration to guide the viewer through the narrative. This "expository mode" (Nichols 2010) of filmmaking has been criticised for its didacticism while the use of experts and authority figure in the media more generally has been criticised for weakening the public sphere by relieving participants "from the burdens of defending judgements and evidence in the marketplace of ideas" (Cherwitz & Hikins 1986:4). Arguing against the theoretical view that voice-over narration is an inherently didactic and regressive strategy for politically conscious filmmakers, Jeffrey Youdelman (2005) argues that narration is an important aspect of documentary's capacity to make coherent statements. In relation to war documentaries, in particular, it seems particularly naïve to believe that images can somehow "speak for themselves" without text or speech to articulate and elaborate the larger context. As Susan Sontag (1977) argued in relation to photography, an image cannot determine an event because the broader event necessarily preceded the image.

With the exception of a few poetic offerings like *Baghdad in No Particular Order* (Chan 2003), almost all of the Iraq War documentaries referenced in this study rely

³³ Renov's four discursive functions are: to record, reveal or preserve; to persuade or promote; to analyze or interrogate; and to express.

on voice-over narration as the key structuring device with talking-head style interviews comprising much of the content. Talking-heads, however, do not simply appear as experts or witnesses but are also framed as such by the filmmakers as part of a film's overall persuasive strategies. The power of filmmakers to frame subjects has raised questions about the moral rights of film subjects; an issue compounded by the digital age of remediation (see Gross, Katz & Ruby 2003).

One insightful way to examine this framing is by considering "the performative dimensions of cinema" (Hawkins 2002). In his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (1959) argues that theatrical performance is a basic component of all social interaction as we consciously act in and adapt to situations and contexts. For Thomas Waugh (2011), performance is also a fundamental aspect of documentary filmmaking insofar as the conventions and practices employed by the filmmaker dictate how subjects respond to the camera and appear to the viewer. One of the most powerful constructions mobilised by documentary film makers is the impression that an interviewee is divulging her thoughts spontaneously and honestly and thereby revealing her true character (Bergman 2004; Stucky 1993). In relation to audience perceptions of TV characters, Ien Ang (1985:33) observes that "the more genuine a character appears to be, the more he or she is valued." In much the same way, the documentary filmmaker has the power to frame an interviewee as a credible or unreliable figure.

Studies of performance in fiction film identify facial expression, tone of voice and gesture as the basic constituents of on-screen performance which define character (Braudy 2002; Bordwell & Thompson 2004; Dyer 1979). Facial expression, in particular, conveys a speaker's attitude and emotional response and it is these responses that viewers evaluate.³⁴ Belinda Smaill (2010:3) observes that "individuals are positioned by documentary representation as subjects that are entrenched in the emotions, whether it is pleasure, hope, pain, empathy or disgust". In recent years, there have been a number of studies addressing the centrality of performance and emotional expression to news media representations. Sophie Nield (2008), for

³⁴ In their work on emotion and affect, Silvan Tomkins and Robert McCarter (1964/1995:218) identify nine key affects revealed by facial expression: interest, enjoyment-joy, surprise, fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, disgust, dissmell, and shame.

example, has analysed how Kate McCann's failure to cry on camera in response to the disappearance of her daughter was taken as “evidence” that she lacked feeling while the tearful confessional interview has been recognised as a strategic means to rehabilitate the public image of “disgraced” politicians and media personalities (Rahman 2008). In terms of broader politics, Patrick Miller’s (2011) article ‘The Emotional Citizen’ argues that people emotionally evaluate the personality of political leaders and that politicians in turn perform emotionally for the public. The documentary framing of interviewees then plays into these highly-salient cultural ideas about the integrity and trustworthiness of people based on their onscreen emotional performances.

Carolyn Lin (2009) has further identified a link between personal values, such as patriotism or religious orientation, and self-selecting exposure to news coverage about the Iraq War. It is on this basis that a number of American Iraq War documentaries reflect a clear effort to appeal to the patriotic and conservative values of those who supported the Bush administration. In fact, much of the emotional force of these films emanates from the deep sense of disillusionment and betrayal experienced by former military and administrative insiders. The framing of these subjects also reflects Brian Winston’s (1988) identification of a documentary “tradition of the victim” and Belinda Smaill’s (2007) observation that documentaries frequently rely on discourses of pain and injury to articulate social injustice.

Traumatised and victimised soldiers have also become the central focus of contemporary war cinema such that the viewer is invited to empathise with the emotionally damaged soldier through “a redemptive narrative of therapeutic healing” (Westwell 2008:131) that “helps make ‘suffering’ American” (Barker 2011:98). For Martin Barker, fiction films about the Iraq War attempt to take refuge in the “apolitical” by focusing on issues of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Iraq War documentaries, in contrast, draw extensively on the cultural discourse of trauma and suffering in order to make political points.

The results, however, are often confused and contradictory as the emotional narrative of victimhood frequently overshadows the pedagogical goals of political critique. This is evident in *Why We Fight* (Jarecki 2005), which attempts to critique the

broader edifice of the American “military-industrial complex” while relying on the highly emotional testimony of a man who lost his son on 9/11 and subsequently supported the Iraq War as a patriotic duty. Similarly, in *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Kennedy 2007), a highly engaging narrative of victim-hood and trauma is developed for the military police which leaves the film poorly placed to accommodate the Iraqi victims of torture at the hands of the same military personnel (see Culloty 2014). The Iraqis, in other words, are reduced to a second-level of suffering that is to be pitied at a distance rather than understood.

Western media representations of conflict have relied extensively on images of “distant suffering” in the developing world (see Chouliaraki 2006). This is particularly true of those Iraq War documentaries which are only tangentially concerned with the plight of Iraqis. Short-segments of these films are given over to reflecting on Iraqi suffering but the documentaries are about broader Western concerns, specifically politics, the military and the media. It is in investigative reports on the lives of Iraqis, which are often also filmed by Iraqis, that the psychological impact of living under occupation is more fully articulated. These films derive their affective power by conveying the sense of loss experienced by everyday Iraqis and the sense of rage they feel towards the occupiers. It is this sense of loss and rage that unites representations of Iraqis across the body of documentaries; whether in the *Blood of My Brother* (Berends 2005) which follows a man who joined the insurgency to avenge the death of his brother or *Iraq: the Women’s Story* (Campbell 2006), discussed in chapter five, which follows the efforts of middle-class Iraqi women to bring relief to the most devastated rural regions.

In addition to their emotionality, these films rely on the evidential power of the image as Iraqis stand before the camera to demonstrate the ruins of their country to the outside world. The authenticity of footage filmed in Iraq is important because,

It matters whether audiences trust what they are seeing. To be committed to acting in response to a story about distant suffering, we must trust that the report is accurate in the first place (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:45).

While there has been much speculation about the “death of indexicality” heralded by digital media (Gunning 2004; Manovich 2002; Prince 1996), the authenticity of digital imagery is frequently invoked by filmmakers using witness or surveillance

footage as evidence. In *Dirty Wars* (Rowley 2013), for example, it is mobile phone footage of an Afghan celebration which appears to authenticate the villagers claim that their home was targeted by US Special Forces. Similarly, *The War You Don't See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010), discussed in chapter six, opens with the provocative gun-sight footage of the formerly classified “*Collateral Murder*” video which serves as evidence for the film’s overall argument that the reality of modern warfare is deliberately hidden from public perception. Typically, however, images are not used in isolation as evidence. Films mobilise notions of authenticity by forging links between and across war representations. It is in the context of this “image war” that Janes Gaines (2007) argues that “radical” Iraq War documentaries are aimed at the “production of outrage”.

More generally, however, mainstream documentaries have moved towards the overt stylisation of fiction films. John Corner (2002b:263) argues that the status of documentary as a “sober” reflection on the world is threatened as entertainment genres employ a documentary aesthetic and documentary moves towards the stylisation of entertainment and advertising genres. Documentaries like *No End In Sight* (Ferguson 2007) and *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Kennedy 2007) marry high-definition images to split-screens effects, dramatic scores and elaborate cutting sequences to create vivid narratives. For Jane Gaines (1999:99), it is through such “aesthetic supplements” that documentaries “can make visceral appeals that work to rouse audiences”. Interestingly, fiction films about the Iraq War, such as *Redacted* (De Palma 2007) and *In the Valley of Elah* (Haggis 2007), ape both vérité-style documentary and mobile media aesthetics by combining grainy film stock, disjointed angles, surveillance footage and naturalistic performances (see Stewart 2009).

Low-budget and amateur documentaries, meanwhile, combine personal-confessional footage and desktop graphics while relying extensively on the digital re-mediation of existing news media content. Although these documentaries appear to mark a break from the tradition of expert talking-heads, Danny Birchall (2009: 282-283) argues that “the immediacy of new online forms should not be mistaken for a lack of mediation: they are as deliberately constructed as any existing documentary forms” and continue to mobilise notions of authenticity, which remains “highly prized by audiences”. In this regard, it is notable that conspiracy films largely eschew the

emotionality of other war documentaries; essentially quest narratives, these films primarily attempt to convince the viewer of their objectivity and rationality through a (questionable) presentation of facts and statistics.

Given the multiple ways in which notions of authenticity are mobilised, it would seem that the pedagogical value of documentary is fundamentally premised on the critical capacity of viewers to make assessments about the credibility of film constructions. This requirement, however, is at odds with the goal of documentary filmmaking which “attempts to create a position for the audience in which we are encouraged to take up unproblematically the truth claims offered to us” (Hight & Roscoe 2001:23). In this regard, Henry Giroux (2002, 2004) has championed popular film as a form of “public pedagogy” but cautions that a level of critical media literacy is first required to enable viewers to assess films in terms of their social and political contexts.

In many ways, contemporary audiences seem well placed to assess documentary representations. Regarding war media, Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (2007) suggest that audiences may have an ambivalent attitude towards war images as they are often aware that war narratives are biased or partial. Although audiences for features documentary have not been researched to the same degrees as audiences for factual programming and reality TV genres (Austin 2005, 2007), studies indicate that viewers are now generally aware that documentaries and news media are deliberately constructed (Philo & Berry 2011) while mobile media has turned the population at large into image-makers and thereby boosted awareness of image construction (Ellis 2010). In reference to television, studies indicate that viewers apply varying “criteria of truthfulness” (Ellis 2002) to different factual formats based on perceptions of their naturalness (Ellis 2005, 2010; Hill 2005, 2007). What is not clear, however, is how viewers actually evaluate the multiple constructions of naturalness that operate across the media from news footage through documentary interviewees to witness reports. Moreover, given the extensive use of re-mediated images and the complex over-lap between war images and entertainment images,³⁵ naturalness is not a

³⁵ Building upon Paul Virilio’s (1989) work on the shared “logistics of perception” between war and cinema, James Der Derian (2009) and Roger Stahl (2010) have critiqued the collaborations between

sufficient criterion to explain perceptions of credibility in the war documentary. Based on the findings of this study, it would seem that viewers' prior convictions along with their trust in particular filmmakers and institutions play a significant role in their willingness to accept film representations.

In any case, assessments about documentary credibility and authenticity are not confined to the act of viewing as a range of ancillary material in the form of press-releases, critical reviews and user comments, seek to frame ideas about film meaning and value. As argued in the following section, although the history of documentary has been analysed in terms of the varying approaches filmmakers have taken to truth-telling (Barnouw 1993), this history is equally defined by the willingness of critics and viewers to accept the legitimacy of these film constructions.

Conclusion: The belief that documentary performs a significant public function has been foundational to the development of documentary theory and practice. Nevertheless, the precise nature of this function has proved difficult to explicate. This difficulty is compounded by the diversity of approaches available to filmmakers regarding production, textual construction and distribution. Within a mass media framework, there has been a tendency to conceptualise documentary in terms of the theoretical opposition between mainstream and alternative public spheres. In the contemporary environment, however, these categories have lost their cogency as conceptual tools. Notions of what is mainstream or alternative, along with corresponding notions of audiences and publics, have become entangled in the flux of digital information. As Iraq War documentaries are removed from their original production contexts on documentary-viewing websites, they inadvertently presuppose a globalised viewership that is not easily mapped onto distinct audiences or publics. The concept of a national public or audience, traditionally solidified by national mass media, then dissolves into looser overlapping publics and audiences.

Nevertheless, individual documentaries are still targeted at distinct audiences and the efforts of filmmakers to persuasively address this audience questions how standards of truth-telling in documentary are balanced with a documentary's more immediate

the military and the gaming and film industries as a collapse of war imagery into entertainment imagery.

social or political purpose. This opposition between verifiable truth and postmodern relative-truth is further complicated by the aesthetic construction of credibility and authenticity by the documentary filmmaker. One potential value of documentary-viewing websites explored in this study is that these issues may be highlighted and challenged when a film is pushed beyond its original distribution context into the transnational sphere.

To maintain the premise that documentaries fulfil valuable democratic and pedagogical roles, it is necessary to re-conceptualise an understanding of the documentary public sphere in light of the shifting parameters of digital media. An active audience framework emphasises that meaning is derived not just from the text but from the contextual relationship between films, their associated ancillary material, and viewers (Barker 2006). The evaluation of a documentary is not simply a process of accepting or rejecting truth-claims but a reflective process that brings a viewer's past experiences, political beliefs and attitudes to bear on the ideological and aesthetic values mobilised by filmmakers in their effort to generate documentary affects. These conditions are outlined in the following section in relation to the informal sense-making processes of viewers and the knowledge-networks formed by online communication flows.

Part Three: Documentary-Viewing Websites and Film Communication

In *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*, Carl Plantinga (1997:191) argues that documentaries have a “bardic” function in Western culture as they “negotiate cultural values and meaning, disseminate information (and misinformation), prompt social change, and engender significant cultural debate”. This discursive perspective, which parallels somewhat the agenda-setting theory of mass media, shifts the theoretical focus from the documentary text’s potential impact on public opinion to its role in the wider process of film communication. In recent years, audience and reception studies have also emphasised the role of context in shaping film meaning. Naomi Schiller (2009:499-500), for example, observes that the meaning of a documentary is shaped not only by its composition but by “who is responsible for its circulation, when and where the film is screened, and the contextual information provided to the audience.” On this basis, reception studies examine promotional material and press reviews as ancillary texts that seek to shape film meaning prior to viewing (Barker 2010; Gray 2010; Staiger 2005) while fan studies examine the activities of invested viewers post-consumption (Gray 2003; Jenkins 2012). As part of this extended process of film communication, documentary-viewing websites may be understood for the multiple textual perspectives they accumulate about the war and for the way they enable users to informally engage with varying perspectives on the individual text.

The unofficial accumulation of films on documentary-viewing websites also reflects a number of wider media trends such as digital convergence (Jenkins 2006; Jensen 2010), long-tail reception (Anderson 2006), and the emergence of “database-logic” as a cultural form that supersedes the consumption of narratives (Bowker 2006; Manovich 1999, 2001). It is in reference to these trends that this study conceptualises the accumulation of Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites as knowledge networks within the process of film communication. Yet, while many theorists recognise an inherently democratic value to this free exchange of information (Benkler 2006; Uricchio 2004), there are also concerns about the quality of online information and the impact of the free-economy on the long-term viability of professional media production (Keen 2007; Sunstein 2009; Sunstein & Vermeule

2009). While upholding the pedagogical and democratic value of documentary-viewing websites, this section concludes by considering the danger of over-estimating the extent to which the online activities of politically engaged users reflect wider practices (Curran & Witschge 2010; Morozov 2011) and concurs with John Keane's (2013a, 2013b) view that the "communicative abundance" of contemporary media lacks a coherent body politic that could translate online activity into a political force for social change.

Film Reception & Ancillary Productions

In the past decade, audience and reception studies have turned towards conditions of film viewing as an essential correlate to the meaning of film texts. In counterpoint to traditions of textual analysis which assumed a passive viewer as a receptacle of film meaning, audience and reception studies are empirically oriented in their attempts to put flesh and circumstance on conceptions of the film viewer. This championing of the primacy of the viewer over the text was initiated by the project of cultural studies and remains indebted to frameworks devised within that milieu; in particular, Stuart Hall's (1973) seminal diagnosis of polysemic texts received within a triad of preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings. Corresponding concerns with identity, compressed into the demographics of gender, ethnicity, and class, were then readily mapped onto Hall's reception figures.

Hall's framework is evidently bound to mass media consumption within a national context such that a base stability of identity is assumed onto which the inflections of various identity markers can be charted. A persistent predisposition towards national print culture is also evident in the study of promotional and review material as a prism through which the historical conditions of film viewing can be delineated. Reception studies in particular has turned to what Martin Barker (2010:13) calls "ancillary material" to discern how promotional and review material shape "in advance the conditions under which interpretations of films are formed". As Barbara Klinger (1997:114) explains, the study of promotional and review material provides "a sense of what the historical prospects were for viewing at a given time by illuminating the meanings available within that moment." On this basis Martin Barker (2010: 13) recommends that "we need to study how all the circulating prior

information, talk, images and debates generate and shape expectations which will influence how we watch a movie.”

The amorphous flows of online information, however, present significant conceptual and methodological difficulties for these reception ambitions. One practical difficulty is the sheer volume of ancillary content produced by both media professionals and amateurs. As the individual documentary is increasingly conceived as a “transmedia product” (see Tryon 2009), documentaries are now supplemented with a variety of online content like study-guides, FAQs, interviews and extended scenes. At the same time, websites like the *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)* and *Rotten Tomatoes* accumulate links to a wide range of professional film reviews making content that previously served a targeted regional market accessible to a transnational readership. Since the mid-1990s, the *IMDb* has also supported the accumulation of user-reviews while the more recent development of social media platforms has given rise to a culture in which people readily archive their opinions through “technologies of self-documentation” (Schwarz 2010:1). Within these overlapping flows of film communication, this study focuses on documentary-viewing websites as a distinct phenomenon of documentary distribution and reception.

Mark Jancovich and Lucy Fare (2003) summarise three distinct areas of film reception research,

The first concerns the audience as a market, while the second concerns the inter-textual contexts within which the reception of a film takes place, and is therefore concerned with the ways in which films are framed for audiences. The third and final area is the ethnography of film audiences, or work that examines audiences’ own accounts of their relationship to film (cited in Dodds 2008: 487).

It would appear that documentary viewing-websites represent a merging of these areas as films are pushed beyond their original distribution markets, are accompanied by promotional material supplied by the filmmakers and original distributors, and are ultimately viewed online and further framed by user-comments. In this context, film meaning reflects a multifaceted process of communication in which there is not a sharp distinction between promotion, textual consumption and audience reception.

Extending the study of documentary from textual construction to the wider influences of film communication has significant consequences for the conduct of

textual analysis as the source of meaning moves from the internal structure of the text, typified by a Saussurean model of textual meaning, to the varying processes by which viewers come to ascribe meaning to particular texts, typified by a Peircean model of semiotic sense-making. In other words, film communication encompasses cognitive processes allied to textual comprehension as well as those interpretative frames users encounter through the ancillary function of the website.

The Peircean model of semiotic pragmatism is also particularly useful as an analytical framework for understanding online communication more generally (Aarseth 1997; Huang & Chaung 2009). As Espen Aarseth (1997:1) explains online communication presupposes activities of search and exploration which “centres attention on the consumer, or user, of the text, as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim.” In contrast to the “predetermined story” of traditional literature and broadcast media, Aarseth (1997:3) defines interactive communication as an incomplete “path” in which users “are constantly reminded of inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard”. The conceptualisation of documentary-viewing websites then needs to accommodate these two overlapping spheres of viewer activity: the exploratory process of navigating online content and the interpretive process of assimilating narrative content. As viewers are presented with a multitude of war documentaries and user-perspectives online, it is the exploratory procedures of online communication that open up documentary reception to the processes of on-going reflection and engagement presupposed by the public sphere. However, as outlined below, networked communication does not negate the operation of power or the dominance of mainstream media institutions. Issues of ownership and control, which defined much critical thinking on mainstream media, endure in a new form. Moreover, they are married to the surveillance power of digital technologies giving rise to a form of “post-hegemonic power” (Lash 2007:55) that is not readily apparent when engaged with material online.

Documentary Reception as Political Communication: Within political theory there has been a tendency to idealise a cause and effect relationship between the consumption of political media and a change in opinion or motivation towards action. War media theorists and practitioners similarly mobilise notions of

politicisation through compassion in reference to images of suffering (Höijer 2004).³⁶ Although audience perceptions have generally been neglected in documentary scholarship (Austin 2007, 2009), a number of recent studies have explored how individual documentaries shape audience perceptions and their willingness to take action.

Regarding documentaries about mental illness, empirical audience studies found that viewers have more favourable attitudes towards mental illness after viewing and are more likely to engage with those suffering from psychological conditions (Laroi & Van der Linden 2009; Owen 2009). Studies on *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim 2005), however, found that viewers' willingness to act on the information they gained from the film quickly declined in the month after viewing (Nolan 2010). Similarly, audience studies of *Fahrenheit 9/11* found that viewers had more negative attitudes towards President Bush and the Iraq War after viewing (Jomini Stroud 2007; Koopman et al. 2006) but if the explicit purpose of *Fahrenheit 9/11* was to convince viewers to vote against George Bush in the 2004 US presidential election, it would seem that there is a significant gap between the initial receptiveness of (American) viewers to the film's claims and their ultimate behaviour at the ballot box. This would suggest that responses to individual documentaries are temporally inflected and that viewers' willingness to take action on an issue is related to a much broader set of personal and public discourses than that offered by an individual film. In the case of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, these include the competing discourses about the merits of George Bush as a president and the merits of Michael Moore as a filmmaker (see Toplin 2005).

When the value of the political is staked on critical reflection rather than textual consumption, a more abstract and extended process of politicisation may be supposed. Attention shifts from the inherent value of individual texts to the combined value of consuming these texts and participating in informal dialogue about them. Developing upon Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's (1993) notion of a proletarian public sphere, Miriam Hansen (1993) argues that the film public sphere is defined not only by the act of film-viewing but also,

³⁶ In a reversal of this process, the "compassion fatigue" hypothesis holds that when the audience lose interest in a story, news editors will stop covering it (see Moeller 1999).

Specific relations of representation and reception ... as part of a larger social horizon, defined by other media, by overlapping local, national and global, face-to-face and decentralised structures of public life (Hansen 1993: 206).

On this understanding, a film or documentary is not public simply through the limited sense of public exhibition but through the overlapping spheres of public and semi-public activities that surround a film like press reviews, online user-comments and informal conversation. Furthermore, film meaning is not derived purely from viewing the text but from an on-going process of assimilating and evaluating a range of related information prior to and after viewing.

In analysing audience perceptions of conflict representations on television, Cohen et al. (1990: 10) conclude that three realms of reality are operating: “the *real* world of what happens ‘out there’, the *symbolic* world represented on television, and the *subjective* world people have in their minds based on a combination of unmediated experiences as well as their symbolic representation.” Consequently, they conclude that the extent to which viewers are dependent on news media representations for political understanding is relative to their totality of previous experiences and to their social or psychological proximity to the subject. When extended to Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites, these findings suggest that value of user-comments is not so much about their evaluation of a given film but their disclosure of varying orientations to the subject and alternative sense-making processes. This understanding of user-comments concurs with the gradual and ongoing process of “relating to the world” presupposed by communicative action (Habermas 1986: 99).

Through the concept of communicative action Jurgen Habermas (1986) has supplanted his socio-historical account of the bourgeois public sphere with a socio-rhetorical approach to the deliberation of informal communication networks. Correspondingly, his universal conception of rationality becomes pragmatic and social as he believes language is inherently rational when directed towards social discussion:

The concept of communicative action presupposes the use of language as a medium of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested (Habermas 1986: 99).

In contrast to the institutionally determined discourse of public opinion formation predicated by the mediated public sphere, communicative action emphasises an anterior hermeneutical process derived from informal communication among citizens. The public sphere and communicative action are then complimentary rather than mutually exclusive conceptions of political discourse. On this basis, Todd Graham (2009:14) argues that “it is through ongoing participation in everyday talk” that “citizens become aware and informed, try to understand others, test old and new ideas, and express, develop, and transform their preferences”. The manifestation of the political in such circumstances is often driven by personal experiences such that people speak as experts of their private realm in contrast to the public experts found in the mass media public sphere (Graham & Harju 2011; Van Zoonen 2012).

In this regard, Sonia Livingstone (2005:17) suggests that distinctions between active and passive consumption and between private and public communication are being eroded by new technologies which are “characterised by the mediation of publics and the participation of audiences”. As Livingstone argues, online spaces undermine traditional conceptions of audiences and publics because they invite “private, individual, anonymous contributions to an – at time personal, at times political – public discussion”. To maintain a distinction between public actions and private actions, which is necessary for the notion of politicisation, Livingstone (2005:17) suggests that online and other informal communication spaces should be conceptualised as an intermediate space of civic culture “positioned between ‘the public’ and ‘the audience’ or, more accurately, between the sphere of experience and identity and the sphere of collective, politically efficacious action”. This solution prevents the normative concept of the public sphere from encompassing all kinds of “public discourse and participation”, while recognizing the importance of the new ambiguous phenomena like “the heated conversation in a talk show” or “the incipient new social movements mobilising online” (Livingstone 2005: 32). Similarly, Stephen Coleman (2005:272) suggests that online media like blogs are “democratic listening posts, enabling us to pick up signals of subjective expression which might inform debate”.

These arguments have important implications for conceptualising the activities of users on documentary-viewing websites for they imply that users do not constitute a

public in so far as “publics are submitted to the normative requirements of the general public sphere” (Dayan 2005:52). As Daniel Dayan (2005:52) explains, “as opposed to a spectator, a public is not simply many spectators.” Instead, the online space of documentary-viewing websites constitutes an aggregate of individual perspectives drawn from multiple identity formations. To broaden the theoretical focus on audiences and publics, Dayan identifies a taxonomy of additional collective processes which connect the public sphere with the activities of individuals. These include spectators, crowds, communities, activists, militants and witnesses which rely on varying processes of mediation and imagination, in Benedict Andersons’ (1983) sense of an imagined social identity, for their very existence. The democratic value of online spaces is then partly premised on the diversity of its participants.

Online Knowledge Networks

Since the widespread adoption of online communication in the 1990s, there have ongoing debates about the democratic potential of the Internet; these early perspectives oscillated between optimism about the Internet’s open and participatory structures and pessimism regarding the inequality and volatility of online communication as well as its increasing commercialisation by existing and emerging corporations (see Fischer & Wright 2001). While most critics now agree that the Internet encompasses all of these characteristics, the rapid development of online platforms and practices has made theorising about online communication difficult.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that the Internet has fundamentally realigned our cultural and knowledge-processing structures. According to Manuel Castells (2011:21), the social structure may be defined for the particular “element that is fundamental in fostering productivity in the production process”. Towards the end of the 20th Century, he believes the production of knowledge within networks has displaced the individual as “the basic unit of economic organisation.” In contrast to the industrial society of material resources and production, the “informational society” values processes of generating and disseminating information. The information or “network society” (Castells 2000, 2011) is then premised on a paradigm shift within the social structure whereby information accumulates in technological networks rather than offline institutions. With this change, the configuration of social power potentially

moves away from the institutions and social elites of urban centres towards a decentralised civil society (Van Dijk & Winters-van Beek 2009). However, this does not negate the import of existing social inequality as society must adapt to the network, “to its logic, to its language, to its points of entry, to its encoding and decoding” (Castells 2000:405), and the capacity to adapt is biased in favour of powerful groups and the wealthier nations in general.

From a cultural perspective, Steven Shaviro (2010:2) proposes that “digital technologies, together with neoliberal economic relations, have given birth to radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience.” He argues that film narratives, which were integral to shaping and reflecting the cultural sensibilities of the twentieth century, are no longer adequate to capture “what it feels like to live in the twenty-first century”. While narratives remain significant, as evidenced by the emergence of documentary-viewing websites, “they have adopted new formal strategies, they are viewed under massively changed conditions and they address their spectators in different ways than was the case in the twentieth century” (Shaviro 2010: 2). Lev Manovich (2001, 2011) has pursued a similar theme when he argues that the database is now the primary cultural and symbolic form which supersedes the consumption of narratives.

With the computer enabling "a new way to structure our experience of ourselves and of the world" (Manovich (2001:40), there has been a two-fold assault on the traditional conception of narrative: first, the value of creative (authorial) agency is displaced by the “database logic” of the machine which is “bound up in software’s capacity for storage and reprogrammability” and, second, the linear causal structure of narrative is supplanted by the rhizomic navigation of links within the database. Espen Aarseth (1997: 91) defines interactive communication in terms of “the dialectic between searching and finding” as the consumption of narratives is now preceded by the user’s information-seeking activities. The process of “databasing the world” (Bowker 2006: 22) through the accumulation and sharing of information has given rise to notions of a new information economy based on “the wealth of networks” (Benkler 2006) and “collective intelligence” (Lévy & Bonomo 1999). These practices also raise important questions about the epistemological, economic and democratic values of digital knowledge networks.

Networked Epistemology: The free-exchange of information has been fundamental to the development of the web, which was designed to support collaboration among researchers (Jenkins et al. 2009). As online communication has become mainstream, many theorists perceive the emergence of “a new economic democracy” (Tapscott & Williams 2006: 267) based on the “democratisation of production” (Shirky 2008: 297) within a participatory culture of information sharing (Jenkins et al. 2009; Burns 2005). In *The Wealth of Networks* Yochai Benkler (2006:10) argues that the networking of information has produced “a new ecosystem of exchange” as information sharing and collaboration is now a major modality of production alongside the traditional modalities of corporations, government, and non-profit organisations. In contrast to the “industrial information economy” of centralised media systems like print, radio, and television, Benkler perceives a new “networked information economy” that is decentralised through “commons-based peer production.” This social production, he argues, subverts the market-based value of knowledge as a commodity by supporting values of free exchange and collaboration.

David Weinberger (2012:196) observes that the production processes of selecting and framing content in traditional media are made more explicit and transparent in online communication such that “networked knowledge brings us closer to the truth about knowledge.” He compares the editorial process behind the encyclopaedia which remains hidden from readers to the complex and contested process of production revealed to users on *Wikipedia*. In much the same way, a documentary-viewing website places the individual film against the range of alternative approaches to a given topic. It becomes noticeable, for example, that the *BBC* and *PBS* declined to make documentaries addressing allegations of war crimes in Fallujah precisely because the web archive highlights the fact that the Italian station *RAI News24* did. In this way, documentary-viewing websites alter the epistemological context of documentaries by highlighting a range of alternative practices and approaches. More broadly, Geoffrey Bowker (2006:1) explains that “the ways we hold knowledge about the past - in handwritten manuscripts, in printed books, in file folders, in databases - shape the kind of stories we [can] tell about that past”. In reference to photographic images, Barbie Zelizer (2004: 161) argues that

“the collective’s ability to remember though images depends on some recognised means of storage...discussions of photographic memory thereby become at some level discussions of cultural practice – of the strategies by which photographs are made and collected, retained and stored, recycled and forgotten.”

In contrast to institutionally defined notions of value, documentary-viewing websites preserve and promote different kinds of content. Despite being poorly received by professional critics, Robert Greenwald’s low-budget Iraq War documentaries, *Uncovered: The War on Iraq* (2003) and *Iraq for Sale* (2006), have been shared extensively online; *Iraq for Sale*, discussed in chapter four, appears on eight of the eleven websites surveyed making it the most prominent film across the websites. Furthermore, material ordinarily excluded from the category of documentary such as lectures and presentations are included among the body of Iraq War documentaries. Yet, while the diverse body of Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites would seem to be a particularly valuable knowledge-resource for future reference, the precarious nature of online platforms raises questions about the long-term endurance of contemporary media forms (see Shirky 2005a).

The networking of knowledge has also changed the values attached to different kinds of content. For Chris Dede (2008:80) the contemporary Web has produced a “seismic shift in epistemology” whereby the classical understanding of knowledge production as “formal, evidence-based argumentation using established methodologies” has given way to a form of knowledge production that combines “facts with other dimensions of human experience, such as opinions, values, and spiritual beliefs.” Lisebet van Zoonen (2012:56) similarly proposes the idea of “i-pistemology” to capture “a contemporary cultural process in which people from all walks of life have come to suspect the knowledge coming from official institutions and experts, and have replaced it with the truth coming from their own individual experience and opinions.” On this point, Andrew Keen (2007) takes issue with the apparent declining authority of experts in favour of the online “cult of the amateur”,

In the digital world’s never-ending stream of unfiltered, user-driven content, things are indeed not what they seem. Without editors, fact-checkers, administrators, or regulators to monitor what is being posted, we have no one to vouch for the reliability or credibility of the content we read and see ... There are no gatekeepers to filter truth from fiction, genuine content from advertising (Keen 2007: 64-65).

An obvious difficulty for Keen's position is that many of the experts and gate-keeping editors he champions promoted the Iraq War through false and misleading information. It is in this context that amateurs have taken to "gate-watching" the mass media (Burns 2005) giving rise to the notion of a "fifth estate" comprised of citizen journalists (Dutton 2009; Gurevitch et al. 2009; Newman, Dutton & Blank 2012).

While Andrew Keen rather dogmatically foresees the end of meaningful debate, other critics are more receptive to the democratic value of online contributions while questioning the structural biases of online communication. Eli Pariser (2011), founder of the US activist network *MoveOn.org*, has expressed concerns about online "filter bubbles" which selectively tailor content based on a user's past activities. Clay Shirky (2005b) has warned about the stultifying effects of group dominance on online discourse while R. Kelly Garrett (2009) describes online "echo-chambers" of self-selecting exposure to ideologically appealing content. Taking up these concerns, Cass Sunstein (2009) fears the rise of "enclave extremism" whereby people only communicate with like minded people and thereby re-confirm and intensify their views. In this regard, a study of Iraq War blogs found that while liberal and conservative bloggers "choose to isolate themselves by linking only to ideological compatriots and to media supportive of their point of view, there is at least a place in the middle where ideas can be debated and, possibly, positions changed" (Tremayne et al. 2006: 308). Many documentary-viewing websites would appear to occupy this middle ground as they are driven by the logic of accumulation rather than ideological gate-keeping. Consequently, even ideologically-driven websites like *911 Docs*, which opposes American war in the Muslim world, has accumulated films like *A Company of Soldiers* (Roberts 2004) which presents a sympathetic portrait of US soldiers in occupied Iraq.

The logic of accumulation, however, also presents significant challenges for knowledge assimilation. Arguing that concerns about how to manage information have been prevalent since ancient times, Ann Blair (2010) believes that the problem of information overload has less to do with particular technologies than with our cultural obsession with information. Nevertheless, as political scientist Herbert Simon (1971:40) has argued, "a wealth of information creates a poverty of

attention”. For this reason, David Gauntlett (2004:9) suggests that the web does not operate a knowledge economy but an “attention economy” in which “there is so much information out there, and everyone has so little time to look at it.” In this attention economy, it is highly unlikely that many viewers would watch all the Iraq War documentaries available on *Top Documentary Films*. It would seem then that the value of the documentary-viewing websites, and of networked-knowledge more generally, is premised on its capacity to highlight the process of knowledge construction, or “the truth about the truth” (Weinberger 2012:196), rather than the consumption of all the available information.

The Digital Economy: The process of digitisation has been conceptualised in terms of the “convergence” of the technological, economic and social spheres into a digital flow of information (Jenkins 2006; Jensen 2010). Yet, if online communication has given rise to a networked culture of exchange, there is a complex relationship between the commercial imperatives of the media industry and the culture of user-generated content and information sharing. In a financialised culture dominated by media conglomerates,

An Internet-based economy has been developing hi-tech spectacle as a means of promotion, reproduction, and the circulation and selling of commodities using multimedia and increasingly sophisticated technology to dazzle consumers (Kellner 2003:1).

At the same time, and in contradiction to these commercial trends, online consumption is characterised by a “gift economy” (Jenkins 2008) in which users share content for free. Consequently, John Caldwell (2011) proposes a categorical distinction between the top-down ancillary material emanating from industry and the ground-up material generated by users and fans.

For Benkler (2006:14) the sharing of information is one of the most fundamental values of online communication because when content is “not treated as proprietary and exclusive but can be made available freely to everyone, it offers modest but meaningful opportunities for improving human development everywhere.” However, as Henry Jenkins (2006:3) observes, “not all participants are created equal” in this participatory culture. Developing on Dallas Symthe’s (1981) notion that it is the audience who work for the media industry by attracting advertisers, Jenkins employs the notion of “fan-labour” to account for those who freely produce content to support

media franchises. The *Amazon*-owned *Internet Movie Database*, for example, has been highly successful in monetising its vast database of film information which was largely compiled for free by film fans.

Documentary-viewing websites also reflect an intriguing symbiosis between commodity culture and the gift economy. *Top Documentary Films* is owned by an individual who benefits, to an unknown extent, from the willingness of anonymous users across the web to share the work of professional filmmakers. Documentary-viewing websites, which are cheap to produce as they do not host content, then have a paradoxical relationship with the documentary enterprise: they promote the cultural value of documentary consumption while simultaneously undermining the commercial viability of documentary filmmaking by making the content available for free. For Steven Shaviro (2010:23), such apparent contradictions reveal that “every act of transgression offers at least a backhanded compliment to the order, the norm, or the law that is being transgressed – since it is only the continuing power of that order, norm, or law that gives meaning to the action of defying it”.

On a similar basis, Jenkins et al. (2013:116) believe that the gift economy supports “the spread of media texts” as users “recommend, discuss, research, pass along, and even generate new material in response”; in contrast to the “stickiness” of texts within traditional industry models, online texts are then valued for their “spreadability”. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009) similarly characterise *YouTube* as a meta-business which enhances the value of individual productions by helping them spread among a potentially wide audience. With “the future of business” in mind, Chris Anderson (2006:1) has identified a trend for long-tail reception whereby niche or marginal content accrues consumers over-time. Applying the concept to film reception, Dina Iordanova (2008) observes that films accumulate viewers through diffuse channels of distribution like film-festival, television screenings, online downloading, and through informal recommendations. Exemplifying long-tail reception, documentary-viewing websites make films which received little attention upon their initial release, or received only a single TV broadcast, available for transnational viewers. For example, one *YouTube* upload of *Channel 4's 'Dispatches' documentary Iraq's Secret War Files* (Sigsworth 2010) has been viewed 516, 259 times between February 2011 and October 2013; this

compares with an estimated audience of around 700,000 viewers for broadcasts of ‘Dispatches’ documentaries (Plunkett 2011).

While being dependent on professional content, the long-tail reception of documentary-viewing websites is de-commercialised. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain how the co-existence of commercial and gratis cultures can be sustained in the long term as the gift economy of video-sharing and peer-to-peer downloading fundamentally undermines the commerce of a commodity driven culture. Across the digital knowledge network, there is an ambiguous tension rather than a happy co-existence between commerce and user behaviour. The unofficial sharing of media content also raises practical and ethical questions about the long-term sustainability of documentary production and, more specifically, about the kinds of war documentary that are financially viable.

In contrast to fiction feature-films, documentary filmmakers are often unable to secure either funding or distribution prior to the completion of a film. Iraq War documentaries reflect a wide array of options for documentary funding from Charles Ferguson, an Internet millionaire turned policy analyst who self-funded his highly-praised debut film *No End in Sight* (2007) to low-budget activist and amateur filmmakers relying on crowd-funding initiatives and DVD sales to recuperate costs. The makers of *My War, My War* (Blood 2007), a low-budget film featuring interviews with Iraq War veterans, appear to have withdrawn online copies of the film in order to encourage DVD sales. Filmmakers like John Pilger similarly seek to restrict free online access in order to take full advantage of cinema and television screenings; it is these screenings which make films eligible for awards, which then return benefits to the financiers. Alternatively, many activist and conspiracy filmmakers encourage free distribution in a bid to increase their viewership. In contrast to these compilation films, on-the-ground and investigative war documentaries are costly and time-consuming to produce suggesting that the free-economy could have a significant impact on the kinds of war documentary that dominates the public sphere. Furthermore, as the advertising revenue for traditional media outlets has drifted and dispersed online, media organisations have “cut back on expensive editorial commitments like investigative reporting and specialist and foreign correspondents” (Freedman 2009:41). A recent Pew (Anderson 2013) study

observed that the number of press photographers and videographers employed by media organisations has halved in the past decade as media organisations increasingly use footage shot and uploaded by citizens.

Filmmakers' own use of remediated media content presents an interesting contrast with the activities of users. The process of remediating or refashioning existing content has been recognised as a characteristic of contemporary cultural production (Bolter & Grusin 2000). For filmmakers, the capacity to quote other media texts is part of the aesthetic construction and serves the pragmatic function of illustration. Many Iraq War documentaries, for example, use existing media footage to illustrate the bias of the mass media or to quote those who declined to be interviewed. However, the clearance costs for licensed material and the inherent ambiguity of copyright law frequently threaten the freedom of filmmakers to use such footage (Ramsey 2005). Patricia Aufderheide and Peter Jaszi (2004) note that distributors and insurers act as gatekeepers by enforcing rigid rights clearance expectations especially regarding film clips and music. They suggest that these expectations adversely affect documentary practice and limit public access to documentary work.³⁷ Amateur filmmakers who release their films online appear less concerned about these issues perhaps because they are less likely to be pursued for copyright infringement.

To circumvent copyright difficulties, many filmmakers invoke the fair-use policy which allows for the unlicensed use of material in cases where the public benefit significantly outweighs any costs or losses incurred by the copyright owner (Aufderheide & Jaszi 2005; Jenkins 2006; Tehranian 2007). Danny Schechter's *Weapons of Mass Deception* (2004), for example, opens with an on-screen definition of fair use as the legitimate use of copyrighted content for "the purpose of media criticism and analysis in furtherance of freedom of press and opinion". Yet, while the legal argument for fair use is grounded on the democratic and educational value of the re-produced content, users uploading content to websites like *YouTube* and *Top Documentary Films* equally claim, albeit without a clear grounding in law, that they

³⁷ Adam Curtis (2005) has explained that his archive-heavy documentaries were not initially released on DVD because it was prohibitively costly to clear the rights.

are sharing content for educational and public purposes. In this regard, Axel Bruns (2007) proposes a useful distinction between different modes of online sharing, which he equates to harvesting, harnessing and hijacking. Beyond issues of textual proprietary, there is a more fundamental structural tension between the apparently free activities of users and the ownership and control of online platforms; this tension threatens to undermine the democratisation of access and participation enabled by online communication and, consequently, the prospects for a revitalised public sphere (see Beer 2009; Fuchs 2014).

The Global Public Sphere: Throughout the twentieth century, the public sphere has primarily been defined by the nation-state and its national institutions. Following Anthony Giddens' (1990: 19) concept of globalisation as a "dislocation of space from place", Ingrid Volkmer (2008:97) argues that the connectivity of online communication "transforms place to space" by forging connections across different regional spheres. It is in this global space, she believes, that "events" like the Iraq War are mediated through "terrains of symbolic power ... [which are] reshaping, defining and sometimes powerfully contesting the symbolic centre in a transnational sphere". In these conditions, Mary Kaldor (2000, 2012) has also identified the operation of a "civilising globalisation" while Ulrich Beck (2000:12) observes the growth of "placeless" transnational communities which develop in the dense networks of "global civil society". Yet, while the Internet may facilitate the conceptual dislocation of "space from place", there is a danger of mistaking the spatial metaphor for an actual entity. As James Curran and Tamara Witschge (2010: 102) observe, "the international public sphere is now regularly referred to as something that actually exists ... it is invested with almost the same sense of reality as the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court."

The apparent formation of a global identity premised on the "placelessness" of online networks also assumes an unfounded ontological distinction between people's online and offline activities. This assumption has been a feature of much discussion on the Internet as a medium and fails to recognise that online communication is simply part of people's wider place-based reality (Hollander 2002: 40). For this reason, Evgeny Morozov (2011:247) rejects the expectation that online communication fosters a

global civil society as the naïve utopianism of those who are already “tolerant cosmopolitans”,

The regular folk don't read sites like *Global Voices*, an aggregator of the most interesting blog posts from all over the world. Instead they are more likely to use the internet to rediscover their own culture and dare we say it, their own national bigotry (Morozov 2011: 247).

While Morozov is perhaps overly dismissive of the potential for cross-cultural communication, he rightly asserts that people do not lose their regional or national identities simply by going online. On documentary-viewing websites, for example, the value of the transnational “space” is not so much the dissolution of local or national identities into a global one but the, sometimes turbulent, coming together of diverse and conflicting perspectives. In reference to the globalisation of social movements, Tuomas Ylä-Anttila (2005) notes that unlike the national sphere, the proposed global public sphere lacks a shared sense of identity. For the global public sphere to have meaning, he believes the various overlapping publics “must face each other and engage in debate conducted in such arguments that the opposing side can understand them and accept the justifications that are presented, even though they do not agree with the conclusions” (Ylä-Anttila (2005:434). This moderate argument about the prospects of a global public sphere closely resembles Habermas' concept of communicative action and is predicated not simply on the existence of technological communication structures but on the willingness of people to engage in civil discussion and debate. The overriding tone of online political discussions, however, is often inflammatory, hostile and bigoted (see Davis 2005). This trend has been a pronounced feature of online communication and is often explained in terms of the “disinhibition effect” (Suler 2004:321) of anonymous or disembodied communication.

Even allowing that online communication fosters a globalised civil society, it is not clear how global public opinion can exert power. That is, while Clay Shirky (2008:1) enthuses about the Internet and digital media as “tools to do things together, without needing traditional organisational structures”, it is through traditional organisational structures that people make decisions and implement policies.³⁸ As John Keane

³⁸ The tendency to overemphasise the transformative role of technology over traditional forms of activist organisation was particularly evident in reporting of the ‘Arab spring’ uprisings (see Dewey et al 2012; Morozov 2009). Dismissing the hype about the “Twitter Revolution” in Iran, Evgeny

(2013a; 2013b) argues, the “communicative abundance” of online media supports transnational voices but lacks a coherent body politic to support long-term action. It is important to recognise then that increased participation in the online public sphere does not equate to a political public in the sense of having power to question politicians or, ultimately, to vote them out of office. More troublingly for the notion of a political public sphere, Keane points out that even when the traditional media do fulfil a fourth estate function within representative democracy, the decision to go to war is still one undertaken by politicians often irrespective of what the people desire. The failure of world public opinion to exert pressure on Coalition of the Willing states regarding the invasion of Iraq exemplifies this weakness.

Finally, in speculating about the rise of a global civil society there is a danger of assuming that the free flow of online communication negates or counter-acts the operation of power. As Christian Fuchs (2014) emphasises, the Habermasian concept of a public sphere concerns the ownership of resources not just issues of access and participation; proponents of the global public sphere attend to the free-flow of online information without adequately addressing the ownership of Internet platforms. In addition, Scott Lash (2007:55) argues that networked information has created “post-hegemonic power” which operates unseen from within the network through algorithms rather than being imposed by a dominant ideology. This form of power is then post-hegemonic because it “encompasses a more general regime of power” than that captured by the work of political theorists like Antonio Gramsci and Ernesto Laclau. The mass surveillance of global communications conducted by the US National Security Agency (NSA), using algorithms to collect and sort vast amount of data, demonstrates the operation of this post-hegemonic power in the service of more traditional hegemony. Consequently, Fuchs (2014:89) points to a fundamental antagonism between the networked formation of political public spheres and “the corporate and state control of social media that limits, feudalises and colonises these spheres.” In this context, “the building of an international public sphere is going to be a lot more difficult in practice than its magical realisation has been in critical social theory [while] global inequalities of power and resources are likely to distort

Morozov (2009) notes that use of social media can actually help pro-government agents to glean information about activists.

the international public sphere that will eventually emerge” (Curran & Witschge 2010:117).

Conclusion: Developing upon cultural studies frameworks, audience and reception studies have challenged the critical focus on media texts to the exclusion of the contexts in which they are viewed and discussed. On this view, it is through the extra-textual activities of film communication that notions of meaning and significance take shape. Textual meaning is then part of an on-going process of reflection and engagement whereby ideas are continuously tested and re-defined. This informal process constitutes a “communicative action”, or willingness to engage, that necessarily precedes the opinion formation of a public sphere.

While online communication has significantly re-aligned the spatial and institutional operation of the public sphere, the resulting communication platforms do not necessarily constitute the unity of practice or commitment to action required of a global public sphere. That is, neither the body of Iraq War documentaries nor the totality of website users constitute a collective in the sense of a shared effort or goal; instead, they reflect a piecing together of perspectives into a thematic unit. The online accumulation of war documentaries would then seem to serve the more modest goal of informing and extending the perspectives of those who are already seeking out war information. Consequently, this study conceptualises the public sphere value of documentary-viewing websites as knowledge-resources, which can undermine institutional efforts to define the Iraq War by privileging a multitude of perspectives through both the accumulation of films and the facility for user-comments.

This international trade in free content and opinion, however, raises questions about the kind of content that is economically viable for professional filmmakers. This is a particularly important consideration for the future of the war documentary as current practice would seem to promote the growth of cheaper compilation films at the expense of on-the-ground or investigative films. In this way, documentary-viewing websites, and similar information-sharing platforms, have a paradoxical relationship with media practice insofar as they support the dissemination of texts while undermining the economics of production.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

As argued in the previous two chapters, digital technologies and new media practices have called into question the enduring relevance of established conceptual frameworks and their associated methodologies. While online communication presents some significant challenges for researchers, it also supports innovative approaches to data collection and analysis. Although often describes as “new media”, online communication is a multi-faceted mix of traditional and emerging media forms. Consequently, this study combines methods for digital media analysis with existing methods of documentary film analysis. In so doing, it seeks to compliment a study of online processes with a corresponding in-depth analysis of online content.

To examine how the accumulation of Iraq War documentaries on documentary-viewing websites re-aligns the democratic and pedagogical roles of the war documentary, the study employed a qualitative mixed-methods approach based on a case-study analysis of documentary-viewing websites. The content analysis of eleven documentary viewing websites was conducted between August 3rd and 8th 2013. As the public sphere value of documentary-viewing websites is fundamentally premised on the quality of the content, the bulk of the study was concerned with qualitatively analysing individual texts and the users’ evaluations of them. Within the case-study framework, an analysis of eleven documentary-viewing websites first established which documentaries are circulating online and identified details relating to their original production and distribution contexts. Based on this information, six documentaries, chosen for their online prominence and their representativeness of broader thematic content, were selected for detailed textual analysis. This analysis drew on relevant critical frameworks from the literature and follows methods of analysis drawn from cognitive film theory, which aims to relate the deliberate construction of the text to the viewer’s activity in processing film information. A reception analysis of user-comments on *Top Documentary Films* then assessed the attitudes and preferences of website users to determine how they additionally frame film-meaning by questioning or endorsing the credibility and significance of individual films and filmmakers.

This methodological approach to documentary-viewing websites follows Lincoln Dahlberg's (2004a:1) call for a "non-reductionist understanding of the Internet". For Dahlberg, to account for the "the multi-dimensionality of determination", research into online communication should address the context of production, the technological structures of communication, and the instrumental use of the technology by users. The use of multiple methods also provides a thick description of the websites and facilitates an analysis of findings within and between the cases (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter 2000). This chapter describes the development of the research design and outlines the processes of data-collection and analysis while assessing the scope and limitations of the chosen methodologies. It also summarises the content found on the documentary-viewing websites and introduces the films chosen for in-depth analysis.

Online Communication Methodologies: As the web emerged as a distinct and conspicuous communication medium in the past twenty years, it has become a significant object of study for media researchers. However, the rapid evolution of new online platforms coupled with the volume of content and its ephemeral nature, have posed significant challenges for researchers seeking to develop robust methodological approaches (Chun 2008; Gauntlett 2004; McMillan 2000; Rogers 2013; Schneider & Foot 2004). Since the earliest research into online communication, there have been pronounced difficulties in generating results that generalise across technologies, users, and temporal contexts (Barley 1998; Fulk & Gould 2009). In the absence of a generalised theory of cause and effect relations, Janet Fulk and Jessica Gould (2009:764) propose that "a smaller but more concrete first step" towards accumulating knowledge is to,

Report greater detail with respect to features of technologies and the contexts in which they and their users are embedded during the time of the research ... the most valuable research will identify which features are available to users, which of these features are used and how, what sense users make of these features, and how all these factors are influenced by interactions among features (Fulk & Gould 2009:764-765).

In this regard, early studies of online communities emphasised that the dynamic relationship between online interactive structures and users' own communication values and behaviours function as cultural contexts which are highly amenable to qualitative research methods (Markham 1998; Turkle 1995).

More recently, in an effort to chart the broad flows of online information circulating about a particular topic, many communication researchers have turned towards large-scale quantitative methods such as nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon 2013), data-mining (Asur & Huberman 2010; Wanner et al. 2009), and issue-tracking (Sayre et al 2010). Such methods are particularly suited to research which aims to identify broad thematic trends across the web. Sitaram Asur and Bernardo Huberman (2010), for example, have data-mined the number social media posts generated about films in the weeks after their release while Franz Wanner et al. (2009) have data-mined RRS news feeds about the 2008 US presidential election to assess the evolving public sentiment surrounding particular candidates. These methods are not employed in this study as it is specifically concerned with a particular type of website rather than the broader availability of Iraq War documentaries, and discussions or comments about them, across the entire network. The suitability of this approach was confirmed after an initial *Google* video search in July 2013 for an “Iraq War documentary” returned an unwieldy 11,000,000 results. These included repeat listings uploaded by multiple users, film trailers, short clips, and associated material that was largely irrelevant to the study. As it was not feasible to process and sort this information in order to determine which websites made full documentaries available, the study concentrates on documentary-viewing websites as distinct units of analysis that allow for a thick description of online practices through case study analysis.

While it is not possible to link the availability of films on documentary-viewing websites to actual viewing figures, these websites do give a good indication of which films are circulating freely online and are thereby more likely to be viewed by someone seeking out an Iraq War documentary. In addition, as the films embedded on these websites are all drawn from other video-sharing platform, like *YouTube*, *Vimeo* and *Live Leak*, documentary-viewing websites are a means to identify broader online content without the pronounced difficulty of navigating the immense volume of content found on these video-sharing platforms.

One emergent methodological framework that is utilised by this study is “web sphere analysis” (Foot 2006; Schnieder & Foot 2000, 2005) which is a multi-method

approach for assessing the thematic grouping of websites surrounding a particular topic. Kristen Foot (2006: 89) explains that a web sphere is “a collection of dynamically defined digital resources spanning multiple websites deemed relevant or related to a central theme or object.” For Foot, once a thematic web sphere is defined, it can function as a macro unit of analysis which creates a set of meta-data that allows for a temporal analysis of web sphere development as well as a comparison between websites. As outlined below, both the web sphere and the corresponding meta-data is determined by the “unit(s) and level(s) of analysis anticipated by the researcher(s)” (Foot 2006:90). In this study, this framework is further allied to the more traditional process of case-study analysis.

Case studies have been the predominant means of investigating online communication. This tendency is due to, “the expanse of the Internet and the limited resources available to researchers coupled with the fact that online communication largely takes place within or across technologically defined ‘sites’” (Dahlberg, 2004b: 35). However, a central problem with case study analysis is the questionable move from the particular to the general (Yin 2009). This difficulty is compounded in online communication research as both platforms and content evolve rapidly (McMillan 2000). Documentary-viewing websites, for example, are a relatively new phenomenon and while these websites share a broadly similar aim, they are not standardised in terms of content or management. Robert Yin (2009) proposes that the problem of generalisation is essentially resolved by devising an appropriate research design that accounts for the limitations of case-study research. On this basis, the study of *Top Documentary Films* is contextualised within a broader case-study analysis of eleven documentary-viewing websites. In this way, it is possible to identify how *Top Documentary Films* both reflects and differs from the trends found on other documentary-viewing websites. As such, the study comprises a “multiple case study” (Stake 2005: 446) whereby the selection of cases are chosen on the assumption that “understanding them will lead to a better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases”.

Identifying Documentary-Viewing Websites: As this study is conceived from the perspective of the information seeker, documentary-viewing websites were identified through processes of online search rather than pre-defined by the

researcher. To identify documentary-viewing websites, it was first necessary to specify appropriate search terms and means of search. An initial *Alexa* search for websites offering free documentaries returned 252 results but these included many irrelevant results such as the general media players offered by corporations like *Disney* and subject specific websites like *Food Matters*. To produce more effective results, it was decided to identify documentary-viewing websites by first conducting a general web search for an “Iraq War documentary” and to then identify documentary-viewing websites based on these results.

There are some inherent biases to online search methods. Search engines, for example, “do not index the entire Internet, and their ordering of results depends on proprietary algorithms” while the data made available online can additionally “be subject to choices over which the researcher has no control” (Hine 2011:3). In *Digital Methods* Richard Rogers (2013:8) also notes that “each search engine has a different general logic for ranking sources” and thereby produces different representations of the thematic web sphere. However, as search engines are a “crucial point of entry to the web” and *Google* is the most popular search engine for users seeking out information (Rogers 2013: 31), it was deemed an appropriate means to identify the websites. Nevertheless, to negate the influence of filters and to minimise the fact that online content is a regularly updated “moving target” for researchers (McMillan 2000), the search was conducted in private browsing mode on *google.com* rather than its regional variants and all searches, including subsequent searches within the websites, were conducted between August 3rd and 8th 2013. In keeping with Schneider and Foot’s (2004) recommendations for web sphere analysis, all this content was then archived for future analysis.

To identify documentary-viewing websites, the results from the first two pages (of ten) search returns were counted; subsequent search returns were not relevant. Amid the multitude of search-returns offering documentary content, a number of additional criteria were applied to select case studies: first, the documentaries on the websites must be freely accessible rather than subscription based; second, the websites must provide full access to the documentaries rather than partial clips or trailers; third, the website must be largely documentary focused rather than feature an isolated film;

and third, the website must facilitate onsite embedded viewing rather than downloading. Applying these criteria excluded the partial clips of broad video-sharing platforms like *YouTube*, returns about recently released films from the *Internet Movie Database* and *Wikipedia*, gateway scam websites offering downloads, and blogs or similar websites which occasionally embed or link to documentary content. As *Snag Films* requires users to register before they can search or view films, this website was discounted. This process identified eleven documentary-viewing websites and background information about these was compiled using online tools like the *Internet Archive's Way Back Machine* and its commercial associate *Alexa* (see Appendix C).

Richard Rogers (2013:23) notes that online tools like *Alexa* and the *Way Back Machine* are a valuable means to reconstruct websites as “archived objects”. In this way, these publicly accessible databases of web history help to overcome the fact that “the Internet may be available 24/7, but specific content may not” (Chun 2008: 167). As the *Way Back Machine* reconstructs a website’s history by archiving and categorising web pages by date, it is a “viable research tool” for contextualising website development (Murphy, Hashim & O’Conner 2007). *Alexa* provides information on each website’s estimated global traffic rank, which measures a website’s traffic relative to all other websites; the main regional sources of traffic, and the number of linked-in websites while the *Way Back Machine* further indicates when the websites were first recorded online (see Appendix C). Based on this information, *Top Documentary Films* emerged as the most prominent documentary-viewing website with a global traffic rank of 8,617.³⁹ In a subsequent content analysis of the eleven websites, *Top Documentary Films* was also found to have the largest archive of Iraq War documentaries. On this basis, *Top Documentary Films* was chosen as the main website for analysis which concurs with Andrew Pettigrew’s (1990) view that the selected cases should exhibit high experience levels of the phenomenon under study.

³⁹ By way of comparison, the hugely-popular *Internet Movie Database* currently has a global traffic rank of 44 while the *PBS* network’s website has a global rank of 1,283 and the art film distributor *Criterion* has a global traffic rank of 44, 471.

A preliminary textual analysis of each website’s design and organisational structures was also conducted to identify the public orientation of each website and the structures of participation supported for users. As the “public front” of a website and the context in which communication occurs, the textual construction of the home-page was analysed by examining permanent textual features such as logos, use of colour and captions (Bates & Lu 1997; Sandbothe 2000). Apart from *911 Docs*, which focuses exclusively on documentaries critiquing the War on Terror and runs home-page polls questioning whether users believe 9/11 was an “inside job”, the selected websites do not appear to engender any explicit political or ideological stance. This analysis also identified the varying stages of development and monetisation on each website. The websites have broadly similar formats and participation structures with *Top Documentary Films* the most developed in terms of its body of content and its efforts to integrate into social media platforms and *Amazon* DVD sales. On this website, a number of documentaries are selected to feature on the home-page, with content further organised into thematic categories and lists of the highest rated films (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Home-Page, *Top Documentary Films*

Archiving Content From the Documentary-Viewing Websites: In outlining the processes of web sphere analysis, Kristen Foot (2006) recommends that web content should be archived and annotated to create a set of meta-data that allows for analysis. Web archiving then enables more rigorous and verifiable research, as well as developmental analyses that are time sensitive (Schneider & Foot 2004). This process of archiving web content closely resembles the goals of content analysis. As the basic unit of online communication, websites are particularly amenable to content analysis (McMillan 2000; Weare & Lin 2000) and content analysis was one of the first methodologies used in online research (Bates & Lu 1997). Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1278). With the broad goal of producing an “objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content of communication” (Baran 2002: 410), a content analysis of the Iraq War documentaries on each website was conducted between August 3rd and 8th 2013. In keeping with Fulk and Gould’s call for greater reporting in online research methodologies, the following outline of the processes of data-collection highlights certain difficulties encountered while conducting a comparative content analysis of the websites.

One difficulty arose from the fact that “there is no consensus or standard practice yet for tagging or categorizing videos” (Clark 2007:4). For the purpose of comparison then, there is no standard unit of analysis to compare content across websites, which use different platforms and organisational structures. A preliminary examination of the websites’ thematic categories found that tagging was frequently inconsistent and often questionable. On *Documentary Storm*, for example, *Control Room* (Noujaim 2004) is tagged under conspiracy while *Documentary Tube* similarly lists many *Channel 4* and John Pilger documentaries as conspiracy films. In other instances, broad catch-all categories were used as, for example, on *Movies Found Online* which lists films relating to the Iraq War and 9/11 conspiracy films under the category “War on Terror/Post 9/11/Police State”.

Consequently, as the websites’ own tagging systems were inconsistent and not comparable across the websites, the identification of Iraq War documentaries was

conducted using the websites' search facilities. On each website, the search term "Iraq War" was used and the resulting entries were listed in order of appearance; although *911 Docs* does not operate a search facility, it does provide a list of available documentaries concerning the Iraq War. There are also limitations, however, when comparing search returns across the websites. As the code performing the search is part of the inaccessible backend/server code, which ordinarily is not revealed to users, it is impossible to ascertain how each website organises its search unless it is stated or there is a "sort by" option. In other words, each website may organise its search facility differently based on the number of views, ratings, key-words or other filters. A search "Iraq War" on *Top Documentary Films*, for example, returned ten pages of titles but these do not include all the documentaries relating to the Iraq War on the website; most notably, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is on the website but did not appear in the search returns. To address this difficulty, the complete list of documentaries produced from all the searches was cross-referenced with a search for each film on each website to determine whether a documentary was available on the website but not featuring in search returns (see Appendix D).

For each film on each website, the following information was compiled: title, year of initial release, original distribution format, country of origin, distributor, director/producer, and the website from which the video is sourced. As the websites do not provide full details for the documentaries, this information was compiled by cross-referencing information on official websites, press-reviews, and specialist film websites like *Box Office Mojo*, *Rotten Tomatoes*, and the *Internet Movie Database*. Nevertheless, in some isolated cases, particularly for non-English language and amateur films, it was not possible to identify all of this information. This data was then arranged in spreadsheets to give a full overview of the films available on each documentary-viewing website. Appendix A presents a complete list of this information for *Top Documentary Films*.

To briefly summarise this content, of the 81 documentaries on *Top Documentary Films*, 38 were first aired on television; 21 were first released in the cinema including six with a simultaneous online/DVD release; 13 were released on DVD; and 12 were first released online. Across the websites, it is television documentaries that dominate

and these reflect a range of national stations. In order of prominence on *Top Documentary Films*, these include: *Channel 4* (UK) *VPRO* (Holland), *RAI* (Italy), *BBC* (UK) *PBS* (USA), *WDR* (Germany), *Al Jazeera English* (Qatar), *ITV* (UK), *History Channel* (USA), *National Geographic* (USA), and *HBO* (USA). As *Google* discontinued its video-sharing service in 2012, most of this content is sourced from *YouTube* and *Vimeo*. In this regard, it became evident that some websites like *911 Docs* are now largely defunct as the broken links to *Google Video* have not been updated.

To identify the spread and popularity of documentaries across the websites, the data for each website was then cross-referenced (see Appendix D). The most popular documentaries, based on their presence in “Iraq War” search returns across the websites, are *Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers* (Greenwald 2004) which appears on eight of the eleven websites, and *Hijacking Catastrophe* (Earp & Jhally 2004) and *The War You Don’t See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010) which appear on seven of the eleven websites. Finally, to assess the volume of user-comments across the body of Iraq War documentaries on *Top Documentary Films*, the films were ranked according the number of user-comments they had accumulated by August 2013 (see Appendix E).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is conspiracy films that have generated the most user-comments with *9/11 Explosive Evidence: Experts Speak Out* (Gage 2012) accumulating 1,528 in a two year-period followed by *The 9/11 Conspiracies: Fact or Fiction* (Davis 2007) with 547 comments, *Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Gardner 2009) with 360, and *The New American Century* (Mazzucco 2007) with 337 comments. The highest ranked non-conspiratorial film is *Channel 4’s Iraq’s Secret War Files* (Sigsworth 2010) which has amassed 323 comments in three years. Only 17 of the 81 films have 100 comments or more. While it would seem likely that more recent films would have acquired more comments than older films, this does not appear to be the case. It is also surprising that some high-profile films, which received considerable critical attention, have failed to attract significant comment from users. These include *The War Tapes* (Scranton 2006), which has only five user-comments and *The Fog of War* (Morris 2003) and *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Kennedy 2007), which have accumulated 23 and 22 comments respectively.

Selecting Films for Analysis: As it is not possible to adequately analyse all of the documentaries, the films were grouped thematically. These thematic categories were based on the historical roles of the war documentary identified in the review of literature and on the evidence of themes emerging from the documentary-viewing websites. Three broad thematic categories were utilised: activism, war reporting, and media-information critique. While most of the films were viewed in full to assess their thematic grouping, in some cases, the categorisation was based on an evaluation of the film's synopsis and press reviews. Two films were then chosen for an in-depth analysis in each thematic area. The six films for analysis were chosen to reflect a number of factors: the range of documentary forms including cinematic releases, DVDs, TV documentaries and online amateur documentaries; the range of countries from which the documentaries were produced; and the range of topics within the thematic groups. In addition, as the free availability of documentaries does not necessarily translate into viewers, the selection of films attempted to account for those most likely to be viewed by considering the popularity of films across the websites, their rank in search returns, and the number of user-comments they have accumulated. The selected films are outlined below in chronological order and in the thematic areas in which they will be analysed.

Activist Documentaries & War Opposition:

Hijacking Catastrophe (Earp & Jhaly 2004): *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire* is an American documentary produced and distributed on DVD by the Media Education Foundation. Established by the communications academic Sut Jhally in 1992, the Media Education Foundation has produced over forty documentaries which aim “to inspire critical reflection on the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media” (www.mediaed.org). Many of these films are freely available on documentary-viewing websites including *Hijacking Catastrophe* which appears on seven of the eleven websites. Released two months prior to the 2004 US presidential election, the film argues that the neo-conservative Bush administration used the 9/11 attacks as a pretext to implement an aggressive foreign policy in order to assert America's control over strategic resources. In particular, the film highlights the corrosive impact of the Bush administration on American democracy by pointing to the economic and political

implications of neo-conservative policy. In making this case, the film features a number of interviewees who regularly feature in Iraq War documentaries: these include high-profile critics of American foreign policy like Noam Chomsky and military critics of the neo-conservatives like former UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter and the Pentagon Whistleblower Lt. Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski.

Iraq For Sale (Greenwald 2006): Although poorly received by professional film reviewers, *Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers* is the most prominent documentary in a *Top Documentary Films* search return and features on eight of the eleven documentary-viewing websites. Along with John Pilger, Robert Greenwald is also one of the most prominent filmmakers in the search returns with five low-budget films exploring the corrupt influence of both corporations and the Bush administration on American democracy. *Iraq for Sale* specifically examines the war profiteering of four major military contractors in Iraq: Blackwater, CACI, KBR/Halliburton, and Titan. In an effort to hold these corporations to account, the film draws on the testimony of former employees and the families of private security workers killed in Iraq. Some of these interviewees also feature in other documentaries to affirm their experience of corruption in Iraq. The film further highlights the failure of Congress to regulate the corporations and calls for action to renew American democracy.

Documentary War Reporting:

Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre (Ranucci & Torrealta 2005): Originally produced for the Italian *RAI News24* network, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* was redubbed into English for the international market. It was then aired on the independent US network *Democracy Now* and been shared extensively online as one of the first films appearing to substantiate reports that the US used white phosphorus and other chemical weapons in its large-scale offensive against the city of Fallujah in November 2004. A follow-up film, *Star Wars in Iraq* (2006), explores the use of laser-weaponry and is also available on *Top Documentary Films*. Over 45 minutes, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* attempts to outline the case for war crimes in Fallujah by accusing the United States of targeting a civilian population using chemical weapons. To present this case, the film appeals to the memory of atrocities

during the Vietnam War and calls on the testimony of Iraqi citizens, journalists and former marines and the apparent visual evidence of severely burned bodies.

Iraq: The Women's Story (Campbell 2006): *Iraq: The Women's Story* is one of six films by *Channel 4*'s investigate series 'Dispatches' available on *Top Documentary Films*. The film also appears on four other documentary-viewing websites. Filmed by a non-professional Iraqi filmmaker Zeena Ahmed, the 49 minute film explores how life for Iraqi women has deteriorated since the invasion while also documenting the efforts of middle-class Iraqi women to bring relief to those most affected. In mocking the claim that the US invasion would bring freedom to the citizens of Iraq, these women repeatedly call on US forces to withdraw and champion resistance to both US forces Islamic fundamentalists as an ethical duty for Iraqis.

Documentary and The Information War:

The War You Don't See (Lowery & Pilger 2010): As a veteran war correspondent and documentary filmmaker, John Pilgers' work is very prominent on *Top Documentary Films*. Twenty of his films may be found on this website ranging from his early work on Cambodia for *ITV* to his most recent films about the War on Terror. *The War You Don't See* appears on seven of the eleven documentary-viewing websites and has attracted 137 comments from *Top Documentary Films* users by August 2013. Given a simultaneous release on British television and in cinemas, the film was shown at many international film festivals although some American screenings were cancelled (Pilger 2011). *The War You Don't See* (2010) traces the history of embedded and independent reporting from the First World War to contemporary conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Palestinian territories. Pilger argues that the Western news media, specifically British and American news media, are deeply biased in their portrayal of foreign conflicts and he directly challenges news makers for their Iraq reporting by calling on suppressed or leaked information to support alternative viewpoints.

Iraq's Secret War Files (Sigsworth 2010): The *Channel 4* documentary *Iraq's Secret War Files* examines the database of US military war logs released by *WikiLeaks*. Working with The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ), it was one of the first

documentaries to critically contextualise the *WikiLeaks* information and has been shared extensively online. It is also the most discussed non-conspiratorial film on *Top Documentary Films* with 323 user-comments amassed in three years. While visualising and interrogating data from the files, the film also re-investigates high-profile cases from the war to set the military's own records against public pronouncements about the war. Perhaps one of the most difficult documentaries in the archive, it reveals the extent of civilian casualties during the occupation and argues that the growth of torture and terrorism are the lasting consequences of the invasion.

Textual Analysis of Documentaries: As argued in the previous chapter, the war documentary is rarely simply explaining war but is instead doing so for some broader purpose. The analysis of the Iraq War documentaries then proceeds on the assumption that filmmakers determine what appears onscreen in order to achieve these goals. To contextualise this purpose, background information for each film was explored through ancillary texts in the form of interviews with the filmmakers and the content found on official websites. The purpose of much textual analysis is to reveal the “directive closures” (Morley 1992:21) embedded in the text, which further the promotion of certain meanings and agendas. In this regard, the cultural studies framework taken up by reception researchers emphasise that viewers are positioned but not determined by texts. This calls for a social semiotic understanding of textual meaning rather than the structural semiotics which has dominated film studies in the form of post-structuralist ideological and psychoanalytical criticism (for a critique of “grand theory” in film analysis see Bordwell and Carroll 2012).

In structural semiotics, the signs and codes of a text take precedence over “speakers and writers or other participants in semiotic activity as connected and interacting in a variety of ways in concrete social contexts” (Hodge and Kress 1988:1). In his critique of structural semiotics, Peter Manning (1987) argues that this method,

Is not a descriptive technique that aims to lay out the historical or prior conditions necessary or sufficient for the appearance of a phenomenon ... nor does it seek to describe the motives of individual actors who animate social life, nor indeed has any concern for individuals, their morals, attitudes, values, or behaviours except as they are symbolised within a system of signs (Manning 1987:26).

In contrast to structural semiotics, social semiotics understands meaning-making as a complex interplay between the producer of the text and the social and cultural context in which the text is consumed (Van Leeuwen 2005). Rick Iedema (2001:186) explains that “social semiotics is concerned with political understandings, the reading positions and the practical possibilities which analysis makes available. Social semiotics promotes detailed analysis, but its starting and end point is about situated praxis”. Consequently, in social semiotics, texts are a “resource for making meaning” (Halliday 1978:192) rather than determined signs. As text and images take on new functions in online communication (Jørgensen, et al. 2011; Manovich 2001), particularly through their remediation by users and filmmakers alike, the notion that signs are recourses for meaning making is particular apt. Furthermore, social semiotics closely relates to C.S. Peirce’s pragmatic model of semiotic sense-making (Rochberg-Halton 1982; Tsang 2013; Vannini 2007), which, as noted in the previous chapter, is also a valuable means to understand the exploratory practice of online communication (Aarseth 1997; Huang & Chaung 2009).

The process of textual analysis for this study is guided by the cognitive film analysis outlined by Greg Smith (2003, 2007). In ‘The Segmenting Spectator’ Smith (2007) argues that documentary theory has promoted the categorical analysis of whole documentaries without giving adequate attention to the sense-making processes of viewers as they engage with the unfolding text. Taking *The Aristocrats* (Provenza 2005) as an example, Smith argues that viewers search for coherence and unity across segments of films,

Here we’re talking about a higher-level activity than an Eisensteinian emphasis on the juxtaposition of images, in which the spectator asks what the following image has to do with the preceding one. The spectator also tries to determine if the next image fits within the subtopic category that currently governs her or his interpretation. As we receive new information in syntagmatic order, we mentally stack the new information onto paradigmatic piles until we receive data that seems to be in a new category, and then we begin a new paradigmatic pile (Smith 2007:95).

For Smith, segmentation, or the search for coherence, is a central activity of the viewer and documentary analysis should pay particular attention to the devices or “conversational turns” used by filmmakers to navigate between individual segments.

In *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Smith (2003:42) further argues for a "mood-cue approach" to film analysis on the basis that "the primary emotive effect of film is to create mood" and this mood makes viewers more susceptible to emotional cues. In keeping with the discussion of documentary affect in chapter two, Smith (ibid) identifies "facial expression, figure movement, dialogue, vocal expression and tone, costume, sound, music, lighting, mise-en-scene, set design, editing, camera, depth of field, character qualities and histories, and narrative situation" as devices that cue emotion. Through such devices, films engage in "critical prefocusing" (Carroll 2010) which seeks to make emotionally significant aspects of the text salient for viewers. In reference to fictional characters, Carl Plantinga (2010) further argues that films prompt the viewer to adopt different levels of identification such as allegiance, sympathy and liking, which influence moral attitudes towards onscreen behaviour.

Such cognitive approaches to film theory and analysis aim to describe the "normative behaviour" of viewers "such as perception, narrative comprehension, social cognition, and the experience of garden-variety emotions such as fear and pity" (Plantinga 2002:20). The "normative viewer" assumed by the structure of the text may then be off-set against the perceptions of actual viewers through reception analysis. After viewing each film, a full segmentation summary was written to define the flow of argument and the chronological segmentation of points, themes and emotional cues.

Reception Analysis of User-Comments on *Top Documentary Films*: The study of user-comments is undertaken to facilitate an understanding "of user agency and the various meanings of participation in the novel media environment" (Milioni et al. 2012: 27). In his study of Iraq War fiction films, for example, Martin Barker (2011) draws on user-reviews submitted to the *Internet Movie Database* to explore viewer reactions to the representation of American soldiers. Such content is of particular interest to "studies concerned with attitudes, preferences, opinions, and behaviour of users" (Kim & Kuljis 2010:369) while also facilitating "unobtrusive methods" of data collection (Lee 2000) in place of the "artificial conversation" of surveys and interviews (King, Scholzman, & Norman 2009:92). However, it is

important to recognise that user-comments do not reflect an online audience. In fact, user comments represent an unknown portion of the wider online viewership. For this reason, this study treats user-comments as elements of reception that accompany the documentary. In a somewhat similar fashion, reception studies treats DVD extras and press reviews as ancillary texts that one may encounter in addition to the individual film.

In *More Bad News from Israel* (2011), Greg Philo and Mike Berry propose the need for audience research which accounts for the dynamic relationship between media content and audiences. In this regard, Philo and Berry draw on focus groups and interviews to compliment their analysis of the news media content. Unlike news media audiences, however, there is a dearth of academic and industry knowledge about documentary audiences (Austin 2007, 2009). Although there have been many studies of art-film and blockbuster audiences, there has been little research on the attitudes and preferences of documentary viewers. In part, this reflects the diversity of the documentary enterprise as there is little that unites the entire spectrum of documentary as a genre. An important avenue for future research then would focus on the war documentary audience delineating the attitudes and preferences of specific audience groups. With this base, if partial, level of knowledge, it would be fruitful to conduct focus groups to assess audience reactions to documentaries in online and more mainstream contexts like television and the cinema. Such a large-scale project, however, lies beyond the scope of this study.

With the proliferation of online platforms, a number of methods for analysing user-comments have been proposed. Often utilised for market-research, sentiment analysis and opinion mining attempt to identify and quantify the positive and negative opinions and emotions of users. Sentiment analysis has also been employed by those analysing the “online radicalisation” of Muslims (Bermingham et al. 2009). Statistical methods of sentiment analysis, however, typically rely on a large corpus with individual contributions of more than fifty words (Bermingham et al. 2009). As comments on *Top Documentary Films* rarely reach this length and vary considerably in number across the documentaries, a qualitative approach to analysis was deemed more beneficial. User-comments on *Top Documentary Films* are operated by *Disqus* and appear beneath the viewing box (see Figure 2). For each film, these comments

were copied, arranged in chronological order and then qualitatively analysed under the assumption that the values and attitudes expressed in the material reflect the values and attitudes of those who created the material (Berger 2013).

Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart (2000: 197) argue that with online communication,

There are no data relating to person or place outside that detectable in the digitally generated script. The text which appears on computer screens must provide all available information about the communication as well as being the communication. It has to be both location and social context. (Mann & Stewart 2000: 197)

Nevertheless, much early work on online identity has emphasised the capacity for online identity play and “trolling” (Baym 1999; Turkle 1995, 1999). Links with social media websites like *Facebook* and *Twitter* have increased the prevalence of users using authentic names and photographs of themselves. On *Top Documentary Films*, users are required to have a user-name with many supplying full names while others use names that reflect, or at least purport to reflect, their ideological or critical positions such as “communism works” or “9/11 was an inside job”. Trolling, however, has remained a significant feature of online discussions. In their study of *You Tube* comments, Schultes et al. (2013) identify three types of comments: discussion posts which are part of a discussion among users; “inferior comments” which contain offensive remarks; and “substantial comments” which contain non-offensive remarks and are directly related to the video content. On *Top Documentary Films*, it was found that contributions often reflect a combination of these types and that the comments threads follow a typical trajectory. Initial comments raise points about the film and the value of the website for sharing it while conspiracy-driven and inflammatory comments then often derail the thread into tangential discussions. Appendix F presents the user-comments accumulated for *Hijacking Catastrophe* (Earp & Jhally 2004) as an example of this trajectory. As this trend for conspiracy and international name-calling is replicated across the comments threads, the analysis chapters primarily integrate the “substantial comments” which relate to the film. In this study, the goal of reception analysis is not to critique the user-comments but to indicate how they challenge or reinforce documentary representations.

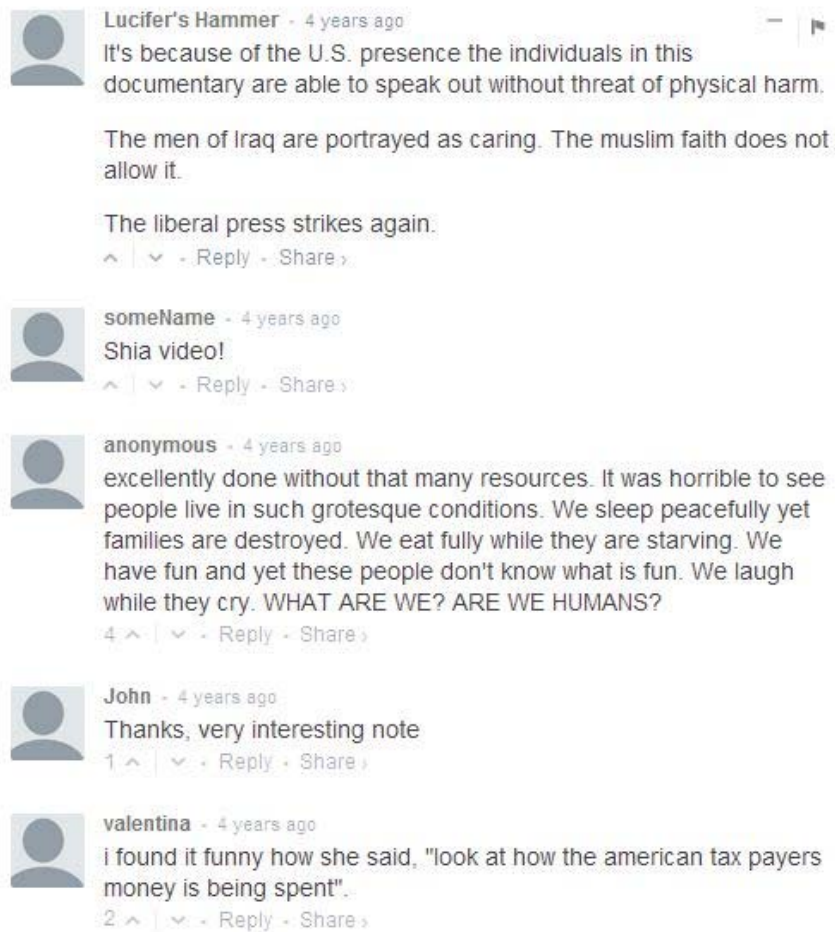


Figure 2: Sample of User-Comments for Iraq: The Women's Story

Limitations of Method: In assessing the recent changes to the distribution and reception of war documentaries on documentary-viewing websites, the study aims to avoid those technologically determinist assumptions which have defined much sceptical and hopeful theorising about online communication. Nevertheless, as “the Internet is a moving target for developers, users and researchers alike” (Jensen 2011: 55), the rapid evolution of online platforms and practices, presents significant problem for generalising research conclusions. In particular, “there seems a growing threat that the very categories and frameworks through which we could base knowledge run the risk of being out-dated even by the time studies find their way through traditional academic publication processes (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:185). In this regard, documentary-viewing websites are a recent phenomenon and their continued existence is likely to be impacted by the growth of corporate

avenues for distribution like *NetFlick* and the development and enforcement of more stringent online copyright laws.

As documentary-viewing websites have been developed by individuals, it would have been useful to obtain the perspective of website owners to establish how the websites were established and how they are currently organised. In reviewing the contact information supplied on the websites, it was found that website owners/managers are largely anonymous and often use pseudonyms. There are no email addresses for the owners/managers but messages can be sent directly through the website. Two messages were sent to *Top Documentary Films* requesting further information but neither received a response. This reluctance may be related to the uncertain legal status of website's facilitation of content sharing.

As it was not feasible to provide an in-depth analysis of all the varying types of Iraq War documentaries found online, it was necessary to make choices about which films to leave out. In particular, the study was unable to accommodate a detailed analysis of an *Al Jazeera* documentary and of documentaries about US troops on active service or as veterans. In large part, the absence of films about soldiers reflects the fact that there are few embed and soldiers' films on the websites. Nevertheless, certain theoretical concerns about these films have been discussed in the review of literature and where relevant these films are referenced in relation to the films analysed in the thematic chapters.

While the analysis of user-comments provides some insight into the way users assess the authenticity and value of war documentaries, these findings are limited in what they reveal about users of documentary-viewing websites more generally. As it is not necessary to register to view documentaries but it is necessary to register to comment, user comments reflect an unknown portion of the wider viewers. It may also be assumed that those who take the time to register and to post comments are likely to have stronger views and reaction. In addition, user-comments offer little insight into how users choose which films to watch. While it would be useful to directly communicate with these users to examine their responses further, it was not practical for this study. Many of the documentaries have been uploaded for a number

of years and efforts to solicit further response from these users now would be hampered by time.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTIVIST DOCUMENTARY & WAR OPPOSITION

The vast majority of Iraq War documentaries surveyed for this study are highly critical of the war. The extent of this criticism is unsurprising given the scale of world-wide opposition to the invasion and the unfolding consensus that the occupation was a “fiasco...based on perhaps the worst war plan in American history” (Ricks 2006:115). Nevertheless, while almost all of the Iraq War documentaries found on documentary-viewing websites could be said to function as activism on some level, few could be equated to the explicit anti-war agenda of *Hell UnLtd* (Mclaren 1936) or *In the Year of the Pig* (De Antonio 1968). Instead, activist documentaries primarily target American viewers as voters by highlighting the corrosive influence of neo-conservative ideology on America’s democratic and military institutions. This is evident in the anti-Bush activism of *Hijacking Catastrophe* (Sut & Jhally 2004) and the anti-corporate agenda of *Iraq for Sale* (Greenwald 2006). This chapter presents a detailed analysis of these oppositional documentaries to argue that insofar as activist filmmakers confine themselves to generating disaffection with the Bush administration, they present a diluted form of war opposition which does not substantially challenge the broader political and ideological structures that validate war as a tool of foreign policy. The chapter concludes by considering how the discussions that flow from various Iraq War documentaries support a foundational level of reflection on the meaning of patriotism in the global public sphere.

Activism & the Iraq War: The paucity of anti-war documentaries and the complex nature of opposition articulated by activist films are fundamentally related to the contours of the broader anti-war movement. The decline of a forceful and coherent anti-war movement following the Iraq invasion is perhaps one of the most surprising features of Iraq War discourse. In his *New Left Review* article “Whatever Happened to the Anti-War Movement?”, Patrick Cockburn (2007: 32) notes that while “a vigorous anti-war movement was flaring into life” in 2003, by the time of the troop surge in 2007, when over two-thirds of Americans disapproved of the war, the organised anti-war movement had become “inert”. The inertia of the anti-war

movement is also surprising as it coincided with the apparent rise of “digital activism” and “new social movements” utilising online communication for grassroots mobilisation and the dissemination of political content (Norris 2007; Joyce 2010; Vasi 2006). Critics, especially Leftist critics who have traditionally formed the bed-rock of anti-war activism, have put forward a number of reasons to account for the decline of organised opposition to the Iraq War.

Powerless Citizens and War Fatigue: The failure of both the United Nations and the world’s largest series of anti-war demonstrations to prevent or forestall the invasion created a sense of powerlessness among citizens. As Martin Shaw (2010: 208) argues, although the anti-war movement “provided a moral background for the growing public disillusionment” within the US and other Coalition states, “once the morally simple and overriding goal of preventing war was no longer the issue, the movement lacked clear foci in the more complex political landscape that succeeded in Iraq”. As the official war dragged on through eight years of insurgency and counter-insurgency, its declining news value pushed Iraq from the news agenda (Ricchiardi 2008) and failed to penetrate the general public apathy (Carruthers 2008b). In the absence of a draft, Andrew Bacevich (2013) additionally argues that American citizens have become disconnected from American wars. This sentiment is echoed in many Iraq War documentaries as veterans frequently express disappointment that the American public quickly became disinterested in the conflict.

Liberal and Leftist Oppositional Strategies: In their common opposition to the Bush administration, a number of liberal organisations within the American anti-war movement aligned themselves with the Democratic Party. On the expectation that the Democrats would reverse the trajectory of the War on Terror, liberal anti-war groups supported Democratic candidates in the 2004 presidential election and the 2006 midterm elections. Consequently, while,

The anti-war movement aspired to create a transgressive politics that challenged the institutions that generate war and imperialism...It found itself caught up in the institutional, party-driven system that many activists saw as the cause of the problems that it mobilized to solve (Heaney & Rojas 2010: 60).

The ultimate naivety of this activist strategy became apparent as the removal of the Republican Party from power did not reverse the trajectory of the War on Terror. Instead, the Democratic Party under President Barack Obama has overseen the

escalation of the drone war, the extension of the Patriot Act and the unprecedented prosecution of whistleblowers (Weiss 2010).⁴⁰

Meanwhile, more radical elements within the anti-war movement attempted to form solidarity with the Iraqi resistance following the model of co-operation with Central American resistance movements in the 1980s. While Cockburn (2007) attributes the failure of these efforts to the Patriot Act, which could heavily penalise US citizens for co-operating with enemy forces, David Horowitz (2004) argues that the socialist left largely misunderstood the complex nature of the Iraqi resistance and found itself in an “unholy alliance” with militant Islamic fundamentalists. For John Brenkman (2007:20), “the unprecedented confrontation between Western democracy and Islamic radicalism has brought out how thoroughly the political judgement and imagination of the so-called Left is limited by its underlying sensibility”. He identifies a fundamental “cultural contradiction” in the desire to oppose American power as undemocratic while endorsing the anti-democratic politics of Islamic fundamentalists.

Shifting Parameters of Militarism after 9/11: Amid the calls for justice and revenge following the 9/11 terror attacks, “those opposing war found few political opportunities to influence either domestic or international security policy” (Maney et al. 2005: 357-358). With the launch of the War on Terror and the implementation of the national security state, the pacifist position appeared particularly weak as US foreign and domestic policy was now driven by the twin-goals of securing the homeland from further attack and suppressing terrorist networks abroad.⁴¹ It is with respect to these pragmatic concerns that military and security commentators eventually began to oppose the Iraq War as an unnecessary and costly distraction from the war in Afghanistan (Huffington 2005). Consequently, many of the most forceful criticisms of the war found in Iraq War documentaries are made by people who support the broader War on Terror and, in some cases, also supported the invasion of Iraq. Through these figures, US anti-war activists sought to

⁴⁰ In this context, journalist Jeremy Scahill suggests that his documentary about the Obama administration’s “*Dirty Wars*” (Rowley 2013) had less appeal for liberal audiences than previous war on terror films (Freedlander 2014).

⁴¹ In September 2001, Barbara Lee was the only member of either house of Congress to oppose war with Afghanistan urging prescient caution about launching “an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target” (cited in Burbach & Clark 2002: 124).

Harness hegemony by drawing upon widely circulating and highly authoritative ideas, by conforming to emotional norms, and by linking strong emotions to opposing war and repression (Maney et al. 2005: 358).

War opposition then takes on a paradoxically militaristic form as activist documentaries rely on notions of patriotism and military service in their efforts to demonise the Bush administration. One consequence of this strategy has been a turn away from the war taking place in Iraq to a focus on the war experienced by American soldiers and their families and, more broadly, on the consequences of the war for American democracy.

Surge or Withdrawal: At the violence in Iraq began to escalate in 2005, a consolidation of anti-war groups rallied under the banner “bring them home”. The peace-movement thereby increasingly defined itself in the isolationist terms of protecting American troops regardless of conditions in Iraq. This scenario reflects the ethical complexity of anti-war campaigning once a war has begun. In his debut documentary *No End in Sight* (2007) Charles Ferguson, who supported the 2003 invasion, cogently counters the call to “bring them home” by arguing that the US has an ethical duty to stabilise Iraq in compensation for the succession of disastrous occupation policies. In *What We Owe Iraq* Noah Feldman (2009) similarly argues that if the project of promoting democracy is to be rescued from the taint of colonialism, the US has a duty to secure a level of stability for Iraqis. These complex considerations, however, are largely absent from activist films, which are limited to addressing domestic American politics.

Iraq War Documentaries as Activism: In questioning whether fiction and documentary film can help “end a war”, Ken Betsalel and Mark Gibney (2008:522-523) believe an anti-war film must “awaken a sense of outrage at war and injustice without dulling our senses.” Noting that the most forceful anti-war films relating to Vietnam were made in the generation following the withdrawal of troops, Betsalel and Gibney contend that distance from the war “provided authenticity, adherence to objective, and nuanced story telling and sparked actual visceral reaction without numbing the audience” (ibid.) They then cite lack of distance as a reason why Iraq War films have failed to resonate with audiences. Although not fully expounded by Betsalel and Gibney, their argument implies that anti-war film-making is essentially

futile as audiences are “numbed” by contemporary war images yet paradoxically enthusiastic for anti-war messages about past wars. Lack of distance, however, may partly account for why there are so few anti-war documentaries on documentary-viewing websites. For this study, activist films are defined as those documentaries explicitly opposing the war or advocating a particular course of action for viewers. Although activist groups like Code Pink supported efforts to film the war in Iraq, the resulting documentaries constitute war reports for use in activist networks and are discussed in chapter five.

In contrast to Sidney Tarrow’s (2005) observation of a new transnational activism that complicates the division between domestic and international politics, the majority of activist documentaries found on the websites focus almost exclusively on domestic politics and traumatised American subjects.⁴² Exemplifying the expectation that a change in leadership would lead to a change in policy, a number of documentaries appeal to the conservative and patriotic values of American viewers in an effort to dissuade them from voting Republican. These include *Bush Family Fortunes* (Grandison & Palast 2004), *Uncovered: The War on Iraq* (Greenwald 2004), *Hijacking Catastrophe*, and *Iraq for Sale*. In these films, administrative and military personnel along with journalists and citizens frame their experiences of America under the Bush administration as a trauma. In many instances, interviewees identify themselves as conservatives and feature as military and intelligence “insiders”. These “turned conservatives” then play a pivotal role in the persuasive rhetoric of the documentaries as, in contrast to the usual suspects already critical of US foreign policy, they appeal directly to those most likely to support the war. Consequently, they argue against the Bush administration’s War on Terror not on anti-war grounds but in terms of domestic security and American values. In this regard, Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles (2008) characterise documentaries like *Fahrenheit 9/11* as an awkward mix of deliberative and campaign rhetoric that engages audiences at the level of symbolic satisfaction.

⁴² An exception is In *I Know I’m Not Alone* (2005) in which musician and peace activist Michael Franti travels to Iraq and Israel-Palestine to record diverging perspectives from conflict participants and to form connections through music.

A subsequent cycle of documentaries explore the lives of Iraq War veteran and represent an extension of calls to “support the troops”, so prevalent prior to the war, to issues of veteran health-care after the war. *The Ground Truth: After the Killings Ends* (Foulkrod 2006) criticises the nature of the military as a killing machine by allowing soldiers to explicate their various forms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); *My War, My Story* (Blood 2007) also explores PTSD among Iraq War veterans although the director is keen to emphasise that his film is not anti-military; *Body of War* (Donahue & Sprio 2007) retrospectively critiques the US congressional debates on the proposed Iraq invasion through a portrait of paralysed war veteran Tomas Young, and more, broadly, portions of investigative documentaries like *No End In Sight* are given over to the psychical and psychological traumas of war veterans. In a throw back to the first Gulf War, *Gulf War Syndrome: Killing our Own* (Null 2007) points to the use of depleted uranium as a cause for illness among veterans of that war.

With their focus on traumatised American subjects, activist documentaries call to mind Michael Anderegg’s (1991) observation that fiction films about the Vietnam War are almost exclusively about Americans rather than the Vietnamese and their struggle to define the future of their country. Moreover, the emphasis on the figure of the traumatised veteran’s family in activist documentaries reflects the “domestication” of soldiers in war fiction films since the 1990s (Basinger 2004; Stahl 2009). For Roger Stahl (2009: 535) the domestication of the soldier in popular culture represents a concerted effort to redefine war as an “internal struggle to save the soldier”. This shifts the focus of films from explaining “why we fight” to an emotional appeal to “support the troops”. While Stahl argues that popular fiction has served to promote militarism, documentary filmmakers attempt to invert this rhetoric to oppose the War on Terror.

In his evolutionary perspective on war, Christopher Coker (2008; 2014) argues that notions of heroism, sacrifice and duty have been passed down through history through artworks and “cultural memes”. On this view, even apparently anti-war texts can paradoxically reinforce war values in so far as they call on notions of heroism and sacrifice that can be re-mobilised for the next war. More broadly, war correspondent Chris Hedges (2002: 3) argues that war endures through history

because “it is a force that gives us meaning ... even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living... It allows us to be noble.” By highlighting former servicemen and women who now reject the purpose and nobility of the War on Terror, activist films prompt reflection on the meaning of patriotism during war time. Eugene Jarecki’s *Why We Fight* (2006) takes up this theme with a complex portrait of a Vietnam veteran who seeks revenge in Iraq for the death of his son on 9/11. As in other activist documentaries, however, the film struggles to reconcile an affirmation of the soldier’s patriotism with a criticism of patriotic support for the Bush administration. The following analysis of *Hijacking Catastrophe* and *Iraq for Sale* examines how these documentaries address American viewers as patriotic subjects with agency and assesses how the framing of war through a domestic lens is offset by the transnational online reception sphere.

Anti-Bush Activism:

***Hijacking Catastrophe* (Earp & Jhally 2004)**

Produced for the Media Education Foundation, *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire* (Earp & Jhally 2004) outlines how the Bush administration capitalised on the 9/11 terror attacks to implement the policy doctrine advocated by the neo-conservative think-tank Project for a New American Century (PNAC). This explication culminates in a pro-longed sequence campaigning against the re-election of President Bush. The Media Education Foundation, a non-profit formed by Sut Jhally in 1992, produces and distributes educational documentaries critiquing the social, political, and cultural influence of American mass media. With a strong focus on schools and public libraries, these documentaries are sold directly on DVD and it is these institutional sales that help fund future documentaries (mediaed.org/wp/faqs). Among the forty films produced by the Media Education Foundation, Jhally has co-directed *Hijacking Catastrophe* and produced two other war documentaries, which are also available online: *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land* (Ratzkoff & Jhally 2004) presents a comparative analysis of US and international media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and *War Made Easy* (Alper 2007) presents Norman Solomon’s analysis of the media’s propaganda role in disseminating pro-war rhetoric.

While the latter two films reflect the organisation's critical literacy goals and primarily feature the work of academics deconstructing media narratives, *Hijacking Catastrophe* is more explicitly a campaign film that seeks to dissuade voters from re-electing President Bush. Consequently, the film's portrayal of American war and American power are specifically tailored to discrediting and demonising George Bush. Although less bombastic than *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which was released three months earlier, *Hijacking Catastrophe* reflects the same "haste of construction and anger of polemic" which "marks a new milestone in the role of documentary in public policy discourse" (Chown 2008:466). However, in many instances the film's polemical public policy role comes at the expense of furthering the critical literacy goals of the Media Education Foundation.

Neo-cons on Trial: In *Hijacking Catastrophe*, the War on Terror, and the Iraq War in particular, is defined as a neo-conservative exercise in consolidating "global dominance through force". For Boris Trbic (2006:12), "*Hijacking Catastrophe's* objective is to challenge and expose the policy of military domination and the new American assertiveness". However, as the documentary was released two months before the 2004 US presidential election, the film's purpose is more explicitly to campaign against a Bush re-election. The exploration of the militarism thesis is then tailored specifically towards this goal and culminates in a pro-longed sequence which discredits Bush while affirming the virtues of American democracy through appeals to historical figures.

To this end, the film is bookended with two quotations, which are as notable for who said them as what they say. The first links the Bush administration to Herman Goering and the Nazi regime while the second links anti-war and anti-Bush protestors to Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy's appeal to responsible citizenship. The Goering quote, formally attributed to "Nazi Reich Marshall Herman Goering at the Nuremberg Trials" appears in the prelude:

The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

In the following scene, leading neo-cons assert the presence of WMD in Iraq but these press-conference clips are notably aged to appear grainy and flickering in black and white (see Figure 3). Aesthetically, they resemble footage from the aforementioned Nuremberg Trials and thereby further allude to parallels between the Bush administration and the Nazi regime. In one of many references to fascism, the film returns to the Nuremberg Trials later to outline how the Bush administration moved the US outside the remit of article 51 of the UN Charter which, in response to Nazi aggression, outlaws pre-emptive war. In the comments section, a German user (My Religion Is 2 do Good) further endorses the parallels between the Nazis and the Bush administration while urging Americans to reject patriotism in favour of an international outlook based on “tolerance, freedom, and peace”.



Figure 3: George Bush on Trial

Julian Bond’s narration asserts that the failure to find WMD has given rise to a debate about the failure of intelligence while the larger question about what the war “is really about” has been ignored. His voice-over then drops to pick up sound from *CNN* footage of a tribute to fallen soldiers. Addressing the crowd, with the helmet and rifle battle cross in the foreground, a young soldier says sorrowfully, “I keep asking the questions of why and does this incident even have a purpose”. Although it not clear that the soldier is actually referring to the purpose of the War on Terror, Bond’s narration resumes in response, “pursuing this question forces us to consider a different story...a story that begins as the Cold War ends”. In this manner, the documentary implies that those who are asking questions about the war are doing so

on behalf of the mourning troops while those in power are pursuing predetermined ideological agendas.

The film then swiftly explores its central thesis that the neo-conservatives capitalised on the end of the Cold War to expand the “American Empire” through militarism and disregard for international law. The “blueprint for empire” is attributed to the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party: deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz, defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and vice president Dick Cheney. In particular, the documentary focuses on “the Wolfowitz doctrine” formulated in 1992 and revised in the 2000 PNAC policy report “Rebuilding America's Defences”. Wolfowitz’s plan for aggressive military action is outlined by highlighting key quotations from the text and culminates in his speculation that implementing the policy would be a long-term process “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event - like a new Pearl Harbour”. Cutting swiftly to footage of 9/11 Bond intones, “one year later, that event would arrive”. The Pearl Harbour reference is perhaps one of the most cited quotes in Iraq War and War on Terror documentaries variously serving as evidence of a premeditated war plan and, more contentiously in conspiracy films, as evidence of an “inside job”. In this regard, a number of users enthusiastically embrace the film’s criticism of the Bush administration because it coincides with their belief in the 9/11 conspiracy. As one user writes,

This most riveting [documentary] is telling [me] something I already know. At the onset of 9/11 I was convinced that the attacks were part of a conspiracy...and the axis of EVIL is within the office of the U.S Government and the men who planned to takedown Saddam were the very demons within (Peter LeClair).

Nevertheless, *Hijacking Catastrophe* is careful to avoid any conspiratorial implications. Instead, the documentary accuses the Bush administration of hijacking the catastrophe of 9/11 to usher in the Wolfowitz doctrine as official US policy. The hijacking metaphor remains central throughout: while invoking the terrorism of the actual 9/11 hijackers, the metaphor is used to assert that the Bush administration has hijacked the tragedy of 9/11 to launch the Iraq War; hijacked patriotism in calling on Americans to support the war without question; and hijacked the democratic process by implementing new laws which subvert the founding principles of the nation. The final quarter of the film, discussed below, presents the anti-war and anti-Bush

campaigners as the converse of this hijacking metaphor. In their opposition to Bush, they “fearlessly” affirm patriotism, support American democracy and truly honour the memory of 9/11.

Various interviewees assert that the neo-conservatives are driven by a megalomaniac desire for empire building along with a vendetta against Saddam Hussein. According to sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein and the British-Pakistani writer Tariq Ali, the major reason for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is to present the world with a “display of imperial power”. More specifically, retired Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski, journalism professor Robert Jensen and peace studies professor Michael Klare, describe 9/11 and WMD as pretexts for the unilateral use of force to secure control over strategic oil-rich regions. Significantly, in presenting this thesis about American’s strategic militarism the film disregards any militarism during the Clinton presidency. Most notably, the 1999 US led NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia which did not have UN approval. Instead, the Clinton era is presented as a peaceful break between the two neo-conservative Bush presidencies. On this point, one user (Brett Gasper) critiques the film’s historical narrative by correctly pointing out that “it was Bill Clinton in his 1998 State of the Union Address who [first] brought up Iraq's WMD's. Remember also, that the Democrats voted to go to war.”

More problematically, by arguing that neo-conservative policy represents a radical break from previous administrations, the film is at odds with the views of interviewees like Noam Chomsky and Chalmers Johnson who have argued that militarism for the advancement of empire has been an established doctrine of American foreign policy since World War Two (Chomsky 2007, 2012; Johnson 2001, 2007). As prominent critics of American militarism, Chomsky and Johnson appear in multiple war documentaries but their representation is typically tailored to suit the argument of the film.⁴³ While critics place the drive towards imperialism at the heart of the American power structure, *Hijacking Catastrophe* downplays this argument in favour of decrying the neo-cons. Presumably, the film chooses to imply that the Democrats are peaceful opponents to “empire” as the only way to oust Bush

⁴³ Interestingly, the conspiracy film *Superpower* (Steegmuller 2008) is one of the few films to allow Chalmers Johnson to fully expound what he means by “American empire” while simultaneously implying that he entertains the “inside job” conspiracy.

from power is to have the alternative Democratic candidate elected. Nevertheless, there is no direct mention of presidential candidate John Kerry as the documentary's rationale is anti-war and anti-Bush rather than pro-Democrat.

The neo-con policy, the one that will continue if Bush is re-elected, is then defined for its logic of brutalising “perpetual war”. New York University Professor Mark Crispin Miller describes the Bush administration as being “more like a fascist movement” in so far as perpetual war is a vital aspect of policy. Sustaining the fascist parallels, Chalmers Johnson describes the US as having become “a warfare state” while Robert Jensen describes the media's glorification of weapons as part of a fascist process of militarising society. The excesses of militarism are then cast as a distinctly neo-conservative fantasy such that they eagerly embrace the military's “shock and awe” doctrine. News footage of shock and awe in Iraq, described enthusiastically by a news anchor as a “breath-taking display of firepower”, fades into horrific images of its human consequences. In a striking juxtaposition, Julian Boyd quotes the detached language of the military text, endorsing “massively destructive strikes, directly at the public will [...so that...] the adversary becomes impotent and entirely vulnerable”, over images of severely wounded Iraqi children (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: “Impotent and Entirely Vulnerable”

In response to such images of destruction in Iraq, some American users reject the documentary for its divergence from their belief that “our country would never be

this cruel” (Trebor). It is this question of patriotism, rather than the Iraq War, that dominates the rest of the film and draws the most attention in the user-comments.

Inverting Republican Campaign Rhetoric: The final third of the film more explicitly targets President Bush by challenging specific points of his campaign rhetoric. In particular, the macho image of Bush as a cowboy-warrior is deconstructed as a myth. A number of former service men and women, Chalmers Johnson, Scott Ritter, and Karen Kwiatkowski, who all appear in multiple documentaries to articulate the same point, describe Bush and the neo-conservatives as “chicken hawks” who now enthuse about war having avoided service in Korea and Vietnam. They further highlight the hypocrisy of elite calls to patriotic service which are taken up by ethnic minorities and the poor while the children of the leading neo-conservatives have largely avoided service. In another appeal to the inequality of rich and poor, Norman Mailer dismisses the Bush administration as the rich who “take care of themselves”.

Echoing Michael Moore’s ironic textual strategies, Bush’s cultivation of a cowboy-image is then deconstructed by intercutting his own references to the Frontier with scenes from cartoonish western films. Bush is thus exposed as an “actor” who merely plays at being a cowboy-warrior. Karen Dodwell (2004) has argued that Bush’s invocation of the cowboy has been received positively in terms of the strong Frontier man and negatively in terms of lawless “cowboy diplomacy”. Security analyst William Hartung invokes the latter meaning to assess Bush’s handling of the economy. By playing the macho cowboy and spending excessively on the military, Hartung accuses Bush of bringing America to an unprecedented level of national debt whereby Americans will “no longer own the horse, the saddle or the lasoo”. In painting a dystopic picture of America’s future in which the country is bankrupt, troops are at risk, and the terrorist-threat grows, Hartung appeals directly to viewers as voters by urging them consider these “substantive issues”. In this regard, Greg Seether attempts to redefine the security threat as one that is internal concerning jobs, education, health insurance and food.

Another notable segment targets the claims of the Bush campaign by countering the view that he has made America safe. The unity of the nation and the expressions of

worldwide sympathy in the aftermath of 9/11 are then contrasted with the growing hostility towards America instigated by the Iraq War. Prominent anti-war activist Medea Benjamin speaks “as a mother” to assert that there is not much more Bush “could have done to make use less safe”. Jody Williams, the 1997 Nobel Prize Peace Laureate, targets claims about military spending to argue that having “the most advanced military in the world” did not prevent 9/11.

Peace & the American Tradition: Moving towards its conclusion, the documentary affirms the virtues of anti-war activism in contrast to the misguided patriotism advocated by President Bush. Appealing to the ethos of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, supporting peace is defined for its “fearlessness” and “true patriotism”. Alternatively, on the “hijacking” of patriotism, former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter bitterly asserts, “I could train a dog to wave a flag”. Over images of anti-war protestors, Americans are invited to stop being “spectators in democracy” and “to take responsibility”. The notion of civic responsibility is then used to link anti-war protestors to the “fearlessness” of those working on ground zero. Thus, while Bush has hijacked and sullied the memory of 9/11, the anti-war protestors honour the bravery of those who worked at ground-zero and continue the legacy of national heroes like Martin Luther King. Echoing the sentiment of the film, one user (Tony Malone501) affirms, “patriotism is not standing behind a lying government it is standing up to them. You may be called names you may be physically injured or worse, but if you wish to be a patriot then stand for the [constitution], when you see rights being pushed [under] the rug raise your voice”.

In the final coda, journalist Kevin Danaher quotes Thomas Jefferson while the camera pans the central inscription on the rotunda of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington. As Danner explains, to protest the war is to honour the founding fathers and the principles of American democracy and to vote “responsibly”, that is against Bush, is to protect those principles. A final quote from Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy ends the film by speaking directly to the importance of the upcoming election, “The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present”. It is in this short final section that *Hijacking Catastrophe* successfully articulates war opposition as an alternative vision of American democracy. By presenting Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther

King as true representatives of the American democratic spirit, the film counters the view that a strong leader is one who leads the country in wartime.

The representation of war in *Hijacking Catastrophe* is very much tied to the flexible construction of “film truth in the age of George W. Bush” (Musser 2007:9). Although *Hijacking Catastrophe* does conclude with a potent assertion of American war opposition, this position is defined somewhat narrowly as opposition to Bush’s war rather than opposition to war generally. To present the Iraq War as a symptom of power-crazed neo-conservatives, the film neglects to fully articulate the more nuanced views of its expert interviewees while occasionally engaging manipulative textual strategies that are at odds with the critical-pedagogical goals of the Media Education Foundation. In particular, the demonization of Bush as a Nazi-like enemy of the state is reminiscent of the propaganda strategies identified in Norman Solomon’s *War Made Easy*. In *Dissent from War*, Robert Ivie (2007) cogently argues that dissent requires challenging cultural militarism while attempting to engage the enemy-Other at the level of diplomacy and refraining from “reverse recrimination” against pro-war advocates. The logic of *Hijacking Catastrophe*, however, is based on such reverse recrimination against the administration and, apart from replying on images of carnage in Iraq as evidence of the Bush administration’s cruelty, the film has strikingly little to say about the war unfolding in Iraq. While the film does support reflection on the meaning of patriotism, both war and peace are narrowly defined in terms of American identity.

Anti-Corporate Activism:

Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers (Greenwald 2006)

Although poorly received by film reviewers, many of whom noted Greenwald’s weak sense of narrative structure and manipulative style, *Iraq for Sale* is the most prominent documentary across the documentary-viewing websites. Framed as an exploration of “what happens to everyday Americans when corporations go to war,” the film examines the war profiteering of four major US military contractors: Blackwater, CACI, KBR/Halliburton, and Titan. Following a similar format to Greenwald’s other anti-corporate films like *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Lost Price*

(2005), *Iraq for Sale* emphasises the corruption of American democracy as individual citizens struggle to hold these corporations to account.

The film proceeds at a rapid pace featuring slide-show style graphics along with the personal testimony of former employees and, most evocatively, the grieving families of private security workers killed in Iraq. Through these figures *Iraq for Sale* appeals heavily to the traditional military values of family and national service, which the corporations, in conjunction with a compliant US congress, are found to corrupt. This sentimental appeal directs outrage and indignation at American corporations but comes at the expense of questioning the structures and values of American war. In this regard, the user comments reflect a sharp division between the receptiveness of American and international viewers to the films' emotional appeals, with the latter challenging the emphasis on Americans as victims of the Iraq War.

Having directed a number of television films, Greenwald's turn towards political documentary filmmaking was inspired by the "stolen" 2000 US presidential election. Through his production company Brave New Films, Greenwald has since made eight feature films about corporate corruption and the Wars on Terror⁴⁴ along with a series of short-documentaries on these themes. Brave New Films has primarily received critical attention for its innovative use of social media and grass-roots organisations to fund and distribute documentaries (Christensen 2009; Haynes 2007; Tryon 2011). Working in partnership with social-justice networks like *MoveOn.org* to promote the project, over \$260,000 was raised in online donations for *Iraq for Sale* (Booth 2006). Various community groups, churches, and political activists then distributed the film locally through "house-party" screenings using low-cost DVDs (Tryon 2011). It is through such grass-roots modes of production and distribution that Greenwald reconfigures documentary as an activist medium that challenges institutional power not simply by informing citizens but by mobilising them to participate (Stokes & Holloway 2010). With this spirit of social-change activism, the DVD of *Iraq for Sale* was emblazoned with the slogan "Share It and Change the World" (Gaines 2007).

⁴⁴ Greenwald's eight documentary features are: *Unprecedented* (2002); *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About The Iraq War* (2003); *Unconstitutional* (2004); *Outfoxed* (2004); *Wal-Mart* (2005); *Iraq for Sale* (2006); *Rethink Afghanistan* (2009); *Koch Brothers Exposed* (2012); *War on Whistleblowers* (2013); and *Unmanned* (2013).

America's Corporate Victims: The rise of anti-corporate campaigning has been linked to the decline of organised labour in the US and corresponding concerns about the close relationship between government and business in neo-liberal capitalist democracies (Haynes 2007). Much like Michael Moore, Robert Greenwald's work recalls the themes of 1960s social protest documentaries and represents an effort at using documentary for social justice activism. Towards this end, *Iraq for Sale* is structured around two contrasting levels of agency: the powerful agency of the corporations who woo congress to attain military contracts and quash investigations into their conduct versus the minimal agency of former employees and their families who seek justice and recognition. As such, *Iraq for Sale*, much like Greenwald's other films, plays into the broad David and Goliath structure of popular films like *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (Capra 1939) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra 1946) in which small-town ordinary Americans fight against the power of corporate and political machines. This trope is also familiar from high-profile campaigning documentary filmmakers like Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock who invite the viewer to follow them on their individual quest to hold corporate America to account. Unlike these filmmakers, however, Greenwald remains unheard and unseen. Instead, he invites the viewer to identify with the struggles of his ordinary American subjects.

Yet, by framing his subjects as ordinary Americans working in Iraq as drivers, engineers and translators, Greenwald ironically feeds into the military contractors' own branding exercise. As Jeremy Schail (2007:18) has argued in *Blackwater*, the success of private military companies is partly premised on "a very sophisticated rebranding campaign organised by the mercenary industry itself and increasingly embraced by policy-makers, bureaucrats, and other powerful decision makers" whereby the term mercenary is replaced with more benign phrases like "civilian contractors' or 'foreign reconstruction workers' as though they were engineers, construction workers, humanitarians, or water specialists." By pursuing a simple narrative of corporate power and victimised American citizens, Greenwald largely

neglects to address the more complex role of mercenaries in modern war and, specifically, in Iraq.⁴⁵

For many of the website users, this issue is most problematic in reference to the portrayal of private security workers Scott Helvenston and Jerry Zovko, two of the four Backwater employees ambushed in Fallujah in March 2004 whose desecrated bodies were hung from a bridge to symbolise the city's defiance. It is on this high-profile incident that Greenwald structures' his narrative of individual grief and corporate greed. As Jeannette Catsoulis (2006) observes in her *New York Times* review, Greenwald relies on the personal tragedy of these men's families to present "a febrile blend of facts, liberal outrage and emotional manipulation" which plays on "the visual power of a grieving mother". This striking portion of the film further exemplifies Susan Moeller's (1999: 107) observation that "mothers and children make ideal victims" for media narratives.

The film dwells extensively on the domestic ordinariness of the bereaved families drawing the viewer into an emotional identification with the mothers' grief and the "all-American" nature of Helvenston and Zovko as young boys. Over montages of family photos and home-videos, Helvenston and Zovko's mothers relate anecdotes about their sons as small children and recall their life-long love of the military. Donna Zovko wistfully says, "I still have little soldiers in a shoe box that he used to play with. Those were his favourite toys." Scott Helvenston, an ex-Navy Seal, is shown playing with his own children as his mother Kathryn explains that he only went to Iraq because he needed the money: "Scottie didn't go over there to hurt anyone. He was there to protect people". The naivety of this remark is striking as Helvenston, after all, was working as a mercenary in the middle of an anti-American insurgency. Showing little sympathy for the mothers' grief, one user (Spaceace 2012) identifies a level of "arrogance" and "fantasy" to the families' claims to victimhood: "I feel very sorry for the family at the beginning living in a fantasy world where their son grows up loving soldiers and ends up in a way being one...then dies...like a soldier" [ellipsis in original]. In a similar vein another user (Mehdi) comments, do

⁴⁵ The role of mercenaries and private security companies in Iraq is examined in the Canadian feature documentary *Shadow Company* (Bicanic & Bourque 2006) and the PBS film *Private Warriors* (2005).

you “care about your soldiers but not for the ones died by your soldiers, think if the same thing happened to your country[?]”

In the film’s only pro-longed sequence, Kathryn Helvenston visits the Zovko family home. Seated at the table in a casual after-dinner setting (see Figure 5), both mothers describe hearing about their sons’ deaths. The camera hovers by the table, occasionally zooming in on a speaker, giving the impression of eavesdropping at a private family reckoning. Each family member smokes and speaks his or her mind in turn while the others look away as though lost in their own thoughts or too distressed by what they hear. The film cuts repeatedly to Jerry Zovko’s father Jozo who keeps his head bent low over the table. Kathryn Helvenston emphatically directs her anger at Blackwater not “the insurgents or kids” who ambushed her son’s vehicle. Jerry Zovko’s brother is equally enraged at Blackwater’s failure to provide sufficient care to their employees claiming that “they knowingly skimmed on the mission and they cut corners” - “for the mighty dollar”, his mother concludes. As they further describe the circumstance of the ambush and speculate about how it could have been averted, it becomes clear that these families repeatedly raise these same questions without any answers. Finally, Jozo Zovko leans back animated and with heavily accented English proclaims “shameful country, shameful Blackwater”.



Figure 5: The Power of Grieving Mothers

This domestic tragedy is the emotional crux of the film which allows Greenwald to demonise the private contractors as heartless corporations. In the absence of any

representatives from the private contractors, Chris Lehane, a crisis communications expert, describes Blackwater's corporate imperative "to preserve the financial business future" by minimising the bad publicity arising from the Fallujah incident. Lehane's detached business-speak and the formal setting of his interview powerfully contrasts the cold logic of a corporate crisis with the domestic crisis of the previous sequence. Lehane relates that Blackwater hired a PR firm linked to the Republican Party and were able to meet "the most powerful members of congress" within 24 hours of the killings. In this way, the corporation's political power is contrasted with the families' emotional paralysis and lack of agency. While the families are left to their grief, we learn that Blackwater not only boosted its growth by 600% the following year but was subsequently awarded a \$73 million contract from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide relief in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Throughout the film, the corporations remain faceless and unaccountable represented only by logos and glossy advertising. Over the closing credits, Greenwald and his assistants are shown repeatedly attempting to contact representatives of the private contractors; all 38 phone calls and 31 email requests for comments were declined. Unable to challenge the corporations directly, *Iraq for Sale* then primarily aims to provoke outrage at the corruption of American values by documenting a litany of corporate crimes.

Corporate Crimes: Through narrative appeals to the corporate betrayal of hard-working and patriotic Americans, Greenwald attempts to extend the reach of his Leftist position to more conservative viewers. As John Haynes (2007: 5) observes, the film offers "Republican voters a kind of deal that lets them know they can hold on to their belief in individual freedoms, family values, and patriotic pride, but still ask questions of corporate power". Significantly, the film largely ignores the consequences of privatised war for Iraqi civilians. In this sense, the title is misleading as it not substantially about the sale of Iraq as a sovereign country but the sale of American democracy and, more specifically, the sale of the American military.⁴⁶ This overriding theme of a corporate usurpation of the American military is neatly

⁴⁶ The misappropriation of some \$23bn in Iraqi revenue during the occupation is investigated in two British television documentaries: *Channel 4's Iraq's Missing Billions* (MacRae 2006) and the *BBC's Daylight Robbery* (Kemp 2008).

encapsulated on the film poster which features a tank adorned with corporate logos (see Figure 6).

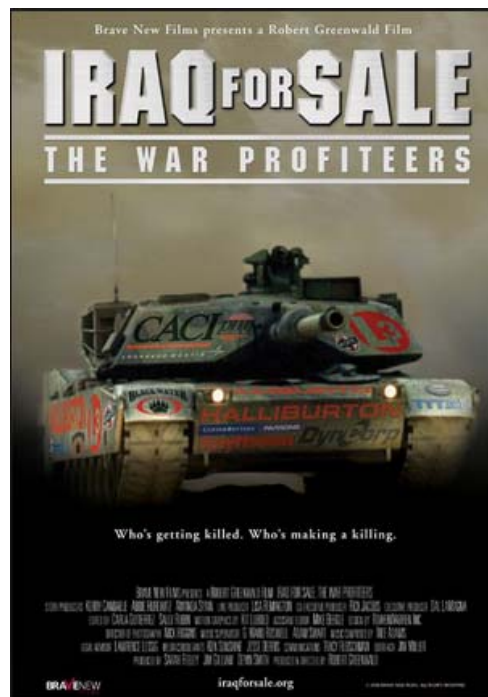


Figure 6: Film Poster, *Iraq For Sale*

While avoiding any criticism of the US military, *Iraq for Sale* inverts the conservative strategy of labelling critics of the war “anti-American” to argue that it is the corporations that are acting against America. To this end, a military contributor argues that true free-market conservatives should be outraged by the corporations’ monopoly on military contracts. Pratap Chatterjee, the executive director of Corpwatch, explains that military contracts operate on a “cost-plus” basis meaning all expenses, with additional profits, are covered by the US government. Unsurprisingly, such highly-favourable terms gave rise to exorbitant spending and the creation of “jobs that didn’t even need to be there”. Former employees describe their surprise at being given luxurious accommodation at oceanfront resorts in Kuwait and Qatar while a former truck-driver explains that if a truck tyre blew out, they would burn the truck and order a new one rather than replace the tyre. As excessive profiteering by the corporations is shown to put troops’ lives at risk, one user (Jonathan R) describing himself as a “business-owning capitalist motivated by monetary gain”, is moved to write, “I cannot understand the lack of moral conscience it would take to be a war profiteer”. A British user (Simon), who claims to have been

stationed in both British and American camps, also praises the film for focusing on corporate corruption, “I think that this is a better [documentary] than many others because it isn't trying to say that the entire government is involved in profiting from war.”

The corporate usurpation of traditional military roles is established in the opening scene, which presents a montage of archive footage depicting soldiers at work in successive wars. A series of unidentified voice-overs testify that contractors now do “pretty much any job that’s in the military” including laundry, cooking and security. This corruption of traditional military functions is raised in many independent embedded documentaries as individual soldiers comment with dismay on the corporate appropriation of their jobs. Another unidentified voice-over informs us that private security contractors comprise the second largest force in Iraq outnumbering the troops of allied nations. Interspersed with these archive images, bold graphics detail the millions of dollars the US government has awarded in contracts to Blackwater, CACI, KBR/Halliburton, and Titan. Greenwald’s primary concern with the inequalities of corporate America is repeatedly highlighted by contrasting the salaries of corporate CEOs with the low-pay and simple lifestyle of their former employees.

Much of the film focuses on specific instances of negligence by these corporations through a succession of emotional testimonies from aggrieved former employees. Ben Carter is moved to angry tears as he recalls how KBR/Halliburton repeatedly ignored his concerns about the poor quality of the water provided to the marines. Bewildered translators relate that Titan’s contract to supply linguists to the military resulted in translators who were not fluent in either Arabic or Farsi and often lacked competence in English. More contentiously, *Iraq for Sale* implies that the abuse and torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib was instigated by CACI’s poorly trained interrogators. In making this point, Greenwald rapidly intercuts images from a cartoonish CACI interrogation manual with images of abuse at Abu Ghraib as though the former were clearly responsible for the latter (see figure 7). While raising legitimate questions about why low-ranking military personnel were convicted for their role in the abuse and torture of Iraqis while CACI employees were not, Greenwald’s anti-corporate agenda greatly simplifies the systematic nature of torture

in Iraq and feeds into the military's own efforts to divest itself of responsibility for interrogation policies.



Figure 7: Corporate Cause and Effect?

As an activist war documentary, *Iraq for Sale* epitomises “the production of outrage” (Gaines 2007:35). Greenwald doesn’t dwell on the particularities of any case but instead guides the viewing through a growing sense of indignation. The catalogue of corporate misdeeds and the rapid succession of figures detailing corporate profits have an overwhelming affect. Often, the use of escalating graphs and statistics is confusing or simply too fast to process. A sprawling graph purporting to explain the corrupt relationship between private business and congress, for example is largely indecipherable while conveying the impression that corruption is so endemic that is essentially official American policy (see Figure 8). Given that *Iraq for Sale* was originally distributed among grassroots activist networks in the months before the 2006 midterm elections, Greenwald’s textual construction was supplemented with activist material providing more in-depth information about the film. The reliance on this additional discussion material concurs with Greenwald’s view that for social change to occur, “it’s not just the film, but the film in conjunction with the groups that are doing the heavy lifting” (cited in Haynes & Littler 2007: 27). While the Brave New Films website supplies supplementary information to the viewer, documentary-viewing websites disrupt and diminish this “transmedia” film conception by presenting the film in isolation. However, it is also in this international reception context, that *Iraq for Sale*’s presentation of Americans as corporate victims of Iraq is called into question.

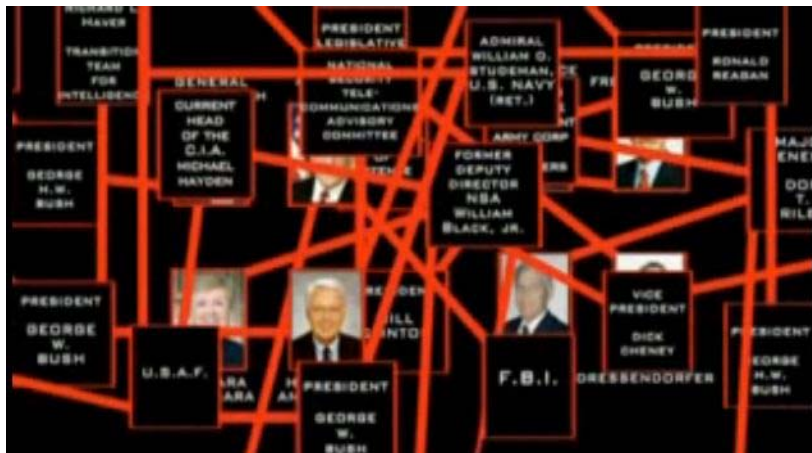


Figure 8: Corporate Connections, *Iraq for Sale*

Although John Haynes (2007) observes that Greenwald's films usually end with a "call to arms" sequence, *Iraq for Sale* ends with expressions of disillusionment. The subjects featured in the film also notably shift from contractors to American soldiers. Over simple domestic scenes of everyday life, these men and woman repeatedly assert their "love" for America while expressing fear for the nation's future direction. This is eloquently conveyed by Aidan Delago, an army reserve stationed at Abu Ghraib who became a conscientious objector.⁴⁷ He describes his Iraq experience as follows,

I went to Iraq and when I came back it was so heart-breaking. I found that we weren't always the good guys and that was very disillusioning for me. Because I'd grown up with this, like, dream of America, of what America was, and when I saw that dream at Abu Ghraib and what it had become I felt heart-broken. And I felt like I didn't know what it was to be an American because I saw what I had thought America was destroyed and disgraced.

As in many other Iraq War documentaries, *Iraq for Sale* attempts to undermine militarism and the Bush administration through a potent appeal to the American soldier's loss of faith in his country. The viewer is then invited to take action on the soldier's behalf. Appealing to viewers to vote against Republicans in the mid-term election, Bud Coyners, a former KBR/Halliburton truck-driver now confined to a wheelchair, asserts "I voted for some of these people. Ok let's see what happens. Lets see if anyone gets into trouble over this, lets see if anyone goes to prison, lets see if anyone loses a contract." However, the corporations' stone-walling of

⁴⁷ Delago also features in features in *The Ground Truth* (Foulkrod 2006) and the PBS film *Soldiers of Conscience* (Weimberg & Ryan 2009).

Greenwald's solicitations for an interview and the extent of the corporations' connections to political power suggest that Bud Coyner's hopeful expectation of accountability will go unfulfilled. At its conclusion then, *Iraq for Sale* struggles to resolve the narrative opposition of powerful corporations and powerless citizens. Some international users take up this theme questioning, "why don't you Americans do something?" (Shane Falco). Another (Guest/Pierre) questions why Americans don't vote out corrupt politicians, "when the senators vote, does the public know how each [one] voted? ... if the USA citizens do not know how their leaders (elite) voted, it becomes a fool's game."

Although many Iraq War documentaries oppose the Bush administration's War in Iraq, few articulate clear anti-war positions. It is particularly striking that activist documentaries opposing the Iraq War have so little to say about conditions in that country. The problematical, almost paradoxical, nature of opposition in Iraq War documentaries is related to the broader complexities of contemporary war activism and to the more immediate issue-driven goals of individual documentaries. Both *Hijacking Catastrophe* and *Iraq for Sale* target American viewers as voters prior to national elections and their portrayal of the war is then tailored to this domestic political goal. To strengthen its anti-Republican position, *Hijacking Catastrophe* presents a diluted critique of American military-imperialism to imply that war is an exclusive product of hawkish Republicans rather than a reflection of long-established structures of American hegemony. *Iraq for Sale* similarly presents a distorted analysis of private contract work in Iraq to achieve its primary goal of bolstering anti-corporate feeling. In this process, the practice of torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib is transformed into a corporate crime, which effectively shuts down calls for further investigation into the culpability of military and political leaders for their interrogation policies. On this basis, the study identifies an essential need to critically interrogate the war narratives of oppositional or alternative texts as is it not sufficient to assume that documentaries operating within alternative activist distribution networks or documentaries opposing a mainstream media consensus are anti-war by virtue of their sentiment.

Conclusion: Documentary, Patriotism & the Online Public Sphere

While activist documentaries attempt to “harness hegemony” (Maney et al. 2005: 358) by appealing to conservative and patriotic values of national service, the range of American and international perspectives found in the online reception sphere extend the terms of this debate to a broader reflection on the meaning of patriotism and identity. In this way, documentary-viewing websites provide a space to challenge the cultural assumptions, and broaden the arguments, of individual war documentaries. In keeping with Ralph Berenger’s (2006: 24) observation that “the Internet is no respecter of national borders...unquestioned patriotism or nationalism”, the international perspectives accumulated on *Top Documentary Films* frequently challenge the assumptions of American patriotism and Americans in turn challenge the anti-American sentiment of other users. The portrayal of Muslims however is given a more complex treatment. Although, many users clearly write as Muslims addressing the circumstances of Iraqis in the documentaries, other users often express sweeping generalisations about Islam that go unchallenged.

In many discussion threads on Iraq War documentaries, users accuse America and Britain of war crimes leaving people writing as citizens of these countries to express anger over the actions of their governments and to assert that their governments do not represent the views of all the people. Surprisingly, apart from *The War You Don’t See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010), documentaries rarely mention the involvement of Britain in the war. Yet, the participation of Britain and other Coalition of Willing states is frequently highlighted in discussion threads as users express shame or anger over the involvement of their countries. Another common response from users is to recommend a documentary as vital viewing for the nation: “every flag waving patriotic American and British person should be made to watch this film if they have ever thought it is unpatriotic to be anti-war after 9 11” (1Perspective).

American users frequently write from a highly personal perspective citing either their own military experience or their family members’ experience in the military.

Consequently, they are highly alert to negative representations of US troops in both the documentaries and the user comments. These users then offset generalisations about America and US troops by contextualising their own circumstances. One user (Ash Breaks Stuff) explains to another: “Not everyone in the US is rich. This economy is cr@p. For some people joining the military is the only way to provide for their families. My dad isn't in Iraq right now because he wants to be.” Users are surprisingly responsive to these interjections often toning down or revising their initial statements. Regularly, a user who posts a comment indicting America and all Americans returns to clarify that he/she does not mean all Americans: “...and when I say "the Americans" I mean the top dogs. The ‘enlightened ones’” (Mattothee).

Although many exchanges are far from conciliatory, the willingness of users to engage or at least acknowledge other points of view is partly attributable to the website owner, Vlatko, who sometimes intervenes in debates that become over heated. In one instance, having rather aggressively attacked those criticising American foreign policy, a user (Dufas_duck) returns after Vlatko's intervention to explain: “what really bothers me is that when I had travelled to many European countries, the common person, the baker, the farmer, the fuel station attendant would jump all over me, sometimes to the point of being physical, about me being American.” As a form of communicative action, these informal exchanges exemplify the idea of globalised overlapping publics engaged in arguments whereby “the opposing side can understand them and accept the justifications that are presented, even though they do not agree with the conclusions” (Ylä-Anttila 2005:434).

One American user effectively summarises this process of patriotism engaging with internationalism:

I am glad to see others comments on here from other countries and different cultures...When I was in the Navy I ran into a gentleman from Ireland who had the point of view about our government as I do now. I reacted to him in anger and now I regret that as he [was] right and I should have listened more clearly to his point of view. At the time though, I was brainwashed into believing in supporting the government without question. A complete blind obedience no matter how wrong it was (Charlesovery).

Similarly, when American users describe the actions of the US military as necessary for defending “freedom”, this popular sentiment is challenged by non-Americans:

“No disrespect to you or your brother [in the US military]...but I get confused when I hear people talking about defending America. Last I heard nobody was trying to invade America” (Ikev). Users also challenge the regular invocation of 9/11 and terrorism as a justification for the Iraq War: “...the news tells you that terrorism is out of control, and you believe it. American criminals kill more Americans than terrorists ever have. There are between 1000 and 1500 murders per year in your country. In the 9 years since September 11th, that's 3 times the amount killed on that terrible day” (Chris W From Canada). Occasionally, broader historical contexts are supplied with users defining war crimes and citing comparable instances in which political leaders have been prosecuted at the International Criminal Court. The notion of humanitarian intervention is also challenged as a false justification through an appeal to contexts that are largely absent in Iraq War documentaries: “If our countries actually gave a poof for others, we would have intervened in Rwanda, Darfur, Tibet and many more. But we would rather have our service personnel die for oil, not Freedom. And what the hell is wrong with the UN? Are they under NWO [New World Order], as well? or are they just impotent?” (Debbye).

However, in much the same way that activist war documentaries concentrate on the American subject, it is the American view and experience of war that dominates discussions. Of the 323 user comments for *Iraq's Secret War Files* (Sigsworth 2010), less than 20% refer directly to the documentary or to conditions in Iraq. Most of the comments emanate from a small group of users who become engaged in a debate about American power, specifically about whether America has historically been the “good guy” or the “bad guy” in world affairs. In keeping with the central rhetorical role of the “greatest generation” in American war discourse (Bostdorff 2003; Noon 2004; Stahl 2008), much of this discussion is about the Second World War. It is also clear that this debate has been on-going across documentary threads as the users are familiar with each other's views.

Not all generalisations go unchallenged. Negative comments about Islam are often uncontested, which partly reflects the broader anti-religious feeling of users and partly reflects their willingness to conflate Islam with terrorism. In the discussion thread on *Iraq's Secret War Files*, one user (StillRV) gruesomely and happily

describes Valdimir Putin's burning of "Jihadists" (meaning Chechen rebels) and there is general agreement for this "hard line on terrorism" without any consideration of the context. Furthermore, while many users embrace the justifications for the War on Terror as a deception, they simultaneously replicate deeply bigoted views about Muslims:

... it is obvious that at least the first objective [of the War on Terror] was to secure the oilfields in Iraq and more than likely to implement the pipeline in Afghanistan, but step back for a second, Islam has one objective as a religion and that is to create a situation where they can impose the religion of Islam on everyone... I think that the primary objective has to be to invade Iran before they can obtain [nuclear] capability and thus be capable of distributing this weaponry to other Islamic states to gain the upper hand on the West (Antogonist).

It is comments such as these that expose the limitations of war opposition in activist documentaries as they fail to address the prevailing demonization of Muslims in contemporary political discourse. Consequently, through the documentaries' "harnessing" of cultural hegemony many users find themselves in agreement with the perspectives of seemingly anti-war films while also holding on to entrenched views that validate on-going war in the Muslim world.

CHAPTER FIVE: DOCUMENTARY WAR REPORTING

The Iraq War has proved to be the most dangerous conflict for war reporters, especially Iraqi and non-embedded journalists. Between March 2003 and December 2011, over 200 media workers have been killed (Smyth 2013) while the escalation of sectarian violence has made reporters targets for kidnapping and intimidation (Kim & Hama-Saeed 2008). The difficulties faced by journalists and filmmakers in securing access to combat areas appears somewhat at odds with the widespread mediatisation of the war through digital media footage filmed by coalition forces, insurgents and civilians witnesses. The resulting online trade in images of IED attacks, marketplace bombings and night-raids may be contrasted with the efforts of on-the-ground reporters to contextualise the disjointed series events unfolding across Iraq. As these on-the-ground documentaries are primarily aimed at Western TV audiences, this chapter assesses how filmmakers ascribe various levels of agency to their Iraqi subjects while calling on the evidential power of images to expose conditions in Iraq. These issues are explored in reference to two television documentaries seeking to counter official military narratives through witness testimony and visual evidence: the Italian film *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* and *Iraq: The Women's Story*, which was filmed for Britain's *Channel 4*. The chapter concludes by contrasting institutional efforts to define the war as a past event through commemorative documentaries with the open-archive of war documentaries and user perspectives preserved on documentary-viewing websites.

Reporting Iraq: As outlined in chapter one, there have been extensive studies on the limitations of news reporting during the Iraq War. In particular, a number of overlapping factors have inhibited the practice of on-the ground war reporting:

Embedded Journalism: While war correspondents have historically travelled alongside military units, the practice of embedding reporters and camera crews with troops was employed systematically during the Iraq War. For journalist Marvin Kalb (cited in Linder 2008:32) the goal of embedding approximately 600 hundred journalists at the beginning of the war was “part of the massive, White House-run strategy to

sell...the American mission in this war". To this end, the embed program promoted military patrols and "stop and search" routines as the public image of war while keeping the media and the public removed from the civilian experience of war. At the same time, the covert psychological operations at the heart of the counter-insurgency strategy remained beyond representation (Zimmerman 2007). The structural bias of embedded journalism then "focused on the horrors facing the troops, rather than upon the thousands of Iraqis who died" (Linder 2008: 33) or, as Patricia Zimmerman (2007:67) describes, embedding encompassed "the deliberate construction of invisibility and the pointed production of endless visibility in the form of images of soldiers and IEDs". Drawing on his extensive study of conflict imagery, David Campbell (2003:144) notes that embedded journalists produced images that were "relatively clean, being largely devoid of the dead bodies that mark a major conflict." In this context, the online availability of documentaries detailing the consequences of the war for Iraqis is a significant counter-point to official narratives.

The Status of Reporters in Irregular War: After the swift fall of the Hussein government, the number of embedded reporters declined sharply⁴⁸ leaving the reality of conditions in Iraq to "disappear" behind military press-releases in many media outlets (Arraf 2009). Although a more critical view of Iraq's deteriorating security conditions was provided by non-embedded reporters, dubbed "unilaterals" by the Pentagon, the complex nature of irregular war presented major difficulties for independent war reporting (DiMaggio 2008). Unlike Vietnam, where reporters could move freely through battle zones as neutral non-combatants, the irregular war in Iraq brought an end to this privilege as journalists became targets for kidnapping and murder. In addition, the US military frequently prevented journalists with appropriate government permits from accessing the sites of US attacks (Reporters Without Borders 2005). As outlined in *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*, independent reporters struggled to gain access to Fallujah and those that did faced arrest and the confiscation of their footage. Consequently, Martin Bell (2008) argues that war

⁴⁸ Based on figures supplied by the Pentagon, approximately 100 journalists were still officially embedded by autumn 2003 and this figure fell to 48 by 2005 (Vania 2006).

reporting, as it has been practiced since the Crimean War (1853-1856), has all but disappeared.

Green Zone Journalism: As conditions in Iraq deteriorated, Western journalists increasingly confined themselves to Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone. *The Independent's* veteran foreign correspondent Robert Fisk (2005) criticised the new norm of Western journalists "reporting from their [Baghdad] hotels rather than the streets of Iraq's towns and cities" for "giving American troops a free hand" and further distancing the Western media from the Iraqi people.⁴⁹ More broadly, the decline of foreign correspondents has given rise to the phenomenon of "parachute journalism" whereby reporters move from conflict zone to conflict zone with little understanding of the local population (Palmer & Fontan 2007; Ricchiardi 2006). In contrast to this, documentaries by Iraqi filmmakers, like *Iraq: The Women's Story*, offer an insider's navigation through the social and political divisions of a collapsing state.

Fixers & Civilian Reporters: As few Western journalists were able to speak Arabic at a professional level of competence (Palmer & Fontan 2007), journalists trying to report the war independently were heavily reliant on local "fixers" and translators to facilitate understanding. International journalists then began to "subcontract newsgathering" (Pendry 2011) by relying on these fixers to source and research stories (McDonnell 2005; Murrell 2010). The risks borne by these Iraqis raise deeply ethical questions about the duty of Western news organisations to the Iraqis upon whom they rely for information. In sharp contrast to the celebrity status enjoyed by many Western war reporters (Markham 2012; Tutuso 2008), Iraqis travelling with cameras were viewed with suspicion by the US military (Layton 2012).⁵⁰ Relying on local sources for news also raises practical questions about the kind of perspectives

⁴⁹ On a similar point, Rajiv Chandasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (2006) accuses American CPA administrators of secluding themselves within the Green Zone and thereby lacking connection with either the Iraqi people or on-the-ground conditions. The book was subsequently adapted into the thriller film *Green Zone* (Greengrass 2010).

⁵⁰ This suspicion has been legitimised in some Hollywood representations of the war; throughout the Oscar winning film *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow 2008), Iraqis only carry cameras to film IED attacks on US troops.

that are available because, as Hun Kim (2010) reports, the perceptions of Iraqi fixers function as a form of gate-keeping.

Freelance & “Witness” Reporters: It seems almost paradoxical that as the dangers of war reporting have greatly increased, there has been a growth in freelance and independent reporting. An underlying factor in these changes is the re-formulation of traditional industry business-models prompted by the rise of digital media. As Piet Bakker (2012:627) explains, “there is a growing pressure on news organizations to produce more inexpensive content for digital platforms, resulting in new models of low-cost or even free content production.” At the same time, following the model of Witness, established by Peter Gabriel in 1992, there has been a growth in small non-profit filmmaking groups promoting the use of video as a means to document human rights issues. Rather than establish an independent audience, many of these organisations aim to have their work picked up by established media outlets (Lebow 2012). Footage shot by local reporters or freelancers is then of great benefit to news organisations as they can further their multi-media reinvention as online platforms and report the war without risking the lives of their own employees.⁵¹ On this basis, *The Guardian’s* “multimedia investigations” platform *Guardian Films* has accumulated 35 Iraq War videos, ranging from one minute to an hour in length, between July 2007 and March 2013.

Documentaries Reporting the War: With the availability of lightweight digital cameras, the Iraq War has been heavily documented through witness footage. Digital cameras have enabled coalition troops and embedded filmmakers to represent their experiences on duty while civilian-filmmakers have documented their lives under occupation. Unlike traditional war reports which attempt to summarise a sense of the total war, these observational portraits of life in Iraq present the war as a series of isolated fragments.

For Charles Musser (2007) the rise of vérité-style war documentaries is a direct reaction to the argumentative polemic of activist films like Robert Greenwald’s

⁵¹ In June 2013, as a growing number of freelancers were being killed and captured in Syria, the Frontline Club launched a freelance register to support those who lack the security and training provided by media institutions.

Uncovered (2004). By declining to take a stance on the war itself, embedded portraits of US troops, like *Gunner Palace* (Tucker & Epperlein 2004) and *Occupation: Dreamland* (Scott & Olds 2005), present an apparently “non-ideological insight into the grunt’s-eye view of the world” (Musser 2007: 26) and ultimately “quell debate” by presenting the “emotional pornography” of soldiers in the field evading IEDs (Aufderheide 2007b). Although the much discussed embedded documentaries are largely absent from documentary-viewing websites, it is worth noting that they have a greater capacity to critique the war than Musser and Aufderheide’s criticisms allow. As Jane Gaines (2007:47) argues, the “immediately analytic camera” of observational documentaries can highlight moments in which “the myth that occupiers are liberators [is] exposed in the ordinary moment”. In *Occupation Dreamland*, for example, soldiers reveal their frustration with the sub-contracting of their jobs and their everyday interactions with Iraqi people present a cynical portrait of liberation. Inadvertently, this film also preserves a document of Fallujah, the “city of mosques”, before the large-scale Anglo-American bombardments of 2004.

Observational portraits of Iraqis under occupation have also been criticised for the methodological practice of waiting “around until something happens” (Bissel 2005). At the beginning of the war films like *Baghdad in No Particular Order* (Chan 2003), *The Dreams of the Sparrows* (Daffar 2005), and *Iraq In Fragments* (Longley 2006) present snap shots of Iraqi life in which it is often unclear “whether the narrative has any relationship to the visual” (Betsalel & Gibney 2008:524). In this regard, Jeffery Chown (2008:466) notes that “too often, Iraqis tend to be the Other in these documentaries, playing a role analogous to the subjects of ethnographic films going back to *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1925)”. Alternatively, a number of charity and activist groups, such as the US feminist group Code Pink, have supplied Iraqis with equipment and training to help them film their own war. The London based Maysoon Pachachi, daughter of prominent Iraqi politician Adnan Pachachi, formed a free training school for young Iraqi filmmakers in 2004 and has showcased the students’ work in Europe and America (Zangana 2011). For Patricia Zimmerman (2007: 70), these practices emphasise a process of collaborative production that is “often invisible in the commercial, feature film and independent media sector that infuses major international film festivals like Sundance and Tribeca.” The new generation of Iraqi filmmakers have presented highly personal accounts of life in Iraq. This follows

decades of media domination by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime and the increasing fragmentation of post-Hussein media along ethnic and religious lines (Al-Rawi 2012). However, as all the films covered in this study are aimed at Western audiences, there are inevitable questions about how Iraqi perspectives are naturalised on film for foreign audiences.

It is also notable that the very act of filming the Iraq War has merited considerable documentary attention. Documentaries like *Iraq: The Cameraman's Story* (Conway 2003); *Control Room* (Noujaim 2004); *War Feels Like War* (Uyarra 2004); *War with Iraq: Stories from the Front* (Jennings 2004); and *Shooting the Truth* (Gannon 2009) further reinforce the prestige status of the professional war reporter (Markham 2012; Tutuso 2008). Many amateur and alternative films are similarly framed as personal quests to record war; first-time filmmaker Mike Shiley, for example, claims to have mocked up his own press-pass to film *Inside Iraq: The Untold Stories* (2004) with the resulting film billed as his daring-do quest to uncover truth in Iraq.

In contrast to these narratives, investigative war reports by *Al Jazeera* and a number of European television networks focus more directly on conditions in Iraq to present an oppositional view of the occupation at a time when the US media enthusiastically embraced the military's counter-insurgency strategy (McKelvy 2009). Ironically, as the Pentagon was expressly concerned with avoiding images of civilian war casualties (Carruthers 2011), such images are now preserved online through these documentary war reports. While there is a growing literature on the notion of "bearing witness" (Guerin & Hallas 2007), studies of news reporting about foreign wars and disasters suggest that the practice of bearing witness to distant suffering contributes to a context in which viewers appear to have limited agency beyond pity (Carpentier & Tenzier 2005; Chouliaraki 2006). At the same, the status of film footage as a document of war is open to interpretation and contestation. Both the UN and the International Criminal Court now accept the physical and testimonial record of film footage as evidence in human rights cases. Yet, as Guerin and Hallas (2007:7) argue the deeply personal experience of individual testimonies "do not claim to represent to the experience of all those who suffered." To consider what is being witnessed in Iraq War documentaries and how the framing of the camera-as-witness is reliant on notions of credibility, built into the film narrative and then

qualified by viewers, this chapter interrogates the visual evidence of two TV war documentaries and their online reception.

Investigating War Crimes:

Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre (Ranucci & Torrealta 2005)

Produced by Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta for the Italian state broadcaster RAI 24, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* first aired on the 8th November 2005.⁵² On the same day, the American non-profit news programme *Democracy Now* broadcasted excerpts from the film dubbed into English and featured an additional interview with Lt. Col. Steve Boylan who denied the film's claims that white phosphorus was used as a weapon in Iraq. After a week of denials, the Pentagon then admitted that white phosphorus was used as an incendiary weapon against "enemy combatants" but not against civilians. Much of the ensuing debate then hinged on a distinction between enemy combatants and civilians; a legal distinction that acquires a significant rhetorical function in what Mahmood Mamdani's (2007:5) calls "the politics of naming". In Iraq, the traditional legal distinction between civilians and insurgents was further complicated by the nature of irregular war and the complex symbolic status attached to Fallujah in various political, military and media narratives. To fully understand the function of the documentary, both at the time of its release and as an enduring document in the online archive, it is first necessary to contextualise the status of Fallujah during the war and the narratives that have grown around it.

Fallujah During the War: Located west of Baghdad within the so-called "Sunni triangle", Fallujah with its 300,000 inhabitants, became a stronghold of armed resistance to the US occupation. The Fallujan resistance came to be typified by the ambush and killing of four US contractors from the private military company Blackwater. Widely publicised images portrayed their desecrated bodies dragged through the street to be left hanging from a bridge by a mob of "very ordinary looking young Iraqis" (Karon 2004). In response, the First Battle of Fallujah was launched in April 2004 but when coalition troops withdrew a month later, Fallujah

⁵² In 2006, the filmmakers produced a second Iraq War documentary *Star Wars in Iraq*, which examines the use of laser weaponry in Iraq and its potential use for crowd control in Western states.

rapidly gained notoriety throughout Iraq as a “city of heroes.” Meanwhile, British and American news media described Fallujah as a “hotbed of anti-Americanism” and an “insurgent stronghold” (Pilger 2004).

In November 2004, Operation Phantom Fury was launched with the twin goals of quashing the anti-American insurgency and stabilising post-Hussein Iraq by preventing a Sunni up-rising. Accompanied by British forces, the ensuing battle was the heaviest engagement of US combat forces since the Vietnam War and saw some of the heaviest deployments of air strikes in Iraq. The chief target was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian Islamist and prominent leader of anti-coalition forces, who was said to be in Fallujah. In *Inside Fallujah* (2009:287), *Al-Jazeera* reporter Ahmed Mansour observes that the “hunt for al-Zarqawi began an endless cycle in Fallujah: American forces would bomb a civilian house and declare they’d just bombed an al-Zarqawi hideout; reporters would snap pictures and shoot footage of dead civilians; and the phantom al-Zarqawi would not be found.”

Although no embedded journalists were permitted during the first assault on Fallujah leaving Arab media like *Al-Jazeera* to document events, selective US media were embedded for the second assault. From the outset, Operation Phantom Fury presented diverging media narratives regarding the coalition’s role in occupied Iraq. Fallujah was variously reported as a “battle” for the “pacification” of an insurgent city or as a war crime against a civilian population. Before attacking the city, the military issued a clear-out order creating 200,000 “internally displaced” refugees. As potential insurgents, “men of fighting age” (18-65) were required to stay and many women and children remained with them; between 30,000 and 50,000 civilians are estimated to have remained in the city (McCarthy & Beaumont 2004). In the US, Noam Chomsky (2004) observed that the news media played an overt propaganda role in reporting these events, not by neglecting to report them accurately but by failing to explain or acknowledge their illegality under international law,

What was dramatic about Fallujah was that it was not kept secret. So you could see on the front page of the *New York Times*, a big picture of the first major step in the offensive, namely the capture of the Fallujah General Hospital. And there's a picture of people lying on the ground, soldier guarding them, and then there's a story that tells that patients and doctors were taken from their beds, patients and doctors were forced to lie on the floor and manacled, under guard, and the picture described it (Cited in Alam 2004: online).

A 2005 UN report later accused the US of “flagrant violation” of international humanitarian law by using “hunger and deprivation of water as a weapon of war against the civilian population” (Ziegler cited in Reuters 2005: online).

In the aftermath of the assault, reports about the use of chemical weapons prohibited by international law circulated in some foreign and activist media. In November 2005, *Fallujah: the Hidden Massacre* was one of the first news outlets to directly accuse the US of using chemical weapons against civilians. Lacking substantial evidence, however, the 30 minute film presents its case by building a narrative of plausibility that invokes the media memory of US atrocities in Vietnam and the evidential shock-value of images of charred corpses and injured bodies.

The New Vietnam: The film opens with images of aerial bombings from the Vietnam War and presents the iconic footage of a Vietnamese child, Kim Phuc, running naked from the napalm bombs. The narrator begins,

This is how a picture can speak about war, in Vietnam. Kim Phuc, age nine, whose fragile, naked body mutilated by the napalm thrown by the Americans, running, arms outstretched to escape death. It is 1972, and the image will circle the globe over as evidence of a war that nobody won and many have forgotten.

As some users point out, the bombing in question was actually carried out (“accidentally”) by the South Vietnamese. However, as the napalm was supplied by their American ally and used extensively by the Americans elsewhere, this appears to be a moot point. Nevertheless, this inaccuracy in the opening minute cements the impression of some *Top Documentary Films* users that the film is just anti-American “disinformation.”

Using extraordinarily vivid archive footage shot from military planes in Vietnam, Ranucci and Torrealta then present an intriguing critique of war mediation. Resembling the spectacle of Hollywood’s Vietnam War films, the marine’s own sweeping footage of bombs falling into pockets of billowing flames in the green country side is set to The Mamas and the Papas’ ‘California Dreaming’(see Figure 9). The narrator explains “these scenes are not part of a film but reality. The military cameramen even used slow motion to better document the bombs’ potential”. To further emphasise the psychological distance between soldier and civilian, the narrator contrasts the pop music “the marines’ would listen to on the radio describing

the dream of the most beautiful place in the world, California, whilst the war destroys a country just as beautiful, Vietnam.” Arguing that the footage remained unseen for decades “for fear of causing a pacifist backlash”, the narrator then directs the viewer to consider “a battle of our time that no one was able to see”.



Figure 9: Vietnam: The Marines' Perspective

This short prelude about the Vietnam War establishes a set of overlapping contexts for the documentary. Firstly, it lays claim to the power of images to reveal the “hidden” human costs of war, which is the explicit purpose of the documentary. Yet, while acknowledging the power of images to raise-awareness, Ranucci and Torrealta also question the long-term impact of images on public consciousness. The footage of Kim Phuc “circled the globe” but the horror of the war is mostly “forgotten.” To extend this point further, while images may serve an immediate role by revealing what is hidden, over time the war is obscured again, only known through iconic isolated images of suffering and atrocity.

Secondly, the opening firmly establishes a historical continuity between the “quagmire” of Vietnam and Iraq. Vietnam then functions as a historical “conflict template” through which uncertain contemporary events can be understood. As evidenced in this opening scene, such templates “not only involve the interpretation of current events they also simultaneously reinforce or reshape the meaning of past events” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010: 91). By first presenting the historical record of napalm use in Vietnam, the film also appeals to precedent to support its own allegations about the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Fallujah.

Thirdly, Ranucci and Torrealta emphasises the deep gulf between the “gun-sight” perspective of soldiers, and by extension the reporters embedded with them (Lebow 2012; Zimmerman 2007), and the perspective of civilians and independent reporters positioned on the receiving end of bombings. By unearthing the marine’s own spectacle driven footage of Vietnam, the film further questions the motivations and values behind the war media produced by soldiers.⁵³ Over embedded footage of US troops on a night-raid in Iraq, the narrator then rejects the idea that the Iraq War was “recorded as it happened” because “the West saw it from a key-hole and only from one point of view.” By constantly invoking the distinction between images that conceal and images that reveal, Ranucci and Torrealta seek to validate their own image-based methodology for establishing the truth about chemical weapons in Fallujah.

Bodies of Evidence: Lacking meaningful evidence that white phosphorus was actually used against civilians, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* progressively develops a picture of the US military’s dishonesty and disregard for Iraqi civilians. On this point, Jeff Englehart, a former army specialist turned anti-war activist, testifies that prior to the launch of Operation Phantom Fury, a commander instructed his troops that “every single person that was walking, talking, breathing was an enemy combatant.” Over images of homes reduced to rubble – “an estimated 37,000 according to a 2005 UN report” - the narrator incredulously quotes US General John Sattler, “I can honestly say that I am not aware of any civilian casualties.” Hospital footage of the wounded appears to further contradict this statement. In one short clip, a woman stands before a wounded toddler to question the viewer, “is he Mujahedeen? Is he al-Zarqawi?” (see Figure 10). Such hospital scenes are replicated across documentary war reports and follow a common pattern: the camera pans across the war wounded while a spokesperson guides the camera to a particular patient who, flanked by Iraqis looking toward the camera, is presented as evidence of atrocity.

⁵³ Studies of soldier-media, particularly online videos, identify a reliance on entertainment genres like rock and ballad music-videos as well as comedy sketches (Andén-papadopoulos 2009; Christensen 2008; Kennedy, 2009).

Such scenes speak directly to the relationship between the war filmmaker's capacity to record injury, the subjects' desires to present their grievances to the outside world, and the viewers who experience the media text. While Elaine Scarry (1985) argues that the individual's experience of pain is an "unmaking of the world" that lies beyond representation, it is through documentation and the filmmaker's purposive framing that "a case for truth" can be established (Butler 2009:70). It is on this basis of affirming truth that Iraqis stand before the documentarian's camera to display injury to themselves and their families. As Guerin and Hallas (2007:10) explain, "for a witness to perform an act of bearing witness, she must address an other, a listener who consequently functions as a witness to the original witness." As viewers, we then "become witnesses through our experience of mediality, drawn into ethical and political relationships" that are dependent "on a certain faith in the veracity or truth of the coverage media offered us" (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010:62).



Figure 10: "Is he Mujahedeen?"

In spite of the prevalence of war images from Iraq, Giuliana Sgrena, an Italian journalist kidnapped by insurgents while reporting on the refugees of Fallujah, describes Iraq as "a war that cannot have witnesses". Asked if she gathered any information about Fallujah, Sgrena relates that her sources discussed "napalm-like bombs in Baghdad" and an unidentified "dust" in Fallujah, which the marines

advised them not to touch. To substantiate this hearsay, Ranucci and Torrealta then present footage of Fallujah's corpses; this footage was filmed by an Iraqi team given access to Fallujah to identify and bury the dead. The film's claims about the use of chemical weapons are then staked on the filmmakers' own brief assessment of these disturbing images. Over a montage of corpses (see Figure 11) set to mournful Arabic music, the narrator describes,

Bodies showing strange injuries, some burned to the bone, others with skin hanging from their flesh. There is no sign of bullet wounds. The faces have literally melted away, just like other parts of the body. The clothes are strangely intact.

The remainder of the film then follows various efforts to hold coalition forces accountable for war crimes in Iraq.



Figure 11: “Strange Injuries”

Questioning the capacity of Ranucci and Torrealta to assess footage of corpses for cause of death, George Monbiot (2005:online) consulted a professor of forensic pathology who concluded that the bodies most likely turned black and lost their skin through decomposition because there is no “indication that the bodies have been burnt.” Monbiot then accuses the film and the media more broadly of making a “pig's ear of the white phosphorus story” by failing to address the fact “that the use of chemical weapons was a war crime within a war crime within a war crime” regardless of whether or not it was used against civilians.

In ‘Not Every Picture Tells A Story’ Erroll Morris (2004:online) similarly cites footage of an American soldier shooting an Iraqi man in Fallujah to argue that images are “physical evidence” which “provide a point around which other pieces of

evidence collect. They are part of, but not a substitute for, an investigation.” In documentary film, the construction of a narrative around individual scenes and images attempts to direct viewers towards a particular interpretation. Unable to conclusively link any civilian deaths to white phosphorus, Ranucci and Torrealta’s narrative strategy is to present the US military in a light that makes their use of chemical weapons seem plausible. The film’s own claim to truth is then itself “hidden” in allegation, hearsay, and speculation. While most website users accept the images in the broader context of US war crimes, citing historical references to illegal interventions, some questions are also raised. Writing in 2012, one user (Antogonist) notes the inconsistency between the Fallujah footage and footage of white phosphorus casualties from the 2008-2009 Israeli assault on Gaza. Reflecting the capacity of users to perform the role of critic, this user notes the difficulty of finding sources for *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* to question, “is it propaganda being used against the USA or is it evidence of evil beyond comprehension by a country which has not cared much for civilians in the past?”

In his article, Morris goes on to assert that regardless of investigation, many people will interpret war images according to their pre-established ideological dispositions. In this regard, many users reject the film’s claims as anti-American and additionally present an alternative insiders’ view of the soldiers’ experience,

I personally took part in Phantom Fury and I say they deserved what they got...How are we (Infantry Marines/Soldiers) supposed to tell the difference between a civilian and an insurgent that wants to kill us[?] ... No civilians were purposely killed or murdered or massacred or whatever you want to call it (JB).

Others acknowledge that the destruction shown in the film is “wrong” but maintain it is necessary to fight Islamic terrorism. Linking to military articles published in the years after the assault, other users replicate the official claim that there is no evidence linking the Anglo-American bombardment to a current health crisis in Fallujah. The sharp division in these online perspectives reflects the diverging narratives about Fallujah found in medical and military literature as well as news media reports.

Although it is no longer denied that chemical weapons were used in Iraq, the “dispute” about Fallujah has shifted to the consequences. International medical reports have consistently documented a health crisis in Fallujah marked by a pronounced rise in genetic birth defects, a reduction in male births, and a rise in

cancer.⁵⁴ Yet, writing in *The Guardian* eight years after the assault former US Marine Ross Caputi⁵⁵ observed,

There has yet to be an article published in a major US newspaper, or a moment on a mainstream American TV news network, devoted to the health crisis in Fallujah. The US government has made no statements on the issue, and the American public remains largely uninformed about the indiscriminate harm that our military may have caused (Caputi 2012: online).

Fallujah thereby remains “a hidden massacre” which, within military literature, has come to represent the apparent success of the US counter-insurgency strategy. In the *Small Wars & Insurgencies* journal, for example, Daniel Green (2010:591) hails the “the successful pacification of Fallujah” as a model for future engagements while ignoring the controversies surrounding the methods used to “physically and psychologically separate the [Iraqi] people from the insurgency”.⁵⁶

In this context, the online distribution of *Fallujah: the Hidden Massacre* plays an important role in countering distorted official narratives of the war. As one user (Zach McGinnes) summarizes, *Fallujah: the Hidden Massacre* “is slightly misinformed, but ‘propaganda’ like this also contains truths not otherwise exposed on consolidated TV programming.” Much like the activist films in the previous chapter, documentary is here valued for the “relative truth” it can establish by opposing the mainstream consensus. In its online after-life, the film has also taken on new roles. Currently, there are at least twelve documentaries about Fallujah circulating online, with compilation films by US marines and the *History Channel* commemorating Fallujah as a battle and reports by independent journalists, Iraqis and former marines highlighting crimes against the population (see Appendix B). One online copy of *Fallujah: the Hidden Massacre* is preceded with an introduction by Christopher Busby, co-author of a report on the Fallujah health crisis, which extends the temporal reach of the film from conditions in 2004 to conditions in 2011. Although the user-comments indicate that people interpret the film relative to their

⁵⁴ A 2013 counter study by the WHO refuting these findings has been challenged for its methodology (see Webster 2013) and for levels of political interference by the British and the Americans (see Ahmed 2013).

⁵⁵ A founding director of The Justice for Fallujah Project, Caputi produced a 2011 documentary *Fear Not the Path of Truth: A Fallujah Veteran’s Documentary*.

⁵⁶ Currently, just two years after the withdrawal of US combat troops, Fallujah, along with parts of Ramadi, is under the control of the former Al-Qaeda affiliate Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

existing knowledge and established beliefs, online reception is also shown to support the interaction of diverging perspectives that rarely interact in official literature.

War Stories:

Iraq: The Women's Story (Ahmed & Campbell 2006)

Filmed by a non-professional Iraqi filmmaker, using the alias Zeena Ahmed, *Iraq: The Women's Story* was broadcast as part of *Channel 4's* 'Dispatches' series in May 2006. One of five 'Dispatches' documentaries about the war available online,⁵⁷ the online version of *Iraq: The Women's Story* is a pre-broadcast copy with the titles removed and the inscription "Islamic Videos.net" superimposed over the image.⁵⁸ The 48 minute film follows Ahmed's three month journey through Iraq reporting on the deteriorating conditions for women under occupation. In contrast to the passive suffering of Iraqis in many other documentaries, Ahmed's film presents a narrative of resistance and solidarity as the generation of women educated under Saddam Hussein's regime seek to bring relief to Iraq's poorest regions and to oppose religious fundamentalism. Visually, the film repeatedly invokes the gulf between American and Iraqi perspectives and through its portrait of active Iraqi women it champions secular nationalism as a mode of resistance to the occupation. The force of this representation is fundamentally related to the role of women with the broader rhetoric of the War on Terror and to the historical role of women within Iraqi society.

Iraq, Women & the War on Terror: Within an overriding "clash of civilisations" framework, the role of women has been a central feature of War on Terror discourse. This has been manifest in the co-option of feminist rhetoric to justify the War on Terror as an effort to "save" Muslim women (Eisenstein 2013; Ferguson 2005) and through the simultaneous promotion of "women warriors" within the US military (Apel 2012). In her anthropological study *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Lila Abu-Lughod (2013: 226) argues that the paradigm of saving Muslim women has "been deployed in current political projects of destructive

⁵⁷ These include: *Iraq: The Reckoning* (Brabazon 2005); *Iraq's Missing Billions* (McRae 2006); *Iraq's Death Squads* (Hawes 2010); and *Iraq's Secret War Files* (Sigsworth 2010).

⁵⁸ No longer functioning, *Islamic Videos* was established in 2006 to provide free access to documentaries, lectures, and interviews covering a wide range of social, political and religious topics.

warfare, chilling xenophobia, and lucrative humanitarianism". By setting the civilised Western world against the uncivilised Muslim world, wars of aggression and occupation take on the guise of humanitarian intervention that will save Muslim women by fighting Muslim men (Mishra 2007). In counterpoint to the apparent weakness of Muslim women in the news media, Dora Apel (2012) explores efforts to promote images of women in the US military. She argues that these female power narratives ultimately serve to suppress stories of abuse and were contradicted by the deliberate use of Western women to humiliate Muslim men at Abu Ghraib (see Gronnvoll 2007).

As outlined in *Iraq: The Women's Story*, the co-option of feminist anti-Muslim rhetoric to justify the invasion of Iraq downplayed the fact that Iraqi women have been unique among the Arab nations for asserting and exercising their rights. At the same time, the social status of Iraqi women has also been greatly influenced by war and foreign intervention. Amid the continued resistance to British rule, Iraqi women's groups had secured rights to education and employment by the 1930s (Efrati 2012). Following the overthrow of the British-backed monarchy in 1958, women attained fundamental legal rights which were further enshrined in the 1970 constitution. Under Saddam Hussein and his secularist Ba'athist party in the 1970s "there was considerable progress in the position of women in Iraq" as Hussein began a project of modernising the country by encouraging women to achieve high standards in education and employment (Sassoon 2011: 254). However, during the eight year Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), there was a shift in government policies towards women as they "carried the conflicting double burden of being the main motors of the state bureaucracy and the public sector, the main breadwinners and heads of households but also the mothers of 'future soldiers'" (Al-Ali 2007:168). Through revised marriage and reproduction laws, "the regime's ambivalent position towards women – as educated workers and mothers of future citizens – tipped towards the latter role as both the ideological climate and pragmatic needs changed" during war time (ibid.).

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the UN's imposition of financial and trade sanctions against Iraq (1990-2003) led to a decline in levels of female employment and literacy (Husein Al Jawaher 2008). As Iraq became starved of food

and medical supplies, the ensuing humanitarian crisis had a pronounced “gendered impact” (Husein Al Jawaher 2008).⁵⁹ With over half a million Iraqi children suspected to have died as a result of the sanctions, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad Denis Halliday, his successor Hans Von Sponeck, and Jutta Burghardt, head of the UN World Food Program in Iraq, all resigned. Largely ignoring this context, the *PBS* documentary *Life and Death in a War Zone* (2004 Doganis & Macrae) cites the poor quality of medical facilities in Iraq as evidence of Saddam Hussein’s neglect of his own people. The film then promotes both the care and sophisticated technology of US medical personnel as evidence of the coalition’s humanitarian mission in Iraq.

More problematically for Iraqi women, in the post-invasion period US efforts to eradicate the Ba’athist party while cultivating co-operation with religious groups and clerics resulted in the widespread curtailment of women’s rights. On this basis Ghali Hassan (2005) has accused the US of “erasing” women’s rights by supporting the resurrection of laws that inhibit women from participating in Iraqi society. *Iraq: The Women’s Story* seeks to both document and challenge this erasure through its portrayal of women actively working to alleviate the suffering of their fellow citizens.

Filming Life Under Occupation: In her introductory voice-over, Ahmed contextualises the film as follows,

I have lived in Iraq for over forty years through the regime of Saddam Hussein and the American bombing of Iraq...I have chosen not to reveal my identity to protect the contacts that have helped me make this film. I am not a professional journalist. I travel in an ordinary taxi with no security. I had to smuggle a camera through check points, be careful when filming in the open, and take cover from gun-fire. The women I met faced similar dangers every day of their lives.

This monologue is punctuated with footage of checkpoints and the nearby sound of combat. Throughout the documentary, the difficulty of filming forms a meta-narrative as Ahmed is held up at roadblocks, denied access to sites of attacks, and her interviews are interrupted by gun-fire. Despite the constant on screen presence of overhead helicopters and background gunfire, US troops are never shown. Ahmed

⁵⁹ Backed by the US, the UN introduced the Oil For Food Programme in 1995 to allow Iraq sell oil in return for food, medicine and humanitarian needs.

explains that it is dangerous to film in proximity to troops and that her film is a reaction to the American images that conceal Iraqi experiences.

The film is billed as a “journey” following 48 year old Intisar al-Araiby, a pharmacist and mother of five, who seeks to bring relief supplies to women in Al Qaem. This remote town west of Baghdad was the focus of Operation Steel Curtain, a 17 day attack engaging 2000 marines and airstrikes to stem the flow of Al-Qaeda fighters. The journey partly unfolds as a suspense narrative as the threats and obstacles faced by the filmmaker form part of the film’s evidence that the occupation is far from a liberation. Prior to setting out on her relief mission to Al Qaem, Insitar speaks of her possible death, “I ask my family to pray to God that if we get hit we will die straight away.” Many participants similarly describe the simple but defiant hopes that accompany their brushes with death. Recalling the bombing of Al Qaem’s hospital, Dr Rayya Khaked Ai-Osseilly, who runs the women’s clinic, recalls, “I noticed a plane flying overhead and I hid behind a wall. I just hoped I could see my mother before I died...but [then] I said to myself, ‘you won’t die. You are strong’”.

To “avoid being questioned or detained”, the driver is keen that Ahmed’s camera be kept hidden because “as long as the Americans are here, there is no safety.” Always referred to as “the Americans”, all the Iraqis featured in the film repeatedly assert that the US military must leave. In particular, the US occupation is continually accused of degrading Iraqi citizens. Passing a refugee camp of tents in the desert outside Al Qaem, Intisar is moved to angry tears, “these are honourable people who always had their doors open. And overnight, here in Iraq, they become homeless. Without shelter or food or a decent place to live in”. In their interactions with people from across Iraqi society, Insitar and Ahmed then seek to assert their dignity in the face of adversity.

When they arrive in the city, it is reduced to rubble prompting Insitar to mockingly comment, “look at how the American tax-payers’ money is spent.” These images of the aftermath of Operation Steel Curtain, in particular the bombing of the hospital, contrast with earlier footage, shot from behind US military lines, depicting troops loading mortars (see Figure 12). Throughout the film, the camera takes in the ruins of Iraq’s towns and cities furthering emphasising the gulf between the image of war as

combat and the civilian experience of devastation. As one contributor notes, “the Americans see things differently” while the narrator affirms, “no one sees what we are going through. All Iraqis are psychologically traumatised by what is happening.” When the crew become “stuck” and “terrified” as fighting breakouts nearby, the camera is left recording the bombed walls of a hospital ward with only the sound of gunfire heard off-camera. In such instances, the film reinforces its point that official journalists are not in Iraq to record the Iraqi’s everyday experience of war.



Figure 12: Two Views of Operation Steel Curtain

As “one of the first independent witnesses to the aftermath” of the assault in Al Qaem, Ahemd finds that, “on seeing our camera the local people were desperate to talk to us.” Standing in the ruins of the hospital’s maternity ward, the hospital director wants “to show the outside world what had happened.” In many similar instances, participants put faith in the capacity of the camera to record their testimony for the outside world. They point to the remnants of their homes and stand before sites where their loved ones were killed to refute official claims that all those killed were connected to militants. In response to these personal tragedies, the narrator quotes a statement from the US military, “civilian casualties are inevitable in a war where combatants hide among the civilian population and in some cases use them as human shields.” A local man whose pregnant sister, along with 16 others, was crushed in the rubble emphatically rejects the suggestion that the home harboured militants offering to supply certificates to prove that they were all women and children. It is based on these experiences that participants offer to give back American democracy, “we are appealing to the government and the world: why are we like this? We don’t want a democracy like this. Let them keep it.”

Many women reduced to poverty when their husbands have been killed or detained indefinitely also offer to “give back” American democracy: “What else have they done besides make houses fall, destroy things and make little children orphans? After all this we can’t expect anything from them but destruction.” The film develops a striking portrait of Iraqi women struggling to survive with large-families, no income, and a lack of food and basic supplies. In addition, the narrator explains that one third of Iraq’s maternity hospitals have been destroyed as a result of coalition bombing.

Travelling to the Shia dominated Basra the narrator finds a formerly prosperous city reduced to rubble as the homeless gather their families in the ruins of buildings without access to water or electricity. With “half of the Iraqi population [now] unemployed”, participants express nostalgia for Saddam Hussein, “when Saddam Hussein was in power I was an electrician [now] I have been unemployed for three years.” This sympathetic view of Hussein’s regime is made more forceful as the narrator explains that Basra’s majority Shia population was heavily persecuted by Hussein. In this way, the film rejects the occupation as being against the will of Iraqis from all sections of society, “for them the invasion of Iraq brought hopes of liberation and better lives but three years after the war the reality is different.”

From multiple angles, the filmmaker and her interviewees reject the view that the invasion was in any way beneficial to Iraqis. Noting that the “ranks of religious militias” are “swollen by unemployed men”, the film goes on to outline the worsening conditions for women in Basra as fundamentalists are gaining power in Iraq’s administrative services. One Basran woman, however, is keen to distinguish her own religion from the fundamentalists describing the latter as “the men who don’t fear God.” It is through the non-sectarian solidarity of Iraqis, particularly Iraqi women, that the film proposes a viable future for Iraq and, in the process, it stridently counteracts images of female victimhood.

Defying Victimhood: International reporting of “distant conflicts” has been heavily reliant on images of helpless suffering particularly suffering by women (Moeller 1999). Susan Carruthers (2011:236) observes that the news media have been predisposed to evocative images of mass suffering whereby “the innocence of

those suffering [is] a precondition for its attention”. Such hopeless suffering is then mediated through the person of the reporter who speaks on their behalf and assumes the heroic figure of rescuer. In this way, the frames of war victims, particularly civilians, are typically prescribed for them (Butler 2009). As an Iraqi film, however, *Iraq: The Women’s Story* is keen to assert the agency of Iraqi women in helping themselves. This picture of resourceful and defiant women then counteracts the rhetoric of a Western humanitarian effort to save oppressed Muslim women.

The two central figures in this narrative are the pharmacist Intisar al-Araiby and Al Qaem’s gynaecologist and surgeon Dr Rayya Khaked Ai-Osseilly. Both women represent the generation of Iraqi women educated under Saddam Hussein and both are willing to endanger their lives to bring relief to Iraq’s poorest and most devastated regions. In this way, the film outlines a class division between educated urban women and the rural poor and a more pointed generational division between women who were able to assert their rights under dictatorship and those who are now losing their rights under an increasingly fundamentalist “democracy.” To emphasise this point, images of Iraqi women at work, in education, and playing sports are contrasted with images of women suppressed by the economic and physiological impact of the war and by the encroaching religious fundamentalism (see Figure 13).



Figure 13: Two Worlds for Iraqi Women

As Insitar explains, “women are depressed because of all the things they have been put through. Especially when a member of the family is detained or killed and they have no source of income.” Without “relying on the support of outside organisations”, Insitar raises money to bring food and supplies to women who have been widowed by the war, “you cannot witness all of these things and do nothing. We have to provide what we can.” Insitar and Dr Rayya, along with the unseen filmmaker Ahmed, then represent the national solidarity of Iraqi women. They are shown cooking and eating together and when they visit the homes of poor rural widows, they sit to enjoy food “prepared [as] a special meal to feed us.” In contrast to the indignity of Iraqi victimhood and military images of insurgents, Insitar and Ahmed emphasise generosity and unity as true expressions of Iraqi identity.

With high-levels of illiteracy and strict customs preventing male doctors from treating female patients, Dr Rayya explains that she specifically chose to work with the poor of Al Qaem, “I challenged everyone by coming to Qaem. My mother worried. She didn’t approve of my coming here. But ... I’m attracted to hotspots because they usually have a shortage of doctors. The doctor who comes here is considered a fighter.” Supporting her point, the local residents express deep affection for Dr Rayya and the male nurses describe her as their inspiration for staying. Intisar is more emphatic in presenting her opposition to the occupation in terms of Iraqi nationalism, “if I am prevented from doing what I want to do. I will take a weapon and defend my country”. There is, however, an unsettling strand to Insitar’s defiance as she calls on young Iraqi boys to resist the Americans. Recalling the nationalistic imperative of women during the Iran-Iraq War to raise “future soldiers” (Al-Ali 2007), Insitar delivers a brief but rousing sermon to a chorus of boys standing in the rubble of Al Qaem’s hospital (see Figure 14). The dialogue unfolds as follows (as translated in the subtitles):

- Boys:** It’s not right that a hospital should be bombed. Children and babies. It’s not right. Those Americans have come to destroy everything.
- Insitar:** Will you resist them or not?
- Boys:** Yes! We will resist them.
- Insitar:** You’ll resist them until they leave our country?
- Boys:** Yes.

Insitar: This exists the world over. Would any man want his home occupied?

Boys: No.

Insitar: It's impossible. So tell the Americans, 'destroy whatever you want but don't destroy what's within our hearts. We have to fight until you leave!' No matter what they do, no matter how much destruction they cause.

Already deeply anti-American with an entrenched sense of injustice, the boys clap and cheer presumably doomed to become the next generation of fighters in Iraq. Nevertheless, Insitar's sermon is also a performance for the Western camera. She turns to smile afterwards having established her point to the outside world that an occupying army will not defeat an entire nation.



Figure 14: “Will You Resist Them Or Not?”

In Basra, the film goes on to outline the efforts of women to stay in education and to continue playing sports when faced with intimidation from religious fundamentalists. As attendance falls, female teachers describe their plans to segregate girls in an effort to keep them participating. The evidence of this encroaching fundamentalism is captured in graffiti on the walls of bombed out buildings and the testimony of young university women who recall receiving death threats for practicing sports and for not wearing the hijab. Commenting upon these circumstances, the narrator relates that “Iraq was one of the few Arab societies where educated women could have a career.”

Focusing on one exceptional family, the narrator introduces “a progressive father” who continues to train his daughters at the athletics track. His wife, a former championship runner who represented Iraq at international events, asserts that she cannot deny her daughters the same experiences she once enjoyed. Over footage of

the parents coaching the girls alongside male athletes, the father is emphatic that he will keep training his daughters,

They just want us to cover up our women. Dress them in the Hijab and shut [them] in the house to cook and raise kids. But we're past thinking about threats. We still come to the track...If we allow these threats to weaken us nobody would go anywhere or do anything.

Despite his defiant words, the expression on the father's face and the overall tone of this sequence holds little hope for a happy future for either the family or the wider region. It does, however, serve to reaffirm the film's overall vision of Iraqi solidarity and defiance in the face of occupation and fundamentalism. This individual story of bravery then takes on a meaning for all Iraqis who seek a return to normalcy while offering the outside world a "progressive" view of Iraqi men.

Following the many stories of courage and suffering, the final scene returns to a widow from Al Qaem who is taken to her husband's grave for the first time. As the woman mourns, the narrator explains, "the destruction caused by the occupation has shattered Iraqis' lives in a way that is almost too much to bear. A dark future lies ahead. I believe it is a shame on the world that it did not stop this happening." While accusing the world of gross negligence, the narrator is not now asking for any international assistance beyond bearing witness to conditions in Iraq. Ultimately, the film calls for the Americans to leave and proposes a vision for rebuilding the Iraqi nation through the work of the middle-class Iraqis who have stayed in the country and the willingness of Iraqis more generally to be more loyal to their country and their families than any sectarian allegiances.

In purely textual terms, there are clearly different levels of agency at work in the documentary witnessing of Iraqi suffering. Following the logic of raising awareness, *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* points to Iraqi suffering in the expectation that the rest of world will be compelled to do something. Consequently, the Iraqi subjects stand passively before the camera allowing us to witness their suffering. An alternative mode of witnessing and agency is found in *Iraq: the Women's Story*. In this film, it is not suffering that is documented so much as Iraqi attitudes to their own suffering. In other words, the film does not ask us to witness Iraqi suffering but to witness Iraqi's defiance and perseverance. Throughout, the narrator refers to "we

Iraqis”. This, of course, is part of the film’s implicit political argument in favouring of ending American occupation.

While the images of suffering and atrocity in *Fallujah: The hidden Massacre* stimulated rather abstract debates among users about insurgents and war crimes, the stories of Iraqi women in this film elicit more empathetic responses of human solidarity. One user (N) directly addresses “the women of this documentary” to assert, “as an American, I want you to know, we didn't all support this ... Our media here is so filtered, most of us didn't know the truth from a lie. I am so sorry for your pain and our ignorance.” The bravery of the women and the filmmaker are also highlighted by users who frequently replicate Insitar’s sarcastic view of American democracy. One user further links the film’s representation to a wider war of imperialism against Muslims,

And for sure this is an American dream coming true by destroying houses, hospitals and many more yet to happen ... No matter what they do, we Muslims are still terror[ists] and we make jihad for fun. Well the truth is [the] American government is the real terror to mankind like it was Britain once (Malik).

A minority of users, however, contest the portrayal of Americans and blame instead the Muslim faith for the conditions Iraqis live in,

It's because of the U.S. presence the individuals in this documentary are able to speak out without threat of physical harm. The men of Iraq are portrayed as caring. The Muslim faith does not allow it. The liberal press strikes again. (Lucifer’s Hammer).

Most users however, American and international, express disillusionment with the project of spreading Western democracy and, citing the positive work of the participants in the film, hope for stability and peace in Iraq. However, in the years since *Iraq: the Women’s Story* first aired, a number of books and reports have continued to highlight the deteriorating conditions for Iraqi women (Abouzeid 2009; Al-Ali & Pratt 2008; Hassan 2005; Kiefer 2011; Zangana 2011). The enduring presence of the documentary online substantiates these accounts with vivid witness testimony while also continuing to challenge the prevailing use of Muslim women as a rhetorical tool of Western foreign policy.

Conclusion:
Remembering War Through Commemoration or Archive

Although war is often discussed as an absolute entity, it is essentially a descriptive term pertaining to a series of often loosely connected events initiated by the declaration of war. On this understanding, it is possible to make a distinction between the fragmented nature of documentaries reporting different aspects of the unfolding war, such as conditions in Fallujah in 2004 or conditions for women in 2005, with efforts to define or commemorate the total war. Using the terminology of language philosopher John Searle (1995), legacy documentaries explore war as an “institutional fact”, whereby war is a descriptive or consensus term referring to a distinct period of combat, and documentary war reports explore war at the level of “brute facts”, whereby buildings are bombed and injuries are incurred. Working with a similar distinction, Elaine Scarry (1985: 63) describes war as a structural relation between the “collective casualties that occur within war”, and the abstract verbalised issues like freedom and sovereignty “that stand outside war.” Yet, as Ted Remington (2011) argues, it is the concept of war as a metaphorical contest with notions of beginning and ending, winning and losing, that has “mystified” events in Iraq since 2003.

For the past century, national television retrospectives have held greatest power to memorialise and define the public image of past wars. More recently, however, efforts to memorialise ongoing conflicts as past events place even greater emphasis on “the politics of war memory” (Ashplant et al. 2000:1). For example, in a highly presumptive effort at iconic programming, *PBS’ 2004 documentary *The Invasion of Iraq** (Sanders) “promises to be a definitive television history of America’s most recent war”. Nine years later, a number of media outlets were inspired by the ten year anniversary of the Iraq invasion to cast a retrospective eye on the conflict. These, of course, are many of the same news outlets accused of failing to adequately question both the case for war and the legitimacy of the occupation. While largely divesting

itself of responsibility then, the news media has presented neat-narratives of the war as a historical British and American event.⁶⁰

The *BBC*'s three-part series *The Iraq War* (2013) draws heavily on the testimony of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and former US Vice-President Dick Cheney to address the apparently troublesome question of why Saddam Hussein failed to confirm that Iraq did not possess WMD. The series further accuses Iraqi informants of misleading British and American intelligence thereby shifting blame for the war onto the Iraqis themselves. Less receptive to the views of those who defined the case for war, *MSNBC*'s *Hubris* (2013) comes full circle to meet the activist films produced a decade earlier by arguing that the war was the result of neo-conservative "hawks". However, with the neo-conservatives out of office, the film finds little reason to mention the continued operation of US forces in Iraq or the continuation of the War on Terror under Barack Obama. By commemorating the Iraq War as a past event, filmmakers and news organisations like the *BBC* and *MSNBC* largely foreclose the need for reporting the ongoing conflict in Iraq. This also feeds into the official rhetoric that what happens in Iraq is now the responsibility of Iraqis. In stark contrast to the enthusiasm for remembering a past conflict, 2013 proved to be the deadliest year in Iraq since the height of the insurgency in 2006.⁶¹ Regarding the ease with which conflicts may be transformed into more palatable past events, Nico Carpentier and George Tenzier (2005:1) observe that, "every recent, highly mediated war has generated the same impenetrable vicious cycle of enthusiasm and fascination, frustration, remorse and excuses, followed by the formulation of new good intentions for the next war or conflict."

Historically, there has been a tendency to place value on the comprehensiveness of the individual war documentary which reflects the broader tendency within cultural discourse to uphold the canonical status of individual texts. Writing in *The Guardian* in 2007, John Patterson bemoaned the Iraq War's failure to produce a "landmark"

⁶⁰ In contrast to this, *Al Jazeera*'s reflection on the conflict, *Iraq: After the Americans* (2012) focuses on conditions on the ground as does the online multi-media magazine *Vice* through its documentary *In Saddam's Shadow: Ten Years After the Invasion* (2013).

⁶¹ Exactly ten years after the invasion, on the 19th of March 2013, as the outside world indulged in reflection on a past war, a wave of explosions in Baghdad killed 56 people and wounded over 200.

equivalent of *In the Year of the Pig*. In many ways, however, the expectation of a definitive or comprehensive documentary works against progressive reflection on a complex unfolding event like the war in Iraq. Although only partial reflection of documentary production, the informal open-archive of films preserved on documentary-viewing websites offers a multi-layered perspective on the evolving conflict while supporting the expression of different ideological perspectives and interpretations. In contrast to the erasures and limitations of a single narrative, the archive extends across topics constituting a broad piecemeal approach that does not promise to be definitive or conclusive. In this way, the freely accessible documentary archive furthers the pedagogical role of the war documentary by fostering a piecemeal understanding of war that is based on a multiplicity of individual contributions and furthers the public sphere role of documentary by contesting the institutional power of TV retrospectives to define the meaning of past wars. This is possible because “recent conflicts and warfare are at once already networked in their initial mediation” and are “constructed and contested more immediately and more continuously through [their] digital diffusion” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:119).

In addition, the “databasing the world” (Bowker 2006: 22) through the digitisation of older content enables documentary-viewing websites to highlight connections and overlaps across the history of archived documentary content. The search for Iraq War documentaries on *Top Documentary Films*, for example, returns documentaries about historical wars and broader cultural contexts in which the Iraq War may be contextualised. It would seem that these older documentaries appear in the search returns because users have forged connections between past and present by referencing Iraq in their comments about other films. In addition to films about Vietnam, these include documentaries about the international arms industry (*Flying the Flag: Arming the World* Pilger & Munro 1995); the 1979-1989 Soviet war in Afghanistan (*Wars In Peace* Sheridan 1995); the impact of UN sanctions on Iraq (*Paying The Price: Killing the Children of Iraq* Lowery 2000); the use and consequences of aerial bombing in Laos (*Bombies: The Secret War* Silberman 2002); as well as more general historical films about Iraq like *Iraq: Cradle of Civilization* (Spry-Leverton 1991) and contemporary films about drone warfare like *Al Jazeera’s America’s War Games* (Abehouse 2013). In addition to shaping “the kind of stories we tell about the past” (Bowker 2006:1), the online archiving of

content can shape the contexts in which we understand the present and it is this contextual understanding that undermines the effort of commemorative documentaries to bracket off the Iraq War as a singular, if regrettable, past event.

In her online essay ‘Seeing, Counting, Taking Time: Memory and the Iraq War’, Marita Sturken (2010) argues that,

The memorialisation of the ongoing, unresolved, and now largely ignored war in Iraq reveals this tension of visibility and erasure. On the one hand, the Iraq War has been the source of vast numbers of images, including nonprofessional images circulated through digital networks ...On the other hand, the war has been subject to traditional forms of censorship, including restrictions on photojournalists and the banning of images (Sturken 2010: online).

The documentaries discussed in chapters five and six, and to a lesser extent chapter four, directly address this tension between what is visible and what is erased. The key textual strategy of these films is to work with, and often contradict, existing mediations of war to contest what has been or is being erased. While the online accumulation of these films potentially offsets the erasures and limitations of individual war narratives, there are also certain challenges for notions of authenticity and credibility in the archiving of digitised content. Writing prior to the widespread adoption of digital cameras, Marita Sturken (1996: 4) proposed that independent video constituted a field of cultural memory that could contest official history by exploring “the politics of memory and identity, the elusiveness of personal memory, and the relationship of camera images to national and cultural memory”. This seems a particularly apt description for the photographs and digital videos emerging from the Iraq War as “witness footage”, whether by coalition forces, civilians, insurgents, or journalists. At the same time, however, the abundance of war imagery and the ease with which war documentaries can redefine narratives of war echoes Jean Baudrillard’s (1995) notion of a postmodern media war in which images replace the real.

Apart from the capacity to historicise faulty narratives, the widespread re-mediation of war images produces a semiological crisis for the project of documentary history. The same archive media clips are recycled across numerous Iraq War documentaries. For example, the conspiracy film *The New American Century* (Mazzucco 2007) is composed almost entirely of scenes from other films while the activist film *Bush*

Family Fortunes (Grandison & Palast 2004) draws on footage from a BBC documentary of the same name as well as *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Unprecedented* (Greenwald 2000). In this way, films which are already heavily reliant on re-mediated footage become a source for additional compilation films. It would appear then that the power of media institutions to define the meaning of past wars has shifted to a postmodern flux of narrative view-points which, often using the same images, claim to reveal the real history of war. The unofficial, and somewhat inadvertent, war memory project that emerges from documentary-viewing websites is then entirely dependent on the veracity of individual documentaries and the capacity of users to assess films that often rely on the same corpus of war images.

CHAPTER SIX: DOCUMENTARY & THE INFORMATION-MEDIA WAR

In the past decade, digital technologies have radically shifted the dynamics of information gathering and control. Digital technologies now support the twin capacity for government omniscience, typified by the unprecedented levels of global surveillance conducted by the US National Security Agency (NSA), and for public exposure, typified by the equally unprecedented leaking of government and military data by *WikiLeaks*. Between these two poles, the “real-time” news media environment is already beset with pressures and limitations arising from the relentless flow of 24 hour news and an increasingly competitive marketplace (Cushion & Lewis 2010; Rai & Cottle 2007). This chapter assesses how documentary makers have responded to the leaking of war information to present critical narratives about media coverage of the Iraq War. *The War You Don't See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010) appeals to de-classified and suppressed information to challenge the news media for its biased portrayal of the war while *Iraq's Secret War Files* (2010) critically interrogates the gap between the US military's records of war and its public pronouncements. Following on from the textual arguments of war-reports discussed in the previous chapter, these films emphasise the capacity of images to both conceal and reveal war by re-examining previous war representations in light of new or alternative information. The chapter concludes by assessing how amateur conspiracy films reflect the extension, and distortion, of investigative war documentaries by calling on notions of mainstream media bias and alternative visual evidence to oppose official narratives.

The Information War: During war time, militaries typically attempt to control information by restricting or managing what details are available to the news media and the public. There is also, however, a convergence of various interests between the news media and the military/government (Herman & Chomsky 1988). Tracing this convergence of interest back to the 1989 Spanish-American War, Deepa Kumar (2006:49) argues that “what is significant about the Iraq War is the depth and scope of duplicity.” Studies of propaganda prior to and during the Iraq War highlight the use of briefing sessions, misinformation, planted stories, embedding and denial of

access as features of the information war (Carruthers 2011; DiMaggio 2008; Hiebert 2003; Kumar 2006). The strategic construction of this information-media environment represents a confluence of trends that have been emerging since the 1980s.

Information Operations: While the military's advancement of information technologies is not new, William Hutchinson (2006:213) explains that the concept of "information warfare" took shape in the 1980s and became a "living" concept during the 1990 Gulf War. Married to the rhetoric of "clean precision" weaponry, the military doctrine of Revolution in Military Affairs advocated a technological transformation of military organisation and strategy to embrace the capacity for "network-centric warfare" afforded by emerging information systems (see Quille 1998). Amid the nexus of "electronic warfare, military deception, psychological operations and information/operational security", the US military, followed by others, hoped to attain a "battlefield edge" (Hutchinson 2006:213).⁶² The information technology-driven Revolution in Military Affairs was then complimented with a renewed emphasis on controlling information about war through "media management" (Kumar 2006; Maltby 2012b). As Ron Matthews observes (2001:4), "what was originally a 'military' technology revolution has now evolved to capture information and media warfare, military doctrinal and organisational change, civil industry, and dual-use technologies".

At the outset of the War on Terror the goals of using information technology in the battlefield and the goal of managing public information came together in "information operations". As reporter Maud Beelman (2001) explained at the time,

The military's growing fondness for a discipline it calls 'Information Operations'... groups together information functions ranging from public affairs (PA, the military spokespersons' corps) to military deception and psychological operations, or PSYOP. What this means is that people whose job traditionally has been to talk to the media and divulge truthfully what they are able to tell now work hand-in-glove with those whose job it is to support battlefield operations with information, not all of which may be truthful (Beelman 2001:16).

⁶² For Jean Baudrillard (1995) it was the chasm, rather than the edge, between the technological advancements of US military and the traditional Iraqi army that partly led him to declare that the First Gulf War "did not take place".

By the time of the Iraq War, the Pentagon commissioned a Hollywood art director to design the “set” for press briefing at Centcom, the US military’s Central Command base in Doha, Qatar. In *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, Paul Rutherford (2004) compares these military’s information briefings to a “marketing” exercise while Eldon Hiebert (2003:243) observes that “staging showy briefings, emphasizing visual and electronic media, and making good television out of it” had become vital to the military’s war effort. On this basis, the military doctrine of “shock and awe” simultaneously functioned as a battlefield strategy designed to overwhelm adversaries through the relentless force of fire-power and as a media strategy packaged for 24 hour television news and designed to overwhelm viewers with the spectacle of firepower (Compton 2004; Jaramillo 2009; Kellner 2004).

The Virtual Media War: The above conditions appear to substantiate the prognosis of a “military-industrial media complex” (Der Derian 2001; 2009; Leslie 1997) whereby the news and entertainment media cultivate cultural militarism. For James Der Derian (2009), the sanitisation of war in Western news reporting is part of a broader re-conceptualisation of war in the 1990s as a bloodless and virtuous enterprise. The sanitisation of war is partly driven by the increased use of abstract and detached military language like “collateral damage” and partly by developments in military technologies which helped to obscure war through images. Discussing the relationship between war and technology, Paul Virilio (1989:7) argues that “the history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception” in which war weaponry are not just tools “of destruction but also of perception”, which ultimately give rise to an “aesthetics of disappearance”.

Taking up this view, Jean Baudrillard (1995:41) argues that the confluence of military technologies and an ever-present news media during the First Gulf War de-realised events in Iraq because “war, when it has been turned into information, ceases to be a realistic war and becomes a virtual war...we are left with the symptomatic reading on our screens of the effects of war, or the effects of discourse about the war, or completely speculative strategic evaluations.” In the documentaries discussed below, the filmmakers devise various textual strategies that allow them to visually represent the effects of war while simultaneously countering the tendency for images to de-realise war.

The New News Media Information War: As outlined in chapters one and four, many studies have analysed the distorted nature of news coverage prior to and during the Iraq War. Much of this work affirms the propaganda function of state and corporate mass media outlined by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988). However, without negating the enduring relevance of Herman and Chomsky's framework, it is clear that the relationship between the government/military, the news media and the public has been fundamentally realigned by the evolution of a networked digital media environment. As new information emerges through networks of digital media, there are more pronounced fractures in the military-mass media relationship.⁶³ Ironically, it is the same information technologies developed and endorsed by the military that now subvert the military's capacity to control information including its own classified information. The publication of the Abu Ghraib photographs and the leaking of classified material epitomise the unpredictable flows of contemporary war communication which is now diffused "through a complex mesh of our everyday media" (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010:18).

WikiLeaks: It is the development of the whistle-blowing non-profit *WikiLeaks* that has gained the most attention for seeming to subvert government and military affairs while reconstituting the discipline of journalism. For C.W Anderson (2010) *WikiLeaks* is the culmination of efforts begun by *Indymedia* a decade earlier to "hack journalistic cultures" with alternative sources and practices (see also Brevini et al. 2013). In April 2010 *WikiLeaks* came to public prominence when it released the thirty-eight minute gun-sight footage of an Apache helicopter shooting twelve civilians, including two Reuters reporters, in a suburb of Baghdad. The statement accompanying the video, now known as *Collateral Murder*, highlighted the inability of Reuters to obtain a copy of the video through appeals to Freedom of Information. While the *Collateral Murder* video encapsulates the evocative power of images to "speak" to war, *WikiLeaks* succession of military leaks mark a shift from an image war to a data war. In July 2010, 76,900 military documents were compiled and released as the "Afghan War Diary" followed by 391, 832 classified "Iraq War logs"

⁶³ Perhaps unsurprisingly, military theorists are keen to assess the possibilities of "diffused warfare" (see Ya'ari & Assa 2007).

in October. The co-operation between *WikiLeaks* and established news outlets to publicise these documents reflects the complex relationship that is emerging between radical oppositional media and traditional news media.

In this context, Yochai Benkler (2012:380) places *WikiLeaks* at the centre of “the battle over the soul of the networked fourth estate” arguing that the future of journalism lies in “the surviving elements of the traditional, mass-mediated fourth estate, and its emerging networked models”. While websites like *WikiLeaks* represent “a new vulnerability” for governments, security organs and corporate institutions (Gowing 2009:6), legal scholar Alasdair Roberts (2012:116) identifies “the illusion of a new era in transparency” because “in its undigested form, information has no transformative power at all.” While *Iraq’s Secret War Files* attempts to make sense of the data by fashioning it into a visual narrative for viewers, Roberts pessimistically concludes that the failure of the leaks to resonate with the public and the extent of the US government’s crackdown on whistleblowers exposes as false the expectation that knowledge and information can radically change politics. Nevertheless, although the documentaries discussed below may not instigate any radical change, they reflect the modest pedagogical goal of alerting viewers to the operation of war propaganda while affirming the alternative under-written history of the Iraq War.

Documentaries About War Media: The propagandising relationship between the military and the mass media is one of the most prominent themes found in the online archives of Iraq War documentaries. A number of documentaries have explored a set of overlapping academic theses about corporate media bias, cultural militarism and the “the military-media industrial complex”. With a strong emphasis on critical literacy, *War Made Easy* (Alper & Earp 2007) examines the dissemination of pro-war propaganda highlighting common features of war rhetoric such as the demonization of an enemy. *War Is Sell* (Standing 2004) similarly traces the history and tactics of war propagandists attempting “to win hearts and minds” while the relationship between the “military industrial complex” and Hollywood is explored in Roger Stahl’s *Militainment* (2007) and *Al Jazeera’s Hollywood & the War Machine*

(Bishara 2010). The satirical film *Military Intelligence & You* (Kutzera 2006) uses World War II propaganda films to critique propaganda about the Iraq War.

In the immediate aftermath of the Iraq invasion, a number of documentaries critiqued the corruption of American news media: *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (Greenwald 2004) and *Weapons of Mass Deception* (Schechter 2004) highlight the corrosive influence of corporate media while a lecture by *Democracy Now's* Amy Goodman, championing *Independent Media in a Time of War* (Hudson Mohawk IMC 2003), is featured on two documentary-viewing websites. The nature of war reporting in Iraq has been critiqued in the French film *Enemy Image* (Daniels 2005), which compares television footage of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq to highlight the tightening of military control on war coverage; in *Control Room* (Noujaim 2004) which contrasts *Al-Jazeera's* coverage of the war with military PR efforts; in the short-film *Iraq: A Tale of Censorship* (Poland 2007) in which a public affairs soldier relates his experience of military censorship; and in the BBC's *War Spin: Saving Private Jessica: Fact or fiction?* (Kampfner 2003) which challenges the Pentagon's version of the Jessica Lynch story. More recently, in *Buying the War* (Hughes 2007) and *The War You Don't See* (Lowery & Pilger 2010), journalists Bill Moyers and John Pilger return to the Iraq invasion to admonish journalists and media institutions for replicating government lies about Iraq.

All of these films reflect the critical consensus that corporate media is inadequate for democracy and fundamentally biased in its war reporting. Since the publication of the *WikiLeaks* documents, some films have addressed the parameters of the new information war regarding Iraq. These include *Iraq's Secret War Files* which works with the *WikiLeaks* data to reassess the Iraq War; *WikiLeaks: The Forgotten Man Bradley Manning* (Harley 2012) by the Australian ABC network and the 'The Intelligence War', which was broadcast as part of *Al Jazeera's* series 'The 9/11 Decade' (2011). More broadly, the "security threat" posed by digital media networks has also been explored in the BBC series *Generation Jihad* (Taylor 2010) which investigates "the terrorist threat from young Muslims radicalised on the web".

As mediations on war representation, both *The War You Don't See* and *Iraq's Secret War Files* call on the “instantly iconic” shock value of Iraq War images while also re-framing these images in light of new information to create an on-going process of re-looking at war. Contrary to ideas about a deluge of information and compassion fatigue, these filmmakers demonstrate textual strategies that can interrogate and reinvigorate war images and narratives. In the process, the remediation of war representations forms a new narrative which can investigate and make sense of war information.

Challenging The Newsmakers:

The War You Don't See (Lowery & Pilger 2010)

A companion piece to the 2007 documentary *The War on Democracy* (Martin & Pilger), *The War You Don't See* presents John Pilger's interrogation of the British and American news media for their coverage of the Iraq War and, to a lesser extent, the Afghan and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Arguing that television news is implicated in cultures of militarisation, Pilger challenges journalists to explain why they did not question official accounts of the Iraq War and simultaneously champions the suppressed work of independent reporters. A veteran war correspondent, Pilger has reported on war and conflict since 1967 and has collaborated on more than 55 documentaries, twenty of which are available on *Top Documentary Films*. In this regard, Pilger is held in high-esteem by *Top Documentary Films* users reflecting Tim Markham's (2012) view that veteran war correspondents engage values of authority, authenticity and morality for viewers.

Released simultaneously on Britain's *ITV* network and in select British cinemas, *The War You Don't See* received minimal, and mostly dismissive, reviews in the British press (Crace 2010; Loyd 2010). In 2011 Pilger directed an open letter “to Noam Chomsky and the general public” highlighting the cancellation of the film's American debut at the Lannan Foundation, New Mexico. In this regard, one user echoes the sentiment of many others when recommending the film as “essential viewing”:

I just wanted to say that as long as this film is allowed to make its appearance again, it's up to us the people who watched to re post it as much as we can on other sites, or anywhere else that lets you do that. This will never get time on *PBS* or any of the others, so this is the only way people will see it. This should

be mandatory viewing for every American, but sadly most Americans will never see it (Wayne).

Top Documentary Films users also prove highly receptive to Pilger's invocation of journalistic values. Users familiar with his work describe him as a "hero of journalism" and even those who express reservations about his ideology offer admiration for his integrity. Journalistic integrity is also the central value espoused in the film as Pilger challenges war reporters for failing to their job.

Collateral Murder & War Illusions: Pilger's central argument is that the news media, television news in particular, are implicated in cultures of militarisation to such an extent that they create and sustain illusions of war. Throughout the film, he highlights key news media illusions about the Iraq War and reveals contemporaneous counter-information that was not revealed to the public. A number of critics assert that had this substantial evidence against the war been circulated by the media, it would not have been possible for the British and American governments to justify the invasion. Instead, as Pilger outlines, the Iraq War presented to the public was based on a successive set of deceptions about Iraq's links to Al Qaeda and possession of WMD and the occupation's status as a liberation and a "clean war."

Working with the key distinction between journalists who seek to reveal truth and journalists who spin official lines, Lowery and Pilger make extensive use of montage sequences. In particular, black and white photographs of Iraqi civilians are used to contrast the bombast and spectacle of TV news reporting. The juxtaposition of different kinds of media footage – specifically video and photographs – is also used to emphasise tonal differences in attitudes towards civilians. The film opens silently with the inscription "Baghdad 2007 Unreported Apache Gunship Attack" leading into a short extract from the *Collateral Murder* video. As the helicopter's grainy camera hovers before a group of men, a voice commands, "see all those people standing down there...Once you get on 'em, just open 'em up...Light 'em all up." As the rounds hit the men creating a cloud of dust, the camera-gun picks out men who are still moving while a voice instructs, "keep shooting, keep shooting".

The next scene cuts to a montage of crisp black and white photographs depicting wounded and distressed Iraqi civilians. This tonal shift affords greater reference to

the Iraqi people and so highlights all the more the casual disregard for Iraqi life evident in the *Collateral Murder* video. The montage culminates in a slow tracking zoom on a photograph of a young girl half buried in the rubble with adult hands framing her face as they dig her out (see Figure 15). This image, which fades into the film's title, serves as an allegory for the Iraqi casualties that are hidden by the news media and the process of uncovering them through independent investigation.



Figure 15: Uncovering Casualties

Lowery and Pilger's striking use of black and white photography to contest the derealisation of Iraqis in the *Collateral Murder* video relies on the capacity of the still image to offer a fixed and constant "neat slice of time" in contrast to the moving image's "stream of underselected images, each of which cancels out the next" (Sontag 1979/1977:17-18). As a textual strategy, the use of black and white photography also feeds into two modes of historicity mobilised throughout the film: the historicity of the image as a captured moment and the historicity of the Iraq War as the most recent manifestation of the West's underreported or misreported wars.

Following the prologue, the black and white images from Iraq are linked to black and white archive representations of "the slaughter known as the First World War." Here too, there is a contrast between the moving image and the still image. Footage from the state propaganda film *The Battle of the Somme* (Mallins & McDowell 1916) depicts jovial soldiers marching to the front while a series of photographs reveal and

preserve the grim fate they found in the trenches.⁶⁴ In championing the photograph as a record of war, Pilger is not suggesting that images alone are sufficient representations of war. He notes the broader effort by military propagandists and war correspondents to not report that soldiers were frequently heard to cry “for their mothers as they died on the battle field.” Emphasising the gulf between the war as it experienced or witnessed and the war as it is seen by the public, he quotes British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, “if people really knew the truth, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don’t know and can’t know.” Tracing continuity between Iraq and the First World War then serves to underscore the film’s point about the long-established relationship between state propaganda, media compliance and public attitudes towards war.

Throughout the film, the historicity of the still image - the moment captured - is set against the ephemeral cycle and bombastic style of television news. In one notable sequence, the filmmakers intercut network news footage of the Iraq War with crisp black and white photographs of Iraqi casualties (see Figure 16). Two of these network news clips are cited in a number of other war documentaries: in the first, a *Fox News* anchor suggests the US military should use “a MOAB, a mother of all bombs, a few daisy cutters, you know, let’s not just stop at a couple of cruise missiles” while in the second, an *MSNBC* correspondent enthuses about military weaponry and describes himself “falling in love” with a fighter plane. In this context, the black and white photographs are a means to re-see and reassess the mediation of war. By lingering on the still images, the film camera endows the photographic representation with an “even greater power than a photograph alone, as each medium of remediation adds another cycle of fixing the gaze anew” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:24). In this way, the photographs also allow the filmmakers to draw attention to, and afford respect to, the Iraqi casualties that went unseen, and remain unseen, on television news. As independent journalist Dahr Jamail affirms, “the war we don’t see in Iraq is the massive toll on civilians daily. Even now people are being wounded and killed because of this occupation”.

⁶⁴ Pilger here assumes that the British audience uncritically accepted the film’s propaganda function. As noted in chapter two, however, Susan Carruthers (2011) identified a complex range of reactions to this particular documentary.



Figure 16: Representing War: Illusion & Actuality

In a similar sequence, Pilger contrasts recent Hollywood representations of war like *The Hurt Locker* - “the familiar story of a psychopath high on violence in someone else’s country where the suffering of its people barely exists” – with the work of independent photojournalist Guy Smallman. Smallman’s work in Afghanistan is presented as a valuable if incomplete record of atrocity. Absent in the images is Smallman’s lasting impression of the striking silence, the “pungent smell of death” and the children who seem “to have all the energy drained out of them” as “they would stare right through me and my translator...they didn’t laugh, they barely spoke at all”. Asked why he thinks audiences are disengaged from distant conflicts, Smallman suggests that people are not given the images and eyewitness accounts to really “connect” with news reports about bombings.

It requires independent journalists then to puncture the military’s efforts to de-realise war for the public. The symbiotic relationship between “the military industrial

complex” and the news media, however, are shown to inhibit such eye-witness reporting. A former CIA analyst, Professor Melvin Goodman, estimates that “80 to 90 percent of what you read in the newspaper is officially inspired” because critical journalists are denied access and most “journalists like to be part of the game, part of the inside crowd.” The notion of the war reporter being “part of the game” is frequently illustrated through archive footage of live war reports. We are invited to contrast the enthusiasm for war, and for the “game” of reporting it, exhibited by these journalists with the solemn reflective attitude of war witnesses like Guy Smallman. In this way, journalistic integrity is mobilised through a lens of basic moral integrity.

Pilger argues that the coverage of war on television news is a meaningless visual construction in the same way that Colin Powell’s presentation of graphs and satellite images purporting to reveal WMD “were meaningless”.⁶⁵ In reference to footage of 9/11 used to seemingly link the attacks to Saddam Hussein, media historian Stuart Ewen explains that “when you start using symbols that have been separated from their meaning and have taken on a life of their own, the facts don’t matter anymore.” Taking the media portrayal of Iraq’s “liberation” and the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Baghdad as a case in point, Pilger questions *BBC World Affairs* correspondent Rageh Omaar about the nature of his reporting. Omaar confesses spiritedly, “I put my hands up ... I didn’t really do my job properly” but goes on to describe the fall of Baghdad as “a made for TV moment.” In reference to the footage of an American flag draped over Hussein’s toppled statue, Omaar describes it as “an iconic moment” because “America had taken ownership of Iraq”. While seeming to concede to Pilger’s point about distorted reporting, Omaar also attempts to retrospectively add nuance and critique to reports that were entirely praiseworthy of the American mission. In contrast to the media’s receptiveness to the “iconic moment”, Pilger quotes the US military’s own report on the event, which describes a “media circus” with “almost as many reporters as Iraqis”. The report also affirms that that it was not Iraqis but an American psychological operations officer who ordered the statue to be pulled down.

⁶⁵ In *Uncovered* (Greenwald 2003/2004), former CIA analysts deconstruct Powell’s presentation arguing that anyone skilled in reading such images would reject their credibility.

Questioning the capacity of British and American media to report a war involving their nations' troops, Pilger notes "that the invaders met courageous resistance was not news at all. Viewers did not get a sense of the sheer scale of the suffering of ordinary people." Instead, Pilger and his interviewees acknowledge a relentless flow of immediate but unverified information. Consequently, Rageh Omaar is somewhat embarrassed to admit that the *BBC* inaccurately reported the fall of Basra to British forces seventeen times. Omaar explains, "within 24 hours news, when you are reporting it for the seventh time, in that chain of seventeen times when the city has fallen falsely, the fact that it's been wrong the previous [six] times just doesn't matter." As the film develops then, the power of the still image becomes more apparent for its function as a counterpoint to the flux of news media illusion and noise.

Journalism on Trial: In his opening monologue to camera, Pilger stands before a bank of bright television screens to question:

What is the role of the media in rapacious wars like Iraq and Afghanistan? Why do so many journalists beat the drums of war and not challenge the spin and lies of governments? And how are the crimes of war reported and justified when they are our crimes?

Much of the analysis in *The War You Don't See* is then pitched as an investigation on behalf of the viewer. Noting that "the cartoon journalism of *Fox* [news] can overshadow the fact that the respectable media has played a critical role in promoting war", Pilger directs his attention at more reputable news outlets. This allows him to tease out of his interviewees their professed journalistic values and then challenge them regarding their performance in Iraq. Perhaps the most forceful aspect of the film, Pilger's challenging of journalists who reported or replicated falsehoods about Iraq stands out for website users who register a sense of satisfaction both in Pilger's relentless pursuit and the interviewees' evident discomfort.

The *Observer's* David Rose grimaces awkwardly as Pilger reads back to him his own words defining the Iraq invasion as "an occasion in history when the use of force is both right and sensible". Dan Rather, praised by Pilger for "standing up to power" in the past, is similarly uncomfortable as Pilger quotes him as saying, "George Bush is the president and he makes the decisions and, you know, as just one American

wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where.” Rather responds that he was speaking an American citizen “in a personal way” but then admits, “we shouldn’t have excuses. What we should do is take a really good at that period and learn from it.” This sentiment of needing to reflect on mistakes is echoed by many interviewees and epitomises Nico Carpentier and George Tenzer’s (2005:1) observation about the news media’s “cycle of enthusiasm and fascination, frustration, remorse and excuses.”

Pilger clearly draws satisfaction from his pursuit of journalistic justice. In many interviews, the physical attitude and response of the interviewees is more revealing than what they say. In a rapid fire exchange with David Mannion, editor in chief of *ITV News*, Pilger keeps pressing the editor’s responses until Mannion defeats his own argument:

Pilger: In August 2002 *ITV* reported a warning by vice-president Dick Cheney that Iraq would soon have a nuclear weapon. And that was nonsense but it was presented uncritically as news. Wouldn’t you say that that contributed to the invasion that happened the following March?

Mannion: It might have done but, with respect, not our fault. I don’t believe that you’re suggesting are you that we should completely dismiss the words of arguably the second most powerful man in the Western world? We reported it. We didn’t necessarily agree with it and we allowed our viewers to make up their minds as to whether this was a man telling the truth or not.

Pilger: No, but that’s not fair on viewers is it? Because they may not know what we as journalists know, or ought to know: that this was an extremely dodgy politician who was making extraordinary claims.

Mannion eventually concedes that “if we knew it, we should have said so” but goes to defend *ITV*’s reporting of Iraq’s supposed “links” to Al Qaeda:

Mannion: “Links”. Now links can mean a thousand things. It doesn’t necessarily mean a bond of support -

Pilger: (interrupting) There were no links.

Mannion: (hesitant) Well, I’m sitting here across from you now. You’re telling me that. I will say to you, ‘well show me that there were no links, show me that were never -’

Pilger: (laughing) Even those claiming that there were links [now] say there were no links.

Mannion trails off and begins to laugh with Pilger realising that his defence has become ridiculous. As a performance, Pilger’s cross-examination gives rise to visible

shift in Mannion’s attitude towards Pilger’s thesis from an initial position of emphatic rejection, to confrontational defence and then to acknowledged defeat (see Figure 17). As *ITV* has consistently supported Pilger’s work throughout his career, this interview is also a demonstration of Pilger’s independence and adherence to the facts over loyalty. In other instances, his constant prodding of interviewees provokes exasperated and surprisingly frank responses about the capacity of the news media to report conflict. When pressed on the *BBC*’s coverage of Israel-Palestine, the frustrated head of newsgathering Fran Unsworth responds that it is not the *BBC*’s fault if the Israelis are more sophisticated at public relations than the Palestinians.



Figure 17: Journalists on Trial

Interspersed with these interrogations are interviews with independent reporters and academics. Historian Mark Curtis says he “finds it virtually impossible to believe that [Prime Minister Tony] Blair could have gotten away with the invasion of Iraq if the media had been doing its job.” Although many Iraq War documentaries recount the historical misdeeds of American foreign policy, *The War You Don’t See* is one of the few documentaries to historically contextualise Britain’s role in the Iraq War. Referring to Britain’s military interventions and support for dictatorial regimes, Crispin asserts, “these simply never get mentioned, they are never referred to in the newspapers, they never get on TV histories of Britain, they’re just taken out; they are deleted from our historical memory.”

In contrast to this institutional erasure, Pilger asserts that “in the wars of today, it often daring independent filmmakers [and reporters] who give the victims a voice.” This work, however, is often rejected by the news media. Consequently, footage by the American journalist Mark Manning, who gained access to Fallujah, “has never

been shown on television.” In an extract from Manning’s documentary, a Fallujan woman is shown pointing to the bullet holes in the wall outside her house while she describes how her son was taken from the house by US forces and shot eleven times. Another American journalistic Dahr Jamail entered Fallujah and wrote a series of dispatches about white phosphorus and civilian casualties but none of his reports were picked up by the mainstream news media. By highlighting these reports about Fallujah, the film contributes to the on-going contestation of how Fallujah is remembered and substantiates the claims of earlier work like *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*.

For Pilger, it is through the suppression of independent journalism, that Iraqi suffering has been hidden from the public. He then cites *Al Jazeera* and other Arab outlets as a “threat to military propaganda” for giving “voice to people who refuse to be portrayed simply as victims.” Concurring with Pilger’s assessment, the *BBC*’s Rageh Omaar states that the bombing of *Al Jazeera*’s bureau in Kabul was “without doubt and categorically a direct targeting of those journalists to shut them up and possibly have them killed.” In this regard, Pilger references a classified British Ministry of Information document, released by *WikiLeaks*, which categorises terrorists and investigative journalists as “threats”. Julian Assange explains, “in fact, in many sections of that report, investigative journalists are the number one threat to information security ... that was a 2,000 page document by the Ministry of Defence on how to stop leaks, which we leaked”. Both Pilger and Assange take evident delight in this irony and it is in light of the military’s capacity to silence or discredit independent oppositional voices and the news media’s reluctance to “speak to power” that Pilger hails the “independent and stateless” *WikiLeaks* as a “landmark in journalism”. In contrast to the suppressed evidence of independent images and eye-witness accounts, *WikiLeaks* offers insider data that can confirm suspicions. As Assange states,

Looking at the enormous quantity and diversity of these military and intelligence insider documents...what I see is a vast, sprawling estate. What we would traditionally call the military intelligence complex or military industrial complex. And that this sprawling industrial estate is growing, becoming more and more secretive, becoming more and more uncontrolled.

In reference to patterns in the data, he compares the arms industry’s flow of money “washed through” Afghanistan, Columbia, and Iraq to the War on Terror’s trade in

people “washed through” Guantanamo Bay, “a tax haven ... where the normal rules don’t apply.”

At its conclusion, the film returns to the *Collateral Murder* video showing the more disturbing elements left out in the earlier extract. Many studies of the video have highlighted how the visual impact of seeing unarmed men gunned down indiscriminately is heightened by the enthusiasm of the troops’ dialogue with “its unnerving contravention of the emotional detachment ordinarily prefigured in the military’s preferred narratives (Andén-Papadopoulos & Allan 2010:246). *The War You Don’t See* highlights and undermines this disconnection by intercutting the video images with footage of a speech by Ethan McCord, one of the soldiers who arrived at the scene depicted in the video.⁶⁶ McCord’s testimony adds depth to the military footage while his nervous and heartfelt tone of voice powerfully contrasts with the emphatic and callous voices heard in the original video. McCord describe his efforts to save a child wounded at the scene only to be told “what the fuck are you doing McCord? Quit worrying about these fucking kids.” This concurs with a dismissive voice heard in the video, “well it’s their fault for bringing their kids into a battle”. Just as the filmmakers’ used still images to offset the video in the opening scenes, the careful articulation of the soldier as witness, and now activist, offsets the brutalising tone of video while also emphasising its evidence of “collateral murder”. Returning to directly address the viewer in the final scene Pilger affirms, “journalists should be the voice of people not power”.

Top Documentary Films users are highly receptive to this portrait of the news media’s propagandising role:

And we criticize China and many other countries of freedom of press and speech???? At least China is up front and honest about not wanting the public to know everything, and honest about not wanting the public to speak or question the government (Vartas).

Another user welcomes the fact that “people are losing faith in the veracity of the [US network] media” while suggesting that “the independent news sources, however, need to do a better job of becoming more obvious to the average

⁶⁶ Curiously, the film makes little reference to Bradley/Chelsea Manning, the US army private who divulged the military data to *WikiLeaks* and was subsequently convicted of espionage. In his writing, however, Pilger (2013) has praised Manning’s “courage” as an “inspirational” example of seizing “a moment of truth”.

citizen.” The idea of trustworthiness is central to these debates with users affirming their trust in Pilger as an individual journalist. How such trust might be established between the journalist-filmmaker and the viewer in the more volatile environment of contemporary media is unclear.

Re-Looking At War: *Iraq's Secret War Files* (Sigsworth 2010)

Working with The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ)⁶⁷, a non-profit news organisation based in London, *Channel 4 Dispatches* had advance access to the *WikiLeaks* files known as the Iraq War logs. As a source, the war logs are valuable to reveal what was known, or available to be known, to officials, but the data is also suspect as the occupier's own record of war. Consequently, the documentary engages a two-step process of decoding and interrogating this data to expose the deceptions of the war. While presenting a horrific picture of escalating levels of torture and terrorism, the film indicts American and British politicians for de-stabilising Iraq. Throughout, the visualisation of the *WikiLeaks* data is encapsulated in the act of looking and re-looking at war representations such that the truth about Iraq is shown to be buried or hidden in multiple, overlapping, and contradictory mediations. The documentary's assertion of “film truth” (Musser 2007) is then based on a cross-examination of these mediations.

Buried In Data: From the outset, the stark details found in the *WikiLeaks* data are established for the viewer:

Dispatches has been sifting through nearly four hundred thousand secret army documents to uncover the full, and unreported, horror of the conflict...we reveal that US troops were killing more civilians than insurgents at checkpoints, that they killed people who were trying to surrender, that even after the scandal of Abu Ghraib, US soldiers continued to abuse prisoners, and how the Coalition turned a blind eye to the torture and murder of detainees by the Iraqi security services.

Many of these “unreported horrors”, however, were already in the public domain. As John Pilger demonstrated in *The War You Don't See*, these characteristics of the

⁶⁷ Officially launched in 2010, TBIJ has conducted a number of high-profile and prize-winning investigations. In addition to *Iraq's Secret War Files*, TBIJ also collaborated on an *Al Jazeera* documentary about the war logs and produced a dedicated website www.iraqwarlogs.com.

occupation had been covered by independent journalists. In *Iraq's Secret War Files*, it is the fact that the US military has implicated itself in crimes that allows the narrator to be so emphatic in his condemnation: “we tell the story of the war and occupation that the US military doesn't want you to know – the one they wrote themselves.”

The killing of civilians, originally buried in official denials and now buried in data the film will expose, is established as the central theme in the opening scene. Over footage of Najaf cemetery, a gravedigger recalls, “some days we buried two hundred, sometimes more, sometimes less” while the narrator explains that the 1000 year old cemetery expanded by 40% since the invasion. As the camera lingers on recently marked graves, a George Bush voice-over claims, “we are taking unprecedented measures to spare the lives of innocent Iraqi citizens.” Like many other Iraq War documentaries, *Iraq's Secret War Files* frequently utilises ironic juxtapositions to undermine authority figures. Over footage of US troops aggressively pointing their guns into the faces of civilians, George Bush is heard off-camera, “when Iraqi civilians looked into the faces of our service men and women they saw strength and kindness and goodwill.” As the narrator explains, “there is often a difference between what political leaders say in public and what they may have known in private, as we discovered when we received a computer memory stick from Wikileaks” containing “nearly four hundred thousand secret reports known as SIGACTS – that's short for ‘significant actions’”.

Dr Toby Dodge, an advisor to the American and British governments on Iraq, likens the data to “military anthropology...a blow by blow account of individual American soldiers and how they react”.⁶⁸ To visualise this anthropology, the film combines archive photographs and video footage, present day testimony from Iraqis and experts, and computer graphics. The resulting narrative reflects the capacity of television to merge different “modes of historicisation bringing together visual and verbal accounts in a new frame” (Hoskins & O'Loughlin 2010:108). As a special

⁶⁸ The data set has since been used to trace patterns of “tit for tat” insurgent warfare (Linke et al. 2012).

computer programme was developed to analyse the “raw data”, the film repeatedly cuts to data analysts seated before a bank of computer screens. With the names of soldiers and civilians blacked out, quotes from the data appear onscreen and are read out using American voice-overs to imply the original (anonymous) military authors. By superimposing reams of data over familiar images such as Abu Ghraib’s “hooded man”, the film emphasises the gulf between public and military information about the war. In this way, the act of looking at the data is then complimented with the acts of re-investigating and re-looking at photographs and footage of Iraq (see Figure 18).

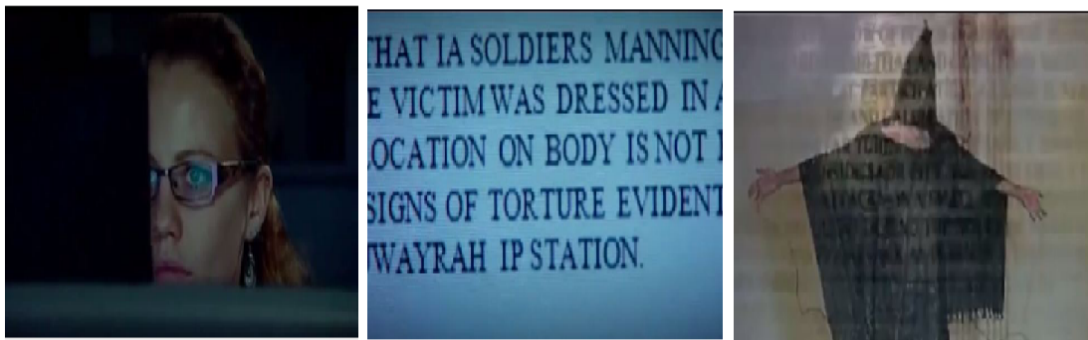


Figure 18: Re-Looking At War

In one notable example, the filmmakers investigate the circumstances behind Chris Hondros’ “iconic” picture of a blood soaked five year-old, Samar Hassan, screaming after her unarmed parents were killed by US troops. The sequence opens by slowly zooming in on the Hondros image and then cutting to grainy images of the family’s car captured by an embedded reporter before and after the shooting. The filed SIGACT report is then superimposed over these images and read out by an American narrator: “A shot was fired at the front tire but the vehicle did not stop. The patrol engaged the vehicle killing two civilians... there were six children in the back seat. All were unharmed”. The narrator continues, “we now know the filed report was inaccurate. Not all the children were ‘unharmed’. A bullet pierced the spine of 11 year old Rakan who was rendered a paraplegic.” Another set of photographs then show US troops and Iraqi doctors tending to Rakan thereby proving the inaccuracy of the report (see Figure 19).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ In a disconcerting extension of looking at war, *The New York Times* paid homage to Chris Hondros by presenting 12 year-old Samar Hassan with the Hondros image and then photographed her response (see Kennedy 2012).



Figure 19: The Multiple Modalities of "Escalation of Force"

Given the abundance of images in contemporary culture, Marita Sturken (2010) argues that there is now more value placed on the capacity to link, aggregate and navigate between images than on the visibility of individual images. In many ways, the collage of media forms used in this sequence exemplifies Sturken's point as the sequence highlights the inadequacy of the individual image, video or data file to reveal or define an event. At a time when there appears to be a "profound crisis in representation brought about by digitization, interactivity, and simulation" (Lovejoy 2004: 170), the filmmakers make effective use of overlapping representations to illustrate how the military's own records simultaneously conceal and reveal. An on-screen statement issued by the US Department of Defence states that the significant activity reports are "essentially snapshots of events, both tragic and mundane, and do not tell the whole story". Through its interrogation of the reports, *Iraq's Secret War Files* concurs with the military's assessment but works to move beyond the limitations of the data.

To further interrogate the data, the filmmakers travel to Iraq “to find some of those who appeared in the Escalation of Force reports [and] to see how the American account compared with theirs.” In Iraq, civilians learn what was recorded about them in the official records and are given the opportunity to re-describe the events themselves. We are invited to judge the integrity of this testimony against the detached language of the military reports. In what the narrator calls “one of the most shocking attacks” found in the data, the filmmakers travel to a rural region to hear the testimony of young boys whose friend was killed in an air-strike attack. While their father describes trying to gather pieces of his nephew’s body in a blanket, the SIGNACT reports reveal that fifty rounds and a hell-fire missile had been launched on “five IED emplacers who were trying to blend in with a sheep herd”. The report later acknowledges that these were actually “six children digging for roots”, which confirms the testimony of the boys. In this context, Toby Dodge argues that the record of 103 civilian deaths by air strike “is ludicrously too low”.

In an interesting overlap with *Iraq The Women’s Story* the film re-examines Operation Steel Curtain in Al Qaeda. While the earlier film offered an insider account into the aftermath of the operation, *Iraq’s Secret War Files* now substantiates and re-investigates these events. Using footage from a US TV interview, Lieutenant Colonel John Harris of the US Air Force denies any awareness of civilian casualties, or what he calls “collateral damage”, arising from the operation. The narrator then counteracts his statement, “Colonel Harris didn’t appear to be aware of what was contained in the Significant Action Reports on Steel Curtain - the deaths of 30 civilians, including a dozen children.”

Unlike images, the *WikiLeaks* data is not immediately or viscerally impactful. It needs to be summarised, interpreted and visualised using archive footage and sound and witness testimony. Using computer graphics, over 100,000 deaths recorded in the files, of which over 60,000 are civilians, are traced across Iraq on an escalating map. Much of the film then fashions this data into a narrative that indicts the case for war by charting the increasingly violent de-stabilisation of Iraq.

The Nightmare of Democracy: The film opens with footage of the withdrawal of US combat forces while Barack Obama in voice-over declares, “our combat mission

is ending. But our commitment to Iraq's future is not." Video footage then depicts an American soldier exclaiming from a tank, "we won. It's over. America. We brought democracy to Iraq." In contrast to this, a Senior Iraqi officer later exclaims, "this is the democracy you have brought along? You have forced us to live a terrifying nightmare of democracy". Outlining the gruesome detail of the military reports, which makes *Iraq's Secret War Files* one of the most difficult films to watch, the film charts the escalation of torture, violence and terrorism that have beset Iraq since the invasion. It is on this basis that the film condemns the political leaders who led the invasion and now attempt to downplay or ignore its consequences. After seven years of occupation, "barely a street corner of Baghdad hasn't been bombed, Al Qaeda is stronger than ever, and around 500 innocents are killed a month."

Over footage of a man being publically whipped by Saddam Hussein's security service, the narrator explains, "one of the main reasons given by Coalition leaders to justify the invasion of Iraq was to put an end to the oppression and appalling human rights abuses of Saddam Hussein's regime. They would offer the Iraqi people protection." A sound recording of George Bush on 17th March 2003 then promises to "tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more torture chambers. The tyrant will soon be gone". The film then explores horrific records of torture by American forces and by the Iraqi security services operating under the remit of American forces. Fenik Adham, Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture, explains that under Saddam Hussein torture was committed by the security service but it is now a "widespread" practice committed by the state, militias and gangs. More damningly, Adnan Pachachi, Member of the Coalition Authority 2003-2004, asserts, "they really did not try hard enough to stop these infringements of human rights because they didn't care and they wanted to let Iraqis kill each other."

For Toby Dodge, endemic torture in Iraq "completely undermines any justification for the invasion and any morality for the occupation." The growth of terrorism in Iraq further negates the justification for war as "the secret files reveal the greatest irony in America's War on Terror – the reported link between Al Qaeda ... and Iraq". The data reveals that "in 2004 there are only seven brief mentions of the terrorist organization, and no suggestion that they had killed anyone." By 2008, there

were over eight thousand entries accounting for one in seven of all SIGACT reports. This information is intercut with Colin Powell's 2003 accusation that Iraq was "harbouring a deadly terrorist network" in the form of Al Qaeda and Al-Zarqawi.⁷⁰ In a number of instances, the film outlines the exploitation of children and mentally handicapped patients by Al Qaeda. One of the final reports in the war logs relates to the massive Al Qaeda attack on the Baghdad Provincial Council and the Ministry of Justice, which killed 61 and wounded 225.

Apart from these individual horrors, the film contextualises the social and psychological trauma of the Iraqi people. Noting that one in fifty of the adult male population was imprisoned at some point between 2004 and 2009, Toby Dodge describes, "large numbers of innocent people were being hoovered up in these military operations, and then sent into a prison system that clearly couldn't cope with them." Yet, as the narrator explains, "while the number of bodies can be counted, there are no reliable figures for the numbers who have simply disappeared." At the "missing room" in Baghdad morgue, Iraqi families whose relatives are missing presumed dead sit silently watching slideshows of over 20,000 corpses in the hope of identifying a body. As "one of Iraq's one million widows", Athra Mohammed has been searching for her husband amid thousands of images of burnt and disfigured bodies: "they have killed my husband and my father - all the men. No one remains..." In the missing room, the camera remains fixed on the Iraqis as they silently study image after image occasionally stopping to wipe their faces (see Figure 20). After all of the mediations of war for Western viewers then, we are left to observe the Iraqis now looking at images of their own dead.

⁷⁰ Confirming what many had argued prior to the invasion, a 2006 US Senate report concluded that "Saddam Hussein was distrustful of al-Qaeda and viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to his regime, refusing all requests from Al Qaeda to provide material or operational support" (cited in Elhadj 2006:166)



Figure 20: Looking For Their Dead, Baghdad Morgue

Returning to Najaf cemetery in the final scene, the narrator explains that the fresh graves have “only one word on them. It’s majhoul, the Arabic for ‘unknown’ and their numbers are growing.” Noting that “military historians will take years to properly analyse all the information in the secret files”, the narrator caustically concludes that “others have already delivered their verdict”. The film cuts to audio of Barack Obama saying, “the United States has paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people” and then to Tony Blair who says he “can’t regret the decision [to invade]”. In this regard, one website user (Carrious) wonders if these political leaders ever watch documentaries like *Iraq’s Secret War Files*.

Reflecting Alasdair Roberts (2012) observation about the failure of the leaks to resonate with the public, many users describe the film as simply confirming what they already suspected: “I am so relieved that a group like *Wikileaks* has been able to gain access to the US's own internal documents to show that what everyone knew in their hearts to be happening over there, did in fact happen” (Jim Elliot). While many British and American users describe themselves as being ashamed of their countries and enraged by the actions of their militaries and governments, a surprising number dismiss the film’s revelations. Some American viewers describe the film as being “pretty slanted” for failing to address “how American soldiers felt” (Peter) and others accept that the events are horrific but suggest that “war is war” and “atrocities

always happen in war” (Everlaid). This sentiment is occasionally challenged by those pointing out that war also has laws which have broken.

As with the war reports in the previous chapter, both *The War You Don't See* and *Iraq's Secret War Files* address the multiple modalities of war representations to offer a meta-narrative or critique of war imagery. Through their textual compositions, these films ask the viewer to re-assess war representations as part of an on-going process of re-contextualising the Iraq War. By highlighting ironic juxtapositions along with the overlaps between images, these filmmakers reinvigorate existing images to fashion new narratives in which certain images are ascribed a truth-value and others are ascribe an illusionary-value. In this way, archive footage is used to condemn and expose political leaders and journalists while the still image in particular endures as a key device to affirm and convey civilian suffering. The success of these narratives is dependent on the willingness of viewers to accept the framing of image-truths and image-falsehoods but, as the user-comments indicate, this willingness is primarily derived from users' prior beliefs and levels of trust in particular filmmakers and institutions. The inherent instability of drawing distinctions between different kinds of digital image becomes more apparent when one considers the rise of the conspiracy documentary, which also mobilises broad notions of mainstream media bias and deception by government. The notion of film truth in the online public sphere then reflects a troublesome confluence of mainstream, alternative and radical media.

Conclusion:

Truth, Propaganda & the Conspiracy Film

In his 1964 essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics”, Richard Hofstadter described paranoia as a recurring style that mobilises the idea of a widespread threat to the American way of life. In an era dominated by an irrational fear of communism and Joseph McCarthy's House of UnAmerican Activities, Hofstadter's essay emphasised the paranoid thinking of the radical right-wing. This right-wing agenda endures through documentaries by the Clarion Fund like *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West* (Kopping 2005) and *Iranium* (Traiman 2011). However, it is

the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror that have given rise to a distinct culture of conspiracy theorising collectively known as the “truther movement”. The 9/11 conspiracy film is one of the most prominent and discussed genres on documentary-viewing websites and reflects the broader popularity and “spreadability” (Jenkins et al. 2013) of amateur online texts. In 2005, for example, *Loose Change* (Avery) became one of the most-watched films on the Internet with ten million viewers (Curiel 2006:1). In addition to high-profile American conspiracy filmmakers like Alex Jones and Dylan Avery, there are online “truther” documentaries from Britain, Ireland, Italy, and the Middle East reflecting various levels of opposition to the US government.

In many respects, it is not at all surprising that conspiracy has emerged as a major conceptual mode for political documentaries. The War on Terror, the Iraq War and, more recently, the revelation of global surveillance by the NSA have all made it clear that governments do deceive the public on a grand scale. The co-option of the news media in these deceptions has further contributed to declining levels of trust in institutions (Dede 2008; Van Zoonen 2012). For Mark Fenster (2008:1), conspiracy is a cultural reaction to political events and “a way of interpreting and narrating politics as part of an oppositional individual and collective project”. This view grows out of the psychological understanding that conspiracy is a means for marginalised groups or “subjects-outside-history” to feel empowered and gain agency (Manson 2002). However, while conspiracy theories have historically remained on the periphery of public discourse as illegitimate and pathological deviance, a mainstream American culture of conspiracy theorising has been emerging since the 1960s in response to the various political assassinations and the Watergate scandal (Fenster 2008). The contemporary salience of conspiracy as an aesthetic mode is evident in Adam Curtis’ celebrated documentary work for the *BBC* in which he combines a highly stylised paranoid aesthetic with a political narrative that draws loose connections between largely unrelated events.

Taking a broadly philosophical view, Lee Basham (2001) suggests that conspiracy theory is a means of understanding and contesting power by exposing “a range of predicaments uniquely associated with epistemic and doxastic issues of institutional credibility”. These issues arise because we “we live in a highly secretive, hierarchical

social system [in which] the major centres of control – national governments and corporate empires - combine enormous financial and technological resources with extensive mechanisms of secrecy, both preventative and punitive” (Basham 2001:256). In their common opposition to government and to state and corporate media, there are strong overlaps between the arguments against authority mobilised in critical war documentaries and those mobilised in conspiracy documentaries. Many conspiracy theorists embrace academic critiques like Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model and Chalmers Johnson’s American empire thesis. Users oriented towards conspiracy are also highly-receptive to criticisms of the American government regarding its historical and current foreign policy. Almost every discussion thread on Iraq War documentaries is quickly over-loaded with conspiracy comments and when a film is removed due to copyright infringement, is it assumed that the film is being officially censored. In some respects, conspiracy would seem to be the distorted end-point of liberal critiques of capitalist society and American hegemony.

Much like the investigative documentaries discussed previously, conspiracy documentaries aim to open up questions where the official consensus is that no questions need to be asked. Echoing the language of an interest group *911 Truth.org* describes its mission statement as follows: “the leading portal of the September 11th research community and truth movement, *911Truth.org* and its staff members have accumulated vast practical experience in investigation and in campaigns for education, visibility, media, lobbying, street action and litigation” (9/11Truth.org 2007). The truther network engages a wide range of research on ballistics, aviation, and politics to provide “evidence” that the official narrative of 9/11 is a lie. These expert groups then use documentary to summarise their research and distribute it among the wider network. Documentaries by industry professionals, such as *911 Intercepted* (2011) by “Pilots for Truth” and *Explosive Experts Speak Out* (Gage 2012), thereby marry the familiar rhetoric of activism to appeals to insider expertise. In addition to expert-insider knowledge, these films cultivate an objective journalistic aesthetic often citing evidence from the non-conspiracy films discussed in this study. In this regard, *Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* (Doyle 2005) is one of the few conspiracy films to acknowledge that the interviewees, who include academics, journalists and politicians, do not endorse the views of the filmmaker. More typically, as noted with

regard to *Superpower* (Steegmuller 2008), filmmakers use interview clips or remediated interview clips of high-profile academics like Noam Chomsky to imply that they do endorse the “inside job” conspiracy.

As the networked epistemology of the contemporary Web, favours experiential and belief-driven “knowledge” over formal argumentation (Dede 2008; Van Zoonen 2012), the co-existence of conspiratorial and non-conspiratorial war documentaries raises interesting questions about how notions of credibility and fact are being mobilised in documentary film and assessed by viewers. In particular, it would seem that that the re-mediation of clips and claims about the Iraq War in conspiracy films potentially discredits the veracity of the original mediation. More broadly, while some websites clearly demarcate conspiracy films, this is an inherently subjective process. Consequently, films like *The War You Don’t See* may be labelled under “conspiracy” and films like *Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* may be labelled under “political documentary”. In a debate arising from *The War You Don’t See*, one user comments,

Now I see that Vlatko tries to post every possible view-point and let us decide which is creditable and which is bogus...You are painting a very realistic portrait of the world we live in and letting us decide what to believe in and what to discredit. We all seem to have different points of veiw. A lot of what I discredit (most conspiracy theories) others hold true (to the point of obsession), and much of what I believe in others condemn (but I will not let them rain on my gum drop reality)...(Guest).

However, one of Pilger’s central points in his film is that the public often lack sufficient background knowledge on an issue to assess the credibility of statements. Moreover, this postmodern perspective assumes that important distinctions between facts, lies, speculation and misinformation are merely differences of opinion. It is in this context that the tension between the “communicative abundance” of contemporary media and the collapse of authority described by John Keane (2013a) becomes evident.

Those who view conspiracy theories as fundamentally dangerous for democracy (Goldswig 2002; Sunstein & Vermeule 2009) are particularly concerned about the proliferation of online conspiracy networks. Rather alarmingly, Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule (2009) endorse using covert agents to infiltrate and subvert online conspiracy networks; no doubt, a practice many conspiracy theorists already believe to be happening. Regarding documentary specifically, however, the popularity and

prevalence of conspiracy films along with their co-option of critical academic theorising suggests that documentary's traditional status as a "discourse of sobriety" (Nichols 1991) is being undermined through the postmodern construction of relative and oppositional truth. In this context, it would seem that Carl Plantinga's (1997:219) assertion that documentary must meet "inter-subjective standards of truth-telling" if it is to "be useful for the diverse functions it performs in a democracy" has become a more pressing concern for the future validity of the war documentary as a democratic and pedagogical contribution to the public sphere.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

As conflict images are disseminated instantaneously online, digital media have made discussion of the war media public sphere increasingly significant. At the same time, however, it is increasingly difficult to conceptualise a public sphere constituted by loose connections among Internet users emanating from diverse and discrete political publics. Furthermore, as the concept of a war media or documentary public sphere is unmoored from its traditional association with the nation-state, there is a growing permeability between what counts as mainstream, alternative or even radical content. Theoretical frameworks designed to elucidate the operation of mass media power are now in need of revision to accommodate the multiple, overlapping, and at times contradictory modalities of war representation in our digital age of “ubiquitous media” (Featherstone 2009). The rapid pace of change, however, adds another level of difficulty to conceptualising a war media public sphere.

Between the Iraq War and the rise of ISIS in its aftermath, there have been significant shifts in the operation of media power. Prior to the invasion, the mainstream news media maintained a dominant propaganda role by disseminating false claims in support of the war while suppressing alternative viewpoints. Since the invasion, the diffusion of war content across various channels of digital media has radically altered the capacity of both the military and the mass media to control or determine war narratives. After the emergence of photographs documenting prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib in 2004, the characteristic unpredictability of war information attained its fullest expression in the leaking of classified military documents by *WikiLeaks* in 2010. It is also telling that while the Iraq invasion has become synonymous with pro-war media propaganda, the vast majority of war documentaries now circulating online offer perspectives that are highly critical of political and military actions in Iraq.

More recently, there has been a renewed effort by governments and their security agencies to assert their power in the online public sphere. This re-assertion of power has taken both soft and hard modes of public persuasion. In June 2014, for example, the US Central Intelligence Agency joined *Twitter* and attempted to cultivate a light-

hearted profile with jokes about its spying activities. This initiative was rolled out just as the United States was revising its most wide-ranging criteria for being classified as a terrorist, which includes merely visiting flagged websites.

The future shape of the online public sphere is now being determined by crude measures to police online behaviour through sweeping anti-terror legislation and the ad-hoc policies of corporate social media giants. In response to ISIS and their atrocity footage, there has been growing support for policing online viewing. Following the release of a video depicting the beheading of journalist James Foley in August 2014, UK police warned the public that viewing or sharing the video was a crime under the country's expanding anti-terror laws. This follows an already heavy-handed approach by the UK police to online "anti-social behaviour" including the 2012 arrest of a young man who posted a *YouTube* video of a burning Remembrance Day poppy. Under pressure to respond to militants' use of their platforms, web corporations have attempted to steer users away from certain content. In the wake of the James Foley video, *Twitter* and *YouTube* suspended the accounts of those who shared the video while just one month earlier *Facebook* suspended the account of the Palestinian photo-journalist Hamde Abu who was documenting the Israeli war in his country. In these conditions, it would seem that the very freedoms afforded by the Internet are under threat by the new media powers.

Recent events would also suggest that the current discourse on the Iraq War is not necessarily reflective of war media public more generally. While there is a broad overlap of publics now united in their criticism of the Iraq War, on-going and contemporary conflicts often lack the overlap or interaction of public voice. During the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza, Lotan Gilad (2014) assessed the intense information war conducted on social media. Confirming Eli Pariser's (2011) prognosis of "filter bubbles", Gilad observed that much of this media took the form of "personalised propaganda" in which two discrete spheres - one pro-Palestinian and one pro-Israeli - emerged and rarely interacted. The 2011 intervention in Libya by a coalition of North American and European forces also exemplifies the disconnection between criticism of Western intervention in one country and support for it in another. In this

context, it seems tenuous to link the strident documentary criticisms of the Iraq War to a greater awareness of or opposition to war policies more generally.

What then are the functions of the war documentary and documentary archives in the digital media public sphere? This study has argued that individual films and their online archiving serve as knowledge resources, which provides those who are seeking out information with access to a range of material that can contest and deepen the narratives found in mainstream news. Amid the Israeli-Gazan War, two film studies professors, Dina Iordanova and Eva Jørholt, launched *Palestine Docs* providing access to over 70 documentaries “that break the silence” on the history of human rights abuses by Israel in Palestine. While it might be naïve to assume that people disinterested in the conflict or people who are already staunchly pro-Israeli would be drawn to this resource, *Palestine Docs* primarily aims to provide access to information that is ignored or greatly reduced in news and social media cycles. As conditions in Gaza typically only receive attention during periodic outbreaks of war, the archive makes accessible an in-depth and multi-faceted picture of long-term occupation. Such websites may not directly counter the power of mainstream news media to set the agenda and define frames of war but they do provide a valuable resource for those seeking to know more about the conflict. As the value of such knowledge resources is fundamentally staked on the content, the rest of this conclusion will address the contemporary war documentary.

Since the inception of the form, documentary has been employed by states and independent critics alike as a means of offering persuasive comment on contemporaneous conflicts. The sheer volume of Iraq War documentaries and, perhaps even more significantly, the range of production and distribution forms they encompass reflect both the increased mediatisation of war and the renewed salience of documentary as a form of political communication. Concurrent to the conflict, documentary has been used to protest, report, critique and memorialise events in Iraq. In their online after-life as archived material, these documentaries preserve evolving representations of the war. In addition, distinctions between different forms of documentary production are equalised as the cinematic work of high-profile filmmakers is archived along-side low-budget and amateur films which were

originally targeted at niche micro audiences. Perhaps surprisingly, the study found that low-budget activist films, national television films, and conspiracy documentaries were far more prevalent and prominent online than high-profile cinematic releases. In this way, contemporary media practices call into question the academic emphasis on certain types of documentary at the expense of others.

In the online environment, documentaries are also opened up to an amorphous transnational viewership which transcends the expectations and intentions of the original production. As films are pushed beyond their original distribution contexts, documentary efforts to promote attitudes towards war are offset, challenged and reframed from a range of cross-cultural perspectives, which extends the value of an individual film into the informal communication that flows from it.

While it is difficult to predict how new media forms will evolve, based on the findings of this study it would seem that the democratic and pedagogical roles of the war documentary are tied into two factors that are largely disconnected: the textual strategies employed by individual filmmakers and the online distribution practices that preserve and re-frame this work independently of the filmmakers. As these are independent processes, studies of documentary distribution processes need to be complimented with an in-depth analysis of documentary-texts. With regard to activist films, the study affirms that it is insufficient to assume that a documentary is anti-war by virtue of its opposition to the pro-war mainstream or its alternative path of distribution. Moreover, through reception analysis, it has been shown that the viewers do not uncritically accept the framing of war presented in documentaries. Instead, they can adapt film frames to form new meanings often contrary to the intentions or claims of the text.

To summarise the research findings and to address the future prospects for the public sphere roles of the war documentary, this conclusion will focus on two key trends identified in the study: remediation and online archiving.

Remediation: Despite the volume and scope of Iraq War documentaries accumulated online, it is striking that the same footage, photographs, quotes and interviewees recur across the films. In fashioning film narratives through the remediation of war

representations, filmmakers re-frame existing footage by appealing to alternative or new information. In this way, remediation helps to recalibrate war representations in an on-going process of reflection. In this regard, it is striking that the filmed photograph is used so prevalently to affirm the actuality of war in opposition to the television image and video footage. There is, however, an inherent instability to a documentary's appeal to truth and lies via the digital image. While individual filmmakers fashion narratives that ascribe truth-values to certain images – or call on them to perform an evidential function – they simultaneously discredit other digital images as false.

This is evident in *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* which pits two kinds of digital image - one filmed by soldiers and one filmed by independent witnesses - against each other. John Pilger takes up this theme in *The War You Don't See*. However, just as it is increasingly difficult to designate distinct categories of mainstream and alternative media based on their distribution processes, it is equally difficult to set images against each other by virtue of who filmed them. This difficulty is intensified as both kinds of images are remediated and reframed by documentary filmmakers. The fact that the remediated footage of corpses in *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* did not actually verify the film's claims about chemical weapons but was embraced by many as though it did, exemplifies the fact that the truth or evidence of isolated images is a matter of interpretation and context. *Iraq's Secret War Files* appears to develop a strategy for overcoming this difficulty by comparing and overlaying multiple representations of the same event. Documentary truth is then based on an aggregation of remediated content whereby facts are confirmed or rejected through the gaps and overlaps between representations.

More broadly, remediation is a central feature of low-budget, amateur and conspiracy filmmaking. Relying largely on the re-purposing of existing footage, including large parts of other documentaries, these films are significantly cheaper to produce than on-the-ground or investigative war documentaries. That is not say that such films are inherently without merit but a film composed of other films is largely confined to addressing the virtual mediation of war. In this regard, it is notable that the most prominent theme among the body of Iraq War documentaries is mediation: whether through the many meta-narratives about the act of filming war or the extensive range

of documentaries critiquing war media. More recently, the immediacy of amateur and low-budget compilation documentaries has become apparent in relation to the escalation of the Syrian Civil War. Developing upon Robert Greenwald's activist production models, these hasty constructions have called on unverified footage, variously shot by rebels and the regime, to distribute in networks advocating for and against Western intervention. The growing use of documentary by interest groups to promote "the production of outrage" (Gaines 2007), reflects Michael Rabiger's (1992) expectation that the conception of documentary is shifting from being a journalistic-like enterprise to one that is primarily speculative and partisan. Although professional journalistic content currently remains more pronounced on documentary-viewing websites, the long-term viability of free content from media professionals remains unclear while the viability of amateur and conspiratorial content would appear to be increasing. In the process, the traditional status of documentary as a "discourse of sobriety" (Nichols 1991) would seem to be undermined.

Online Archiving: Throughout this thesis I have argued that documentary-viewing websites function as important knowledge resources about the Iraq War by accumulating a diverse range of content produced over the course of the occupation and by allowing the claims of individual films to be contested from various national and ideological perspectives. A number of advantages and limitations have been identified regarding the pedagogical roles of war documentaries in online archives.

As documentaries are increasingly archived online, and as online search has become the primary avenue for information seeking, there is good reason to address the online availability of Iraq War documentaries as a collective archive. From the perspective of the information seeker, the broad multi-faceted scope of a documentary-viewing website facilitates a deeper understanding of war by presenting by a piece-meal account of various aspects of the evolving conflict. Individual films take on a greater significance within the collective body of work as they establish overlaps and connections with previous documentaries. Subjects briefly addressed in one film, like war propaganda or private contractors, are then taken up and explored in greater depth in other films. From a temporal perspective, more recent films like *The War You Don't See* and *Iraq's Secret War Files* can confirm and extend the on-

the-ground perspectives of earlier films like *Iraq: The Women's Story* and *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*.

As a preeminent cultural form, the online archive also encourages a shift away from the canonical status of individual texts. The capacity of any individual documentary to define the meaning and memory of war is then replaced with a multitude of overlapping perspectives that preserve an on-going record of war as a transnational and contested event. As noted in chapter six, the body of films returned in a search for Iraq War documentaries also forged connections between the Iraq War and historical conflicts while the open-archive continues to accumulate new films. In this way, the online archiving of war documentaries counteracts the institutional impulse to bracket off individual wars through the commemoration of on-going conflicts as past events. In this regard, the online perspectives offered by users can also extend the limitations of individual films by challenging the cultural values and assumptions of films addressing a national audience.

There are however a number of limitations to the configuration of the online archive as a documentary public sphere. In the absence of editorial oversight, users are left to make their own distinction between verifiable and spurious documentary content. The capacity to make this distinction would seem vital to the continued relevance of documentary to the public sphere but it has been shown that users primarily assess film claims based on their prior beliefs. Like many online platforms, documentary-viewing websites are also inherently unstable and their long-term viability is unclear. The existence and maintenance of these websites is dependent on anonymous and unaccountable individuals while the continued existence of free documentary archives is likely to be effected by the growth of corporate avenues for distribution like *NetFlicks* and the enforcement of more stringent online copyright laws. In light of the “post-hegemonic power” (Lash 2007:55) of the corporate dominated networked, it would seem that the democratic and pedagogical value of online documentary archives needs to be enshrined in a form a public media as envisaged by Dan Hind’s (2012) call for a citizen-led re-vitalisation of the public sphere.⁷¹

⁷¹ In *The Return of the Public* Hind (2012) proposes allocating public funding to citizen-led commissioning boards whereby journalists and members of the public debate subjects for investigation through an open deliberative processes.

The democratic and pedagogical potential of online media has been a subject of much debate and as new platforms and practices develop quickly online, it is not yet clear how the tensions between the Internet's freedoms and limitations will stabilise. In an accelerated and highly partisan war media environment, the study finds that the inherent tension between the free flow of content in the public sphere and the quality and veracity of this content calls for continued reflection on the dynamic relationship between traditional media content and emergent media practices. In particular, there is need for more research on the dynamic, and often idiosyncratic, relationship between media content and contemporary audience practices. It is unclear, for example, how users chose which documentaries to watch, make assessments about credibility and legitimacy, and then integrate this documentary material into their online contributions about war. Based on the limited reception analysis conducted for this study, it would seem that many people chose to watch films that are contrary to their own views, which contradicts the idea of information-seeking based on confirmation bias. It would also be instructive to trace individual war documentaries across the Internet to see how they emerge in different networks and through processes of re-framing and re-editing to become new texts. Finally, as part of a longitudinal study, it would be instructive to trace the continued presence of Iraq War documentaries in online networks to ascertain which documentaries are taken up in subsequent spheres of war discourse and which documentaries endure in the long-term process of remembering the Iraq War.

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Iranium (2011), directed by Traiman, Clarion Fund, USA, documentary film.

Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers (2005), directed by Robert Greenwald, Brave New Films, USA, documentary film.

Iraq in Fragments (2006), directed by James Longley, Daylight Factory, USA, documentary film.

Iraq's Secret War Files (2010), directed/produced by Marc Sigsworth, Cannel 4 & TBIJ, UK, documentary film.

Japanese Relocation (1943), director unknown, Office of War Information, USA, documentary film.

Kony 2012 (2012), directed by Jason Russell, Invisible Children, USA, documentary film.

La Section Anderson/ The Anderson Platoon (1967), directed by Pierre Schoendoerffer, Pathé, France, documentary film.

La Sixième Face Du Pentagone/ The Sixth Face of the Pentagon (1968), directed by Chris Marker & François Reichenbach, France, documentary film.

Le 17e parallèle: La Vietnam en guerre/The 17th Parallel: Vietnam in War (1968), directed by Joris Ivens, France, documentary film.

Loin du Vietnam/Far from Vietnam (1967), directed by Joris Ivens, France, documentary film.

Loose Change (2005), directed by Avery, USA, documentary film.

McCarthy: Death of a Witch Hunter (1971), directed by Emile De Antonio, Continental Distributing, USA, documentary film.

Memory of the Camps (1945/1985), directed by Sidney Bernstein, UK & USA, documentary film.

My Country, My Country (2006), directed by Laura Poitras, Independent Television Service , USA, documentary film.

Nanook of the North (1922), directed by Robert J. Flaherty, Les Frères Revillon, France & USA, documentary film.

No End in Sight (2007), directed by Charles Ferguson, Representational Pictures, USA, documentary film.

Nuit Et Brouillard/Night and Fog (1955), directed by Alain Resnais, Argos Films, France, documentary film.

Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West (2005), directed by Kopping, Clarion Fund, USA, documentary film.

Occupation Dreamland (2005), directed by Chris Corcione & Eric Forbes, GreenHouse Pictures, USA, documentary film.

Oil, Smoke and Mirrors (2005), directed by Ronan Doyle, Online, Ireland, documentary film.

Our Enemy: The Japanese (1943), director unknown , Office of War Information, USA, documentary film.

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism (2004), directed by Robert Greenwald, Brave New Films, USA, documentary film.

Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq (2001), directed by Alan Lowery, Carton Television, UK, TV documentary.

Point of Order (1963), directed by Emile De Antonio, Continental Distributing, USA, documentary film.

Prelude to War (1942), directed by Frank Capra, War Activities Committee of the Motion Pictures Industry, USA, documentary film.

Private Warriors (2005), directed by Martin Smith, PBS Frontline, USA, documentary film.

Raising Old Glory over Morro Castle (1899), directed by James Blackton & Albert Smith, USA, film.

Redacted (2007), directed by Brian De Palma, Film Farm, USA, feature film.

Red Nightmare (1962), directed by George Waggner, Warner Brothers, USA, documentary film.

Red Snow (1952), directed by Boris Petroff, Columbia Pictures, USA, feature film.

Rush to War (2004), directed by Robert Taicher, RTW Productions, USA, documentary film.

Seeing Red (1983), directed by Jim Klein and Julia Reichert, Heartland Productions, USA, documentary film.

Shadow Company (2006), directed by Nick Bicanic & Jason Bourque, Purpose Films, Canada, documentary film.

Shoah (1985), directed by Claude Lanzmann, New Yorker Films, Various, documentary film.

Standard Operating Procedure (2008), directed by Errol Morris, Sony Pictures Classics, USA, documentary film.

Star Wars in Iraq (2007), produced by Sigfrido Rannuci and Maurizio Torrealta, RAI 24, Italy, TV documentary film.

Superpower (2008), directed by Barbara-Anne Steegmuller, Cinema Libre Studio, USA, documentary film.

Taxi to the Dark Side (2007), directed by Alex Gibney, Discovery Channel, USA, documentary film.

The Atomic Café (1982), directed by Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty, and Pierce Rafferty, Libra Films, USA, documentary film.

The Battle Cry of Peace (1915), directed by Stuart Blackton & Wilfred North, Vitagraph, USA, documentary film.

The Battle of San Pietro (1945), directed by John Huston, US Army Pictorial Services, USA, documentary film

The Battle of the Somme (1916), directed by Geoffrey Malins & John McDowell, British Topical Committee for War Films, UK, documentary film.

The Blood of my Brother (2005), directed by Andrew Berends, Storyteller Productions, USA, documentary film.

The Century of the Self (2002), directed by Adam Curtis, BBC Four, UK, documentary series.

The Death of Yugoslavia (1996), produced by Norman Percy, BBC, UK, documentary series.

The Doctor, the Depleted Uranium, and the Dying Children (2004), produced by Freider Wagner and Valentin Thurn, Germany, documentary film.

The Fall Of The Romanov Dynasty (1927), directed by Esfir Shub, USSR, documentary film.

The Fog of War (2003), directed by Errol Morris, Sony Pictures Classics, USA, documentary film.

The Great War (1964), written by John Terraine & Corelli Barnett, BBC, UK, documentary series.

The Ground Truth (2006), directed by Patricia Foulkrod, Focus Features, USA, documentary film.

The Hoackers (1952), 'directed' by Herman Hoffman, MGM, USA, documentary film.

The Nation's Peril (1915), director unknown, USA, documentary film.

The Road to Guantanamo (2006), directed by Matt Whitecross & Michael Winterbottom, Roadside Attractions, UK, feature film.

The Red Menace (1949), directed by R.G. Springsteen, Republic Pictures, USA, feature film.

The Sorrow and the Pity (1969), directed by Marcel Ophüls, ORTF, France, documentary film.

The Spanish Earth (1937), directed by Joris Ivens, Contemporary Historians Inc., USA, documentary film.

The Spies Who Fooled the World (2013), written by Peter Taylor, BBC, UK, documentary film.

The Thin Blue Line (1988), directed by Errol Morris, American Playhouse, USA, documentary film.

The War at Home (1979), directed by Glenn Silber, USA, documentary film.

The War Game (1965), directed by Peter Watkins, BBC, UK, documentary film.

The War Tapes (2006), directed by Deborah Scranton, SenArt Films, USA, documentary film.

The War You Don't See (2010), directed by Alan Lowery & John Pilger, Dartmouth Films, UK, documentary film.

The World at War (1973-74), created by Jeremy Issacs, ITV, documentary series.

Triumph of the Will (1935), directed by Leni Riefenstahl, Universum Film AG, Germany, documentary film.

Uncovered: The War on Iraq (2004), directed by Robert Greenwald, Cinema Libre Studio, USA, documentary film.

War: A Commentary by Gwynne Dyer (1983), Canada, documentary series.

War As It Really Is (1916), directed by Donald Thompson, USA, documentary film.

War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death (2007), directed by Loretta Alper & Jeremy Earp, Media Education Foundation, USA, documentary film.

Why We Fight (2005), directed by Eugene Jarecki, Sony Pictures Classics, Canada France, UK & USA, documentary film.

Winter Soldier (1972), directed by the Winterfilm Collective, Milliarium Zero, USA, documentary film.

WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception (2004), directed by Danny Schechter, Cinema Libre Studio, USA, documentary film.

Zeitgeist: The Movie (2007), directed by Peter Joseph, GMP LLC, USA, documentary film.

Appendix A:

Search Returns for 'Iraq War' on *Top Documentary Films*

Documentary	Released	Country	Distributor	Director/Producer	Source
Uncovered: The War on Iraq	Limited Release	USA	Cinema Libre Studio	Greenwald	You Tube
Star Wars in Iraq	TV	Italy	RaiNews24	Torrealta & Ranucci	You Tube
Dispatches: Iraq's Secret War Files'	TV	UK	Channel 4	Sigsworth	You Tube
Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers	Limited Release & DVD	USA	Brave New Films	Greenwald	You Tube
The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror	Limited Release	USA	Free Will Productions	Ungerman & Brohy	You Tube
My War, My Story	Limited Release	USA	Documentary Channel	Blood	You Tube
The Unending War	TV Series	Iran	Press TV	Eilhamkhsh	You Tube
Dispatches: Iraq: the Women's Story'	TV	UK	Channel 4	Campbell	You Tube
Nova: Life & Death in a War Zone'	TV	USA	PBS	Doganis & Macrae	You Tube
War Made Easy	Limited Release	USA	Media Education Foundation	Alper & Earp	You Tube
Body of War	Limited Release	USA	The Film Sales Company	Donahue & Spiro	You Tube
Dispatches: Iraq's Missing Billions'	TV	UK	Channel 4	MacRae	You Tube
Wars In Peace	TV	UK	ITN	Sheridan	Archive.org
Fault Lines: Iraq after the Americans'	TV	Qatar	Al Jazeera English	Walker (reporter)	You Tube
Dispatches: Iraq the Reckoning'	TV	UK	Channel 4	Brabazon	Google Video
Iran and the West	TV Series	UK	BBC	Percy	You Tube
No End in Sight	Limited Release	USA	Magnolia Pictures	Ferguson	Vimeo
The War You Don't See	Limited Release & TV	UK	ITV	Lowery & Pilger	Vimeo
Inside Iraq: The Untold Stories	DVD	USA	Passion River	Shiley	You Tube
Breaking the Silence: Truth and Lies in the War on Terror	TV	UK & Australia	Carlton TV	Connelly & Pilger	Vimeo
Unconstitutional: The War on Civil Liberties	Limited Release & DVD	USA	Disinformation Company	De la Peña	You Tube
War and Globalisation: a lecture by Michel Chossudovsky	Online	USA	Centre for Research on Globalisation	Snow Shoe Films	You Tube
Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre	TV	Italy	RaiNews24	Torrealta & Ranucci	Live Leak
Ghosts of Abu Ghraib	TV	USA	HBO	Kennedy	You Tube

Documentary	Released	Country	Distributor	Director/Producer	Source
I Know I'm Not Alone	Limited Release & DVD 2005	USA	Epitaph & WEA Video	Franti	You Tube
The True Story of Black Hawk Down	TV 2003	USA	History Channel	Keane	You Tube
Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism	Limited Release & DVD 2004	USA	Disinformation Company	Greenwald	You Tube
Empire: Hollywood & the War Machine'	TV 2010	Qatar	Al Jazeera English	Bishara (reporter)	You Tube
WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception	Limited Release 2004	USA	Cinema Libre Studio	Schechter	You Tube
People and Power: 'America's War Games'	TV 2013	Qatar	Al Jazeera English	Abehouse	You Tube
Tegenlicht: A Future Scenario for Israel	TV 2007	Holland	VPRO	Meerman	You Tube
History Alive: 'The Kings from Babylon to Baghdad'	TV 2004	USA	History Channel	Gimbrone	You Tube
Gulf War Syndrome: Killing our Own	DVD 2007	USA	Gary Null & Associates	Null	You Tube
The War of the World	TV series 2006	UK	BBC	Pennick	You Tube
Year Zero: Death of Cambodia	TV 1979	UK	Associated Television	Munro	Vimeo
The Ground Truth	Limited Release & DVD 2006	USA	Focus Features	Foulkrod	You Tube
Tegenlicht: 'Uzeren Driehoek: de Carlyle Group' (Iron triangle: the Carlyle Group)	TV 2004	Holland	VPRO	Tan	You Tube
Bombies: The Secret War	TV 2002	USA	ITVS & Bullfrog Films	Silberman	Vimeo
The Trap: What Happened to our Dream of Freedom?	TV series 2007	UK	BBC	Curtis	You Tube
Why We Fight	Limited Release 2005	USA, Canada, UK, France, Denmark	Mongrel Media & Sony Pictures Classics	Jarecki	You Tube
The Secret of the Seven Sisters	TV series 2013	Qatar	Al Jazeera English		You Tube
World War II In HD Colour	TV series 2009	USA	Military Channel	Nugus	You Tube
Control Room	Limited Release 2004	USA	Magnolia Pictures	Noujaim	You Tube
The War Tapes	Limited Release 2006	USA	SenArt Films	Scranton	You Tube
Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West	DVD 2005	USA	Clarion Fund	Kopping	You Tube

Documentary	Released	Country	Distributor	Director/Producer	Source
Enemy Image	2005	France		Daniels	You Tube
Independent Media in a Time of War a lecture by Amy Goodman	2003	USA	Hudson Mohawk Independent Media Centre	Hudson Mohawk Independent Media Centre	You Tube
The New American Century	2007	Italy	Arcoiris.tv (Creative Commons)	Mazzucco	Vimeo
Mission Accomplished: Langan in Iraq	2007	UK	BBC	Langan	You Tube
The Fog of War	2003	USA	Sony Pictures Classics	Morris	You Tube
Dispatches: 'Chechnya: the Dirty War'	2005	UK	Channel 4	Plis & Mamon	You Tube
Panorama: 'Daylight Robbery'	2008	UK	BBC	Kemp	You Tube
Our War 10 years in Afghanistan	2011	UK	BBC	Douglas, Bernard & Goodison	You Tube
The Death of Yugoslavia	1995	UK	BBC	Percy	You Tube
Paying The Price: Killing the Children of Iraq	2000	UK	Carlton TV	Lowery	Vimeo
The War on Democracy	2007	UK & Australia	Lionsgate	Martin & Pilger	Vimeo
Tegenlicht: 'A Way Out of the War on Terror'	2008	Holland	VPRO	Locher	You Tube
Genocide: Worse than War	2009	USA	PBS	DeWitt	You Tube
Carrier	2005	USA	PBS	Chermayeff	You Tube
Bomb Harvest	2007	Limited Release	TVF International	Mordaunt	You Tube
Bush Family Fortunes	2003	DVD	Disinformation Company	Grandison	You Tube
Legacy: 'Iraq: Cradle of Civilization'	1991	TV series	Carlton TV	Spry-Leverton	You Tube
Shooting War: World War II Combat Cameramen	2000	TV series	ABC	Schickel	You Tube
Four Corners: 'WikiLeaks: The Forgotten Man Bradley Manning'	2012	TV	ABC	Harley	You Tube
Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think	2009	DVD		Gardner	Vimeo
HAARP Holes in Heaven?	1998	VHS		Robbins	You Tube
Guns for Hire: Afghanistan	2006	TV	Sky One	Von Plata	Vimeo

Documentary	Released	Country	Distributor	Director/Producer	Source
The 9/11 Conspiracies: Fact or Fiction	2007	USA	History Channel	Davis	You Tube
NOVA: 'Battle of the X-Planes'	2003	USA	PBS	Jorgensen	You Tube
Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich	2005	UK	BBC	Olusoga	
Assange: Facebook, Google and Yahoo are Spying Tools	2011	Russia	Russia Today		You Tube
Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War	1980	Canada	CBC	Arnett & Maclear	You Tube
Vietnam: American Holocaust	2008	USA	Linux Beach Productions	Claiborne	You Tube
The 9/11 Decade: The Intelligence War	2011	Qatar	Al Jazeera English		You Tube
Afghanistan: Drugs, Guns & Money	2008	Australia	SBS	Smith	You Tube
Dispatches: Iraq's Death Squads	2010	UK	Channel 4	Hawes	You Tube
Hijacking Catastrophe	2004	USA	Media Education Foundation	Earp & Jhally	Vimeo
9/11 Explosive Evidence: Experts Speak Out	2012	USA	Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth	Gage	You Tube
The Prisoner: How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair	2006	USA	Magnolia Home Entertainment	Tucker & Epperlein	You Tube
In Saddam's Shadow: Ten Years after the Invasion	2013	USA	Vice News	Mojica	You Tube
The Spanish Civil War	1983	UK	Granada Television	Blake & Hart	You Tube
Iranium	2011	USA	Clarion Fund	Traiman	You Tube
The Power of Nightmares	2004	UK	BBC	Curtis	You Tube
The Mexican Mormon War	2012	USA	Vice News	Fitzgerald & Kaplan	You Tube
The Billy Meier Story	2009	USA	Reality Entertainment	Gerlich	You Tube
20/20: Kill Shot: The Story Behind Bin Laden's Death	2011	USA	ABC	Sloan	You Tube
7/7 Ripple Effect	2007	UK	JforJustice.net	Hill AKA 'MuadDib'	You Tube
Generation Jihad	2010	UK	BBC	Salaria & Telling	You Tube
Afghan Heroin: The Lost War	2008	USA	National Geographic	Strauss	You Tube
Oil, Smoke & Mirrors	2005	Ireland	Google Video	Doyle	You Tube
State of Mind: the Psychology of Control	2013	USA	Info Wars Shop	Lane	You Tube

Documentary	Released	Country	Distributor	Director/Producer	Source
Network First: 'Flying the flag: Arming the World'	1995 TV	UK	ITV	Pilger & Munro	Vimeo
This World: 'Mexico's Drug War'	2010 TV	UK	BBC	Cosentino	You Tube
9/11 Intercepted	2011 Online & DVD	USA	You Tube	Pilots for 9/11 Truth'	You Tube

Appendix B:
Documentaries about Fallujah Available Online

Fallujah (2005), directed by Homodi Hasim, Deep Dish & Code Pink, Iraq & USA, documentary film.

Fallujah: A Lost Generation? (2012), directed by Feurat Alani, Baozi Prod & CANAL+, France & Iraq, documentary film.

Fallujah: City of Ghosts (2005), directed by Ali Fadhil, Channel Four & Guardian Films, Iraq & UK, documentary film.

Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre (2005), directed by Sigfrido Ranucci & Maurizio Torrealta, RAI 24, Italy, documentary film.

Fallujah: The Real Story, directed by Ali Fadhil, Channel Four & Guardian Films, Iraq & UK, short documentary film.

Fear Not the Path of Truth: A Fallujah Veteran's Documentary (2011), directed by Ross Caputi, The Justice for Fallujah Project, USA, documentary film.

Fight for Fallujah (2008), director unknown, Military Channel, USA, TV episode.

From Philadelphia to Fallujah (2011), directed by David Hammelburg, USA, short documentary film.

The Battle of Fallujah (2004), directed by USA Patriotism, Online, USA, documentary film.

The Road to Fallujah (2009), directed by Mark Manning, Passion River Films, Iraq & USA, documentary film.

Shootout: D-Day: Fallujah, director unknown, The History Channel, USA, TV Episode.

Shootout: Return to Fallujah, director unknown, The History Channel, USA, TV Episode.

Appendix C:

Overview of Documentary-Viewing Websites

Websites Ordered by Alexa's Global Traffic Rank (14-08-13)						
Website	Global Traffic Rank	Main Sources of Traffic (% of site traffic)	Sites Linking In	Earliest Archive Record		
Top Documentary Films http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/	8,617	USA (31.3%); Canada (8.6%); India (7.2%); UK (6.8%); Australia (5.7%); South Korea (3.7%)	4663	18-Apr-07		
Documentary Heaven http://documentaryheaven.com/	45,881	USA (26.7); Canada (11.3%); UK (8.2%); Norway (6.8%); Australia (6.1%)	1032	22-Jul-09		
Documentary Lovers http://documentarylovers.com/	57,215	USA (21.5%); Canada (14.0%); UK (6.7%); Australia (6.3%); Malaysia (6.1%)	95	07-Feb-11		
Movies Found Online www.moviesfoundonline.com	162,244	USA (38.1%); India (7.3%); UK (5.4%)	574	19-May-07		
Documentary Storm http://documentarystorm.com/	131,609	USA (35.7%); India (9.7%); UK (9.4%); Canada (6.9%); Australia (4.3%); Iran (.5%)	393	08-Dec-09		
Documentary Network http://documentary.net/	249,512	USA (35.6%); India (10.8%); UK (7.5%)	204	30-Dec-03		
Documentary Tube www.documentarytube.com	433,881	USA (37.9%)	204	No Record		
Documentary Wire http://www.documentarywire.com/	574,932	USA (no other listed)	347	18-Jun-08		
Free Documentaries www.free documentaries.org/	528,537	USA (44.2%), Iran (3.8%)	994	18-Sep-04		
911 Docs 911docs.net/iraq	1,537,363	Pakistan (44.7%); Palestinian Terrortries (2.5%)	102	04-Oct-07		
Documentary Jungle www.documentaryjungle.com	1,662,458	No Data	44	07-Jan-12		

Appendix D:

Documentaries Ordered by Popularity in 'Iraq War' Search Returns

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers	<	<	<	<	<			<	<	•	<	<
Hijacking Catastrophe	<		<	<	<				<		<	<
The War You Don't See	<	<	<	•	•	<		<	<			<
Why We Fight	<	<	<	•	<			<	<	<		<
Dispatches: Iraq the Reckoning'	<	<	<		<			<	<			<
Dispatches: Iraq: the Women's Story'	<	<	<		<		<		<			<
Nova: Life & Death in a War Zone'	<	<	<						<			•
The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror	<	<	<		<				<	•	<	<
War Made Easy	<	<	<		<				<			•
Control Room	<	<	<		•	<			<			
Dispatches: Iraq's Secret War Files'	<	<	<		<		<		<			
Ghosts of Abu Ghraib	<	<	•	<	<				<	•		•
Panorama: Daylight Robbery'	<	<	<	<	•	<			<			<
Shadow Company			<	<				<				
Star Wars in Iraq	<	<	<						<		<	
Uncovered: The War on Iraq	<	<	<						<			
WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception	<	<	<						<		<	
Body of War	<	<	<						<			
Die Story: Irak: Der Dauerkrieg' (Iraq: The Continuous War)			<					<			<	<
Die Story: The Doctor, the Depleted Uranium and the Dying Children	•		<					<			<	
Dispatches: Iraq's Missing Billions'	<	<			<						<	
Dispatches: Iraq's Death Squads'	<	<	<								<	
Enemy Image	<	<	<	•								
Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre	<	<	<						<			

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Gitmo: The New Rules of War	<	<	<		<				<	<		•
Il Nuovo Secolo Americano (The New American Century)	<	<	•			<			<	<		•
Iran and the West	<	<							<			•
Mission Accomplished: Langan in Iraq	<	<		<							<	
My War, My Story	<	<	<						<			
No End in Sight	<	<	<		•				<	•		
People and Power: America's War Games	<	<	<	<			<		<	•		•
Terrorstorm: A History of Government Sponsored Terrorism			<	•	<		<		<	•	•	•
The 9/11 Decade: The Intelligence War	<	<	<	<	<		•				<	•
The Ground Truth: After the Killing Ends	<	<	•		<							
The Secret of the Seven Sisters	<	<	<	<			<					
The Trap: What Happened to our Dream of Freedom?	<	<	<		•				<	•		•
The War on Democracy	<	<	<		•				<	•		•
Unconstitutional: The War On Our Civil Liberties	<	<	<		<					•		•
Beyond Treason: The True Story of Depleted Uranium	•	•	<						•	•	<	•
Bombies: The Secret War	<	<							<			
Breaking Ranks										<	<	
Breaking the Silence: Truth Lies and The War on Terror	<	<	•		<			•		•		
Bulletproof Salesman				<								<
Bush Family Fortunes	<	<	•	•	•				<	•		•
Carrier	<	<	•	<								
Conspiracies: 'Iraq'			<								<	
Declassified: Ayatollah Khomeini			•					<	<			
Dispatches: 'Chechnya: the Dirty War'	<	<	<		•					•		

Documentary	Top Documentary Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Dispatches: Is Torture A Good Idea?	<	<	<	<	<			<			•
Dispatches: Spinning Terror	•	•	•	•		•	•	<			•
Dispatches: 'The Killing Zone'	<	<	<	<				<			
Fault Lines: Iraq after the Americans'	<	<	<	<				<		<	
Frontline: 'Private Warriors'	•	<	•	•	•	•		•			
Genocide: Worse than War	<	<	•	•	•			•	<		
Hearts and Minds	•	<	•	•				•	<		
History Alive: 'The Kings from Babylon to Baghdad'	<	<									
I Know I'm Not Alone	<	<						<			•
Independent Media in a Time of War, a lecture by Amy Goodman	<	<						<			•
Iranium	<	<									•
James Steele America's Man of Mystery in Iraq	•	<	<	•		<		<		•	•
Liberty Bound		<						<		•	•
Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West	<	<									•
Oil, Smoke & Mirrors	<	•	•	<				•		•	
Oklahoma City: What Really Happened?	<			<							
Shut Up and Sing	•		<	<				<			
Taxi to the Dark Side	•	•	•	<				<	•		•
Tegenlicht: 'Iron triangle: Carlyle Group'	<	•							•		•
The Fog of War	<	<		•				<	•		
The Invisible War		<							<		
The Obama Deception	•	•	<					•			•
The Power of Nightmares	<	•	•	<					•		•
The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power	•		•	<							<

Documentary	Top Documentary Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
The Spies Who Fooled the World	<	<	<								>
The War Tapes	<	<									
War and Globalisation: the Truth Behind 9/11, a lecture by Michel Chossudovsky	<	<	•		•			•			•
20/20: Kill Shot: The Story Behind Bin Laden's Death'	<										>
20th Century Battlefields: '1973 Middle East'											
21 Days to Baghdad	<									>	
7/7 Ripple Effect		•								•	
9/11 Conspiracy Road Trip	•		•					>			•
9/11 Explosive Evidence: Experts Speak Out	<							•		•	•
9/11 Intercepted	<		•					•			
Afghan Heroin: The Lost War	<										
Afghan Massacre: Convoy of Death	•			>					•		•
Afghanistan: Drugs, Guns & Money	<		•				•				
Alive Day Memories		<									
All Wars are Bankers' Wars	•	<	•				•				
America: License to Torture			<								
AnOther Story of Progress	•	<			•						
Anthrax War	•	•	•	>			•				•
Assange: Facebook, Google and Yahoo are Spying Tools	<		•								
Baghdad ER											
Baghdad: A Doctor's Story										>	
Behind the Big News: Propaganda and the CFR	•	<									
Beneath Iraq and a Hard Place										>	

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Big Brother, Big Business	•		•		◀			•	•	•		•
Blood and Oil: The Middle East in World War I												◀
Bomb Harvest	◀		•	•		•						
Brainwashed by the Westboro Baptist Church	•		◀								◀	
Capturing Saddam									◀			
Conspiracy Files: 9/11												
Contempt of Conscience	•							◀				
Crossing the Line			•		•							◀
Dateline: 'Abu Ghraib: A Torturer's Tale'											◀	
Dead Famous: Melbourne Underworld War			◀									
Disbelief					◀							
Dispatches: 'At Home with the Terror Suspects'	•				◀					•		
Dispatches: 'Jihad TV'											◀	
Doctors of Death			◀									
Elephant in the Room	•		◀		•				•	•	•	•
Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs	•								◀			
Empire: 'Hollywood & the War Machine'	◀		•									
End of Liberty	•				◀				•			•
Fabled Enemies	•		•		◀						•	•
Fallujah											◀	
Female Fighters of Kurdistan			◀									
Fifth Estate: 'To Sell a War'												
Four Corners: 'WikiLeaks: The Forgotten Man'	◀		•	•					◀			
Frontline: 'A Company of Soldiers'											◀	

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Frontline: 'The Lost Year in Iraq'	•	<	<	•			•		•		<	•
Fuel												<
Gangland: 'Basic Training'												•
Generation Jihad	<		•	•								•
George W Bush: the 9/11 interview	•	•	<	•								•
Grandma's Tattoos	•	•		<								•
Gulf War Syndrome: Killing our Own	<		•						•			•
Guns for Hire: Afghanistan	<		•						•			•
HAARP Holes in Heaven?	<		•						•			•
Heavy Metal in Baghdad			•						<			
Hidden Wars of Desert Storm										<		
History of Modern Iraq: Rogue State			<									
Hood News: Police Terrorism					<				•			
Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral									<			
I Survived						<						
In Saddam's Shadow: Ten Years after the Invasion	<		•	•								
Inside Hamas			<		•							
Inside Iraq: The Untold Stories	<				•							
Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think	<			•		•						<
Inside the Iraq War				•								•
IRAN (Is Not The Problem)	•		•							<		
Iraq Experience: Croey Rowe											<	
Iraq in Fragments	•		<						•			
Iraq: the Hidden Story										•		

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Joe Rogan: the American War Machine			<								<	
Last Letters Home												
Leaked Audio of Bradley Manning's Statement to the Military Court							<					
Legacy: Iraq: Cradle of Civilization'	<											
Let There Be Light												>
Lomography			<									
Loose Change		•	•	•	<				•	•	•	•
7/7 Ludicrous Diversion		•			<			•		•	•	
Matrix of Evil		•	•		<		•					
My Ghost Season Three												>
Nabila												
Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich		<	•									
Network First: 'Flying the flag: Arming the World'	<								•	•		•
Nightmare in Mancuria			<									
Nova: 'Battle of the X-Planes'	<		•	•		•						
Operation Homecoming	•		•						>			•
Our War 10 years in Afghanistan	<		•		•				•			•
Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism	<		•	•	•					•		•
Paying The Price: Killing the Children of Iraq	<				•					•		•
Penn & Teller: Bullshit	<											
Police State 3: Total Enslavement	•				<							
Police State 4: The Rise of FEMA	•				>							•
Private Needham's War												
Propaganda			<									

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Protocols of Zion	•		•		<			•			•	•
Recon: The Wounds Within'											<	
REVEALED: The Path to War					<							
Secrets of the CIA	•				<			•		•		•
Sex, Lies and Julian Assange	•		•	•		•	<					•
Shooting War: World War II Combat Cameramen	<											•
Sniper: Deadliest Mission												<
Soldier's Pay												
Soundtrack to War					•						<	
Spying on the Home Front	•		•		<			•		•		
Standard Operating Procedure			•						<			
State of Mind: the Psychology of Control	<											•
Taking Liberties	•		•		<							
Tegenlicht: 'A Way Out of the War on Terror'	<											
Tegenlicht: 'Endgame: A Future Scenario for Israel'	<											•
Tegenlicht: 'Energy War'	•		<							•		
Tegenlicht: 'Purple Hearts'			•								<	
Ten Trillion and Counting						<						
The 9/11 Conspiracies: Fact or Fiction	<											
The Art of Deception	•		<	•								
The Billy Meier Story	<											
The CIA and the Nazis	•		<	•								
The Code of Silence			<									
The Cost of a Coke			<	•					•			

Documentary	Top Documentary	Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
The Crisis of Civilisation	•		<			•						•
The Death of Yugoslavia	<		•	•					•		<	
The Empire Strikes Out			•								<	
The Fifth Estate: 'The Lies That Led To War'			<	•								•
The Foreign Legion: Tougher than the Rest			<									
The Iraq War: Through Photographers Eyes	•		<	•	•							
The Memphis Belle: Flying Fortress			<	<								
The Mexican Mormon War	<		•	<								
The Myth of Violence			•			<						•
The Prisoner: How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair	<		•						•			
The Road we travelled: Obama 2012						<						
The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis	•								<			•
The Secret Iraq Files				<								
The Six Day Arab Israelie War			•	<								
The Spanish Civil War	<								•			
The Story of the Sputnik Moment			<									
The Third World			<									
The True Story of Black Hawk Down	<		•		•				•			•
The Unending War	<											
The US versus John Lenin			<									
The Vice Guide to Travel: Libena	•		<									
The War of the World	<											
This World: Mexico's Drug War'	<		•									
Torture in America's Prisons	•		<		•							

Documentary	Top Documentary Films	Documentary Heaven	Documentary Lovers	Movies Found Online	Documentary Storm	Documentary Network	Documentary Tube	Documentary Wire	Free Documentaries	911 Docs	Documentary Jungle
Tour of duty: Australia's Secret War		<									
Uganda's Silent War		<		•						<	
Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War											
Undercover Syria		<									
Vietnam: American Holocaust	<	•	•	•							
Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War	<	•	•								
War on Our world	•	<	•					•			
Wars In Peace	<										
What I've Learned about US Foreign Policy								<			
What in the World are they Spraying?	•	<	•				•	•			•
Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden?	•	•						<			•
Wikirebels	•	<		•		•		•			
WikiSecrets: Behind the Scenes						<					
World War II In HD Colour	<	•									•
Year Zero: Death of Cambodia	<								•		
Zeitgeist	•	•	•	<			•	•	•	•	•
Zero: an Investigation into 9/11		<								•	

Appendix E:

Documentaries Ordered by User-Comments on *Top Documentary Films*

Documentary	Earliest Comment Before August 2013	User Comments
9/11 Explosive Evidence: Experts Speak Out (2012)	Two Years	1,528
The 9/11 Conspiracies: Fact or Fiction (2007)	Three Years	547
Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think (2009)	Two Years	360
The New American Century (2007)	Four Years	337
Dispatches: 'Iraq's Secret War Files' (2010)	Three Years	323
The 9/11 Decade: 'The Intelligence War' (2011)	Two Years	271
The True Story of Black Hawk Down (2003)	Four Years	169
20/20: 'Kill Shot: The Story Behind Bin Laden's Death' (2011)	Three Years	163
9/11 Intercepted (2011)	One Year	147
Tegenlicht: 'A Future Scenario for Israel' (2007)	Three Years	143
Iranium (2011)	Three Years	142
<u>Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich (2005)</u>	Three Years	137
The War You Don't See (2010)	Three Years	137
The Death of Yugoslavia (1995)	Four Years	128
Oil, Smoke & Mirrors (2005)	Three Years	116
Assange: Facebook, Google and Yahoo are Spying Tools (2011)	Two Years	108
Bombies: The Secret War (2002)	Two Years	100
Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West (2005)	Six Years	96
Fault Lines: 'Iraq after the Americans' (2012)	One Year	96
Vietnam: American Holocaust (2008)	Two Years	92
HAARP: Holes in Heaven? (1998)	Five Years	89
People and Power: 'America's War Games' (2013)	Seven Months	89
Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre (2005)	Four Years	87
Legacy: The Origins of Civilisation (1991)	Four Years	87
Afghan Heroin: The Lost War (2008)	Three Years	78
State of Mind: the Psychology of Control (2013)	Six Months	75
Genocide: Worse than War (2009)	Three Years	74
This World: 'Mexico's Drug War' (2010)	Two Years	73
Guns for Hire: Afghanistan (2006)	Four Years	69
Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War (1980)	Three Years	68
The Trap: What Happened to our Dream of Freedom? (2007)	Five Years	67
The War of the World (2006)	Two Years	63
The Unending War (2012)	Ten Months	62
Breaking the Silence (2003)	Four Years	64
The Power of Nightmares (2004)	Five Years	56
Generation Jihad (2010)	Four Years	52
Gulf War Syndrome: Killing our Own (2007)	Four Years	51
Our War 10 years in Afghanistan (2011)	Two Years	49

Documentary	Earliest Comment Before August 2013	User Comments
The Billy Meier Story (2009)	Four Years	48
Tegenlicht: 'A Way Out of the War on Terror' (2008)	One Year	44
Dispatches: 'Iraq's Missing Billions' (2006)	Four Years	44
War Made Easy (2007)	Five Years	43
Mission Accomplished: Langan in Iraq (2007)	Two Years	45
The Mexican Mormon War (2012)	One Year	45
Carrier (2005)	Four Years	42
The Kings from Babylon to Baghdad (2004)	Four Years	42
Empire: 'Hollywood & the War Machine' (2010)	Three Years	40
Tegenlicht: 'Iron triangle: Carlyle Group' (2004)	Four Years	38
Weapons of Mass Deception (2004)	Five Years	37
Prisoners of War Betrayed (2013)	One Year	36
The Spanish Civil War (1983)	Four Years	36
Hijacking Catastrophe (2004)	Four Years	35
No End in Sight (2007)	Four Years	35
War and Globalisation (2003)	Four Years	34
Why We Fight (2005)	Four Years	33
<u>Bush Family Fortunes (2003)</u>	Four Years	33
Dispatches: 'Iraq's Death Squads' (2010)	Four Years	32
Dispatches: 'Chechnya: the Dirty War' (2005)	Five Years	31
7/7 Ripple Effect (2007)	Four Years	30
Afghanistan: Drugs, Guns & Money (2008)	Four Years	29
Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism (2004)	Four Years	29
The War on Democracy (2007)	Four Years	28
Panorama: 'Daylight Robbery' (2008)	Four Years	28
NOVA: 'Battle of the X-Planes' (2003)	Four Years	27
Star Wars in Iraq (2006)	Four Years	26
Iran and the West (2009)	Four Years	25
I Know I'm Not Alone (2005)	Five Years	25
<u>Unconstitutional (2004)</u>	Five Years	24
The Fog of War (2003)	Five Years	23
Dispatches: 'Iraq: the Women's Story' (2006)	Four Years	22
Ghosts of Abu Ghraib (2007)	Four Years	22
Shooting War: World War II Combat Cameramen (2000)	Two Years	22
The Secret of the Seven Sisters (2013)	Nine Months	21
Year Zero: Death of Cambodia (1979)	Five Years	21
Bomb Harvest (2007)	Three Years	19
Four Corners: 'WikiLeaks: The Forgotten Man Bradley Manning' (2012)	Three Months	19
Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers (2006)	Four Years	19
My War, My Story (2007)	Four Years	18
Enemy Image (2005)	Five Years	18

Documentary	Earliest Comment Before August 2013	User Comments
Wars In Peace (1995)	Four Years	18
Uncovered: The War on Iraq (2004)	Four Years	15
<u>Nova: 'Life & Death in a War Zone' (2004)</u>	Four Years	15
The Ground Truth: After the Killing Ends (2006)	Four Years	14
Control Room (2004)	Four Years	12
Network First: 'Flying the flag: Arming the World' (1995)	Four Years	10
The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror (2004)	Four Years	9
Body of War (2007)	Four Years	9
Independent Media in a Time of War (2003)	Four Years	7
The Prisoner: How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair (2006)	Four Years	6
In Saddam's Shadow: Ten Years after the Invasion (2013)	Eight Months	6
The War Tapes (2006)	Four Years	5
Dispatches: 'Iraq the Reckoning' (2005)	Four Years	4
Inside Iraq: The Untold Stories (2004)	One Year	1
Paying The Price: Killing the Children of Iraq (2000)	Six Months	1

Appendix F:

Top Documentary Films User-Comments for Hijacking Catastrophe (2004)

- decaris** I have your site bookmarked and have watched quite a few documentaries so far and find them very informative. Thanks for putting this together and keep up the good work.
- Jules** This is one of my favorite sites ever!!! I've watched easily over 100 docs on this site, in every category. It's amazing, and has really opened up my eyes to everything from factory farming to political issues. Vlatko, you rule!! I intend to keep watching docs on this site as long as you keep them coming. :o) ~A very thankful Californian
- Vlatko** Thanks decaris, I appreciate that.
- Yavanna** good doc - very slick, approaches the political causes. Also useful to view from an economical viewpoint.
- Brett Gasper** This documentary is compelling - but has a leftist bias (Norman Mailer and Naom Chomski). Remember it was Bill Clinton in his 1998 State of the Union Address who brought up Iraq's WMD's. The CIA knew that Sadam Hussein gave up his WMD's to deny his sons in law CIA protection after their meeting in Amman, Jordan. Remember also, that the Democrats voted to go to war. If they were lied to - that just makes them incompetant... Democrats and Republicans. Robert Byrd and Ron Paul voted "NO" for war in Iraq. I was in Iraq when we were viewed as liberators and I thought that was a graceful time to leave. Paul Bremmer screwed that up by disbanding the police, military and public works... welcoming in the militias.
- communism works** There is no left/right. It's the same policies running the country. I know friend from Iraq, who calls the new government a bunch of thieves.
- Peter Leclair** This most riveting doc is telling something I already know. At the onset of 9/11 I was convinced that the attacks were part of a conspiracy from the get go and the axis of EVIL is within the office of the U.S Government and the men who planned to takedown Saddam were the very demons within. Sure enough North America has become the most hated in the world thanks to a war that was never justified. When George Bush senior saved Kuwait, the invasion by Saddam was just the specific war that the Bush chronies of the 2002 era had been hoping for. The U.S could have killed Sadam but the powers that be needed a more powerful reason to invade Iraq. I have paid special attention to the words NEW WORLD ORDER. I am convinced this might become reality within my lifetime. Finally every time a question was raised by the media about Iraq junior Bush would falter with his answers and would be caught in a lie. These war mongerers will pay the ultimate price in the end when they must answer to a higher power that will see right through the lies. We as a people should hold them responsible for the lives of thousands. This is high treason. These thugs have made a mockery of the principles set out in the declaration. Wasted hundreds of

years and insulted Washington, Jefferson. Lincoln as well as Rosevelt.

TREBOR

Our country would never be this cruel. The USA is the best country on this planet. The most compassionate people and God fearing. I love my country, the troops, the flag and the people. The US Government has many wonderful and caring people who would never allow these lies to take place. PATRIOT HERE AND ALWAYS WILL BE!

GoughLewis

Psychologists tell us that many people's view of the government is a projection of their view of their parents. In other words, whatever they believe about their parents, they also believe about the government. He or she assumes that the government wants to protect its citizens, just as his or her parents tried to protect their family (or at least he or she believed they did). So for this average American, believing that the government could do something cruel would be extremely difficult. And to question Fathers actions is tantamount to betraying that approving fathers love, regardless of the fact he is a mass murderer with a pathology of secretiveness/deception/perception management.

The script goes like this Trebor: The sleazy looking cop, as cops all look like these days, says to the kid, "Kiddo... we caught your Dad doing something very very wrong, he did some things well, they are so disgusting we are going to wait until you grow up a bit before we can tell you, ok? ...we have the DNA tests Kiddo, it's your Dad! I know this is hard to except!" The kid looks into the reptile like eyes of the authority figure, and trusts him because he is an authority figure, but screams out anyway, "My Dad would never be this cruel. My Dad is the best on this planet. The most compassionate of people and God fearing. I love my Dad, the troops, the flag and the people. My Dad is wonderful and caring people who would never allow these lies to take place. I LOVE MY DAD AND ALWAYS WILL!" "Kiddo... your dad is going to be getting a lethal injection when a jury hears the evidence on what your Dad did." The sleazy cop, as they all are, snorts with joy. "I just wish I could be the one stickin that needle deep into your Dad's sick @!*% arm myself Kiddo! ...he's one sick ass son of a bitch." Cop laughs, as the Kid cries tears, and muttering ver and over, "I'll never believe it...EVER!!! (boo hoo hoo)

Just a thought on mental resistance to information regarding the dark event of September 11th, 2001.

veverk

Trebor,I feel sorry for you, you blind mouse...

ELFISDODGE

Nurse! He's out of bed again!

t.altan

those colors did not fly....and they never wil!!

debbye

When the events of this "era" were unfolding, i knew that the words spewing from our leaders were Bulls**t! I knew that the WTC buildings collapsed in the manner of a planned demolition, as i watched in horror on TV. I also knew, that the US government is not representative of the "freedoms" that our country stands for. I have long been an activist for the rights of those who have no voice. I am no longer young. Nor am I as active as I once was. I am no longer a

"Cockeyed Optimist" ... & our future is grim. I can understand the view of the world community towards the US. I do not believe that the "people" are represented, anymore.

debbye

@TREBOR good luck with the delusions!

tonymalone501

Patriots are always standing alone, being imprisoned, laughed at or shot. Whatever the enemys of freedom loving people can use to quite them. I am older and yes I used to believe in my government but our founding fathers knew better. The free press was supposed to help inform people of what is really going on but now try and just mask a question that the non constitutional abiding govt we have now. Patriots are few and far between so you may want to educate yourself if you want to consider your self a patriot. Patriotism is not standing behind a lying government it is standing up to them. you may be called names you may be physically injured or worse, but if you wish to be a patriot then stand for the conxtitution, when you see rights being pushed under the rug raise your voice. This is not the same country I grew up in. Do some research. I believe you can be proud of our country and be wrong I was.

James Shawver

Why would he need to educate himself before he calls himself a patriot? Is it because he does not share your narrow views of patriotism? People need to adopt your beliefs or they can't love their country. I'm sorry but you sound as ignorant as Bush.

**My Religion Is 2
Do Good**

This one should be watched by every American citizen. It seems to me that many of them didn't quite understand what patriotism really means. No sensationalism - but instead smart people with insight on every level of government, politics, and economy. It should not be forgotten that patriotism is a form of nationalism, supporting the notion of the own country being better than any other. But countries are made of people, humans like you and me... or the Afghani mother, the Iraqi father, the Somali daughter, and so on. There is no 'better'. Every human life has the same value. The only value that can change is the value of a person for their respective society, which is of course dependent on the view of the observers on that person.

Patriotism - in its worst form - is planted in our brains by leaders in order to be manipulated in a certain direction. How this usually turns out we can learn from history. No single empire which thought of itself to be 'superior' and tried to force others to be a part of it has ever survived. Another aspect I personally have a problem with is the pride which goes along with patriotism. How can I be proud to be - in my case - German when it was merely coincidence that I was born in Germany? Did I choose it? Is it an achievement? What if I was born in Venezuela, or China, or Eritrea? Would it make me better or worse as a human? I think not. (Please do not counter with any Third Reich stuff; the USA has enough skeletons in its own closet - as well as any other country for that matter.) On a sidenote, as far as I know pride is a cardinal sin as well. Not that this would affect me, being an agnostic, but I understand the message anyway. We would be all better off with a little more of its

counterpart - humility. 'Patriotism is the virtue of the vicious.' - Oscar Wilde I believe tolerance, freedom, and peace, would be much worthier goals to strive for. All I learned about the USA in the last two decades reminds me as a German of our own not so far past. I already see America going into the exact same direction.

MOSA

-the opening speeches-' they have lethal weapons' -replays in my mind the old truth in jest -that is.... How do we know-they have weapons? we have the receipts---Sadam +Osama-are---eh -were old friends---eh clients---eh---cut the tape!!!!< my addition to jest>

NB-Here in Ireland-the national media RTE or Random Tedious Effluvia 'news' department -follow the 'line'. that is when they are not condescending to their audience -or selling them something-or mesmerising them-- in other subliminal ways-while they pamper themselves and their own golden circle of opinion making friends. Sadly the same-is evident for neighbours in the UK. Even the more intellectually searching agencies-and less corrupt- in Germany and France among others have bought to some degree-the 'line'

Panem et Circenses- - bread and circuses

...Here! Buy this commodity- you need! -while we show you sport and musak -and Give your minds a holiday!

Don't ask and don't worry!--ad nauseum-adinfinitum

MOSA

to add a little context to my initial comment infra-

I remember in 1963-as a 7 year old-seeing JFK -in Dublin Ireland. He was not a bad man despite what some opportunist lazy and cowardly latter day scibes would have you think. Dead men can't sue. I digress. When I heard news of his murder -5 months later-I was scared of this 'Oswald' character. Years later-what Warren et al- overlooked-was evident to anyone who cared to notice. 40 years -or a little shy of it; I have had the great opportunity to visit almost half of the great US States from California to Vermont.

My interest and fascination with aviation -found me at flight test areas and air force bases across the length and breath of a wondrous land-of kind and talented and hard working people. In 2007-I was privileged to be in the White House -and in retrospect take up JFK's offer -to visit there-which he made in the summer of 63. I as an 'ordinary Joe visitor' that is. I have similarly been privileged to have been permitted to 'tour'the Pentagon -twice no less. I stood in the centre or center-of that 'power house'-and to this day -I would see the folks there -as 'good'. I stood -in Lincolns 'place' in the Capitol building as I tend to do-in a slightly obsessive way -at most -most historic places =across the globe. As critical sense developed-I believe I understood most socio -economic -cultural political moves-(though I missed the Ollie and Ronnie Iran Contra intrigue-which was some move-by the backroom boys). Anyway-to bring matters to issue at hand-----I fell for the 9/11 tragedy 'line'---until I decided -belatwdly this September 2011-to review the evidence. The only conspiracy -is to take the meaning out of the word. The 'evil' which the misguided Mr Bush spoke of -as he rode backseat -behind real pilots onto a carrier-is the coterie of Cheney, Rumsfeld , and

their ilk-who sat out wars in Vietnam and Korea-and schemed ways to make 'meaning' of their lives-by the acquisition of money and power-.....in effect making war on thie own nation,

Notwithstanding the cabal of power holders -mentioned in most of the documentaries herethe lowest form of human life outside of them and lower than bankers and esate agents is the self serving media tribe.. Here in Ireland-the -the aforementioned Random Tedious Effluent videlicet RTE-; along with cartoon class TV3 ;Newstalk' ;Today FM-make up the numbers.

They height of their inquiry-when not insincerely joking and 'joshing among themselves on the latest celebrity - is to ask their audience -'dial up-if you can-and answer if you can-where is New York'-and win a chance to win -a chance to win -something. The money of course -is collected to add to hyper salaries...but one 'member' of their audience wins something. The scary element is that folk do-and that indicates how easlily people can be manipulated-and ultimately 'down the line' controlled.

Warning.

Keep a critical eye-or develop one -if necessary-and try to resist print and visual 'networks'-who will only take your soul away for the price of a holiday or a car. Seek the truth -in the USA and -across the world -or in my country Ireland (where the political class are 'only' inordinately clueless and greedy)-that is -God forbid- they could ever wage war. more anon

Maurice Aherne
aka Liebewitz

**Ireno Rodriguez
Winston Smith**

So true!

"How could they have placed explosives in the buildings without anybody noticing?" (*Read; 'DEMOLITION ACCESS TO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER by Kevin Ryan in the Journal of 9-11 Studies & Jim Hoffman on 911research.wtc7 net has 'A Hypothetical Blasting Scenario' which go over some of the possibilities.) There are many different possibilities and all are hypothetical.. Maybe the person or people in charge of security might have had an easier time of it. It could only be hypothetical but people have looked at this. The cores, could only be accessed through the elevator shafts, had their own walkway-floors beyond the walls on the interiors of the buildings. There's no question that these events happened as witnessed and that uncontrolled fires and gravity (subsequent to the plane crashes, the buildings stood for only 56 &102 mins) cannot possibly account for all the anomalies that make the official explanations impossible. For example: the speed and symmetry in the destruction of WTC 1 2 & 7, the explosiveness of 1 & 2, which systematically blasted apart the entire buildings and their core structures, blasting them laterally for hundreds of feet in every direction creating 1200' debris fields and massive pyroclastic clouds, pulverized most of the concrete in the Towers, and left 1100 missing bodies,,- all in about 12-13 seconds.

watch?v=1JnZbYXcbqw

watch?v=hSApOavkHg8

The fires burned for 100 days (w/temps as high as 2800f). Despite continuous efforts to put them out, neither water nor special fire suppressants could extinguish them for over 3 months, molten metal, explosions, sham investigations which ignored evidence, the rapid disposal of most of the structural steel, the FEMA BPAT Appendix C which documents molten structural steel, the iron micro-spheres, and so on.. are all indicators of additional energy sources and a cover-up by investigators which did not even test for explosive residues.

- batvette** you better get your story straight with the rest of the twoofers, they think a good talking point is "collapsed in their own footprint". Check it out! Gravity! Who knew?
- 911_was_an_Inside_Job** No matter how much we disagree with these tyrants, they are gonna do what they do best. Wage War, Kill innocent, Colonise other Countries, spoil and steal resources, make life hell for comon people, bring one World Government. I only hope, we as the generation of today together with the generation of yesterday and the generation of tomorrow could make an impact so hard that these tyrants can never rise again.
- Andrew Crook** We are and we will. Free Humanity is rising and these tyrants are doomed.
- 911_was_an_Inside_Job** And I am absolutely positive about it. We are not gonna lose this battle.
- batvette** You're a real Che Guevara. You bring some proof of an inside job and we'll see about that.
- Christian Klinckwort Guerrero Andrew Crook** The essencial: "They will fail" quoting Kevin Danaher
- Andrew Crook** WTF?
- oQ** Dear @Achems, How did this pass over the moderators....LOL
- Pysmythe** And not only the moderators. ;)
- Achems_Razor** Was not here, am here now, lol
- buttons1994** The Republican's????????? I'd say the left had more to do with it all..but all of them are behind it.. God help us!
- N** America look in the mirror...
- DoHuh (Sombrero del WalMart)** Preemptive War by a nation with only 2 countries on it borders and protected from conventional war by 2 oceans. Yet we spend more money on weapons than the rest of the world combined. That has to tell you something.
- batvette** Preemptive war? Gee I thought Saddam invaded Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and refused to meet the conditions of the cease fire he agreed to. But then silly me, I don't see the good in portraying the actions of our side in a bad light to the world.
- James Shawver** Preemptive strike was the term W. used in the run up to the invasion,

along with words like wmd, mobile chemical labs, aluminum tubes, yellow cake from Niger, meetings in Prauge with terrorists, and smoking gun in the form of a mushroom cloud. I don't see the good in portraying W. as being noble when every reason he gave for the invasion was shown to be untrue. I don't believe any of the 9/11 conspiracies, but let's not rewrite history.

Will Hybrid
Beats Vergano

So... its been removed due to 3rd party copyright notifications. I assume that was the makes of this video? Of course, its a documentary! They would want this type of thing not to be shown to as many people as possible wouldn't they... ;)