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# The 'War on Terror' Metaframe in Film and Television

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the government of the United States of America declared a 'War on Terror'. This was targeted not only at the ostensible culprits - al-Qaeda - but at 'terror' itself. The 'War on Terror' acted as a rhetorical 'metaframe', which was sufficiently flexible to incorporate a broad array of nominally-related policies, events, phenomena and declarations, from the Iraq war to issues of immigration. The War on Terror is strategically limitless, and therefore incorporates not only actual wars, but potential wars. For example, the bellicose rhetoric towards those countries labelled the 'Axis of Evil' or 'Outposts of Tyranny' is as much a manifestation of the metaframe as the 'Shock and Awe' bombing of Baghdad. As a rhetorical frame, it is created through all of its utterances; its narrative may have been initially scripted by the Bush administration, but it is reified and naturalised by the news media and other commentators, who adopt the frame's language even when critical of its content. Moreover, film and television texts participate in this process, with fiction-based War on Terror narratives sharing and supporting - co-constituting - the War on Terror discourse's 'reality'.

This thesis argues that the War on Terror metaframe manifests itself in multiple interconnected narrative forms, and these forms both transcode and affect its politics. I propose a congruency between the frame's expansiveness and its associational interconnections, and a corresponding cinematic plot-structure I term the Global Network Narrative. Elsewhere, an emphasis on the pressures of clock-time is evoked by the real-time sequential-series *24*, while the authenticity and authority implied by the embedded 'witness' is shown to be codified and performed in multiple film and television fiction texts. Throughout, additional contextual influences - social, historical, and technological - are introduced where appropriate, so as not to adopt the metaframe's claims of limitlessness and uniqueness, while efforts are made to address film and television not as mutually exclusive areas of study, but as suggestively responsive to one another.

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## **Author's Declaration**

This thesis represents the original work of Christopher Buckle, unless otherwise stated in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out in the Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Dr. Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Dr. Ian Craven during the period of October 2007 to June 2010.



## Introduction

I was working at Barclays in the machine room and one of the girls got a phone call from her husband telling her that one of the twin towers has been hit by a plane. Spent the last 3 hours of the afternoon in the rest room watching the news in complete and utter disbelief. For the first time I felt that the world was changing before my eyes.

After work I met my gf for a quick drink, then got the 142 to Brent Cross to watch Hendon play a Bedford Town side that had lost their first 7 games of the season. Watched the news in the bar before going out and watching us lose 2-1... Spent most of the night then watching the news. It was utterly compelling viewing.<sup>1</sup>

- 28yootoahfc, *Drowned in Sound* forum

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, nineteen terrorists - retrospectively referred to as 'The Hamburg Cell' - hijacked four commercial flights in the United States. Two were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York; another was piloted into The Pentagon in Virginia, while the fourth crashed in the Pennsylvanian countryside. Approximately three thousand people died: passengers and crew in the hijacked planes, office workers and first-responders in downtown Manhattan, government employees of the Department of Defence, and the hijackers themselves. Nine days later, President George W. Bush announced a 'War on Terror' that would target not just those groups responsible for the attacks, but 'every terrorist group of global reach'.<sup>2</sup> One month after that, the US and its allies invaded Afghanistan; in March 2003, Iraq became the war's second front. A raft of further anti-terrorism policies were passed in support of these efforts, and the War on Terror became an accepted and oft-invoked concept amongst politicians, the media, and the public alike.

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<sup>1</sup> "8 years ago today. What were you doing?", *Drowned in Sound*, accessed 12 Sept. 2009. <http://drownedinsound.com/community/boards/social/4198069>

<sup>2</sup> 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', Press Release, The White House, 20 Sept. 2001, accessed 27 Sept. 2011. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>

It is not difficult to find personal testimonies concerning the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. The attacks continue to be subject to seemingly endless analysis, and have generated myriad statements and accounts from those who experienced their effects at some level. Some testimonies have acquired greater cultural authority than others, creating a loose hierarchy that places the families of the dead and emergency services first-responders at the top, with first-hand witnesses in the tier immediately below. The third tier is considerably larger. This contains the significant proportion of the planet's population who witnessed and have re-witnessed the events second-hand thanks to modern global communications technologies.

The account offered by 28yootoahfc, a user of the online discussion forum of the UK-based music website 'Drowned in Sound', is as valid an example of this third group as any other. His or her version of events may not be as interestingly unique as that of, for example, Sergeant John McLoughlin (pulled from the wreckage of the second tower), Lisa Beamer (wife of Todd Beamer, who perished on United Flight 93's crash in a field in Pennsylvania)<sup>3</sup> or Rudy Giuliani, Mayor of New York at the time of the attacks.<sup>4</sup> But, in its mix of astonishment and banality, and its reliance on filmed reports transmitted from miles away, it is typical of a more widespread experience. It is indicative of the experiences of vast numbers of people for whom '9/11' constituted a defining historical event, an easily-recollected moment of personal experience colliding with a far larger geo-political narrative, but which unfolded 'before their eyes' on television or online, and not in their immediate vicinity.

Posted in a thread entitled '8 years ago today, What were you doing?', 28yootoahfc's recollection was followed by one hundred and seventy nine replies from other users keen to share their experiences. There are predictable inclusions: attempts at bad-taste humour; paraphrased and confused attempts to define the attacks as works of art; and indignant comparisons to other events deemed 'worse' than 9/11 (notably the siege in Beslan in which hundreds died, but also famine in Africa and, the perennial internet forum topic of comparison,

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<sup>3</sup> Lisa Beamer and Ken Abraham, *Let's Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003)

<sup>4</sup> Rudolph W. Giuliani, *Leadership* (London: Time Warner Paperbacks, 2003)

the Holocaust). More broadly, these accounts evidence the widespread impulse to narrate, indexing personal experience to the grander narrative of history.

The decision to include certain facts may seem obtuse (the football score will likely seem insignificant to most), but it is typical of the way other Drowned in Sound users construct and narrate their own perspectives. *brokenchairs* reveals she was watching *Josie and the Pussycats* (Elfont and Kaplan, 2001) with her friends when she heard the news; *wrightylew* was playing computer games and found out when he went downstairs to make a cup of tea; *idle65* was told at after-school rugby-practice. Amongst the prosaic details, one user, *marckee*, breaks out of the third tier to recount their first-hand observation of the towers' collapse from the window of Newark airport departure lounge. Their proximity to the events is valued, one responder remarking that there's 'probably no need for any other posts on this really after that'. *marckee*'s actual post is not, however, a full account of their experience in the Newark departure lounge, but a link to a thread started the previous year on the same website, featuring many of the same contributors. In the straightforwardly titled 'September 11<sup>th</sup> thread' posted in 2008, *marckee* recounts the experiences in detail: tanks on the freeway, evacuation of the airport, muttered reactions from those watching President Bush's address. Already, *marckee*'s version of 9/11 is cemented in place and repeated on demand.

For everyone else involved in the discussion, the details are less visceral. Yet few admit to any uncertainty over their whereabouts or activities, despite the majority identifying themselves as very young at the time (the website's demographic is broadly 18-25 year olds, and many of the accounts hark back to school-age experiences). The majority support their crystal-clear stories with reams of detail: as well as *28yootoahfc*'s football score, *brother\_moiph* specifies the episode of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* (NBC, 1990-1996) shown on BBC2 that evening, while *Teddus* notes the 'record low' turnout at another football game.

Although I do not contribute to internet forums, I too could, if asked, narrate my experiences of the day. The narrative would touch upon many of the same elements as those listed above (involving school bus rides and gawping at live news reports), and would be just as routine and un-illuminating. But while I can strongly recall a version of events, I no longer have any way of distinguishing

what is actual memory and what has been conditioned over time. When I began this research project, I listed, for my own benefit, those parts of the ‘War on Terror’ that had made the biggest impact upon me personally: Staying up all night to watch live news reports of Baghdad being bombed in 2003; being both repulsed and fascinated by photographs of Saddam Hussein’s execution on the Internet; seeing the Twin Towers collapse in New York, live. I was perturbed to realise, much later, that the last must be a false memory. The first tower fell at 9:59 am local time, the second at 10:28 am. That would time their collapses at 14:59 pm and 15:28 pm GMT. I was in my final year of high school at the time, so would have been in a classroom when the first tower began to crumble, and walking towards the bus rank when the second fell. I may have witnessed the towers collapsing, but I could not have watched them do so ‘live’. Andrew Hoskins uses the term ‘media flashframes’ to refer to those events, like the attacks of 9/11, that are experienced as news images, their ‘apparent vividness and immediacy’ potentially causing a ‘mis-remembering of events; people seeing an event revisited on television in later times can easily convince themselves that they witnessed it originally on TV.’<sup>5</sup> He supports the observation with reference to a poll in which ‘a majority of Americans believed they had witnessed the Kennedy assassination live on television’, when the Zapruder footage was not in fact shown until five years after the event.<sup>6</sup> Neuroscientist Tali Sharot’s research into memories of the 2001 attacks draws a similar conclusion:

People felt their memories were as accurate as videotape, while often they were filled with errors. A survey conducted around the country showed that eleven months after the attacks, individuals’ recollections of their experience that day were consistent with their initial accounts (given in September 2011) only 63% of the time.<sup>7</sup>

Whether brother\_moiph is correct about the television listings, or Teddus remembers the crowd capacity accurately is not something I can speculate on. But the Drowned in Sound thread does feature examples of similar false memories: brusma remembers being able to watch it on television because his college course ‘always finished at 1pm on a Wednesday’ (September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Hoskins, *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 7

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Tali Sharot, ‘The Optimism Bias’ *Time*, 177.23 (2011), p. 36

was a Tuesday); while vamos compares the attacks to the bombings in London in July 2005, bemoaning the way people exaggerated their proximity to danger by claiming some kind of narrow escape (i.e. 'I should have been at that station at that time but I slept in') in their status updates on the social networking site Facebook, until others point out that Facebook wasn't introduced in the UK until after said event. As distance from the event increases, established narratives will become more and more central to discussions of the attacks, and when these narratives are based not on experience but false memories, this becomes a possible cause for concern. When we shift attention from the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 to the war declared shortly after, the concern intensifies.

This thesis focuses on a handful of War on Terror narratives, from cinematic depictions of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks, to television programmes dramatising counter-terrorist activities; from documentaries filmed in Iraq and Afghanistan, to fictional texts that look like documentaries filmed in Iraq and Afghanistan. These texts are different manifestations of 9/11 and the War on Terror as depicted in popular culture, and the four sections into which the following chapters can roughly be divided do not combine to form a single, linear argument, just as the events themselves do not yield to simple reconciliation: timelines have been drawn, and histories have been written, but the War on Terror continues to be defined more by its breadth than by its narrowness. This thesis examines some key trends that together are suggestive of certain congruities and overlaps, but which resist being folded into a single, all-encompassing argument. There are a multitude of conclusions to be drawn, which together build into a partial portrait of the way '9/11' and the 'War on Terror' have been presented and represented in the last ten years.

A decade-worth of continuously proliferating texts in the twin fields of film and television (not to mention literature, print news media, internet web sites and other related areas into which this thesis will on occasion dip) clearly presents, however, far too vast a field of study. Therefore, I want to make clear the motivation behind choosing certain texts over others.

## 0.1 Willing texts

Due to its nebulous nature, the ‘War on Terror’ can refer to numerous socio-political constructs, or few, depending upon the parameters drawn by the commentator. Therefore, it should be made clear what type of texts will be considered by this study. This thesis is concerned with representations of politics (specifically, the area of politics pertaining to the War on Terror), as opposed to political representations. This caveat does not preclude a political stance in many - perhaps even the majority - of the texts under discussion; for example, a film like *Redacted* (De Palma, 2007) is explicitly political in its examination of war crimes in Iraq, interrogating the subject at the level of both form and content. But it is a common subject matter that is shared by all the texts under discussion, not necessarily a political agenda: in execution, they may be apolitical, overtly ideological, or attempting a political intervention.

The ideology/politics distinction is thereby of diminished importance, though it is necessary to address it in brief. Any discussion of ‘political’ film and television presupposes the opposite - a non-political form of film and television production. If we consider the way in which film and television function at an ideological level, such a presupposition is problematical; as Andrew Sarris suggests, ‘it can be argued that all films are ultimately political either as statements or evasions’.<sup>8</sup> Although this is a valid conclusion, it arguably does not sufficiently acknowledge the vastly different qualities evident in films such as *Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966), *Land and Freedom* (Loach, 1995) or *Lions for Lambs* (Redford, 2007) in comparison to *All That Heaven Allows* (Sirk, 1955), *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001) or *Transformers* (Bay, 2007), for example. Drawing a distinction between the *political* and the *ideological* helps to identify what differentiates the former examples from the latter.

All films are ideological to the extent that they are products of a social system, and either passively reiterate the dominant discourses or self-consciously perpetuate them; ideological ‘either by commitment or default’.<sup>9</sup> As Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni argue, ‘*every film is political*, inasmuch as it is determined by the ideology which produces it (or within which it is produced,

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Sarris, *Politics and Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 6

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p. 68

which stems from the same thing)'.<sup>10</sup> In his introduction to *Hollywood Goes to Washington*, Michael Coyne acknowledges the ways in which different classical Hollywood genres have been understood to relate ideologically to aspects of the 'American Dream':

Westerners on horseback and the lone man of conscience are monuments to self-reliance and inner resolve. The multi-ethnic platoons so beloved of World War 2 movies are hymns to the harmony of the melting pot. The impoverished, driven youngster who rises to riches is a testament to the virtue of hard work and the ease of social mobility. The happy ending of the Hollywood musical is a paean to the promise of America - in essence, the guaranteed pay-off in this most wonderful of all possible worlds: Hollywood's America is the land of happy endings. In American movies, ideology is *everywhere*.<sup>11</sup>

However, Coyne concludes that, although 'underlying political messages are virtually all-pervasive in American movies', there is a distinct corpus of narratives that deal with the subject of 'politics' directly, identifying 'political film' as a genre in its own right. Such films include *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (Capra, 1939), *All the President's Men* (Pakula, 1976) and *Good Night, and Good Luck*. (Clooney, 2005).<sup>12</sup>

Thus, while *All That Heaven Allows* et. al. have been interpreted as, in some sense, 'political', to do so entails a certain degree of excavation: Sirk read from a feminist perspective;<sup>13</sup> *Amelie* criticised for its exclusively-white Parisian setting, omitting the city's cultural diversity;<sup>14</sup> and, more pertinently to the current discussion, *Transformers* identified by Paul Haggis as a right-wing response to the seemingly never-ending War on Terror, opposing skepticism and discontent with spectacle and a reassurance that 'evil' can be defeated.<sup>15</sup> Each of these arguments convincingly identifies an ideological element in the text,

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<sup>10</sup> Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods: An Anthology, Vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 24

<sup>11</sup> Michael Coyne, *Hollywood Goes to Washington: American Politics on Screen* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 8

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 8

<sup>13</sup> Jackie Byars, *All That Hollywood Allows: Re-Reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991)

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Jeffries 'It's hard for me to play romantic. I come across as a bit of a jerk' *The Guardian* 6<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2001, accessed Nov. 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2001/aug/06/edinburghfestival2001.edinburghfestival>

<sup>15</sup> Ali Jaafar, 'Casualties of War' *Sight and Sound* 18.2 (2008), p. 20

but their respective plots are not ‘about’ politics; their ideological content is ancillary to romance, comedy, and spectacular action sequences. Therefore, *Transformers*, within the scope of this thesis, is not a War on Terror text worth addressing.

I have instead adopted Coyne’s approach with some minor alterations. Texts are chosen for their direct depiction of aspects of the War on Terror at the level of content, including: ‘9/11’; ‘extraordinary rendition’; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; terrorism and counter-terrorism more broadly; and widening surveillance protocols - though as chapter one suggests, one of the key features of the ‘War on Terror’ is its rhetorical flexibility, applicable to a vast number of events, policies, phenomena and so on. Coyne acknowledges that defining his corpus is complicated by those films which are ‘endowed with a distinctly political message’ yet which do not engage ‘primarily’ with ‘the world of American politics’; his examples include *The Grapes of Wrath* (Ford, 1940) and *Forrest Gump* (Zemickis, 1994).<sup>16</sup> So as to preserve the singular focus on ‘political film’ as a genre, Coyne chooses to exclude them from the field of study. The equivalent in this study would be those films that allude to aspects of the War on Terror, but do not make the connection overt. Many attempts to identify a ‘post-9/11’ or ‘War on Terror’ trend in film and television have engaged in a kind of thematic excavation designed to bring such connections to the surface: for example, Jennie Carlsten’s article identifying liberal anger in *The Constant Gardener* (Meirelles, 2005) and *25<sup>th</sup> Hour* (Lee, 2002),<sup>17</sup> or Anthony J. Kolenic’s linking of ‘the anxieties of this historical moment’ to the comic-based superhero narratives of *Batman Begins* (Nolan, 2005) and *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008).<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Thomas S. Hibbs argues for a collection of observable trends in the ‘anxious’ film and television typical of the early part of the twenty-first century, including a renewed ‘quest for innocence’ and an emphasis on exhibitions of heroic virtue,<sup>19</sup> while *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the War on Terror* contains essays that, variously, examine the way

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<sup>16</sup> Coyne, *Hollywood Goes to Washington*, p. 9

<sup>17</sup> Jennie Carlsten, ‘Containing Their Rage: Anger and the Liberal Cinema’, *Cinephile* 3.1 (2007), pp. 4-11

<sup>18</sup> Anthony J. Kolenic, ‘Madness in the Making: Creating and Denying Narratives From Virginia Tech to Gotham City’, *The Journal of Popular Culture* 42.6 (2009), pp. 1023-1039

<sup>19</sup> Thomas S. Hibbs ‘Film and TV in Anxious Times’ *The New Atlantis* 6 (2004), pp. 90-106



contemporaneous critical responses to the Napoleonic War-set *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (Weir, 2003) framed it in relation to the War on Terror;<sup>20</sup> identify dystopic science fiction *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985) as prophetic of the actions of the Bush administration;<sup>21</sup> and propose period Western *Deadwood* (HBO, 2004-06) as an interrogation of the simplistic moral logic of the Bush administration.<sup>22</sup>

This thesis differs from the above, in that, by only addressing those film and television texts that feature the War on Terror overtly in their narratives, it renders the excavation of further meaning at the level of content unnecessary, privileging form, rather than content, in the actual analysis. The focus is on how and why such narratives are structured and styled in particular ways. The texts under discussion are all 'willing' texts - not only are they all produced by Western members of the 'Coalition of the Willing' (predominantly US texts, though also British or co-productions), but they are all openly 'about' the War on Terror, and therefore willing to be interpreted as such. If the content's relevance is a given, we are free to explore nuances in form more thoroughly.

For this reason, the abstractions of allegory will be avoided; searching for analogical relevance runs the risk of begging the question while casting analysis adrift in an endless sea of possible yet conflicting readings. By way of an example, *Gone Baby Gone* (Affleck, 2007) ostensibly narrates a child's kidnap and the ensuing investigation, culminating in the discovery that the missing girl was stolen by the well-intentioned, yet morally dubious police chief, acting out of fear for the young girl's safety if left with her irresponsible and seemingly uncaring mother. It is not difficult to identify themes of interventionism and exceptionalism in its plot, which circles the moral issue of circumventing the law for supposed humanitarian reasons; an allegorical musing on the pros and cons of unilateralist humanitarian intervention. This is an approach adopted in part by Douglas Kellner in *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney*

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<sup>20</sup> Jeff Birkenstein, 'An Early Broadside: The Far Right Raids *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* in Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell (eds.) *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the 'War on Terror'* (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 69-82

<sup>21</sup> David H. Price, 'Governing Far in the Iron Cage of Rationalism: Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* Through the 9/11 Looking Glass' in Birkenstein et. al. (eds.) *Reframing 9/11*, pp. 167-182

<sup>22</sup> Stacy Takacs, 'The Contemporary Politics of the Western Form: Bush, *Saving Jessica Lynch* and *Deadwood*' in Birkenstein et. al., *Reframing 9/11*, pp. 153-166

*Era*, in which he subjects a variety of US films released between 2000 and 2008 to ‘diagnostic critique’. Through this diagnostic lens, *Saw* (Wan, 2004) ‘puts on display the demented illusions, grotesque hypocrisy, obscene violence, and utter lunacy of the Bush-Cheney era’;<sup>23</sup> *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Burton, 2007) articulates ‘both the violence and the deep cultural pessimism of the Bush-Cheney era’;<sup>24</sup> and even *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End* (Verbinski, 2007) supplies ‘a chilling reminder of Bush-Cheney administration “justice”’ in its opening scene.<sup>25</sup>

Some allegorical readings offer themselves up more readily, but while a film like *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008) might be arguably ‘about’ 9/11 (in that its scenes of urban destruction filmed on a camcorder self-consciously echo footage of said attacks) it cloaks its reference in science fiction. *Battle Los Angeles* (Liebesman, 2011) lies somewhere in-between War on Terror allegory, and actual War on Terror text. Its fantastical premise - aliens invade earth in order to acquire its natural resources - lends itself easily to the sort of reading conducted above on *Gone Baby Gone*: news reports speak of a ‘coordinated attack’ from an ‘unknown enemy’ which has left cities in flame and turned buildings to rubble. US Marines must hastily mobilise to combat the threat, or leave the country (and, by extension, the entire globe) open to further assault (in this reading, the ‘enemy’ is both terrorist and imperialist). Such an interpretation resembles analyses of science fiction texts of the nineteen-fifties, which mapped the perceived threat of communism onto extraterrestrial foes; for example, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956) understood as an ‘iconic cultural representation of its contemporary climate of anti-communist paranoia’.<sup>26</sup> As such, it would be exempt from the parameters of this particular study. However, it is also arguably, at another level, an explicit depiction of the War on Terror. Its characters are Marines training for deployment in the Middle East (their exact destination is not specified, but there are references to both Iraq and Afghanistan; furthermore, they train in desert-like conditions and wear

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<sup>23</sup> Douglas Kellner, *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film in the Bush-Cheney Era* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 7

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* p. 30-1

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* p. 163

<sup>26</sup> M. Keith Booker, *Alternate Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), p. 65

khaki fatigues), with the central character Staff Sergeant Michael Nantz (Aaron Eckhart) in the process of leaving the armed forces following an undeveloped incident on his last tour in Iraq that left several men dead. The enemy fought in the film itself may be fantastical, but the focus on urban warfare, trauma, patriotism, and sacrifice is made consistent with rhetoric surrounding the actual military campaigns fought by America and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan. The connection to the War on Terror, in this example, is therefore more than just allegorical; it is partially explicit. This would qualify it for potential inclusion in the sample of films under examination.<sup>27</sup>

One final example of an allegorical war on terror text will underscore further difficulties posed in defining the ‘War on Terror’ text. *Appaloosa* (2008) stars its director and co-writer Ed Harris as gunman Virgil Cole, who along with his trusted right-hand man Everett (Viggo Mortensen) rides into the titular town to wrestle control from the lawless crooks terrorising its inhabitants. Cole’s first act is to impose strict by-laws that give him autocratic control, infringing upon the liberty of the innocent in order to protect them from harm. Occasionally he goes too far, beating one harmless drunk unconscious for disturbing the peace, but generally both men are presented as heroic and self-sacrificing, the film concluding with one settling down with a good woman and the other surrendering his legal authority as deputy in order to shoot a murderer who has evaded justice, before riding off into the sunset. Through the haze of an allegorical reading, this appears unsubtle metaphor, and can be re-written thus: world hegemon the United States of America, with its trusted allies in the coalition of the willing, embark on a military-led campaign against the pervasive threat of ‘Terror’. New laws are introduced that curtail individual freedom, but are justified as necessary tools in the newly declared conflict. While their conduct is not perfect, we cannot expect it to be, and should remember that ‘a few bad apples’ (as Dick Cheney labelled those responsible for the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib) should not be allowed to spoil the entire project in the eyes of the world. Nor should the restraints of international law be adhered to

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<sup>27</sup> Note: while *Battle Los Angeles* does not feature again in the subsequent analyses, there are definite connections to be made: the global reach of the attacks (invasions take place in Paris, Jordan, Hamburg, Rio, Hong Kong and elsewhere) links with the content of chapter six, while a scene in which soldiers speed up their armoured vehicle so as to strike and kill their enemy echoes incidents from *The War Tapes* (Scranton, 2006) and *In the Valley of Elah* (Haggis, 2007), discussed in chapters nine and ten respectively.

if they straightjacket the US and impinge upon its ability to wage war where it deems such actions to be necessary. The task remains unfinished, but will eventually yield a safe haven for the nation's citizens to live their lives in, while their foreign policy-makers move on to deal with new threats, new enemies and new doctrines of war.

It is possible to develop the reading further, drawing out the similarities to argue for a close corollary between debates over US foreign policy and the film's themes, intentional or otherwise. However, many of the themes and tropes linked above to foreign policy actions in the twenty-first century are already familiar generic conventions of the Western. The thin line between order and disorder, the stoically heroic lawman, the marshal law of the frontier town: these constituent parts do not identify *Appaloosa* as a War on Terror film any more than they identify *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952) as one. That is not to say, however, that such films will be entirely absent in the analyses to follow: tangential, contemporaneous texts such as *Appaloosa* are valuable in interrogating conclusions, while a predecessor like *High Noon* has a two fold value, historicising the development of certain traits, while also suggesting the two-way rhetorical influence of film and television narratives. When George W. Bush repeats his maxim 'you're either with us or against us' he in effect echoes Gary Cooper's lone sheriff. Bush declares the United States' intentions to take a stand against evil with or without the support of the international community (or even its own citizens), just as *High Noon's* sheriff defended the town single-handedly despite a lack of popular support. Labelling Bush a 'cowboy President' stems from more than just an acknowledgement of his Texan roots and his fondness for spending time on the ranch; it is a criticism of the perceived simplicity of his dichotomy between right and wrong, a dichotomy frequently dramatised in the Western genre. *Appaloosa* resembles a War on Terror narrative because the War on Terror rhetorically resembles *High Noon* and other Westerns.

To summarise, the texts that will be discussed in this thesis are those that address the War on Terror explicitly, by featuring aspects of the conflict prominently in their narrative content. Allegory will be excised in favour of direct depictions of the war's component elements, partly in order to pragmatically reduce the analytical sample. This also helps pre-empt potential

accusations of historical amnesia; the thesis focuses on 9/11 and the War on Terror, but I do not want to replicate the ‘9/11 changed everything’ mentality. Rather, treating the War on Terror as a representational subject, and not a paradigm shift per se, allows the thesis to address a range of disparate trends and developments drawn from a variety of disciplines. Such developments did not necessarily originate at 8:46am on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, nor are they observable only in depictions of the War on Terror specifically: Bakhtin’s chronotope was first posited in the nineteen-thirties; the multi-strand cinematic narrative dates at least as far back to the *Grand Hotel* (Goulding, 1932), with further roots in the novel form; clock-time has been a governing force since the dawn of modernity; paranoia and conspiracy theories are at least as old as the United States itself; and the citizen journalist is part of a long-in-development historical trend towards members of the public contributing eye-witness accounts and visual documentation of news stories as they unfold, facilitated by developments in telecommunications stretching back to the telegraph. Furthermore, the rhetoric surrounding the War on Terror more broadly can be linked to long-held American ideals, including exceptionalism and manifest destiny - the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan lengthening a ‘shadow of war’ that Michael Sherry argues stretches back to the United States very inception.<sup>28</sup>

All this serves to undermine efforts to isolate the War on Terror as unique or unprecedented. So why place it at the centre of a study in the first place? Because although it did not constitute the unprecedented paradigm-shift it was claimed to by certain figures, ‘9/11’ refocused American perceptions and priorities, making the War on Terror a compelling point of convergence for multiple disciplinary concerns. Characterising the relationship between political subject and theoretical approach thus allows for the likes of ‘citizen-journalism’ to be discussed meaningfully in this particular context, without having to stipulate a direct, absolute and exclusive connection between the two; the War on Terror is simply a prominent lens (or, to preempt the language of chapter one, a metaframe) through which the phenomena have been propagated and examined. Paranoia, pattern recognition and globalisation, to pluck an assortment of key words from the pages that follow, all pre-date 2001, but are

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 1

nonetheless frequently understood in relation to the War on Terror's 'era-defining' conflict.

## 0.2 Sharks and flaming skyscrapers

Hollywood is too deeply embedded in America's culture to be isolated from its politics.<sup>29</sup>

- *Richard Brownstein*

A political film is one which informs the largest mass possible, people who are not necessarily militant.<sup>30</sup>

- *Costa-Gavras*

The second criteria governing selection relates to the concept of 'the popular'. Speaking to *Cineaste* in 1976, Italian filmmaker Lina Wertmüller identified her artistic motivation as originating in and aspiring towards a sense of the 'popular':

My greatest desire is to make popular cinema... I hope I can do the same in America without resorting to sharks or flaming skyscrapers - but if it proves necessary, I'll do this too.<sup>31</sup>

Due to the violent nature of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, War on Terror texts struggle to avoid the inclusion of flaming skyscrapers, the media images of the collapsing towers of the World Trade Centre and their smouldering ruins an indelible component of the war's iconography. But Wertmüller's unabashed embrace of 'the popular' as a conduit to provoking political thought in an audience is nonetheless instructive. Firstly, it counters a pervasive association of political filmmaking with an aggressive or marginal position, though even Wertmüller cannot quite bring herself to accept the political opportunities of Hollywood without a disparaging aside about the perceived base tastes of its audience. Such spectacular elements are not always, however, seen to leave the political filmmaker hamstrung when attempting to create a work with

<sup>29</sup> Richard Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), p. 391

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in John J. Michalczyk, *Costa-Gavras: The Political Fiction Film* (London: Associated University Press, 1984), p. 17

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Dan Georgakas and Lenny Rubenstein (eds.), *Art, Politics, Cinema: the Cineaste Interviews* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 131

popular appeal: in some accounts, they are conduits through which political content can be made palatable and enjoyable to those without a vested interest in the subject matter. Screenwriter Mike Gray suggests that overt politics can enter the mainstream so long as they include a ‘traditional Hollywood element’ - if not sharks or flaming skyscrapers, then ‘tits and ass, guns and a chase’.<sup>32</sup> Some dispute the end product’s political worth, with Guy Hennebelle coining the term ‘Z Movies’ to describe those thrillers that use political topics merely as background and do not subject it to any social or political analysis, the results borrowing ‘the dramatic recipes (plot revelations, palpitating suspense, traditional heroes) of the American-style detective story and [injecting] into it, as it were, a political theme’.<sup>33</sup> Named after *Z* (1969), the Costa-Gavras-directed thriller that reconstructs the 1963 death of Gregorios Lambrakis, such films are criticised for what Charles Brooks described as an attempt to ‘apply the methods of *North By Northwest* to making *The Battle of Algiers*’<sup>34</sup> - the implication being that the glossy Hollywood (and therefore establishment) style of the former is incapable of the political statements valued in the latter.

This study hopes to reposition the mainstream, popular text as a legitimate and influential source of political meaning (in a way that goes beyond the ideological model). This is suggestive of what media analysts call ‘soft news’. Political scientist Matthew A. Baum argues that those texts which emphasise entertainment over revolution expose ‘otherwise politically inattentive individuals’ to certain political issues ‘as an incidental by-product of seeking entertainment’.<sup>35</sup> A film like *In the Valley of Elah* may be to Brooks and Hennebelle’s eyes a politically-empty ‘Z film’, a standard tale of investigation and retribution with a conveniently topical but narratively-unnecessary War on Terror backdrop, but in another sense it possesses political expediency through virtue of tackling a particular socio-political subject matter at a time when such issues are at their highest level of newsworthiness. Other examples display an

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<sup>32</sup> David Talbot and Barbara Zheutlin, *Creative Differences: Profiles of Hollywood Dissenters* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1978), p. 315

<sup>33</sup> Guy Hennebelle, ‘Z Movies, or What Hath Costa-Gavras Wrought?’ *Cineaste* 6.2 (1974), p. 29

<sup>34</sup> Charles W. Brooks, ‘Z: Politics on Film’ *Commentary* 49.5 (1970), p. 28

<sup>35</sup> Matthew A. Baum, ‘Sex, Lies and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public’ *The American Political Science Review*, 96.1 (2002), p. 91

activist agenda, promoting social change and/or charity involvement via onscreen appeals and messages. Costa-Gavras states:

Whether the political film is militant or entertaining, documentary, semi-documentary or fiction, it is created to alter in varying degrees the viewer's perception of certain socio-political situations.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, the popular product previously deemed ideologically compromised, reacquires a position of protest - it is newly accepted as a legitimate source of political thought.

Whether airing a particular political topic translates to observable political action on the part of the viewer is a different matter, one which this thesis is neither able nor interested in attempting to explore. But the related issue of influence - what chapter one will relate to the 'reality effect of language' - is worth briefly considering. In its March 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 edition, amongst articles pondering the escalating violence in Kenya, the unresolved Obama/Clinton battle for the Democratic Presidential nomination and the effect of rising food prices on the world's poorest populations, *Time* magazine asked 'Can a Film Change the World?'.<sup>37</sup> The article's writer, Rebecca Winters Kegan, considered the political impact of films such as *Blood Diamond* (Zwick, 2006), *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006), *Sicko* (Moore, 2007) and *The Kite Runner* (Forster, 2007) and the potential effects of then-forthcoming releases such as *Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden?* (Spurlock, 2008) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (Morris, 2008). Kegan concluded that 'they can [change the world], but often not in the way filmmakers hope... they change the world not in wide swathes of multiplexes but one popcorn bucket at a time'.<sup>38</sup> Though the question posed was vague and the proposed answer delivered with suitable uncertainty, Kegan typifies an approach to political film (and media culture more widely) that holds media representations up against their real-world referents and political impact.

I intend to consider the relationship between politics and film and television dialogically: film and television will be used to contextualise and understand the

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Michalczyk, *Costa-Gavras*, p. 20-1

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca Winters Kegan, 'Can A Film Change the World' *Time* 171.11, 17 March 2008, pp. 55-7

<sup>38</sup> Kegan *op. cit.* p. 57



war on terror, and vice versa. The text, to adopt Bakhtin's term, constitutes its own 'utterance'. Film and television have, at various times, by various writers and for various reasons, been argued to 'mirror' politics;<sup>39</sup> act as a 'window' into politics;<sup>40</sup> 'represent'<sup>41</sup> politics; or give film and television makers a political 'voice'.<sup>42</sup> The relationship between the texts and the actual subject to which they relate will here be understood to be circular; the thesis will examine the ways in which certain aesthetics, structures and technologies have influenced the way in which 9/11 and the War on Terror has been depicted on screen, whilst also paying due consideration to the way in which the War on Terror has itself been affected by such depictions. John Belton defines the relationship thus:

The relationship between motion pictures and culture remains complex. The movies are an integral part of mass culture and are embedded within it. One does not produce the other; rather, each interacts with the other, and they mutually determine one another. If films and filmmakers produce culture, they are also produced by it. Thus it is impossible to separate films and filmmakers from the society within which they exist.<sup>43</sup>

To borrow Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan's terminology, texts will be understood to 'discursively transcode' the social and political context in which they are produced, in order to 'emphasise the connections between the representations operative in film and the representations which give structure and shape to social life'. Kellner and Ryan argue that:

Films transcode the discourses (the forms, figures and representations) of social life into cinematic narratives. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves

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<sup>39</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari To Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947/1974), p. 129

<sup>40</sup> Critiqued in Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)

<sup>41</sup> Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 69

<sup>42</sup> Michael Goddard, 'Wajda, Grotowski and Michkiewicz: The Dialectics of Apotheosis and Derision' in John Orr and Elzbieta Ostrowska (eds.), *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), p. 139

<sup>43</sup> John Belton, 'Introduction' in John Belton (ed.), *Movies and Mass Culture* (Athlone, London: Athlone, 1996), p. 1

become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality.<sup>44</sup>

Examples of this process include *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) and *Woodstock* (Wadleigh, 1970) transcoding ‘the discourses of the 1960s counterculture into cinematic texts in image, sound, dialogue, scene and narrative’; *Red Dawn* (Milius, 1984) and *Rambo: First Blood Part 2* (Cosmatos, 1985) transcoding ‘the conservative discourses of Reaganism’ and, more pertinently, *Syriana* transcoding ‘mistrust in the Bush-Cheney era of government, big oil corporations and corporate power’.<sup>45</sup> Kellner goes on to argue that recent ‘War on Terror’ texts have been far from uniform, with conservative films transcoding ‘Bush-Cheney discourses on foreign policy and militarism’, while the likes of *Lions For Lambs* and *Rendition* (Hood, 2007) transcode ‘liberal discourse critical of Bush-Cheney administration politics’.<sup>46</sup> As stated earlier, the precise political content of individual texts is not the main subject of enquiry here, but the reminder that plurality exists is useful. Kellner writes:

One could argue that the language of film does not find its exact analogue in social events, nor does film discourse exist as a parallel mirror to actual events. Rather, films take the raw material of social history and of social discourses and process them into products which are themselves historical events and social forces...<sup>47</sup>

These texts are one form of politics (policy decisions, war etc) transcoded into another (their cinematic and televisual presentation).

This thesis aims to hold politics and film in what Slavoj Žižek terms ‘a parallax view’. He opens his book of the same name by recounting two ‘remarkable stories’ from 2003: the first the discovery of a secret prison used in Spain during the 1930s, in which surrealist-inspired cells were designed to inflict ‘psychotechnic torture’, which Žižek labels the ‘first use of modern art as a deliberate form of torture’; the second the revelation that Walter Benjamin was

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 12-3

<sup>45</sup> Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p. 2

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> Douglas Kellner, ‘Hollywood Film and Society’ in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *American Cinema and Hollywood: Critical Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 129

murdered by Stalin's agents in order to prevent the publication of an elaboration on his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', as opposed to dying at his own hand as had been previously believed. Zizek takes from this pair of seemingly unrelated tales the following:

what the two stories share is that the link they establish is an *impossible short circuit* of levels which, for structural reasons, can never meet...<sup>48</sup>

The illusion, he continues, is

that of putting two incompatible phenomena on the same level..., the illusion of being able to use the same language for phenomena which are mutually untranslatable and can be grasped only in a kind of parallax view, constantly shifting perspectives between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible. Thus there is no rapport between the two levels, no shared space - although they are closely connected, even identical in a way, they are, as it were, on the opposed sides of a Moebius strip... revolutionary politics and revolutionary art move in different temporalities, although they are linked, they are *two sides* of the same phenomenon which, precisely as two sides, can never meet.<sup>49</sup>

I will endeavour to keep this incompatibility in mind during what follows. The depiction of a terrorist attack in an episode of *24* or a film like *Body of Lies* (Scott, 2008) is not, evidently, the same as a terrorist attack viewed live on television, nor is this in turn identical to a terrorist attack experienced directly, in close proximity. But that does not mean that there are no connections between the levels of art and politics; they exist on parallel planes, with moments of intersection through which they influence one another.

Chapter one will introduce these connections by focusing on the War on Terror's genesis - both its ostensible causal roots in '9/11', and its rhetorical roots in the language of the Bush administration and the media. As Adam Hodges and Chad Nilep note, 'any transformation that has taken place... was affected through the use of language',<sup>50</sup> with the War on Terror used to 'explain, react to, justify, or

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<sup>48</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), p. 3

<sup>49</sup> Ibid p. 4

<sup>50</sup> Adam Hodges and Chad Nilep, 'Introduction: Discourse, War and Terrorism' in Adam Hodges and Chad Nilep (eds.), *Discourse, War and Terrorism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), p. 3

understand a broad range of political, economic and social phenomena'.<sup>51</sup>

Various 'truth statements' attached to 9/11 will be interrogated, with the 'War on Terror' identified as a persistent meta-frame, strategically amorphous and ambiguous so as to incorporate everything from Christmas shopping to immigration law.

Chapter two will introduce film and television texts to the study by considering the substitution of facts with an emotional and openly-ideological 'truthiness'. The War on Terror's essential intangibility will be argued for, utilising theories of derealisation and the distancing effect of mediated experience to position the fiction text as an equally important component of the War. All elements are experienced by the majority as images on a screen and sounds played through speakers; therefore, as an abstract, ideological conflict, the War on Terror is as much expressed in an episode of *24* (Fox, 2001-10) as in a news report showing Western troops stationed in the Middle East. These opening chapters will together argue that the War on Terror is first and foremost a rhetorical construction, an ideological conflict for which the primary reality is its utterance, rather than the disparate events collated and conflated by its usage. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 will be recognised as the integral - if not necessarily instigating - event, rhetorically manufactured as 'year zero', abstracting both time and space, and acquiring numerous meanings through frequent re-invocation; meanings neither natural nor inevitable, but the product of a 'reality-making' effect that posits non-causal relationships as contingently causal through rhetorical association.

Chapter three begins the task of unpicking some of the shared tendencies observable in many War on Terror narratives, focusing first on spatial organisation. It will consider networks both geographical and narrational, beginning with the multiple narratives surrounding the War on Terror's aforementioned rhetorical starting point, 9/11. Of particular interest will be the events' global significance, with the network of perpetrators and victims, investigators and observers covering vast distances. As Richard Jackson notes, the War on Terror has:

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid p. 2

Already made an indelible mark on both international relations and the dominant politics of most countries. Its effects are horizontal and vertical, penetrating outward toward other states and inwards into the belly of domestic politics.<sup>52</sup>

Chapter three explores how - and why - the War on Terror's narrative was from the beginning characterised by such multiplicity, simultaneity and polyvocal exchange.

Chapter four will take this global 'web' and examine its relationship to notions of paranoia fuelled by secrecy and clandestinity, and argue that the resultant 'detective' impulse impacts further upon the framing of the War on Terror narrative, presenting it as a complex enigma to be solved or 'revealed'. Making connections is also at the heart of chapter five, which will examine the hyperlink as both a method of navigation (both online and in hypertext novels) and as an analogy for the organisation of myriad spatially-diverse plots, which negate distance and refashion 'space' along the axis of 'proximate relativity'. Chapter six will then use these conclusions to frame its discussion of what I will refer to as the Global Network Narrative as typified by *Syriana* and *Babel* (Iñárritu, 2006) amongst others.

Chapter seven will move away from the cinematic examples (and the accompanying focus on spatial organisation), by discussing the narrative forms encountered in various television texts, most extensively *24*. *24*'s 'real-time' structure will be examined in relation to Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, with the show's temporal arrangement scrutinised in relation to clock-time and deadlines. Chapter eight retains *24* as a focus of study, but widens the focus out to incorporate various examples of what Henry Jenkins describes as 'transmedia storytelling'.<sup>53</sup> In doing so, this chapter will attempt to break down the dividing line that treats film and television as exclusive categories, by arguing for the migration of certain aesthetics and narrative structures across multiple platforms. By introducing texts that fall into neither category (such as mobisodes and online animations), and others that hybridise the two (for

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 3

<sup>53</sup> Henry Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling: Moving Characters From Books to Films to Video Games Can Make Them Stronger and More Compelling' *Technology Review* 15 Jan. 2003 accessed Jan. 2010. <http://www.technologyreview.com/biotech/13052/>

example, the feature-length, stand alone *24: Redemption* [Cassar, 2008]), many of the narrative structures and aesthetic arrangements noted in the preceding chapters - notably, an emphasis on multiplicity, simultaneity, complexity and unexpectedness - will be suggested to exceed the medium on which they were first noted, and come to characterise the War on Terror more broadly.

The final two chapters are ostensibly more concerned with aesthetics than narrative structure, but it will be emphasised throughout that aesthetic choices can influence narrative structure in quite a direct manner. Chapter nine will consider the formal qualities of key documentaries, establishing a broadly-shared preoccupation with a responsive and unprepared style that has been influenced both by footage shot on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (facilitated by advances in communication technologies) and by broader trends in news media, particularly the increasingly central figure of the DIY journalist. Finally, chapter ten will consider the frequency with which the 'raw footage' aesthetic identified in chapter nine in relation to documentary and news media is self-consciously evoked in fiction texts. Again, the organisational effect of this aesthetic trend is of interest - in this case, unforced ellipses and a degraded image stream that suggest unpreparedness - but also the issue of verisimilitude: the semblance of unedited recording and un-composed framing suggestive of both individual ground-level involvement and 'live' transmission. This will develop into a final argument that reintroduces the Global Network Narrative, in order to examine the way War on Terror narratives balance subjective (and therefore necessarily narrow) experience, and an objective surveying of the wider context.

To summarise, this thesis will suggest that the War on Terror is a strategically flexible metaframe which manifests itself in numerous narrative forms. These forms both transcode and affect aspects of the metaframe's rhetoric: multiplicity, associational linking and global interconnectivity find corresponding narrative shape in the Global Network Narrative; the labour-led pressures of clock-time are evoked by the real-time sequential-series; while the authenticity and authority of the embedded 'witness' is codified and performed via a raw footage aesthetic. Throughout, additional contextual influences - social, historical, and technological - will be introduced where appropriate, so as not to adopt the metaframe's claims of all-pervading limitlessness and uniqueness.

As this chapter outline suggests, this project is inescapably interdisciplinary, and echoes ongoing debates in multiple areas of research, including media studies, war studies and communication theory, not to mention the growing body of literature for which 9/11 and the War on Terror are the organising parameters. It seems necessary, therefore, to clarify this thesis's disciplinary origins and the extent of its interdisciplinary aspirations before proceeding. First, the frequent use of close textual analysis affirms its basis in film and television studies, as opposed to 'media studies' per se. My research questions are aimed at understanding the ways in which certain film and television texts produced during the last decade have influenced, and been influenced by, a wider media ecology, and not at dissecting the logics and functions of the global mediasphere itself. These questions stem from a series of broad observations relating to the key narrative structures and visual aesthetics most frequently encountered in 'willing' War on Terror texts: issues of multiplicity, unpredictability and simultaneity; themes of 'liveness' and 'real time', causality and pre-emption, and conspiracy and paranoia, amongst others.

Richard Grusin introduces *Premediation* with the assumption that:

All media forms and practices are interrelated. Thus I take up movies, television, and the internet; sports, entertainment, and news; academic, journalistic and popular texts; individual, collective, and mobile media. Media should not be studied in isolation, but placed in relation to their patterns and flows of interaction as well as to their incommensurabilities and discontinuities.<sup>54</sup>

This project surveys a similarly broad range of texts and interests, albeit with more modest ambitions. This thesis necessarily interfaces with multiple disciplines, but these are selectively used to support a central focus on cinematic and televisual narratives and aesthetics; all media forms and practices may indeed be interrelated, as Grusin states, but not all can be given satisfactory analysis in a single thesis. Therefore, no absolute depth of knowledge is claimed with regards those secondary disciplines used to support, challenge or enhance the work that is conducted on film and television texts specifically.

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) p. 5

This research is situated at the intersection of multiple areas of research - war studies, history and philosophy amongst them - but care has been taken to return its conclusions to the academic discipline with which I hold the greatest familiarity. As a result, it is hoped that the study's interdisciplinarity is not at the expense of its focus, thoroughness, or expertise.



# 1 Framing 9/11 and the War on Terror

In less than two hours, between the first attack on the WTC and the crash of the fourth hijacked airliner in rural Pennsylvania, Americans discovered, or rediscovered, moral absolutes... There was good, and there was evil. We could tell the difference again, and we could use those words again.<sup>55</sup>

- *George Weigel*

Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated... Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen.<sup>56</sup>

- *President George W. Bush, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001*

Shortly following the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a war that would come to define his presidency. The targeted enemy was not restricted to Osama Bin Laden or al-Qaeda (the apparent culprits). Nor was it focussed solely on Afghanistan, whose Taliban government provided Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda with refuge - though Afghanistan was the first to feel its effects. The stated enemy was 'terror' itself.

As Secretary of State Colin Powell defined it, the intended goal was to reach:

a state where people are no longer afraid of terrorist activities, where they can go about their lives not concerned about the kinds of things that happened on the eleventh of September or the kinds of car bombings that take place in Jerusalem, or the kinds of terrorism that [are] meted out by the guerrillas of Colombia.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> George Weigel, 'The Just War Tradition and the World after September 11' *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 5.3 (2002), p. 14

<sup>56</sup> George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People' *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 25.2 (2002), pp. xxi-xxii

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Marilyn B. Young, 'Ground Zero: Enduring War' in Mary L. Dudziak (ed.) *September 11<sup>th</sup> in History: A Watershed Moment?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 22

This goal ignored geopolitical differences and posited a single ideological struggle that is as nebulous as it is ambitious; a struggle that conflates left-wing American revolutionaries and Palestinian nationalists - amongst other groups - and declares them two proponents of the same 'enemy'.

This chapter will examine some of the ways in which the War on Terror was rhetorically created, and its real-world effects. This is not a specialised linguistic or philosophical study, but such studies exist, with common observations including: an emphasis on 'good vs. evil' over 'right vs. wrong' that casts the conflict in theological terms;<sup>58</sup> evocation of Just War theory;<sup>59</sup> the language of 'moral accounting' (in which ethical decisions are discussed in the language of commerce);<sup>60</sup> the dehumanizing effects of language (e.g. the characterisation of the enemy as 'rag-heads', and 'sand-niggers');<sup>61</sup> and a long-standing sense of American exceptionalism with links to a frontier self-mythology,<sup>62</sup> to give only a representative selection. This chapter will touch upon some of these areas, particularly those that relate to interpretations of causality, and the broadly inclusive, protean nature of the War on Terror's encompass. The War on Terror will be considered as a symbolic frame that collates and conflates myriad concepts, policies, battles, incidents and attitudes much like the way the Cold War framework defined American foreign policy in the post-war years up until the break up of the Soviet Union.

## 1.1 9/11's faux-Grotian moment

The world has changed in ways no one could have foreseen. We cannot diagnose the events of 9/11 by any simple application of the usual tools. They defy

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<sup>58</sup> Andrew Norris, 'Us' and 'Them': The Politics of American Self-Assertion After 9/11' in Tom Rockmore, Joseph Margolis and Armen Marsoobian (eds.) *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 19-41

<sup>59</sup> Lorraine Besser-Jones, 'Just War Theory, Legitimate Authority, and the 'War' on Terror' in Timothy Shanahan (ed.) *Philosophy 9/11: Thinking About the War on Terrorism* (Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing, 2005), pp. 129-148

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 169-196

<sup>61</sup> Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills, *At War With Metaphor: Media, Propaganda, and Racism in the War on Terror* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2008)

<sup>62</sup> Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

our sense of legible order, and we cannot say when our categories will adjust again.<sup>63</sup>

- *Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis*

The allure of transformative moments transcends academic disciplines. Their inherent appeal to scholars lies in their ability to serve as an interpretive lens through which to view transitions between old eras and emerging ones... International law is no stranger to this allure of the transformative...<sup>64</sup>

- *Laurence R. Helfer*

Before discussing the ‘War on Terror’ itself, it is worth debunking - or at least challenging - the frequently articulated assumption that ‘everything changed’ on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The belief that 9/11 heralded a new era in which old rules no longer applied was exemplified by former director of the CIA’s counter-terrorism unit Joseph Cofer Black testimony to Congress in early 2002 in which he stated ‘there was a before-9/11 and an after-9/11... After 9/11 the gloves came off’.<sup>65</sup>

Its ‘year zero’ status is potentially contradicted, however, by evidence showing that preliminary planning for the supposedly retaliatory, pre-emptive invasion of Iraq began pre-9/11: ex-Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill revealed to CBS News in 2004 that ‘from the very beginning [of the Bush presidency], there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go’, and that plans to depose the Iraqi dictator began shortly after President Bush’s inauguration, at least eight months before September 11 2001.<sup>66</sup> More generally, Naomi Klein argues that the ‘Shock and Awe’ doctrine was written in 1996 with re-fighting the first Gulf War in mind,<sup>67</sup> while ‘disaster-capitalists’ - disciples of

<sup>63</sup> Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis, ‘Introduction’ in Rockmore, Margolis and Marsoobian, *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 3

<sup>64</sup> Laurence R. Helfer, ‘Transforming International Law After the September 11<sup>th</sup> Attacks? Three Evolving Paradigms For Regulating International Terrorism’ in Dudziak, *September 11<sup>th</sup> In History*, p. 180

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Dana Priest and Barton Gellman, ‘Stress and Duress’ Tactics Used on Terrorism Suspects Held in Secret Overseas Facilities’ *Washington Post* 26 Dec. 2002

<sup>66</sup> Rebecca Leung, ‘Bush Sought ‘Way’ To Invade Iraq?’ *CBS News* 11 Jan. 2004, accessed Dec. 2010. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/09/60minutes/main592330.shtml>

<sup>67</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), p. 329

Milton Friedman's Chicago School model of economics who 'pray for crisis the way drought-struck farmers pray for rain', and who had previous experience in turning a catastrophe into a profitable situation - were positioned in key White House roles ready to put such plans into action when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>68</sup> Rahul Mahajan, meanwhile, suggests that the first Gulf War ended without closure, and it was therefore inevitable that the Bush administration would seek some kind of 'closure', regardless of the attacks of 9/11.<sup>69</sup> The notion of closure already indicates the relevance of narrative theory to 9/11 and the War on Terror, a link awkwardly expressed by Donald Rumsfeld himself in an interview with Cal Thomas of Fox News shortly before his departure from office:

I guess I don't think I would have called it the war on terror. I don't mean to be critical of those who have or did or - and certainly I've used the phrase frequently... the word "war" conjures up World War II more than it does the Cold War, and it creates a level of expectation of victory and an ending within the 30 or 60 minutes of a soap opera. And it isn't going to happen that way.<sup>70</sup>

The irony is that, in its open-endedness, the War on Terror narrative structurally resembles a soap opera more than Rumsfeld appreciates. In the soap opera, Christine Geraghty observes, 'there is never... a sense that a resolution is possible or imminent';<sup>71</sup> likewise in the deliberately nebulous War on Terror. Noel Carroll notes:

If Aristotle was correct in asserting that tragedies have beginnings, middles, and ends, then it seems equally fair to observe, as many have, that soap-operas - an indisputable specimen of narrative - have indefinitely large, expanding, and wide-open middles, with no conclusions in sight.<sup>72</sup>

That Carroll's phrasing echoes the title of the Oscar-winning documentary *No End in Sight* (Ferguson, 2007), which criticised the War on Terror's lack of

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid p. 12

<sup>69</sup> Rahul Mahajan, *Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 12

<sup>70</sup> 'Interview with Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Cal Thomas of Fox News Watch' 07 Dec. 2006, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3824>

<sup>71</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps* (Polity Press, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 12

<sup>72</sup> Noël Carroll, 'Narrative Closure' *Philosophical Studies*, 135.1 (2007), p. 2

achievable goals and counter-productive policies for producing a potentially endless state of conflict, only underscores the similarity.

Despite the War on Terror's apparent pre-2001 origins, 9/11 continues to be identified as the War's 'year zero', the point from which all other events developed, in official reports as well as in the media and fiction. The *9/11 Commission Report* sought to provide 'the fullest possible account' of the events that led up to the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 in New York, Washington, and onboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed before reaching its intended target. It purports to 'look backwards in order to look forward',<sup>73</sup> establishing a detailed chronology with the intention of shedding light on how the attacks were able to be carried out, and in the process to identify intelligence failures, so that recommendations can be made to ensure no repeat attacks are allowed to occur in future. Its first chapter is a minute-by-minute account of the day itself, while later chapters look back further to establish the series of events that led up to the attacks. However, the 'fullest possible account' is severely limited: for example, the historical context only acknowledges prior engagement with the terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, and not the reasons behind that group's existence. So although it eventually establishes a timeline that goes back as far as the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, the Report only includes events that are considered to lead directly and causally to the attacks themselves. The account is solely concerned with the events of the day itself and its direct build-up, and not the numerous precedents that can be drawn from the wider socio-historical and political context that 9/11 exists as a part of.

The signifier '9/11' evidences the symbolic abstraction that the day has become in popular rhetoric, its four syllables able to evoke a myriad of emotional, political and historical connotations. The indelible connection between the date 'September 11<sup>th</sup>', and the terrorist attacks committed on US soil in 2001 has been used to add *frisson* and/or irony to some film texts: for example, Ken Loach's short in the anthology *11'9''01* (Various, 2002) has its Chilean protagonist writing a letter of empathy to the American people, pleading with

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<sup>73</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, authorised edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), p. xvi

them not to forget the prior significance of the date in 1973, when the US-backed General Augusto Pinochet violently deposed the democratically-elected Chilean President Salvador Allende in a CIA-backed military coup d'état. There is an implication that this prior '9/11' can no longer lay claim to the date's historical significance - it has been wrenched from chronological time to become symbolic of the attacks, emotions and responses of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the very language used to refer to the terrorist attacks perpetuating the rhetoric of 'uniqueness' and 'world-changing-ness'. That the signifier used is one of time rather than action (a date, rather than a description) is significant to later chapters which will look more closely at the role of chronological real-time in the narratives of the War on Terror - it is worth noting, for example, that the Japanese strikes on Pearl Harbour that brought the United States into World War II are not known as 12/7, but by their geographic location. This is partly due to the fact that the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 were not restricted to a single location: summarising the day with reference to New York only would overlook those who died in the crash at the Pentagon or the crash in Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, the temporal rather than geographic signifier merits further comment later in the thesis.

There are other motivations behind drawing a line under the attacks and declaring anything prior an irrelevance and anything that follows part of a monumentally changed world. It minimises the blame levied at the intelligence agencies - such an attack was unimaginable and therefore unforeseeable, meaning that they did not fail, since they could not possibly have seen such a seismic, unprecedented attack coming. It also echoes Chomsky's observation that academia has a tendency to 'proclaim every few years that we have "changed course", the past is behind us and can be forgotten as we march on towards a glorious future'.<sup>74</sup>

Laurence Helfer characterises the 'everything changed' mentality as symptomatic of a temptation in scholarship and popular culture alike to identify 'Grotian moments'. The term originates with the Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius, who Helfer credits with identifying the 'first and only undisputed transformative moment - the change from a medieval world in which ecclesiastical authority

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<sup>74</sup> Noam Chomsky, *9/11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), p. 69

dominated secular power to a world controlled by industry and sovereign nation states'.<sup>75</sup> Since then, new Grotian moments have been proposed - from an American political perspective, the 'crossroads' presented by the end of the second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall present the two most widely argued-for examples (proposed by the likes of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* amongst others) - but, Helfer warns, 'history is littered with erroneous labelings of watershed events that, in hindsight, seem little more than one in a series of points on a Cartesian line mapped out decades earlier'.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, for any aspect of the War on Terror and September 11 2001, there exist precedents. Terror-as-spectacle has been used by numerous organisations in support of numerous political causes: examples include the assassination of Israeli athletes by Black September at the Munich Olympics in 1972, and the World Trade Centre bombing in 1993. Neither is the response from the US government unique: using fear to bolster faith in Presidential capabilities was evident in George H. W. Bush's campaign against Democrat candidate Michael Dukakis in 1988, when adverts about the freed prisoner Willie Horton were circulated to discredit his opponent's policies on crime;<sup>77</sup> the potential for war to offer an unpopular leader renewed public support was witnessed when Margaret Thatcher entered the UK into the Falklands War in 1982;<sup>78</sup> while the declaration of a 'war' when a more tempered social response might have been more appropriate finds precedent in the War on Drugs.<sup>79</sup> Even the 'War on Terror' itself is not a new concept: during Ronald Reagan's administration, a similarly-phrased goal was articulated by CIA director William J. Casey,<sup>80</sup> and by

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<sup>75</sup> Helfer, 'Transforming International Law', pp.180-1

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, p. 180

<sup>77</sup> Eric Lichtblau, 'For Voters, Osama Replaces the Common Criminal' *New York Times*, 18 July 2004, accessed Dec. 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/18/weekinreview/the-nation-for-voters-osama-replaces-the-common-criminal.html>

<sup>78</sup> According to Chris Atkins, Sarah Bee and Fiona Button, Thatcher's decision prompted a young Tony Blair to pointedly observe "Wars seem to make prime ministers popular" – see: *Taking Liberties Since 1997* (London: Revolver, 2007), p. 230

<sup>79</sup> Rahul Mahajan is one of many commentators to draw out the similarities between the two inappropriately monikered 'wars', arguing that, just as the War on Drugs was not a war on drugs, 'The War on Terror is not a war on terror', citing the illogic of a militaristic course of action that 'might well, in fact, exacerbate the threat' (*Full Spectrum Dominance*, p. 32)

<sup>80</sup> David C. Wills, *The First War on Terrorism: Counter-Terrorism Policy During the Reagan During the Reagan Administration* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003)

Reagan himself.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the neo-conservative agenda that underpins the Bush doctrine of foreign policy - pre-emption, the '1% doctrine' (where Vice President Dick Cheney suggested that if a threat against the American people had even a one per cent likelihood, it should be responded to as if it were a one hundred per cent certainty) and so on - has its origins as far back as the forties,<sup>82</sup> while many of the decisions made by the Bush White House have their roots in decisions made or policies perpetuated by the Clinton administration, including the following:

The Clinton administration arguably violated the Constitutional and legal limits on the President's authority; used military force outside the confines of international law; made the removal of Saddam Hussein a national priority as a matter of law; and supported US military planning for 'full spectrum dominance' of every military situation anywhere in the world.<sup>83</sup>

This last point is important - not only are 9/11 and the War on Terror less unique and epochal than the war's rhetoric would try to suggest, neither is left-liberal protest correct to place the historical starting point of the 'War on Terror' era in January 2001, when George W. Bush was inaugurated as US President. The 'Bush years' are no more unprecedented or removed from historical context than the events that occurred on September 11, 2001.

Despite these precedents, the War on Terror has been widely considered a distinct period that warrants particular consideration - a focus this thesis unavoidably shares, though hopefully without lending credence to those assigning it Grotian importance. Henceforth, this thesis is not concerned with the degree of 'uniqueness' found in the events of 9/11 or in the subsequently declared War on Terrorism. Rather, the rest of this chapter will consider how and why it has been characterised as such by certain figures and institutions.

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<sup>81</sup> John Pilger, 'Return of People Power' *Information Clearing House*, 30 Aug. 2006, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article14758.htm>

<sup>82</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads* (London: Profile Books, 2006), pp. 4-5

<sup>83</sup> George Leaman, 'Iraq, American Empire, and the War on Terrorism' in Rockmore, Margolis and Marsoobian, *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 8



## 1.2 The War on Terror as symbolic frame

Different metaphors imply different ways of dealing with things.<sup>84</sup>

- *Norman Fairclough*

Language matters, because it can determine how we think and act.<sup>85</sup>

- *George Lakoff and Evan Frisch*

Seth Lewis and Stephen Reese suggest that the War on Terror is best characterised as a 'metaframe', in that it 'conjures up a wider world of meaning'.<sup>86</sup> Working from Reese's own definition of 'frame' - 'organising principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world'<sup>87</sup> - they conclude that the 'War on Terror' is an indicative example of the metaframe since it:

Comprehensively *organises* information, providing an umbrella for a wide range of military, political and legal policies; it is based on an abstract *principle* that is embedded in ideological struggle - an 'organising idea' far larger than an individual text; it is socially *shared* as a rallying cry of nationalism in this 'post-9/11 world' and served as the backdrop against which the 2004 presidential election was played; it has been *persistent*, durable and constant since its introduction in 2001; it is revealed through *symbolism*, as typified in Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln in 2003; and it lends clear patterns of *structure*, bifurcating the world into two camps - with us, or with the terrorists.<sup>88</sup>

Their article includes interviews with journalists from *USA Today* which examine the ways in which journalists 'transmit', 'reify' and 'naturalise' the war on terror as policy. Many of the interviewees express concern over the accuracy

<sup>84</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 100

<sup>85</sup> George Lakoff and Evan Frisch, 'Five Years After 9/11: Drop the War Metaphor' *The Huffington Post*, 11 Sept. 2006 accessed Dec. 2010. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/five-years-after-911-drop\\_b\\_29181.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/five-years-after-911-drop_b_29181.html)

<sup>86</sup> Seth C. Lewis and Stephen D. Reese, 'What is the War on Terror? Framing Through the Eyes of Journalists' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86.1 (2009), p. 88

<sup>87</sup> Stephen D. Reese, 'Framing Public Life: A Bridging Model For Media Research' in Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy Jr. & August E. Grant (eds), *Framing Public Life: Perspective on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World* (Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ, 2001), p. 11

<sup>88</sup> Lewis and Reese, 'What is the War on Terror?', pp. 87-88

and helpfulness of the term ‘War on Terror’, but feel obligated to use it as, as the anonymous Journalist ‘J’ elaborated:

If you’re on TV you have twenty seconds or thirty seconds for a spot, it gets the idea across, the context in which you’re talking about something.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to shorthand practice, an earlier draft of the article suggested another reason for the popularity of the War on Terror frame:

The most powerful thing about the war on terror is that it fits into a headline really nicely. [Laughs] It doesn’t have a lot of letters... It’s a great headline phrase. Seriously. The fewer picas [a unit of measurement used in typography], the more likely it is to catch on.<sup>90</sup>

By talking about the War on Terror not just as a policy, an abbreviation or a metaphor, but as a brand, Journalist ‘D’ hints at the wider, persuasive power of the frame. It is not just convenient terminology, but a concept that is seductive by design. The phrase proved so seductive that subsequent attempts to re-brand it as the ‘Global Struggle against Violent Extremism’ were unsuccessful. The positive connotations of its acronym - GSAVE - were presumably not coincidental:

“It is more than just a military war on terror”, Steven J. Hadley, the national security advisor, said in a television interview. “It’s broader than that. It’s a global struggle against extremism. We need to dispute both the gloomy vision and offer a positive alternative”.<sup>91</sup>

However, President Bush was reportedly personally unhappy with the change, insisting that ‘war’ was still the most suitable metaphor.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *ibid* p. 92

<sup>90</sup> Seth C. Lewis and Stephen D. Reese, ‘What is the War on Terror? Exploring Framing Through the Eyes of Journalists’ 08 Aug. 2008, accessed May 2011  
[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/2/7/2/4/9/pages272497/p272497-1.php](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/7/2/4/9/pages272497/p272497-1.php), p. 15

<sup>91</sup> Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, ‘U.S. Officials Retool Slogan for Terror War’ *The New York Times*, 26 Jul. 2005 accessed Jan. 2011.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/26/politics/26strategy.html?\\_r=1&hp&ex=1122436800&en=84d917f2326e4105&ei=5094&partner=homepage](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/26/politics/26strategy.html?_r=1&hp&ex=1122436800&en=84d917f2326e4105&ei=5094&partner=homepage)

<sup>92</sup> Al Kamen, ‘Post-Postwar (PPW)’ *Washington Post*, 03 Aug. 2005 accessed Jan. 2011.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/02/AR2005080201673.html>

Following the 2005 US election that awarded George W. Bush a second term in office, the *New York Times* featured an article by Matt Bai entitled 'The Framing Wars'. Bai identified language as key to the Democrat Party's defeat:

Even before the election, a new political word had begun to take hold of the party... That word was 'framing'. Exactly what it means to 'frame' issues seems to depend on which Democrat you are talking to, but everyone agrees that it has to do with choosing the language to define a debate and, more important, with fitting individual issues into the contexts of broader story lines. In the months after the election, Democratic consultants and elected officials came to sound like creative-writing teachers, holding forth on the importance of metaphor and narrative.<sup>93</sup>

Bai identifies George Lakoff as the figurehead behind this newly visible emphasis on 'framing'. In *Moral Politics*, Lakoff argues that US politics is framed according to two conflicting models of the family: the Strict Father (which, broadly speaking, frames conservative worldviews) and the Nurturant Parent (which broadly frames liberal worldviews).<sup>94</sup> These are not offered as prescriptive categories, but as descriptors whose careful analysis reveals a great deal about the way a multitude of issues on which conservative and liberal perspectives are typically at odds - from foreign policy to abortion - are divided.

Lakoff employs his model with a more directly political agenda - his work moving from the descriptive to the proscriptive - in *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, an 'essential guide for progressives' that proposed 'reframing' as key to potential Democratic victory in the 2004 presidential elections.<sup>95</sup> Taking its title from a simple exercise Lakoff gives students of his Cognitive Science 101 class at Berkeley - in which participants are instructed *not* to think of an elephant, but invariably find themselves doing so - Lakoff argues that facts, intentions and reason are not the most important aspects of political articulation. In the elephant example, negating the frame of an elephant still evokes it (Lakoff suggests that Richard Nixon delivered a

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<sup>93</sup> Matt Bai, 'The Framing Wars' *New York Times*, 17 July 2005, accessed Apr. 2010. [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/17/magazine/17DEMOCRATS.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=1&ei=5070&en=e3e686efd4fa97c5&ex=1183608000](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/17/magazine/17DEMOCRATS.html?_r=2&pagewanted=1&ei=5070&en=e3e686efd4fa97c5&ex=1183608000)

<sup>94</sup> George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002)

<sup>95</sup> George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004)

political example when he ‘stood before the nation and said, “I am not a crook”. And everybody thought about him as a crook’).<sup>96</sup> Therefore, when arguing against ideological opponents, he advises, ‘Do not use their language. Their language picks out a frame - and it won’t be the frame you want’.<sup>97</sup>

According to Lakoff, facts that contradict a preexisting frame are no guarantee that that frame will be abandoned, as the War on Terror’s genesis confirmed:

The truth alone will not set you free. Saying ‘the President lied when he started this war’ puts the truth out there - but for many people it just bounces off. A huge number of people in this country still believe that Saddam Hussein was behind September 11<sup>th</sup>. There are people who will believe this because it fits their understanding of the world. It fits their worldview. Given that, it is appropriate for them to believe... It is not that they are stupid. They have a frame and they only accept facts that fit that frame.<sup>98</sup>

The way the rhetoric of the War on Terror effects understandings of causality will be returned to later in the chapter.

Lakoff is one of several commentators to interrogate the decision to pick a framework of ‘war’ in response to the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks. He suggests that framing the attacks as criminal acts would have offered greater opportunities for locating, capturing and punishing those responsible, noting that even figures in the Bush administration initially advocated a legalistic frame over that of military conflict.<sup>99</sup> But instead, a war metaphor was chosen, whose combatants were abstract principles and ideals:

Literal - not metaphorical - wars are conducted against armies of other nations. They end when the armies are defeated militarily and a peace treaty is signed. Terror is an emotional state. It is in us. It is not an army. And you can’t defeat it militarily and you can’t sign a peace treaty with it.<sup>100</sup>

The essential problem at the heart of this ‘War on Terror’ metaphor, Ronald Dworkin suggests, is the distinction between the designation ‘war’ relating to a

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid* p. 3

<sup>97</sup> *ibid* p. 3

<sup>98</sup> *ibid* p. 18

<sup>99</sup> Lakoff and Frisch, ‘Five Years After 9/11’

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*

status, and the designation ‘terror’ relating to a means.<sup>101</sup> A state of war such as that called into existence on December 8th, 1941 is accompanied by actual confrontation between the two opponents that enter into that state of war. The War on Terror, by contrast, does not target a specific enemy or identify a key battle to be won. Instead, it is designed to implicate a vast number of potential threats, enemies, targets and battles. Its breadth is due to the essential malleability of its rhetoric: anything and everything can be declared part of the ‘War on Terror’ if it suits the individual or group making the declaration, since it has no clear definitional parameters.

### 1.3 War without limits: Defining the ‘War on Terror’

The main Egyptian newspaper had a big article called ‘Axis of Evil’ recently. They said there really is an ‘Axis of Evil’: the US, Israel and Turkey. It’s an axis of evil aimed at the Arab states, and has been for years...<sup>102</sup>

- *Noam Chomsky*

War on terror is a political slogan - not a coherent strategy for national defence - and it succeeds brilliantly only as politics. For everything else, it is quite illogical.<sup>103</sup>

- *William Greider*

Those critical of the policies enacted in the name of the War on Terror have subjected the term to substantial interrogation, questioning whether it can be accurately described as a ‘war’, and if so, whether the enemy is best described as ‘terror’. As Noam Chomsky has pointed out, the latter claim is particularly dubious due to its flawed logic of fighting fire with fire, or in this case, combating the effects of international terrorism by provoking terror and fear through military actions:

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<sup>101</sup> Ronald Dworkin, ‘Terror and the Attack on Civil Liberties’ in Rockmore, Margolis and Marsoobian, *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 91

<sup>102</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Power and Terror: Post 9/11 Talks and Interviews* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 103

<sup>103</sup> William Greider, ‘Under the Banner of the ‘War’ on Terror’ *The Nation*, 21 Jun. 2004, accessed Dec. 2010. [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Greider/UnderBanner\\_WarOnTerror.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Greider/UnderBanner_WarOnTerror.html)

There is actually one simple way for the US to decrease very significantly the amount of terror in the world, and that is to just stop participating in it.<sup>104</sup>

Further key questions relating to rhetoric include: who are the ‘international community’? What is meant by ‘enemy combatant’ and why are captured Taliban or Iraqis not considered Prisoners of War if captured during the course of such a war? What is it that distinguishes ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ from torture as outlawed by the Geneva Convention? In addition, the rhetorical euphemisms coined in past wars re-emerge: what is friendly about ‘friendly fire’? How does military invasion entail humanitarianism? As Chomsky pithily observes, even the phrase ‘peace process’ has traditionally lacked a clear definition, usually referring to whatever actions the US happens to be taking, even when such actions undermine rather than promote peaceful coexistence.<sup>105</sup>

The enemy in the War on Terror is similarly abstract and muddled, despite attempts to project it onto a cadre of nation-state targets. The ‘Axis of Evil’ was the first significant category to emerge from the wider War on Terror umbrella, grouping together Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Apparently coined by speechwriter David Frum (though he cedes credit to chief speechwriter Michael Gerson for substituting the original ‘axis of hatred’ for a more evocatively theological phrasing),<sup>106</sup> the term was consciously designed to echo the Axis Powers of World War 2.<sup>107</sup> The sense of moral certainty associated with the Second World War was opportunistically appropriated, though the actual similarities between Germany, Japan and Italy’s alliance in the 1940s and the supposed interconnections between Iran’s ayatollahs, Iraq’s secular rulers and North Korea’s isolated dictatorship are highly dubious. Later, the United States’ ambassador to the United Nations John R. Bolton added Libya, Syria and Cuba to the list of supposed collaborative enemies (in a speech entitled, in appropriate sequel fashion, ‘Beyond the Axis of Evil’),<sup>108</sup> while Secretary of State

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<sup>104</sup> Chomsky, *Power and Terror*, p. 76

<sup>105</sup> *ibid* p. 33

<sup>106</sup> David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 238

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid* p. 236

<sup>108</sup> John R. Bolton, ‘Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats From Weapons of Mass Destruction’ Heritage Foundation Lecture, delivered 06 May, 2002 accessed Dec. 2010. <http://www.futurodecuba.org/Bolton%20lecture.pdf>

Condoleezza Rice later still shifted the rhetoric from ‘evil’ to the less theological ‘tyranny’, naming the remaining ‘Axis of Evil’ countries (North Korea and Iran) along with Cuba, Belarus, Zimbabwe and Burma ‘Outposts of Tyranny’.<sup>109</sup> The language may have been modified, but the collation of vastly different countries and cultures into a single enemy remained.<sup>110</sup>

Throughout, the difficulty in defining ‘terrorism’ itself remains. It is interesting that while wars are waged in the name of combating international terrorism, there is still no clear consensus of what the term encompasses. The debate over whether the mass shooting at US military base Fort Hood by army psychiatrist Nidal Malik Hasan in 2009 constituted an act of terrorism or multiple acts of murder evidences the continued ambiguity, and indicates how violent events remain open to interpretation, rather than falling unproblematically into one category or another. On the one hand, a *Time* cover story asked ‘The Fort Hood Killer: Terrified... or Terrorist?’, ostensibly questioning whether the shooting was the act of a radicalised Muslim terrorist or a mentally unstable soldier whose distress went unnoticed, but with an emphasis on the former.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, Senator Joe Lieberman repeatedly referred to the shooting as a ‘terrorist attack’ and requested Congressional Hearings to confirm his analysis.<sup>112</sup> By contrast, official preliminary investigations emphasised a psychological rather than political explanation for Hasan’s act of violence,<sup>113</sup> while the Department of Defense’s published report, called for by Lieberman, makes no reference to Islam as a motivational factor, to the Senator’s express disappointment.<sup>114</sup> ‘Terrorism’, this example seems to suggest, is difficult to define with any sense

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<sup>109</sup> Paul Reynolds, ‘Bush Speaks – Now What?’ *BBC*, 22 Jan. 2005, accessed Dec. 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4198133.stm>

<sup>110</sup> The homogenised enemy is familiar from the Cold War, in which acts of terrorism were commonly interpreted as ‘all ultimately connected, all instigated by the Soviet Union’, thereby denying ‘distinctions between different groups and different kinds of action’. Philip Schlesinger, Graham Murdock and Philip Elliott, *Televising Terrorism: Political Violence in Popular Culture* (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1983), p. 6

<sup>111</sup> Nancy Gibbs, ‘The Fort Hood Killer: Terrified... Or Terrorist?’ *Time*, 174.20, 23 Nov. 2009, pp. 20-5

<sup>112</sup> David Johnston, ‘Lawmakers Call Ft. Hood Shootings ‘Terrorism’ *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2009 accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/20/us/politics/20hood.html>

<sup>113</sup> David Johnston and Eric Schmitt, ‘Investigations Into Fort Hood Shootings Turns Up No Link to Terror Plot’ *New York Times*, 07 Nov. 2009, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/08/us/08investigate.html>

<sup>114</sup> Mark Thompson, ‘The Fort Hood Report: Why No Mention of Islam?’ *Time*, 20 Jan. 2010 accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1954960,00.html>

of certainty, a conclusion supported by numerous studies of the term's etymology and usage. As Bruce Hoffman concludes:

On one point, at least, everyone agrees: 'Terrorism' is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore... Hence the decision to call someone or label some organisation 'terrorist' becomes almost unavoidably subjective...<sup>115</sup>

This subjectivity has not, of course, hindered the term's widespread application in myriad legal and political contexts, despite the lack of agreement even between US state institutions as to the term's meaning. Hoffman notes that the U.S. State Department, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense all use subtly different definitions, each of which 'reflects the priorities and particular interests of the specific agency involved'.<sup>116</sup> So the FBI's definition incorporates material damage to private businesses by anarchist groups and domestic attacks on abortion clinics, reflecting its focus on the investigation of crime, while the State Department emphasises the 'ineluctably political nature of terrorism and the perpetrator's fundamental 'subnational' characteristic'.<sup>117</sup>

The consequence of such a loose definition was demonstrated by federal judge Joyce Hens Green in late 2004, when she demonstrated in court the full purview of such a loose definition:

Green introduced a hypothetical case to Brian Boyle, a Justice Department lawyer: could the President of the US imprison 'a little old lady from Switzerland' as an enemy combatant if she donated to a charity not knowing that her money was eventually used to finance the activities of al-Qaeda terrorists? After a long pause, Boyle responded: 'possibly'.<sup>118</sup>

The definition is no clearer in other members of the Coalition of the Willing (another contentious noun to emerge from the War on Terror metaframe). The

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<sup>115</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 23

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid* p. 31

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid* p. 32

<sup>118</sup> Michael Welch, *Scapegoats of September 11<sup>th</sup>: Hate Crimes and State Crimes in the War on Terror* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p. 118



authors of *Taking Liberties*, a study of New Labour but with conclusions that can be applied to the Bush administration, note that ‘terrorism’, as defined in the UK’s Terrorism Act of 2000, amended in 2006, as ‘the use or threat of certain types of action where the use or threat is designed to influence the government, or to intimidate the public or a section of the public’, could include historical figures as far ranging as Jesus, Robin Hood, Gandhi, George Washington, Francois Mitterand, Martin Luther King, and the Suffragettes.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, since anyone who ‘encourages or glorifies’ a terrorist is also by extension a terrorist themselves, all Christians following the teachings of the terrorist Jesus Christ are guilty by association:

[as] a practicing Christian, so therefore worshipping Jesus, [Tony Blair] is risking a seven-year jail sentence under his own law... And as for Gordon Brown, he is a big fan of Ghandi, so he’s on the list as well.<sup>120</sup>

As previously stated, such loose parameters give the metaframe ‘War on Terror’ a broad encompass. Part of the War on Terror’s function is to dissolve erstwhile boundary lines separating public and private, domestic and foreign, the everyday civilian and the militarised. Soon, *everything* is potentially part of the War on Terror, as Welch observes:

Even the debate over gay marriage has been framed with national security in mind. ‘So argued a woman interviewed by NPR (National Public Radio) at the National Association of Evangelicals convention in Colorado Springs. Her reasoning: by breaking down the family, we’re not having enough kids, while ‘other countries’ with an agenda to hurt America are having boatloads of babies. If we legalise gay marriage, the terrorists will eventually outnumber us.’<sup>121</sup>

Satirist Al Franken - now a Democratic senator - highlights a similar attitude in quotes from American televangelist Jerry Falwell:

‘I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way - all of them who tried to secularise America - I point the finger in their face and say ‘you helped this happen’. To which Robertson [Pat

<sup>119</sup> Atkins, Bee, Button, *Taking Liberties Since 1997*, pp. 236-7

<sup>120</sup> Ibid p. 237

<sup>121</sup> Welch, *Scapegoats of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 185

Robertson, host of *700 Club* on which the statement was made] responded: 'well I totally concur'.<sup>122</sup>

In a comparable fashion, the 'Warballs' column featured in the satirical publication *Private Eye* ridicules attempts to connect a litany of subjects - from reduced profits at strip club Spearmint Rhino to increased purchases of burgundy mohair throws - to the effects of 9/11 and Iraq by members of the news media and cultural commentators alike, with the drop of customers at the former blamed on 'the knock-on effects of the 11<sup>th</sup> September terror outrages of 2001' and the soaring sales of the latter attributed to the 'death' of modernism on 9/11.<sup>123</sup>

In less extreme ways, seemingly unrelated cultural trends have been (and continue to be) routinely linked to 9/11 and the War on Terror - for example, Ruth La Ferla's article 'A Trend With Teeth', published in the *New York Times*, that suggested a correlation between the popularity of vampire fiction like *Twilight* and *True Blood* (HBO, 2009 - ) and 'real world anxieties' such as the threat of terrorism.<sup>124</sup> Academics (including myself) also share responsibility for this expansion of the War on Terror from political doctrine to all-pervasive omnipresent cultural phenomenon. To give just one example, *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture* contains several articles that address the War on Terror directly: Sheila Whiteley's introduction notes the rise in G.I. Joe sales in the lead up to the Christmas of 2001;<sup>125</sup> Freya Jarman-Ives pins the success of UK Christmas number one 'Mad World' by Michael Andrews and Gary Jules on the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan by arguing the song's lyrics 'spoke clearly to Britain's national mood at that time';<sup>126</sup> Christine Agiu considers broader intersections of Christmas and war;<sup>127</sup> while Tara Brabazon sketches the similarities between coverage of the 2004 tsunami that devastated large parts of

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<sup>122</sup> Al Franken, *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right* (London: Allen Lane, 2003)

<sup>123</sup> Examples from *Private Eye: Mediaballs 2* (London: Private Eye Productions, 2005), p. 29

<sup>124</sup> Ruth La Ferla, 'A Trend with Teeth', *New York Times*, 01 July 2009, accessed April 2010. [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/02/fashion/02VAMPIRES.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/02/fashion/02VAMPIRES.html?_r=2)

<sup>125</sup> Sheila Whiteley 'Introduction' in Sheila Whiteley (ed.) *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)

<sup>126</sup> Freya Jarman-Ives, 'The Musical Underbelly of Christmas' in Whiteley, *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*

<sup>127</sup> Christine Agiu, 'Christmas and War' in Whiteley, *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*

Asia and the coverage of the War on Terror.<sup>128</sup> Despite the ostensible focus on a Christian holiday - a brief that could be interpreted any number of ways - it is telling that so many opt to link the subject to an event popularly considered 'era-defining'.

The War on Terror political currency also crosses international borders. Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec use interviews with Serbian intellectuals to examine how discourse surrounding war was retrofitted to echo War on Terror rhetoric, concluding that 'a discourse of "anti-terrorism" has been manipulated to justify violent political actions and past crimes'.<sup>129</sup> The language of the War on Terror has been appropriated in various places by governments keen to identify 'their own fight against internal insurgents and dissidents, notably Russia, India, China, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Colombia and Israel' with America's war. Jackson notes that:

Linking rebels and dissidents at home to the global 'war on terror' gives these governments both the freedom to crack down on them without fear of international condemnation and in some cases, with direct military assistance from America.<sup>130</sup>

It can also be linked to less militarised activities such as immigration control, as evidenced by members of Australian Prime Minister John Howard's government rhetorically linking asylum seekers with terrorist threats, particularly during the Tampa affair in which a Norwegian freighter carrying four hundred and thirty eight asylum seekers rescued from international waters was refused entry to Australia.<sup>131</sup> The link was made explicit by Steve Reith, then Defence Minister, in an interview on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2001:

The New York act of terrorism just means that things are not going to be the same in the future as they've been in the past. And one of the things that we will need to be looking at is improving security more generally and part of security is to ensure that you can properly process and manage and know who's coming into the country and if

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<sup>128</sup> Tara Brabazon, 'Christmas and the Media' in Whitely, *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*

<sup>129</sup> Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec, 'Discourse of War and Terrorism in Serbia: 'We Were Fighting the Terrorists Already in Bosnia...'' in Hodges and Nilep, *Discourse, War and Terrorism*, p. 198

<sup>130</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, p. 13

<sup>131</sup> Russell Hogg, 'The Khaki Election' in Phil Scraton (ed.) *Beyond September 11<sup>th</sup>: An Anthology of Dissent* (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

we are just going to have an open door then the fact is that that is an invitation for trouble in the future.<sup>132</sup>

If Chechnya, gay marriage, Norwegian ships and Christmas are all conceivably connectable to the War on Terror, its definition grows bloated and hazy. In short, if *everything* is (or can be argued to be) the War on Terror, it ceases to have defining characteristics of its own. It is amorphous and universal; effectively, *nothing* is war on terror, in so much as it is no more defined by its War on Terror status than by any other frame of reference, and the tag potentially loses its meaning and the metaphor its potency. This inclusive tendency, facilitated by definitional ambiguity, helps identify the War on Terror as a proscriptive, organisational term rather than an indexical, descriptive statement of actuality: new components can be added simply by declaring their membership.<sup>133</sup>

#### 1.4 'Don't think of the War on Terror': The persistence of the metaframe

Contests over definitions of words are not just word games. Real political outcomes are at stake. If the public, or sufficient sections of it, can be persuaded that the state's perspective on a given 'war against terrorism' is questionable, this might imply a weakening of support. On the other hand, if the public can be persuaded the state is right, this helps mobilise support for transferring resources from welfare to security. Language matters, and how the media use language matters.<sup>134</sup>

- *Philip Schlesinger, Graham Murdock and Philip Elliott, 1983*

In one respect, then, the rhetoric of the War on Terror metaframe is designed to be broad and ambiguous. However, this does not necessarily facilitate multiple interpretations: the War on Terror metaframe is flexible enough to incorporate

<sup>132</sup> 'Transcript of the Hon Peter Reith MP, Radio Interview With Derryn Hinch – 3AK', 13 Sept 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/ReithSpeechtpl.cfm?CurrentId=999>

<sup>133</sup> However, this should not obscure the genuine links that do exist, often in surprising places. See Nick Turse, *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives* (New York: Faber, 2008), in which Turse identifies the way everyday products, from Special K to the Roomba vacuum cleaner, are part of the military-industrial complex – with Kellogg's a Department of Defense contractor (p. 7), and the Roomba technology also used to make 'PackBots', tactical military robots (p. 8).

<sup>134</sup> Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliott, *Television Terrorism*, p. 1

new enemies or areas of policy - from immigration to foreign diplomacy - but deliberately restrictive enough to ensure its central narrative is relatively consistent. The broad, populist rhetoric that allows for the metaframe's application in a multitude of scenarios can also serve to restrict meaning.

The rhetoric of the War on Terror is necessarily populist, as a metaframe can only exist and persist if it acquires popular acceptance and legitimacy. Richard Jackson argues that such a frame must obtain a level of social consensus, which is impossible without the careful deployment of convincing rhetoric and supportive language.<sup>135</sup> 'Consent' is not being used here as a euphemism for 'support': the protests that took place across Europe and in the US are testament to the large numbers of people who opposed the invasions for a variety of reasons, ranging from the legalistic (the US did not have a mandate from the international community as represented by the United Nations and NATO) to the ethical (those who objected to war as a fundamentally immoral action) to those who questioned its practical logic (the bombing of a poor and technologically inferior nation considered unlikely to increase the safety of the United States). But though dissenting, protesters adopt the term nonetheless: in Lakoff's analogy, they are thinking of the elephant even as they oppose it.

The War on Terror metaframe is in one respect flexible and amorphous, but in another it is insidious and persistent. Bush argued for the invasion of Iraq by conflating Saddam Hussein with the stateless terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, adding Hussein's Baathist party to a growing list of homogenised 'terrorist' enemies:

We know that Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy - the United States of America. We know that Iraq and al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq... We've learned that Iraq has trained al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases. And we know that after September the 11<sup>th</sup>, Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, p. 24

<sup>136</sup> George W. Bush, 'President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat', 07 Oct. 2002, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/print/20021007-8.html>

The nature of this link is, however, deliberately ambiguous, allowing Bush to later refute the notion that his administration had ever tried to connect Saddam Hussein to September 11<sup>th</sup> itself:

We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September 11<sup>th</sup>... What the vice president said is that he has been involved with al Qaeda... There's no question that Saddam Hussein had al Qaeda ties.<sup>137</sup>

The language typified by the first quote is supportive of the metaframe - it acknowledges popularly-held fears and articulates policy decisions based on these fears by emphasising the threat of future terrorism. It suggests connections between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, thereby reinforcing the War on Terror metaframe. Yet the subsequent denial does not resolve the connection between Iraq and the War on Terror; the metaframe works through evocation and association and once a link is made it is difficult to eradicate, with attempts to do so diminished by their need to utilise the same frame. Michael Welch identifies several key categories of language used in such efforts to establish and justify the War on Terror metaframe: mystical, tough talk, blaming, fabrication, rumour and domination.<sup>138</sup> Individually each presents its own challenges to the listener seeking to cut through the rhetoric to engage with the content, but the task is made more difficult by their combined usage.<sup>139</sup> As demonstrated above, denial is the last straw for the rhetorician, either in the form of 'interpretive denial', in which 'facts are not refuted but are given a different spin, thus altering the meaning' or more blatant denial, such as Cheney insisting 'I have not suggested there's a connection between Iraq and 9/11', despite quotes to the contrary.<sup>140</sup>

Most problematic of all is 'empty language', statements that in Welch's definition 'carry little meaning'. Such statements, when inserted into political speech, are not merely irrelevances or distractions, but manipulative, distracting listeners 'from examining the content of the [overall] message'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> David Hancock, 'Bush: No Saddam Links to 9/11' *MSNBC*, 18 Sept. 2003, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/11/18/iraq/main584234.shtml>

<sup>138</sup> Welch, *Scapegoats of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 8

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

Such statements are ‘tremendously broad and vague’, making them ‘virtually impossible to oppose’. Renana Brooks suggests that such language allows the user to dominate discussion, using empty language to:

conceal faulty generalisations; to ridicule viable alternatives; to attribute negative motivations to others, thus making them appear contemptible; and to rename and ‘reframe’ opposing viewpoints.<sup>142</sup>

This suggests that while the War on Terror metaframe is strategically vaguely defined and amorphous, its rhetoric also functions to delimit meaning and deny alternative interpretations. The rhetoric is both broad enough to encompass multiple disparate components, while restrictive enough to serve particular political interests. The mammoth USA Patriot Act - a contrived acronym standing for ‘Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism’ - demonstrates how redefinitions and branding help achieve this. When this evocative acronym is contrasted with the legislation’s mass - three hundred and forty two pages, three hundred and fifty subject areas, forty federal agencies consulted and twenty one legal amendments - it becomes indicative of the way in which complex issues (in this case, complex legislation) are boiled down to instinctively-grasped but loosely-defined concepts - in this case, patriotism.<sup>143</sup> A similar blend of easily-comprehended shorthand symbolism and complicated, wide-reaching legislation is evident in the short-lived Operation TIPS (Terrorism Information and Prevention System) - another bill, Marilyn B. Young observes, ‘whose acronym must have preceded its full naming’.<sup>144</sup>

Even when the rhetoric appears clear and unequivocal, ambiguity is traceable. The ‘torture memos’ uncovered by *Newsweek*, in which Office of Legal Counsel lawyer John Woo re-defined torture, *habeas corpus* and other concepts integral to the War on Terror and the treatment of prisoners in ways that minimised US obligations under the Geneva convention, are perhaps the most infamous

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<sup>142</sup> Renana Brooks, ‘A Nation of Victims’, *The Nation*, 12 June 2003, accessed June 2011. <http://danawilliams2.tripod.com/aaarg/brooks.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> In *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore, 2004), Moore highlights the unwieldy mass of the Patriot Act by confronting politicians who voted for it and discovering few had read it (Rep. John Conyers responds “sit down, my son. We don’t read most of the bills”). To rectify this, Moore reads it in its entirety from a hired ice-cream van driven through Washington D.C.

<sup>144</sup> Marilyn B. Young, ‘Ground Zero’ in Dudziak, *September 11<sup>th</sup> in History*, p. 13

examples of rhetorical manipulation in the War on Terror.<sup>145</sup> The memos took the word ‘torture’ and restricted its meaning:

Physical pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death. For purely mental pain or suffering to amount to torture (under U.S. law), it must result in significant psychological harm of significant duration e.g. lasting months or even years.<sup>146</sup>

This retrospective definition, which prohibits only what it describes as ‘extreme acts’, is a repudiation of the Third 1949 Geneva Convention, where ‘any form of coercion’, including all forms of physical or mental torture, are forbidden against prisoners of war.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the Convention states, if a prisoner refuses to answer they ‘may not be threatened, insulted or exposed to unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind’.<sup>148</sup> Hence the need for the Bush legal team to invent a new designation, the ‘enemy combatant’, a category neither civilian nor military, imprisoned during war yet not a prisoner of war. Without this new category, as Philippe Sands Q.C. puts it:

You’re either a warrior, subject to the rules of war and armed conflict, or you are a criminal subject to the rules of criminal justice. There is no middle ground, and there’s no legal black hole.<sup>149</sup>

While the declaration of war was not a contingent outcome of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 - as previously discussed, alternative paths might have been chosen - once a war metaframe was evoked, the ‘enemy combatant’ definition offered a welcome loophole that allowed the war to retain a degree of legality while exempting itself from the widely agreed rules of warfare. But the precise language of this forty-four page legal memo is still strategically ambiguous, with

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<sup>145</sup> Michael Hirsh, John Barry and Daniel Klaidman, ‘A Tortured Debate’ *Newsweek* 21 Jun. 2004, accessed Jun. 2011. <http://www.newsweek.com/2004/06/20/a-tortured-debate.html>

<sup>146</sup> Jay Bybee, ‘Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President Re: Standards of Conduct for Interrogation under 18 U.S.C. 2340-2340A’ *U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel*, 01 Aug 2002, accessed Jan 2011. [http://dspace.wrlc.org/doc/bitstream/2041/70964/00355\\_020801\\_001display.pdf](http://dspace.wrlc.org/doc/bitstream/2041/70964/00355_020801_001display.pdf)

<sup>147</sup> ‘Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949 (Geneva Convention III)’ accessed Dec. 2010. <http://www.mineaction.org/downloads/Emine%20Policy%20Pages/Geneva%20Conventions/Geneva%20Convention%20III.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> *ibid*

<sup>149</sup> quoted in Atkins, Bee, Button *Taking Liberties Since 1997*, p. 190



phrases like ‘significant psychological harm’ difficult to empirically define due to the non-specific meaning of the word ‘significant’ in this context.

The language used to perpetuate the War on Terror metaframe, then, is flexible enough to expand and contract as required, but strategically designed to delimit meaning. The metaframe is both inclusive - everything is feasibly part of the War on Terror - and exclusive - alternative frames or interpretations are denied. This process of narrowing meaning to a singularly-defined core narrative while simultaneously incorporating ever-multiplying strands will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three; first I want to establish the reality-making effect of the War on Terror metaframe.

## 1.5 ‘Things related and not’: The reality effect of language

The *word* security is the *act*: the utterance is the primary reality.<sup>150</sup>

- *Ole Waever*

Human conflict begins and ends via talk and text.<sup>151</sup>

- *Daniel N. Nelson*

We conclude that the use by Ministers of phrases such as ‘war on terror’ and ‘arc of extremism’ is unhelpful and that such oversimplifications may lead to dangerous policy implications... We recommend that the government should not use this or similar language in future.<sup>152</sup>

- *House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee*

In the War on Terror, an infinite and vague ‘war’ was declared, and two invasions undertaken in its name, yet the connection between the conflicts only

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<sup>150</sup> Ole Waever, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’ in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 55

<sup>151</sup> Daniel N. Nelson, ‘Conclusion: Word Peace’ in Mirjana N. Dedaić and Daniel N. Nelson (eds.) *At War With Words* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), p. 449

<sup>152</sup> ‘House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee ‘Global Security: The Middle East, 8<sup>th</sup> Report of Session 2006-2007’ 25 Jul. 2007, accessed Feb. 2010.  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmfaaff/363/363.pdf> p. 10

exists in the rhetoric used to justify their existence. This is tautological and self-fulfilling - the War on Terror exists because there is conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, while there is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan because the U.S. and its allies are fighting a War on Terror. This section will scrutinise such circular logic by considering how causality is understood and acted upon in the War on Terror frame.

Ole Waever offers an instructive starting point. Writing in the mid-nineties, Waever conceives of 'security' - a much discussed concept in the years immediately following the Cold War - not as an indexical state of existence, but as a speech act:

In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering 'security', a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.<sup>153</sup>

Already, the strategic implications of such a speech act are apparent:

In naming a certain development a security problem, the 'state' can claim a special right, one that will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elites... By definition, something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so.<sup>154</sup>

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 prompted a renewed public interest in notions of security; indeed, an entire new department of federal government, the Department of Homeland Security, was premised on securing the country against future instances of a newly-exposed threat. As in Waever's conceptualisation of 'security' in the nineties, the War on Terror is not a descriptive label applied to an indexical phenomenon; it was summoned into existence by speechwriters and policymakers, not identified retroactively.

As previously discussed, the War on Terror's targets were not limited to those groups and individuals directly responsible for the attacks, as supported by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's directive to 'go massive... sweep it all up.

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<sup>153</sup> Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', p. 55

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 54

Things related and not'.<sup>155</sup> The creation of causal links became a feat of verbosity, and not the interpretation of gathered facts. In an infamous display of dubious reasoning, Rumsfeld demonstrated the War on Terror's self-fulfilling logic by stating that 'the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'.<sup>156</sup> Rumsfeld revealed the tautological manner in which the Bush administration approached the search for culprits post-9/11; rather than search for evidence to prove a link, the onus was on others to prove that the supposed link did not exist, an inversion of the criminological tenet 'innocent until proven guilty'.

I. A. Richards points out that the labels 'cause' and 'effect' are also open to interpretation:

There is a good deal of arbitrariness at several points which comes from the different purposes for which we need causal laws. We decide, to suit these purposes, how we shall divide up events... [and] we distribute the titles of 'cause' and 'effect' as we please... We are especially arbitrary in picking out the cause from among the whole group, or context - or prior and subsequent events which hang together.<sup>157</sup>

As previously discussed, officials identified 9/11 as the undisputed 'cause', the War its necessary 'effect'. For Richard Jackson, this identification of 9/11 as the clear and unchallenged origin in essence allowed the administration to 'control the future', in as much as the retaliatory state of war was made to appear inevitable and unquestionable.<sup>158</sup> The very notion of 'pre-emption' echoes this control: while the pre-emptive attack occurs first chronologically, it is framed as the 'effect' of an impending 'cause' that it is designed to prevent.

Angelica Nuzzo observes the repercussions of positing war as an 'allegedly necessary effect, or response to, the occurrence of events that, under the

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<sup>155</sup> 'Plans for Iraq Attack Begin on 9/11', *CBS News*, 04 Sept. 2002. accessed Dec. 2008. [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/04/september\\_11/main520830.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/04/september_11/main520830.shtml)

<sup>156</sup> Cited in Mahajan, *Full Spectrum Dominance*, p. 130

<sup>157</sup> I. A. Richards (ed. John Constable) *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 22

<sup>158</sup> See also: Patricia L. Dunmore, 'Emerging Threats and Coming Dangers: Claiming the Future For Preventive War' in Hodges and Nilep *Discourse, War and Journalism*, pp. 19-45

designation terrorism, are regarded as primal “causes”<sup>159</sup>. In the War on Terror, she concludes:

It is the effect that first institutes the cause as cause. The cause is individuated - or ‘posited’ - on the ground of the effect, not the other way around. Hence, what appears as cause (terrorism) is in truth itself an effect; it is the true effect that follows from that which is instead presented as a subsequent and necessary effect (war).

The ‘cause’ is premised on its ‘effect’, not vice versa. Such retrospectively-identified causality has been a feature of the War on Terror metaframe in various ways: from the leaked Downing Street memos which suggested a wilful manipulation of ‘facts’ to suit pre-existing goals (‘the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy’ as Downing Street foreign policy aide Matthew Rycroft put it)<sup>160</sup>; attempts to link Iraq to the US anthrax attacks in late 2001<sup>161</sup> (when packages containing anthrax spores were posted to two senators and several media offices, killing five people - now believed to have been the work of non-Muslim American microbiologist Bruce Irvins);<sup>162</sup> and the aforementioned directive to ‘sweep it all up’. The narrative of the War on Terror is flexible enough to suggest causal connections between events that research uncovers as exaggerated, misguided or false. In the process, the discourse exerts its own causal influence over actual events. Marc Howard Ross writes:

Narratives play a causal role in the conflict process when they frame cognitions and emotions that structure and limit the actions individuals and groups consider as plausible. In this process, narratives shape what constitutes evidence and how it is to be used... From this perspective, narratives do not force parties to take

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<sup>159</sup> Angelica Nuzzo, ‘Reasons for Conflict: Political Implications of a Definition of Terrorism’ in Rockmore, Margolis and Marsoobian, *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 128

<sup>160</sup> Matthew Rycroft, ‘The Secret Downing Street Memo’ *The Sunday Times* 01 May 2005 accessed Dec. 2010. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article387374.ece>

<sup>161</sup> See John Pilger, ‘An Unconscionable Threat to Humanity’ in Scraton, *Beyond September 11<sup>th</sup>*: ‘For several weeks, the *Observer*, a liberal newspaper, has published unsubstantiated reports that they have sought to link Iraq with September 11<sup>th</sup> and the anthrax scare. “Whitehall sources” and “intelligence sources” are the main tellers of this story. “The evidence is mounting...” said one of the pieces. The sum of the “evidence” is zero.’

<sup>162</sup> David Willman, ‘Apparent Suicide in Anthrax Case’ *Los Angeles Times*, 01 Aug. 2008 accessed Dec. 2010. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/01/nation/na-anthrax1>

particular action... but narratives may be crucial in limiting the range of choices that are considered.<sup>163</sup>

Richard Jackson draws a similar conclusion:

The 'war on terror'... is simultaneously a set of actual practices - wars, covert operations, agencies and institutions - and an accompanying series of assumptions, beliefs, justifications and narratives - it is an entire language or discourse. At the most basic level, the practice of counter-terrorism is predicated on and determined by the language of counter-terrorism.<sup>164</sup>

For this reason, the film and television texts that dramatise and represent War on Terror-related subjects are of great importance to any attempt to understand and explain the actual socio-political situation.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The War on Terror is a rhetorical frame that confuses, subverts and obscures cause and effect for political purposes. As a rhetorical frame it is created through all of its utterances; its narrative may have been initially scripted by the Bush administration, evoking 9/11 as an epochal schism, but it is reified and naturalised by the news media and other commentators. Moreover, film and television texts participate in this process, with fiction-based War on Terror narratives sharing and supporting - co-constituting - the War on Terror discourse's 'reality'. Chapter two will consider the ramifications of this conclusion.

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<sup>163</sup> Marc Howard Ross, 'The Political Psychology of Competing Narratives: September 11<sup>th</sup> and Beyond' in Craig Calhoun, Paul Price, Ashley Timmer (eds.) *Understanding September 11<sup>th</sup>* (New York: The New Press, 2002), p. 314

<sup>164</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, pp. 8-9

## 2 The War on Terror is not taking place: War as information event

Fiction is history... or it is nothing. But is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting - on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth.<sup>165</sup>

- *Joseph Conrad*

Dick Cheney's a fine fellow. He's entitled to his own opinion. He's not entitled to his own facts.<sup>166</sup>

- *Joe Biden*

'Truthiness', Merriam-Webster's 'word of the year' in 2006,<sup>167</sup> was coined by American satirist Stephen Colbert in the pilot episode of the popular *The Colbert Report* (Comedy Central, 2005 - present). It skewers both the dependence on rhetorical conviction examined in chapter one, while also hinting towards the kind of 'reality' possessed by film or television:

I will speak to you in plain, simple English. And that brings us to tonight's word: 'truthiness'. Now, sure some of the 'word police', the 'wordinistas' over at Webster's are gonna say, 'hey, that's not a word'. Well anyone who knows me knows I'm no fan of dictionaries or reference books. I don't trust books. They're all fact, no heart. And that's exactly what's pulling our country apart today. Cause face it, folks; we are a divided nation... We are divided between those who think with their head, and those who *know* with their *heart*... What about Iraq? If you *think* about it, maybe there are a few missing pieces

<sup>165</sup> Joseph Conrad, 'Henry James: An Appreciation' *The North American Review*, 180.578 (1905), p. 106

<sup>166</sup> 'Biden, Cheney Spar Via Talk Shows' *CNN Politics*, 14 Feb. 2010, accessed May 2011. [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-02-14/politics/biden.cheney\\_1\\_vice-president-joe-biden-dick-cheney-qaeda?s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-02-14/politics/biden.cheney_1_vice-president-joe-biden-dick-cheney-qaeda?s=PM:POLITICS)

<sup>167</sup> 'Word of the Year 2006', *Merriam Webster*, accessed Mar. 2009. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/info/06words.htm>

to the rationale for war. But doesn't taking Saddam out *feel* like the right thing?<sup>168</sup>

In interview, out of character, he elaborated on the concept behind the humour:

It doesn't seem to matter what the facts are. It used to be, everyone was entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. But that's not the case anymore. Facts matter not at all. Perception is everything. It's certainty.<sup>169</sup>

The previous chapter concurred that in the War on Terror, perception is indeed more important than facts. Subjectivity trumps objectivity in the rush to assign blame for 9/11, and war rhetoric flourishes regardless of arguments to the contrary. Semantic play ousts intelligence gathering as the primary basis for foreign policy decisions. Links fabricated in language become concretised by policy, and the ripples spread outwards to encompass a broad, amorphous range of constituent elements, some more widely accepted than others, but all integrated into the War on Terror at some level. This chapter will consider the relationship between the rhetoric of the War and the film and television texts that report, represent or re-imagine its claims, establishing the 'truthiness' of film and television drama.

It is important to acknowledge that 'the War on Terror' is more than the two actual-conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as some critics of the Bush administration's foreign policy decisions have already suggested. Michael Welch discusses what he considers the hidden victims of 9/11 and the War on Terror, from Arab-Americans subjected to racially-motivated violence, to the censorship of dissenters labelled unpatriotic if speaking out against the Bush White House.<sup>170</sup> He draws no distinction between these acts of violence and those more obviously part of the War on Terror's mandate, from the shock and awe bombing campaign used to 'soften up' Baghdad to the extraordinary rendition program used to 'outsource torture' of detainees. But we must go further: if we consider only actual violence and conflict carried out in connection with the War on Terror, we overlook the fact that, as a theoretically limitless state of war, it includes

<sup>168</sup> *The Colbert Report*, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>169</sup> Nathan Rabin, 'Interview: Stephen Colbert' *The AV Club*, 25 Jan. 2006, accessed Mar. 2009. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/stephen-colbert,13970/>

<sup>170</sup> Welch, *Scapegoats of September 11<sup>th</sup>*

not only already existing wars, but all potential wars to be carried out in its name. If it is deemed necessary to attack another country identified as part of the so-called Axis of Evil - most likely Iran, although cross-border strikes in Pakistan and the recent decision to intervene in Libya also threaten further large-scale conflict in the region - then these possibilities are as much a part of the War on Terror as the two conflicts already underway. This is not a distinction between 'real' wars and 'fake' wars, but between actual conflicts and potential conflicts that presently exist only theoretically, in war game scenarios and dossiers - imagined wars. And once the projected and imaginary are incorporated into the state of war, it no longer makes sense to exclude more obviously fictional forms of warfare, such as the dramatic fictional warfare depicted on film and television.

It follows that a war that relies upon rhetoric for its accepted existence finds expression in all of its manifestations, from the actual fighting between soldiers that takes place in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, to the textual images of the War on Terror that reiterate and contextualise the actual world fighting as part of this larger, epochal 'War'. Richard Jackson writes that the language of the War on Terror is as constitutive of the 'reality of counter-terrorism' as the practices it seeks to normalise and reify.<sup>171</sup> The 'War on Terror' is comprised of all of its forms, from the military (e.g. the shock and awe bombing of Baghdad), to the political-rhetorical (e.g. the Bush administration's 'with us or against' us dichotomy) to the narrated and dramatic. The last category includes all film and television texts that connect themselves directly with some facet of the War on Terror: from *World Trade Centre* (Stone, 2006) and the films dramatising the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001; *Syriana* and multi-strand global network narratives that attempt to accurately portray the global interconnectedness that links together geopolitical cause and effect in complex ways; to films that depict the tribulations of the soldiers who fight the actual wars that War on Terror rhetoric seeks to combine. The War on Terror is an amalgamation of various sources: a bomb blast, an episode of *24*, an implied threat to Iran, the rendition of an 'enemy combatant', the film *Redacted*, and so on: all are part of its patchwork existence.

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<sup>171</sup> Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, p. 2



It is worth stating here that I do not mean to suggest that the deaths of civilians, soldiers, terrorists or ‘enemy combatants’ are directly comparable to the deaths of imaginary characters in television and film texts,<sup>172</sup> nor that the ‘spectatorial’ perspective is universally shared (the ‘breathtaking provincialism’ challenged by Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*).<sup>173</sup> The point is instead that the narrative which connects these events, the labyrinthine maze of interconnected terror networks and coalitions, of instigating cause and retaliatory effect, does not possess a tangible reality of its own. This chapter will use the writing of Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, amongst others, to argue for film and television fiction’s particular importance to the War on Terror meta-frame, by emphasising the effects of modern communications technologies on twenty-first century warfare.

## 2.1 ‘Just like a movie’: The imagination shift

Airport ’77, Towering Inferno, The Fall of the House of Usher, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Escape from New York [and] Godzilla were all being shot on the one sound stage simultaneously. And the world stopped to watch the spectacle...<sup>174</sup>

- *Dmetri Kakmi*

If there is any veracity to the claim that ‘the world changed’ on 9/11, and that we now exist in a post-9/11 world which is fundamentally different from the world we previously inhabited, it is only to the extent that a mental shift occurred in the way Americans and others in the West perceive their place in the global geopolitical climate. Fear replaced complacency and perceptions were re-organised to make sense of the newly actualised threats of violence that international terrorism posed. The *9/11 Commission Report* specifically blames a failure to *imagine* such attacks for the unpreparedness of the intelligence

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<sup>172</sup> See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010) on the way war frames more broadly ‘normalise destruction’, separating ‘dispensable’ lives from ‘those to be preserved.’ Butler writes: ‘The frame does not simply exhibit reality, but actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what will count as reality... [T]he frame is always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realising and de-legitimising alternative versions of reality...’ p. xiii

<sup>173</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 98-9

<sup>174</sup> Dmetri Kakmi, ‘Cinema as Delphic Oracle’ *Senses of Cinema*, 17, Dec. 2001, accessed Jan. 2009. <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/symposium/kakmi.html>

agencies on that day,<sup>175</sup> arguing that ‘imagination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies’.<sup>176</sup> By contrast, cultural philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek have suggested that the West *did* imagine the attacks, with alarming frequency, through cultural texts that foreshadowed and fantasised about such mass-destruction - the Hollywood action film, and disaster films in particular.<sup>177</sup> Director Robert Altman interpreted this resemblance as bearing some degree of responsibility for the attacks, asking:

The movies set the pattern, and these people have copied the movies. Nobody would have thought to commit an atrocity like that unless they’d seen it in a movie... I just believe we created this atmosphere and taught them how to do it.<sup>178</sup>

Douglas Kellner paraphrased Altman’s concern by asking ‘Was *Independence Day* the template for 9/11?’<sup>179</sup> It is important to specify that the ‘likeness’ remarked upon in such examples is primarily *visual* - 9/11 *looked like* numerous disaster movies, but did not resemble them in other ways.<sup>180</sup> *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1996) - a film in which technologically superior and inhuman attackers overwhelm the United States with unfathomable fire-power and without forewarning - bears little thematic relation to the terrorist acts of 2001, but with its repeated shots of urban buildings engulfed in flame, there is a visual parity of sorts. This emphasis on the visual will re-emerge later in the chapter.

The phrase ‘it was just like a movie’ was repeated numerous times in various iterations by witnesses and academic commentators alike. Some, like Wheeler Winston Dixon, echo the Commission Report’s stress on the failure of imagination, characterising the comparison as inevitable, since most people

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<sup>175</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 339-348

<sup>176</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 344

<sup>177</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 15-6

<sup>178</sup> J. Hoberman, ‘All as It Had Been’ *The Village Voice*, 04 Dec. 2001, accessed Mar. 2010. <http://www.villagevoice.com/2001-12-04/film/all-as-it-had-been/>

<sup>179</sup> Douglas Kellner, *From 9/11 To Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 53

<sup>180</sup> As Richard Grusin notes in ‘Premediation’, even this apparent visual parity between cinematic spectacle and television coverage of catastrophe is debatable. Grusin proceeds to identify a broader process of premediation in the years that followed 9/11, including in relation to the invasion in Iraq, where “the incessant premediation of the war helps to explain the sense of inevitability”, a logic explored in greater detail in the book-length study that followed. See: Richard Grusin, ‘Premediation’, *Criticism* 46.1. pp. 17-39

observing the attacks and subsequent collapse of the Twin Towers had ‘no other referent to fall back on in the face of such apocalyptic destruction’, as if the comparison was little more than a convenience.<sup>181</sup> I am more inclined towards interpretations which understand the comparison as seeking comfort in familiarity and exerting control over fears - the imagination of disaster written about in 1965 by Susan Sontag with regards to science fiction films of the period<sup>182</sup> and updated with regards to the attack by Claire Kahane:

Even as this historical event unfolded, it was quickly recognised, placed in a familiar category, and given a local habitation and name: ‘it’s just like a movie’, the newscasters blurted out, a remark echoed repeatedly that morning... Thus the actual reality before our eyes was almost immediately transformed into and by the virtual reality of Hollywood and made familiar, déjà vu. In this assimilation, as we turned to the movies to orient us to the real disaster, the historical was confused with the fictional, and the event of 9/11 itself - familiar and unfamiliar, real and unreal - took on an uncanny ambiguity.<sup>183</sup>

For Kahane, this has greater significance:

Indeed, our response to 9/11 made disturbingly clear how much our perceptual experience as well as our psychic life is filtered and managed through films we have seen, even experienced as films we have seen.<sup>184</sup>

The sudden censorship of certain films in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks suggests that the entertainment industry was acutely aware of this similarity between entertainment fantasy and violent reality: for example, the planned climax to *Men in Black II* (Sonnenfeld, 2002) involved a battle between the secret agents and their alien enemy atop the twin towers, a scene that was hastily recalibrated and re-shot in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to take place in a less sensitive locale - an unspecified, generic rooftop.<sup>185</sup> Images of the Towers were digitally edited out of in-production or recently-completed films and television programmes, ranging from the teaser trailer for *Spider-Man*,

<sup>181</sup> Wheeler Winston Dixon, ‘Teaching Film After 9/11’ *Cinema Journal* 43.2 (2004), p. 117

<sup>182</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), pp. 209-225

<sup>183</sup> Claire Kahane, ‘Uncanny Sights: The Anticipation of the Abomination’ in Judith Greenberg (ed.) *Trauma at Home: After 9/11* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 107

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid* p. 107

<sup>185</sup> Dave Karger, ‘Aliens, Smith, and Jones’ *Entertainment Weekly*, 12 Jul. 2002, accessed Aug. 2009. [http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,305154\\_4,00.html](http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,305154_4,00.html)

which originally showed a helicopter becoming entangled in a giant web spun between the two towers,<sup>186</sup> to such seemingly uncontroversial fare as *Zoolander* (Stiller, 2001), *Serendipity* (Chelsom, 2001) and *People I Know* (Algrant, 2002).<sup>187</sup> New York-set television programmes like *Friends* (NBC, 1994 - 2004) and *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004) also removed the World Trade Center from view, the former changing the stock footage used to bridge its studio-filmed scenes, and the latter cutting location-shot scenes in which the Towers were visible.<sup>188</sup>

Texts that predated 9/11 were also considered potentially upsetting, and action was taken to minimise the risk of offence; for example, scheduled television screenings of films featuring scenes of urban destruction or terrorism plots, including the aforementioned *Independence Day*, as well as *The Peacemaker* (Leder, 1997) and *The X-Files* (Bowman, 1998), were cancelled.<sup>189</sup> Blockbuster Video, then the largest rental outlet in the U.S., applied highly visible yellow stickers to sections of its stock which read:

In light of the acts of terrorism on September 11, 2001, please be advised this product contains scenes that may be considered disturbing for some viewers.<sup>190</sup>

Labeled films included *Swordfish* (Sena, 2001), *The Point Men* (Glen, 2001) and *Ticker* (Pyun, 2001).<sup>191</sup> Although a spokesperson for the company stated that the stickers were intended only for new releases which customers may not already be familiar with ('They know *Die Hard*' was the comparison offered),<sup>192</sup> certain stores apparently broadened it to other films deemed to contain sensitive

<sup>186</sup> Stephen Keane, *Disaster Movies: The Cinema of Catastrophe 2<sup>nd</sup>* edition (London: Wallflower, 2006), p. 92

<sup>187</sup> Steven Jay Schneider, 'Architectural Nostalgia and the New York City Skyline on Film' in Wheeler Winston Dixon (ed.) *Film and Television After 9/11* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), p. 36

<sup>188</sup> Luke John Howie, 'Representing Terrorism: Reanimating Post-9/11 New York City' *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, 3.3 (2009), p. 2

<sup>189</sup> 'Sport and Entertainment Events Axed' CNN, 13 Sept. 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. [http://articles.cnn.com/2001-09-13/world/terrorism.hollywood\\_1\\_terror-attacks-fox-network-fox-spokesman-scott-grogin?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2001-09-13/world/terrorism.hollywood_1_terror-attacks-fox-network-fox-spokesman-scott-grogin?_s=PM:WORLD)

<sup>190</sup> Peter M. Nichols, 'Home Video; A Terror Alert on New Stickers' *The New York Times*, 15 Oct., 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/05/movies/home-video-a-terror-alert-on-new-stickers.html?src=pm>

<sup>191</sup> Melia Bowie, 'New Video Labels Warn of Terrorism' *St Petersburg Times*, 17 Nov. 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. [http://www.sptimes.com/News/111701/TampaBay/New\\_video\\_labels\\_warn.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/News/111701/TampaBay/New_video_labels_warn.shtml)

<sup>192</sup> Nichols, 'Home Video'

material, including *The Siege* (Zwick, 1998).<sup>193</sup> However, if the latter's screenwriter Lawrence Wright is to be believed, the cautionary stance was unnecessary; in a 2007 interview, he claims his film was 'the most rented movie in America after 9/11'.<sup>194</sup>

The apparent motive for such warnings and alterations was to avoid upsetting potential viewers who, it was felt, did not need reminders of the attacks in their entertainment products, an intention made explicit by producer Harvey Weinstein in relation to *Serendipity*:

What people are feeling is this: we don't want to be reminded in our entertainment of the disaster we went through.<sup>195</sup>

Some reminders were more pronounced than others: *Big Trouble* (Sonnenfeld, 2002), in which terrorists smuggle an atomic bomb through lax airport security, was moved from December 2001 to an April 2002 release date, its producers presumably uncomfortable releasing a comedy that might indicate a failure on the part of the US for the success of the attacks.<sup>196</sup> Whatever the motive, the attempt to remove visual similarities or reminders of the event from film and television texts underscores the perceived congruity between violent reality and onscreen fiction.

## 2.2 Bombs and butter(ed popcorn): Cinema and desubstantialised war

Following the attacks, George W. Bush's Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove met with filmmakers and other Hollywood figures, a meeting Douglas Kellner states was arranged in order to 'discuss how they could aid in the war against

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<sup>193</sup> Jason Bailey, 'The Siege (Blu-ray) Review' *DVD Talk*, 17 Jun. 2009, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/37619/siege-the/>

<sup>194</sup> 'Reporting the Bin Laden Beat' *CBS*, 09 Sept. 2007, accessed Jan. 2011 <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/09/09/sunday/main3244713.shtml>

<sup>195</sup> Andrew Palver, 'I'm back, so watch out' *The Guardian*, 28 Sept. 2001, accessed Feb. 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2001/sep/28/artsfeatures.janeausten>

<sup>196</sup> The statement released by the film's distributors simply stated: 'Due to the national tragedy that occurred, Touchstone Pictures has postponed the release date of its comedy 'Big Trouble'. Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected by this terrible tragedy'. (Quoted in 'Attacks Cause Delays of Film Releases', *Daily News* (Los Angeles), 12 Sept. 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/ATTACKS+CAUSE+DELAYS+OF+FILM+RELEASES.-a079089834>)

terrorism'.<sup>197</sup> Requests were made for supportive films that were not overtly propagandistic, but which celebrated the patriotism and heroism of the American armed forces, a request so resembling the relationship between cinema and war during World War 2, as exemplified in a US context by the *Why We Fight* films, that Michael Levine argues it proves 9/11 did little more than reinforce the 'problematic relation between cinema and reality', and that any claims of a 'sea-change' triggered by the attacks should therefore be dismissed.<sup>198</sup> Linked to this is the vehement criticism of films considered unsupportive or critical by right-wing figures such as Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly, who reacted to the 'vile' *Redacted* and the 'foolish' *Lions For Lambs* by claiming that the films were 'actually putting American service people at risk', reserving particular ire for the former film's financier Mark Cuban and concluding that 'If even one American is killed because of this film, that is on Mark Cuban'.<sup>199</sup>

While the Rove-Hollywood meeting was intended to enlist support from the entertainment industry, so that pro-war messages could be perpetuated, what reports of this meeting rarely acknowledged at the time was that Hollywood was already contributing greatly to the waging of the War on Terror, through the close relationship that film has long held with warfare.

Paul Virilio has written extensively on the relationship between war and cinema, specifically the 'logistics of perception' (the subtitle to *War and Cinema*).<sup>200</sup> He identifies a shared technological basis, with both military and cinematic technologies developing in unison. This emphasis on perception is important to warfare in its most conventional form, with the large-scale battle between armies requiring strategic planning borne of an awareness of the battlefield, and a dependence on sight recognised as far back as Sun Tzu. Virilio notes that with

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<sup>197</sup> Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror War*, p. 104

<sup>198</sup> Michael Levine, 'Things Are Forever Changed: Business as Usual' *Senses of Cinema*, 17 Dec. 2001, accessed Jan. 2009. <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/symposium/levine.html>

<sup>199</sup> Bill O'Reilly, 'Harming America the Pop Culture Way' *Fox News*, 06 Nov. 2007, accessed Jan. 2008. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,308557,00.html>; see also: Bill O'Reilly, 'The Far-Left, Mark Cuban and A Movie That Will Put U.S. Troops in More Danger' *Fox News*, 15 Nov. 2007, accessed Mar. 2010. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,311812,00.html>

<sup>200</sup> Paul Virilio, trans. Patrick Camiller, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989)

the visualisation of the enemy comes the need to deceive the enemy, or as *The Art of War* succinctly understood it, ‘the way of war is a way of deception’.<sup>201</sup> More recently, James Der Derian’s *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* updated President Eisenhower’s warning against allowing American policy to be dictated by the interests of the ‘military-industrial complex’ to include the effects of the media by retracing the author’s:

Travels in virtuality, where made-for-TV wars and Hollywood war movies blur, military war games and computer video games blend, mock disasters and real accidents collide, producing on screen a new configuration of virtual power.<sup>202</sup>

Der Derian focuses on the ways in which war and entertainment are combined through technological advancements: Bran Ferran, Disney’s former head Imagineer now provides technology and design to a range of clients including the US military, designing ‘the Disney Room’ on a naval command ship;<sup>203</sup> Viewpoint Datalabs, a company specialising in 3-D simulations, lease their services to military and entertainment industries alike, their product utilised in military simulations of fighter-plane maneuvers and the alien attack scenes in *Independence Day* and *Star Trek Voyager* (Paramount, 1995-2001) alike;<sup>204</sup> while at the University of Southern California forty million dollars was invested in setting up an Institute for Creative Technologies, a collaborative project between the Pentagon and Hollywood which would see ‘the best military gamers, computer graphic artists and entertainment executives’ gather to ‘prepare for the next war’.<sup>205</sup> Der Derian also considers war-game scenarios conducted in the Nevada desert between US troops and fictional enemies including the Krasnovians, Sumarians or Hamchuks,<sup>206</sup> and simulated training exercises such as Exercise Internal Look ‘90, a war game designed to test how the military would respond to potential ‘real-world scenarios similar to those they may be expected to confront’, which used a then theoretical invasion of

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<sup>201</sup> Sun Tzu, trans. John Minford, *The Art of War* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 4

<sup>202</sup> James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), p. xi

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid* p. xix

<sup>204</sup> *ibid* p. 91

<sup>205</sup> *ibid* p. xxi

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid* p. 1-9

Kuwait by Iraq less than a week before the actual invasion that triggered the first Gulf War.<sup>207</sup> These examples, Der Derian argues, contribute to the effect of ‘clean[ing] up the political discourse as well as the battlefield’, by presenting a war scourged of its most unpleasant features:

Fought in the same manner as they are represented, by real-time surveillance and TV ‘live-feeds’, virtuous wars promote a vision of bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic wars.<sup>208</sup>

It is worth noting that Der Derian’s study was published in 2001 prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, as some have suggested that the attacks constitute an un-ignorable ‘return of the real’. Richard Wolin, for example, criticises academics including Noam Chomsky’s ‘self-flagellating’ condemnations of US imperialism, Susan Sontag’s ‘spectacularly maladroit attempt’ to refute the charge of cowardice directed at the hijackers, and the American Left in general’s ‘ideologically fossilised’ inability to renounce the ‘myth’ of pacifism.<sup>209</sup> Wolin reserves particular scorn for the ‘rarified epistemological hair-splitting that dominated academic debate during 1980s and 1990s’, with Jean Baudrillard considered the worst culprit.<sup>210</sup> The targets of Wolin’s censure did not, however, abandon their positions in light of the September 11 attacks’ apparent ‘return of the real’. Instead, they modified their positions where necessary, and emphasised the continued relevance of their conclusions.

Slavoj Zizek, for example, points out that, while the horror of 9/11 was all too real to those directly affected by the attacks, for those observing through the media coverage (a group constituting the clear majority), the horror was both mediated and sterilised:

While the number of victims - 3000 - is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see - no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people...<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> *ibid* p. 15

<sup>208</sup> *ibid* p. xv

<sup>209</sup> Richard Wolin, ‘September 11 and the Self-Castigating Left’, *South Central Review*, 19.2/3 (2002), pp. 39-49

<sup>210</sup> *ibid* p. 44

<sup>211</sup> Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, p. 13



Zizek links this to the notion of de-substantialised warfare first written about in the nineties: the first Gulf War concluded in one hundred hours; the intervention in Kosovo completed without a single US casualty and so on.<sup>212</sup> But the idea of a war ‘deprived of its substance’ seems at odds with the increasing number of soldiers killed or injured in Afghanistan and Iraq, with Zizek’s claims that:

Just as we drink beer without alcohol or coffee without caffeine, we are now getting war deprived of its substance - a virtual war fought behind computer screens, a war experienced by its participants as a video game, a war with no casualties (on our side, at least)<sup>213</sup>

grimly contradicted by the escalating figures on websites like icasualties.org. Nonetheless, his point that technology-driven modern warfare lacks substance in the experience of the majority who witness it is as true of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts as it was for the first Gulf War or Kosovo. Visualisation is again key: it is only through instantaneous, round-the-clock media coverage - the continuous relay of images and footage from the war’s epicenter to all connected corners of the globe, that remote viewers can lay claim to ‘experiencing’ the war (at the level of ‘witness’). Though still intensely real to those in its midst, the ratio of actual participants to distanced observers has been massively altered, the former reduced by advances in weapons technology such as unmanned attack drones, at the same time as the latter has increased vastly due to advances in communications technologies. The ratio is now hugely weighted towards the observer, whereas in wars occurring before the invention of satellite transmission, the ratio would have been significantly different.

Zizek suggests that people accept that America is in a real state of war, despite the fact that America is:

Obviously *not* in a state of war, at least not in the old conventional sense of the term (for the great majority of people, daily life goes on, and war remains the exclusive business of state agencies): the very distinction between the state of war and the state of peace is thus

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<sup>212</sup> As many have noted, there has always been a degree of Eurocentrism inherent in such claims: as the thousands of dead Iraqis, Serbs and Kosovars testify, war is shorn of none of its destructive effects when experienced at close hand.

<sup>213</sup> Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, p. 37

blurred; we are entering a time in which a state of peace itself can at the same time be a state of emergency.<sup>214</sup>

This blurring of war and peace, along with the blurring of actual and virtual, finds its counterpart in the actual changes made to the US military under Rumsfeld. This transformation involved outsourcing numerous jobs previously kept 'in-house' - including catering, healthcare, and even some aspects of combat through the employment of mercenary firms, the largest of which, Blackwater, had an estimated 10,800 security forces deployed in Iraq in 2007.<sup>215</sup> This follows Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney's conservative vision of a military operating as an out-sourced capitalist enterprise, privatised as much as possible. The focus, Cheney stated, should be on 'war-fighting', and 'in all other cases, we should seek suppliers who can provide these non-core activities efficiently and effectively'.<sup>216</sup> The effect is what Naomi Klein describes as a McMilitary, resembling a 'perilous package vacation' rather than the horror of a war zone.<sup>217</sup> Contractors such as Halliburton make the experience for US soldiers as comfortable as possible, so that while soldiers continue to die regularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, those that survive spend their time in a home-from-home complete with McDonalds and Pizza Hut. The effect is a military reduced to its core competencies, and even then its capacity to wage war is highly reliant upon privatised non-military support. So a war that is not a war is fought by a military that is not fully military. War ceases to be Clausewitz's 'continuation of state policy by other means'<sup>218</sup> and instead is organised under a business model - the disaster-capitalism complex that Klein warns against.

The confusion of the actual and the virtual in the War on Terror echoes conclusions drawn by Jean Baudrillard with regards the first Gulf War,<sup>219</sup> in a series of provocative essays ostensibly denying its existence. The proposition outlined in the title of 'The Gulf War Will Not Take Place' was only proven

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<sup>214</sup> *ibid*, p. 107

<sup>215</sup> T. Christian Miller, 'Contractors Outnumber Troops in Iraq' *Los Angeles Times* 04 Jul. 2007, accessed Jun. 2009. <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jul/04/nation/na-private4>

<sup>216</sup> Klein *The Shock Doctrine*, p. 287

<sup>217</sup> *ibid*, p. 292

<sup>218</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, trans. J. J. Graham, *On War* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2006). p. 17

<sup>219</sup> Jean Baudrillard, trans. Paul Patton, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995)

incorrect by the subsequent conflict if he is interpreted as predicting that a *show* of force - a simulation of force - would sufficiently negate the need for the actual *use* of force. But Baudrillard's point was not necessarily that nothing would happen, only that what would occur would a) bear little resemblance to the predictions circulating at that time; and b) be experienced by the majority not as warfare but as an onscreen media event. The model of traditional warfare would not be applicable to the Gulf conflict, and so the hysterical media-led speculative 'Gulf War', which emphasised the war-making capabilities of the US forces and imagined the battles to come, would never occur in the guise such speculation expected; in short, the *potential* Gulf War would not take place, though something else might (and indeed did). Alternatively, a second possible interpretation is proposed by William Bogard:

The Gulf War never happened. That *can* mean: it just *keeps* happening... it just *keeps* being over, played out again and again in advance *even in its execution*, in endless war games, battlefield scenarios, casualty figures, incinerated bodies, lethal, murderous video, a great simulacrum of death.<sup>220</sup>

In this understanding, the war is preceded by its own simulation on television screens, in war games, and so on.

Baudrillard published a second essay once the Gulf War had begun, continuing in what some, such as Christopher Norris, interpreted as a hopelessly contrary and stubborn vein, denying the existence of an event even as visual confirmation of said event was being witnessed through media reports.<sup>221</sup> What Baudrillard claims this time, however, is not that such reports were deceptive, but that what was witnessed was not to be automatically taken as confirmation of the 'real', only its simulacrum - a term used by Baudrillard to identify a cultural symbol that no longer stands in relation to something else; a 'real without origin or reality: a hyperreal'.<sup>222</sup> In this formulation, images replace reality. In Baudrillard's view, McKenzie Wark summarises:

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<sup>220</sup> William Bogard, 'Baudrillard, Time and the End' in Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). p. 321

<sup>221</sup> See: Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992)

<sup>222</sup> Jean Baudrillard, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1

The 'evidence' of the Gulf War taking place can also 'prove' the opposite. That what took place is not a war at all, but something else - the spectacle of a massacre. Or that the 'place' that the war 'took' for those of us who watched it on TV was an imaginary place, an orientalist fantasy of mad Arabs and imperial splendour. The war took the space of our televisual imaginations.<sup>223</sup>

This is similar to the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter: that while there are undoubtedly conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the frame used to combine and describe them as part of a 'War on Terror' has no tangible actuality, and originates in rhetoric. Evidence of the conflicts does not confirm the War on Terror's existence: at most, it confirms two separate conflicts that might be labeled 'The Iraq War' or 'The Afghanistan War', but for which other frames might also be legitimately applied. The 'War on Terror' as a meaningful concept can be denied, even as apparent proof of its existence - in the form of casualty reports, bomb damage and so on - is accepted as genuine.

Baudrillard reasoned that:

While one fraction of the intellectuals and politicians... are wholeheartedly in favour of the war, and another fraction are against it from the bottom of their hearts... all are agreed on one point: this war exists, we have seen it. There is no interrogation into the event itself or its reality...<sup>224</sup>

Baudrillard's 'stupid gamble', described in a postscript as the attempt to 'demonstrate the impossibility of war just at the moment when it must take place', is thereby argued to be less stupid than blindly accepting the veracity of something only indirectly witnessed.<sup>225</sup>

As Paul Patton reminds in his introduction to his 1995 translation, it should not be forgotten amidst Baudrillard's talk of simulacra that 'technological simulacra neither displace nor deter the violent reality of war, [but] have become an integral part of its operational procedures'.<sup>226</sup> The strategies of deception have

<sup>223</sup> McKenzie Wark, 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place', original publication unknown, 15 Aug. 1995, accessed Mar. 2009. <http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/001205.php>

<sup>224</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'The Gulf War: Is It Really Taking Place?' in Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 58

<sup>225</sup> Jean Baudrillard (1995) 'The Gulf War Will Not Take Place' in Baudrillard *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 28

<sup>226</sup> Paul Patton (1995) 'Introduction' in Baudrillard *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 4

been fully integrated into the twenty-first century war model, in which the infosphere has joined the geosphere as a site of conflict. The US bombing of the al-Jazeera offices in Qatar is a vivid example of the desire to control access to information, while the military tactic of Shock and Awe used in the aerial bombardment of Baghdad relies as much upon the dissemination of fear as it does actual damage.<sup>227</sup> Though actual destruction is a key element of the doctrine, it explicitly aims to remove the enemy's will to fight by psychologically targeting civilians as well as military, spreading fear through self-consciously ostentatious displays of force, and not merely through force alone. The authors indicate extensive precedence for such a strategy, finding inspiration in the German blitzkrieg, the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in tactics advocated by, variously, Sun Tzu, the Romans, and Haitian rebels in the 1800s.<sup>228</sup> The bombing of Baghdad arguably differs due to the key role played by technologies of instantaneous transmission, which relay events (and potentially their psychological impact) to audiences across the globe, and not just to proximate participants or the immediate populace. The message is delivered through simultaneous news relay, the act existing primarily for its symbolic value as *images* rather than its actual destructive power. This resembles the tactics of 9/11 itself, a terrorist attack dependent on spectacle for its effects, the deaths of nearly three thousand Americans almost incidental to its symbolic power.

In *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Baudrillard offered his own reaction to the supposed 'return of the real' that Wolin inscribed in the September 11 attacks. Whereas the first Gulf-war was a non-event masquerading as an event, Baudrillard argues that the 9/11 attacks represented the return of the type of global symbolic event that he claims were absent in the 1990s.<sup>229</sup> He makes a similar claim to Žizek, suggesting that the attacks were the fulfillment of Western fantasies. He argues that 'they *did* it, but we *wished for* it', elaborating that 'countless disaster movies bear witness to this fantasy'.<sup>230</sup> The 'return of the real', far

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<sup>227</sup> As the doctrine's 1996 manual makes clear, 'Shock and Awe' deliberately inflicts 'nearly incomprehensible levels of massive destruction directed at influencing society writ large, meaning its leadership and public, rather than targeting directly against military or strategic objectives' (Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Charleston, SC: Bibliobazaar, 2007), p. 49

<sup>228</sup> Ibid pp. 47-57

<sup>229</sup> Jean Baudrillard, trans. Chris Turner, *The Spirit of Terrorism: and, Other essays* (London: Verso, 2003), pp. 3-4

<sup>230</sup> Ibid p. 5

from being denied, is expanded upon and identified as key to terrorism's modus operandi, 'the tactic of the terrorist model to bring about an excess of reality'<sup>231</sup> - a violent rejoinder to the detached state of desubstantialisation Zizek argued characterised modern life. The attacks of 9/11, when considered from the Western perspective for which Baudrillard claims to speak, are thereby identified as monumental events at the opposite end of the spectrum from the non-event of the first Gulf War.<sup>232</sup> However, he goes on to state that 'an excess of violence is not enough to open on to reality', his reasoning being that the reality principle no longer exists in itself, but is now inextricably combined with fiction:

In this case, then, the real is superadded to the image like a bonus of terror, like an additional *frisson*: not only is it terrifying, what is more, it is real.<sup>233</sup>

This prompts a further question from Baudrillard:

How do things stand with the real event, then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction? In the present case, we thought we had seen (perhaps with a certain relief) a resurgence of the real, and of the violence of the real, in an allegedly virtual universe. 'There's an end to all your talk about the virtual - this is something real!'... But does reality actually outstrip fiction? If it seems to do so, this is because it has absorbed fiction's energy, and has itself become fiction...<sup>234</sup>

Baudrillard is suggesting a blurring of the categories of reality and fiction. This is symptomatic of the 'informational event', virtualised (and, importantly, visualised) through the speed of technological relay. Baudrillard suggests that 'at a certain speed, the speed of information, things lose their sense'.<sup>235</sup> Paul Patton paraphrases:

'Real' events lose their identity when they attain the velocity of real time information... In this sense, while televisual information claims to

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid p. 18

<sup>232</sup> For a more detailed review of Baudrillard's response to the events of '9/11', see William Merrin, *Baudrillard and the Media*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005) pp. 980-114

<sup>233</sup> Ibid p. 29

<sup>234</sup> Ibid p. 28

<sup>235</sup> Baudrillard, 'The Gulf War: Is It Really Taking Place?' in Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 49

provide immediate access to real events, in fact what it does is to produce informational events which stand in for the real, and which 'inform' public opinion which in turn affects the course of subsequent events, both real and informational. As consumers of mass media, we never experience the bare material event...<sup>236</sup>

Such informational events, 'endemic to postmodern public life', should be subject to constant scrutiny, an informational event always an 'object of endless speculation, the site of total uncertainty'.<sup>237</sup> '9/11', while in some sense a 'return of the real' for Americans (and perhaps the West more broadly), is indicative of a reality fused with the simulated quality of the informational event through its instant broadcast and reception around the world. As a site of total uncertainty, meeting cries of '9/11 changed everything' with carefully applied cynicism is important, but it is only part of the impact such uncertainty has upon the rhetoric of 9/11 and the War on Terror. As will be argued in subsequent chapters, the narrative forms of certain War on Terror texts - for example, those that depict multiple, complex, interconnected plot-strands, geographies and time zones - perpetuate this doubt and questioning, forcing any interested party to discover links and clues in order to comprehend the 'big picture'.

### **2.3 “The following takes place...” The reality effect of fiction**

Riveted to their TV screens... Americans saw an instant amalgamation of war movie, science-fiction epic, horror film, disaster flick, and documentary. Their president saw it mainly as a war movie, which may have had more disastrous repercussions in coming months.<sup>238</sup>

- *David Sterritt and Mikita Brottman*

With less than one percent of American citizens now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, films are one of the

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<sup>236</sup> Patton 'Introduction', p. 10

<sup>237</sup> Baudrillard, 'The Gulf War: Is It Really Taking Place?', p. 41

<sup>238</sup> David Sterritt and Mikita Brottman, 'A Reflection' *Senses of Cinema* 17, Dec. 2001, accessed Jan. 2011. [http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/symposium/sterritt\\_brottman.html](http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/symposium/sterritt_brottman.html)

few ways to connect the other ninety nine percent of Americans to the reality of modern conflict.<sup>239</sup>

- *Paul Reickhoff, Newsweek*

While chapter four will frame this investigative imperative as part of a paranoid culture, such meaning-making is not the sole preserve of the conspiracy theorist. It is a vital part of the official arguments that brought the War on Terror into existence. Few would continue to argue for the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, or for a connection of any kind between Saddam Hussein and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, but before the talk of regional stabilisation, humanitarian intervention or pro-democracy regime change, Weapons of Mass Destruction and 9/11 culpability were the primary arguments behind an invasion of Iraq. Lending credence to the Thomas theorem that whatever people perceive to be real will be real in its consequences,<sup>240</sup> compelling rhetoric took precedence over evidence, and a causal relationship was rhetorically established.

It is interesting that while the Weapons of Mass Destruction were never located and most likely never existed, anti-terrorism agents in film and television uncover their existence and thwart devastating attacks frequently. For example, Jack Bauer of *24* discovers a plot involving weapons of mass destruction - atomic bombs, nerve gas, deadly viruses - at least once a season. Does *24* not, therefore, offer a more accurate reflection of the aims and outcomes of the War on Terror's official rhetoric than actual events? The weapons of mass destruction in *24* are a Baudrillardian simulacrum: they are hyperreal, a sign without any corresponding signified reality. If, as Baudrillard finally argued, the Gulf War did not take place because the conflict bore no resemblance to the war-model perpetuated by the media frenzy, the War on Terror, as defined by its creators, did take place, but only in the imaginary War on Terror fought onscreen by the protagonists of various film and television texts.

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<sup>239</sup> Paul Reickhoff, 'When Cinema Verite Isn't' in *Newsweek*, 24 Feb. 2010, accessed 12 Apr. 2010. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/234064>

<sup>240</sup> W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Swain Thomas, *The Child in America: Behaviour Problems and Programs* (New York: Knopf, 1928), pp. 571-2



The virtual War on Terror fought in *24* and other texts has actual consequences. For example, US Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan approached the show's creators to request they include a negative portrayal of torture to offset the frequency with which torture is unproblematically employed to yield unquestionably important and verifiable intelligence integral to stopping the terrorist threat in time. That a high-level member of the military felt compelled to intervene was reportedly due to a behavioural change in new recruits to the intelligence agencies, whose propensity for violent interrogation was apparently traced to its positive portrayal in the popular show.<sup>241</sup> While this claim of behavioural influence is highly debatable, and the effects of violent images on the temperament of their audience far from conclusive, what matters here is that the link was considered strong enough to warrant intervention from official military sources. It is not the only example of this particular show's apparent real-world influence: lead actor Kiefer Sutherland was also asked to give a talk at West Point, in the hope that a more reasoned weighing up of the dilemmas raised by torture, delivered out of character, may dissuade new recruits from emulating Jack Bauer's unpleasant but successful actions.<sup>242</sup>

The frames discussed in chapter one influenced policy and behaviour - opting to identify the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 as acts of war requiring retaliation was a linguistic choice that facilitated certain responses and actions while discouraging others. In this formula, the utterance precedes the act; the definition summons its own reality. As the discussion of framing previously established, the media reifies and naturalises cognitive frames, and is therefore a vital part of the process. I am not extending this conclusion to claim that *24* 'causes' terrorism, or that films and television programmes - or the media more broadly - are 'causing' wars: the causality model is not appropriate. Examples of Bauer-influenced torturers are offered as suggestive of a blurring between actual and fictional examples of the War on Terror, not to indicate the negative influence of screen-violence. I am suggesting that the War on Terror's rhetorical claims - that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are part of a single conflict; that terror is an appropriate enemy that can be defeated in battle; that Saddam

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<sup>241</sup> Atkins, Bee, Button *Taking Liberties Since 1997*, p. 213

<sup>242</sup> Marty Kaplan, 'Torture is Magic' *The Huffington Post*, 02 Mar. 2008, accessed June 2009. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marty-kaplan/torture-is-magic\\_b\\_89439.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marty-kaplan/torture-is-magic_b_89439.html)

Hussein was in possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction that made his removal from power an urgent necessity - are more fully iterated in fiction than in actuality. Furthermore, with modern warfare fought by many of its soldiers remotely on screens, and witnessed by the majority of those populations supposedly engaged in the war in the same fashion, it is directly comparable at a textual level to the fiction films and television programmes that depict terrorism, anti-terrorism, US wars in the middle-east and the like.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The role of simulation has been stated with matter-of-fact regularity in relation to the War on Terror, from allegations of 'sexed-up' dossiers to fabricated intelligence reports - specifically the 'yellowcake' argument (that Saddam Hussein had tried to purchase yellowcake uranium from Niger) later proven to have been premised on a falsified report.<sup>243</sup> This chapter has hopefully established that fakes and forgeries are not the only simulations that have helped structure (and produce) the War on Terror; the various screen texts that simulate, represent or premeditate (whether through wholly imagined fictional scenarios or through fact-based recreation) its rhetorical claims are also integral.

This thesis will henceforth, however, eschew the provocative stance of Baudrillard. It will not deny actuality, but rather will continue to consider the ways in which language and frames dictate the interpretation of material events. I hope that this chapter's use of Baudrillard follows the suggestion of Douglas Kellner, reading Baudrillard as a kind of 'science fiction, which anticipates the future by exaggerating present tendencies',<sup>244</sup> with an element of pataphysics in his most outlandish arguments. Despite such excesses, Baudrillard usefully highlights some of the salient characteristics of media-saturated warfare - speed, instantaneity, a lack of material substance - which chimes with this thesis's argument that representations in any medium -

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<sup>243</sup> David Ensor, 'Fake Iraq Documents 'Embarrassing' For U.S.' *CNN*, 14 Mar. 2003 accessed Jan 2011. <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/14/sprj.irq.documents/index.html>

<sup>244</sup> Douglas Kellner, 'Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-de-Millennium' in Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), p. 13

whether political speech, factual television programming, or fiction texts - are constitutive of the War on Terror meta-frame.

The remainder of this thesis will address particular features of these films and television programmes, from the understanding that the manner in which they contribute to the War on Terror frame matters a great deal. When a sub-genre of films organise their narratives as a complex web of entangled causalities, this influences the War on Terror frame. When a television show emphasises real-time action over deliberation, this influences the War on Terror frame. And when examples of both film and television evoke and mimic non-fiction conventions, this influences the War on Terror frame. If the frame changes, so do perceptions; and if perceptions change, the range of permissible actions grows or contracts. Film and television are not 'reflecting' reality in this model, nor are they exerting direct influence; they are enmeshed in wide-reaching frames and discourses, through which they transmit their influence diffusely.

### 3 The multiple narratives of '9/11'

Before the events in New York and Washington could be grasped as history, they appeared only as chronology and narrative.<sup>245</sup>

- James W. Carey

In a media age of twenty-four hour dedicated news channels, innumerable websites offering reportage and commentary (of varying degrees of quality) and instantaneous live coverage of 'breaking news', the individual looking to traverse the network of global news events is necessarily versed in the multiple narrative news structure. This multiplicity is, of course, not novel, but an intensification of existing tendencies: one long-standing precedent that operates similarly would be the newspaper front-page, which selects a variety of news-narratives connected only by their proximate occurrence in time. These are presented non-sequentially on a grid for the reader's perusal, their comprehension relying upon an implicit understanding of the piecemeal, fragmented nature of news reportage. In the case of 'breaking news' - the modern event that interrupts and demands attention *as it happens*, reported upon without the benefit of hindsight, perspective or contemplation - this fragmentation is increasingly visible within coverage of a single story. In the case of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the impact of plane-hitting-building was isolated and replayed countless times as the visual centre point - with one Australian network going so far as to reproduce the image as a 'small animated icon permanently displayed in the corner of the screen, automatically resetting itself at the end of each momentary cycle'<sup>246</sup> - while numerous narrative frames were adopted to contextualise the attacks, and various alternative or tangential sub-

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<sup>245</sup> James W. Carey, 'American Journalism On, Before, and After September 11' in Barbie Zelizer, Stuart Allen (eds.) *Journalism After September 11<sup>th</sup>* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 71

<sup>246</sup> Bill Schaffer, 'Just Like A Movie: September 11 and the Terror of Moving Images', *Senses of Cinema*, 17, Dec. 2001, accessed Mar. 2009.  
<http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/symposium/schaffer.html>

narratives coalesced around the event.<sup>247</sup> The way the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were broadcast, witnessed and ultimately understood crystallises some of the key factors involved in generating the complex network of multiple plots that together constitute the abstract '9/11' - and, later, the 'War on Terror'. This chapter will examine key depictions of 9/11 itself, as well as the portmanteau text represented by *11'9''01*, paying particular attention to the way multiple plot strands are combined in interconnected, networked narrative structures. It will assess the ways in which multiple plot strands are established and organised in texts as diverse as the official Commission Report and a made-for-cable dramatisation of the hijacking of United Flight 93, and suggest some of the ideological ramifications of such a narrative structuring.

### 3.1 Collective tragedy/individual victims

We weren't mourning an anonymous mass... we were mourning thousands of individuals.<sup>248</sup>

- *Paul Auster*

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, there was an attempt to comprehend the event as it unfolded. Before much was known for certain, multiple text lines ran along the margins of the screen on most news networks, often reporting nothing more than the lack of information to report and heavily dependent on speculation and the continual reiteration of key questions: was it a plane or a missile? If a plane, was it a large passenger plane or something smaller? Was it deliberate or accidental? If deliberate, who is responsible? A moment-by-moment account of the events was assembled as quickly as modern telecommunication transmissions

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<sup>247</sup> Karen Lury notes that the narrative shaping of events began almost immediately: 'In a short item presented at the end of the ITN *Ten O'Clock News* on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2001, the traumatic events of the last thirty hours were reproduced for viewers in a kind of super-condensed mini-narrative (which some disparagingly called a music video). In this sequence, two minutes and thirty seconds long, the "story" of the disaster was presented in a series of images... Pictured events were arranged in a loosely chronological and sequential order.' Even in this sequence, the 'pivotal' moment – when the second plane crashes - is isolated and repeated several times from different perspectives' Karen Lury, *Interpreting Television* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 115-6

<sup>248</sup> Quoted in Nancy K. Miller, 'Reporting the Disaster' in Greenberg, *Trauma at Home*, p. 42

would permit, the sense of witnessing history unfold ‘live’ an important part of 9/11’s perceived uniqueness and the deep sense of shock it engendered.<sup>249</sup>

In the following days and weeks, attempts were made to narrate the individual ‘stories’ of 9/11, including what Michael Schudson describes as the ‘haiku obituaries’ that ran in the *New York Times*.<sup>250</sup> These miniature articles, entitled ‘Portraits of Grief’, were featured in the newspaper until December 31<sup>st</sup> 2001, offering truncated tributes of those that perished, and thereby indicating the many life stories that found a common conclusion in the attacks.<sup>251</sup> One of the first dramatic features made about the attacks, *Flight 93* (Markle, 2003) echoed this balance between a collective tragedy ‘timeline’ and brief individualisation of the victims. The made-for-cable feature about the titular United Airlines flight, the fourth hijacked plane, and the only one which did not reach its intended destination, chronologically depicts the minutiae of events that occurred on the morning of the attacks - boarding, airport security, hijack preparations (for the terrorists) and the serving of breakfast (for the other passengers), with only one digression from the linear sequence (an uncharacteristic flashback motivated by Ziad Jarrah’s (Dominic Rains) recollection of his training using a cardboard replica of the cockpit). Edits are made to show various authorities attempting to make sense of the morning’s confusion, including air traffic controllers and military commanders, but the main structuring device used to allow cuts away from the confines of the aeroplane is the phone-call. This is partly understandable in terms of verisimilitude - the plane crashed with no survivors, and the black-box data and radio transmissions made by the pilots prior to the hijacking and by the terrorists afterwards offered only very limited empirical data about how events unfolded after take-off. One of the few sources of information of unquestioned veracity are the telephone calls made by many of the passengers to family and loved ones, so the emphasis placed on these tearful goodbyes suggests a commitment on the part of the filmmakers to some degree of factual accuracy. It also permits the narrative to spread outwards to incorporate aspects of the

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<sup>249</sup> Therese Davis, *The Face on the Screen: Death, Recognition and Spectatorship* (Bristol: Intellect, 2004), pp. 87-8

<sup>250</sup> Michael Schudson, ‘What’s Unusual About Covering Politics as Usual?’ in Zelizer, Allen, *Journalism After September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 39

<sup>251</sup> see <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/portraits/> for complete archive.

passengers' lives, as well as their deaths, though interestingly not all are afforded this level of attention.

The plot focuses upon those passengers that managed to place calls to family members before their plane crashed, including Tom Burnett and Mark Bingham. Their stories are mined for their dramatic (or perhaps melodramatic) potential, while those without young children or expectant spouses are restricted to the shared tragedy of the hijack, and not the individual heartache that their death caused in further, undeveloped 'storylines'. The centrality of the family unit is reiterated in the nation-as-family metaphors frequently emphasised in 9/11 and War on Terror discourse, as identified by Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert amongst others. For example, Bush's reaction to criticisms that he did not express specific gratitude to Canada following 9/11 was to argue 'I didn't necessarily think it was important to praise a brother; after all, we're talking about family'.<sup>252</sup> During the same period, legislature and rhetoric celebrating marriage and 'safe and stable families' flourished, leading Cowen and Gilbert to conclude that 'since the initiation of the War on Terror, the private family stands at the center of US domestic and foreign policy'.<sup>253</sup> At a more general level, the very identification of a 'homeland' which requires specialised 'security' shares *Flight 93*'s familial focus.

As the weeks and months went by, further narrative angles were discovered: the *New York Times*' periodical supplement 'Science Times' dedicated the entire content of its September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001 edition to articles dissecting different science-related stories connected to the attacks, from 'the engineering task of clearing debris without risking the foundations of neighbouring buildings' to 'how to make jet fuel safer' and 'the problems for blood banks of maintaining a blood supply'.<sup>254</sup> A single topic monopolised the news, but endless variations on the theme were explored - and continue to be explored at each anniversary. And, importantly, the breadth of the collective perceived to have been victimised by the attacks extended far further than those that lost their lives

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<sup>252</sup> Quoted in Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert, 'Citizenship in the 'Homeland': Families at War' in Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert (eds.) *War, Citizenship, Territory* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 261

<sup>253</sup> *ibid* p. 261

<sup>254</sup> Schudson, 'What's Unusual About Covering Politics as Usual?', p. 37

and their immediate family. The nation/family metaphor extended the ranks of the afflicted to the entire United States, with those that lost their lives subsumed into a unified *American* victim - despite the fact that citizens of at least fifty other countries died that day (including the United Kingdom, South Korea, India, Colombia, Australia and China; the global impact of 9/11 will be considered in greater detail later in the chapter). To use Benedict Anderson's terminology, the 'imagined community'<sup>255</sup> of the nation-state was reinforced in the aftermath of 9/11, specifically through its metaphorical association with the smaller interconnected network of the family unit.

### **3.2 'We have some planes': The 9/11 plot(s) and the 9/11 Commission Report(s)**

The shape of the attacks helped generate the aforementioned multiple network of 'stories': as opposed to a single bombing or hijacked aircraft, multiple hijackings and acts of violence were committed simultaneously, offering a range of particularities to be pored over and dissected in the media analysis that followed. The *9/11 Commission Report* demonstrates the difficulty in relaying the multiple 'plotlines' of the attacks. The structure of its first chapter resembles a screenplay, with sub-chapter headings such as 'Inside the Four Planes' emphasising the simultaneous unfolding of four distinct 'plots', while its use of edits and cutaways between the developing storylines mirrors cinematic editing techniques. Linking sentences such as 'Hundreds of miles south west of Boston, at Dulles International Airport' condense geographic distance to combine spatially disparate occurrences under the 9/11 ur-plot.<sup>256</sup> The report also suggests that the 'grandiose original plan' proposed by Khalid Sheik Mohammad would have been an even more elaborate network of attacks - ten hijackings:

nine of which would crash into targets on both coasts - [including] those eventually hit on September 11 plus CIA and FBI headquarters, nuclear power plants and the tallest buildings in California and the State of Washington. KSM himself was to land the tenth plane at a US airport and, after killing all adult male passengers on board and

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<sup>255</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006)

<sup>256</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 15



alerting the media, deliver a speech excoriating US support for Israel, the Philippines and repressive governments in the Arab world.<sup>257</sup>

Whether Khalid Sheikh Mohammad's 'confession' reveals an actual plot scaled down for reasons of practicality, the false product of questionable interrogation, or an invention of US intelligence hyperbolically speculating about how bad things could have been, the inclusion of this baroque hypothesis in the American government's official verdict on the attacks reveals something about how a multiplicity of linked plots has become an accepted and understood characteristic of the attacks.

The cross-cutting necessary to narrate the multifarious events of the day is made more apparent in *The Illustrated 9/11 Commission Report*, a graphic novel adaptation by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon. Endorsed by the official report committee's chair Thomas H. Kean and vice chair Lee H. Hamilton, who approve of the pictorial version's accessibility and coherence in their foreword,<sup>258</sup> Jacobson and Colon's illustrated version utilises the organisational structure of the comic book to make clear the simultaneity that the official report struggles to convey. *The Illustrated Report* uses the dividing lines of the comic frame to demarcate each of the unfolding plotlines, arranging the Commission Report's chapter detailing the chronology of the hijackings into a series of channels plotted against the unfolding time (*fig. 3.1*).

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<sup>257</sup> *ibid* p. 154

<sup>258</sup> Sid Jacobson & Ernie Colon, *The Illustrated 9/11 Commission Report* (London: Viking, 2006), p. ix-x

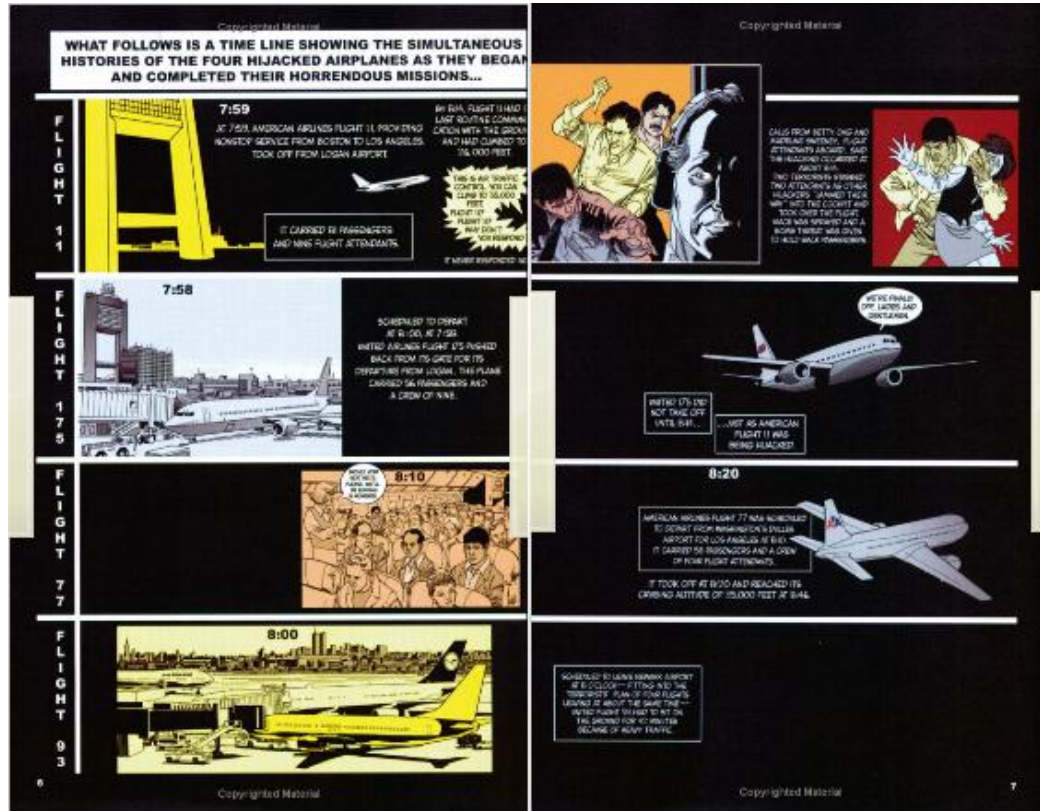


Fig 3.1: The Illustrated 9/11 Commission Report

The gap between the frames (known as the ‘gutter’) unifies the separate plotlines in the mind of the reader through what Scott McCloud terms ‘closure’, which ‘allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality’ out of ‘unconnected moments’.<sup>259</sup> This is not all that different in principle from the persistence of vision in the perception of cinema, whereby still frames are experienced as a moving image in the mind of the perceiver when projected at twenty-four frames per second.

As well as the cross-cutting techniques used to edit between the different locales in the Commission Report, cinematic editing techniques were visible in the way in which television networks pieced together shots of the attacks: while there is relatively little footage of the first tower being struck due to its unexpectedness, by the time the second plane hit the South Tower, amateur and professional cameramen alike had their cameras trained on the unfolding news story. Mike Chopra-Gant notes the news broadcasters’ use of ‘match-on-action’ editing, defined as ‘a standard device from the conventions of cinematic and televisual continuity editing, to establish a seamless cut from one image to

<sup>259</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), p. 67

another'.<sup>260</sup> Three separate pieces of footage taken from different angles and distances and at different times, were spliced into a sequence to show the attacks from the best vantage points available, 'making out of these fragmentary pieces of filmed historical data a more meaningful, coherent narrative whole'.<sup>261</sup> Chopra-Gant continues:

The... *collapsing of different perspectives together to produce a single, coherent narrative* is, however, an example of the process of translating raw events into a discourse, a process that, on a larger scale, closely approximates the historiographical activity of contextualising key events within a wider array of social, political and economic forces.<sup>262</sup> (emphasis added)

This emphasises the ideological effects of imposing a coherent, unified version of events even as the 'plot lines' multiply, allowing for the imposition of the various rhetorical frameworks examined in chapter one. At the same time as the plotlines and perspectives multiply, there is an attempt to fix the event, to concretise its meaning by rendering it a comprehensible text, with a network aesthetic providing a potential model for connecting its myriad component parts.

*United 93* (Greengrass, 2006), a version of the same 9/11 sub-plot on which *Flight 93* was based, illustrates well this tension between narrating a unified tale of national loss and trauma and teasing out individual plotlines from the mix. The early scenes take place at the airport prior to boarding and contain a deliberate accumulation of details depicting routine and habit, such as check-in procedures and aircraft refuelling. Much as in *Flight 93*, the film's dramatic power in its preliminary stages hinges upon evoking the ordinariness of the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, creating tension for an audience well-versed in the 'red-letter day' significance of the date, and contrasting with the scenes of terror that follow. The camera is constantly mobile, repositioning its frame frequently in an approximation of the observational documentary aesthetic - a performed unprepared, reactive posture, the use of which will be examined more thoroughly in chapters nine and ten. In addition, the editing cuts from

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<sup>260</sup> Michael Chopra-Gant, *Cinema and History: The Telling of Stories* (London: Wallflower, 2008), p. 89

<sup>261</sup> *ibid*

<sup>262</sup> *ibid*

conversations mid-sentence, suggesting an unbiased focus on diffuse, multiple subjects. These fragmented conversations evoke numerous lives, each with its own particularities, but which are individually not sufficiently important for the story to linger over; instead it is their cumulative narrative that is emphasised. Such piecemeal organisation of the soundtrack is typical of the layered audio used throughout the film, the constant buzz of background noise suggesting both authenticity and immediacy, with its later crescendo used as a marker of mounting intensity and confusion. Most importantly, the sonic layering is evocative of a communal group, united in the unfolding plot of 9/11, within which the voice (and by extension, personal plot) of the individual is incidental. As Kenneth M. Cameron writes with regards to the war film, ‘individuality disappears in statistics’;<sup>263</sup> in the context of *United 93*, it is the ‘united’ group onboard the flight that is foregrounded, rather than any constituent, statistical member of said group.

The film’s promotional material, in comparison, seems self-consciously preoccupied with ensuring the individual tales of loss are paid attention to and not lost amongst the collective. The DVD release has a separate memorial page for each passenger and crew member consisting of a photograph and a short biography that emphasises what made each special to those that mourn them. Some acknowledge the potential for memory to be distorted by grief; for example, Claudette Greene, who lost her father on Flight 93, admits:

It is easy to elevate a lost loved one, creating a superhero from cherished memories.

Regardless, the memorial page does precisely that; Don Greene was special, and the world should know why:

Yet it is difficult for family and friends to think of anything negative about Don. Claudette and her sister remember, now with fondness, how he always insisted on re-organising the dishwasher every time either one of them packed it!

Others, however, explicitly align their subject with a larger community of victims/heroes:

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<sup>263</sup> Kenneth M. Cameron, *America On Film: Hollywood and American History* (New York: Continuum, 1997), p. 147

Although they are definitely ‘heroes’, all the other victims who perished that tragic day are also ‘heroes’ in my heart, as they gave the greatest sacrifice anyone could give and it should never, never be forgotten.

The elevation of the individual to the status of ‘hero’ is achieved within the context of the collective - no differentiation is made between William Joseph Cashman’s heroic deeds, the subject of the above tribute, and the collective heroism displayed by his fellow passengers. As such, *United 93*’s efforts to memorialise those who perished on the flight are multi-stranded, consisting of numerous individual stories combined into a singular plot.

Another key DVD extra is a sixty-minute documentary entitled *United 93: The Families and the Film* (Solomon, 2006), in which a series of interviews with family members culminate in a private pre-screening of the completed film. Throughout the documentary, the families offer motives for their cooperation with the project, typically involving terms such as ‘legacy’, ‘tribute’ and ‘memorial’. For example, Lori Guadagno, sister of Richard Guadagno promises he ‘will not be an invisible passenger in this story’.

However, within the film itself, many of the passengers are marginalised to the point of near-invisibility, in the interest of preserving a collective-focus - for example, no-one is formally introduced or named, so connecting the characters with their real-life referents becomes complicated and dependent on personal knowledge of the victims. In this sense, the role of the aforementioned documentary is more than just an added-on ‘extra’; it informs the reading of the film itself when viewed on DVD, providing the necessary context for the viewer to identify individual passengers. This exemplifies the intratextuality that Brookey and Westerfelhaus identify as integral to the DVD format: primary and secondary texts are not separated in time and space, but presented and consumed as part of the same package<sup>264</sup> (as opposed to intertextuality in which primary and secondary texts are ‘usually physically distinct from one another and are often read at different times’).<sup>265</sup> The way in which a text’s

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<sup>264</sup> Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, ‘Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet’ *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 19.1 (2002), pp. 21-43

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid* p. 23

technological platform affects its reading will be picked up in a more sustained analysis with regards the paratexts of 24 in chapter eight.

Unlike *Flight 93*, the personal lives of individual passengers are not elaborated upon - phone calls made to loved ones are not cues to introduce fresh plotlines, but partially-heard, one-sided farewells that add to the film's verisimilitude, but not to its load of sub-plots requiring narrative management. However, other 'stories' from outside the plane are included, such as the attempts of air traffic controllers in New York and Boston to hail the flight, the National Air Traffic Control Centre at Herndon's struggles to coordinate their responses, the confusion at a military base in Rome, New York, over whether incoming reports are part of an ongoing training simulation or are 'Real World', and an observation tower south of Manhattan which relays information on the fate of American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175, which hit the North Tower and South Tower respectively. However, the individuals featured in these various locations are largely depersonalised components of the larger plot, afforded little individual characterisation beyond the establishment of their professional role in the unfolding drama. The network is evoked, but it is the overall impression of interconnected existence that is emphasised, not the individual participants.

### 3.3 The ripple effect: 9/11 as global event

We are all Americans.<sup>266</sup>

- *Le Monde*, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2001

On the one hand, then, the news reportage of the September 11, 2001 attacks is premised upon multiplicity, a polyvocal reaction to a colossal act of violence that impacts upon many lives in different ways; on the other, these 'stories' are collated and labeled '9/11', which suggests some degree of coherence and unification of experience. Various 'strands' are threaded together: the events are composed into a chronology by news agencies, which is joined by official rhetoric (the focus of chapter one), and later by documentaries and fiction film and television texts. While the examples discussed thus far have focused upon

<sup>266</sup> Jean-Marie Colombani, 'We Are All Americans' *Le Monde*, 12 Sept. 2001, accessed Feb. 2011. [http://www.worldpress.org/1101we\\_are\\_all\\_americans.htm](http://www.worldpress.org/1101we_are_all_americans.htm)

American narratives, of vital importance is the global range of this network. *Le Monde's* September 12<sup>th</sup> headline declared empathy and shared suffering, expanding the collective victim's ranks to those outside the US. Importantly, this unified global collective subsequently stands in opposition to a second global collective: al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda is routinely characterised as a coherent terror network rooted to no single country, with members that span the globe - not just in Africa and the Middle East, but in sleeper cells lying dormant in Western cities. There are logical policy advantages to framing the threat in this way - an organised enemy with a single, demonised, mastermind leader presents a defeatable target, whereas a diffuse plethora of unrelated threats overwhelms and potentially fosters defeatism - but it is a mischaracterisation.<sup>267</sup> There is also an irresolvable tension between emphasising the cross-border, planetary threat posed by Islamic terrorism, and identifying physical locations to target: al-Qaeda are framed as mobile and non-national in one-sense, but fundamentally connected to Afghanistan (and later Iraq) in another.

Much has been written conceiving the simultaneous international broadcast of footage of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks and the profound impact such broadcasts made all across the globe. For example, Bill Schaffer notes that 'all free-to-air television stations in Australia switched their programming to coverage of the disaster' for 'up to forty-eight hours after the event',<sup>268</sup> while the global scope of '9/11's impact was itself incorporated into news-reports as another plot-strand in its own right: the 'real-time global montage' of initial reports editing between images of 'ground zero' in New York, celebrations from Palestinian refugees and 'the stuttering images provided by video phones in Afghanistan'.<sup>269</sup> This simultaneous global broadcast, and the subsequent effect upon global-politics, exemplifies Douglas Kellner's observation that, more than a revelation of American vulnerability or a demonstration of asymmetric warfare at its most devastatingly destructive, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001

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<sup>267</sup> see Laurence Wright (2006) *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Road to 9/11* (London: Penguin, 2006) and Jason Burke (2004) *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 2004) for more nuanced explanations of al-Qaeda's organisational structure.

<sup>268</sup> Bill Schaffer, 'Just Like A Movie'

<sup>269</sup> *ibid*

showed ‘the fundamental interdependence of the world, dramatising how activities in one part of the world affected others’.<sup>270</sup> Kellner considers this to be the crucial characteristic of the 9/11 attacks, identifying international terrorism as the dark face of globalisation, the ‘defining reality of our time’. He continues:

9/11 was obviously a *global event* that dramatised an interconnected and conflicted networked society in which there is a constant worldwide flow of people, products, technologies, ideas and the like. 9/11 could only be a mega-event in a *global media world*, a society of the spectacle in which the whole world is watching and participating in what Marshall McLuhan called a global village... Thus, 9/11 dramatised the interconnected networked globe and the important role of the media in which individuals everywhere can simultaneously watch events of worldwide significance unfold and participate in the dramas of globalisation.<sup>271</sup>

In light of this global interconnectivity - global both in terms of the mediation of events in global media, and with regards the consequences for local political activities described in chapter one - it is interesting that one of the first cinematic responses to the attacks came in the form of a multi-director portmanteau film, a structure utilised in the past to arrange disparate-yet-interlocking responses to complex socio-political issues in films like *Far From Vietnam* (1967) and *Germany In Autumn* (1978). The portmanteau-film’s collaborative, multi-authored form allows for incoherent, polyglottal responses without supposing any firm collating narrative. Rather, an artistic briefing or structural gimmick shared by each participant unifies the short constituent films as a collected whole. Such a structure makes the portmanteau film well-suited to the articulation of complex issues: there is the opportunity to present incompatible perspectives, space to include oppositional voices that tackle a subject from conflicting angles. This possibility may not always be realised - the contributors to *Far From Vietnam* were all members of the political left, with the perspectives all protesting American actions in Indochina in various ways - but the potential to contain oppositional points of view remains a key feature of the portmanteau form.

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<sup>270</sup> Douglas Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror War*, p. 44

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid* p. 41



Although not directly ‘about’ the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks or the ‘War on Terror’, one such film, the two-part anthology *Ten Minutes Older* (2002) utilises a metaphor broadly characteristic of the way the portmanteau film connects its component shorts. Between each of its fourteen segments, made by filmmakers from three continents (though the emphasis in this example is firmly on renowned European filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Bernardo Bertolucci and Claire Denis, with Kaige Chen (China) the only non-European or North American participant) there is an inserted image of a flowing river, the ripples on its surface morphing into each auteur’s signature as a way to introduce their segment of film. This ‘rippling’ effect - the influence that emanates from an event and connects those affected together - is less literally invoked in *11’9’’01*, a collaboration conceived of and arranged by French producer Alain Brigand. Brigand describes 9/11’s ‘planetary echo’, the reverberations of which reached ‘all corners of the globe’, as the source of his inspiration.<sup>272</sup> Across its constitutive short films, further ‘9/11’ plots are suggested, both additional tales of individual experience of the attacks (Claude LeLouch’s short in which a deaf couple argue, oblivious to the news unfolding on their television set; Sean Penn’s abstract tale of an aged widower still mourning his wife’s passing, too wrapped up in grief to notice the carnage right outside his window, even when the collapsing tower lets sunlight into his apartment for the first time) and further historical linkages (Shôhei Imamura’s obtuse World War 2 parable involving a snake-like soldier’s incarceration; the Ken Loach short discussed in chapter one, in which a survivor of the US-backed Chilean coup d’etat of 1973 writes a letter asking the American victims of 9/11 not to forget the suffering of others, drawing an explicit link between two infamous ‘September 11<sup>th</sup>’s in history). The nationalities of the filmmakers involved is more diverse than in *Ten Minutes Older*, with filmmakers from Iran (Samira Makhmalbaf), France (LeLouch), Egypt (Youssef Chahine), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Danis Tanovic), Burkina Faso (Idrissa Ouedraogo), the United Kingdom (Ken Loach), Mexico (Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu), Israel (Amos Gitai), India (Mira Nair), the United States (Sean Penn) and Japan (Shohei Imamura). This cross-global collaboration is key, emphasised by a linking insert that, rather than the abstract flow of the river, returns to a map of the globe intersected with longitude and latitude lines - the planet

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<sup>272</sup> Alain Brigand, *Artistic Producer’s Statement* included on the Artificial Eye DVD release of *11’09’’01* (2002)

rendered as both mappable and interconnected. The Eurocentrism - the 'paradigmatic perspective' as defined by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'in which Europe is seen... as the world's center of gravity'<sup>273</sup> - that was suggested by the Western bias of *Ten Minutes Older's* participants is not entirely absent: the Mercator map is used, placing Europe in the centre and reflecting an imperial visual arrangement of the planet around its colonial hub, echoing the tendency recognized by Shohat and Stam to map the world 'in a cartography that centralises and augments Europe'.<sup>274</sup> But there is nonetheless a clear effort to foreground themes of global interconnectivity in both the motif of the map and the range of filmmakers who take part. The films all relate to the terrorist attacks on New York (some in more abstract fashion than others), and the multitude of ways the event impacts upon observers around the world evokes simplified chaos-theory - most popularly conceptualised as 'the butterfly effect', in which a butterfly beats its wings and unleashes a tornado thousands of miles away.<sup>275</sup> Here the collapse of two buildings in Manhattan engenders world-wide reactions and, rhetorically at least, 'changes everything' with regards to geopolitics.<sup>276</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a tension in the 9/11 metaframe - a component of the broader War on Terror metaframe - between multiple, individual, global 'plot' strands and a singular, collective, American core narrative. This is identifiable in early films (both made-for-cable and cinematic) depicting one 'strand' of the 9/11 attacks, as well as in contemporary political rhetoric and in the official Commission Report. The attacks on America were framed as attacks on the world; the victims were individual heroes, but the tragedy was collectively experienced; the myriad opinions, voices, strands and angles were dialogically intertwined, but a core narrative of innocence assaulted without warning quickly formed.

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<sup>273</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-2

<sup>274</sup> Ibid p. 2

<sup>275</sup> Edward Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 181-184

<sup>276</sup> As section one has already argued, this '9/11 changed everything' claim is highly dubious if not entirely fictitious, but its cultural currency is of importance here, not its empiricism.

It is worth noting here that such frames are dynamic and historically situated, not immutable - for example, the united empathy encapsulated by *Le Monde's* 'We are all Americans' headline arguably began to wane soon after the attacks, in light of unpopular US actions. The plethora of commentary and newly-commissioned programming that surrounded the attacks' tenth anniversary demonstrates the way the commemorative impulse has calcified with time, while also confirming the shifting parameters of the '9/11' sub-frame; footage of body parts and accounts of falling bodies striking first responders in *9/11: The Fireman's Story* (Maxwell, 2011) are shocking not only in their content, but due to their being hithertofore absent from the popular accounts of the day's events. *9/11: The Falling Man* (Singer, 2006) presents an earlier example of this flux, examining the way in which the iconic image referred to by the title - someone falling to their death from the burning Trade Centre - was absent from print in the immediate aftermath, but subsequently reacquired its place in the visual record.<sup>277</sup>

The art-house anthology discussed in the chapter's final section displays similarities in form to the newspaper front page discussed at the beginning. Unlike the linear structure of the book page - and the novelistic cinematic text - the newspaper presents its plot lines all at once for the reader to select from and combine at their discretion. Marshall McLuhan writes:

[The book page] fosters a single tone and attitude between a writer, reader, subject, whereas the newspaper breaks up this linearity and singleness of tone and perspective, offering many book pages at the same moment. The telegraph gave instantaneity to this picturesque news landscape, turned the news-sheet into a global photograph or world snapshot.<sup>278</sup>

Greg J. Smith makes a similar observation, characterising the newspaper as a 'time capsule comprised of hundreds of stories stitched together into a composite narrative', and quoting from artist Nancy Chun, who describes the

<sup>277</sup> Singer's documentary also illustrates the individual victim/collective tragedy tension. It contrasts attempts to identify the person in the picture - to fix their identity to a specific victim - whilst discussing the way in which the image came to iconically represent all those who jumped to their deaths from the towers.

<sup>278</sup> Marshall McLuhan, 'New Media In Arts Education: an address given at the March 1956 convention of the Eastern Arts Association, New York City' accessed Apr. 2010. <http://learningspaces.org/n/files/mcluhan56.html>

newspaper front-page as a 'daily map of the world'.<sup>279</sup> Clearly editorial and pictorial elements - headlines, relative placement on the page, accompanying graphic or lack of - influence the way this 'global photograph' of 'map of the world' is understood, and direct the reader to what are considered the most important (or at least, most prominent) sections first. But even if we follow the inferred path through the page, from main story (indicated by size of headline and central positioning) to those considered secondary, there is still arbitrariness to their collection. The anthology film orders its segments as the linearity of film projection demands, but these segments do not interconnect in any coherent way and alternative orders seem possible; they exist in a network of potential connections.

Chapter five will draw similarities with the internet's hyperlink structure,<sup>280</sup> while in chapter six, I will return to this notion to examine not the anthology film but a more mainstream and common narrative structure, the multi-strand global network narrative. First however, I wish to consider a possible effect of the surfeit of information potentially generated by the network model - a model that generates links and connections between individual nodes. When a surfeit of information ceases to be manageable and comprehensible, it instead tips into an ever-increasing centrifugal cycle, incorporating more and more 'plotlines' into its narrative. While the network news and *Commission Report* examples incorporate multiple plotlines into a comprehensible narrative thread, the scale of the attacks also engenders responses in the opposite direction, with conspiracy theorists poring over every official report and statement to isolate discrepancies and spin elaborate fictions implicating the US government, the Russians, sinister defence contractors and countless others. This is the network not as organisational feature, but as tangled trap - the web perceived by the paranoid.

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<sup>279</sup> Greg J. Smith, 'Front Page Aesthetics' *Serial Consign*, 18 Nov. 2007, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://serialconsign.com/2007/11/front-page-aesthetics#comments>

<sup>280</sup> The way web pages organised the multiple plots of 9/11 is examined in detail in Michelle Brown, Leia Fuzesi, Kara Kitch and Crystal Spivey 'Internet New Representations of September 11<sup>th</sup>: Archival Impulse in the Age of Information' in Steven Chermak, Frankie Y. Bailey and Michelle Brown (eds.) *Media Representations of September 11<sup>th</sup>* (London: Praeger, 2003), pp. 103-116

## 4 Paranoia, conspiracy and patternicity: Web as net #1

In times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in a situation where he has to play detective.<sup>281</sup>

- *Walter Benjamin*

You can get people to swallow anything by intensifying the details.<sup>282</sup>

- *Ray Bradbury*

Conspiracy theories have a long lineage in American culture. Peter Knight suggests that conspiracy is integrally woven into the very origins of the United States, arguing that:

The Republic itself was founded amid fears and allegations on both sides, with the leaders of the American Revolution well schooled in discerning political intrigue and deception, a lesson they had learned from British politics.<sup>283</sup>

Knight and others suggest that the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 was the key event that triggered conspiracy's move from a marginal position into a more general cultural form, becoming the 'lingua franca of ordinary Americans'.<sup>284</sup> Over time, Knight argues, conspiracy has become 'the default assumption in an age which has learned to distrust everything and everyone'.<sup>285</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, then, that fears of conspiracy surfaced during the War on Terror, particularly when the sheer scale and complexity of its remit is

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<sup>281</sup> Walter Benjamin, trans. Harry Zohn, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyrical Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (Verso, London: Verso, 1997), p. 40

<sup>282</sup> Quoted in Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 14

<sup>283</sup> Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X-Files* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3

taken into consideration. Figure 4.1 is a power-point slide designed on behalf of the US military to organise and ‘contain’ the complexity of the war in Afghanistan.

### Afghanistan Stability / COIN Dynamics

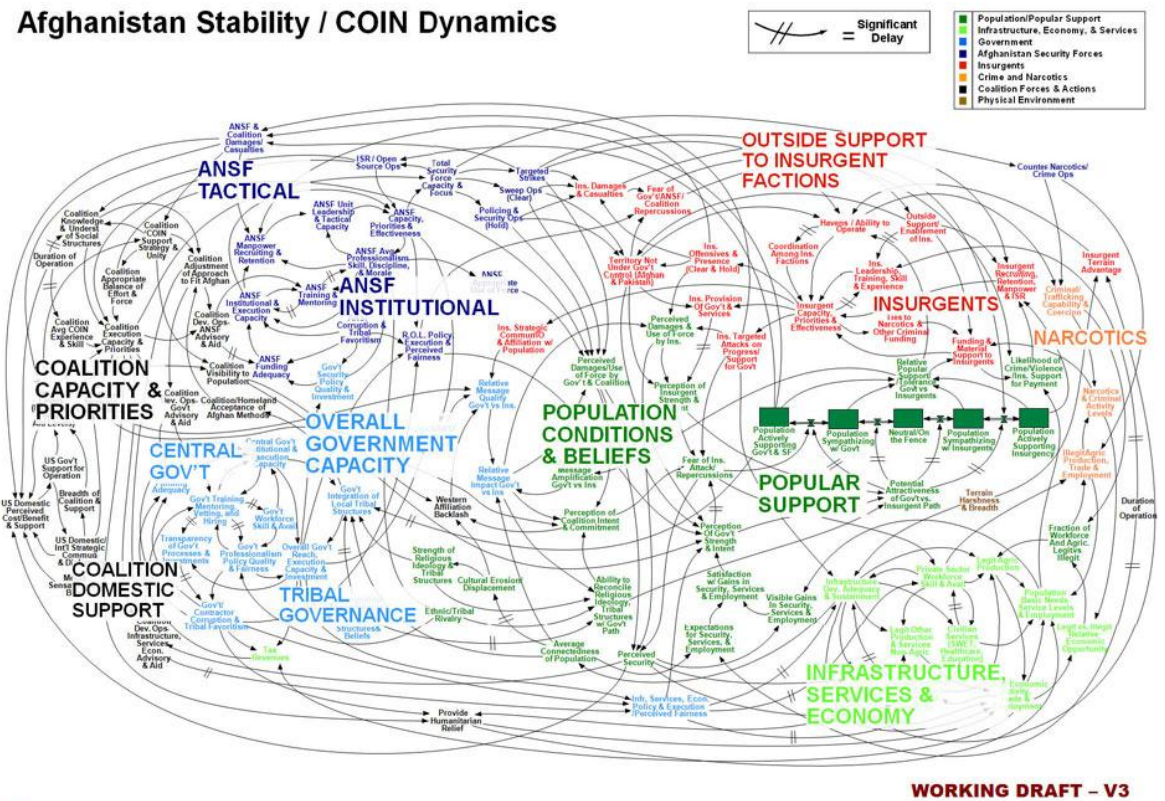


Fig. 4.1: Powerpoint slide: ‘Afghanistan Stability/COIN Dynamics’

Upon seeing the slide, General Stanley McChrystal reportedly quipped ‘when we understand that slide, we’ll have won the war’.<sup>286</sup> Finding meaning amidst the ever-expanding web of complexity, it would appear, is the overriding imperative of more than just the conspiracy theorist. This chapter will examine the role of conspiracy theories in the War on Terror, including the related issue of ‘patternicity’: the identification of meaning in meaningless data. It will argue that the War on Terror metaframe produces and perpetuates the atmosphere of fear alluded to by Benjamin, resulting in a detective impulse shared by audiences and filmmakers alike, which frames the conflict as a mystery to be solved.

<sup>286</sup> Julian Borger, ‘Afghanistan: the PowerPoint Solution’ *The Guardian* 27 Apr. 2010, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2010/apr/27/afghanistan-microsoft>

## 4.1 9/11 conspiracy theories

9/11 has inspired and drawn together a vast number of conspiracy theories. One rumour, spread through email and the Web, claimed that no Jews had been killed in the attack, insinuating that Mossad was responsible for the attacks.<sup>287</sup> Another suggested that financial traders had foreknowledge of the attack and engaged in seemingly-irregular dealing beforehand which became profitable soon after. While trawling the internet would no doubt unearth countless sceptics offering implausible twists on any subject imaginable, the visibility of 9/11 conspiracy theories and the relative seriousness with which they are narrated in the mainstream public sphere seems particularly high.<sup>288</sup> Indeed, the hugely successful documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* was premised around the uncovering of conspiratorial agendas in the Bush administration's actions in the immediate aftermath of the attacks - arranging for Saudi nationals to be flown out of the country while all other flights were grounded, for example. The film itself engendered its own sub-industry of documentaries attempting to debunk Moore's claims, a further level of conspiracy in which Moore was argued to manipulate the truth for nefarious, self-serving ends.<sup>289</sup>

Even six years after the attacks, in the UK alone, BBC2 broadcast *The Conspiracy Files: 9/11 - The Truth Behind The Third Tower* (BBC2, 2007) which asked experts to evaluate the 'evidence' that WTC 7 - a forty-seven story building in the World Trade Centre complex that also collapsed on September 11 - rather than being weakened by fires spread from the Twin Towers, was deliberately demolished by the government to conceal classified documents stored there. Channel 4, meanwhile, screened a program about a less labyrinthine plot - *The 9/11 Faker* (Channel 4, 2007), detailing the story of Tania Head, who claimed to

<sup>287</sup> Peter Knight, 'Conspiracy Theories about 9/11' *Centre for International Politics Working Paper Series*, 34, (2007), p. 4

<sup>288</sup> It is important not to homogenise all conspiracy theorists. Within the 9/11 conspiracy communities, certain groups and individuals are afforded greater legitimacy than others, and many conflicting opinions exist. Few of what could loosely be termed the 'mainstream' conspiracy theorists, for example, would seek association with 'no-planers', who claim that no aircraft were involved in 9/11; instead, holograms were used to disguise missiles. (see: David Aaronovitch, '9/11 conspiracy theories: The truth is out there...just not on the internet', *The Times*, 29 Apr. 2009, accessed May 2010.

[http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/women/the\\_way\\_we\\_live/article6187493.ece](http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article6187493.ece)

<sup>289</sup> See: *Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore* (Caine and Melnyk, 2007); *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Peterson, 2004); *Celsius 41.11: The Temperature at Which the Brain...Begins To Die* (Knoblock, 2003); *Michael Moore Hates America* (Wilson, 2004); *Michael & Me* (Elder, 2004); *Shooting Michael Moore* (Leffler, 2008) amongst others.

be one of only nineteen people above the planes' point of impact to escape the towers alive, but who was later exposed as a fraud.<sup>290</sup> Furthermore, hundreds of low budget documentaries are available online claiming one elaborate plot after another, with titles including *9/11: The Great Illusion* (Humphrey, 2006), *9/11: In Plane Site* (Lewis, 2004) and *9/11: The Greatest Lie Ever Sold* (Hilder, 2004).<sup>291</sup> These are not marginal texts either: *Loose Change* (Avery, 2006), a \$6000 home-made film about 9/11 conspiracy theories was at one time the most popular video on Google Videos (the search engine's video sharing site), with over ten million views by May 2006.<sup>292</sup> Interestingly, its makers Korey Rowe and Dylan Avery began *Loose Change* as a fictional screenplay 'loosely based around us discovering that 9/11 was an inside job', before they apparently became convinced by what they considered the overwhelming evidence their research unearthed.<sup>293</sup>

The urge to uncover a hidden truth relies upon a fundamental belief in the existence of secrets. John Dean lists the ways that secrecy damages democracy in the United States: it is alienating, precludes public accountability, threatens liberty, negatively affects character, and encourages incompetence, amongst other detrimental effects.<sup>294</sup> Most troublingly, as John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg suggest in their study of the spy novel's genesis and development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, secrecy and clandestinity replace morality with pragmatism - the clandestine world cannot, due to its inherently secretive nature, be subject to public checks and measures, and ethical considerations thereby become secondary to questions such as 'can it be done?' and if so, 'how?'. Those that participate in clandestine activities come to believe that their actions are not subject to the same rules as the non-

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<sup>290</sup> David W. Dunlap, 'In a 9/11 Survival Tale, the Pieces Just Don't Fit' *The New York Times*, 27 Sept. 2007 accessed Jan. 2011. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/27/nyregion/27survivor.html?\\_r=1&ei=5087&em=&en=620a38f8cc36fbd0&ex=1191038400&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/27/nyregion/27survivor.html?_r=1&ei=5087&em=&en=620a38f8cc36fbd0&ex=1191038400&pagewanted=all)

<sup>291</sup> see <http://www.911docs.net/> for a more extensive list.

<sup>292</sup> Nancy Jo Sales, 'Click Here For Conspiracy', *Vanity Fair*, Aug. 2006, accessed Jan. 2008. <http://www.vanityfair.com/ontheweb/features/2006/08/loosechange200608>

<sup>293</sup> Lev Grossman, 'Why the 9/11 Conspiracy Theories Won't Go Away', *Time*, 03 Sept. 2006, accessed Mar. 2009. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1531304-2,00.html>

<sup>294</sup> John Dean, *Worse Than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004), pp. 185-88



clandestine world, but are exempt due to the seriousness of their objectives.<sup>295</sup> From Dick Cheney's 'go massive, sweep it all up, things connected and not' directive, to the warning that US intelligence would have to operate on 'the dark side', hiding its activities from the American people (and its allies) in order to preserve operational security, secrecy has been a defining feature of the Bush administration's response to the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. To the conspiracy theorist's file, already containing MK-ULTRA, TWA Flight 800, Lee Harvey Oswald, Watergate and Area 51, the Bush administration's secrecy has added WMDs, The Carlisle Group and Ghost Planes, amongst others.

## 4.2 Conspiracy culture and postmodernism

The ubiquity of conspiracy culture has meant that attempts to debunk or disprove claims of hidden plots and secret connections have given way to attempts to understand and explain their attraction. Psychological explanations - which, Knight suggests, usually assume 'that people blame external causes for what are essentially internal, psychic problems, sometimes of a sexual nature'<sup>296</sup> - are not sufficient to explaining the phenomenon at a more widespread social level. Samuel Chase Cole, echoing Knight's identification of conspiracy theories' widened popularity from the 1960s onwards, suggests a correlation between conspiracy culture and postmodernism, arguing that the simultaneous growth of each is not coincidental, but that fears of conspiracy act as a paradoxical 'antidote' to the terrifying un-grounding of postmodernism.<sup>297</sup>

Both conspiracy and postmodernism share a distrust and denial of the narratives that structure social existence. However, this scepticism manifests itself differently: postmodernism refuses master narratives (a category to which the War on Terror metaframe arguably belongs), turning the stabilisation of meaning into an impossible goal, while conspiracy culture re-asserts new, baroquely elaborate plots in which, if we look beneath the surface, everything is connected. The appeal of conspiracy culture, then, is the reassurance that order does exist, even if, paradoxically, the order is masked and/or sinister in

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<sup>295</sup> John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 14-5

<sup>296</sup> Knight, *Conspiracy Culture*, p. 18

<sup>297</sup> Samuel Chase Cole, *Paradigms of Paranoia: The Culture of Conspiracy in Contemporary American Fiction* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2004)

nature - better than the meaningless abyss of postmodernism. Where this pessimistic view of postmodernism casts established 'truths' (and the very possibility of 'truth' itself) in doubt, making everything 'relational, debatable, elusive and precarious', Cole identifies conspiracy's remedial properties:

everything becomes a sign, a clue, a piece of a larger puzzle... [reducing] everything to evidence and predetermined clues. It literalises experience, seeing connections in coincidence, chance and accident. It fixes identity, transforms the fluidity of postmodern theory into the foreordained scripts of conspiracy theory... In many ways this can become a comfortable notion since the contemporary world becomes explainable and explained, the postmodern malaise rationalised and understood.<sup>298</sup>

'Putting the pieces together', then, is the paranoid conspiracy theorist's motivation. However, the same imperative underpins the investigative journalist, the viewer of the network-narrative film or television text (as will be discussed in section six), and, as Walter Benjamin suggests, everyone living in a time characterised by terror. Such assemblage is arguably integral to understanding any narrative, but there is a difference in degree: in these examples, meaning is only tenable through active investigation.

Writing off conspiracy culture as delusional is therefore unhelpful. Fredric Jameson identifies conspiracy as 'the poor person's cognitive mapping', suggesting that the prevalence of conspiracy indicates an inability in many individuals to otherwise 'make sense of their lives within the larger historical and socio-economic context'. The unveiling of a secret web that conspiratorially links everything together provides a sense of location.<sup>299</sup> But, as Slavoj Žižek suggests, this is an insufficient explanation when presented with evidence of *actual* conspiracy.<sup>300</sup> Conspiracy theories are not purely paranoid or delusional, but responsive to the secrecy that characterises both War on Terror policy and, indeed, the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 themselves. Where the viewer of a film like *Syriana* traces plot connections to formulate a coherent story (just as 9/11 news reports traced connections to produce a coherent, detailed chronology of causally-linked events), the conspiracy theorist

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>299</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 356

<sup>300</sup> Žižek, *The Parallax View*, p. 375-6

compulsively and actively seeks links on the assumption that the connections are there if you know where to look. Surfaces are always deceptive, hence there is a preoccupation with subtext: strip away the outer façade and the truth will reveal itself - until, that is, the connections appear satisfactorily identified, at which point a further false layer presents itself to the conspiracy theorist's eyes. To the paranoid conspiracy believer, the truth will always be partially obscured in an endless, recessionary process of skepticism and investigation, but at a certain level, the secrecy of the War on Terror engenders investigation at all levels from all affected by it.

In the wake of '9/11', the conspiracy theories multiplied, settling into two broad camps delineated by Knight: 'Letting it Happen on Purpose' (LIHOP) and 'Making it Happen on Purpose' (MIHOP), both stemming from the underlying assumption that:

the Bush administration and/or oil companies had much to gain from the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and were looking for - perhaps even willing to engineer - a modern-day Pearl Harbour in order to gain support for their pre-existing war plans.<sup>301</sup>

The links to oil companies are a particularly popular link in the 9/11-War on Terror conspiracy chain - television mini-series such as *Burn Up* (BBC/Global Television, 2008) and *State of Play* (BBC, 2003) featured such a connection as part of their labyrinthine plots, while *Syriana* presents a similar argument in a more detailed fashion. This economic, capitalist rationale for war - securing oil reserves and pipelines abroad - is argued to be motive enough to either orchestrate or allow an attack that would permit retaliatory force, in the process toppling uncooperative regimes and installing puppet governments that will act in ways favourable to Western interests.

Naomi Klein notes that it is unlikely that any shadowy conspiracy exists in the fog-and-mirrors sense of Machiavellian trickery, citing as evidence the private writings of key members of the Bush administration, including George W. Bush, which evidence the same Manichean logic and unequivocal certainty in the sanctity of their decisions as their public statements. Klein concludes that locating the truth hidden amongst the myriad plots is not about uncovering a

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<sup>301</sup> Knight, 'Conspiracy Theories about 9/11', p. 8

diabolical master plan or exposing Bush and his cabinet as disingenuous fiends, but about acknowledging the unfortunate truth in the aphorism ‘fortune favours the prepared’ - which here carries the unpleasant realisation that the military-industrial complex has made war both profitable and favourable to the interests of its architects.<sup>302</sup>

### 4.3 Conspiracy and filmanthropy

Multiple conspiracy plots are both engendered by and add to the escalating network of perspectives and plot-lines of the ‘War on Terror’ metaframe, acting as stark reminders of the secretive machinations of the military-industrial-political complex. Even if paranoid delusions are avoided, the diverse network of plots necessarily casts its interpreter in an investigative role, a position recognised by Walter Benjamin in past times of terror but remaining equally applicable in this new context. The multi-strand narrative in film and television (e.g. *Syriana*), already suggested to be structurally emulating the newspaper layout in both content (‘ripped from the headlines’) and in layout (plots organised with varying attempts to convey simultaneity and multiplicity), seems also, then, to embody the impulse of revolutionary journalism as identified by Paul Virilio in *The Vision Machine*:

Revolutionary journalism aims *to enlighten* public opinion, to make revelations, to delve behind deceptive appearances, to provide slowly but surely a convincing explanation for every mystery in keeping with the demands of a public full of examiners.<sup>303</sup>

This imperative is echoed by the number of War on Terror films given jargon-based titles that frame their plots as part-exposé of a supposedly condemnable practice: for example, *Stop Loss* (Pierce, 2008) has Sergeant Brandon King (Ryan Phillippe) flee from the US army in protest at their ‘stop-loss’ practice of extending soldier deployment and sending them on additional tours of duty beyond the length of time agreed in their contracts, a function likened to a back-door draft both in the film and by John Kerry during his presidential campaign.<sup>304</sup> Other examples include *Redacted* (the censorship of images and

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<sup>302</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, p. 11-2

<sup>303</sup> Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, p. 35

<sup>304</sup> Rome Neal, ‘Back-Door Draft’ Raises Questions’ *CBS News*, 27 June 2004, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/28/sunday/main620263.shtml>

text, ostensibly for reasons of national security or mission integrity, but in De Palma's film used to condemn the covering-up of American crime) and *Rendition* (the central plot-strand of which depicts a case of 'extraordinary rendition' - the practice of secretly seizing suspects and deporting them overseas for interrogation - a term that has been accused of euphemistically disguising its true nature, described by Jane Mayer as 'Outsourcing Torture').<sup>305</sup> If these films are indeed, to some degree, attempts to enlighten their audience by revealing the sinister truth masked by the neologisms and euphemisms that permeate War on Terror discourse, then they share with the paranoid conspiracy theorist a conviction that something is hidden, and can be unearthed if we question the rhetorical arch-narrative and disentangle the web of sub-narratives it masks.

This explicitly political motive is integral to the concept of 'filmanthropy', practitioners of which have been instrumental in the making of many of the movies under discussion. The term was coined by Internet mogul Ted Leonsis to describe his role in setting up a film production company, Agape, and producing *Nanking* (Gutentag and Sturman, 2007), a documentary about the Rape of Nanking. It has been used to describe affluent individuals who, having found success in their business endeavours, spend money on political film projects. The nature of said films, often controversial and niche in appeal, means that profit is an unlikely motivation (though potential financial success is not entirely forgotten, as Leonsis's ambitious claim that *Nanking*, 'if marketed right, could be like a *Passion of the Christ*' attests)<sup>306</sup>. Instead, Leonsis suggests, the compulsion stems from a similar goal to that of the revolutionary journalist:

It's where you can shed light on a big issue. You raise the money around your charity and make something that can drive people to understand an issue... It brings together philanthropy and understanding how media works. You're going to see a lot of people doing this because a studio probably wouldn't do a story like this.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Jane Mayer, 'Outsourcing Torture', *The New Yorker*, 14 Feb. 2005, accessed Dec. 2009. [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/02/14/050214fa\\_fact6](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/02/14/050214fa_fact6)

<sup>306</sup> Thomas Heath, 'Leonsis's 'Filmanthropy' Plants a Seed With Buddies', *The Washington Post*, 25 Jan. 2007, accessed Jan. 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/24/AR2007012401887.html>

<sup>307</sup> *ibid*

Other figures tagged with the filmanthropist soubriquet include Jeff Skoll, founder of Ebay, whose Participant Productions has financed dozens of politically-conscious movies including *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Fast Food Nation* (Linklater, 2006), *Good Night, and Good Luck*. and *Chicago 10* (Morgen, 2007), as well as specifically War on Terror-related films such as *Charlie Wilson's War* (Nichols, 2007), *Syriana* and *Standard Operating Procedure*; Charles Ferguson, the founder of Vermeer Technologies in 1994 and subsequently producer and director of Oscar-winning documentary *No End In Sight*; and Mark Cuban, whose role in the making of *Redacted* will be considered in the next section. Skoll's talk of 'a double bottom line', where making socially-conscious films that audiences both want to see and are affected by is essential, suggests the imperative to 'make public' that is shared by both investigative journalist and filmanthropist, who share with the old-fashioned political avant-garde a desire to address under-reported issues, but who deliberately do so within a mainstream filmmaking tradition, thereby reaching multiplex-goers as well as the politically active. This expositional role is directly related to the conspiracy culture discussed by Knight et al; if secrecy is the primary facet of conspiracy, publicity is the prerequisite of democracy:

Publicity depends on the idea of secrecy. The power of the public is a power to unmask or reveal... When the public sphere provides our model for democracy, then, political action revolves around exposure, revelation. *Disclosing* and *making visible* are synonyms for *politics*.<sup>308</sup>

Conspiracy culture, then, shares certain characteristics with revolutionary journalism and filmanthropy. The principle difference is the motor driving its expositional imperative. If filmanthropy and revolutionary journalism are ostensibly driven by political altruism and empirical accuracy, conspiracy culture is characterised by paranoia. The former categories seek to establish a narrative by uncovering and making public the 'truth', while the latter scrutinises everything for its sub-text. Key to all three is pattern recognition.

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<sup>308</sup> Jodi Dean, 'Webs of Conspiracy' in Andrew Herman and Thomas Suriss (eds.), *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 69

## 4.4 Pattern recognition

We must find the terrorists in a world of noise.<sup>309</sup>

- *John Poindexter, Director of Total Information Awareness (TIA), US anti-terror research initiative*

I spread the map out on the dining room table... The dots where I'd found things looked like the stars in the universe. I connected them, like an astrologer, and if you squinted your eyes like a Chinese person, it kind of looked like the word 'fragile'. Fragile. What was fragile?... I erased and connected the dots a different way, to make 'door'... I had the revelation that I could connect the dots to make 'cyborg' and 'platypus' and 'boobs' and even Oskar'... I could connect them to make almost anything I wanted, which meant I wasn't getting any closer to anything.<sup>310</sup>

- *From Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Jonathan Safran-Foer*

The paradoxical relationship between exposing great quantities of information (in the form of 'stories' - both news scoops based on a fresh snippet of information and narrated tales that structure multi-strand plots) and in the process obfuscating the truth was recognised forty years ago by Marshall McLuhan in *Counterblast* as the inevitable consequence of media saturation. 'Faced with information overload', he wrote, 'we have no alternative but pattern recognition'.<sup>311</sup> However, the above extract from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* illustrates the possibility of assigning false meaning to observable patterns. Safran-Foer's novel narrates a young boy's search for his missing father, who disappeared on the morning of 9/11 and is presumed dead. The discovery of buried items such as a coat hanger and an old pocket watch are clung on to by the young child as potentially vital clues, until the disheartening realisation that if you look hard enough you can find patterns to support *any* interpretation of said clues. Michael Shermer offers a diagnostic term for such over-recognition of patterns: patternicity, or 'the tendency to find meaningful

<sup>309</sup> John Poindexter, 'Remarks Prepared for Delivery at the DARPRTEch 2002 Conference', *Federation of American Scientists*, 02 Aug. 2002, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/poindexter.html>

<sup>310</sup> Jonathan Safran-Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 10

<sup>311</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast* (London: Rapp and Whiting Ltd., 1970), p. 132

patterns in meaningless noise'.<sup>312</sup> In other contexts, other names are used to refer to similar mis-identifications: statisticians would call it a type I error (i.e. a false positive),<sup>313</sup> while neurologist Klaus Conrad coined the term 'apophenia' to describe the psychological process by which meaning is assigned to 'random configurations', such as the frequent reports of the face of Jesus being observed in the uneven browning of pieces of toast, the underside of jar lids, and other incongruous locations.<sup>314</sup>

William Gibson's novel *Pattern Recognition* follows 'cool-hunter' Cayce, a brand expert who uses her instinctual understanding of which marketing campaigns are likely to work at an international level to advise various corporations. Cayce - along with an unknown number of others - is fascinated by fragments of film that mysteriously appear online and are pored over by rapt followers, who debate their chronology, meaning, source and purpose. Clues are sought in the obscure snippets, though what Cayce and her fellow obsessives expect to discover is unclear, to both reader and character.<sup>315</sup> As well as this obvious act of pattern recognition, the novel juxtaposes disparate events and icons, juxtapositions commented upon by Alex Links in his essay 'Global War, Global Capital, and the Work of Art in William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*':

True to its title, *Pattern Recognition* makes no explicit claim to any kind of fundamental or deliberate causal connection between brand culture, the latest evolution of corporate culture into the global, and the twentieth century history of warfare. They are, however, consistently juxtaposed to constitute a provisional, tentative argument. This patterning without polemic is the novel's attempt to offer a history that is not custodial and that recognises contingency.<sup>316</sup>

This, he continues, is specifically related to aspects of 9/11 and the War on Terror:

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<sup>312</sup> Michael Shermer, 'Patternicity: Finding Meaningful Patterns in Meaningless Noise', *Scientific American Magazine*, 25 Nov. 2008, accessed Dec. 2008.  
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=patternicity-finding-meaningful-patterns>

<sup>313</sup> J. Neyman and E. S. Pearson, 'The Testing of Statistical Hypotheses in Relation to Probabilities a priori' *Mathematical Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, 29 (1933), pp. 492-510

<sup>314</sup> Sandra L. Hubscher, 'Apophenia: Definition and Analysis' *Digital Bits Skeptic*, Nov. 2007, accessed Jan. 2011. <http://www.dbskeptic.com/2007/11/04/apophenia-definition-and-analysis/>

<sup>315</sup> William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (London: Penguin, 2003)

<sup>316</sup> Alex Link, 'Global War, Global Capital, and the Work of Art in William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*' in *Contemporary Literature* XLIX.2 (2008), p. 216



In particular, images of the World Trade Center disaster are twice juxtaposed with the Coca-Cola logo, arguably the most recognised brand on earth. Rather than make any open claims about the connection between the attacks and the expansion of American global capital, the novel simply juxtaposes images of violence and of the expansion of capital over and over again, positing the recognizable pattern as a newly urgent question while refraining from claims of any kind of direct causality.<sup>317</sup>

The existence of the pattern is sufficiently evocative; speculating upon the nature of the link between elements within the pattern is refrained from. The replacement of causal connections with associative connections echoes the conclusions of chapter one, in which the rhetoric of the metaframe was argued to conjure associative links. Claims that '9/11' was unique, unprecedented, unpreventable and cataclysmically devastating are countered, Gibson's novel suggests, by the recognition of broader patterns of violence, which foreground historical commonalities and evoke past traumas. Perhaps this non-committed form of interpretation is the one most closely suggested by the portmanteau films discussed in the previous chapter: inter-connections are minimal, yet we are encouraged to identify certain patterns and thematic similarities, without assigning any kind of concrete causality.

Obviously, pattern recognition has applications in the waging of the War on Terror: the monitoring of signals by intelligence agencies such as the CIA and NSA is premised upon discovering patterns of terrorist activity amidst the vicissitudes of electronic communication. This 'chatter' is filtered and scrutinised, in the hope that the pattern will reveal itself to the observant and trained interpreter. Patrick Radden Keefe argues that the increasing dependence upon this type of electronic surveillance over human intelligence has been ongoing since the Carter administration, and has increased exponentially since the end of the Cold War.<sup>318</sup> But there is potential for manipulation; Keefe notes that:

after spikes in terrorist chatter set off a series of alarms about impending terrorist strikes in various places around the world in 2003, some observers of the intelligence community speculated that Al

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid, p. 216

<sup>318</sup> Patrick Radden Keefe, *Chatter: Uncovering the Echelon Surveillance Network and the Secret World of Global Eavesdropping* (New York: Random House Trade, 2006), pp. 6-7

Qaeda was deliberately throwing out red herrings on frequencies they knew were being monitored by the NSA.<sup>319</sup>

The deployment of false information designed to frustrate an opponent's ability to gather intelligence and interpret it accurately is, of course, not new. What is new is the volume of information and the speed with which it is interpreted and acted upon. When the expectation is near-instantaneous interpretation, computer algorithms and search tools replace human analysis, hence the privileging of pattern recognition over other forms of interpretive analysis. The possibility of a genuine pattern not being identified in time provides constant pressure: data mining and filtering are extensive processes with scope for error, and the limitations in threat recognition and reporting procedures were one aspect of intelligence criticised in the *9/11 Commission Report*.<sup>320</sup> Locating threats in 'a world of noise' requires specialised tools, which projects such as EELD (Evidence Extraction and Link Discovery) worked to develop as part of the Information Awareness Office at DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency - the Department of Defence's research and development wing).<sup>321</sup> Such projects originate in efforts to implement a Total Information Awareness (TIA) system, a system of pattern recognition so vast its data is measured in petabytes (one petabyte is equal to one million gigabytes).<sup>322</sup>

This form of meaning-making - surveying the entirety and looking for patterns - impacts upon causal relations in a number of ways. The connections identified need not conform to any causal relationship, or even a sequential relationship; only their proximity and some identifiable (though vague) 'meaning' connects them. Rather than A causing B, or even A preceding B, pattern recognition's connective principle is *tertium comparitonis* - their comparable significance, which is not predetermined by any sequential logic. Causality is therefore not

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid, p. 8

<sup>320</sup> For example: Clarke's testimony that 'warning about the possibility of a suicide hijacking would have been just one more speculative theory among many, hard to spot since the volume of warnings of "al Qaeda threats and other terrorist threats, was in the tens of thousands – probably hundreds of thousands"', *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 345

<sup>321</sup> Richard Baxstrom, Naveeda Khan, Deborah Poole and Bhri Gupta Singh, 'Networks Actual and Potential: Think Tanks, War Games and the Creation of Contemporary America Politics' *Theory & Event* 8.4 (2005), accessed Nov. 2009.  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory\\_and\\_event/v008/8.4singh.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v008/8.4singh.html)

<sup>322</sup> Elliot Borin, 'Feds Open 'Total' Tech Spy System' *Wired*, 07 Aug. 2002, accessed Feb. 2011.  
<http://www.wired.com/politics/law/news/2002/08/54342>

the only relational principle at work in War on Terror discourse. In conspiracy theory, ‘everything is connected’ through a tangled, labyrinthine but theoretically plottable chain of cause and effect, but other meaningful connections are permitted; in patternicity, everything is connected, but the connections are *associational* rather than *causal*.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that conspiracy theories inform War on Terror narratives to a far greater degree than their fringe status might suggest. The act of making connections between disparate ‘clues’, in order to expose previously-hidden truths, informs the work of journalists, filmanthropists - even policy makers. When a link is argued to exist between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, premised on secret intelligence, the rhetoric resembles the associational logic of the conspiracy theorist, a logic that circumvents the need for absolute causal evidence.

Mark Fenster suggests that it is not the geographic or historical scope of these associations that is of most fundamental importance to the conspiracy narrative, but ‘the breathtaking speed with which it moves from event to event and adds “fact” after “fact”’; in other words, its *velocity*.<sup>323</sup> The ability to instantly juxtapose and contrast ‘evidence’ at speed therefore makes the World Wide Web a natural conduit for conspiracy theory propagation, and the hyperlink a useful organisational feature. The Web, Jodi Dean argues, is infused with the characteristics of conspiracy. ‘Conspiracy’, she argues, ‘haunts our thinking about the Web’, detailing their similarities: the overabundance of information (the problem that necessitates pattern recognition), but also the ‘preoccupation with minutiae, evidence, documentation’ and their reliance on ‘odd, seemingly random links that have always resisted a reconciling closure or coherence’.<sup>324</sup> It is the latter similarity that will frame chapter five.

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<sup>323</sup> Michael Butter and Lisa Retterath, ‘From Alerting the World To Stabilising Its Own Community: The Shifting Cultural Work of the *Loose Change* Films’, *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 40.1 (2010), p. 27

<sup>324</sup> Dean, ‘Webs of Conspiracy’, p. 63

## 5 The Internet and the hyperlink: Web as net #2

The ontology of the World Wide Web is more than simply a question of space, sites or pages; it is fundamentally concerned with links and motion.<sup>325</sup>

- Rob Shields

Vannevar Bush, then advisor to President Truman, is widely credited with conceiving in a crude fashion the World Wide Web. Mark Levene argues that the *memex* machine, outlined in 'As We May Think', displays many of the hallmarks of the interconnected network *par excellence*, the Web: a 'mechanised private file and library' linked by 'associative indexing' whereby 'any item may be caused at will to select immediately and automatically another'.<sup>326</sup> This navigation style was modelled by design on the cognitive patterns of the human brain, which 'operates by association'.<sup>327</sup>

Paul Virilio notes that the later development of the internet has its origins in military-based technology.<sup>328</sup> Many, including Virilio, have used this connection to mount studies of the internet's ongoing involvement in military-conflicts, coining or co-opting terms like 'infosphere' and 'virtuous war'<sup>329</sup> to articulate the complexities of a conflict scenario in which the 'user-interface' has taken precedence over face-to-face combat - a virtual, information-based form of war. I instead aim to look at how the organisation of information on the Web has influenced the organisation of certain War on Terror narratives, culminating in a close textual analysis of *Redacted*. Online, pattern recognition - identified in chapter four as an essential interpretive aid when digesting vast quantities of

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<sup>325</sup> Rob Shields, 'Hypertext Links: The Ethics of the Index and Its Space-Time Effects' in Herman and Suriss, *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p. 145

<sup>326</sup> Mark Levene, *An Introduction to Search Engines and Web Navigation* (Harrow: Addison Wesley, 2006), p. 2

<sup>327</sup> Vannevar Bush, 'As We May Think' *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945, pp. 47-61

<sup>328</sup> Paul Virilio, tr. Chris Turner, *Strategy of Deception* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 77

<sup>329</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*

information - has its functional equivalent in the form of search engines, used to navigate the vast stores of accessible information, with links premised on meaningful (and multiple) connections, as opposed to any single linear causality.

The global component of the Web will also be discussed, particularly its potential effect on the perception of space and distance. The Internet and World Wide Web have been privileged by numerous commentators as either facilitators of globalisation or metaphors for globalisation. Globalisation's deterritorialised 'flows' (to adopt Manuel Castell's terminology)<sup>330</sup> have been argued to diminish the centrality of the nation state in global geo-politics, with the Web argued to either support (as part of a telecommunication network that allows instantaneous information exchange over vast distances) or reflect (the flawed utopian understanding of the Web as post-national and borderless) this in its architecture. A global reach is clearly an aim of the Web (in that it has been proclaimed to be 'World Wide' since its birth) and a reality (in that it is used around the world, often to unite remote sources), but it is by no means democratic - inequalities in access, censorship, bandwidth etc create geographical disparities, for example. Essentially, geography still matters.<sup>331</sup> However, the way in which global space is experienced or understood *is*, I will argue, affected by digital navigation - in particular, the notion of distance. The way network plots express this will be examined in chapter six but first I want to unpack the manner in which information is arranged and experienced on the Web. Of particular interest is the way in which certain narratives have been influenced formally by the structural and aesthetic organisation of the hyperlink.

## 5.1 Mapping the Web

The term hypertext, coined in 1965 by Ted Nelson, referred to his understanding of a literature as a 'system of interconnected writings', in which associative links (for example, footnotes) refer to other connected writings, creating links that the reader must follow.<sup>332</sup> Janet H. Murray defines the hypertext as 'a set of documents of any kind (images, text, charts, tables, video clips) connected to

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<sup>330</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000)

<sup>331</sup> See: Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu, *Who Controls the Internet? Illusions of a Borderless World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) for a more in-depth study of this conclusion.

<sup>332</sup> Ted Nelson, *Literary Machines* (Sausalito, CA: Mindful Press, 1982)

one another by links',<sup>333</sup> while Mark Levene loosely defines the term as 'non-sequential writing, organised as a network of nodes and links'.<sup>334</sup> The World Wide Web, then, is the hypertext writ large - or, more accurately, it is a compilation of numerous hypertexts due to its non-homogenous nature. A web-crawl experiment conducted in 1999 by researchers from Alta Vista, Compaq and IBM that analysed two hundred million nodes and one and a half billion links revealed that:

Over seventy five percent of the time there is no directed path of links from one random web page to another. When such a path exists, its average distance is sixteen clicks, and when an undirected path exists (i.e. one allowing backward traversal of links) its average distance is only seven clicks.<sup>335</sup>

The hypertext, then, is not an unstructured array of infinite interconnections; the available connections are myriad, but limited, and, like the newspaper front page discussed in chapter four, certain 'routes' through the information are encouraged over others.<sup>336</sup>

The hyperlink is the possible pathway that leads from one node to another. However, despite the use of spatial metaphors (sites, pathways etc), the geography of the web is not easily comparable to physical geography.<sup>337</sup> Attempts to accurately 'map' the web are numerous and necessary incomplete;<sup>338</sup> Google, the most widely used Internet search engine, estimated the number of distinct web pages across the web to exceed one trillion in 2008, not including the 'deep web' - the information stored in databases and secure sites not directly accessible from a search engine but nonetheless

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<sup>333</sup> Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 55

<sup>334</sup> Levene, *An Introduction to Search Engines and Web Navigation*, p. 167

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 18-9

<sup>336</sup> It is important to distinguish between the Internet and the World Wide Web, as each has a separate and distinct meaning. The World Wide Web (the web) is the vast network of software navigated through search engines and the like, while the Internet is the physical infrastructure which manages this web. The technical elements of the internet need not concern us; only the organisational properties (and problems) of the web are relevant here.

<sup>337</sup> Hanhwe Kim and Stephen C. Hirtle, 'Spatial Metaphors and Disorientation in Hypertext Browsing' *Behaviour and Information Technology* 14.4 (1995), pp. 239-50

<sup>338</sup> See Lumeta Internet Mapping Project for examples. <http://www.lumeta.com/research/> accessed May 2011.

interconnected as part of the Web.<sup>339</sup> But scale is not the only limitation of attempts to map the Web. Since websites do not possess any physical dimensions (aside from the literal space of the servers on which they operate), any 'map' is misrepresentative. Visiting linked sites does not involve a 'journey' as such. Any two sites connected by a hyperlink are brought immediately into apparent proximity, and getting from screen A to screen B could require fifty different hyperlink clicks or a single one depending on the route taken.

The difficulty in mapping this structure stems from the spatial dimensions that are evoked by any cartographical representation. Space is suggested, but there is no greater journey involved in visiting sites from across the globe, or held in different databases, or on widely different subjects, than there is visiting a neighbour's blog page. Levene writes:

To map the web, a spatial model must be formulated, and although it is large in a physical sense, since it is spread out all over the world, it differs from a geographical map in several ways. In cyberspace, the notion of distance in the traditional sense is non-existent. Remotely distant physical sites may be just a few clicks away from each other in cyberspace, and one can often jump from one web site to another by a single click.<sup>340</sup>

So while space is not absent in the topology of the web, distance is.<sup>341</sup> I will return to this point in chapter seven to draw out certain similarities between the absence of distance in hyperlink-structured webs, and the editing together of disparate spaces in the global network narrative.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Jesse Alpert and Nissan Hijaj, 'We Knew the Web Was Big...' *The Official Google Blog* 25 July 2008, accessed June 2010. <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/07/we-knew-web-was-big.html>

<sup>340</sup> Levene, *An Introduction to Search Engines and Web Navigation*, p. 202

<sup>341</sup> Furthermore, inputting the URL (Uniform Resource Locator, the address used to retrieve a specific resource on the internet) or utilising a search engine or web portal means that the hyperlink chain can be broken to provide a more direct path to a required source, potentially bringing an even greater number of sites into immediate proximity.

<sup>342</sup> It is worth noting that the abolition of distance has been identified in other contexts as an effect of cinema more broadly. For example, the ability to bring faraway lands into the visual range of audiences in the West (as utilised by ethnographic filmmakers practically from the technology's inception), to the 'vision-at-a-distance' of the 'Kino-eye', as conceived by Dziga Vertov ('Kino-eye means the conquest of space, the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visual fact...') see:

Karl G. Heider, *Ethnographic Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006)

Dziga Vertov, trans. Kevin O'Brien, 'From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye' in Annette Michelson (ed.) *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 86

So despite the vast sprawl of the web, the proximate relationships between sites are never random - a hyperlink fixes a connection between two sites or two sections of a site, but the agency of the user dictates which links are followed, and the hyperlink itself will usually offer contextual information suggesting its destination site. Structurally, then, the web offers myriad proximate relationships between sites, but at the point of navigation these are traversed according to cognitive patterning logic, rather than being spatially or causally contiguous.

## 5.2 The hypertext novel

The link is the first significant new form of punctuation to emerge in centuries.<sup>343</sup>

- *Steven Johnson*

The hypertext novel embodies this hyperlink structure in its form, but on a much smaller scale than the networked World Wide Web. Hypertext novels are constructed from a number of screens, or nodes, that eschew the linearity of the conventional novel form for a non-linear structure that emphasises both connections (between screens) and fragmentation (by frustrating a totalising arch-narrative). The polycentric form of these novels has clear similarities to postmodernism's rejection of unified narratives, echoing Robert Stam's characterisation of the hypertext more broadly as 'fluid texts with multiple points of entry, as well as [an] openness to multiple temporalities and perspectives'.<sup>344</sup> But postmodernism alone does not sufficiently explain the particularities of the hypertext novels' fragmented plotting; there is also an emphasis on repetition and circularity that suggests that more is being expressed than a simple rejection of unified narrative.

The hypertext novel is written using computer-based programmes such as Storyspace and is read using an interface that mimics the hyperlink structure of the Web. *Victory Garden* by Stuart Moulthrop, is a non-causal, non-sequential narrative set during the first Gulf War, in which the reader navigates their way

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<sup>343</sup> Steven Johnson, *Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create and Communicate* (New York: Harper Edge, 1997), p. 110-1

<sup>344</sup> Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 325



through story nodes by clicking on hyperlinks. Its fragmented structure allows for and encourages multiple possible readings. The possible paths through the narrative maze are not entirely random or limitless, however, as each story screen only offers a few possible next steps, limiting the novel's possible configurations. An example from *Victory Garden* will better illustrate a typical screen in the hypertext novel:

Where Were You?

Where were you when the news came?

You might have been among the half million shipped out to Armageddon, in which case it was no news to you.

Or perhaps like the rest of us you got caught **looking**. Maybe it reached you on the air, down from the satellite, pulsing through the cable, all those **male faces** taut with excitement, with concern, with the rush of **the big story**. Did it catch you at your evening meal, a blast from decades past?

How did it make you feel -- scared, depressed, elated, unreal? When History unfolded around you, did you see it as a poison flower (fucked, like the man say, down to its eternal root), or did it seem to you a fantastic **firework**, some gorgeous portent of the skies? [hyperlinks for possible next steps underlined and in bold]<sup>345</sup>

Clicking on the '**looking**' link, for example, would lead to this node:

Thursday night, January 16, 1991. Here is what the war looks like so far:

Blowtorch flares from F-15 Strike Eagles burning above "a large airbase somewhere in Saudi Arabia"... Street maps of downtown Baghdad with an ID shot of Holliman, Arnett, or Shaw stuck on... Peter Jennings, automaton avunculus, looking like he could use a few minutes on the nod, which makes him seem almost human... Men in fatigues standing on hotel roofs trying to repeat the obvious while jets scream across the sky... Television as **Radio**: lots of reports coming in "Live on the Phone"... Gun camera footage from Libya a few years back: think of these shots as rushes... Ominous blue domes glowing against the night sky of Riyadh, architecture of the **Apocalypse** that's really just the roof of an indoor pool... The President reading his war poem, invoking FDR, JFK, even the Great Communicator...

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<sup>345</sup> Stuart Moulthrop, *Victory Garden* (Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems, 1992)

It's a familiar feast, all fragments and repetition stuck together with a paste of groundless spec. And of course it's what we don't see that counts.<sup>346</sup>

This second screen also suggests how the hyperlink structure is being used to manifest what Stuart Moulthrop seems to suggest is a particularly important Gulf War characteristic: like the war itself, the hyperlink structure builds a narrative that is 'all fragments and repetition', with some screens offering no further links and necessitating a return to the beginning or a 'back-tracking' through the screens to find a new path to explore. Even if a screen does not result in a dead-end, most do not offer as many fresh possible links as these two examples, so while the route taken varies from reader to reader, the possibilities are not infinite. That said, the back-tracking and repetition eventually yield to a through-path, suggesting a similar tension between a multitude of possible plots and a reiterated collective plot that grows more distinct with repetition, as that observed in the 9/11 narratives discussed in chapter three.

However, this is not merely a fragmented or complexly organised narrative that must be pieced back together - unlike, say, the dual plotting of *Memento* (Nolan, 2000), in which one sequence of events unfolds in reverse, while another sequence is seen in chronological order. This does not conform to conventional narrative structures, but can ultimately, retrospectively, be reorganised into a traditional cause-and-effect plot.<sup>347</sup> In the hypertext novel, working out a 'correct' order that maps the unfolding of the Gulf War to specific events in the protagonists' lives is not possible, due to the numerous paths that can be taken to bring them into contact. Multiple and equally valid narratives are possible. The longer the hypertext is read, the more central the role of repetition becomes - the endless convolutions that result from continually traversing the narrative labyrinth will repeat certain nodes and potentially overlook others.

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<sup>346</sup> *ibid*

<sup>347</sup> Proof that *Memento's* complex narrative organisation can be rearranged into a single 'correct' version is offered by a hidden extra feature on its DVD release entitled 'The Beginning of the End', which re-orders the scenes into linear, causal order. See: Stefano Ghislotti, 'Narrative Comprehension Made Difficult: Film Form and Mnemonic Devices in *Memento*' in Warren Buckland (ed.) *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), p. 90

The hypertext is, as Robert Stam notes, ‘ultimately about “linking” in a world where everything is potentially “next to” everything else’,<sup>348</sup> an arrangement navigated in the hypertext novel by the hyperlink structure discussed above, and in the World Wide Web itself by navigational tools including the hyperlink and the search engine. While opportunities for divergence are restricted to a limited number of hubs, there is an evocation of semantic freedom and reader/audience choice, but this freedom is mediated and partially ‘locked-in’ to pre-arranged patterns.

### 5.3 The hyperlink film

In her review of Don Roos’ *Happy Endings* (2005) - a multi-protagonist network film in the vein of near contemporaries like *Crash* (Haggis, 2004) and earlier examples such as the ensemble films of Robert Altman, Alissa Quart transposes the term ‘hypertext novel’ to film as ‘hyperlink cinema’.<sup>349</sup> The term is flawed in that cinema does not offer the same opportunities for interactivity, and so cannot be accurately said to emulate this fundamentally important feature of the hypertext novel;<sup>350</sup> however, if considered not as a navigational structure but as an aesthetic imitation of its associational connections, it does suggest the way that the multi-strand narrative form can undermine causality in favour of other meaningful relationships between events.

Features of the hyperlink film, according to Quart, include a multiplicity of plots within a single film, a flexibility with temporal structures, and an ‘irremediably relativist’, non-hierarchical relationship between the interconnected plotlines.<sup>351</sup>

Referring specifically to *Happy Endings*, Quart attests:

We are always one click away from a new life, a new story, and new meaning, all equally captivating but no better or worse than what we have just left behind.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Stam, *Film Theory*, p. 325

<sup>349</sup> Alissa Quart, ‘Networked: Dysfunctional Families, Reproductive Acts, and Multitasking Minds Make For Happy Endings’ *Film Comment*, 41.4 (2005) p. 48

<sup>350</sup> See: Peter Lunenfeld, ‘The Myths of Interactive Cinema’ in Dan Harries (ed.) *The New Media Book* (London: BFI, 2004), pp. 144-156

<sup>351</sup> Quart, ‘Networked’, p. 51

<sup>352</sup> *ibid* p. 51

This range of options, limited in the World Wide Web to a degree, and more severely curtailed by the hypertext novel, is difficult to reconcile with the linearity of cinematic projection, which necessarily fixes the filmic events in a set viewing order from which the viewer cannot deviate without willfully distorting the text (i.e. projecting reels out of order or playing DVD chapters in the wrong order). Unlike the portmanteau anthology text, removing or altering the order of sections would disrupt their individual meaning. However, Quart suggests another, less problematic characteristic of the hyperlink film: their engagement of the audience's contemporary 'information-processing proclivities'.<sup>353</sup> The hyperlink film depends upon the viewer utilising similar cognitive abilities as those necessary to surf the internet's myriad data, without the experiences being directly analogous. In the hyperlink film, the cognitive activities help the viewer understand what is shown, whereas in the Web or the hypertext novel, it is an active process of navigation. The meaning of 'hyperlink' in 'hyperlink film', then, is not one of user-agency or navigation, but one of interpretation and dialogism. The viewer of *Happy Endings* cannot affect the route in the manner possible in the hypertext novel, but the term still provides insight into the relative meaning that is suggested between sub-plots. The hyperlink film is then, perhaps, motivated not be a postmodernist evasion of a unified narrative, nor an escape from the rigidity of pre-existing narrative forms, but an evocation of contemporary technologies that alter cognition and promise omniscience. Like the conspiracy theorist, the viewer of such texts is presented with multiple events and characters, and is encouraged to spot the patterns that link them together.

However, I would argue that Quart's insistence on multiple, disparate-but-linked plots as integral to the hyperlink cinema structure is too restrictive. The term is uncritically applied as a synonym for multi-strand network plots more generally. If it is to have a more precise and useful meaning, it is necessary to identify where it differs from or adds nuance to the multi-strand plot more generally. For this reason I will offer a reading of *Redacted* as hyperlink text, rather than a film like *Syriana* (which was described as such by influential US film critic Roger

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid p. 48

Ebert and which I will subject to analysis in the next chapter).<sup>354</sup> *Redacted* does not offer multiple interconnected storylines, but does use a fragmented structure and contrasting aesthetics to narrate its central plot from a variety of perspectives, echoing the polyvocal potential of the hyperlink text (as well as the self-consciousness of modernism). Its segmented structure evokes a diffuse point-of-view in-keeping with the multi-storyline characteristic of the War on Terror more generally; just as the multiple 9/11 storylines essentially coalesced around a rhetorically unified subject - the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 - *Redacted* narrates its plot through a refracting prism of possible perspectives, suggesting a diverse polyvocal response to a single event.

#### 5.4 Case Study: *Redacted*

*Redacted* was directed by Brian De Palma and financed by the entrepreneur Mark Cuban, billionaire owner of basketball team the Dallas Mavericks. The film's filmanthropist backer and jargon-based title fits the trend identified earlier regarding the investigative exposé titling of a number of War on Terror texts. The term 'redaction' refers to the removal of information, in this case the censorship of official military reports and the supposed covering up of criminal acts by US soldiers serving in Iraq. The imperative to 'restore' the hidden truth has clear parallels with the paranoid aesthetic discussed in chapter four, while the fragmented, mosaic-like structure of its narrative demonstrates a particularly emphatic hyperlink organisation, one which is foregrounded in the text itself. In an interview given at the time of the film's release, De Palma described how observing his daughters' online habits provided the impetus for the film's conceptualisation, motivating its distinctive aesthetic:

They look at little pieces of this and little pieces of that” he explained, “and that’s how they get their information.”<sup>355</sup>

The result, in the words of Peter Debruge is a ‘conceptual statement about the way sceptical twenty-first century audiences gather information to form their

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<sup>354</sup> Roger Ebert, 'Syriana', *Chicago Sun Times*, 09 Dec. 2005, accessed May 2011. <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051208/REVIEWS/51130002/1023>

<sup>355</sup> Peter Debruge, 'More Scripts Take Non-Linear Route' *Variety*, 07 Dec. 2007, accessed May 2008. <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117977363.html?categoryid=13&cs=1>

own narratives'.<sup>356</sup> Stephanie Zacharek phrases a similar observation more broadly, tagging the film 'a metaphor for the struggle to make sense out of chaos'.<sup>357</sup>

The film is divided into a series of scenes between which causal connections and chronological development can be assumed but not always easily confirmed. When pieced together, the plot is relatively simple: a group of soldiers stationed at a checkpoint in Samarra voice doubts over their mission and display growing fears that insurgents, potentially undetected amongst the Iraqi people who pass through the checkpoint everyday, will attack with IEDs (improvised explosive devices) - fears realised when an explosive kills their Sergeant during a routine patrol. Two of the soldiers orchestrate an attack on a local household, ostensibly to exact revenge, though there is no suggestion that anyone in the family had any connection to the killing. They rape the daughter and murder the entire family. This is officially blamed on Shiite militia, though there is scepticism towards this reported version of events from both the extended family and local news reporters. An inquiry is conducted, the results of which are heavily redacted and kept classified, while one soldier, a budding filmmaker who recorded the atrocity as part of an ongoing film project designed to get him into film school when his tour of duty concludes, is abducted and beheaded by Iraqi insurgents in a further layer of reprisal.<sup>358</sup>

Structurally, this plot is constructed from thirty-four segments of sixteen different aesthetic types: the aforementioned war diary by Angel Salazar; *Barrage*, a French art-house documentary; Arabic news (though not explicitly the case, it is presumably modelled on al-Jazeera); embedded video on a Islamist fundamentalist website; a CCTV security camera on the US military base camp; an embedded European journalist's report on a US raid; a video message from the wife of one of the soldiers uploaded to 'Just a Soldier's Wife', a blog presumably for spouses to leave messages for loved ones in the forces; the

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<sup>356</sup> *ibid*

<sup>357</sup> Stephanie Zacharek, 'Redacted' *Salon*, 16 Nov. 2007, accessed May 2008. <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2007/11/16/redacted/21/02/08>

<sup>358</sup> There are practical advantages to including a filmmaker amongst the dramatis personae, as it allows for another filmed source in the patchwork structure, one that depicts events that the other sources cannot depict without stretching the plot's feasibility. Further resonances of the hand-held, self-documenting protagonist will be discussed in chapters nine and ten.

recorded psychological evaluation of Angel Salazar; a video call between one soldier and his father; a CEN news report; an internet clip of the decapitation of Salazar; a YouTube-style video-sharing site; the recorded criminal investigation of Corporal McCoy; the recorded depositions of the two soldiers primarily responsible for the massacre (with rostrum shots of the redacted documents); a home video of McCoy and his wife; and, finally, a montage of (mostly) genuine photographs of dead and injured bodies. Some segment styles appear only once (such as the 'Just a Soldier's Wife' blog and the two-way video conversation), while others are returned to repeatedly (the War Diary and *Barrage*, for example). Each is easily identifiable, sometimes through on-screen captioning or narrative content, but usually through coding of the image and sound to evoke a variety of aesthetic conventions. For example, segments from Salazar's War Diary are filmed as if with a hand-held camera, each opening and closing with crude digital editing effects - a 'shattering' of the image; sideways wipe accompanied by a fake 'whoosh' sound; a whirlpool effect spinning the image out of focus and so on. Security footage has a grainy texture and is black and white, shot from a fixed, raised vantage point that occasionally means that the 'action' is obscured; the video call divides the screen in two, showing both parties in a low-resolution image with slight delays between picture and sound to suggest an unreliable satellite link over a great distance; while *Barrage* is shot in high-resolution expensive film stock and accompanied by an incessant classical score.

Other segments are more obviously coded to resemble a particular media source: the embedded journalist report adopts the shaky composure of on-the-hoof reportage, shot with the familiar green hue of the camera's night-vision mode; the CEN news report has the requisite professional, studio-bound steadiness, the appropriate props (news desk, suited anchor etc) and clear, bright lighting; while the YouTube segments occupy only a fraction of the shot, the majority of the image given over to convincing imitations of the comments, task bars and advertising that frame videos watched through such video-sharing platforms (*figure 5.1*).



Figure: 5.1: YouTube-style segment in *Redacted*

Such fidelity to media verisimilitude echoes Vincent DiGirolamo's observation that evoking authenticity in film isn't simply a matter of resembling the event being depicted, but resembling *other films about the event*.<sup>359</sup> *Redacted* echoes the aesthetics of the representational media through which we currently experience such 'reality' - which, as chapter one argued, is for the vast majority indirect and mediated through, amongst others, file sharing sites like YouTube or dedicated military weblogs such as Milblogging.com.

This aesthetic range foregrounds the piecemeal accumulation of information observed by De Palma in his daughter's surfing behaviour, while the editing together of such distinctive and divergent contextual frames evokes the wider web of informational sources available to the individual attempting to navigate their way towards the 'Truth'. The ordering of these segments initially appears strictly chronological - the plot moves sequentially from the patrol, to the death of Sergeant, to the rape/murder, to the investigation. The security camera footage and deposition videos have time/date marker watermarks, confirming their chronological arrangement. However, like the hypertext novels, other scenes resist easy insertion into a coherent chronology, suggesting that the structural logic of *Redacted* is closer to the associational meaning of the hyperlink, rather than the causal meaning of conventional narrative forms. This

<sup>359</sup> Vincent DiGirolamo, 'Such, Such Were the B'Hoys...' *Radical History Review*, 90 (2004), pp. 132-141



is clearest when looking at the scenes showing Corporal McCoy's (Rob Devaney) growing sense of guilt and his decision to expose the massacre. In this way, interactivity is represented, even if it cannot be literally performed.

During the rape and murder, McCoy is shown first actively trying to prevent Flake (Patrick Carroll) and Rush (Daniel Stewart Sherman) from carrying out their violent intentions, before weakly acquiescing. The video call to his father is the first sign of the mental turmoil this decision has thrown him into, though he is seemingly dissuaded from reporting on his fellow soldiers by his father, who pointedly remarks 'we don't need another Abu Ghraib'. McCoy's next appearance is only inferred - in the You-Tube clip in which a disguised whistleblower exposes the crime, though keeps most of the specifics vague to avoid detection. The audience has no way of confirming it is McCoy, as the individual's face is obscured and their voice digitally altered, but assumes so due to his previous expression of guilt. The frame surrounding this embedded clip blurs out much of the surrounding text, so unlike the security camera footage, the exact time and date is not discernable, but the past tense phrasing - 'when I was stationed in the Middle East...' - identifies the scene as occurring after the tour of duty has concluded. However, the following scene, captioned 'The criminal investigation of Cpl. McCoy 08/22/06', is again dated, positioning it only two months after the attacks. The video deposition dates - the second and third of September - similarly conform to the chronology, but as these scenes take place on the military base in Samarra, it is difficult to know what to make of the YouTube scene. A further complication occurs at the very end of the film, when the CEN report, placed in-between the 'criminal investigation' segment and the depositions, reports on the story, even naming Flake as the focus of the investigation.

In the scene immediately following the depositions - another YouTube-emulating segment in which a young angry girl rants about 'just' punishment for Flake (allowing the girl's surviving family to torture him to death) while drawing comparison with the My Lai massacre in Vietnam - confirms that the story has, at least partially, been made public. Which makes the penultimate segment - the home video of McCoy and his wife celebrating his safe return in a bar with friends who insist he share 'a war story', prompting a tearful breakdown and confession which is ignored by the bar patrons, who applaud his 'heroism' -

difficult to comprehend. There are two possibilities: one in which the whistleblower video occurs chronologically after the home video; the other in which the time line is irreconcilable. Neither reading can be confirmed with any degree of certainty. Whether this discrepancy disturbs the chronology or destroys it entirely, it foregrounds a more general element of the film's structure.

Throughout the film, the sharp disruptions to spatial unity caused by each edit deny cohesiveness and emphasise distancing techniques familiar from other forms of political cinema: for example, the multiple diegesis and narrative intransitivity recalls Peter Wollen's cardinal virtues of counter cinema.<sup>360</sup> With every edit, the spectator must reorient themselves in time and space, and while sometimes the ordering of scenes is made clear (with the date watermarks, for example), at other times it is not. The film offers no coherent viewpoint in time or space - who is assembling these sources? When? - and once this abstraction is understood, other scenes in the film invite scrutiny. For example, *Barrage* (the French documentary), appears to be being shot concurrently with Salazar's war diary, but aside from one reference by Salazar to Flake's shooting of a pregnant woman whose car fails to stop at the checkpoint, an incident featured in the preceding *Barrage* segment, there is no way to confirm that these events are simultaneously unfolding - the documentary film crew are not referred to by the soldiers in any of the other segments, nor are they caught on camera in Salazar's war diary. *Barrage*, then, could be seen as representational, rather than part of the narrative: it evokes the constant tensions experienced by soldiers manning checkpoints such as the one at which McCoy, Salazar and Flake are stationed, without specifically showing events that are concurrent with the other segments. This has precedent in news broadcasting, in the way that stock images are reused to illustrate multiple stories, such as Katy Parry's example of photographs of Iraqi soldiers surrendering in 1991 being used in the *Daily Mail* to

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<sup>360</sup> Peter Wollen, 'Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent D'est*' in Peter Wollen, *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 79-91

illustrate reports of deserting Iraqi troops in the early stage of the 2003 invasion.<sup>361</sup>

It also, more pertinently, echoes the abstract nature of the hypertext novel, where certain screens are summoned by cognitive association rather than causal progression and subsequently cannot be fixed in time or space. The ‘space’ in which these *Barrage* segments occur is not disputed in *Redacted* - they are situated in the shared space of the checkpoint - but, I would argue their chronological position *is* disputable. Furthermore, the repetition inherent in reading the hypertext novel is echoed in these scenes by the recurring score that accompanies each *Barrage* segment, which mocks the pomposity of empty artistry while emphasising repetition: both the repetitiveness of daily life for the soldiers, and the repetitiveness of the segments themselves. Furthermore, as a classical piece of music, a degree of timelessness is suggested, arguably supporting a reading that connects the scenes through cognitive association (*Barrage* presents ‘a day in the life of a soldier’, which provides background information, if not quite justification, for their subsequent callousness) rather than causality.

A final characteristic of the hypertext novel is instructive in this reading of *Redacted*. Sometimes, the hyperlinks offered do not link to other sections of the hypertext novel, but to outside sources - excursions into the wider web. The diegesis is opened up to the ‘real’ or secondary texts outside its diegesis, for any number of possible readings and creating any number of possible effects: for example, supporting the narrative’s verisimilitude through allusion to non-fictions; or to suggest connections to theory, such as the node in *Victory Garden* which consists only of an extended quote from Donna Haraway’s ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ that emphasises the notion that ‘we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system’, a belief that clearly informs the structure of the hypertext novel.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Katy Parry, ‘“Our Disgust Will Make Us Stronger”: UK Press Representations of PoWs in the 2003 Iraq War’ in Claudia Alvares (ed.) *Representing Culture: Essays on Identity, Visuality and Technology* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 86-7

<sup>362</sup> Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 161

The final segment of *Redacted* is the aforementioned montage of actual photographs showing men, women and children killed during the War on Terror, which are introduced as 'Collateral Damage'. Or at least that is the insinuation: Susan Sontag would note there is little that can be unequivocally stated about images which are neither contextualised nor captioned;<sup>363</sup> although, as Judith Butler addresses in her response to Sontag,

Even the most transparent of documentary images is framed, and framed for a purpose, carrying that purpose within its frame and implementing that purpose through the frame. If we take such a purpose to be *interpretive*, then it would appear that the photograph still interprets the reality that it registers... After all, the photograph does not merely refer to the acts of atrocity but also builds and confirms these acts for those who might name them as such.<sup>364</sup>

A disagreement between producer Eamonn Bowles and De Palma allows the photographs' authenticity to be visually identifiable; much to De Palma's chagrin, Bowles cited 'untenable' legal and ethical problems with showing images of the dead Iraqis, and so, in a somewhat ironic move, redacted the montage to partially obscure their faces.<sup>365</sup> Thus, when the final photograph in the sequence is shown - a staged, but disturbingly believable, shot of the actress who played the raped and murdered victim Farah (Zahra Zubaidi), lying in grotesque mortis - the lack of censorship exposes the illusion, making clear the fakery and recasting the others in a more authentically 'real' light. This final transgression of the film's diegesis and style - shifting from fictionalised performance to directly inserted (though manipulated) images of the real-world - ends the film with a final array of links, ones that centrifugally point outwards to the wider political issues, rather than centripetally back in on the film itself. The photographs have no accompanying captioning, and it would not be surprising if some were images from previous acts of violence, unrelated to the presence of US troops in Iraq in 2006. But confirming this suspicion is not necessary: by including these images, ungrounded as they are in verifiable time or space, the film confirms its associative arrangement.

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<sup>363</sup> Sontag, 2003

<sup>364</sup> Judith Butler, 'Photography, War, Outrage', *PMLA*, 120(3), p. 824

<sup>365</sup> Christine Kearney, 'Director De Palma Disturbed Over Iraq Film Edit' *Reuters*, 19 Oct. 2007, accessed May 2010. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN1846489220071019>

## 5.5 Conclusion

The twenty-first century War on Terror is the first Internet war.<sup>366</sup>

- *Richard Stengel*

Ken Provencher writes of *Redacted*:

Viewers acquainted with Iraq War documentaries, soldier's camcorder footage, milblogs, YouTube, Al Jazeera, Sky News and Jihadis' websites are in a position to confirm just how well *Redacted* has simulated those forms... What is missing from most of those sites, however, is a critical context; there is always the sense that no matter how spectacular or passionate the on-screen images and words, they represent only a fragment of truth. *Redacted* is just as fragmented and frustrating: instead of filtering the morass of the Iraq War through the mono-aural voice of pure documentary, it is multi-vocal and multi-visual - the impression of truth at twenty-four points of view a second.<sup>367</sup>

It is this impression of polyphony and the connecting principle between segments that most closely resembles the hyperlink and hypertext structures discussed above. As Provencher observes, the film's fragmentation frustrates attempts to reconcile its sources into a singular narrative voice; in evoking a diffuse media environment of partial insights and conflicting opinion, *Redacted* emulates a broad information network of news channels, blogs, video sites and more. Yet this is contained within and restricted by the feature film format, the film's emphatic anti-war agenda only *styled* as if the product of multiple sources or threads.

In *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet H. Murray offers a prior example of one medium emulating another:

Decades before the invention of the motion picture camera, the prose fiction of the nineteenth century began to experiment with filmic techniques. We can catch glimpses of the coming cinema in Emily Bronte's complex use of flashback, in Dickens' cross-cutting between intersecting stories, and in Tolstoy's battlefield panoramas that dissolve into close-up vignettes of individual soldiers. Though still

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<sup>366</sup> Richard Stengel, 'The First Internet War' *Time*, 25 Oct. 2001, accessed May 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,181350,00.html>

<sup>367</sup> Ken Provencher, '*Redacted's* Double Vision' *Film Quarterly*, 62.1 (2008), pp. 32-38

bound to the printed page, storytellers were already striving toward juxtapositions that were easier to manage with images than with words.<sup>368</sup>

The influence of hyperlinks, the Internet and the World Wide Web on cinema seems to present a similar process: globalisation as filtered through War on Terror discourse seems too complex a subject to convey using existing cinematic forms, requiring a new means of organising and understanding multiple plots. ‘The Victorians had writers like Dickens to ease them through the technological revolutions of the industrial age’ Steven Johnson writes, ‘writers who built novelistic maps of the threatening new territory and the social relations it produced’. He argues that the interface - rather than the novel - is the modern equivalent, offering a structural map or model of social relations.<sup>369</sup> In a similar vein, Lev Manovich posits the database as ‘the key form of cultural expression of... the computer age’ - a collection of ‘individual items, with every item possessing the same significance as any other’.<sup>370</sup> While Manovich’s database structure dispenses with narrative entirely (‘database and narrative are natural enemies’, as he puts it)<sup>371</sup> it is possible to see traces of its non-sequential organisation in the examples discussed in this chapter, from hypertext novels to hyperlink cinema.

Like the *Commission Report*’s attempts to convey multiple simultaneous plots in prose, *Redacted* draws comparison with the hyperlink’s structuring of the World Wide Web in its multiple perspectives and the hidden complexity of the connecting principles between them. Its resulting organisation is used to narrate a complex event for which a more straightforward structure would have been insufficient. Richard Stengel observed of the War on Terror, shortly following the invasion of Afghanistan:

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<sup>368</sup> Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, p. 29. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin’s theory of remediation proposes an alternative relationship between different media, emphasising continuities to suggest that every new media consciously responds to those that precede it, identifying a mutual process of reform and refashioning. See: Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999)

<sup>369</sup> Johnson, *Interface Culture*, pp. 19-20

<sup>370</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 218

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225

This war has so many strands and there are so many things going on at once, it defies more linear mediums like print and television. The web is infinite in its depth and its breadth.<sup>372</sup>

In *Redacted*, the War on Terror is represented by a narrative structure that denies a singular source and position (regardless of the filmmaker's own didactic politics, at a structural level, the film suggests multiple positions). The connections between segments emphasise association and patterns over comprehensible and reconcilable causality. The War on Terror is thereby narrated through an appropriate structural format. It is worth stressing that this form is not reserved solely for War on Terror narratives; other subjects and stories can be narrated in similar ways. However, I have argued that, for a number of reasons (the virtual component of modern warfare, the associational rhetoric of the War on Terror metaframe), the navigation of networks via hyperlinks is particularly suited to transcoding the particular characteristics of the War on Terror, such as multiplicity and interconnectedness.

As stated previously, Quart's definition of hyperlink cinema is significantly broader than the one I have used, identifying multiple plots as a cornerstone feature. It is this broader category of films that the next chapter will address. While I have argued that a film like *Redacted* is a more useful example of the hyperlink model in film due to its associational structure and irreconcilable chronology, multi-strand network narratives also possess certain structural features that make them open to associational, pattern-based interpretation. Of course, the multi-strand network structure is not new, nor unique to War on Terror narratives. It has, however, acquired fresh inflections in the last decade - the most notable of which I have termed the cinematic Global Network Narrative.

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<sup>372</sup> Stengel, 'The First Internet War'

## 6 The Global Network Narrative: 'Web' as organisational structure

It might be said of Americans that, though they possess space, they do not have a sense of distance.<sup>373</sup>

- *Jean Baudrillard*

War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.<sup>374</sup>

- *Ambrose Bierce*

The previous chapter argued for a more specific meaning for the term 'hyperlink cinema', which has elsewhere been uncritically applied to any film narrative with multiple plot-lines. If the term was to have any critical weight, it had to more closely acknowledge its origins, by highlighting the associations of the hyperlink itself: non-linear, associational, non-spatial links that evoke a spatial network of nodes and paths. This chapter will identify a related style of narrative organisation which has been utilised in the telling of War on Terror stories; one in which non-linearity is not the key trait (though it is sometimes utilised), but spatially-distanced protagonists located in different places across the globe. I will describe such films as Global Network Narratives (hereafter, GNN), but this is not a simple exercise in nomenclature: I will link this relatively new narrative structure to the particular difficulties in narrating the War on Terror, drawing examples from *Babel* and *Syriana* amongst others. The GNN, I will argue, cinematically transcodes many of the tendencies that inform the War on Terror's rhetoric, as well as the multi-plot interconnections discussed in the previous chapter. I hope to demonstrate how the associational-connections of the hyperlink inform the way plots in the GNN are interlinked, with moments of

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<sup>373</sup> Jean Baudrillard, tr. Chris Turner, *Cool Memories 2: 1987-1990* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 44

<sup>374</sup> Quoted in Denis Cosgrove, 'Landscape and Global Vision' in Dianne Suzette Harris, D. Fairchild Ruggles (eds.) *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007) p. 97



more direct interaction between protagonists giving dramatic shape to the tele-influence that characterises the global networks of contemporary geo-politics.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that other texts utilise similar structures and characteristics (intensively detailed plots; multiple objects (or angles) of inquiry) without containing overt connections to the War on Terror in their content: for example, *Traffic* (Soderburgh, 2000), in which the drugs trade is dramatised at multiple levels (production, distribution, prosecution, use) using characters in multiple locations, and *Mammoth* (Moodysson, 2009), which locates its plots in the Philippines, Thailand and the US, dramatising issues related to migrant labour and the inequality of international trade. Perhaps it is therefore more consistently accurate to consider the use of multiple, global plots as transcoding issues of globalisation more broadly. If this broader relationship is accepted, then the War on Terror, as the US's definitive geo-political narrative of the last decade, and those narratives directly relating to aspects of it, arguably constitute the most prominent iteration of this congruency, with the War on Terror metaframe enveloping most popular attempts to survey the effects of globalisation more broadly.

## 6.1 Multi-strand narratives

The multi-strand narrative in its simplest guise consists of multiple plotlines which are revealed to be connected in some way. Sometimes this connection is immediately apparent, other times it is revealed gradually. *Grand Hotel* stars Greta Garbo, Wallace Beery, Joan Crawford, John Barrymore and Lionel Barrymore, as, respectively, a fading ballerina, a beleaguered businessman, a lovelorn typist, a cash-strapped Baron and a neurotic hypochondriac, whose storylines frequently overlap in a kind of network of acquaintances. The film's title indicates the spatial parameters of these plots, with the titular establishment housing all the characters, bringing them into regular contact with one another. Robert Altman's celebrated ensemble films similarly contain multiple plots within a restricted location: for example, *Nashville's* (1975) country music denizens; the loosely related lives of *Short Cuts'* (1993) Angelinos; up to the country-house politics of *Gosford Park* (2001). Other examples of this use of a restricted locale upon which multiple plots are mapped include *Magnolia* (Anderson, 1999) (which, like *Short Cuts*, takes place in LA); the

London-set protagonists of *Love Actually* (Curtis, 2003); and the violent interactions of those resident in *Sin City* (Rodriguez, Miller, Tarantino, 2005)'s titular vice-ridden metropolis.

Charles Ramirez Berg names this particular type of multi-strand narrative the Polyphonic Plot, marked by multiple protagonists occupying a single location. Berg's taxonomy identifies multiple other iterations of the multi-strand narrative: the Hub and Spoke Plot, in which a specific repeated event is returned to and shown to affect otherwise separate storylines in turn (for example, *11:14* (Marcks, 2003), *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001) or *Go* (Liman, 1999)); the Daisy Chain Plot, typified by *Slacker* (Linklater, 1990) and *The Red Violin* (Girard, 1998), in which there is no central protagonist, but instead a series of plots presented one at a time in a continuous chain; and the Repeated Event Plot, in which a single action is seen from multiple perspectives - *Rashomon* (Kurasawa, 1950) is the obvious example though the form has been more recently seen in *One Night at McCool's* (Zwart, 2001) and *Last Days* (Van Sant, 2005).<sup>375</sup>

Geoff King suggests an industrial motive for the growing popularity of complicated narrative structures, arguing that the American independent feature often utilises novelty in order to differentiate itself in a market crowded with more aggressively promoted studio features.<sup>376</sup> Michael Z. Newman partly agrees, claiming that 'complexity of storytelling in the past two decades of American film is a function in large part of the increasing prominence of the independent cinema movement'.<sup>377</sup> However, such complexity is increasingly utilised in studio features such as the 'Repeated Event Plot' *Vantage Point* (Travis, 2008) - which narrates the apparent assassination of the US President, a terrorist bombing, and an attack on a nearby hotel, all of which occur near-simultaneously - suggesting that product differentiation in the independent sector is only one possible factor.

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<sup>375</sup> Charles Ramirez Berg, 'A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots in Recent Films: Classifying the 'Tarantino Effect' *Film Criticism*, 31.1-2 (2006), pp. 5-61

<sup>376</sup> Geoff King, *American Independent Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 59-60

<sup>377</sup> Michael Z. Newman, 'Character and Complexity in American Independent Cinema: *21 Grams* and *Passion Fish*' in *Film Criticism*, 31.1-2 (2006), p. 89

King offers further explanations, including a commitment to a kind of verisimilitude (he suggests that the multi-strand narrative comes ‘at least relatively closer to the dense complexity of real life’),<sup>378</sup> or the prevalence of certain themes, such as loneliness and alienation:

Characters are separated from one another in their lives, in many instances, as are the narrative components they inhabit. Where narrative strands are brought together, relationships can be established in some cases... if not in others.<sup>379</sup>

King identifies this correlation between thematic content and narrative design in *Short Cuts*, *Happiness* (Solondz, 1998) and *Magnolia*, but to this list could be added *Crash*, *Happy Endings* and *The Ice Storm* (Lee, 1997) amongst others. The latter explanations have the advantage of portability across different filmmaking practices, rather than being unconvincingly identified as specifically the reserve of ‘independent’ film production.

Berg also suggests a number of factors relating to the multi-plot narrative’s popularity, many of which chime with the preceding chapters: ‘the fragmenting postmodern condition and its revolt against master narratives’; ‘the branched experience of surfing the net’ and ‘hypertext linking that allows users to create a personalised sequence of disparate types of artefacts that might include text, image, video and sound’.<sup>380</sup> Along with the conspiracy culture discussed in chapter four, these elements have already been argued as indicative of the way the War on Terror’s spatial organisation effects causality, and will be elaborated upon further in the *Syriana* case study.

Finally, Ben Dickinson suggests that such narratives are inherently suited to politically-minded plots, comparing *Cradle Will Rock* (Robbins, 1999), a multi-strand narrative involving union strikes, artistic censorship and the McCarthy witch hunts, and *The Last Samurai* (Zwick, 2003), a mono-plotted film about an American soldier finding redemption in events loosely based on the samurai’s Satsuma Rebellion in the 1870s. In *Cradle Will Rock*:

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<sup>378</sup> King, *American Independent Cinema*, pp. 90-1

<sup>379</sup> King, *American Independent Cinema*, p. 91

<sup>380</sup> Berg, ‘A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots in Recent Films’, pp. 6-7

The consequences of individual action are always shown to be social, and narrative is shown to be the product of decisions by individuals and organisations. Whereas Captain Algren's choice to join the samurai ultimately only makes a difference to him... in *Cradle Will Rock* a personal decision can affect countless others and each effect is shown onscreen.<sup>381</sup>

By this understanding, the multi-strand narrative is generally premised on cause-and-effect, but one in which both causes and effects are multiple and diffuse. The structure of *Cradle Will Rock* expresses the broad social effects engendered by individual and group actions in a way that a narrative centred on a sole protagonist cannot. This complex causality is certainly suggested in films like *Babel* and *Syriana*, with the added complexity of plots taking place at different locations across the globe.

## 6.2 The GNN Effect: The Global Network Narrative

Two hundred years ago Oliver Goldsmith said that if every time a man fired a gun in England, someone was killed in China, we should never hear of it and no one would bother very much about it. All that is changed. We should hear about that murdered Chinaman almost at once... There has been a complete revolution in our relation to distances... Our interests and our activities interpenetrate more and more. We are all consciously or unconsciously adapting ourselves to a single common world.<sup>382</sup>

- H.G. Wells, 1938

In the Global Network Narrative, a number of largely separate stories are shown to be connected. The key difference between the GNN and the more broadly defined multi-strand narrative structure is scale: the stage on which they take place is notably larger than the likes of *Cradle Will Rock*. For example, *Babel* has four main plotlines: the shooting of an American tourist in Morocco that sparks an international diplomatic row; the two children responsible for the shooting - a non-malicious accident - trying to avoid arrest; a Mexican nanny who runs into problems at the Mexican/American border; and a deaf Japanese girl coming to terms with the death of her mother and the terrors of dating. By the

<sup>381</sup> Ben Dickinson, *Hollywood's New Radicalism: War, Globalisation and the Movies From Reagan to George W. Bush* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 184

<sup>382</sup> H.G. Wells, *The World Brain* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1938), p. 27-8

end, connections are drawn between all the plots: the Mexican nanny works for the American tourist, while the Japanese girl's father gifted the gun used in the shooting to his guide (the shooters' father) when on a hunting trip.

In Berg's Polyphonic Plot category, single locations - as specific as a single hotel or country house, or as vast as a city like Los Angeles or London - were key to ensuring coincidental interactions between characters; essentially, characters had to meet if their otherwise separate plots were to link up. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his analysis of Greek romance, writes:

In any meeting the temporal marker ('at one and the same time') is inseparable from the spatial maker ('in one and the same place').<sup>383</sup>

The 'inseparable unity of time and space markers', necessary for a meeting to take place, is integral to the Polyphonic Plot structure. By restricting plots spatially, the opportunities for time-space intersections are maximised.

In *Babel*, however, subjects are not spatially proximate; the network evoked is more complex. Connections between characters no longer depend upon the inseparability of the temporal and spatial markers; the intersection of two plotlines occurs at a distance. The intersection of the plots dramatises not coincidence and proximate relations, but the interlocked global relations of the twenty-first century, in which advances in technology have created a 'factitious topology in which all the surfaces of the globe are directly present to one another',<sup>384</sup> a structure reminiscent of the hyperlink navigation of the World Wide Web. Furthermore, by shifting the locus of connection from chance to intricate web, the GNN echoes the conspiracy culture discussed in chapter five; the expectation on the part of the audience is that, even if not immediately apparent, connections will be revealed that are to some degree causal. While the characters are indeed revealed to all be connected to the shooting, the narrative is not a Hub and Spoke-style plot of the type identified by Berg: the Japanese-based plot is connected to the others only tenuously, with Chieko Wataya (Rinko Kikuchi)'s grief unaffected by the events in Morocco - it brings her into contact with the young policeman she propositions, but otherwise the

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<sup>383</sup> Mihail Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Michael Emerson and Michael Holquist *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 97

<sup>384</sup> Virilio, *War and Cinema*, p. 46

incidents are not causally-linked in any simple way. Yet their proximate positioning in the narrative suggests the existence of meaningful relationships.

Stanley Milgram's small-world hypothesis, popularly referred to as the 'six-degrees of separation' that links any two individuals on the planet,<sup>385</sup> is the defining paradigm, both in the GNN and frequently more generally in discussions of global connectivity.<sup>386</sup> 'The phrase "small world"', Milgram co-wrote with Jeffrey Travers, 'suggests that social networks are in some sense tightly woven, full of unexpected strands linking individuals seemingly far removed from one another in physical or social space'.<sup>387</sup> Not all links are direct but there is assumed to be a series of intermediaries, who together form an associative chain connecting one individual to another.<sup>388</sup> This belief in a mappable route of connections between any two individuals may be factually disputable, but as a rhetorical framework it evokes the complexities of an interconnected globe in a schematic way that, like the conspiracy culture discussed in four, can offer a degree of comfort. The small-world hypothesis reassures by positing order and structure as antidotal to chaos and Babelic cacophony. Moreover, it is premised upon stressing commonalities over difference, an emphasis that, like the hyperlink-based navigational system of the World Wide Web, has a bearing on its conceptualisation of space, as will be explored shortly.

Attempting to map *Syriana's* convoluted web of intersecting plots, intertwined through both causality and chance, will make these points clearer. There are four main plots in *Syriana*, with eight characters whose mobility and roles bring them into contact (directly or at a distance) with one another: Bennett Holiday (Jeffrey Wright), Bob Barnes (George Clooney), Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon), Prince Nasir Al-Subaai (Alexander Siddig), Dean Whiting (Christopher Plummer), Jimmy Pope (Chris Cooper), Wasim Khan (Mazhar Munir) and Prince Meshal Al-Subaai (Akbar Kurtha). Holiday, an attorney, investigates the possible

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<sup>385</sup> Stanley Milgram, 'The Small World Problem' *Psychology Today* Vol. 2 (1967), pp. 60-67

<sup>386</sup> For example, see Mark Lynas's ecological study *Six Degrees: Our Future On A Hotter Planet* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), which self-consciously echoes Milgram to suggest how the need to halt global warming before our planet's temperature increases by the six degrees necessary to cause extinction-level changes necessarily implicates every one of Earth's inhabitants.

<sup>387</sup> Jeffrey Travers and Stanley Milgram, 'An Experimental Study of the Small-World Problem' *Sociometry* 32.4, (1969), p. 426

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 425-6

corruption that is holding up a merger between two oil companies - Connex and Killeen; Woodward, an energy analyst, takes a job as adviser to the likely heir to the throne of a Middle Eastern country with vast oil reserves; Wasim, a young Pakistani living in the Persian Gulf, is recruited by radical jihadis; and Barnes, a CIA agent, is cut off from the agency following a botched assassination in Beirut.

The connections between the eight characters that occupy these plots are numerous, and increase in number throughout the film's running time. While the interconnections are dauntingly complex, certain techniques help reconcile the various plot strands, in the process underscoring the sense of an underlying, mappable order; as the plots converge there is increasing use of sound bridges that carry across edits, connecting disparate spaces aurally and emphasising global connectivity. By linking two distant spaces in this way, a network structure is emphasised. Without providing a detailed synopsis running to several pages, it is difficult to fully explain all these connections in the order they occur; therefore, Stephen Mamber's 'narrative mapping' methodology is useful. Mamber argues that visually mapping a narrative provides the ability 'to unpack, to deconstruct, to resequence',<sup>389</sup> making it a 'useful tool for dealing with complexity, ambiguity, density and information overload'.<sup>390</sup> A possible narrative map of *Syriana*'s principal characters might look something like this:

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<sup>389</sup> Stephen Mamber, 'Narrative Mapping' in Anna Everett and John T. Caldwell (eds.) *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 146

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, p. 157

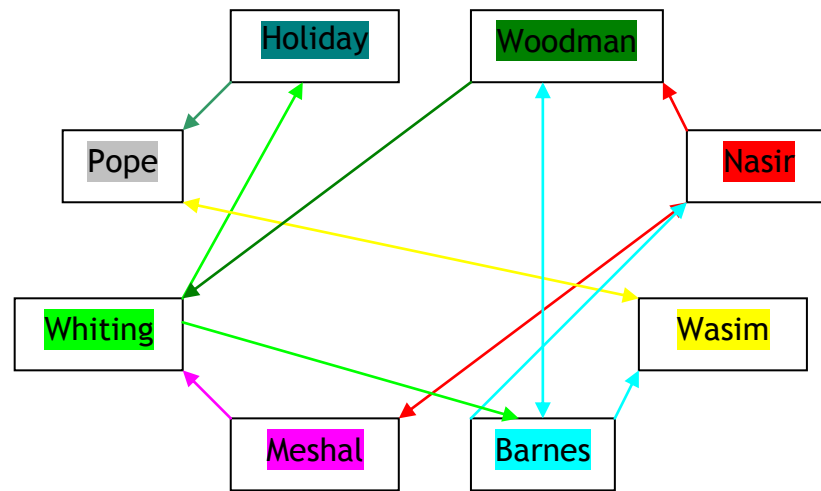


Fig. 6.1: Selected character connections in *Syriana*

To explain this more fully, I will look at the links emanating from and leading to the most connected of these eight characters, Dean Whiting.

Whiting is first shown hiring Holiday to investigate the possible corruption which is jeopardising the potential merger. He is introduced as the evidently wealthy and powerful head of a firm of corporate attorneys. His next appearance is in the affluent surroundings of a private members club, at which he discusses the investigation briefly with Holiday. Both these meetings occur in the United States. His third appearance occurs in France, aboard Prince Meshal's boat, where he offers to assist the prince in becoming Emir over his more qualified (but less co-operative) brother, Prince Nasir. This influence bars Prince Nasir from seeing his father later in the film, preventing the progressive, liberal leader-in-waiting from being appointed, and instead ensuring that the country remains governed by a US-friendly puppet. His final scenes are instigated by Barnes, who learns through a loyal insider that Whiting was behind the order to assassinate Prince Nasir in Beirut, an order that Barnes would have carried out had he not been kidnapped and tortured by an old contact. Whiting is woken by his security firm advising that an alarm has been tripped, which on inspection is shown to be due to an open, unlocked door. Upon this discovery, Barnes calls and arranges to meet Whiting at a café, where he threatens to kill him if anything happens to his wife and son.



Whiting then, is the closest the film has to a conspiratorial architect: he heads the law firm investigating the Connex-Killeen merger; he tries to use Barnes to assassinate Prince Nasir and he engineers the appointment of Nasir's brother Mashal as the new Emir. As well as direct connections to Barnes, Nasir, Holiday and Mashal, connections can be drawn to Woodward (employed by Nasir, they discuss Whiting's nefarious influence over Meshal) and Pope (who works for Connex). Even Wasim, whose story involves far fewer meetings and intersections than the plots involving the other characters, is linked to Whiting: the deal struck by Prince Nasir with the Chinese, the deal which denied Connex a lucrative contract and necessitated the merger, is the catalyst behind Whiting's plot to kill Nasir and install Meshal as Emir. After losing the contract, Connex fires all of its immigrant workers in the Persian Gulf - a work force that included Wasim and his father. The frustration of poverty and unemployment are shown to be instrumental in the jihadi's recruitment process, with the offer of food and support used to tempt Wasim to the school, and eventually, to his death in an act of terrorism. So all characters in *Syriana* are, at most, two steps removed from Whiting, with the majority able to be linked in a single, direct line. However, these connections, while complicatedly causal (such as the link between Whiting and Wasim), do not evidence some grand Machiavellian plot orchestrated by Whiting; his role has multiple links to others, but he is not a conspirator in the omniscient sense discussed in chapter four. He is just one particularly well-connected node in the complicated network the film evokes.

Because multiple lines of connection exist, the route between any two characters - for example, Holiday to Pope - can vary. A direct route exists - Holiday meets with Pope in his corruption investigation - but one involving considerably more characters and intersections can also be traced - Holiday is hired by Whiting, who arranges the assassination of Nasir, who employs Woodman, who meets Barnes in a lift, who delivers the rocket launcher the jihadi recruiter shows Wasim, who is fired from Connex, who employ Pope. As previously suggested, such a network is evocative of Milgram's small-world hypothesis, while the multiple routes between characters are suggestive of the direct and indirect connections between nodes linked through the World Wide Web discussed in chapter five.

It is worth noting that the above elucidation of Whiting's interconnections, and the accompanying map of *Syriana*'s principal links, in some ways misrepresents the film's structure as it is experienced during viewing, a potential limitation of the narrative mapping methodology proposed by Mamber. A casual viewer does not take notes, and is not expected to view the text several times in order to clarify their hypotheses.<sup>391</sup> Treating the interconnections with absolute clarity is antithetical to the experience of watching the film, during which the connections seem deliberately *unclear* and designed to confuse. What is evoked is the *impression* of a traceable (but hidden and complex) mass of interconnections, and not a firm revelation of the interconnections themselves. No single character has the objective, contextual perspective necessary to understand or explain it all; only the audience is in a position to spot the patterns, even if the complexity of the plot complicates the task.

Some of these connections are not causal, but coincidental: the scene in which Barnes, Woodward and Nasir all occupy the same lift in Beirut is the clearest example of this. While Barnes' presence in Beirut is causally motivated by a direct connection to Nasir, the meeting in the lift is purely accidental. It is interesting that the narrative, while fragmented and spread across multiple plots, is chronological and linear throughout, with only one exception. At the conclusion, in which Barnes and Nasir's paths cross for the second time, a flashback is shown of their original, chance meeting in the lift, a repetition that serves to emphasise the film's most obviously accidental and coincidental meeting, imbuing it with a degree of prophetic meaning. This meaning relates to Nasir's moment of associative recognition; his cognitive retrieval of the prior event from memory suggests an associative indexing that temporarily interrupts the film's linearity. The two events are connected by Nasir's recollection, not by their position in a causal chain. It is an associative connection rather than a linear link, and is reminiscent of the organisation of plots in the hypertext novels discussed in chapter five.

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<sup>391</sup> This complexity leads David Denby to describe *Syriana* as a 'clogged-sink narrative': 'so heavily loaded with subplots and complicated information that the story can hardly seep through the surrounding material'. David Denby, 'The New Disorder: Adventures in Film Narrative' *The New Yorker*, 05 Mar. 2007, accessed Apr. 2009.  
[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2007/03/05/070305cra\\_t\\_atlarge\\_denby](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2007/03/05/070305cra_t_atlarge_denby)

### 6.3 Globo-Cop: US-centrism

The more multifaceted and multilayered the picture of power...the more global it becomes.<sup>392</sup>

- *Peter Berglez*

A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is minimum for life, the minimum for existence.<sup>393</sup>

- *Mikhail Bakhtin*

According to the foregoing analysis, the canvas is larger and the connections less dependent upon physically proximate meetings in the GNN, reflecting the perceived geo-political effects of globalisation. Peter Berglez has linked the perceived interconnectedness of globalisation with changes in journalistic practice thus:

If globalisation is defined by ongoing relations between regions and peoples, generated by capital, trade, human mobility and technology, then global journalism ought to be the kind of journalistic practice which 'makes it into an everyday routine to investigate how people and their actions, practices, problems, life conditions etc. in different parts of the world are *interrelated*'.<sup>394</sup>

Continuing the observation made in an earlier chapter that the War on Terror's multi-form structure bears comparison to journalistic practice more generally, the GNN resembles this increasingly global form of journalism. 'Global journalism', Berglez surmises, 'concerns the journalistic representation of *complex relations*'.<sup>395</sup> This necessitates an altered cognitive process, one capable of comprehending vast complexities of hidden links, delayed cause and effect relationships, and pattern recognition, and capable of subsequently formulating an understanding of how 'practices, processes and problems in different parts of the world affect each other, are interlocked, or share

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<sup>392</sup> Peter Berglez, 'What Is Global Journalism? Theoretical and Empirical Conceptualisations' *Journalism Studies*, 9.6 (2008), p. 852

<sup>393</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis, MS: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). p. 252

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 846-7

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*, p. 848

commonalities'.<sup>396</sup> Berglez thereby identifies complexity - inherent to the conspiracy discourse discussed in chapter four - as crucial to attempts to survey the globe in news reportage. The networked plots in a film like *Babel*, the very title of which foregrounds its engagement with polyvocal exchange, are therefore necessarily complicated: it is the structural form required to convey the 'increasing connectedness, boundarylessness and mobility in the world'.<sup>397</sup>

Efforts to dramatise a global web have been identified in other, non networked texts: Andrew deWaard collates *Syriana* et al under the category 'Global Social Problem Films', or GSPs, alongside films like *Blood Diamond* and *Munich* (Spielberg, 2005), the contents of which share a preoccupation with the global 'web-of-life' which 'creates an expectation within the viewer for unforeseen relations and causal connections among the film's disparate characters'.<sup>398</sup>

Steven Thomas, meanwhile, identifies a 'globalisation thriller' sub-genre that includes *The International* (Tykwer, 2009) and the most recent James Bond film, *Quantum Of Solace* (Foster, 2008),<sup>399</sup> while Kirsten Emiko McAllister writes of the 'geopolitical complicity drama', in which 'the role of democratic Western countries in geopolitical crises' is the particular emphasis (cited examples include *The Constant Gardner* and, once again, *Syriana*).<sup>400</sup> None of these categorisations satisfactorily identifies the specific properties that I argue distinguish the GNN (associative indexing, multi-plots set across the globe, indirect connections) as a specific sub-category, but DeWaard, Thomas and McAllister's work does help evidence a wider *thematic* preoccupation with these issues, in addition to the *structural* preoccupation currently under discussion.

*The 9/11 Commission Report* articulated its own politically-charged version of the interconnected globe when it stated that 'the American homeland is the planet'.<sup>401</sup> The imperial undertones of such a proclamation may prompt

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid, p. 847

<sup>397</sup> Ibid, p. 855

<sup>398</sup> Andrew deWaard, 'The Global Social Problem Film' *Cinephile*, 3.1 (2007), pp. 12-8

<sup>399</sup> Steven Thomas, 'The New James Bond: and Globalisation Theory Inside and Out' *CineAction!*, 78, (2009), pp. 32-9

<sup>400</sup> Kirsten Emiko McAllister, 'Human Cargo: Bridging the Geopolitical Divide at Home in Canada' in Zoë Druick and Aspa Kotsopoulos (eds) *Programming Reality: Perspectives on English-Canadian Television* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), pp. 311-27

<sup>401</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 362

discomfort, but in context the conclusion aimed at revising security priorities, rather than declaring all-encompassing sovereignty. America, it was decided, could no longer concentrate its defence spending on missile systems and the like, since protecting its borders from a conventional long-range attack seemed no longer as likely as the type of attack suffered on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

Despite the practical motivation behind such a statement, it broadly echoes debates surrounding US national security and foreign policy that originated long before September 11<sup>th</sup>. ‘Reluctant Sherrif’,<sup>402</sup> ‘globocop’,<sup>403</sup> or, as Trey Parker and Matt Stone satirically put it, *Team America: World Police* (2004), are all, with varying degrees of seriousness, versions of the reorientation of America’s hegemonic position in international relations following the end of the Cold War. No longer occupied with fighting the influx of communism and holding its super-power rival in a deterrent-based stalemate, commentators suggested new roles for the United States, many of which hinged upon utilising America’s unrivalled power to act judiciously and forcefully when called upon, a debate tested by a series of foreign interventions in the nineties. The key concepts evoked in such discussions go further back still, to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 (the proclamation by President James Monroe that any interference by European powers would be considered acts of aggression and met with intervention by the United States), and to the opposing foreign policy ideologies of Presidents Woodrow Wilson (Wilsonian Idealism - intervention as a way to spread ethnic self-determination and ‘freedom’) and Andrew Jackson (an isolationist privileging of domestic security and prosperity which treats prospective foreign intervention with caution) which continue to be evoked to characterise subsequent Presidential attitudes.<sup>404</sup> Where the ‘the American homeland is the planet’ statement conceptually differs is in its homogenising of the globe into a facet of America’s homeland, as opposed to suggesting a governing role for the US within the international arena. The conclusion not only emphasises America’s pre-eminence in global politics, but renders the rest of the world

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<sup>402</sup> Fraser Cameron, *US Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 187

<sup>403</sup> Michael Hirsh, ‘Calling All Regio-Cops: Peacekeeping’s Hybrid Future’ *Foreign Affairs*, 79.6, (2000), p. 7

<sup>404</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter and Tony Smith, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) for a discussion of where President George W. Bush’s foreign policy decisions in the immediate wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 fit into this scale.

little more than a series of venues or provinces for America to battle its foes - the world is not only America's homeland to defend, but America's battleground on which to fight. In this way it resembles long-standing arguments equating globalisation with American hegemony. G. John Ikenberry notes that the fact that 'American hegemony and economic globalisation are connected is not surprising', since 'economic relationships always bear the imprint of powerful states',<sup>405</sup> but Alex Callinicos argues that there is an observable intensification of negative readings of this relationship in the last decade:

The experience of the administration of George W. Bush, whose leading figures made no bones about their aim of entrenching US global primacy and their disdain for the constraints imposed by international institutions and coalition-building, has greatly reinforced the widespread perception of globalisation as a technique of American imperial rule.<sup>406</sup>

A film like *Traitor* (Nachmanoff, 2008) is typical of the way certain War on Terror narratives in film and television embed this perspective. *Traitor* is not a GNN, but it takes place across a similarly broad global canvas; it follows only a small number of characters, who are all connected in a single plot that contains several branches, as opposed to multiple plots that are woven together. Two FBI agents (Guy Pearce and Neal McDonough) pursue a terrorist suspect across the globe, unaware that the man in question, Samir Horn (Don Cheadle) is an undercover CIA agent, whose handler (Jeff Daniels) has kept all record of the operation hidden from others in the agency to ensure his cover is not blown. Samir uses the trust of a terrorist cell middleman (Said Taghmaoui) to infiltrate a group planning a large scale attack on American soil: the simultaneous explosion of fifty Greyhound buses across the American heartland. During the film, the characters travel the globe: scenes are set in Sudan, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Yemen amongst others. Yet the result is not a broad global cross-section, but an international thriller resembling the globe-trotting adventures of James Bond, Ethan Hunt and any number of American action heroes, suggesting the persistence of generic forms; just as certain films about Vietnam were seen to transplant World War 2-style

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<sup>405</sup> G. John Ikenberry, 'Globalisation as American Hegemony' in David Held and Anthony McGrew (eds.) *Globalisation Theory: Approaches and Controversies* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), p. 41

<sup>406</sup> Alex Callinicos, 'Globalisation, Imperialism and the Capitalist World System' in Held and McGrew, *Globalisation Theory*, pp. 62-3

plots to a new setting (for example, *The Green Berets* (Kellogg and Wayne, 1968), certain War on Terror texts simply adopt pre-existing narrative forms and convert them to a contemporary context. In *Traitor*, the focus is squarely on the American FBI agents and the American CIA agents (even the Sudanese-born Horn, whose original nationality is used to provide an element of suspense early on when it is not clear to which side he is loyal, is later repeatedly defined by his American nationality and his service to his country). The only non-Americans are the members of the terrorist cell - indicating that diversity and polyphony are not the film's main aims. A broad international network is evoked thematically in the extensive destinations, but these are merely locations for Americans to conduct their business.

The multiple, spatially separated plots of the GNN offer a potential alternative to the US-centrism of a film like *Traitor* by imitating polyphonic dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense. According to A.M. Sidorkin:

For Bakhtin, truth is not a statement, a sentence or a phrase. Instead, truth is a number of mutually addressed albeit contradictory and logically inconsistent statements. Truth needs multitude of bearing voices [sic]. It cannot be held within a single mind; it also cannot be expressed with a 'single mouth'. The polyphonic truth requires many simultaneous voices.<sup>407</sup>

This is not Bakhtin's way of saying that knowledge is built up through shared information, each voice offering its own partial truth from which the larger truth is assembled. It is:

The fact of mutual addressivity, of engagement, and of commitments to the context of real-life event, that distinguishes truth from untruth.<sup>408</sup>

This polyphonic truth has its literary equivalent in the likes of Fyodor Dostoevsky, in which a narrative is constructed:

not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the

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<sup>407</sup> A.M. Sidorkin, 'The Fine Art of Sitting On Two Stools: Multicultural Education Between Postmodernism and Critical Theory' *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 18 (1999), p. 150

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid* p. 150

interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other.<sup>409</sup>

The GNN, with its global settings and multiple plots, would seem the perfect vehicle for a cinematic manifestation of polyphonic literature, by allowing a semblance of multiple perspectives engaging dialectically.<sup>410</sup>

Despite the multi-plot structure's potential for dramatised polyphony, however, the privileging of an US-centric perspective in the GNN is often no less obvious than in *Traitor*. The three storylines of *Lions for Lambs*, for example, take place on both US coasts and in the mountains of Northern Afghanistan, but all speaking roles are American, and the differences evoked are ones of political opinion or profession, not nationality. Berg defines the polyphonic-plot by the existence of multiple characters, 'each of whom has an individual goal... none of [which is] the featured goal of the film, the narrative's organising principle'.<sup>411</sup> Both *Lions for Lambs* and *Syriana* are consistent with this trait; while certain characters are foregrounded, they do not entirely monopolise the screen time or singly dictate the overall plot.<sup>412</sup> However, if we consider Gerald Prince's definition of the polyphonic ensemble-network film as 'characterised by the interaction of several voices, consciousnesses, or world views, none of which unifies or is superior to (has more authority than) the others',<sup>413</sup> *Syriana*, like *Lions for Lambs*, undermines its polyphony by emphasising its American characters over the others. Its plots take place in Lebanon, Spain, France, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and various locations in the United States, but despite these sundry settings, the overall focus is American: Matt Damon, Jeffrey Wright and

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<sup>409</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 18

<sup>410</sup> It should be stressed that, unlike the portmanteau films discussed in chapter four, these perspectives do not equate to separate discourses; like *Redacted's* disparate segments, the multiple perspectives portrayed in the GNN all stem from the same authorial source. The GNN structure does not facilitate actual polyphonic truth, but potentially allows for its dramatisation.

<sup>411</sup> Berg, 'A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots in Recent Films', p. 26

<sup>412</sup> Incidentally, Berg identifies *Syriana* as belonging to a separate category described as the Parallel Plot. Like the ensemble and polyphonic-plot, the Parallel Plot structure is defined by multiplicity, but specifically involves plots occurring in different time-frames and/or locations. As an organisational feature, parallel plotting is fundamental to the global network narrative structure, as suggested earlier with regards to *Babel's* spatial diversity. However, with its network of connections and extensive cast of characters, *Syriana* is also clearly related to the ensemble structure. For that reason, it should be noted that Berg's categories are not bounded and absolute – as befits such multiply-minded films, these GNNs belong to both categories.

<sup>413</sup> Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 19



George Clooney share top-billing and the lion's share of the screen time as an American energy-analyst, an American attorney and an American CIA agent respectively. These are the only characters with back-stories largely unrelated to the main narrative, included to imply character depth rather than necessary plot information: Damon's estrangement from his wife following the accidental death of their son; Wright's relationship with his alcoholic father; Clooney's troubled relationship with his ex-wife and son (the radicalized Pakistani youth Wasim (Munir) has several scenes with his father, who dreams of the mountains back home, but these are part of his storyline - his frustrations in the Persian Gulf are what lead him to the jihadist recruiters). Other key characters - Alexander Siddig's Arab leader, Mark Strong's Lebanese torturer, Mazhar Munir's radicalised Pakistani youth - are all to some degree defined by their relationship to particular Americans - Siddig to Damon, Strong to Clooney - or to America in general as a perceived oppressor, such as Wasim's final act of terrorism against an American ship, which closely resembles the attack upon the USS Cole in 2000. *Syriana's* US-centrism, partially disguised by its multiple-plot structure populated by numerous non-US characters is evident nonetheless in its US-bias.

## 6.4 Space and place in the GNN

The text of geography is not an innocent one.<sup>414</sup>

- *Shaun Irlam*

GNNs, as has already been suggested, feature storylines spread over a broad geography. Lina Khatib's study of cinematic depictions of the Middle East uses the Foucaultian logic that space and place are intricately implicated in power dynamics to examine the way US films code Middle Eastern spaces and places, concluding that 'films can create space as well as deny it'.<sup>415</sup> By this logic, neither place nor space is fixed, but are cultural constructions, the meanings of which - borrowing from Henri Lefebvre - are 'based on the social power

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<sup>414</sup> Shaun Irlam, 'Gerrymandered Geographies: Exoticism in Thomson and Chateaubriand' *MLN*, 108:5 (1993), p. 892

<sup>415</sup> Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East*, p. 17

structure of the culture representing those meanings'.<sup>416</sup> In this formulation, space is 'made up' - socially produced, with 'place' a:

particular form of space, one that is created through acts of naming as well as the distinctive activities and imaginings associated with particular social spaces.<sup>417</sup>

The coding of both space and place in the GNN is principally achieved through the concerted effects of mise en scene. For example, *Rendition* narrates plots in Chicago, Washington D.C. and an unnamed North African country. A coordinated colour palette is employed to ensure that the three places are easily distinguishable: Chicago is shot in warm, autumnal colours, Washington in blues and chrome, and North Africa in dusty browns and yellows. These visually distinct colour schemes offer a short-hand delineation of place, allowing the viewer to swiftly reorient themselves each time an edit switches events from one location to another. The sudden changes are made more easily comprehensible by the recognisable pattern that associates certain colours - as well as props, sounds and so on - with specific narrative threads.

Editing in classical Hollywood practice has, of course, always been in part a method of eliding space and time. However, in the GNN the distances that are being elided are not the journey up a flight of stairs or the movement through a doorway (to cite two of the more common continuity editing practices), but an elision of thousands of miles. These separate places, although coded as distinct from one another, are brought into sequential contact by the editing. In fact, scenes of travel are uncommon in the GNN format - even in *Rendition*, the very plot and title of which hinge upon the practice of secretly transporting prisoners around the world for detainment and alleged torture (a practice that itself demonstrates the global vectors of the War on Terror). Despite the titular flight being integral to the plot, no scenes take place aboard the aeroplane (though this is arguably designed to evoke the disorientation experienced by sensory-deprived captives, for whom the distances travelled would be difficult to

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<sup>416</sup> *ibid.* See also Henri Lefebvre, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

<sup>417</sup> Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine, 'Editors Introduction' in Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 5

gauge).<sup>418</sup> Like the hyperlink's instantaneous shift from one network node to another, the global network narrative makes transitions from place to place instantaneously, making distant places appear adjacent.

These characteristics recall observations made in 1947 by the Russian filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin in his article 'The Global Film'. In particular, the implied omniscience offered by the camera's traversal of the planet was traced to the combination of distant elements through montage rather than the apparatus itself:

Actually, the camera lens never saw more than did the human eye; it was the creative unification on the screen of all that the camera could see in many scattered places - throughout the world, if you wished, and at any time - constructed into a vision as single and convincing as a landscape or portrait, that gave this picture of the true relationships of phenomena. Before film existed no eye could see this, just as without the telescope no one saw the satellites or Jupiter, or as no one saw living cells before the existence of the electronic microscope.<sup>419</sup>

The combination of spatially-diverse plots, then, draws upon this capacity for cinema to collate multifarious places (or in the global network narrative, plots), and impose an ordered structure. The difference, it seems, is that a 'vision as single and convincing as a landscape or portrait' is no longer the primary goal, but has been replaced by an evocation of the polyglottal.

## 6.5 Distance

Immanuel Kant wrote over 200 years ago that we are 'unavoidably side by side'... Since Kant, our mutual interconnectedness and vulnerability have grown rapidly... In our world, it is not only the violent exception that links people together across borders;

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<sup>418</sup> This disorientation and obfuscated travel informs the twist of *Five Fingers* (Malkin, 2006), in which the kidnapping of a US citizen Martijn (Ryan Phillippe) travelling in Morocco is initially understood to be an act of terrorism by African Islamic fundamentalists, then later revealed to be a CIA rendition flight by undercover agents attempting to uncover Martijn's role in a terrorist network (though somewhat implausibly, the rendition is *from* Morocco *to* the United States, where the CIA agents inflict the torture themselves in a studio made to look like a generic Middle Eastern location).

<sup>419</sup> Vsevolod Pudovkin, 'The Global Film' *Hollywood Quarterly*, 2.4 (1947), pp. 327-332

the very nature of everyday problems and processes join people in multiple ways.<sup>420</sup>

- *David Held*

From now on speed is less useful in terms of getting around easily than in terms of seeing and conceiving more or less clearly.<sup>421</sup>

- *Paul Virilio*

The globe, I have argued, is not homogenised by the GNN. The world is depicted as consisting of interlocking cultures, societies, individuals, and geographical spaces which retain their differences from one another. Geography is preserved in the GNN, and with it current geo-political power dynamics. What is absent, rather than separate places or spaces, is the impression of distance.

Marshall McLuhan offered an early formulation of a technology-facilitated, distance-less world in the 'global village' that would 'heighten human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree',<sup>422</sup> but his is by no means the extent of such debate. 'The world is flat' according to Thomas Friedman;<sup>423</sup> the 'death of distance' will herald global peace suggests Frances Cairncross;<sup>424</sup> while economist Richard O'Brien is one of a number of thinkers to have declared the 'end of geography'.<sup>425</sup> These particular arguments are problematic at best, with Vincent Mosco criticising the common conflation of distance and geography - the former the 'time it takes to get from one place to another', the latter

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<sup>420</sup> David Held, 'Violence, Law and Justice in a Global Age' in Calhoun, Prince, Trimmer (eds.) *Understanding September 11<sup>th</sup>*, p. 92-3

<sup>421</sup> Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, p. 71

<sup>422</sup> Incidentally, the paratactic style used by McLuhan in books such as *Counterblast* also displays similarities to the hyperlink structure of *Victory Garden* et al; the pictorial mosaic encourages a non-linear survey of the page, rather than a directed path from left to right, top to bottom. McLuhan hinted at similarities to the newspaper front page when he wrote 'take the date line off a newspaper and it becomes an exotic and fascinating surrealist poem', further emphasising the similarities between the hypertext, new narratives and global network narratives (see Marshall McLuhan, 'Television in a New Light' in *The Meaning of Commercial TV: The Texas-Stanford Seminar* (Austin: University of Texas, 1967), p. 97)

<sup>423</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005)

<sup>424</sup> Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives* (London: Orion Business Books, 1997)

<sup>425</sup> Richard O'Brien, *Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1992)

representative of ‘the place itself’.<sup>426</sup> But they serve here to indicate the ways in which modern communication technology’s ability to connect spatially distance nodes instantaneously has been characterised as fundamentally altering geo-politics. The connectivity they permit fosters telesthesia, or ‘perception at a distance’, which McKenzie Wark argues creates a ‘virtual geography’, in which things are not ‘bounded by rules of proximity, of “being there”’.<sup>427</sup> Wark recognises the lengthy history of the telesthetic effect, identifying the telescope, the telegraph, the telephone, television and telecommunications as instrumental in its development,<sup>428</sup> though the exponential growth of technological innovation in these and related fields makes the process of increasing importance.

The GNNs follow a telesthetic organisational logic, based not on the physical movement of bodies through space, but on the virtual vectors of media technology. Telesthesia is evoked by the editing together of disparate places, in a manner reminiscent of the attempts to map the World Wide Web discussed in chapter five (in which ‘space’ is no more than a convenient metaphor for contemplating the non-spatial ‘cyberspace’). Clicking on a hyperlink appears to move the user from one virtual ‘place’ to another instantaneously, linking two dynamic pages which appear illusorily static on-screen; in a similar fashion, the GNN conjoins two geographically distant spaces through its editing, fixing a ‘static’ identity on the spaces through visual short-hand, rather than acknowledging their ideological-construction.

Paul Virilio notes the connection between visual observation and control in warfare by detailing the development of visual apparatus and the advantages they afforded in battle scenarios - from the advantage gained by finding high ground, to the telescope, to the satellite, sight is valued as a powerful form of control.<sup>429</sup> Michel Foucault similarly recognised the ability for sight to imprison and control, his notion of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon as sociological

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<sup>426</sup> Vincent Mosco, ‘Webs of Myth and Power: Connectivity and the New Computer Technopolis’ in Herman and Suriss (eds.) *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p. 40

<sup>427</sup> McKenzie Wark, *Virtual Geography: Living With Global Media Events* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. xvii

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43

<sup>429</sup> Virilio, *War and Cinema*

metaphor premised on the subjugating effect of the unequal gaze.<sup>430</sup> The panoptical vision of the GNN, when anchored around a particularly Western perspective, seems to be an extension of this power dynamic. It is telling that the roots of the Bush doctrine that drives the War on Terror are traceable to a document entitled *Joint Vision 2020*, written by the United States Department of Defense and released in May 2000. In the report, the United States military mission is described as ‘full-spectrum dominance’, meaning the capability to defeat any adversary (multiple adversaries where necessary) by controlling ‘any situation across the range of military operations’, using metaphors of light (and, by extension, sight) to describe the proposed military supremacy.<sup>431</sup> Speed, immediacy and instantaneity are consciously evoked, themes which will be returned to in greater detail in later chapters.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The War on Terror is fundamentally ‘multiple’, a conclusion argued for in chapter three through discussion of the 9/11 attacks themselves and in chapter four by the conspiracy theories that surround it. The interpretation of multiple plots depends upon particular types of cognitive activity, which chapter five argued draws upon information-processing skills utilised in hyperlink navigation. An emphasis is placed upon connections and links, an investigative imperative informed by a culture of conspiracy, underpinned by the suspicion that ‘everything is connected’. As a result of these factors, multiplicity and interconnectedness emerge as the key themes informing many of the first filmic narratives to depict the War on Terror directly, a group of films I have collectively termed Global Network Narratives.

While Web-based hyperlink navigation has been argued to strongly inform the formation and interpretation of these narrative structures, another kind of media text, as yet unacknowledged in this thesis, also shares certain formal similarities with the GNN. The British mini-series *Traffik* (Channel 4, 1989), the aforementioned US film adaptation of which arguably inaugurated the cinematic trend toward such narratives in the noughties, displays all the previously

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<sup>430</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977)

<sup>431</sup> *Joint Vision 2020 – America’s Military: Preparing For Tomorrow*, 30 May 2000, accessed Apr. 2009. <http://www.iwar.org.uk/military/resources/aspc/pubs/jv2020.pdf>

identified hallmarks of the GNN, in particular multiple plots (a Pakistani poppy farmer becomes a drug lord's chauffeur to feed his family; a politician in charge of British drug policy discovers his daughter is a heroin addict; and the wife of a German drug dealer attempts to restart his business following his arrest), which are edited between without the connections being immediately obvious or directly causal. The characters are located in multiple global locations (United Kingdom, Germany, Pakistan) and the different locations are visually coded - something which Stephen Soderbergh's film adaptation took further by applying coloured filters, so that a deep yellow hue was used for all scenes set in one part of the world, a washed-out blue for another and so on.<sup>432</sup>

*Traffik's* writer, David Simon, said of the series' structure:

When you jump frequently between different countries and cultures... the world becomes smaller and more connected. We realise that all our actions have consequences.<sup>433</sup>

That *Traffik* precedes the GNN in this conceptual realisation by a decade is suggestive. It further diminishes the uniqueness of the GNN, and helps cast the War on Terror as one of many 'global events' dramatised through globally diffuse networks of cause and effect, as opposed to the unique, totemic event that its rhetoric argues for. Secondly, and more interestingly, it suggests that television serials or mini-series lend themselves more comfortably to multi-thread narratives such as these. With their large casts and rhizomatic plotlines, in which characters are connected in complex ways that complicate causal relations, the GNN therefore has more than a passing resemblance to the television serial, the primary focus of the next two chapters.

Chapter seven will begin this exploration of the television War on Terror text by discussing 24. In the process, I will shift attention from the spatially-multiple plots prevalent in the GNN, to a consideration of temporally-multiple plots, in

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<sup>432</sup> The film version *Traffic* (a pre-9/11 GNN predecessor) relocated its characters to the United States and Mexico, Americanising the plots and bringing them into closer proximity with one another on the same continent. Following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the film formed the basis for a second mini-series, also entitled *Traffic* (USA Network, 2004), which reinstated an intercontinental scope by locating its interconnected protagonists in the US and Afghanistan - a closer approximation of the GNN's particular characteristics as delineated in this chapter.

<sup>433</sup> Simon Moore, 'Traffik' in Rosie Boycott and Meredith Etherington-Smith (eds.) *25 x 4: Channel 4 at 25* (London: Culture Shock, 2007) p. 98

which spatial diversity is secondary to synchronicity, simultaneity and 'liveness'.

Jose Braganca De Miranda writes:

Network media have created a new culture that is profoundly altering the millennial structure that articulated proximity with distance. For many, what now prevails is 'immediacy', the 'time of the real' or 'direct time'.<sup>434</sup>

Because of this apparent correlation, the emphasis in chapter seven will move from one vector- space - to its counterpart - time, using a 'real-time' text as its conduit.

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<sup>434</sup> Jose Braganca De Miranda, 'The End of Distance: The Emergence of Telematic Culture' in Alvares (ed.), *Representing Culture*, p. 149



## 7 'Events occur in real time': The chronotopes of 24

Whilst the temporal organisation of the War on Terror has been addressed in the previous chapters to some extent (specifically the *simultaneous* unfolding of multiple, geographically separate plots in the Global Network Narrative), the emphasis has thus far been primarily on the spatial component of such narratives; how they organise space and evoke global networks. Utilising Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, I now intend to re-establish the equal importance of time in narrative organisation. The chronotope is useful precisely because it privileges neither space nor time, but recognises their inseparability. The chronotope, Bakhtin writes is where 'time... thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically viable; likewise, space becomes charged and responsible to the movements of time, plot and history'.<sup>435</sup> It is this combination of spatial and temporal vectors that makes time 'palpable and visible' and space 'concrete' and communicable.

This chapter will move discussion beyond cinematic texts to focus upon the long-running television serial 24. Care will be taken to ensure that media specificity is not ignored or homogenised: film and television will not be uncritically conflated. However, just as the associative organisation of the World Wide Web hyperlink was eventually incorporated into a discussion of multiple-plot films, over the next two chapters I intend to demonstrate how conclusions drawn from a study of the television sequential series can shed light on the narrative organisation of the cinematic Global Network Narrative. In this way, it follows John Caldwell amongst others, in questioning assumed 'essential differences' between film and television.<sup>436</sup>

While illustrations of Bakhtin's 'chronotope' can be provided by any and all texts to an extent, Sue Vice suggests that some texts present more fruitful objects of study than others - for example, texts which 'adopt one of the forms where

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<sup>435</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 84

<sup>436</sup> John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995) pp. 25-7

relations between time and space are especially clear'.<sup>437</sup> 24's most prominent stylistic markers - particularly the digital clock motif and the split-screen - identify it as such a text. Vice also observes that, while it is the interrelationship between time and space that constitutes the chronotope, one can take precedence over the other; for example, in 'idyllic, pastoral chronotopes, space holds sway over time'.<sup>438</sup> In 24, by contrast, time arguably takes precedence over space.

As Martin Flanagan notes, the 'chronotope' is a loosely-defined concept; even within Bakhtin's own writing the term is ambiguously defined and conceptually fluid. It is prone, Flanagan writes, to:

mutation between three apparently distinct categories of meaning. The first sense... [demarcates] stable generic forms which are classified according to methods of representing time and space, such as the 'folkloric chronotope'. Secondly, the term can signify a more localised rendering of time and space within the diegesis. Bakhtin refers to elements that fall into this second category as 'chronotopic motifs'; for example, the motifs of 'meeting' or 'the road'.<sup>439</sup>

The chronotopic arrangements that will be discussed in chapters eight and nine - the chronotope of clock-time, the chronotope of coexistence represented by the split-screen image, and the chronotope of meeting - largely occupy these two categories as either motifs (split-screen, meeting), or generic forms of a sort (the 'real-time' of clock-time). The third category of meaning is a 'chronotopic element in reading':

Here, B contends that the representational elements of the text emerge '[o]ut of the actual chronotopes of our world'. It would thus seem possible to theorize a chronotope of reception, or at least a way in which real and represented time/space configurations are linked via the operations of chronotopes.<sup>440</sup>

This third essentially characterises the approach of these chapters *in toto*, which aim to identify not only the structural forms of the narratives under discussion,

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<sup>437</sup> Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 202

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201

<sup>439</sup> Martin Flanagan, *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 57

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57

but to establish connections to wider trends: modernity, technological progress and popular political rhetoric, for example. In this chapter, this third way of interpreting Bakhtin's concept will be used to suggest how the chronotopes of *24* intersect with wider socio-historical context in which the text is produced and viewed.

Flanagan notes Bakhtin's own efforts to clarify the term in *Forms of Chronotope in the Novel*, defining it in the 'Concluding Remarks' as 'the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel [...], the place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied'. In this expansion, Flanagan concludes:

The integral role played by the chronotope within all levels of the text is underlined: chronotopes not only link disparate parts of narrative material together and play a part in the way in which we experience the text, but provide the very "ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events". Without chronotopes there would presumably be no narrative; for they make possible the combination of temporal and spatial co-ordinates that make narrative events "visible... [and] concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow through their veins."<sup>441</sup>

The conclusion 'without chronotopes there would presumably be no narrative' is important: if a narrative occupies and represents both space and time (which in audio-visual dramas like these, they always must do - even if that space and time is abstracted for narrative purposes), it utilises chronotopes. But the ubiquity of the chronotope should not render it invisible - while all representations of space and time are necessarily chronotopic (the term itself literally translating as 'time-space'), certain generic forms and motifs hold particular interest.

## 7.1 *24* and time

With its first season airing in the United States a matter of weeks after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and subsequent seasons dramatising contemporary political issues by promising storylines 'ripped from today's headlines',<sup>442</sup> the relationship between *24* and the War on Terror metaframe is particularly close.

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid, pp. 57-8

<sup>442</sup> Paul Woolf, 'So What Are You Saying? An Oil Consortium's Behind the Nuke? - 24, Programme Sponsorship, SUVs and the War on Terror' in Steven Peacock (ed.) *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 74

The real and the fictional have been frequently blurred in discussions of the show: in addition to the examples from chapter two - the depiction of torture cited by US Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan as an influential factor in the rise of prisoner abuse by American interrogators; star Kiefer Sutherland lecturing recruits at West Point on the subject of forceful coercion - former Justice Department lawyer John Yoo, author of the so-called 'torture memos', referenced the show's fictional hero, CTU agent Jack Bauer, in his book *War By Other Means*, in order to paint a hypothetical 'ticking-bomb' scenario that would help argue for the use of torture.<sup>443</sup> QC Philippe Sands, meanwhile, claims that Bauer was a key inspiration in early 'brainstorming meetings' conducted by military officials at Guantanamo in September 2002.<sup>444</sup> Clearly *24* possesses surplus cultural meaning that extends beyond that of a simple entertainment product - it is consciously being cited as precedent in real-world legal arguments with potentially major ramifications in the Yoo example, and influencing interrogation protocols in the latter Guantanamo Bay example.<sup>445</sup> Likewise, the Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia blurs actual and virtual anti-terrorism, between 'television and the Constitution' when he asks 'Jack Bauer saved Los Angeles... He saved hundreds of thousands of lives... Are you going to convict Jack Bauer?'<sup>446</sup> The logical response would be to point out the fictional nature of both threat and saviour in Scalia's example, but regardless, the citing of *24* in a legal statement makes clear the show's potential rhetorical value.

Less controversially, *24* can be considered a central text in the first wave of War on Terror narratives due to its huge popularity, both critically and with audiences. Lasting eight seasons, its success proved long-term, and spanned the entire political period in which 'War on Terror' rhetoric flourished. Its representations and emphases have not been static, but have evolved over the seasons, with different emphases at different times. For example, in season two (the first full season written after the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks) the threat

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<sup>443</sup> John Yoo, *War By Other Means: An Insider's Account of the War on Terror* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006)

<sup>444</sup> Philippe Sands, *Torture Team: Deception, Cruelty and the Compromise of Law* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 73-4

<sup>445</sup> In the latter example, the accuracy of Sands' pronouncement is irrelevant; once again, it is the suggestion of *24*'s real-world influence that matters.

<sup>446</sup> Peter Lattman, 'Justice Scalia Hearts Jack Bauer' *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 Jun. 2007, accessed Jul. 2010. <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2007/06/20/justice-scalia-hearts-jack-bauer/>

comes from Middle Eastern terrorists, which Paul Woolf points out ‘coincided with the build-up to the predominantly Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and the ensuing conflict’.<sup>447</sup> By season five, the threat is the President himself, who knowingly puts the country at risk in order to start a conflict that would secure American oil interests in the Middle East - a shift that mimics the ever decreasing popularity of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the MIHOP (Making It Happen on Purpose) conspiracy theories discussed in chapter four. However, throughout its eight seasons, its narrative organisation of time has remained consistent.

24 foregrounds its preoccupation with time in its title. As Daniel Chamberlain and Scott Ruston observe, it is unusual for a mainstream American drama to make no reference to its content - whether it be the show’s main location (*The West Wing* [NBC, 1999-2006], *E.R.* [NBC, 1994-2009]), or its characters (*The Sopranos* [HBO, 1999-2007], *House* [Fox, 2004 - present]).<sup>448</sup> Even examples of more oblique titles which deviate from this tendency, such as *Northern Exposure* (CBS, 1990-1995) or *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005), still give some indication of content (a New York doctor’s relocation to an eccentric Alaskan town and a family-run funeral parlour respectively). Chamberlain and Ruston remark:

Notably the show is not named *CTU* or *Agent Bauer* or any other subject, location or organisation-type name...[In 24] the emphasis of the title is on the narrative structure, the events of one day told one hour at a time.<sup>449</sup>

Immediate parallels with the rhetoric of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 suggest themselves. Chapter one demonstrated how the abstraction ‘9/11’ came to signify those events, since the multiple, geographically-diverse nature of the attacks made a location-based signifier inappropriate. Ina Rae Hark draws out the comparison:

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<sup>447</sup> Woolf, ‘So What Are You Saying?’, p. 74

<sup>448</sup> Daniel Chamberlain and Scott Ruston, ‘24 and Twenty-First Century Quality Television’ in Peacock, *Reading 24*, p. 19

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19

This day was soon rendered numerically in many media reports: 9/11. In a somewhat similar fashion, the multiple terrorist operations in the Fox show all occur during one single day...<sup>450</sup>

The emphasis on time rather than location, character or content is echoed by the name of the company set up to produce the show: Real Time Productions.<sup>451</sup>

24, then, privileges time over place in its title, a privilege that extends into the opening moments of the first season:

It begins with little flashes and fragments, quickly collecting into a bigger picture. A sound strikes up: a clipped, rhythmic, repeated blip, like an electronic alarm clock chiming out seconds of time. A pulse of yellow light follows: single dashes flashing and forming into an LCD whole, into a display of multiple, digital '8's... [T]he style and type of the digits on display is precisely expressive of one of 24's chief preoccupations: the ubiquitous presence of the digital clock and associated forms of technology; their possibilities and limitations; our reliance on computers to mark and inform our daily duties...<sup>452</sup>

From these opening seconds onwards, the programme emphasises its temporal organisation and key thematic concerns. Further reminders of the show's preoccupation with time occur throughout: the first dialogue spoken in every episode (after the obligatory 'Previously on 24...' reminder montage) is a voice-over from star Kiefer Sutherland stating the temporal parameters for the impending episode ('The following takes place between...'); the 'ubiquitous' digital clock recurs multiple times in each episode, leading into and out of every advert break and opening and closing each episode, even appearing during scenes on occasion. In addition, a four-way split-screen is frequently used in conjunction with the digital clock motif following an advert break; the four screens appear in time with the aforementioned metronomic electronic pulse, visually punctuating each passing second and often appearing on screen in a clockwise movement (*fig. 7.1*).

<sup>450</sup> Ina Rae Hark 'Today Is the Longest Day of My Life: 24 as Mirror Narrative of 9/11' in Dixon (ed.) *Film and Television After 9/11*, pp. 121-122

<sup>451</sup> Interestingly, the company's second completed project, which was not picked up by the networks so only a pilot of which exists, is a similarly high-concept show entitled *The Call*, focused around a team of paramedics and, like 24, reportedly consisting of real-time episodes - in this case, each hour would correspond with an hour-long call-out for the medical team.

<sup>452</sup> Steven Peacock 'It's About Time' in Peacock, *Reading 24*, pp. 1-2

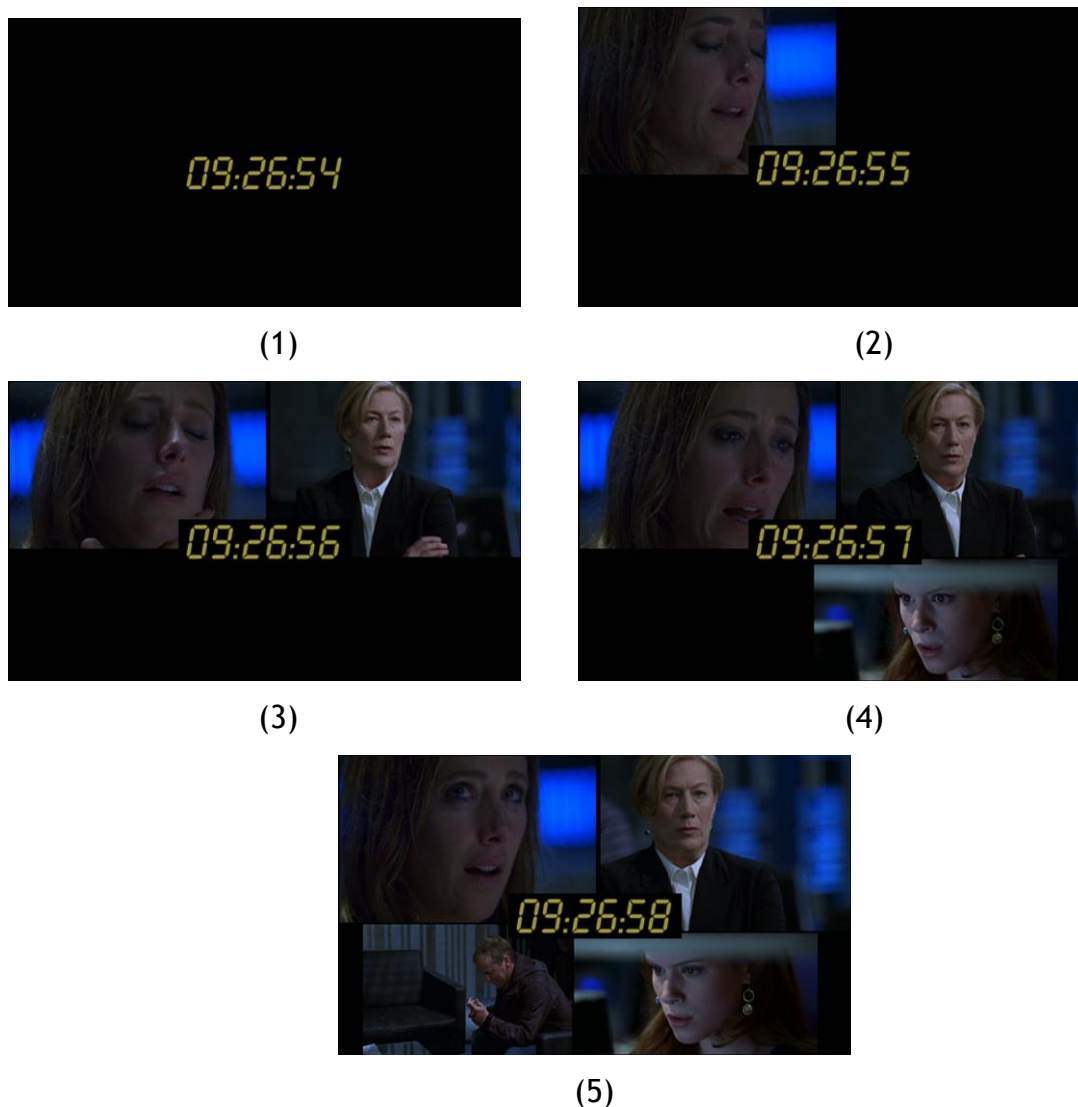


Fig. 7.1: Clock-time in *24*

The clockwise appearance of the images visually mimics the hands of an analogue clock, while the central digital clock ticks off the seconds as they pass.

From these examples it should be clear that *24* is not simply privileging ‘time’ in general as a metaphysical concept, but a particular *formulation* of time: clock-time. This is the first of *24*’s distinct chronotopes - space and action is continuously subject to the mechanical and uniform progression of the seconds, minutes and hours that make up its twenty-four hours of plot, and such an arrangement is historically and socially significant. Lest *24*’s depiction of time appear matter-of-fact and natural, it is worth examining the genesis of - and alternatives to - clock time, in order to confirm its constructedness as a social concept rather than an essential, natural phenomenon.

## 7.2 The chronotope of clock-time

In *Empires of Time*, Anthony Aveni acknowledges the links between the way time is measured and segmented in modern society and natural occurrences - a day relating to the time take for the earth to complete a full rotation, a year the time taken for the earth to rotate the sun (or, in pre-heliocentric cultures, the time take for heavenly bodies to complete their movement across the skies).<sup>453</sup> However, he also identifies the various fictions that simplify and organise such apparently planetary rhythms - for example, the fact that an actual solar year (the exact time taken for the earth to orbit the sun) is, on average, not a precise three-hundred and sixty-five days, but the less neat 365.2422 days.<sup>454</sup> By noting the viability of alternative calendars in a Western context - for example, the three hundred and sixty-four day 'World Calendar' considered by the United Nations (which would make every January 1<sup>st</sup> a Sunday, every February 1<sup>st</sup> a Wednesday and so on),<sup>455</sup> or the short-lived French Revolutionary calendar introduced in France in 1792 and used for fourteen years until Napoleon announced a return to the Gregorian system<sup>456</sup> - the constructedness of these apparently-essential divisions of time becomes clearer still.

More pertinent to the current discussion of 24 and 'real time' are the smaller, constituent units that each day is split into. Aveni states that 'The minute and the second... are total figments of our imagination'. Unlike the year and the month, which have at least some basis in nature (the year in the rotation of the earth around the sun; the month in the lunar cycle), these smaller units of time do not correspond with any external phenomena.<sup>457</sup> They are practical divisions that render time usable in certain ways. Such an observation effectively disputes the essentiality of time as dividable into regular, uniform and well-defined units. Aveni cites the occasional need to add a second to official timekeeping records as evidence of natural time's irregularity: if one were to

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<sup>453</sup> Anthony Aveni, *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks and Cultures* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2000), pp. 85 - 118

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, p. 161

<sup>455</sup> Ibid, pp. 161-2

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, pp. 144-5

<sup>457</sup> Ibid, p. 98



listen to an atomic clock counting off the seconds, Aveni suggests we would 'note days, like 31 December 1987, when an 86,401<sup>st</sup> second was added, for now even the once supposed constancy of the rate of the earth's rotation, the very day itself, has become anachronistic'.<sup>458</sup> These leap-seconds are necessary since, while atomic clocks boast phenomenally high levels of accuracy (if left running for thirty million years, the FOCS-1 in Switzerland would deviate only one second),<sup>459</sup> the earth's rotation is not absolutely constant. Such closely measured and divided time is therefore culturally-projected, rather than natural or essential. In planetary time as in life, 'running like clockwork' is a manufactured, modern imposition, rather than a natural state.

However, time is still experienced as regular by those living in modern societies, the universal synchronisation of experience advantageous to urbanisation, transport and industry. Aveni notes how various early forms of time-keeping - such as gravity clocks (i.e. sand timers) and sundials - were of limited use when used to regulate labour: the former start out fast then start to run more slowly, the latter 'do not keep equal hours because the shadow lengthens more rapidly in late afternoon'.<sup>460</sup> Furthermore:

The hours drift in different parts of the year and in different locations... Should people who work different shifts of different lengths be given the same pay? Why should one person be required to start work earlier than another? Or stay later? Is it possible to adopt a reliable system of uniform hours?<sup>461</sup>

The answer to such questions came in the form of a 'public time system', developed and implemented by the late Middle Ages: a 'work clock' that 'slowly began to dominate life'.<sup>462</sup> This method of marking time 'was automated and unnatural; it was based on reason'.<sup>463</sup> In effect, time was abstracted and regimented to meet the demands of labour organisation. Such labour-led

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid, p. 98

<sup>459</sup> 'Remarkable Clocks and Watches: Switzerland's Most Accurate Clock' *Swissworld*, accessed June 2010.  
[http://www.swissworld.org/en/switzerland/swiss\\_specials/swiss\\_watches/switzerlands\\_most\\_accurate\\_clock/](http://www.swissworld.org/en/switzerland/swiss_specials/swiss_watches/switzerlands_most_accurate_clock/)

<sup>460</sup> Aveni, *Empires of Time*, p. 93

<sup>461</sup> Ibid, p. 93

<sup>462</sup> Ibid, p. 93

<sup>463</sup> Ibid, pp. 93-6

organisation of time arguably reaches its apotheosis with the publication of Frederick W. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which Ursula K. Heise describes as offering 'a plan for the rationalisation and acceleration of industrial work by splitting it into small components of motion and determining the standard time for each'.<sup>464</sup> As nations became industrialised, the work clock expanded to encompass the nation, and when international trade and colonial expansion knitted together previously-separate locations across the globe, the 'work-clock' became an international product, and standardised time was adopted on a near-universal level.<sup>465</sup> Stephen Kern cites July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 as a key date in this development; the date of the first time signal transmitted around the world, which caused the 'independence of local times... to collapse'.<sup>466</sup>

Once implemented and organized, World Standard Time divides and demarcates space, fulfilling the role of the chronotope: space is dissected by time. Time zones, for example, hereafter function as a global reminder of the constructedness of clock-time, simplifying the process of adjusting clocks to fit new surroundings by dividing the planet into strips of shared time. Ian R. Batsky concludes:

Standard time... helps the citizen who telephones long distance, tunes to a TV station in a nearby city, dates a legal document, and travels between cities and towns. Standard time has become *our culture's time*.<sup>467</sup> [Emphasis added]

It should now be clear that the term 'real-time' in the everyday sense (the sense in which it is used in *24*, for example) equates to 'clock time'; furthermore, there is nothing 'real' about clock-time as such, in so much as there is nothing essential or natural about the way in which modern societies 'keep' time. While 'the hold the clock has upon Westerners cannot be understated' (Aveni suggests the National Association of Watch and Clock collectors' motto - 'Time rules life' - is a profound statement on modern society),<sup>468</sup> it is important to comprehend

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<sup>464</sup> Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 34

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4

<sup>466</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 14

<sup>467</sup> Ian R. Batsky, 'The Adoption of Standard Time' *Technology and Culture* 30.1 (1989), p. 27

<sup>468</sup> Aveni, *Empires of Time*, pp. 158-9

both its artificiality, and the fact that its apparent necessity within modernity is fundamentally tied to industry and labour. Workers may all be ‘regimented under the empires of time’, but the ‘time’ in question is not the natural, varying time of seasons changing or planetary rotations, but the so-called ‘real-time’ of the clock that counts down the seconds, minutes and hours of each day. Randall Stevenson notes that soon the ‘ritual of “clocking-in” and “clocking-out” came to establish the beginning and end of each day’s work, the clock now exactly controlling each entry to and exit from the workplace’.<sup>469</sup>

24’s emphasis on the passing of clock-time and its links with labour is most apparent in the show’s efforts to present a complete ‘day’ of plot-time, a ‘day’ carefully divided into seconds, minutes and hours (the latter corresponding with the length of an episode), in which the time represented onscreen is equitable to the time experienced by the characters. Each season consists of twenty-four episodes, with each leading directly and without interruption into the next. Together, the episodes combine to narrate the apparently complete events of a single twenty-four hour period. While efforts are made to ensure the impression of ‘real-time’ (i.e. atomised clock-time) is as convincing as possible, it is necessarily illusory. Each episode lasts around forty-two minutes, the rest of the hour taken up by scheduled advert breaks included during the show’s transmission. In an echo of clock-time’s origins in markets, industry and commerce, the makers of 24 anticipate this concession to advertising by having the action ‘continue’ during each break, with missing minutes incorporated into the episode to give the impression that, even if the television network must intermittently pause the programme to bolster advertising revenue, the show’s characters never stop. So while one section of narrative may conclude at, for example, 12:12:49, the next recommences at 12:17:12. The effect, Slavoj Zizek suggests, is the illusion of:

a live transmission [being] interrupted. It is as if the continuity of action is so urgent that it cannot even be interrupted for advertisements.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992), p. 114

<sup>470</sup> Slavoj Zizek ‘The Depraved Heroes of 24 are the Himmlers of Hollywood’ *The Guardian*, 10 Jan. 2006, accessed May 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jan/10/usnews.comment>

With DVD box sets an increasingly popular way for viewers to watch television programmes, however, the illusion becomes somewhat strained - without the adverts, the plot lurches forward through time at regular intervals. Similarly, the first two seasons were screened in the UK by the BBC, where they also proceeded without interruption. However, the effect aimed for is that one minute of screen-time is equal to one minute of plot-time. The plot unfolds chronologically and linearly, and, other than the aforementioned gaps dictated by advertising, no overt elliptical edits constrict the action. As Jacqueline Furby puts it, 'the exact time of the story action is therefore equal to the time it takes to view that action'.<sup>471</sup>

Furby goes on to define the terms screen-time, story-time and plot-time, distinctions worth reiterating here. Screen-time refers literally to the amount of time taken to watch the text - in a feature film usually between eighty minutes and several hours. Since the duration of an episode of *24* depends on the method of viewing - approximately forty-two minutes if watched from DVD or on the BBC, one hour when watched with advert breaks - I will add another categorical term to the taxonomy: broadcast-time. So, the screen-time of an episode of *24* is forty two minutes, but the broadcast-time is one hour.<sup>472</sup>

Plot-time and story-time relate to the events depicted on screen. The 'story' is the overall sequence of events represented, narrated or alluded to, while the 'plot' is the sequence of events as ordered in the text itself; story-time and plot-time therefore refer to the duration of each of these respective continuums. In *24*, the plot-time, broadcast-time and story-time are designed to appear equal, though the latter is extended through back-story - for example, the first season's story extends back to the mid-1990s, when Jack Bauer killed Victor Drazen's family in the Balkans, prompting the revenge attempts that

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<sup>471</sup> Jacqueline Furby 'Interesting Times: The Demands *24*'s Real-Time Format Makes on its Audience' in Peacock, *Reading 24*, p. 60

<sup>472</sup> To complicate things further, episodes have occasionally broken from this pattern. The opening episode of the third season was screened without advert breaks and was a full hour long (broadcast-time and screen-time equal). Similarly, broadcast-time and screen-time were equal when the first two seasons were shown by the BBC in the UK, but were shorter than the plot-time. However, generally speaking the distinction is maintained: broadcast-time includes adverts and is equal to plot-time (one hour of plot equals one hour of broadcasted viewing), while screen-time without adverts is of a shorter duration than plot-time.

dominate the plot-time. In other texts, the distinction between the categories is clearer. To use a GNN example discussed in the previous chapter, *Babel*'s story-time is several years, going back as far as the death of Chieko's mother. The plot-time, by contrast, is only a matter of days, and its screen-time is one hundred and forty three minutes (broadcast screen-time does not apply to this cinematic text - unless, of course, the film is cut for television transmission, a possibility which underscores the potential similarities between televisual and cinematic texts that will be elaborated on in future chapters). Furthermore, while story-time is a chronological sequence of events, plot-time can be temporally-manipulated: time can be expanded or condensed, events can be repeated, and the order of events can be switched. While *24* eschews any obvious temporal manipulation of this sort, the importance of this distinction will become apparent when discussing other *24*-related texts in chapter eight.

### 7.3 Deadlines and duration: Time as a vector

“I have to get Salazar in that chopper, in the air, in the next sixty seconds, or a hundred thousand people will die!”

- *Jack Bauer, Season 3, (5pm-6pm)*

Jacqueline Furby notes examples of *24*'s disguised manipulation of time, such as the impression of 'multiplied time' created by the presentation of 'a variety of plotlines' unfolding at once,<sup>473</sup> and the ease with which the characters apparently travel from place to place.<sup>474</sup> Despite these manipulations, she argues that time '*feels* real in that it has many characteristics in common with how we experience time as members of modern Western society, and how we feel the pressure of time in our everyday lives'.<sup>475</sup> The overall effect, she concludes, is that time in *24* appears:

Hyper-real rather than real. It is like the time we experience everyday in our relationship to external clock-time, but speeded up and multiplied.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Furby, p. 63

<sup>474</sup> Ibid, p. 63

<sup>475</sup> Ibid, p. 64

<sup>476</sup> Ibid, p. 66

For Furby, the pressure of time-running-out resembles an exaggerated version of the way time is experienced in contemporary society; the aforementioned 'clock-time' where time is 'somehow "owned" by the clock'.<sup>477</sup> But this needs qualification: while the standardised and structured time of modernity is indeed reflected in 24's 'real-time', clock-time chronotope, it is a peculiarly tenseless iteration of clock-time based on duration and deadlines.

When Paul Virilio claims that 'the organisation of calendars and the measurement of time (clocks) have... presided over a vast chronopolitical regulation of human societies',<sup>478</sup> the suggestion is that modern daily existence is structured and organised by temporal segmentation. John Postill considers the relationship between social order and the organisation of time in similar terms:

Clock and calendar time (CCT) is one of the West's most successful exports. It may not make the world go round, but it regulates (directly or indirectly) the daily rounds of most people, artifacts and representations across the world. It is the invisible hand of market, state and civil society alike...<sup>479</sup>

The 'perennial need of modern people to coordinate their actions with others within and across time-zones' influences the actions and activities of individuals.<sup>480</sup> We act according to the time of day: meals are split into time-specific periods (breakfast, lunch, dinner), we wake in the morning, sleep at night, relax in the evening, and so on. Most importantly, in this scenario, we work during the day, with our daily labour subject to numerous other deadlines and ritualised routine. Obviously these examples are not absolute, fixed or universal, but they are generally accepted as the norm.

Time in 24, in comparison, is peculiarly fluid: the clock is omnipresent and compels the action, but the emphasis is on deadlines based on duration rather than specific times of day invested with particular meaning. Attacks must be thwarted within the hour; nuclear meltdowns must be averted within twenty minutes; technicians have a maximum of two minutes to re-position satellites,

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid, p. 66

<sup>478</sup> Paul Virilio, tr. Julie Rose, *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 13

<sup>479</sup> John Postill, 'Clock and Calendar Time: A Missing Anthropological Problem' *Time and Society*, 11.2/3 (2002), p. 251

<sup>480</sup> Ibid, p. 252

and so on. In this sense, *24* echoes classical Hollywood narratives; as David Bordwell notes, ‘appointments and deadlines have long served to organise a film’s overall time scheme’.<sup>481</sup> Screenwriters use the term ‘ticking clock’ to describe certain techniques used to ratchet tension in the final act, usually by emphasising urgent impending deadlines. *24* amplifies this convention by making its deadlines constant and pervasive.

But although *24*’s protagonists are ruled by the ‘glare of liquid crystal’,<sup>482</sup> with specific times asserted and re-asserted through the regularly-appearing on-screen digital clock, particular times lack particular cultural inscription. Its protagonists do not eat or sleep or relax: whether 4:00am or 6:00pm (the show, oddly, does not use the twenty-four hour clock due to concerns that it might confuse American audiences)<sup>483</sup> the only directive is the fight against terror threats. In *24*, time is a vector: it has both duration and direction (sagittal and chronological) but does not carry further structured social significance.

Completing a task in a set time period is essential - for example in season four, episode seventeen, when Jack must locate and retrieve the ‘nuclear football’ (a briefcase containing all of the United States’ military codes) from the wreckage of the downed Air Force One before the terrorists do - but the task could as easily take place in the dead of night as the middle of the day (as it happens, this particular challenge occurs between eleven pm and midnight). Even the start and end times of each season eschew any obvious pattern: while five of the eight seasons begin between 6:00am and 8:00am, the others start at midnight (season one), 1:00pm (season three) and 4:00pm (season eight). The implication is that threats can begin and end at any time of day: the terrorists are not working recognisable shift patterns. In this respect, *24*’s format mimics the pervasive rhetoric of the War on Terror as a whole - danger permeates every second of the day, ensuring that threats and conspiracies are feared all the time. Furthermore, it draws upon clock-time’s origins in the organisation of labour: the professionals of *24* are *always* working, always active and responsive to the demands of the ticking clock.

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<sup>481</sup> David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (London: University of California Press, 2006) p. 42; see also: David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 156-7

<sup>482</sup> Peacock, ‘It’s About Time’, p. 2

<sup>483</sup> Johnny Dee, ‘24 Facts About *24*’ *The Guardian*, 10 Jan. 2009, pp. 16-7

Moreover, *24* demonstrates its preoccupation with artificial, atomistic units (seconds, minutes, hours), as opposed to natural-time, by frequently making night and day indistinguishable. While, in keeping with the ‘real-time’ conceit, day progresses into night and night into day over the course of a full season, the progression is infrequently acknowledged: *24*’s mise-en-scène is usually dominated by the artificial light of windowless government facilities and underground hide-outs, night and day indistinguishable under phosphorescent bulbs. In effect, both 3pm and 3am, for example, are rendered equivalent through dark interiors and deadline-based activities.

## 7.4 The perpetual present

“You better shoot me or help me but decide *now!*”

- *Jack Bauer, Season one (3am - 4am)*

While the frequent appearance of the clock in *24* makes constant reference to specific times (even if these specific times matter only in so much as they relate to impending deadlines), it is notable that no further temporal markers are offered. The very first season specified the date only as ‘the day of the California Presidential primaries’, with no month or year. Subsequent seasons are similarly non-specific in their year, with each season referred to as Day 2, Day 3 and so on. Furthermore, a season inevitably spans more than one calendar day - for example, if its first episode identifies the time as 4:00pm (as is the case in the final season, Day 8), then the plot-time will pass midnight by the end of the eighth episode and enter a new calendar day. Yet the twenty-four episodes are together labeled ‘Day 8’. A ‘day’ in *24*, therefore, is simply twenty-four consecutive hours - a vector of fixed length untethered to particular beginning or end points. While the minutes and hours are marked incessantly, the programme does not register the passing of calendarial days as precisely - or indeed, at all. This is a definitively modern definition of a ‘day’ - a unit no longer premised on the movements of the sun, only on the mechanical passing of atomised, measured time.

In attempts to fix dates to *24*’s narrative, websites such as [24.wikia.com](http://24.wikia.com) have compiled carefully cross-referenced timelines using ‘clues’ in the programme - for example, the existence of the United States Department of Homeland



Security in President David Palmer's administration in the second season dates it to after the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (the department of Homeland Security was established in November 2002), while a poster of Coldplay's debut album 'Parachutes' in Kim Bauer's room in season one would date the first season to late 2001 (roughly in line with its transmission date).<sup>484</sup> These act as markers by which other events can be dated - if Day 1 takes place in mid-2001, then Day 2 must take place in 2003 (we are informed that the first two seasons are separated by approximately eighteen months of story-time), and so on - a process that would date the final season to circa 2017. But these are tentative conjectures based on miniscule evidence; in general, the seasons of *24* are not given a specific year or month. Like the individual time-pressured tasks, each twenty-four hour period as covered by a season is a vector; it does not correspond to a particular, recognised date.

*24*'s creators confirm this. When a journalist visiting the set pointed out that the phone displays in CTU claim the date to be 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2012, the show's executive producer responded:

“They're technically correct, but they're emotionally and narratively incorrect, so they get to argue by putting it on the phone”, executive producer Howard Gordon says, referring to the show's chronologically obsessed set designers... Katz adds, “At a certain point we'd added up the years that spanned the series, but we're not really doing a show in the future. We're in the perpetual now.” The last word on the subject comes from the show's Emmy-winning director/producer Jon Cassar, who points out, “We avoid dates. You'll never see a date on our show ever.”<sup>485</sup>

This insistence on an absence of dates recalls John McTaggart's influential categories of time - the A-series and the B-series. Without delving too deeply into McTaggart's argument, the two formulations of time can be summarised thus. Concepts such as 'past', 'present' and 'future' belong to the A-series - they depend upon an understanding of time as a flow in which events that are

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<sup>484</sup> Though the latter only indicates the events occur later than that album's release, not that they are contemporaneous with it, just as the *Rashomon* poster that hangs in my flat does not date my living room to the 1950s.

<sup>485</sup> Daniel Fienberg, 'Looking For Clues on the Set of *24*', *Zap2It*, 17 Jan. 2007, accessed Mar. 2010. <http://blog.zap2it.com/frominsidethebox/2007/01/looking-for-clues-on-the-set-of-24.html>

future become present, and then become past.<sup>486</sup> Time in the A-series is thus subjective: as I write *now*, 1941 is seventy years in the past, while 2111 is one hundred years in the future. To McTaggart, at the time of writing in 1908, both 1941 and 2111 were future, while a future generation will consider both 1941 and 2111 to be past. However, by using dates to exemplify the A-series, I am already necessarily adopting the B-series.

The B-series organizes events in terms of being ‘earlier’ or ‘later’ in relation to one another.<sup>487</sup> 1940 is earlier than 2110; this fact is independent of any individual subjectivity. The B-series expresses the relationship between the two events as an equation of sorts, and as such, in the B-series, neither 1940 nor 2110 is ‘past’, or ‘present’, or ‘future’. They are simply earlier or later than one another. Even if I introduce my own moment of writing, 2010, all three dates remain tenseless in the B-series - 1940 is earlier than 2010, while 2110 is later. *Now* is not a moment that is reconcilable in the tenseless B-series without recourse to the tensed A-series.

McTaggart used these distinctive categories of time to argue the existence of an impossible paradox: every event must exemplify all three stages of the A-series - pastness, presentness and futurity - but since no event can be all three at once, the A-series - and therefore time itself - does not exist.<sup>488</sup> I am not interested in debating the validity of McTaggart’s logic; I evoke the A- and B- series with more modest aims. I wish to suggest that, since *24* is dateless, it exists only in the A-series of past, present and future, which produces certain ideological effects. By existing so forcefully in the present tense - with urgent deadlines in the (rapidly encroaching) future and concluded events firmly in the past, *24* privileges the present over all else, producing a subjective, ahistorical, and, to borrow a term from Fredric Jameson, ‘depthless’ formulation of time.

It should be acknowledged that, as a fiction, *24* is not, however, strictly subject to the rules of the A- and B-series of time outlined by McTaggart, a distinction

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<sup>486</sup> John Ellis McTaggart, ‘The Unreality of Time’, *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, 17 (1908), pp. 456-473, accessed Sept. 2010.  
<http://www.ditext.com/mctaggart/time.html>

<sup>487</sup> *ibid*

<sup>488</sup> *ibid*

that potentially troubles the conclusion above. As Gregory Currie observes, McTaggart himself noted this objection:

The objection is based on the claim that fictional time series possess B- but not A-series properties: I cannot judge the events of a fiction to be past, present or future, but I can say that one of them occurred before the other. McTaggart replies, first, that fictions are non-existents and so not in time at all, for only what exists can be in time. He then acknowledges that we can contemplate the events of a fiction 'as if they really happened', but says that if we do so contemplate them, we must contemplate them as located in the A as well as in the B series.<sup>489</sup>

So although we understand the events of a fiction like *24* to, overall, be ordered in the B-series of time (episode four occurs before episode fourteen but after episode two), at the moment of viewing we experience them *as if* they are occurring in the A-series. As well as occurring in the perpetual now, the fiction is experienced by the viewer in their *perceptual* now. So *24*'s events and episodes are relative to one another, but as the fiction is at great pains to stress, they are also relative to the experiential present: a voiceover from star Keifer Sutherland which introduced each episode of the first season included the words (or slight variations thereof):

*Right now*, terrorists are planning to assassinate a presidential candidate. My wife and daughter have been kidnapped...and people that I work with may be involved in both. I'm Federal Agent Jack Bauer, and today is the longest day of my life. [emphasis added]

Each subsequent season of *24* similarly begins in what is identified as the present, just as each second of the show takes place in the 'relentless present tense'. The only reference to the past tense in the above introduction ('my wife and daughter *have been* kidnapped') is used to emphasise the ongoing nature of the threat - they have been kidnapped, and remain that way; *now* Jack must save them. The programme is designed to resemble a constant stream of 'nows', which each episode resumes week-on-week. As each episode concludes with a cliffhanger designed to lure its audience back the following week, the episode which follows, by continuing immediately and without interruption after the conclusion of the last, invariably begins *in media res*. The action is always

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<sup>489</sup> Gregory Currie, 'Can There Be A Literary Philosophy Of Time?' in Jeremy Butterfield (ed.), *The Arguments of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 53-4

already underway, the clock always already ticking and the threat always already looming large. This goes for both scenes within an episode, and for the relationship between one episode and the next.

Individual scenes are also usually already underway when the narrative alights upon them, supporting the previously outlined illusion that 'time continues' for the characters and their various plights/missions/plots regardless of whether the audience is witnessing them. When an edit shifts from one location to another, the new scene is not interpreted as parallel (the sideways move implied by classical cross-cutting editing) but as consecutive - only the use of split-screen indicates parallel, simultaneous action. In effect, a switch from one location to another in *24* does not quite evoke simultaneity, since the forward progression of time, symbolised by the seconds whose passing is routinely marked by the digital clock display, is never paused or rewound; the relationship between one scene and the next is not 'meanwhile', but 'then'. In *Visible Fictions*, John Ellis described the soap opera as a 'slow history always in the immediate present'.<sup>490</sup> *24* is similarly endlessly 'present', but its sense of time never runs slow - nor does it stop, skip or reverse its direction.

Ellis also observes how broadcast television more generally suggests its own sense of existing in the perpetual present:

Broadcast TV declares itself as being in the present tense... The tight scheduling that is favoured by most large broadcast operations means that an audience wanting to see a particular programme had to be present at a very precise time, or they miss it. This increases the sense that broadcast TV is of the specific present moment. In addition, unlike cinema, the signal comes from elsewhere and can be sent live... The broadcast signal is always available during almost all normal waking hours. It is ever-present.<sup>491</sup>

The ever-presence of the television signal fosters a certain relationship between text and viewer that is distinct from that of cinema-goer and film, continuing as it does 'whether a particular set is turned on or not'.<sup>492</sup> In effect, the TV event

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<sup>490</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 157

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138

is always 'just there'.<sup>493</sup> *24's in medias res* scenes share this sense of being 'just there' - they appear to continue even when, as previously noted, the programme itself makes way for advertising.<sup>494</sup>

This is suggestive of Misha Kavka and Amy West's work on the temporality of reality television. Kavka and West write:

Dates are anathema to Reality TV. As markers of historical time, dates have a distancing, objectifying effect. Instead of dates and years, Reality TV counts hours, minutes and seconds, setting participants against deadlines, insisting on time in its smallest parameters.<sup>495</sup>

Time in reality television, they argue, is regimented but ahistorical - 'a performance of the present linked with a decontextualising of the past'.<sup>496</sup> It operates on its own vector-based deadlines (one week to complete a task; two episodes until a contestant is knocked out of the competition; an indeterminate amount of time to turn a failing enterprise around) without reference to historical time. Kavka and West imply that, where historical-time distances the viewer, the 'perpetual now' of television invites closeness. This suggests a further political effect of the 'perpetual now' in *24* - events are not only urgent, but proximate. The proceedings are without date, and therefore resist becoming dated; the threat is eternally contemporary.

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid, p. 138

<sup>494</sup> One possible objection to this supposed correlation between televisual technology and the sense of a 'perpetual present' is that it presupposes a directionless signal as the predominant means of experiencing such a text. With on-demand services, +1 channels, and set-top boxes that record to a built-in hard-drive so that the viewer can, when desired, 'pause' and 'rewind' what is being watched, as well as the previously acknowledged popularity of DVD box-sets as a means to view many series and serials, the viewer can exert their control quite easily and fairly extensively over the conditions - particularly the time - of viewing. Scheduling is no longer rigidly instructive; texts can be summoned as and when they are desired. But an objection on the grounds of technological advancements is refutable; while for most viewers, *24* is not 'just there' to tune into or risk missing, this is not to say that it does not draw upon television's residual sense of 'liveness'.

<sup>495</sup> Misha Kavka and Amy West, 'Temporalities of the Real: Conceptualising Time in Reality TV' in Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.) *Understanding Reality Television* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 136

<sup>496</sup> *ibid* p. 136

Kavka and West proceed to relate this to more general conceptualisations of television, such as Stephen Heath's 'now this-ness',<sup>497</sup> implying that ahistorical time is a particularly televisual temporal register. They conclude that reality television's ahistorical time 'creates immediacy by resuscitating the feeling of "liveness" inherent in the medium of television'.<sup>498</sup> This sense of live-ness will be returned to in chapter nine.

### **7.5 'Elsewhere on 24...': 24's split screen as chronotopes of coexistence**

In addition to the clock motif, 24's other key visual motif is its use of 'split-screen', which I identify as a single frame with internal divisions - multiple boxed images within a fixed frame (namely that of the viewing device itself, e.g. the television). Split-screen is utilised consistently to create a specific arrangement of time and space, one which visualises simultaneous coexistence. This is a less omnipresent chronotope than the clock-time chronotope - it is a chronotopic motif that occurs at frequent intervals, rather than a constant chronotope of genre as in the case of clock-based 'real-time' - but one used extensively and consistently. Through the separation of the screen into multiple boxes, the viewer finds him or her self observing multiple locations at once, and understands these events to be occurring simultaneously. Some have interpreted this as exemplary of John Caldwell's notion of 'videographic televisuality', with Daniel Chamberlain and Scott Ruston writing:

Often in the four and five frame sequences, two of the frames show the same scene... from different camera angles..., an arrangement that offers little additional narrational or character information, instead serving only to emphasise the extreme videographic style of the programme.<sup>499</sup>

In this formulation, the splitting of the screen into multiple images is aesthetic rather than structural, and unequivocally televisual.

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<sup>497</sup> Stephen Heath, 'Representing Television' in Patricia Mellencamp (ed.) *Logics of Television* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 15

<sup>498</sup> Kavka and West, 'Temporalities of the Real', p. 139

<sup>499</sup> Chamberlain and Ruston, '24 and Twenty-First Century Quality Television' in Peacock, pp. 16-7

Peacock argues, however, that split-screen is integral to the show's format, taking issue with Rob White's suggestion in *Sight and Sound* that 'the visual techniques in *24* - particularly the use of split-screen - are purely functional, subservient to the onward rush of the story':<sup>500</sup>

The technique does more than contribute to the 'rush' of the story: it is the story... The use of split screen allows *24* to connect disparate spaces, places and characters in the same frame, at the same time. This effect reinforces the sense of the scenarios' simultaneity. It bolsters the programme's use of real-time, declaring that all these events are happening at precisely the same time, are happening *now...*<sup>501</sup>

The real-time narrative conceit and the split-screen aesthetic motif are in this reading inseparable, together creating the illusion of simultaneity and multiplicity. Both co-constitute a particular chronotopic arrangement: the 'real-time' narrative implies non-reversible, linear clock-time, while the split-screen images implies multiple synchronous places adhering to said clock-time, with all events unfolding simultaneously. While the GNN evoked a similar simultaneity of plots without recourse to split-screens, *24*'s 'onward rush' and serial fragmentation necessitates more frequent reminders of the story's always co-existent multiple 'nows', which the plot selects from and foregrounds at various moments. The phenomenological awareness of myriad, parallel and simultaneous 'nows' is, Stephanie Marriott suggests, an awareness produced by instantaneous communication and transmission:

By making it possible to 'be in two places at once', electronic communication allowed its participants to experience reality as a multiplicity of disparate events, each of which was unfolding in a present moment which was simultaneous with the *now* of their own private time.<sup>502</sup>

Echoing familiar arguments surrounding technology's ability, in tandem with the ideological influence of globalisation, to constrict distance and bring far-flung locations into the immediate proximity of the individual without incurring a journey, Marriott states that:

<sup>500</sup> Rob White, 'Channelling' *Sight and Sound*, July 2002

<sup>501</sup> Steven Peacock, '24: Status and Style' in Peacock (ed.), pp. 25-6

<sup>502</sup> Stephanie Marriott, *Live Television: Time, Space and the Broadcast Event* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 31

The capacity of electronic communication to render the distant proximate - to bring what is beyond the boundaries of my perceptual field into my immediate vicinity - is dependent on two interrelated factors. The first of these has to do with the speed of transmission. Electronic forms of communication are *instantaneous* or near-instantaneous.<sup>503</sup>

She concludes:

Machines could not, however, deliver instantaneity were the world not the way it is and were we not to experience it the way we do. Instantaneity - coincidence of transmission and reception - is predicated, in turn, on *simultaneity*. Put simply, all localities co-exist in the same present moment; *all elsewheres are at once*.<sup>504</sup>

An important distinction is being made. This is not simply the familiar lament/celebration of the 'death of distance' - to Marriott, it is not so important that all places are brought into the same experiential space, but that we are made aware that all 'elsewheres' unfold simultaneously. The split-screen of 24 allows multiple 'elsewheres' to be displayed together, all visible in the viewer's phenomenological 'now'.

The instantaneity of electronic telecommunications facilitates this awareness of the interconnectedness of the planet:

It is just precisely this *simultaneity of elsewheres* which permits the complex connectivity which the instantaneity of electronic interaction brings in its wake. By switching on my computer, television or radio, by calling someone on a phone, I can instantly avail myself of an interaction with one of an apparent infinity of other localities, each of them transpiring precisely in tandem with my own.<sup>505</sup>

At a global level, this awareness is manifest in various understandings of globalisation, Marriott quoting Stephen Kern's argument that we conceive of the modern world:

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid, p. 27

<sup>504</sup> Ibid, p. 27

<sup>505</sup> Ibid, p. 30



As an apparently endless series of simultaneous elsewheres whose unfolding events may impinge upon and affect to a greater or lesser degree what is transpiring in our own locales.<sup>506</sup>

The phantom capital of global markets and the displacement of production - companies no longer tethered in space but free to establish themselves wherever in the world offers the greatest incentives - are examples of the way in which instantaneous communication allows spatially-distant, and once temporally-distant, 'elsewheres' to exert influence remotely, increasing what Donald Janelle terms 'human extensibility'.<sup>507</sup>

Marriott is careful not to suggest that electronic communication produces simultaneity, only that it enables its perception. 'Always and at all moments', she writes, 'innumerable sequences of events are transpiring in places remote from our own, whether we are aware of them or not'.<sup>508</sup> 24's split-screen visualises this by showing two or more (remote) places at once, evoking apparently simultaneous 'elsewheres'.

There is, however, a tension between the split-screen's evocation of multiple synchronous 'elsewheres' and the efforts made to appear structurally 'real-time'. The former visualises simultaneity, while the latter is forcefully focused on the 'and then-ness' of sequence. The sequential and the simultaneous are two distinct (though compatible) temporal arrangements, which are toggled between in 24. The use of split-screen following the gaps left for advertising breaks - where the various contemporaneous plots are displayed together, constitutes a narrative 'knot', a chronotope of coexistence. Rather than forcing time to effectively 'stand still' as we shift back and forth between contemporaneous action, 24 uses the split-screen to punctuate the constantly progressing chronological sequence of events, providing small moments in which to take stock of the various parallel occurrences, without interrupting the continually unfolding clock-based real-time.

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>507</sup> Donald G. Janelle, 'Measuring Human Extensibility in a Shrinking World' *The Journal of Geography* 72.5 (1973), pp. 8-15

<sup>508</sup> Marriott, *Live Television*, p. 32

By comparing the consistency of *24*'s use of split-screen to another, aesthetically similar text, the peculiarity of such a singular tie between technique and effect reveals itself. *Conversations With Other Women* (Canosa, 2005) narrates its plot - a man and a woman meet at a wedding and sleep together - entirely in split-screen. The frame is bisected, with each principle character, for the most part, occupying one half of the image. Since they spend much of the film in conversation with one another, this echoes the long-standing use of split-screen to show both sides of a telephone conversation (dating back as early as *Are You There?* (Williamson, 1902)), except in this case both parties occupy the same proximate environment.<sup>509</sup> However, the divided frame has other uses: it is also used to display flashbacks (to their first meeting), or possibly misremembrances (they dispute each other's recalled versions of events). There is also the possibility that the younger versions of the leads seen in these sections are actually contemporaneous comparative characters (since the actors playing the younger versions of the leads also appear in the background at the wedding). So already there is ambiguity in the film's use of split-screen - it is not always clear whether it displays illustrative action unfolding simultaneously, earlier events, or distorted and subjective projections. Furthermore, the split-screen is used variously to: visualise a character's imagination (when the female character guesses that the male's girlfriend is a stripper the right side of the screen duly shows a stripper); create ironic juxtapositions that are difficult to assign a chronological order; illustrate self-confessed fictions told by one character to the other; echo/repeat actions (the two sides of the screen dropping slightly out of sync in a kind of temporal stutter); or display alternative responses to a single exchange (suggesting a multiplicity of possible timelines). The split-screen is used to show past events, simultaneous events, events yet to occur, events that may never occur, and so on.

Split-screen in *24* by comparison, is indicative of only one temporal arrangement: simultaneity. The only exception to this is a shot at the end of the first season in which an image of Jack Bauer's wife Teri, a shot first featured much earlier in the season, is shown in a box next to Jack as he grieves over her dead body. That this exceptional arrangement was reserved for a sole moment

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<sup>509</sup> This also has an equivalent in *24*, when the split-screen images show two vantage points of the same event.

of extreme grief from the central character, and was never again repeated in the seven seasons that followed, affirms its unusualness: generally speaking, a split-screen in *24* will display either multiple angles on the same event, or simultaneously-unfolding events that are spatially separate. Despite *Conversations With Other Women* lasting only eighty minutes (compared with over one hundred hours of *24*), it experiments with the different combinations that split-screen makes possible, emphasising the rigidity of *24*'s split-screen usage by comparison.

## 7.6 “A delay of a few moments might destroy the hopes of a lifetime”: Split-screen, real-time and urgency

“I don’t have time to ask nicely.”

- *Jack Bauer, Season six (4pm-5pm)*

As previously asserted, using split-screen to consistently display simultaneous action in the perpetual present helps to emphasise *24*'s ‘real-time’ (i.e. clock-time) progression. This engenders a sense of urgency that leaves little space for context or contemplation. Slavoj Žižek suggests that this produces certain ethical effects pertinent to the War on Terror:

The pressure of events is so overbearing, the stakes are so high, that they necessitate a suspension of ordinary ethical concerns.<sup>510</sup>

Specifically, urgency is routinely evoked in arguments that justify the use of torture - both in *24* and in actuality.<sup>511</sup> Jack Bauer’s threat to a suspect - quoted above - iterates an argument familiarly used to advocate the legitimacy of torture as an interrogation technique: that the ends justify the means, and that intelligence must be gathered as swiftly as possible.<sup>512</sup> Long-term considerations are forgotten, immediate results taking priority over ethical consequences. Jane Mayer quotes the following from a report made by the Intelligence Science

<sup>510</sup> Slavoj Žižek, ‘Jack Bauer and the Ethics of Urgency’ *In These Times*, 27 Jan. 2006, accessed Apr. 2010. <http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/2481/>

<sup>511</sup> See Jane Mayer ‘Whatever It Takes: The Politics of the Man Behind *24*’, *The New Yorker*, 27 Feb, 2007 for further discussion of the intersections between right-wing political debate and the content of *24*.

<sup>512</sup> See Alan Dershowitz, ‘Want to Torture? Get a Warrant’ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 Jan. 2002 for one particularly high-profile example of the ‘ticking-bomb’ hypothesis being used to legitimise torture.

Board, an advisory panel to the U.S. intelligence community which discussed 24 directly:

The characters do not have the time to reflect upon, much less to utilise, what real professionals know to be the ‘science and art’ of ‘educing information.’ They want results. Now. The public thinks the same way.<sup>513</sup>

This urgency is also embedded in the fast-paced progression of the programme as a whole; if the plot of 24 is to progress satisfactorily before the end of each episode, actions must be enacted swiftly. The narrative works to its own deadline (the episode) while dramatising the deadlines of its protagonists. Interestingly, the anxiety that such perpetual urgency potentially engenders has long been noted; for example, Kern notes how George Beard’s 1881 study *American Nervousness* blamed ‘the perfection of clocks and the invention of watches for causing nervousness wherein “a delay of a few moments might destroy the hopes of a lifetime”’.<sup>514</sup>

In a less alarmist sense, the need to coordinate and organise space swiftly and in accordance with clock-time characterises not only 24’s chronotopic use of split-screen, but the use of multi-frame displays in non-fictional settings. Caroline Crosser looks closely at one-such technology in the military, conducting a qualitative study of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s usage of a new ‘command and control’, or C2, technology named Command Post of the Future (CPOF) during deployment in Baghdad between April 2004 and April 2005. CPOF is designed to allow for ‘all facets of operation - logistical, doctrinal, strategic, training, technological and organizational... to be altered to reflect their environment’ in real-time. To do so, CPOF draws together information from the Army Battle Command System (ABCS) ‘in a format that allows the easy comprehension, manipulation and communication of information of all kinds regarding the battlespace’.<sup>515</sup> The key characteristic of the CPOF system of interest to the current discussion is the manner in which the information is presented to its analyst users. Every connected workstation uses three flat-screen monitors, each with a specific function. One screen displays the battlespace as a three-

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<sup>513</sup> Mayer, ‘Whatever It Takes’

<sup>514</sup> Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, p. 15

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

dimensional simulation, another displays satellite mapping of the area amongst other things, while the third is a ‘shared view area, where collaborative planning and the dissemination of the commander’s intent take place’.<sup>516</sup> The entire system is designed to overcome what Crosser identifies as ‘the key problem encountered by the modern military’: the vast amounts of information available in the network-centric conflict space. Systems like CPOF attempt to corral and manage the information, and it is interesting that they use simultaneous multiple-screen displays to do so. Clearly, the presence of multiple display units in the setup is distinct from 24, which splits a single screen into multiple, mobile sections, but both depend upon spatially organising multiple images and information for their user/viewer.



Fig. 7.2: Command Post of the Future workstation

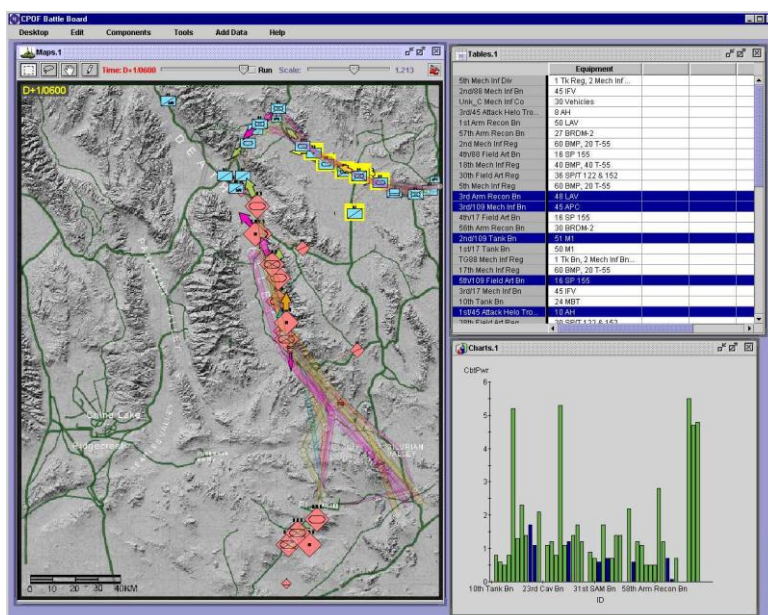


Fig. 7.3: Command Post of the Future screenshot

<sup>516</sup> Ibid, p. 15

In a similar way, *24*'s split-screen acts at one level as an organisational tool, necessary to successfully manage its multiple and simultaneous plots, characters and points of view. *24* similarly divides and multiplies its screen to represent multiple synchronous spaces. This echoes the discussion of the role 'information overload' plays in conspiracy culture - the impression of excess connections and patterns can engender suspicion and paranoia in the user/viewer. *24* plays on this paranoia to augment its plots, based as they are in elaborate conspiracies and nefarious schemes, but ultimately the split-screen image reassures by making the elaborate plots visually manageable. The same logic arguably motivated the creation of windows-based interfaces for PCs; a more common example than CPOF but one that shares the same goals of rendering multiple sets of data and multiple tasks understandable through segregated visual representation. As James Poniewozik observed in *Time* shortly after the first season aired:

Like Web pages or the headline "crawls" on cable-news screens, the [split-screen] device is a visual metaphor for busyness, implying that the program is too bursting with action for one screen to contain. It's drama for the age of information overload.<sup>517</sup>

CPOF's set-up suggests that the primary advantage of split or multiple screen displays is the increased quantity of information that can be displayed at any one time. CPOF's multiple-screens, like *24*'s split-screen or PC windows, can provide multiple perspectives or types of information *simultaneously*. Multiple screens in CPOF are therefore symptomatic of the real-time reactions necessary to wage war according to the technologically-advanced twenty-first century model. The multiple-images of both CPOF and *24* alike are motivated by a real-time component - the immediacy necessary for the military to respond effectively (and near-instantaneously) to dynamic threats in the case of CPOF, and the narrative/aesthetic evocation of 'real-time' in the case of *24*.

## 7.7 Conclusion: 9/11's attack on clock-time

The conquest of time and space..., alternating with the embrace of global war as a continuation of the dominance of the global market, are written into the

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<sup>517</sup> James Poniewozik, 'The Time of Their Lives' *Time*, 05 Nov. 2001, accessed Sept. 2010. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,182911,00.html#ixzz0z38j3gLK>

form and content of 24... Time is submitted to the rigors of the clock, similar to that of the global markets, with their tightly run periods of trading. Narrative space is broken up into quadruple pieces [by the use of split-screen], similar to the global flow of capital both across the world and through the four major stock markets of New York, Tokyo, Frankfurt and London. Narrative flow thus expresses the flow of capital.<sup>518</sup>

- *Daniel Broe*

In 'Fox and Its Friends: Global Commodification and the New Cold War', Daniel Broe foregrounds the association between a regimented formulation of time (and a preoccupation with deadlines in the drama) and global industry. Featuring the clock and its time-sensitive constraints so heavily as structuring device, motif and plot point, and combining it in the narrative with 'the aggressively militarist actions of the protagonist' dramatises a specific congruency, Broe argues, between finance and conflict, 'the very structure of Murdoch's News Corporation... written into its media products even as those products act on the public consciousness to promote this new symbiosis between global markets and global warfare'.<sup>519</sup> Broe thus explicitly links 24's 'real-time' narrative with the existence and perpetuation of the Military-Industrial-Entertainment Complex discussed in chapter one. However, we do not need to claim such a strong link (Broe's allegations are open to charges of paranoia of the type discussed in chapter four) to recognise the connections between the programme's clock-time chronotopic organisation and concepts already argued to be integral to War on Terror rhetoric, and modernity more generally, particularly multiplicity, simultaneity and urgency.

As a broadcaster, Fox invoke and reify regulated and standardised clock-time with every transmission, the television schedule exerting its own social, organisational influence. But there are, of course, occasions when normal programming is interrupted - when the temporal organisation of the schedule is disrupted and replaced by something unplanned. The suspension of 'normal programming' on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 is one such example. Though their

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<sup>518</sup> Dennis Broe, 'Fox and Its Friends: Global Commodification and the New Cold War' *Cinema Journal*, 43.4 (2004), p.100

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101

impact relied upon instantaneous broadcast (the attacks occurred in ‘real-time’ in the sense that they were witnessed by millions around the world at the moment of occurrence via television signals), the attacks were in another sense, an attack on clock-time itself. I hope in this conclusion to indicate how *24*’s chronotope of clock-time can be read as responsive to this perceived injury, while also returning to the ‘chronotope of reception’ referenced at the outset.

The chronotope of clock time stresses continuity over interruption, and is fundamentally based on a sense of simultaneity, in that it is standardised and universal. But chronotopes in narratives are not independently formed; they are responsive to the socio-historical climate in which they are evoked. Julianne Pidduck writes:

Bakhtin’s chronotope connects spatio-temporal forms of genre and narrative with the historical contexts where the work is produced and read.<sup>520</sup>

The correlation between split-screen motifs and modern technologies (from the Windows-based PC to the US military’s CPOF) suggests one such connection between chronotope and context in *24*. The ‘perpetual now’ is, at least partially, a product of the telecommunication technologies that link together space and make the individual acutely aware of the myriad simultaneous ‘elsewheres’ that are underway at precisely the same time.

A similar comparison is offered by Torin Monahan, who argues *24* is symbolic of a growing awareness of global coexistence:

The structure of the show as a real-time twenty four hour day effectively symbolises the non-stop, just-in-time production models of economic globalisation, but with an added emphasis on the need for constant self-sacrificing labour and responsibility. The future of the world depends on it.<sup>521</sup>

This non-stop, unrelenting pace is comparable to the anxiety and urgency discussed previously. In globalisation, Toby Miller and Geoffrey Lawrence write

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<sup>520</sup> Julianne Pidduck, *Contemporary Costume Film: Space, Place and the Past* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p. 104

<sup>521</sup> Torin Monahan ‘Just-In-Time Security: Permanent Exceptions and Neoliberal Orders’ in Peacock, *Reading 24*, p. 110



‘time is manipulated in concert with the interests of global capital, space is torn asunder’, emphasising the economic basis of globalisation as a world-shaping force, as well as its origins in imperialism.<sup>522</sup> Economic markets do not sleep - when Wall Street closes, the Nikkei opens, and vice versa. Time is no longer valued for its unifying capabilities - the ‘shared’ time of the nation is replaced by the onward rush of perpetual global exchange.

Except, of course, Wall Street can ‘sleep’. The New York Stock Exchange stayed closed on the day of the terrorist attacks of 2001, and did not resume trading until six days later.<sup>523</sup> The act of terrorism was very much an attack on industry, trade and transport (the choice of New York target - the World Trade Center - and method of attack - passenger planes - substantiate this), which were also identified as the main factors contributing to clock-time’s introduction in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the aforementioned suspension of television schedules, dropped so that broadcasts could be focused on the unfolding news, further disrupted the impression of time as regular and progressive: in broadcasting, times of day no longer corresponded to anything other than the ‘breaking news’ of the attacks, during which single moments (particularly the impact of the second plane) were repeated over and over. Shortly after the attacks, Bill Schaffer wrote:

From now on, it seemed, time could no longer be adequately measured by the neutral ticking of a clock, but only by the compulsive reviewing of the unthinkable.<sup>524</sup>

If industry initiated and continues to depend upon standardised clock-time, terrorism of the kind directed at the United States in September 2001, by attacking industry, attacks clock-time. It interrupted capital by targeting the financial heart of the US in New York, while simultaneously striking a symbolic blow by leveling the World Trade Centre’s twin towers, which represented capitalist expansion and prosperity in addition to their functional role in the city’s economics. It is therefore not surprising that one of the many slurs

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<sup>522</sup> Toby Miller and Geoffrey Lawrence ‘Globalisation and Culture’ in Toby Miller (ed.), *A Companion To Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 504

<sup>523</sup> Bill Barnhart, ‘Markets Reopen, Plunge’ *Chicago Tribune*, 17 Sept. 2001, accessed Sept. 2010. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-010917markets.0.5287650.story>

<sup>524</sup> Schaffer, ‘Just Like A Movie’

directed at the Muslim faith in the aftermath of the attack was to label its practitioners backwards and pre-modern.

It would be a mistake to interpret *24*'s chronotopes as a direct and conscious response to these events - for one, the first half of its first season was already written, filmed and scheduled prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. But it is nonetheless of note that, following an event during which 'time stood still' in the words of onlookers; which aggressively challenged (at least initially) the US's sense of manifest destiny (the ideological component of historical US clock-time that emphasises ceaseless forward progression); which inserted a violent caesura in the perpetual trade of Wall Street and the regimented schedules of broadcast television; that a programme in which intensely-urgent plots involving the apprehension and punishment of terrorists in swift, apparently real-time fashion, earned plaudits and viewers. *24*'s chronotopic arrangement reasserts the familiar, progressive clock-time that was temporarily traumatised by '9/11' (even now, the event symbolically stands outwith historical time when evoked without its full calendar date), by extension framing terrorism as something that can be managed, organised - even diarised to an extent - and, ultimately *controlled*. Yet at the same time, its dramatic power stems from the notion that threats are omnipresent, terrorism a sinister counterpart to the perpetual trade of global economics.

## 8 ‘Previously on 24’: Continuity, platform and paratext

With the importance of clock-time to *24* and modernity established and interrogated, this chapter will expand the field of enquiry on two fronts. First, it will use *24* to consider television narratives more broadly, analysing how continuity and complexity are organised. The way that the television sequential series arranges and manages its plots will be examined, in order to demonstrate traits such as fragmentation, interruption, and deadline-based installments. Secondly, the chapter will incorporate audio-visual texts that lie outside the television serial drama discussed thus far. Such paratexts (to quote Jonathan Gray’s adaptation of Gerard Genette’s literary terminology)<sup>525</sup> will be considered accompaniments to the main text - neither necessarily primary nor secondary, but co-constituents of its brand. I will outline the ways in which such paratexts attempt to evoke the ‘real-time’ chronotope, despite more limited durations (as short as one minute per episode).

Finally, one particular chronotopic motif will be examined in detail, one taken from Bakhtin’s own writing: the chronotope of meeting. I will propose a dynamic relationship between a narrative’s platform (i.e. the medium for which it is designed - for example, internet, DVD, television, mobile phone, and so on), and its ability to evoke global plotlines, with global plots and an impression of ‘real-time’ incompatible in a sequential series like *24*, but oddly possible in one of its paratexts: *24: Redemption*. Technology is thus the chapter’s organising theme in two senses: the co-temporality of modern telecommunication technologies will continue to inform the analysis, but will be joined by a consideration of the technology on which texts are produced and consumed.

### 8.1 Serial/series, episode/fragment

For the purposes of this chapter, I will define the television series as episodic, and the serial as a continuous narrative presented in installments. Glen Creeber

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<sup>525</sup> See: Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 6

argues that traditionally this distinction was clear, but hybrid narrative forms have increasingly led to many television dramas sharing characteristics of both.<sup>526</sup> For this reason, the term ‘sequential series’ will be used to best evoke this combination of constituent episodic narrative arcs and a consistent, continuous thread. The effect of a hybrid mix of the episodic and the installment-based in narrating an ongoing conflict will be expanded upon shortly.

The quantity of ‘War on Terror’-related television dramas is notable,<sup>527</sup> far outnumbering cinematic examples in the years immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Creeber suggests that complex historical or political topics are perhaps more effectively narrated by the serial television drama than the feature film, the format inherently better suited to multifaceted subject matter. Television drama, Creeber argues, offers ‘possibilities that cinema or theatre simply cannot’,<sup>528</sup> citing examples such as *Roots* (ABC, 1977) and *Holocaust* (NBC, 1978).<sup>529</sup> Creeber goes on to suggest that it is their longer duration (compared to a single film) that allow for ‘large and difficult narratives that [cover] huge areas of both space and time’.<sup>530</sup> He highlights the increased opportunities for narrative complexity by comparing the aforementioned examples - *Roots* and *Holocaust* - with similarly-themed films (*Amistad* (Spielberg, 1997) and *Schindler’s List* (Spielberg, 1993) respectively). Of the former comparison, Creeber writes:

While the expansive narrative arc of *Roots* crosses multiple generations, *Amistad* centres its storyline around *one* event... [This]

<sup>526</sup> Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p. 11

<sup>527</sup> In addition to the aforementioned examples: *10 Days to War* (BBC, 2008), *E-Ring* (NBC, 2005-06), *Generation Kill* (HBO, 2008); *Over There* (FX, 2005); *Sleeper Cell* (Showtime, 2005-2006); *The Unit* (CBS, 2006-2009); *House of Saddam* (BBC/HBO, 2008); *The Grid* (BBC/Fox/Carnival, 2004), *Rescue Me* (FX, 2004 - present), *The Border* (CBC, 2008 - present), *Occupation* (BBC, 2009), *The Kill Point* (Spike, 2007), *Threat Matrix* (ABC, 2003-04), *The State Within* (BBC, 2006), *Spooks* (BBC, 2002 - present) and *Spooks Code 9* (BBC, 2008). In addition, many shows which started prior to 2001 incorporated the attacks into prominent plotlines; in addition to *24*, *The West Wing*; *Alias* (ABC, 2001-06); *JAG* (Belisarius/Paramount/CBS, 1995-2005); *7th Heaven* (The WB, 1996-2007) and *Third Watch* (NBC, 1999-2005).

<sup>528</sup> Creeber, *Serial Television*, p. 6

<sup>529</sup> These are perhaps more accurately considered mini-series – a specific variant of the serial which is defined by its transmission arrangement over consecutive nights in a relatively small number of installments.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-7

risks misrepresenting history at the expense of finding and foregrounding a central moral imperative. While a similar framework is discernable in *Roots* as a whole..., it could be argued that its multigenerational narrative structure offers a more complex and pluralistic reading of history than could ever be matched by Spielberg's true, but *exceptional* storyline.<sup>531</sup>

A similar War on Terror related example might be to compare *Over There*, a 2005 sequential series set in Iraq (making it the first television drama to depict an ongoing conflict), with Iraq-war-based feature-film narratives, such as *Home of the Brave* (Winkler, 2006), *Stop Loss*, *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008) or *American Soldiers* (Furie, 2005). The main plotlines of these films include: a badly injured soldier struggling to readjust to life with a prosthetic limb (*Home of the Brave*); a soldier on leave going AWOL (*Stop Loss*); the constant fear of IEDs and the judgement calls made daily by bomb disposal teams (*The Hurt Locker*); and the similarly fraught danger experienced on patrol in the streets of Baghdad (*American Soldiers*). *Over There* manages to feature all of these plot lines in its thirteen episode run, spreading their impact across its main cast of characters: Bo (Josh Henderson) loses his leg in an IED explosion during the first episode and spends the rest of the series trying to become proficient enough with his prosthetic leg to re-enlist; 'Mrs B' (Nicki Lynn Aycox) exploits a brief return Stateside to temporarily go AWOL; a young orphan's chess set is mistaken for an IED and destroyed by a tank, prompting much pontificating on the many young, innocent casualties of war; and finally, most episodes involve at least one intense gunfight (though nothing quite on the scale of *American Soldiers*' near-constant battles). The thirteen part sequential series *Over There*, then, is able to dramatise a far greater variety of Iraq-war events, offering a pluralistic reading of the war, rather than the 'exceptional' storylines of the individual feature film, which must choose, and therefore necessarily privilege, a single aspect, promoting it above all other angles or perspectives.

It is not only the quantity and complexity of plots that the television sequential series can include which potentially distinguishes it from the feature film; the episodic structure and the combination of individual, self-contained incidents with longer, over-arching plot-lines also frame the narrative content in particular ways. The episodic, self-contained plots of *Over There* arguably

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid, pp. 28-9

provide a false sense of conclusion to particular aspects of war. Many of the episode titles alone point towards this: 'Roadblock', 'The Prisoner', 'Embedded', 'Spoils of War', 'Orphans', 'Weapons of Mass Destruction'. Self-contained incident follows self-contained incident; for example, the experience of manning a roadblock is dealt with in a complete narrative arc in 'Roadblock', the interrogation of captured insurgents similarly concluded in 'The Prisoner' and the fate of Iraqi civilian children given screen time only in 'Orphans'. The suicide bomber in 'Mission Accomplished' is decontextualised - no connections are made between that episode's narrative arc (the guarding of a make-shift prison) and the other examples, and consequentially no causal relationship is traceable. The suicide bomber is separated from the war's other episodic events, and as a result, context is ignored. If we compare this again to the GNN, the effect on causality is made clearer: while *Syriana* overloads the viewer with interconnections, giving the impression that countless causal relationships exist even if they are too complicated to be fully comprehended, *Over There* presents thirteen tales of the war in Iraq, linked only by character and location. The GNN can make geo-political interconnections its *raison d'être* and explicitly dramatise intertwined global existence, having secured the attention of its audience for its full running time; by comparison, the sequential series must allow for interruptions. Both the GNN and the television sequential series manage multiple plots, but whereas the former explores the knots of connection that bind its nodes together, the latter segregates its plots and consequently undermines the links between its individual narrative events.

However, other films structure their narratives in a manner comparable to *Over There*. For example, the aforementioned *The Hurt Locker* is arguably similarly 'episodic', its 131 minutes split, approximately, into seven distinct sections: a prologue in which Staff Sergeant Matt Thompson (Guy Pearce) is killed while defusing an IED, five episodes depicting events from Sergeant First Class William James (Jeremy Renner)'s tour of duty, and an epilogue detailing his awkward return home and decision to re-enlist. The five days each have their own miniature plot: an altercation with private contractors that leads to a protracted stand-off with an Iraqi sniper; the hunt for a missing Iraqi child; a failed attempt to diffuse a reluctant suicide bomber's explosive vest, and so on. Douglas Cunningham argues that 'each of the five days depicted deliberately offers little

in the way of active narrative causality'.<sup>532</sup> The set-pieces therefore arguably constitute episodes (as in *Over There*) rather than installments in a causal plot.

To return to *Over There*, while each of the episodic events is exceptional, in that they occur only once in a season, the programme nonetheless foregrounds consistency and repetition. While the GNN can place its characters across the globe without confusion, the television serial/series risks alienating the returning viewer if it does not include enough recurring recognisable elements. This is usually a combination of spatial and temporal elements: characters, time-frame and location. So *Over There*'s pilot episode introduces a cast of characters that will be remained with, more or less consistently, throughout. Its episodes take place over a relatively narrow time period and are emphatically restricted to the same core, key locations - Iraq, the US homeland and a German hospital for injured veterans. Very few programmes spread their characters and plots over a consistently broad geographic space; even those with international interests are usually anchored by one or two primary locations: the White House in *The West Wing*, CTU in *24* and so on. Generally, a sequential series' characters are spatially proximate and temporally synchronous.

Despite such consistencies, John Caughie notes that fragmentation remains characteristic of most television narratives:

The probability - or even possibility - of interruption [draws] television's narrative form towards an organisation around segments, little dramas which sustain their own interest within the narrative world, rather than towards the economy of causality in which sequences are linked in a chain of cause and effect, and in which missing a causal link - through inattention or interruption - can be fatal to the coherence of the narrative.<sup>533</sup>

As previously discussed, such segmentation is easily recognisable in *Over There* but the same process occurs in *24*. The individual tasks and challenges that are posed and which must be completed or achieved within a specific timeframe are the mini-narrative fragments that together constitute the larger mission. So, although there are strong serial links between installments, there are individual

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<sup>532</sup> Douglas Cunningham, 'Explosive Structure: Fragmenting the New Modernist War Narrative in *The Hurt Locker*', *Cineaction*, 81 (2010), p. 2

<sup>533</sup> John Caughie, *Edge Of Darkness* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), p. 52

events within each hour that are given a complete arc all the way to their conclusion. For example, in episode seven of season four, nuclear reactors are sabotaged and CTU systems analyst Edgar Stiles (Louis Lombardi) single-handedly stabilises them, his task well-defined and (largely) completed by the end of the episode. While six of the reactors do not stabilise immediately, fulfilling the role of cliff-hanger with which each episode concludes, otherwise the particular task and narrative fragment is complete.

When placed within the larger narrative arc, this can have the effect of further defying logic in an already far-fetched narrative. Episode eight of the same season sees a CTU mole frame an innocent analyst, Sarah Gavin (Lana Parrillia); she is tortured (the standard tool utilised by 24 when time is short, which it inevitably is), before further information exonerates her at the end of the episode. After a one-episode absence (in which she 'recovers' from her ordeal in the CTU hospital), and following a swift apology and a compensatory pay-rise, the character is back at her desk continuing her job, the issue resolved. Even grief is contained: Chloe (Mary Lynn Rajsckub) is distraught when Edgar dies in a biological attack on CTU (season five, episode twelve), but a stern talking to from Jack Bauer ensures she is back to work within the hour, focused once again on the relentless 'now' of the continuing terrorist attacks.

Such implausibility is even more pronounced in the programme's tangential plots - those ostensibly separate from the central terrorist threat. For example, Chloe's attempts in season three to covertly look after a baby while working in CTU: the incident and the questions raised - to whom does the baby belong? Why is she in Chloe's care? How will this connect to the plot to release biological weapons in the United States? - are given conclusive answers shortly after - the baby belongs to field agent Chase Edmunds (James Badge Dale); he has asked Chloe to look after her so that his girlfriend (and Jack's daughter) Kim (Elisha Cuthbert) doesn't find out he has a child; and it does not connect with the terrorist plot in any way. However, the fact that, in 24, a baby is the source of tension and mystery is indicative of the paranoid conspiracy logic in which anything and everything is a potential node in the conspiracy's sinister web. Jay David Boulter suggests this is itself an effect of real-time news coverage, which 'demands that everything must be fitted into the larger narrative', with events



outwith or uncontained by the master-narrative constituting ‘a source of anxiety’.<sup>534</sup>

Some fragmentations in the sequential series are platform-related, the consequence of television production methods in the US. Episodes are conceived and written by a team of writers, not a sole individual who pens the story arc from beginning to end. Early episodes are often completed before decisions have been made regarding the conclusion of the season as a whole. For this reason, there can be an element of improvisation in the overall plot progression. This is most apparent in *24* when considering the threats posed in each season. In all eight seasons, the threat is not singular or consistent for the full twenty-four hours; a miniature climax or resolution is usually achieved, at which point a new enemy emerges. In the first season, the split is particularly pronounced due to the uncertainty surrounding the programme’s re-commission; only twelve episodes were initially made, and it was then up to the network to decide whether to continue with the series. For this reason, the first twelve episodes of season one were designed to have a degree of completeness - albeit with loose-ends and cliffhangers to resolve should the show get its hoped-for renewal.

However, subsequent seasons, written with the assurance that all twenty-four episodes would be aired, have similar splits. For example, season five, consists of three roughly distinct acts each with their own principal antagonists. The first section (roughly episodes one to five) involves Jack Bauer attempting to clear his name when forced out of hiding and framed for a series of murders (in which terrorist James Nathanson [Geraint Wyn Davies] and White House Chief of Staff Walt Cummings [John Allen Nelson] are his main foes). For the second (roughly episodes five to fifteen), the main enemy switches to Russian separatists Vladimir Bierko (Julian Sands) and Ivan Erwich (Mark Sheppard), and Jack must prevent their impending series of attacks. Finally, the third reveals President Charles Logan (Gregory Itzen), former CTU agent Christopher Henderson (Peter Weller) and Jack’s brother Graem (Paul McCrane) as the ultimate villains; Bauer’s main task in this final section is to reveal the full

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<sup>534</sup> Jay David Boulter, ‘Preface’ in Geoff King (ed.) *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality Television and Beyond* (Bristol: Intellect, 2005), p. 11

extent of the conspiracy, and the main threat a final assault from the terrorists involving a Russian nuclear submarine.

Unlike *Over There*, which undermines causality through its episodic structure, synchronous events in *24* are given a false sense of causality. Mid-way through season six, several leads are being chased without any firm causal connection linking them together. By episode eleven, CTU are simultaneously tracking the movements of Dmitri Gredenکو (Rade Šerbedžija, a Cold War general who has been orchestrating many of the attacks), Jack Bauer's father Philip Bauer (James Cromwell, who is trying to cover up his involvement in the nerve-gas plot of season five), ex-President Charles Logan (disgraced following his role in a plot to secure American oil interests which involved the assassination of a former President), and Abu Fayed (Adoni Maropis, a terrorist cell leader from an unspecified Middle Eastern country who is, unbeknownst to him, being used in Gredenکو's scheme), among others. Meanwhile, a tangential plot to assassinate President Wayne Palmer (DB Woodside) and Hamri al-Assad (Alexander Siddig, the reformist leader of the aforementioned Middle Eastern nation, earlier framed by Fayed) is underway, led by Deputy Chief of Staff Reed Pollock (Chad Lowe), in a misguided attempt to instill Vice President Noah Daniels (Powers Boothe) as President so that a controversial national security plan can be enacted. This, Pollack and his co-conspirators believe, is the only way to protect America since the milquetoast Palmer lacks the courage to do so.

No single architect controls these figures - each operates according to individual agendas, with little to do with one another aside from the coincidence of their actions. As one plot is thwarted, another emerges, and not necessarily as a causal consequence of what occurred prior. For example, if Fayed is stopped, Gredenکو, Philip Bauer and Pollack remain; each operates independently. As well as echoing the organisation of al-Qaeda (a cell-based network of loosely connected groups falsely homogenised by members of the group and Western figures alike), this is indicative of a more general tendency in *24* (and, as argued in previous chapters, War on Terror rhetoric more widely) to present the sequential and co-existent as networked and contingent.

Therefore, unlike the GNN, which weaves disparate plots into a gradually-revealed patterned network, the duration of such mini-narratives in *24* are

restricted to only a fraction of the programme's overall running time. The story of Bryan Woodman's business relationship with Prince Nasir Al-Subaai in *Syriana*, for example, is returned to repeatedly throughout the film's two hour screen-time; the story of Sarah Gavin's wrongful arrest in *24*, by contrast, is a minor event in the season's overall plot, one with localised importance and short-term resolution. Like *Over There*, *24*'s narrative is segmented, allowing for the built-in interruptions of television noted by Caughie.

On the one hand this would appear self-evident - *24* is, after all, a television programme and not a film, and so might naturally be expected to share closer affinities with other television rather than cinematic texts like *Syriana*. However, *24*'s identity as 'television' is challenged by the brand's infiltration of multiple media, generating an increasing number of *24* paratexts. When a brand spans online content, DVD box-sets, feature length releases and so on, yet retains elements of the same chronotopic arrangements in all its forms, the question of platform specificity must be addressed.

## 8.2 Transmedia storytelling: 'Other' 24s

Comparing the multi-part television sequential series with the multi-plot Global Network Narrative implies that the chronotopes of certain War on Terror texts are partly influenced by their platform - whether cinematic, televisual or audiovisual paratexts of another variety. The cinematic GNN is global, convoluted and difficult to comprehend in its totality; the real-time sequential series *24* is elaborate, but fragmented and always comprehensible.

Up to this point, the *24* I have been referring to, and on which the majority of writing about *24* has been focused, has been the twenty-four part television drama. It is important to note, however, that *24* is not a sealed text existing in a single form. Its vast success has allowed the Fox network and creator Jon Cassar to develop the concept into a wider franchise, with numerous constituent manifestations. These include predictable merchandise such as action figures and trading cards, and not so obvious examples such as the *24: The Series* Stimulation energy drink. DVD, console and board games are also available, while a glut of official comic strips and novels add to the adventures of the show's protagonists. All of these examples inform the *24* brand, but of more

interest are the numerous other audio-visual, narrative-based *24* paratexts. These include: *Day Zero*, a series of animations available online; *The Rookie*, a short series of live-action webisodes; the *Day 6 Debrief*, a short ten minute epilogue to the sixth season, shown online and included in the region one DVD release; short prequels made to trail the then-upcoming seasons four, five and six; *24: Conspiracy*, a mobile-phone based live-action mini-series sent as media files to subscribing Vodafone users; and *24: Redemption*, a feature-length episode/film screened between the sixth and seventh seasons.

Most of these alter the real-time structure in particular ways necessitated by their respective platforms. For example, the *Conspiracy* mobisodes, created by Fox in conjunction with Vodafone and designed to be transmitted to and watched on the small dimensions of a mobile phone screen, are only one minute in duration each. Each individual episode is still nominally real-time: one minute of screen-time is equivalent to one-minute of plot-time. However, unlike the main programme, ellipses occur between episodes. While it is not inconceivable that a series of twenty-four one-minute episodes could each begin immediately after the last to produce twenty-four minutes of plot- and screen-time, it would severely delimit the opportunity for drama and conspiratorial plot developments of the kind favoured by *24* i.e investigations, chases, torture and so on.

*Day Zero* adopts a different technique in adapting the real-time conceit to its platform limitations. An animated prequel to the first season featuring the characters of Jack Bauer, Nina Myers (the CTU mole unmasked in the first season), George Mason, and Tony Almeida amongst others, its six episodes were made available to watch online following the end of season six (though have subsequently been removed, replaced by *The Rookie*). Its low-budget, crude animation makes scenes of movement laborious, so ellipses are built in to each episode to edit out uneventful movement in a more conventionally classical manner. As a result, the plot-time is greater than the screen-time: for example, the first episode's screen-time lasts a couple of minutes, while its plot is supposed to take place over a ten minute period, the depicted events taking place over a longer period than the animation's actual duration.

*The Rookie* is made by many of the same production team as the main programme but focuses on a different selection of government agents and their separate attempts to thwart various terrorist plots. The first two seasons, like *Day Zero*, are not structured to appear as real-time, with the amount of story-time covered by each two to three minutes of screen-time varying between three and thirty minutes. Its third season was extended from three episodes to six, each of longer duration, and with an extended running time, the need to constrict action is lessened, allowing *The Rookie* to adopt a version of real-time. However, there is still 'missing' action: its total plot-time is one hour, while its total screen time is around thirty minutes due to the gaps which occur between its episodes (like in *Conspiracy*). The individual episodes appear real-time (with the exception of the final episode, in which screen-time is uncharacteristically longer than the plot-time), but without the strict seriality of the series, skipping several minutes of story-time between each episode so that the end of one episode does not lead directly and without pause into the next.

However, despite these alterations, all of these examples remain clearly marked and understood as part of the same 'extended universe' as the main series in a number of ways: continued plot (the *Debrief*); casting (Kiefer Sutherland voices Jack in *Day Zero*); aesthetic elements, including the show's distinct colour scheme and soundtrack (*The Rookie*); or allusions to events tangential but connected to the plots of the main series (judging by references made to the kidnapping of Secretary Heller and his daughter Audrey Raines, the events of *24: Conspiracy* take place alongside season four, the season whose broadcast it was released to coincide with). In addition, while the real-time illusion may be weakened or absent, time is still paramount in all of these versions of *24*. In all the *24* media, allusions are made to a restricted time-frame, their episodes contained within, at most, a twenty-four hour period. The pressures of clock-time are still regularly evoked: episode one of *Day Zero* takes place between 10:17 and 10:27 p.m., and Jack and Tony have three minutes in which to escape a compromised safe-house that has been wired to explode; the six episodes of *The Rookie: Extraction* cover different durations of plot time but are given equally precise clock-times (for example, episode 1 begins at 5:00pm and finishes at 5:04pm). These paratextual examples simply employ a greater degree of ellipsis in constricting the action, ellipses that, as the last chapter

demonstrated, are also present in the main *24* sequential series. There is no essential difference between the gaps that exist between episodes of *Conspiracy* or *The Rookie* (in which the plot continues to advance) and the advert breaks of the main series; the difference is rather a matter of degree. Similarly, the editing of unnecessary action in *Day Zero* for the purposes of moving characters from one location to another without animating the entire journey is a more obvious example of the editing down of travel observed by Furby in the main programme.

Carlos Alberto Scolari argues that this variety of texts makes *24* an example of 'transmedia storytelling',<sup>535</sup> a term coined by Henry Jenkins. Jenkins defines a 'transmedia story' as one 'told across multiple media', where:

Each medium does what it does best - so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa.<sup>536</sup>

The latter point is important: I do not wish to suggest that these *24* texts are essential narrative appendages to the main series, without which the *24* viewer does not receive a 'complete' story. Rather, I characterise these texts as valid extensions of the *24* narrative, available for interested parties to explore and enjoy, without involving any major digression from the main sequential series text's plot or style. In the words of Scolari, *24*'s multiple texts constitute a 'complex semiotic device for generating multiple implicit (trans)media consumers', who can either encounter individual texts 'without taking into account the total geography of this world', or as 'open door to the *24* narrative universe'.<sup>537</sup> Whether experienced at entry level or in conjunction with the series (between seasons or episodes), these texts self-consciously evoke, and are therefore made comprehensible in relation to, the clock-time chronotope of the sequential series.

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<sup>535</sup> Carlos Alberto Scolari, 'Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds and Branding in Contemporary Media Production' *International Journal of Communication*, 3, (2009) pp. 586-606

<sup>536</sup> Jenkins, 'Transmedia Storytelling'

<sup>537</sup> Scolari, 'Transmedia Storytelling', p. 597

These secondary 24s are given a variety of labels by Scolari depending upon their position and relationship to the main serial, which he places at the centre of the 24 narrative sphere. Possible expansions include ‘interstitial microstories’ which ‘enrich the diegetic world by expanding the period between the seasons’ and ‘have a close relationship with the macrostory’ (for example, the *Day 6 Debrief*);<sup>538</sup> ‘parallel stories’ such as *24: Conspiracy*, in which another story unfolds alongside the main story - a ‘spin-off’ of sorts;<sup>539</sup> and ‘peripheral stories’ which ‘can be considered more or less distant satellites of the macrostory’ (*The Rookie* would fall into this category).<sup>540</sup> These categories help to delineate the variety of narrative forms that exist in the 24 universe, which, despite their disparities, cohere and interrelate unproblematically.

Elided time, then, has always been a factor in 24’s real-time format, and these multi-platform variations simply develop the series’ narrative slight-of-hand in ways that better suit the immediate needs of their platform - whether that be DVD extras, online content or phone-based mobisodes. Each example balances the demands of remaining faithful to the show’s distinctive real-time chronotope and making concessions to the capabilities of their respective media, as well as the expectations of their audience - even if full one-hour episodes of *24: Conspiracy* were possible, it is debatable how many fans would wish to experience them on such a small screen.

Studying these additional 24 texts also confirms ‘real-time’ as not only a narrative structure, but as an aesthetic ambition. It is clear that organising plots to appear real-time in the main series is at least partly architectural, as it places certain demands upon what plots can be included and how they unfold (as will be explored in further detail shortly with regards to global travel in 24). The real-time conceit organises the sequential-series precisely; each episode must begin immediately after the conclusion of the last, and must wind up precisely one-hour of plot-time later, and its ellipses must occur at precise moments dictated by advert breaks. *The Rookie*, *Conspiracy*, *Day Zero* and so on do not share these structural designs, yet retain the evocation of real-time as an

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid, p. 598

<sup>539</sup> Ibid, p. 598

<sup>540</sup> Ibid, p. 598

aesthetic ambition. They do more than simply reproduce the show's branding. Through the onscreen clock motif, time-based deadlines, split-screen and so on, these additional 24 narratives evoke the more fully-realised real-time illusion of the sequential-series, and while they may not be chronotopically comparable in terms of structure, they are thematically consistent.

### 8.3 24: Redemption

In 2007, the twelve thousand members of the Writer's Guild of America refused to work over a dispute regarding the monetary relationship between large studios and the writers they employ. In anticipation, some films were hurried into production,<sup>541</sup> while others were put on hold until the strike was resolved. Online commentators have cited the strike as an explanation for poor scripts being rushed before cameras before they were ready,<sup>542</sup> but the perceived effect on film production was largely speculative and subjective: as Pamela McClintock and Michael Fleming wrote in *Variety*, 'unlike in television... the natural cycle of making movies means studios have had ample time to prepare for a walkout'.<sup>543</sup>

As McClintock and Fleming insinuate, the effect upon television was more concrete. Due to the aforementioned production-model in which scripts for later episodes are not yet written when the series begins, the strike forced delays and adjustments for a number of high profile shows: most opted to cut their season short,<sup>544</sup> while others were halted entirely or postponed until after the industrial action was resolved.<sup>545</sup> 24 falls into the latter category, presumably due to the damage that would be done to the real-time format were a several-month long schism to interrupt the 'day'. The gap instead was partially filled by the first television-based digression from the main-season

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<sup>541</sup> Heath McKnight, 'Why You Should Care About the Impending Hollywood Strikes' *Screenrant*, 17 Sept. 2007, accessed Oct. 2009. <http://screenrant.com/why-you-should-care-about-the-impending-hollywood-strikes-heath-960/>

<sup>542</sup> Heath McKnight, 'Did the Writers Strike Hurt This Summer's Movies?' *Screenrant*, 05 May 2009, accessed June 2010. <http://screenrant.com/writers-strike-hurt-quality-films-heath-7460/>

<sup>543</sup> Pamela McClintock and Michael Fleming, 'Studios Prep Backup Plan' *Variety*, 13 Oct. 2007 accessed Mar. 2010. <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117975064.html?categoryId=13&cs=1>

<sup>544</sup> Examples include: *Lost* (ABC, 2004-10), *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010), *CSI* (CBS, 2000 - present), *Law and Order* (NBC, 1990 - present), *Smallville* (The WB, 2001 - present), *Without a Trace* (CBS, 2002-09) and *Prison Break* (Fox, 2005-09).

<sup>545</sup> Examples include *Entourage* (HBO, 2004 - present), which recommenced once the strike had concluded, and a planned *Prison Break* spin-off which has since been cancelled.



format, a feature-length (broadcast screen-time: two hours, actual screen time: eighty-nine minutes in its original cut) special entitled *24: Redemption*, which takes plot points that would otherwise have been covered in the first episodes of the new season. As well as keeping the franchise in the public eye during its enforced hiatus, the feature also acted as a prequel to the delayed season seven, a larger-scale version of the trend started in season four to preview the upcoming season with a short preparatory snippet of the upcoming storylines.

Towards the beginning of *Redemption*, the familiar voice of Kiefer Sutherland delivers the line which introduces every new season of the show and on which we have already dwelled upon at length: 'Events occur in real time'. While this has been shown to be an illusory fiction in all the main seasons, with hidden ellipses throughout, *Redemption's* claims to real-time are particularly tenuous. Several minutes of screen-time have already elapsed by this point, showing the brutal initiation of a young child soldier into the army of *Redemption's* main villain, a US-funded General planning a coup in the fictional African country of Sangala. These scenes are markedly *not* real-time, shifting from day (in the opening minute when Colonel Ike Dubaku walks through his camp, monitoring the training of captured children) to night (for the initiation ceremony itself) abruptly in a single edit. The screen then goes dark, and the familiar flicker of the show's phosphorescent logo sputters piecemeal into view, followed by the temporal parameters ('the following takes place between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.') and the aforementioned 'Events occur in real time' message. When the next scene begins, it is day again (3:00 p.m. in fact), and a day or two appear to have elapsed.<sup>546</sup> This concession to classical editing techniques sets up one of the main plot-strands efficiently, but to do so with brevity requires a postponement of the real-time structure. Other stylistic elements remain consistent and ensure, however, that the opening appears closely connected to the series up to this point, despite the huge change in location: short-hand motifs symbolising African militia violence - 4 x 4 trucks, the AK-47 - establish a scenario far different from any thus far confronted, but one of the first sounds

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<sup>546</sup> *Redemption* is also interesting in that it must deal with multiple time-zones; it cannot be 3:00 pm in both Sangala and Washington. If it were not already apparent, *Redemption* confirms the programme's privileging of Jack Bauer's perspective: it is his 'now' that we follow; the 'now' of the President-elect is ancillary.

heard is a mobile phone ringing, which when answered initiates *Redemption's* first split-screen conversation.

The compression of time, typical of classical narrative structures, preempts what creator Jon Cassar reportedly had planned for the structure of the long-mooted feature film version that has thus far proved logistically impossible.<sup>547</sup>

The intention, he states:

Is to do an hour that sets it up where you can go around the world and set up a story in normal film time, and probably the last hour will be in real time.<sup>548</sup>

More recent interviews conducted with Keifer Sutherland following the conclusion of the eighth and final season suggest that the plan has since altered slightly. Sutherland has been quoted as saying that the film 'would lose the real-time aspect' entirely, to permit the writers greater freedom to constrict and expand time when necessary.<sup>549</sup> As a 'two hour representation of a twenty-four hour day',<sup>550</sup> the film version of *24* would therefore abandon its structural emulation of real-time. In both Cassar and Sutherland's descriptions, the proposed alterations to the format align the potential film closer to conventional classical Hollywood narrative structures, and further from the television text's original concept - though it is likely that, as with the other *24* narratives outlined above, the pressures of real-time will still be consciously evoked through various stylistic trademarks, such as the on-screen digital clock and split-screens displaying simultaneous action.

Interestingly, as well as the intended adjustment of the real-time format for the film, Cassar mentions going 'around the world', another deviation from the norm found in *Redemption*.<sup>551</sup> As well as the Jack-in-Sangala plot, a second plot

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<sup>547</sup> Steve Weintraub, 'Keifer Sutherland Talks 24 Movie Possibilities' *Collider*, 20 Mar. 2009, accessed June 2010. <http://www.collider.com/entertainment/news/article.asp/aid/11318/tcid/1>)

<sup>548</sup> Anthony C. Ferrante, '24 Director Jon Cassar Takes a Time-Out To Discuss Season Six and the Movie' *IF Magazine*, 19 Feb. 2007, accessed Mar. 2009. <http://www.ifmagazine.com/feature.asp?article=1926>

<sup>549</sup> Weintraub, 'Keifer Sutherland Talks 24 Movie Possibilities'

<sup>550</sup> *ibid*

<sup>551</sup> While the feature film remains in pre-production, and its potential plot is unknown, an apparently leaked shooting schedule that visited London, Prague and Morocco would appear to confirm this intended international scope.

strand takes place on the other side of the Atlantic, in Washington D.C. on the day of the new President's inauguration. Allusions are also made to story-elements understood to have occurred between the end of season six (and its aforementioned *Debrief*) and the opening of *Redemption*, namely how Bauer came to find himself on the other side of the world working in an orphanage. Reference is made to a subpoena that will eventually require him to return to the US in time for the start of season seven. The subpoena is to force Bauer to stand trial for the numerous acts of torture committed against detainees, and has pursued Bauer 'across three continents', with specific reference made to India as one of his hiding places.

The internationalisation of Jack Bauer's adventures is not completely unprecedented, but ventures out-with US borders have previously been restricted in four main ways. The most obvious and lengthy journey away from US soil in the main seasons involved the pursuit of drug czar Ramon Salazar into Mexico in season three. While scenes of travel are frequently abbreviated in the main series, as noted by Furby, too great a constriction would damage the credibility of the real-time illusion. Therefore, this international movement is to a neighbouring country, to a compound located just over the border, minimising the amount of plot-time (and therefore screen-time) spent on board an aircraft, time which the writers fill with various plane-based challenges for Bauer to deal with during transit.

The second way international scenes are managed in the main series is to have these incidents take place between seasons, such as Jack's abduction by the Chinese authorities following a botched raid on the Chinese embassy in which the Chinese ambassador is killed. Season five ends with Jack being dragged aboard a tanker bound for China, and season six opens with his arrival back in the United States by plane twenty months later. The third example is similar: the opening scene of season two takes place in Seoul, South Korea, where a man is tortured to provide information on the impending attacks. With his disclosure that the attacks are about to begin, the plot moves to Los Angeles and remains there for the rest of the season. This resembles the prequel paratexts that

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preceded the fourth, fifth and sixth season - a miniature preparatory prologue, rather than a separate plot strand as such.

Lastly, international scenes are framed within conversations shown through video-conferencing windows, in which one party remains located in Los Angeles. The way in which technology representatively constricts space, will be returned to shortly.

It is interesting, then, that *Redemption's* two-hours of broadcast screen-time permit a greater global range than the twenty-four hours of broadcast screen-time covered by a single season of the main series, which always localises its plots. To understand why, it is worth examining the centrality of 'meetings' to *24's* narrative.

#### **8.4 Global 24, mobile phones and the chronotope of meeting**

*24*, in all its forms, is constructed around various meetings, usually involving Jack Bauer. Characters clandestinely plot together in darkened rooms, chase each other through cities, torture one another in holding cells, hide from each other behind conveniently located objects, shoot at each other from said hiding places, and so on. For these meetings to take place, both bodies must be broadly in the same place at the same time, with plot-progressing events in *24's* action-adventure format - the defusing of a bomb, the eliciting of intelligence through torture, the capture of a suspect - requiring physical presence of both parties at the same place and at the same time. Since this is not always feasible, the mobile phone plays a central role in *24's* narratives, allowing interaction at a distance. It is rare for an episode of *24* not to feature prominently some kind of mobile communication technology, used variously as prop and plot device. The counter-terrorism depicted in the show time-sensitive, and the urgent transmission of information from one place or person to another is one of the show's defining characteristics, with mobile phones the most direct technology available in most circumstances.

It pays to be specific about the particular type of mobile devices featured in the show. The characters invariably use PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant) or Smartphones, i.e. mobile devices with more advanced processing capabilities

than a standard phone handset, running on simplified computer operating systems. While there are a number of advantages to this detail, both to the production (the programme has had multiple product placement deals, including contracts with telecommunication companies keen to exhibit their top-of-the-range models)<sup>552</sup> and to the plot (the increased functionality allows handsets to, at various times, detonate bombs, act as GPS trackers, and interface with satellites), it also means that the phone itself is shown to operate on a form of split-screen display - schematics are downloaded, satellite images are patched through, and live surveillance feeds are streamed, each in separate windows. Within the diegesis, *24* emphasises the need to organise information in multi-image displays, echoing the conclusion drawn in chapter eight with regards CPOF, and embedding a further example of split-screen visual segmentation. The representation echoes that which is represented; *24*'s use of split-screen mimics contemporary information technologies more broadly.

The connective power of the telephone feeds back into the sense of the 'perpetual present' discussed in chapter seven. With the invention and widespread use of the landline, commentators in the early 1900s recognised the monumental impact the technology would have over not only spatial relations (bringing individuals at a distance from one another into verbal contact), but also temporal:

The effect of the telephone on the past and present was recognised at once - it eliminated the preservation of the past in letters and expanded the spatial range of the present... The historian Herbert Casson... noted that 'with the use of the telephone had come a new habit of mind. The slow and sluggish mood has been sloughed off... life has become more tense, alert, vivid...'<sup>553</sup>

Furthermore, the telephone, Kern writes, made it possible, in a sense, to be in two places at the same time:

It allowed people to talk to one another across great distances, to think about what others were feeling and to respond at once without the time to reflect afforded by written communication. Business and

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<sup>552</sup> The most long-lasting deal was with Sprint Nextel, whose handsets featured prominently (see: '24 Countdown Begins with Sprint', *Sprint Newsroom*, 12 Jan. 2007, accessed Jan. 2010. [http://newsroom.sprint.com/article\\_display.cfm?article\\_id=342](http://newsroom.sprint.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=342))

<sup>553</sup> Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, p. 91

personal exchanges suddenly became instantaneous instead of protracted and sequential.<sup>554</sup>

Mobile telephony adds another element to this transformation - what Joseph A. Tighe argues is its innate ability to transcend space and time. Tighe interprets the contemporary ubiquity of the mobile phone through a Foucaultian lens, emphasising the potential to imprison by blurring the boundary between private and public space and thereby lock its users into a system of perpetual accountability. 'Accountability', Tighe writes, 'is given through knowledge of individuals in space and time', and the mobile phone permits perpetual contact regardless of the constraints of either.<sup>555</sup> A shift occurs, Tighe argues: the ability to contact anyone at anytime mutates into the expectation that one should be able to do so. This is contrasted with the rigidity of the mobile's forebear: while the landline is fixed in space (and time, as the call will only reach its intended target if they are proximate at the exact moment that the call is placed), the mobile 'breaks apart the reference of synchronous vocal communications and the spatial contexts of the interlocutors'. Conceptually speaking, 'the cellular phone is a non-spatial-referential communicative technology'. For this reason:

Cellular phone calls are decidedly not calls from place to place, but from person to person. The cellular phone is a refinement of accountability, a way of rendering individuals accountable no matter where they are in space.<sup>556</sup>

It is this quality that Tighe likens to Foucault's concept of the Panopticon; the mobile phone ensures that neither time nor space affects an individual's reachability.

In *24*, the unreliability of mobile telephony places the protagonists in jeopardy on numerous occasions (through loss of signal or depleted battery charge, for example). But more generally the technology constitutes the connective link between disparate characters. The perpetual accountability suggested by Tighe relates to the programme's depiction of time as a vector: attempts to contact characters are unaffected by the time of day or the character's location.

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid, p. 69

<sup>555</sup> Joseph A. Tighe (2008) 'It's For You: The Cellular Phone As Disciplinary Technology' in Alvares, *Representing Culture*, p. 135

<sup>556</sup> Ibid, p. 137

However, while the cellular phone alters the nature of the individual's position in time and space, it does not eradicate their importance:

The cellular phone makes definite space and time by rendering the individual always locatable through disciplinary practice. In terms of space, the cellular phone functions as 'enclosure'... i.e. a cell. With respect to time, the cellular phone allows for a technology of time that renders the individual always accountable as an individual within a multiplicity.<sup>557</sup>

Of course, one can ignore a call or switch off a mobile phone, so perhaps 'always accountable' is an overstatement. Nonetheless, mobile telephony etiquette means one is expected to answer calls unless there is good reason not to. Furthermore, Tighe's thesis gains support from *24*'s drama, in which answering a call literally makes an individual locatable via advanced tracking devices that use global satellite positioning (GSP) to 'lock-on' to the device's (and therefore its user's) position.

Steven Peacock explicitly connects the preponderance of mobile phones in the *24* universe with its use of split-screen:

With directness and immediacy, the telephone connects the characters aurally as, for the viewer, the split-screen connects them through space, visually.<sup>558</sup>

The split-screen distorts and rearranges space visually, bringing separate places into spatial proximity. 'Real-time' disrupts 'real-space', the frame deconstructed and recomposed but the suggestion of clock-time always consistent. Black masking separates the images, a literal gap that stands in for the gap between locations, evoking distance and separation while still bringing the images into proximate contact with one another. These dark borders box space in order to emphasise synchronous time. If, as Tighe suggests, the mobile phone encloses its user in a cell of accountability unaffected by spatial parameters, this 'cell' is visually echoed by the split-screen's constriction of the frame around the conversing character.

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid, p. 139

<sup>558</sup> Peacock, 'It's About Time', p. 27

While these mobile phone exchanges ensure that characters can be contacted and put in communication with one another when necessary, the requirements of an action-oriented show such as *24* means that, in addition to being accountable, the individual must then be in a position to act; hence the inability for the show to cover the same global breadth as the GNN without sacrificing its real-time conceit. Where the GNN explicitly dramatises the web of interconnectedness, foregrounding nodes and links, *24* is essentially working mono-directionally towards a dramatic resolution. The show is avowedly linear and chronological, and its multiple plots and characters are always in service to its central strand: the protection of the United States from terrorist attack. So although the individual within the multiplicity is made perpetually accountable through the mobile phone, they cannot remain geographically separate from others if they are to influence the outcome of events directly.

To use Stephanie Marriott's terminology, the show requires mediated encounters (i.e. those conducted via technological means at a distance) to, at some stage, become canonical. In a canonical encounter:

Space (the set of relations between relevant objects and individuals) is fundamentally linked to place (the arena in which these relations are structured), so that all the relevant physical relationships between conversational participants, and between those participants and the objects around them, are constrained by the boundaries of the locale in which they find themselves. Two or more people in the same place thus loosely share a set of spatial relations to their immediate environment and to each other.<sup>559</sup>

The show's real-time conceit makes this impossible if the plots are spread over too large a geographic distance. So if, for example, the plot of the paratext *Redemption* had been used as the opening episode of season seven as intended, it would presumably have required considerable alteration. The time taken to travel from the west coast of the United States of America to any point in Africa is considerable,<sup>560</sup> so moving a character from one to the other would be prohibitively lengthy, unless abandoning the real-time conceit entirely.

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<sup>559</sup> Marriott, *Live Television*, p. 10

<sup>560</sup> The precise location of Sangala is never specified, though it is nominally in the West near its name-sake Senegal: when it is 3:00 p.m. in Sangala it is 10:00 a.m. in Washington, so if Washington observes EST, then Sangala must observe Greenwich Mean Time. Furthermore, it is Francophone, and its military coup, child soldiers and coastal location suggest it was modelled upon Sierra Leone, Liberia, or somewhere nearby



*Redemption* avoids this problem by keeping its plot strands separate throughout, with the African-set characters (including Bauer) not interacting directly with the Washington-set characters (other than a single conversation via satellite phone), and as a result, the connections between the two strands are left unresolved and vague. This is in stark comparison to the main television show, which promises to eventually connect everything, solving every mystery in the process; sometimes only an episode or two after questions are first posed, sometimes left hanging, to be picked up and resolved in subsequent seasons. This is partly due to *Redemption's* prequel status - though largely stand-alone in its plotting, several characters are included seemingly in order to prepare viewers for their presence in the seventh season, rather than because they are essential to the events of *Redemption* specifically. While characters like Carl Benton (Robert Carlyle) exhaust their role in the *24* universe by the plot's conclusion (unequivocally so following his death by landmine), others, such as the shadowy businessman and weapons contractor Jonas Hodges (Jon Voight) and the new President and First Gentleman (Cherry Jones and Colm Feore respectively) receive little more than brief introductions. Their roles in the events of *Redemption* are either unclear (in the case of Hodges) or yet to exist (in the case of the President), but are subsequently explored in greater detail in the seventh full season due to the exhaustive efforts of Bauer. However, I would argue that the vagueness of *Redemption* is more than just an effort to prompt interest in the forthcoming full season, but is an effect of its platform. To do so, I wish to return once again to the Global Network Narrative.

As previously discussed, having *24's* hero Jack Bauer become embroiled in international affairs is a clear break from the domestic anti-terrorist activities dealt with in the main series. Even the examples of previous international ventures were framed always in relation to the risk they posed to the United States homeland - such as the pursuit of the Salazars into Mexico in order to intercept the exchange of deadly biological weapon that threatens the US. *Redemption* has Jack choose to intervene in a conflict occurring on the opposite side of the world from his erstwhile home of Los Angeles, a conflict which poses no significant threat to American safety (even the evacuation of embassy staff successfully occurs without loss of life). While season seven subsequently turns the Sangala-coup into a matter of domestic security by having Colonel Ike

Dubaku lead an unlikely assault on the US infrastructure in an attempt to force the newly-elected President to cancel the intended invasion of Sangala, during *Redemption* the connection between Sangala and the United States is diplomatic, not militaristic. While the incumbent President is faced with her first foreign policy decision in Washington, it is not a time-pressured threat of the kind which *24* usually forces its Presidential characters to contend with. No final conclusion is required by the end of the (twenty-four hour) day.

There are strong similarities here to the GNN cinematic narrative. Where *Syriana* confounded easy comprehension with its labyrinthine plot-connections, and *Babel* left some of its stories unresolved and the inter-connections loose, *Redemption* follows suit by beginning and ending with its characters separated by thousands of miles, without any clear answers as to how they are all eventually to be connected. Due to its commitment to retaining the real-time conceit, *24* can only allude to the complexity of global networks if it keeps its plotlines apart for the entirety of its narrative run - a problem in a twenty-four part sequential series but less so in a two-hour special. As in the GNNs, the disparate locations are made proximate through editing (and, in the case of *24*, split-screen), but the characteristics of each separate space are not lost; the editing does not destroy geographical distinction. The aforementioned motifs used to symbolise 'Western African state at war' - AK-47s, 4 x 4 trucks - starkly contrast with the equivalent representational motifs of bureaucratic Washington - tailored suits, limousines and background secret-service agents. Colour is similarly juxtaposed - steel, blue, grey Washington against earthy, yellow, brown Sangala - and while both plot strands take place during daylight hours, the low-light of early-morning Washington is clearly distinct from the bright sun illuminating the Sangala scenes.

I would argue that only by adopting the narrative organisation of the GNN can *24* evoke the vast net of global interconnectedness I suggest is central to rhetorical formulations of the War on Terror more broadly. In the main series and its various internet and mobile-based paratexts, the real-time concept places limitations on its geographic scope,<sup>561</sup> which *Redemption* is able to expand upon,

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<sup>561</sup> In the secondary *24* media, only *The Rookie: Extraction* ventures out-with the US, staging all of its action in Mexico itself (a continuation of the Salazar-plot of season three). By beginning and ending its hour in a non-US location, the problems posed by transport are avoided.

but only by sacrificing the narrative clarity that the series otherwise strives towards. Since it cannot solve every puzzle in just two hours of plot-time, it leaves certain questions relating to the links between one continent and another (the US and Africa) unanswered (which the subsequent season then resumes). The global network, then, is necessarily incomprehensible in its myriad interconnections, whereas the main programme's depiction of domestic anti-terrorism agencies is comfortingly simple - in retrospect, at least, all the pieces fit and the threat is averted. In *Redemption*, we are given clues that suggest connections exist - connections that may potentially threaten the United States - but the pieces do not fit, at least not yet.

This potentially contradicts Creeber's suggestion that the television drama can more effectively represent complex, multifaceted events due to its longer duration. The cinematic GNN can make the complexity of global socio-politics its principle theme, as can *Redemption*. *24* can (and indeed does) explore the various plot strands in greater detail in the following season, but in doing so it loses the sense of global complexity: international politics become domestic, and the complex global network boils down to one man's city-based attempts to thwart the terrorist enemy.

## 8.5 Conclusion

'Real-time' was discussed in the previous chapter as both an articulation of artificial 'clock-time' and as a structural component of *24*'s narrative, which engendered particular effects (such as the suggestion of a 'perpetual now' shorn of historical context). Despite the necessary dilution or loss of the real-time structure in the *24* paratexts, elements of 'real-time' are retained through a continued thematic and stylistic emphasis on time and duration. The 'real-time' illusion is no longer as convincing, but it remains present as an aesthetic ambition: immediacy, instantaneity and so on are not simply by-products of technology and the core show's structural conceit, but are evoked aesthetically, a conclusion important to the next chapter's discussion of cinema's mimicry of live transmission and technology-facilitated instantaneity.

The second conclusion drawn from this chapter is equally important to the aforementioned task: while chapter seven concentrated on specifically televisual

tropes and traits, this chapter acts as a conduit, bringing together conclusions drawn from analysis of a television text and conclusions drawn from the cinematic Global Network Narrative together. The various media manifestations of *24* illustrate how vastly different narrative structures told through vastly different media platforms retain similarities by embedding the core narrative's chronotopes - in this case, clock-based real-time narration - in the paratext's aesthetic. Particular narrative forms have particular ideological effects and shape the subject matter in particular ways, but there is arguably a growing hybridity, in which different media 'learn' from one another. The case study of *24: Redemption* exemplifies the way that the structural demands of a particular media platform can necessitate particular organisations of time and space - specifically, proximate and clear connections in the real-time sequential series, compared with disparate and obscured connections in the two-hour feature - but that similarities can be traced across different platforms.

In '24 and Twenty-First Century Quality Television', Scott Ruston and Daniel Chamberlain compare *24*'s split-screen image to television news and sportscasts, both of which 'use the split screen to emphasise simultaneity of experience, whether during a crucial point of the game, or to unite geographically distant guests of a news programme'.<sup>562</sup> *24*, they argue, adopts 'the visual markers of live television'<sup>563</sup> without actually being 'live' in the way that a football match or news bulletin is.<sup>564</sup> Its sense of liveness is evoked through its aesthetic design; for example, a freely-moving, hand-held camera follows the movement of characters, giving an impression of spontaneity and unpredictability.<sup>565</sup> Liveness in *24* is 'a set of communicative mechanisms... an effect, rather than a concrete question of time and space'.<sup>566</sup> *24*:

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<sup>562</sup> Chamberlain and Ruston, '24 And Twenty-First Century Quality Television', p. 17

<sup>563</sup> Ibid, p. 17

<sup>564</sup> Ibid, p. 17

<sup>565</sup> The making of feature on the *24: Redemption* DVD reveals that the show invariably has a hand-held camera operator as well as the standard static cameras, and that the hand-held camera is privileged (the 'A' camera).

<sup>566</sup> Marriott, *Live Television*, p. 52

Performs immediacy in ways which are not ontologically given but which have devolved, rather, from the communicative imperatives of the [television] medium.<sup>567</sup>

Chapters nine and ten will consider how such ‘communicative mechanisms’ operate in a range of texts drawn from across multiple platforms, examining the way in which ‘liveness’ is evoked, crafting a visual and aural aesthetic modeled at least partially on the unpredictability of ‘raw footage’.

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid, p. 52

## 9 Raw footage, performance and non-fiction

The air war started with a split-screen war of images: in one box, a desolate Kabul seen through a night-scope camera lens, in grainy-green pixels except for the occasional white arc of anti-aircraft fire... In the other, a rotating cast of characters, beginning with President Bush... On the one side we witnessed images of embodied resolve in high resolution; on the other, night time shadows with nobody in sight.<sup>568</sup>

- *James Der Derian*

Life imitates art, but so do documentaries.<sup>569</sup>

- *Jeffrey Chown*

This is a war where the best footage is all shot by the people on the ground; either the insurgents shoot footage or the American troops shoot footage, and that's probably also influenced the way people depict the war.<sup>570</sup>

- *Nick Broomfield*

A terrorist plot unfolds onscreen, captured on a shaky, hand-held camera. A clock appears in the lower part of the screen, the metallic sound of its seconds ticking over emphasising the immediacy of the unfolding drama. As the familiar voice of Keifer Sutherland bemoans the unreliability of intermittent cell-phone coverage, the screen contracts. The space around it fills first with blackness, then with other images: multiple aircraft have been hijacked, and are approaching their grim destinations miles apart but concurrent in time. Later another split screen emphasises the full scale of this terrifying plot: four targets,

<sup>568</sup> James Der Derian, 'The War of Networks' *Theory & Event*, 5.4 (2001), accessed July 2009. [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory\\_and\\_event/v005/5.4derderian.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.4derderian.html)

<sup>569</sup> Jeffrey Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War: A New Genre For New Realities' in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (eds.) *Why We Fought: America's War in Film and History* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), p. 480

<sup>570</sup> Simon Hattenstone, 'No One Wants to Know' *The Guardian*, 08 Mar. 2008, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/mar/08/features.iraqandthedia>

three already in smouldering ruin and one endangered. The summary displays many of the hallmarks of an episode of *24*, but it is not an episode of *24*.

The text described is *9/11: The Flight That Fought Back* (Goodison, 2005), a documentary covering one strand of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, with tangential reference to the day's wider events. The film features talking-head interviews with the families of United 93 passengers, who perished when their plane was crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, after what is popularly understood to have been a selfless act of insurrection. Interviews are combined with other familiar documentary stylistics: a contextualising voice-over, historical source material (in this case the inclusion of actual sound recordings from the cockpit of the hijacked flight) and clips taken from contemporaneous news reports. Additionally, acted and scripted 'reconstructions' feature heavily, dramatising scenes for which no visual record remain. The external images of the plane are computer generated, and the majority of the action shown is a best-guess speculation of the unknowable final moments on the flight.

This combination of documentary and drama conventions is hardly unique, but the explicit evocation of a particular television fiction - the star persona of Keifer Sutherland; split-screen; an onscreen, audible, digital clock - is more unusual. *24* was only four series old when *The Flight That Fought Back* premiered in the US on the fourth anniversary of '9/11'. Yet for the makers of *The Flight That Fought Back*, this was the preferred template for narrating a real event; its factual claims viewed through the prism of a specific fiction's aesthetic. These 'interpretive cues', Mike Chopra-Gant suggests, are a deliberate frame designed to organise the filmmakers' 'preferred reading of the film'.<sup>571</sup> The components of this preferred reading are only one of the questions this chapter hopes to address. More broadly, *The Flight That Fought Back*'s merging of actuality and recreation, the evocation of television fiction alongside claims to documentation and verisimilitude, represents important wider trends in War on Terror narratives.

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<sup>571</sup> Chopra-Gant, *Cinema and History*, p. 93

In the previous chapters, structural strategies were characterised as aesthetic choices rather than inherent characteristics of particular media. The 24-mimicry of *The Flight That Fought Back* suggests that such aesthetic choices eventually become naturalised ways with which to narrate and organise particular types of plots, regardless of their relation to actual events.<sup>572</sup> The final chapters will identify and provide evidence for one such example: the frequency with which a performed ‘raw footage’ aesthetic is adopted in audio-visual depictions of the War on Terror, with the term ‘raw’ describing footage that appears free from editorial intervention or manipulation; that has been spontaneously captured as fully as the situation permits. Note that I say that it ‘appears’ this way, not that it *is* that way: as I will shortly argue, this effect can be staged and performed in addition to being, in some cases, a situational necessity. I will begin by identifying ‘caught-on-camera’ citizen journalist footage in news reports of 9/11, and suggest a corresponding emphasis on unprepared reactions in observational documentaries, before chapter ten considers the implications of a performed pseudo-footage aesthetic in fiction texts. Throughout I will argue that the evocation of ‘raw footage’ does more than influence the visual aesthetic; it involves a structural impact as well.

This chapter will begin with a brief history of the visual documenter in war. This will re-introduce the influence of particular technologies on narrative form, with the quantity and immediacy of roughshod reports - often transmitted live - shown to frame the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular ways. I will then briefly examine the body of documentaries made about the subject, drawing upon more detailed research into the documentary boom to sketch key trends. A case study of *The War Tapes* will expand upon the most pertinent of the trends, involving the observational embedded filmmaker, which will lead to a more theoretical consideration of the implications and associations of ‘caught-on-tape’ footage. From this, a ‘raw-footage aesthetic’ will be identified and defined, characterised as reactive and unprepared, but also suggestive of authenticity. The raw-footage aesthetic downplays the constructedness of filmmaking and emphatically and self-consciously defines itself as unscripted, uncontrolled and unmanipulated.

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<sup>572</sup> See: Donald Matheson and Stuart Allan, *Digital War Reporting* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 72



Frequently I will use the term ‘visual documenter’ to refer to the camera-operator, a deliberately ambiguous term intended to be applicable to all of the various types of ‘cameraman’ as touched upon in his chapter. When necessary, the particular type of visual documenter will be specified, whether that be freelance documentary filmmaker, network photojournalist, amateur civilian or the self-documenting subject. But this chapter will ultimately argue that, at an aesthetic level, there is hybridity between these categories, and therefore their distinctiveness from one another is, for the most part, less important than their similarities.

## 9.1 The visual documenter at war

The role of the cameraman in war dates back as far as the Spanish-American War of 1898; that of the photographer to the Crimean War of 1854-5; and that of the written documenter considerably further still. The relationship between the military and journalism is always dynamic, the level of co-operation and trust shifting over time, and varying according to the nature of the conflict in question: protests over the Vietnam War are routinely claimed to have been considerably strengthened by the shock engendered by uncensored images sent home by cameramen in the field;<sup>573</sup> the intervention in Bosnia in the mid-nineties by a US-led NATO is frequently associated with ‘the CNN effect’, the imperative to act in a given situation influenced by the coverage afforded it by news outlets.<sup>574</sup> In one example, distaste and outrage hasten the withdrawal of troops; in the other, those same emotional responses are used to help justify their deployment. Tracing the vicissitudes of the fluctuating relationship between the military and journalists far exceeds the abilities of this thesis. However, several issues, lifted from the work of others, will help to contextualise the proposed move from a composed, glossy textual style in news reports of the first Gulf War, to what I will call a ‘raw footage’ aesthetic visible in coverage of the War on Terror.

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<sup>573</sup> It should be noted that this orthodoxy is not without its opponents – for example, Daniel C Hallin, presents an conflicting view in his study *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984)

<sup>574</sup> See Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (London: Routledge, 2002) for a book-length study of the term.

Paul Virilio notes that in the Great War of 1914-18, the photojournalist was distrusted by the military establishment:

Vaguely lumped in the same category as spies, civilian filmmakers and photographers were generally kept out of military zones.<sup>575</sup>

The job of documentation was left to illustrators and engravers, and the fictionalisation and embellishment that partially shaped their work is an early indicator of the themes that will be explored in the next chapter. This distrust of photojournalism stems from an awareness on the military establishment's part of the strategic advantage visual surveillance affords; visual documents outwith the control of the strategists and generals were potentially dangerous, or at the very least not to be encouraged as they could potentially aid the enemy. By the Second World War, however, the roles were altered, and the visual documenter was incorporated into the military effort. Filmmakers like John Ford, though not strictly speaking journalists as such, lent their abilities:

From on board a freighter, Ford meticulously filmed the approaches and defences of all the major Eastern ports... Among other things, what Ford would retain of his military career were those almost-anthropomorphic camera movements that anticipated the optical scanning of video surveillance.<sup>576</sup>

The observation from Virilio concerning the influence of this role on Ford's later work pre-empts the next chapter's conclusion: that an aesthetic originating in documentary practice (of a sort) has influenced depictions of the War on Terror more broadly, its connotations carrying particular ideological power. But although the detached surveillance style suggested in the above passage has its War on Terror counterpart in the closed-circuit television aesthetic discussed earlier in relation to *Redacted*, the aesthetic I am currently concerned with is much less composed and much more subjectively personal.

Moving on to the American war in Vietnam, the visual documenter's role in the war zone changed again. Virilio identifies the censorial attitude prompted by the media's perceived role in 'losing' the war:

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<sup>575</sup> Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, p.48

<sup>576</sup> Virilio *The Vision Machine*, pp. 49-50

Photographers, the group who had contributed so much to the Allied victory against the Nazis, were soon to precipitate America's defeat in Vietnam... [And] once the military twigged that photographers, steeped in the traditions of the documentary, now lost wars, image hunters were once again removed from combat zones.<sup>577</sup>

This censorial reaction originates in a fear of the power contained within the image. For examples of this fear's manifestation in the War on Terror, one need only consider the photographs of the torture at Abu Ghraib, the US government's reaction to their being made public suggesting awareness of the threat posed by a visual record.

While international journalists were permitted during the first Gulf War in 1991, their ability to report was similarly censored. The distrust of unyoked reporters was strong enough for CNN's chief correspondent Peter Arnett to be labelled in some quarters as an Iraqi sympathiser, and President George HW Bush was reportedly angered that attempts to demonise Saddam Hussein were undercut every time a US network aired footage of Hussein amiably meeting with Western hostages.<sup>578</sup> This charge was particularly frequent when it came to those stationed in Baghdad, since their presence was necessarily authorised by the Iraqi government, leaving such reporters open to charges of concession and manipulation.

Ironically, the other frequent charge levied at Gulf War coverage was its unquestioning adoption of the official version of events provided by politicians and the military. Philip Taylor remarks how reporters on the ground in Iraq frequently relied upon news stories coming through on the wire that they simply regurgitated for the camera, recycling it as news borne of their own volition.<sup>579</sup> This was partly due to the restrictions placed on reporting. While news teams covering the Gulf War broadcast audio-visual material live around the world, the content of that footage was carefully managed. The regulatory efforts of the US Department of Defense intensified as technologies of live transmission became more powerful, widespread and portable. There was no longer a delay of days and weeks as reports were filed or photographs shipped back home from the

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-6

<sup>578</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 7-8

<sup>579</sup> Ibid, p. 14

battlefield; footage could be sent unfiltered from the frontline, which posed new challenges to the military's press corp. The Annex Foxtrot memo which circulated in 1990 spelt out the US military's policy. Written by chief Public Affairs Officer Captain Ron Wildermuth, one frequently reported rule stated that 'News media representatives will be escorted at all times. Repeat, at all times'.<sup>580</sup> *The New York Times* noted:

The Gulf War marked this century's first major conflict where the policy was to confine reporters to escorted pools that sharply curtailed when and how they could talk to the troops.<sup>581</sup>

For those that agreed to its conditions, the arrangement allowed for aesthetically-attractive image-making, so long as the results were favourable to the military's preferred representation. At times, the images were closer to a cinematic frame of reference than a televisual one:

The Gulf War looked very different from an ordinary news event. In part, this was because of the unusual sense of power conveyed by the images - the armour surging forward, the F-15E thrusting into the air with afterburners glowing, the sixteen-inch guns of the battleship *Wisconsin* belching fire. But there was something else distinctive about many of these images: they were beautiful.<sup>582</sup>

This composed beauty, I will suggest, is less characteristic fifteen years later, though the resemblance between news footage and contemporaneous fiction arguably remains in an altered form. Where the above description of the 1991 Gulf War news coverage evokes the spectacle of a film like *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986), which made a similar exhibition of military hardware via stylised action shots, I will argue in this chapter and the next that depictions of the War on Terror in news media, television and cinema emphasise 'rawness'.

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<sup>580</sup> Quoted in John R. Macarthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 7

<sup>581</sup> Jason DeParle, 'After the War: Long Series of Military Decisions Led to Gulf War News Censorship' *The New York Times*, 05 May 1991, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/05/world/after-the-war-long-series-of-military-decisions-led-to-gulf-war-news-censorship.html>

<sup>582</sup> Daniel C. Hallin and Todd Gitlin, 'The Gulf War as Popular Culture and Television Drama' in W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (eds.) *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 155

As well as the obligatory escorts, press pools were established that dictated which reporters could work when and where. While this method of information control has been labelled propagandist and a victory for the military in its 'battle' against the media (during this period the two are frequently characterised as foes, not allies), the majority of commentators also note that the media happily acquiesced, lobbying perhaps for preferential access, but honouring and adhering to the restrictive framework set out for them, 'keen to cooperate with the hands that fed them with their tit-bits of vital information'.<sup>583</sup> When the war was over, there was no deluge of reporters, freed from gag orders, ready to admonish the military's clampdown on their profession and unveil the 'True Story'. I mention this so as not to falsely simplify the relationship between the military and the media as binary and oppositional at this stage. However, the way in which the media were effectively managed in the Gulf War has relevance to the tactics employed the second time the US invaded countries in the Middle East.

By the time the US military entered Afghanistan in 2001, the method of news control had shifted tactics from exclusion to inclusion. In a bid to regulate journalistic output at least partially, journalists were now 'embedded' with troops. The guidelines issued by the Department of Defense specified that:

These embedded media will live, work and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of U.S. forces in combat and related operations.<sup>584</sup>

The logic, according to Chown, is that pairing a reporter with specific soldiers, whose names, faces and personalities the journalist would learn and remember, would result in a more sympathetic, or at the very least empathetic, portrayal of the conflict.<sup>585</sup> Embedding placed reporters in the midst of action alongside those fighting the war. Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson comment:

Embedded reporters ate, lived, traveled and slept with the troops. They choked on the same sandstorm grit and carried the same mandatory gas mask and chem. suits. They dined on the same MREs

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid, p. 272

<sup>584</sup> Department of Defence memo, Feb. 2003, accessed Oct. 2010.  
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/othergov/dod/embed.pdf>

<sup>585</sup> Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War', p. 459

(Meals Ready to Eat), and bounced along the same rutted desert tracks. They faced the same enemy fire.<sup>586</sup>

This threat is important: with an increased number of journalists in the midst of the fighting, risks to them also increased. John Higgins and Alison Romano estimate that journalist deaths in Iraq surpassed those of the whole of World War 2 by 2008,<sup>587</sup> while Katovsky and Carlson claim that ‘statistically, journalists were ten times more likely to die than the 250,000 American and British soldiers’.<sup>588</sup>

The visual record of such death and destruction also reached its audience substantially faster than in World War 2; transmission technologies had superseded those used even in the first Gulf War many times over, and if ‘liveness’ was a key trope in coverage of the first war in Iraq, it was even more so the second time around. This instantaneity allows, like the GNN’s multiple plotlines, coverage of the world *now*, simultaneously experienced in multiple locations (the ‘here’ of the viewer watching at home and the ‘there’ of the flak-jacket-wearing embedded reporter). The embedded visual documenter, closer to the front line than press pooling or outright exclusion would allow, and keen to stress their presence alongside those doing the fighting, is strategically placed to privilege such live, perilous up-close-and-personal immediacy.

The visual documenter in the War on Terror’s battlefield is identified, therefore, as imperiled by the situation and responsive to instantaneously unfolding events. Composure is challenged: carefully organised reports are destabilised by potential jeopardy and situational unpredictability. It is irrelevant whether this danger is genuine in each individual report; similarly, the actual ratio of reports actually transmitted live compared to those pre-recorded, a ratio that a quantitative study could calculate,<sup>589</sup> similarly has no bearing on the point at

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<sup>586</sup> Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq* (Connecticut: Lyons Press, Guilford, 2003), p. xi

<sup>587</sup> John M. Higgins and Allison Romano, ‘Why Journalists Risk Their Lives to Cover Iraq’ *Broadcasting & Cable*, 136:23, 04 June 2006, accessed Oct. 2010.  
[http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/104403-Why\\_Journalists\\_Risk\\_Their\\_Lives\\_To\\_Cover\\_Iraq.php](http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/104403-Why_Journalists_Risk_Their_Lives_To_Cover_Iraq.php)

<sup>588</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, *Embedded*, p. xi

<sup>589</sup> 62% of reports shown on US television in 2004 were live, according to The Project for Excellence in Journalism (‘The state of the news media: An annual report on American

hand. What is relevant is that a live, imperiled and reactive aesthetic gains visibility in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, partly as a result of technological advances and partly due to alterations to the military's organisation of media personnel.

To explain the way a practical, organisational decision (i.e. embedding) effects the War on Terror aesthetic more generally it is worth re-considering a second form of embedding, one discussed at length in previous chapters: that of placing one frame (or more) within another. News reports frequently utilise multiple displays to cover a story: a studio will often feature banks of display units and monitors that dominate the set dressing, while a typical report might include a shot in which the studio-bound anchor converses with a field reporter in Kandahar, Baghdad, Peshwar or other commonly-visited locations through a video link-up. The word 'live' is usually emphatically printed on the screen during such exchanges, emphasising that both the trusted anchor and the intrepid war correspondent are communicating across vast distances, and that we are witnessing the exchange *as it happens*. The creation of this sense of liveness is more than just technological, and indicated by more than just the superimposed 'live' stamp. Other aesthetic elements connoting 'liveness' include: a corrupted data feed from the satellite link-up leading to a breakdown in image fidelity; time delays that punctuate long-distance verbal exchanges; or the sight of a still and unresponsive reporter unable to hear the anchor when the audio connection is lost.

While this type of news report is often actually live - transmitted and broadcast via satellite near-instantaneously at the moment of recording - other visual documenters do not proffer their footage so immediately. Their recordings will not be consumed until much later, after being shaped in the edit suite in preparation for feature-length broadcast or theatrical release, yet with their 'rawness' strategically preserved to some extent in the finished article. The type of visual documenter to which I refer is the documentary filmmaker.

## 9.2 The War on Terror documentary

With camcorders on the battlefield and both sides using the Internet, the Iraq war has become the first 'digital' war.<sup>590</sup>

- *Jeffrey Chown*

Thanks to the ubiquity of the web-cam, sky-jackings take place in real time.<sup>591</sup>

- *Lee Rodney*

Susan Carruthers, author of several articles on the War on Terror documentary, comments upon their numbers and possible motives:

Dissatisfied with mainstream media and frustrated by an administration intent on curtailing the war's visual record, many independent filmmakers have been drawn to Iraq. The result: a significant corpus of documentary films.<sup>592</sup>

As well as aligning the feature documentary with the investigative journalism role discussed in relation to conspiracy culture in chapter four, this quote reintroduces the curtailing of journalistic imperatives, a professional infringement whose historical precedents have just been considered. Carruthers identifies several strands specifically about the Iraq War, although with conclusions relevant to documentary films about the wars in Afghanistan and other War-on-Terror related events, and identifies particular 'waves' as prominent at different stages. The first is the immersed and observational, as seen in early documentaries such as *Iraq in Fragments* (Longley, 2006) and *Gunner Palace* (Epperlein and Tucker, 2004).<sup>593</sup> Such 'verité portraits of occupation, soldiering, and sensitively drawn cameos of Iraqi life'<sup>594</sup> became restrictively dangerous following the troop surge in 2007; as a result, a second wave comes to the fore, in which 'flies on the wall are replaced by a procession

<sup>590</sup> Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War', p. 458

<sup>591</sup> Lee Rodney, 'Real Time, Catastrophe, Spectacle: Reality as Fantasy in Live Media' in King, *The Spectacle of the Real*, p. 39

<sup>592</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, 'No One's Looking: The Disappearing Audience for War' *Media, War & Conflict* 1.1 (2008), p. 72

<sup>593</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, 'Say Cheese! Operation Iraqi Freedom on Film' *Cineaste*, 32.1 (2006), pp. 30-6

<sup>594</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, 'Question Time: the Iraq War Revisited' *Cineaste*, 32.4 (2007), p. 12



of talking heads', with Iraq itself 'largely rendered through archival footage': such films include *No End In Sight* and *Taxi to the Dark Side* (Gibney, 2007).<sup>595</sup> In these, the tone is no longer detached and observational, but frequently accusational, partial or polemical. The third strand Carruthers identifies a year later is the returning veteran documentary, for which she uses the examples of *Body of War* (Donohue and Spiro, 2007) and *Lioness* (McLagan and Sommers, 2008).<sup>596</sup> The first of these 'waves' is the most relevant to this chapter's interest in an observational documentary aesthetic, while the second resonates with the style of *The Flight That Fought Back* as discussed earlier. The third is less immediately helpful, as it refers primarily to a shift in topic rather than a shift in style.

Within 9/11-related documentary, one of the most discussed texts is *9/11* (Hanlon, Klug, Naudet and Naudet, 2002), billed in its opening titles as 'An eye-witness account of one of the most defining moments of our time'. In September 2001, the Naudet brothers were filming an observational documentary about Manhattan's Engine 7/Ladder 1 company of the New York Fire Department. In the film's voice-overs and interviews, they discuss their search for a suitably compelling narrative around which to structure their film, with the probation period of rookie Tony Benetatos offering the most possibility. However, the lack of drama is a source of frustration: as they film the minutia of life in the fire house with only routine call-outs to break up the footage of Benetatos preparing meals (a job reserved for rookies), they voice their impatience and hope for something dramatic to turn their 'great cooking show' into something more memorable. On one such callout - a possible gas leak - they record, by chance, American Airlines flight eleven crashing in to the North Tower of the World Trade Centre, one of only a handful of videos taken of the first plane's impact. One of the brothers, Jules, is then able to accompany fire-fighters into the lobby of the North Tower, resulting in the only known footage of the building's interior shortly before its collapse, while the other gets caught in the vast dust cloud caused by the South Tower's collapse as he tries to approach the World Trade Centre to find his younger brother. What had been

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid p. 12

<sup>596</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, 'Bodies of Evidence: New Documentaries on Iraq War Veterans' *Cineaste* 34.1 (2008), pp. 26-31

planned as an observational documentary about a professional place of work became, quite accidentally, an observational documentary about the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The lack of preparedness is evident in much of the footage shot following the sudden shift in focus: for Jules, a shaky camera, a lack of audio clarity due to the absence of on-person microphones, and eddying spins and turns as he tries to film all of the carnage that surrounds him; for Gedeon, the complete visual obstruction following the tower's collapse, and the sight of his hand optimistically trying to wipe away the thick dust coating the lens so as to continue documenting the destruction.

There is an amateurish quality about the resulting footage - uncomposed, incomplete and lacking clarity. Not that the Naudet brothers are themselves amateurs: the sibling filmmakers had already completed one full-length documentary, *Hope, Gloves and Redemption* (1999) at the time of the attacks. However, 'amateurish' is being used as a *stylistic* descriptor, not a category designating a particular level of filmmaking experience; the footage of 9/11 is amateurish, but not amateur. Like the imperilled, 'live', embedded reporter, the volatility of the situation they find themselves reporting on strips away their composure and leaves them responsive rather than proactive.

Lee Rodney suggests it is the coverage of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in news and in documentaries like *9/11* that subsequently played the greatest role in shaping coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed; specifically the emphasis on the chaotic and uncomposed:

The prevalence of 'amateur' video footage in much of what now stands of 9/11 certainly influenced how the invasion of Iraq was subsequently presented in 2003. The emphasis on 'real life' confusion as conveyed in the jerky, vertiginous sequences, dirty lenses and hysterical commentary that came through in the camcorder tapes of the World Trade Centre collapse gave new life to the old form of the eye-witness account.<sup>597</sup>

The non-professional witness, called upon so frequently to voice their reactions to the attacks and to provide visual documentation of an event for which professional news teams were understandably unprepared, become the War on Terror's primary visual paradigm. Rodney continues:

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<sup>597</sup> Rodney, 'Real Time, Catastrophe, Spectacle', pp. 38-9

The introduction of the embedded journalist in Iraq and the excessive focus on twenty-four hour coverage also emphasised real-time information and appeared ‘unedited’.<sup>598</sup>

Of course, both 9/11 and the prepared reports submitted by embeds in Iraq and Afghanistan are, naturally, extensively edited prior to broadcast/release. I now want to turn my attention to a relatively recent development in journalism, which is frequently considered more transparent and authentic than the reports proffered by professionals and documentaries like 9/11, regardless of how ‘raw’ they are made to appear: the citizen journalist.

### 9.3 DIY journalism

Like most of the structural, aesthetic and historical trends visible in War on Terror narratives discussed in this thesis, the citizen journalist is not a post-9/11 invention; for instance, the fear of a loss of authority for traditional news outlets has been a source of concern in the published news world since long before al-Qaeda became a house-hold name. However, the citizen-journalist nonetheless carries special meaning in the current context, his/her ubiquity particularly noticeable during the period in which the War on Terror rhetoric flourished. While Stuart Allan identifies early examples of what would come to be termed ‘citizen journalism’ as far back as 1989,<sup>599</sup> September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 is usually identified as a key date in its development. In a report written for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, Lee Rainie, Susannah Fox and Mary Madden state that:

Do-it-yourself journalism has been a staple of Internet activity for years and the terrorist attacks gave new prominence to the phenomenon... With the eyes of the world focused on a small number of related events, many stepped into the role of amateur journalist, seeking out sources and sometimes assembling these ideas for others.<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> Ibid, pp. 38-9

<sup>599</sup> Stuart Allan, ‘Histories of Citizen Journalism’ in Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen (eds.) *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 20

<sup>600</sup> Lee Raine, Susannah Fox, Mary Madden (2002) ‘One Year Later: September 11 and the Internet’ *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, 05 Sept. 2002, accessed Oct. 2010. [http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2002/PIP\\_9-11\\_Report.pdf.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2002/PIP_9-11_Report.pdf.pdf), p. 6

The citizen journalist is here explicitly linked to the centrality of the ‘eye-witness’ more widely in contemporary news reports. Stephanie Marriott notes that, on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, NBC aired its first telephone interview with an eyewitness only fifteen seconds into their breaking news coverage, with five more featuring in the fifteen minutes that followed (a pattern observable across networks),<sup>601</sup> and the trend is more recently observable in the BBC’s tendency to augment its online reports with a catalogue of ‘eyewitness accounts’, as seen following the 2011 Japanese earthquake,<sup>602</sup> and the suicide bombing at Domodedovo airport in Moscow.<sup>603</sup> Claiming to witness an event first-hand carries, Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer note, a certain kind of ‘discursive authority’.<sup>604</sup> ‘Eyewitnessing’, Zelizer writes elsewhere, ‘is thought to offer a kind of proof that is different from that provided by other types of reportorial chronicles’, namely ‘an ability to account subjectively for the events, actions or practices seen with one’s own eyes’.<sup>605</sup> This appeal has long been cultivated by war correspondents ‘on the frontlines’, and is now increasingly evidenced by the actions of the citizen-journalist.

The citizen journalist is troubled less by fact-checking, impartiality or context; instead, their authority comes exclusively from presence at the scene, from the speed with which they translate their version of the events into an online narrative. Not that reports are restricted solely to online sources; television networks in the US and elsewhere accepted and encouraged footage from such non-professional sources and actively sought eye-witness accounts, incorporating them into their reports alongside more conventionally presented segments. The eye-witness visual documenter had featured in the narrating of previous events: Richard Sambrook (amongst others) identifies Abraham Zapruder’s accidental filming of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 as the trend’s

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<sup>601</sup> Marriott, *Live Television*, p. 114

<sup>602</sup> ‘Japanese Earthquake: Eyewitness Accounts’ *BBC News*, 11 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12711152>

<sup>603</sup> ‘Moscow Blast: Eyewitness Accounts’ *BBC News*, 24 Jan. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12270374>

<sup>604</sup> Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer, ‘Rules of Engagement: Journalism and War’ in Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer (eds.) *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime* (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p. 5

<sup>605</sup> Barbie Zelizer, ‘On ‘Having Been There’: ‘Eyewitnessing’ as a Journalistic Key Word’ *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24.5 (2007), p. 411

key predecessor,<sup>606</sup> while the videotape footage of Los Angelean police beating Rodney King in 1991 is identified by Dan Gillmour as another key instance.<sup>607</sup> But by 2001 the technology facilitated it to a far greater degree - a rise that continued as cameras became smaller, more ubiquitous, and capable of higher picture quality.<sup>608</sup> By 2004, coverage of the Asian tsunami was initially illustrated almost solely by mobile phone video clips taken by those in afflicted countries (at least until professional news teams arrived to document the rescue and recovery efforts), making it the 'decisive moment' when 'citizen journalism became a prominent feature on the journalistic landscape' in many histories of the trend.<sup>609</sup> Other key instances include the terrorist attacks in London in 2005, following which the BBC received more than one thousand photographs, twenty videos, four thousand text messages and twenty thousands emails, many of which were incorporated into the news coverage;<sup>610</sup> pilot Chesley Sullenberger's successful landing of his Airbus 320 in the Hudson, first reported - with pictures - through the social network Twitter, whose users broke the news seconds after the landing, thereby scooping the professional news outlets; and Shohaib Athar's accidental real-time tweeting of the Navy Seal raid that killed Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Richard Sambrook, 'Citizen Journalism' in John Owen and Heather Purdey (eds.) *International News Reporting: Frontlines and Deadlines* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 223

<sup>607</sup> Dan Gillmour, *We The Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, For the People* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2006), p. 35

<sup>608</sup> Wendy Robinson and David Robison, 'Tsunami Mobilisations: Considering the Role of Mobile and Digital Communication Devices, Citizen Journalism and the Mass Media' in Ananadam P. Kavoori and Noah Arceneaux (eds.) *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), p. 86

<sup>609</sup> Allan, 'Histories of Citizen Journalism', p. 18

<sup>610</sup> Richard Sambrook, 'Citizen Journalism and the BBC' *Nieman Reports*, Winter 2005, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100542>

<sup>611</sup> Amelia Hill, 'Osama bin Laden Killed – How a Live Blogger Captured the Raid' *The Guardian*, 02 May, 2011, accessed June 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/02/osama-bin-laden-live-blogger>



Fig. 9.1: Hudson landing, Janis Krums via Twitter, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009

When it comes to video footage, the ubiquity of recording equipment permits a certain level of polished professionalism to creep into even the most modestly-recorded clip; post-shoot, easily and cheaply available editing software such as Windows Movie Maker (for PCs), iMovie (for Macs), as well as slightly more expensive examples like Adobe Premier and Final Cut Pro (both of which are used by professional editors and broadcasters as well as by non-professional consumers), permit a degree of polish to be applied very quickly. However, as Amy West observes, whether filmed by a professional embed using state of the art, lightweight equipment, or a citizen-journalist using store-bought consumer products such as mobile phones or digital cameras/camcorders, a relatively rough aesthetic aids its apparent veracity and verisimilitude:

[Caught-on-tape] events such as these cannot be predicted, pre-planned or staged - thus they cannot be faked. But this assertion of the unfakability of content is not enough. Without a correlative promise of a truthful medium, this putative reality is as suspect as that of any other represented event. This is why the flag of amateurism is waved so high in the field of caught-on-tape television. The self-evident non-professionalism of footage screened under the caught-on-tape banner certifies that the represented event is not staged, because both the technology utilised and operator controlling

it lack the sophistication to fake. Thus amateur image production is coded as transparent.<sup>612</sup>

So, far from a restrictive compromise, such an aesthetic is ideologically powerful, a stamp of authenticity and transparency which is actively sought after, hence the drive to simulate or replicate its 'rawness'. West goes on to note how visual and aural clarity is exchanged for authenticity:

Compromises in audio and visual pleasure which this mode of production may entail are traded off against a heightened feeling of the real - a trade audiences are more than willing to make. The poor quality of caught-on-tape footage thus becomes a marker of realness because it signals certain circumstances of production. The coincidence of unpredictable content and unprocessed medium adds up to a powerful and pervasive sense of the real.<sup>613</sup>

The poor quality of such footage can be indicative of unavoidable limitations (of technology, of situation, of production), but in those cases where more composed and polished footage is potentially attainable, the adoption of an amateurish aesthetic has to be understood as an artistic choice, rather than a circumstantial compromise.

## 9.4 Collage and self-documentation

To return to *9/11*, it is important not to emphasise only its 'caught-on-tape' footage. As James Kendrick notes, 'for all the immediacy of 9/11, it still bears the hallmarks of a constructed film'.<sup>614</sup> As well as the footage shot by the Naudet brothers, numerous additions are made: a voice-over from former fire-fighter, co-director and actor James Hanlon; talking-head interviews; a non-diegetic musical score (which, as Kendrick notes, 'is clearly intended to guide the viewer's emotional experience');<sup>615</sup> sound bridges linking multiple video clips together; rostrum stills; onscreen captions; an aural montage of contemporaneous news reports commenting upon the attacks; digital manipulation of the image (footage is slowed down, paused, and later

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<sup>612</sup> Amy West, 'Caught on Tape: A Legacy of Low-tech Reality' in King, *The Spectacle of the Real*, pp. 84-5

<sup>613</sup> Ibid, p. 85

<sup>614</sup> James Kendrick, 'Representing the Unrepresentable: 9/11 on Film and Television' in Rollins and O'Connor, *Why We Fought*, p. 518

<sup>615</sup> Ibid, p. 518

repeated); and additional, secondary source footage, used to provide angles on events that the brothers' perspectives could not offer. The editing itself is also far from unobtrusive; the majority of shots last only a few seconds at a time, dissecting the raw footage and undermining the supposed transparency that the documentary otherwise ostensibly foregrounds. With such conscious manipulation of the image, and with so much artistic intervention evident in the film, *9/11* is typical of the way that a semblance of un-manipulated 'rawness' is often evoked within an otherwise composed framework.

*102 Minutes That Changed America* (edited by Seth Skundrick, 2008) evokes this tension more subtly by dispensing with many of the traditional documentary ingredients used to piece together *9/11*'s narrative. It consists of an elaborate collage of video clips taken from over one hundred sources, which narrates in 'real-time' (i.e. the atomised, chronological clock-time identified in chapter seven) the one hundred and two minutes from the first plane crash to the towers' collapse. Like *The Flight That Fought Back*, there are echoes of *24*'s temporal organisation: a digital clock appears on screen regularly in the format '00:00:00:00am' - chronicling events down to the last hundredth of a second. No contextual voiceover explains the on-screen visuals; captions occasionally note the location of the individual responsible for each clip but not their identity. The opening title card identifies them only as 'eyewitnesses who grabbed their cameras to record an unfolding event that became history'; otherwise it is difficult to discern whether they are examples of non-professional members of the public, filmmakers like the Naudet brothers or news-team B-roll. The clips all exist on the same aesthetic plane, some more composed than others but all of comparable technical quality. Sometimes sound helps mark the distinction: one high-angle view of the towers is accompanied by a voice conducting a 'mic check for the newscopter', while others are sound tracked by the distressed sounds of families in their living rooms. In practice, sounds frequently bridge two different clips, indicating that the image and the audio have been separated, the latter later recombined with the former in a way that aids continuity. The end credits list forty-one individual contributors, followed by 'Additional archive courtesy of ARD German TV, ABCNews Videosource, BBC Motion Gallery, CNN Imagesource, Global Imageworks, LLC, NY1, WABC Radio



770, WABC-TV, WCBS Newsradio 880, WNYW-TV/FOX 5'. Telling them apart is not an easy task.

Similarly complex in its construction is the presentation of raw footage in *Combat Diary: The Marines of Lima Company* (Epstein, 2006). The film mixes observational footage of the titular Company engaged in various activities; self-recorded video clips of the soldiers in Iraq; and retrospective talking head interviews with many of the Marines. As Sgt. Steve Hicks states during the film, 'Everybody had a camera, and if they didn't... by the time you left they did (sic)'. Director Michael Epstein uses these clips, marked by their low-resolution and haphazard framing, to construct a narrative of the 'hardest-hit' Company in Iraq (Lima took fifty-nine casualties during their tour of Al Anbar in 2005, twenty-three of which were fatal). But the incorporation of low quality, 'authentic' images is, as in *9/11*, contained within a professionally-constructed framework:

The camera footage... is still subject to the mediation of a professional video editor. The lighting and composition may have a rough edge, but the overall narrative structure and sequencing are far beyond the amateur.<sup>616</sup>

More recently, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans were invited to direct and produce a season of films as part of an initiative entitled *Operation in Their Boots*. The participants were chosen on the basis of their filmmaking aptitude, as well as their experience in the military, and their filmmaking skills were honed in a 'bootcamp' designed to impart key skills and enhance an understanding of various documentary filmmaking conventions. Reporting on the project, Alexandra Zavis of the *L.A. Times* suggests the project arose from a need to counter the distorted representations of such issues by 'civilian' filmmakers:

For years they have cringed at Hollywood's portrayals of the Iraq and Afghan wars. And don't get them started on the inaccuracies in the Oscar-nominated film *The Hurt Locker*. Now, five veterans have been offered a chance to make their own documentaries about the consequences of the wars for them and those around them.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War', pp. 476-7

<sup>617</sup> Alexandra Zavis, 'Veterans Put Their Own War Stories on Film' *L.A. Times*, 07 Mar. 2010, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/mar/07/local/la-me-vets-films7-2010mar07>

The five veterans chosen to take part each tackle a different under- or misrepresented subject pertaining to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), to substance abuse, to the particular challenges that face Muslim American soldiers. Most topics are tackled from a personal standpoint: for example, Marine veteran Chris Mandia - now a playwright and screenwriter - examines 'the transitional journey American service members make when they go from the battlefield to a college campus' while attending the University of Southern California.<sup>618</sup> The project's press release states the overall aims clearly:

For the first time, soldiers who have felt and seen the ravages of war... will have the opportunity to tell their war stories *unfiltered*.  
[emphasis added]<sup>619</sup>

There is no acknowledgement of the apparent tension between the stated aim of presenting an 'unfiltered' perspective, and lengthy training sessions with mentors including Robert Greenwald,<sup>620</sup> designed to ensure that the finished products are of a sufficiently-high quality 'fit for the silver screen'.<sup>621</sup>

Chown explicitly compares documentary examples to their online video clip equivalents:

It is instructive to compare these works to the less polished, amateur footage that is easily available on YouTube and its growing number of competitors. The material ranges from a simple, thirty second clip of an IED explosion caught by a soldier out on patrol to more carefully edited polemical pieces designed to present pointed commentary. In this area, documentary representations of the Iraq war are furthest from the Vietnam template and, in effect, offer a new visual paradigm that is more subjective, spontaneous and unfiltered than previous media.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> 'Meet the Filmmakers', *In Their Boots*, accessed Oct. 2010.

<http://www.intheirboots.com/itb/operation-in-their-boots/meet-the-filmmakers.html>

<sup>619</sup> 'Iraq and Afghan Veterans hit the Silver Screen', *In Their Boots*, accessed Oct. 2010.

<http://www.intheirboots.org/press.html>

<sup>620</sup> Tamara Krinsky, 'War Stories: Brave New Foundation Trains Soldiers to Mark Docs'

*Documentary.org*, 2010, accessed Feb. 2011. <http://www.documentary.org/content/war-stories-brave-new-films-trains-soldiers-make-docs>

<sup>621</sup> 'Iraq and Afghan Veterans hit the Silver Screen'

<sup>622</sup> Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War', pp. 476-7

While I partially agree with the above statement, I think the distinction is not as clear-cut as is suggested here. Reuters also posted footage online during the wars, which was deliberately left 'raw' - without commentary or final edition - while MSNBC.com streamed:

A webcam of the Baghdad skyline as the city was bombed [and] reported significant number of viewers simply leaving the sites open all day on their work computers. In removing some of broadcast journalism's usual packaging, such forms of coverage appealed as a step beyond immediate news to become, at least in appearance, unmediated or unfiltered news.<sup>623</sup>

I would also argue that the online clip posted by the DIY novice is frequently heavily manipulated or edited: the number of videos uploaded to sites such as YouTube (as well as smaller, subject-specific equivalents such as militaryvideos.net) that feature a soundtrack of classical music, hip-hop, heavy metal or jingoistic, patriotic country and western (to name only the most prevalent genres and styles) testify to the contextual framing practices engaged in by even those filmmakers with the most limited resources. The new visual paradigm the latter online visual documenters offer, then, may appear more subjective, spontaneous and unfiltered, but that is not to say that these documents *are* more subjective, spontaneous or unfiltered. And neither are their network news equivalents; as Donald Matheson and Stuart Allan note, 'technologies of immediacy, while removing some news packaging, [do] not remove newsroom control'.<sup>624</sup>

The visual documenter, then, whether imperiled embed, documentary filmmaker, or citizen journalist, is characterised as unprepared and caught-off-guard, but this visual paradigm is largely independent of the mode of production, performed by professional news teams, online filmmakers and self-documenting soldiers alike. Such an aesthetic connotes mobility, responsiveness, transparency and, most importantly, *authenticity*. This authenticity replaces composed professionalism as the primary claim to authority. To reiterate what should be already clear, however, I do not wish to claim this as universal. It is not the only way in which visual documents of the

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<sup>623</sup> Matheson and Allan, *Digital War Reporting*, pp. 68-9

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been shaped, and alternatives exist. The composed composition continues to play a strong visual role in both news reports and documentaries about the War on Terror's military conflicts, and, as will be discussed in chapter ten, a second trend originating in high-spec military technology influences its documentary and fiction narratives in a different, but compatible, way. However, I will argue that the raw footage aesthetic, in addition to being prevalent in documentary, news reports and online blogs, is particularly influential in the organisation of fictional narratives. I use the word organisation deliberately: as I wish to now argue, the performance is not solely visual; it is structural.

### 9.5 'Caught on camera': Skepticism towards 9/11

The perspective from which Naudet filmed the strike was so perfect that it cannot have been a coincidence. The only reasonable conclusion to draw is that the location was chosen in advance, with all that implies by way of foreknowledge... they also had the EXTREME COINCIDENCE OF FILMING the first plane strike while being called for a fake gaz odor alarm [sic].<sup>625</sup>

- *'Social Democracy Now'*

The status of caught-on-tape moments - however diverse their subject matter - is that of crisis... Accidents and aberrations...stake their claim in the domain of the real by asserting their status as unpremeditated.<sup>626</sup>

- *Amy West*

What the texts under discussion apparently share is their status as unprepared reactions, responsive to events out-with the filmmakers' manipulative abilities. In 'caught-on-tape' footage, Amy West writes:

The object of capture is a moment of crisis... [and] because the incident is unforeseeable, the circumstances of capture can be characterised as inadvertent, meaning that the recorded moment

<sup>625</sup> 'Social Democracy Now', 'The Incredible Vanishing Naudet Brothers', 20 Nov. 2009, accessed Oct. 2010. [http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=503\\_1258736317](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=503_1258736317); earlier version posted 29 Oct. 2005, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://www.blogigo.co.uk/socialdemocracynow/The-incredible-vanishing-Naudet-brothers/27/>

<sup>626</sup> West, 'Caught On Tape', pp. 84-5

arises out of a critical coincidence of rolling camera and spontaneous or aberrant incident. Notions of entrapment and containment offered by the term 'caught' are delusory. In fact this model of audiovisual capture is one in which both pro-filmic event and the mechanisms of its capture are spontaneous, aberrant, random or inadvertent.<sup>627</sup>

As discussed previously, this condition impacts upon the appearance of such footage - shaky camera angles, poor sound, and the low-resolution of inferior recording equipment are typical hallmarks. But it also considerably affects the structure of the narratives, with, for example, 'dead time' often included to emphasise the transparent and untainted recording of events as-they-happen. Additionally, ellipses of action are employed differently than they would in a more classically organised narrative, with important moments often 'missed'. Where a controlled, professional documentary (or narrative of any kind), might seek to edit out anything deemed inessential in order to privilege moments of action or drama, the raw footage aesthetic - belatedly responding to unforeseeable events - may ignore, or even subvert, such an arrangement. In fact, if the footage that is 'caught-on-tape' is deemed too serendipitous, the circumstances of its filming too fortuitous, or its coverage too extensive and 'professional', it can arouse suspicion. The above quote from 'Social Democracy Now', the online identity of a cynical commentator convinced that the Naudet brothers' film is phony, echoes the conspiracy culture logic discussed in chapter four, but a closer look at one of the sources of this allegation ties the paranoid presumption more closely to the aesthetic under discussion.

The source in question is a blogger by the name of Leslie Raphael, who responded to the Naudets' footage with extreme scepticism and compiled a sixty-five point list of what he/she terms the many 'conveniences' contained in a single sequence lasting around two minutes.<sup>628</sup> These include: the peculiar allegation that a filmmaker in the process of shooting a documentary would not necessarily have had his equipment on his person at that exact moment, and therefore the presence of a camera at all is suspicious; the circular logic that, if the film was part of a conspiracy, a cover story would be required, and a documentary about a fire-house is the perfect smokescreen; and the paranoid

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid, p. 83

<sup>628</sup> Leslie Raphael, 'Jules Naudet's 9/11 Film Was Staged', *Serendipity*, 06 Feb. 2006, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://www.serendipity.li/wot/naudet/raphael.htm>

claim that the fact that the battery was charged and filming had already started is evidence of pre-warning. This acute mistrust characterises Raphael as an example of the online conspiracy theorist, one who seems to be aiming to convince through the quantity of allegations rather than their individual plausibility. Raphael concludes the list:

If just one of these circumstances had not applied, this film might easily not exist; how likely is it that every one applied, not one went wrong, and that not one other person in Manhattan managed even one single piece of luck, to produce even an off-centre, blurred monochrome photograph of the event, let alone perfect colour film of it? A unique film might be credible - if it had faults - or conversely, a perfect film, if we had others less perfect to compare with it - if not quite as imperfect as the Hlava film. How likely is it that this photographer achieved both uniqueness *and* perfection?<sup>629</sup>

We are not required to entertain this statement as credible;<sup>630</sup> I instead include Raphael's contentions to highlight the suspicion that overly 'professional' quality can arouse, and the scepticism possible when confronted with too-complete a caught-on-camera record. Most of Raphael's other sixty one 'conveniences' relate either to the filmmaker's expedient location (no traffic or pedestrians blocking the shot; facing away from the sun; in line with the plane's final approach) or the suspiciously high quality (the lack of zoom; the lack of conversation at the moment the plane flies overhead, which allows its engine noise to be picked up by the microphone). But, to return to the question of structure, one more allegation is worth considering:

He would want to leave out all the flight but the last few seconds - the rest of the flight would be an irrelevance or a distraction, and only the impact needs to be captured; he films only the last two seconds.<sup>631</sup>

This introduces the issue of elided action; by apparently conforming too closely to classical editing's economy of duration, the film's authenticity is questioned.

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<sup>629</sup> *ibid*

<sup>630</sup> As well as contradicting itself by mentioning 'the Hlava film' (Pavel Hlava's less composed recording of the North Tower as the aeroplane hit, which surfaced two years after the event), the comment overlooks the time-lapse photographs of Wolfgang Staehle, a conceptual artist who was automatically and periodically photographing the New York skyline at the time of the attacks.

<sup>631</sup> *ibid*

To elaborate further on this structural effect, I want to turn away from the Naudet's *9/11* documentary to one filmed during the US-led invasion of Iraq.

## 9.6 The War Tapes

When *The War Tapes*'s director Deborah Scranton was offered accreditation as an embedded journalist with the C Company of the New Hampshire Army Reserve, she declined, instead providing ten soldiers in the Company with video cameras and asking them to document both the tour and their readjustment to civilian life upon their return. Editor Steve James spent a year piecing together the eight-hundred hours of raw footage the soldiers sent back to Scranton, with three soldiers foregrounded in the finished result. Like the other documentaries discussed thus far, significant artistic interventions are made, often to subtly support the 'raw' aesthetic - for example, the military-jargon that flows second-nature from the soldiers' mouths is explained and defined through onscreen captions, explaining the meaning of abbreviations like IED, RPG and VBIED without interrupting their dialogue.<sup>632</sup>

Identities are blurred from the outset; professional soldiers are transformed through the technological apparatus given to them into amateur cameramen.<sup>633</sup> Chown notes how their professional role is altered by their use of cameras, creating a dual identity that even the embedded journalist cannot emulate:

Early on in the film, one of the videographers questions a sergeant about their mission. He responds 'I'm not supposed to talk to the media'. The interviewer responds, 'What do you mean? I'm not the media'. But of course, he is.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> The authenticity implied by military jargon is exemplified by the dialogue of the drama serial *Generation Kill*, which is thick with obscure acronyms, code-words and slang. While it does not offer onscreen clarification in the manner of *The War Tapes*, it features a journalist character who asks the others to explain certain key terms, while the DVD box set includes a reference booklet listing other featured words.

<sup>633</sup> It is worth noting, however, that one of the soldiers, Zach Bazzi, is University-educated and possesses prior experience in journalism, so is not as inexperienced as this description perhaps implies. However, a post added to his profile page on *The War Tapes*' website emphatically declares 'I am a soldier NOT a filmmaker', Bazzi eager to set the record straight regarding the extent to which his role as a visual documenter was secondary to his duties as a Sergeant. (Zach Bazzi, 'Blog & News: Bazzi' *The War Tapes*, 26 Sept. 2006, accessed Mar. 2010. <http://www.thewartapes.com/2006/03/bazzi.shtml>)

<sup>634</sup> Chown, 'Documentary and the Iraq War', p. 476

Moreover, these soldiers are, like the Naudet brothers, self-documenting subjects, characters in a narrative compiled from their own recordings. There are some differences in the set-up compared to *9/11* - the documentary is premised on presence in a war zone and the consequential likelihood of drama and conflict, as opposed to the sudden unexpectedness of the Naudet's caught-on-tape moment. But while the set-up may involve a degree of expectation, unexpectedness and unpreparedness are still key features. The shocking detonation of an improvised roadside explosive; the eruption of gunfire; the unpredictable approach of a vehicle towards a roadblock - such events in Iraq or Afghanistan may be statistically more likely than the flight of a passenger plane into a New York skyscraper, but they are nonetheless individually uncontrollable and sudden. As a result, pivotal moments are missed by *The War Tapes* cameras. Arguably the most dramatic incident in the film (or at least, the one that is dwelt upon and provokes the most emotional response) is the death of an Iraqi woman crossing the road in front of an SUV convoy. Trained not to slow down so as not to risk ambush, protocol dictates the SUVs increase their speed, striking the woman and killing her. It is only afterwards that they are able to satisfactorily ascertain that she was not a threat, with the soldiers offering various accounts: the body was 'in pieces' recalls one; another explains how they then 'had to get her out of the road', then corrects his statement to 'get what was left of her out of the road'; while a third proffers the less graphic observation 'I remember looking down and seeing crumbled cookies', underscoring the innocent intentions of her attempt to cross the road - a biscuit delivery that results in her death. These accounts are delivered at the side of the road shortly *afterwards*; the death is not caught on film, and the soldiers can only react to it on-camera after the event has concluded. The event itself is absent, undocumented, and rendered only through verbal recreations. Rather than evidence a flaw in the caught-on-camera aesthetic, however, the fact that, often, things are *not* caught-on-camera, serves to underscore the authenticity in a way more likely to discourage the conspiracy-minded scrutiny of paranoid online commentators like Leslie Raphael.

So the raw aesthetic is evoked through more than image quality; caesuras and elisions also emphasise immediacy and responsiveness. However, there is still a



kind of pleasure in completeness, as observed in an example of DIY self-documentation discussed by Chown:

An officer in charge of training soldiers for deployment related the following story: a friend and former student of his called from a hospital in Iraq just after surviving a highway IED explosion. Despite being wounded, the soldier was quite ‘jacked up’. He excitedly explained a camcorder on his vehicle had been rolling when they were hit, but more importantly, the vehicle behind them also had a camcorder running. This presented unexplored possibilities. He would now be able to edit the two angles together to show the explosion in all its glory. The same night, just after leaving the hospital, he proudly emailed the edited footage to his former trainer.<sup>635</sup>

Again, this illustrates the widespread availability of the technology required to self-edit raw footage, and the speed with which the finished product can be made ready for viewing. Chown identifies literary precedents to this self-documentation, citing Ernest Hemingway’s participation in World War 1 as a way of acquiring ‘the experiences that would be the grist of his modernist writing’, concluding that ‘in postmodern Iraq, the camcorder has replaced the pen’.<sup>636</sup>

The speed with which such footage can be edited and presented online is crucial. Whether actually transmitted live (in the case of uncomposed live reports on news channels) or screened considerably later (in the case of the documentary examples), the unprepared, reactive composition is, as has previously been discussed, a performance that emphasises raw footage over professional codes, and the illusion is translated to the viewing experience. One key implication is worth reintroducing here: the lack of time for reflection. Philip Taylor notes how, in the first Gulf War, ‘the sheer speed of the communications technology... eroded our capacity to reflect, interpret, sift’.<sup>637</sup> As a result, journalistic standards are seen to ‘slip’, the imperative simply ‘to get the story on the air, no matter how dubious or uncorroborated it is’.<sup>638</sup> While this is predominantly an issue of technology and broadcast - the theatrically-released documentary cannot be said to rush its footage into the

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid, p. 478

<sup>636</sup> Ibid, p. 479

<sup>637</sup> Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 10

<sup>638</sup> Ibid, p. 10

public domain, and has time (if not always necessarily the inclination) to adequately contextualise and substantiate its assertions - there is, however, a correlating issue: the amount of time the viewer of such material is given to reflect or interpret what they see. Whether caught-up in the extensively documented rush of history-in-the-making (in the 9/11 footage) or missing integral events entirely (in *The War Tapes*), the momentum of the raw footage aesthetic encourages breathlessness, the viewer is left as unprepared as the filmmaker either is or purports to be, and is forced into a comparable responsive position. Again, this is not merely a matter of visual parity; it plays an organisational role in structuring a narrative and the viewer's relationship towards it.

## 9.7 Conclusion: The Flight That Fought Back

To conclude, I want to reconsider the text with which I introduced the chapter: *The Flight That Fought Back*. This chapter has taken care to stress the hybridity and mutual exchange between different registers, codes, conventions and practices (particularly in the assertion that factual reports are performative), a conclusion I now wish to frame using a text in which the performance of 'exchange' is more overt, while also setting up the next chapter's interest in texts from the other end of the spectrum; not factual texts emulating fiction, but fictional texts emulating factual ones.

'Caught on tape' is evidently not being evoked in *The Flight That Fought Back* as an illusion; the film is not attempting to 'fool' its audience into thinking they are witnessing something they are not. At least not wholly; although an on-screen caption appears to identify the use of authentic recordings, the acted or recreated dialogue used elsewhere is recorded and processed to match - low quality, background noise etc. But this does not appear to be malicious or misleading: *The Flight That Fought Back* does not purport to show visual proofs of its events, and neither the computer-generated scenes of the aircraft from the outside, nor the acted and scripted scenes that take place inside the aircraft, seem intended as anything other than illustrative. Yet it evokes the raw aesthetic nonetheless. A hand-held camera moves as if from a passenger's visual perspective, and when the insurrection begins, its shakiness increases dramatically. This could be interpreted as an expressive use of *mise-en-scene* -

the destabilisation of the image matching the destabilisation of the situation on the plane. But it more closely resembles the in-the-moment camerawork of the reactive visual documenter discussed at length in this chapter, despite *The Flight That Fought Back* being both scripted and acted.

The use of recreation in documentary was given renewed popular legitimacy, Steve Anderson claims, by the success of Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), which 'revived once scorned strategies of recreation and simulation in historical documentaries', and in the process aggravated 'already precarious connections between the real world and systems of representation'.<sup>639</sup> This led to a 'renewed critical attention to such ideas as "performativity"' which in turn: 'necessitated a revision of Bill Nichol's venerable taxonomy of documentary modes'.<sup>640</sup> Nichols himself wrote of the 'turn' in 1994:

Reenactments came to be denounced as fabrications in the days of observational cinema; then, more recently, filmmakers resurrected them as a legitimate way to address what is not available for representation in the here and now.<sup>641</sup>

The issue with re-enactment, Nichol states, is that it produces an extra layer of simulation - the figures we watch onscreen are 'ghosts or simulacra of others who have already acted out their parts'. He continues:

Spoken testimony came to be seen as an antidote for the 'body too many' problem of re-enactment (the bodies of those in the re-enactments were 'extras', never matching the historical bodies they represented). Social actors, witnesses, could speak now about what they know of historical events. The indexical image authenticates testimony now about what happened then.<sup>642</sup>

In *The Flight That Fought Back*, these spoken testimonies come from family and loved ones, but also the voices of those whose parts are being re-enacted onscreen through the various telephone and cockpit recordings.

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<sup>639</sup> Steve Anderson, 'The Past in *Ruins*: Postmodern Politics and the Fake History Film' in Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (eds.) *F Is For Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2006), p. 79

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79

<sup>641</sup> Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning In Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 4

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

The notion of performativity recalls the writing of Vivian Sobchack, amongst others, who offers the reminder that ‘a “documentary” is not a thing, but a subjective relationship to a cinematic object’.<sup>643</sup> The documentary relationship only becomes such when it is received as one by its audience, who use knowledge of past documentary experiences to understand the present text. It is for this reason that a blatantly imaginative recreation of events (in *The Flight That Fought Back*) can be taken as a form of actuality-filmmaking - more mediated than a traditional observational documentary mode, but a form of actuality filmmaking nonetheless; it *looks* and *feels* enough like actuality filmmaking to warrant the label.

Alisa Lebow notes that this is indicative of a more general inability to define documentary absolutely and in terms of its relation to ‘reality’:

Tellingly, theorists more often proffer inevitably flawed descriptions of what documentary film is not (not fiction, not acted, not scripted) than of what it may actually be. I say ‘flawed’ because many, if not most, documentaries do contain scripted sequence, do employ or engage (perhaps non-professional) actors and acting, and partake, at the very least, in the narrative imperative (telling stories) no less than do fiction films...<sup>644</sup>

*The Flight That Fought Back*, first compared to the fictional *24*, is therefore, in Lebow’s formulation, merely a documentary in which the scripting, acting and fictionalisation is more readily apparent than in less overtly mediated documentary examples (such as *9/11* or *The War Tapes*). That is not to say that the comparison to *24* is mistaken or unhelpful. Rather, it suggests that, while *The Flight That Fought Back* repackages elements of *24* to build excitement in its narrative progression, *24* borrows from the documentary (and the raw footage aesthetic prevalent in visual documents of the War on Terror more broadly) to lend authenticity to its spectacle.

Stephanie Marriott, borrowing terminology from John Lyons, discusses live television’s ‘experiential mode’, analysing various examples of live broadcast -

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<sup>643</sup> Vivian Sobchack, ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience’ in Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (eds.) *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 251

<sup>644</sup> Alisa Lebow (2006) ‘Faking What? Making a Mockery of Documentary’ in Juhasz and Lerner *F is for Phony*, p. 228

from sporting events to morning breakfast shows to the ‘breaking-news’ coverage of 9/11 itself - to demonstrate the way voiceover commentary serves to frame events in relation to the ‘here-and-now’. Predictions and recaps surround a core vocabulary designed to emphasise the present moment - for example, a nature programme in which the presenter ‘reiterates the liveness and the *nowness* of the image’ multiple times: ‘we’re back *live now*’; ‘there *are* four’; ‘as *you* can see’ and so on.<sup>645</sup> Marriott links this to ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ ways of talking about time - the A- and B-series of time discussed in chapter seven:

Viewed dynamically, the relation of events to each other shifts as the speaker enters into an ever-new *now*-moment. The notion of dynamic time can... be usefully understood with reference to the notion of the *phenomenological now*... All our encounters with the world necessarily take place at this *now-moment*: just as the place where I am can only, under any set of circumstances, be *here*, so the moment is always *now*...

*The Flight That Fought Back* presents its recreations in a similar fashion, with Kiefer Sutherland’s voice over similarly presenting footage as if it were in the process of unfolding. For example, when introducing actual recordings of the flight’s final moments, he announces ‘this is the actual recording of what *is happening* in the cockpit’, rather than ‘this is an actual recording of what *happened*’. In this way, the film’s performed rawness evokes the experiential mode of live broadcast, even if its actual means of production and transmission are unequivocally non-live. Like *24* and the Global Network Narrative, this fosters a sense of the ‘perpetual present’, which has been previously argued to detach the present moment from both historical context and subsequent causal effects.

Performed rawness brings depicted events into the phenomenological vicinity of the viewer, both spatially and temporally. Events are made immediate, *here* and *now*. Earlier in the chapter, the prevalence of a raw, unprepared aesthetic was linked partially to the process of ‘embedding’ journalists with military units, a process premised on the assumption that sharing certain experiences with the soldiers would foster a greater degree of empathy in the reporters. While the

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<sup>645</sup> Marriott, *Live Television*, p. 61

film undermines the effect by intercutting its dramatic reenactments with real talking-head interviews, which break the momentum considerably at the climax,<sup>646</sup> the rawness and liveness of *The Flight That Fought Back* nonetheless enhances expected sympathies with the flight's victims. When this same effect is used in films focused on soldiers, it would therefore appear to engender empathy for a US militaristic perspective - the audience embedded with troops figuratively just as journalists have been literally. Because the rawness of such footage suggests the unmediated capture of events as-they-happen, it also suggests an unmediated impartiality, thereby obscuring the underlying ideology - which, in *Flight That Fought Back* is emphatically militaristic. At the climax, family members state matter-of-factly their loved ones' capacity for violence if deemed necessary: for example, Phil Bradshaw, husband of flight attendant Sandra Bradshaw warns 'you make Sandy mad you better look out, cause she was a little tornado - she could hit hard', while Paula Nacke says of her brother Joey Nacke 'he was very aggressive'. Most emphatically violent is Jeremy Glick's wife Lyzbeth, who says of her husband: 'I can imagine Jeremy snapping a neck quicker than you would believe, then just beating the guy till he was beyond dead'. In this account, united defiance through violently-achieved self-determination defines the deceased, just as it characterised justifications for the War on Terror more broadly.

Chapter ten will expand upon this chapter's conclusions - namely the tendency towards a raw-footage aesthetic in a broad range of media representations of the War on Terror, from milblogs to network news reports, theatrically-released documentaries to footage 'caught-on-tape' by citizen journalists; an aesthetic that presents itself as an un-manipulated recording of events as-they-happen, as opposed to staged and controlled production. Unpreparedness, danger, and a semblance of 'liveness' will be identified as influential in the appearance and structure of certain fiction films and television serials, suggesting the raw-footage aesthetic is more than a journalistic or documentary trend; it is a widely-encountered visual paradigm with particular ideological connotations.

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<sup>646</sup> Cynthia Weber, 'Popular Visual Language as Global Communication: the Remediation of United Airlines 93' *Review of International Studies*, 34 (2008), pp. 137-153

## 10 Pseudo-footage in fiction

I did documentary footage of the soldiers [sic]. I was interviewing them and I was collecting soldier-made videos, then we wrote a script and then I traditionally filmed it as one would. Traditional film, 35 millimeter. Most of the movie is a movie.<sup>647</sup>

- *Kimberly Peirce on Stop Loss*

The Iraq war ushered in the video phone as the standard of television war reporting rather than the exception; visual immediacy ruled supreme.<sup>648</sup>

- *Andrew Hoskins*

*Stop Loss* opens with onscreen text identifying it as 'episode 312'. A sideways wipe replaces the black background with footage typical of the raw-footage aesthetic discussed in the previous chapter: the colours are over-saturated, the camera unsteady, there is dirt on the lens and frequent zooms cause loss of focus (*fig. 10.1*). Text scrolls along the bottom in the same serif font as before, stating 'The Men of Shadow 3 Going the Fuck Home', while the images provide a collage of patrol footage, barrack-based leisure, photographs of guns and tattoos, and the central characters singing a patriotic song with an acoustic guitar. This then segues directly into a scene set at a checkpoint in Tikrit manned by Sgt. Brandon King (Ryan Phillippe) and his men, shot on 35mm film (*fig. 10.2*).

<sup>647</sup> Annie Nocenti, 'Q&A: Kimberley Peirce, Director of *Stop Loss*' *Stop Smiling*, 31 Mar. 2008, accessed Oct. 2010. [http://www.stopsmilingonline.com/story\\_print.php?id=1017](http://www.stopsmilingonline.com/story_print.php?id=1017)

<sup>648</sup> Hoskins, *Televising War*, p. 57



Fig. 10.1 Raw-footage aesthetic in *Stop Loss*



Fig. 10.2: 35mm film stock in *Stop Loss*

This ‘home-movie’ aesthetic is returned to at regular intervals later in the film: following a firefight that injures and kills several US soldiers, a hip-hop sound-tracked sequence ‘in loving memory of our fallen brothers’ pays tribute to deceased characters, editing the staged scenes together with what appears to be stock battle footage (*fig. 10.3*). Later still, a compilation of such material is watched by the characters while on leave, sound-tracked by the heavy riffs of metal band Drowning Pool, whose song *Bodies* (the key lyric of which is ‘let the bodies hit the floor’) is popular in both War on Terror narratives and amongst actual soldiers: the song is featured in the documentaries *Soundtrack to War* (Gittoes, 2006), *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the mini-series *Generation Kill* and even a US commercial for the Marine Corp (available on YouTube); more worryingly, it was used as part of the interrogation of Guantanamo Bay detainee Mohamedou Ould



Slahi, played at high volume for long periods to instill disorientation and fear.<sup>649</sup> Most of the footage used in these segments is clearly performed for the camera, particularly when one or more of the film's lead actors - Phillippe, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Channing Tatum - is visible in the shot. Yet other segments so closely mimic actual combat footage as to be near indistinguishable (it is unclear whether actual footage was utilised - in one interview, director Kimberley Pierce states 'everything was staged'<sup>650</sup>, while in another she claims to have incorporated actual soldier videos in the opening).<sup>651</sup> To further complicate the distinction, *Stop Loss* started out as a documentary, before director Kimberly Pierce decided to change approach and tackle the subject matter - the retention of soldiers by way of a clause in their contract that allows them to be re-deployed indefinitely in a time of war - in a fictional mode instead. While, in Pierce's words, the majority of the movie 'is a movie' - shot on high quality film in a conventional manner - the raw-footage aesthetic plays a central role in the film's visual style.



**Fig. 10.3:** Pseudo-stock battle footage in *Stop Loss*

Raw footage - staged or otherwise - is frequently incorporated into conventionally-filmed fictional War on Terror narratives. Examples from both television and film will shortly be used to evidence this, before introducing two

<sup>649</sup> 'Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in U.S. Custody' Senate Armed Services Committee, 20 Nov. 2008, accessed Oct. 2010. <http://documents.nytimes.com/report-by-the-senate-armed-services-committee-on-detainee-treatment#text/p1>

<sup>650</sup> Jennifer Merin, 'Kimberly Pierce – Interview' *About.com*, 2008, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://documentaries.about.com/od/documentarydirectors/a/kimberlypierce.htm>

<sup>651</sup> Nocenti, 'Q&A'

additional components of the proposed War on Terror aesthetic - military technology and surveillance - and suggesting their ideological similarities to issues of 'rawness'. It will conclude by examining the tension between attempts to evoke subjective, immediate, raw experience, and the evocation of a broader, detached geopolitical overview, via a reading of the film *Rendition*.

### 10.1 Pseudo-documentary/pseudo-footage: defining terms

Before we proceed, it is important to clarify the relevant terminology. Terms such as 'mockumentary' or 'fake documentary' carry unwanted connotations - a comedic or satirical tone in the former and subterfuge in the latter - so will be avoided, though work carried out in these areas will be useful in summarising the field.<sup>652</sup> As Alisa Lebow notes, 'mocking is only one possible stance that the fake documentary can take'.<sup>653</sup> It can, she suggests, alternatively 'copy, mimic, gimmick, play with, scorn, ridicule, invert, reverse, repeat, ironise, satirise, affirm, subvert, pervert, covert, translate, and exceed documentary style'.<sup>654</sup> Furthermore, the particular variant I am focused on, incorporating the raw-footage aesthetic, is not solely documentary. For this reason, I will adjust the categories accordingly. The broad encompass suggested by the aforementioned terms will be narrowed and corrected by opting instead for the term 'pseudo-documentary'. When discussing the raw-footage variant - i.e. those that evoke the 'raw' style specifically typical of professional War on Terror news reports, citizen journalism and observational documentary - I will employ the term 'pseudo-footage'.

Another distinction is necessary, to identify those works that, like *Stop Loss*, incorporate small sections of such material within otherwise conventionally-filmed narratives, and those that sustain the effect over their entire duration, like *Septem8er Tapes* (Johnston, 2004) and *.wmd* (Holroyd, 2009), both of which will be discussed later in the chapter. Therefore, in addition to 'pseudo-

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<sup>652</sup> The pseudo-documentary is represented in a War on Terror context by *Death of a President* (Range, 2006), which mimics documentary filmmaking style to narrate the fictional assassination of George W. Bush by a traumatised army veteran, using acted talking head interviews, voice-over narration, and staged 'source footage'.

<sup>653</sup> Alice Lebow, 'Faking What? Making a Mockery of Documentary' in Juhasz and Lerner (eds.) *Is For Phony*, p. 223

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid*, p. 223

documentary’ and ‘pseudo-footage’, I will later introduce the term ‘pseudo-found-footage’.

Pseudo-documentary in any of its guises is not an invention of twenty-first century film and television makers, nor is it utilised solely in the telling of these particular kinds of stories: for example, Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight identify sixty one such texts predating 9/11 which they roughly categorise as parodies, hoaxes or deconstructions.<sup>655</sup> It is notable, however, that many films that have adopted the style wholly - for example, *Cloverfield* or *Diary of the Dead* (Romero, 2007) - or in part - *The Dark Knight*, *Monsters* (Edwards, 2010) - since 2001 have been interpreted as allegories for the War on Terror and its ancillaries, in part due to the connotations of their use of pseudo-footage.<sup>656</sup> For example, Richard Matthews connects *The Dark Knight* and others to 9/11 and the War on Terror, arguing that:

These blockbusters... mobilise the sights and sounds of the millenium’s newscasts to inject immediacy into their pulp subject matter.<sup>657</sup>

Matthews explicitly identifies their mimicry of the conventions of news media, and the sense of immediacy that they evoke, as evidence of an allegorical relationship to contemporary concerns regarding terrorism.

Gary D. Rhodes and John Parris Springer question the categorical separation, by filmmakers, critics and audiences alike, of non-fiction filmmaking from fiction, observing how non-fiction and fiction filmmaking developed side by side, with ‘frequent intermingling’ a ‘persistent tendency in cinema from its very beginning’.<sup>658</sup> From this they conclude that:

As a visual medium based upon a photographic representation of the world, the cinema has always been uniquely suited to such

<sup>655</sup> Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

<sup>656</sup> See: <http://www.empireonline.com/reviews/reviewcomplete.asp?FID=135364> + <http://www.totalfilm.com/reviews/cinema/the-dark-knight> + <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/feb/01/actionandadventure.drama> + <http://www.filmjuice.com/monsters-cinema-review.html> for examples of such comparisons.

<sup>657</sup> Richard Matthews, ‘Terror Vision’ *Total Film*, 147, Nov. 2008, p. 119

<sup>658</sup> Gary D. Rhodes and John Parris Springer, ‘Introduction’ in Gary D. Rhodes and John Parris Springer (eds.) *Docufictions: Essays on the Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Ltd, 2006), p. 3

ambiguities regarding the fictional and factual status of its representations.<sup>659</sup>

They go on to cite ‘the rise of the docudrama, the self-reflexive documentary and the mockumentary’ as signalling ‘the breakdown of the stable critical dichotomy which had for so long kept fiction narrative and documentary film in separate analytical boxes’.<sup>660</sup> Essentially, they suggest the two categories have always been less mutually exclusive than is generally assumed, and that this assumption is challenged by new hybrid categories that patently draw upon both traditions, with precedents in popular fiction films: the use of voiceover narration in *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick, 1964); the intertitles in *Raging Bull* (Scorsese, 1980); the talking head interviews in *Reds* (Beatty, 1981); and the *March of Time* pastiche in *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941).

I will shortly analyse scenes and/or episodes from *Vantage Point*, *Over There* and *In the Valley of Elah*, all of which adopt a pseudo-documentary or pseudo-footage aesthetic in whole or in part, but do not make an overt claim that the content is ‘actual’. Events may carry similarities to actual events (particularly *In the Valley of Elah*, which is based on an article that first appeared in *Playboy* about the true-life murder of Iraq veteran Richard T. Davis),<sup>661</sup> but they are nonetheless scripted and acted. Regardless, they visually resemble some of the aforementioned conventions of the raw-footage aesthetic. But they do so without any trace of deception or manipulation - the audience is not hoodwinked into thinking that what they are shown *is* raw footage, only that it *looks like* raw footage. The lack of deceit is partly due to production (audiences are likely to recognise actors such as Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, Sigourney Weaver and William Hurt) and partly due to presentation. Jane Roscoe writes of the ‘mock-documentary’ *Man Bites Dog* (Belvaux, Bonzel and Poelvoorde, 1992):

While audiences are encouraged to (although it is not assumed they will) enter into a documentary mode of engagement when viewing *Man Bites Dog*, this is not to say that viewers are duped into thinking that this is a real documentary. Rather, the film attempts to position

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>661</sup> Mark Boal, ‘Death and Dishonour’ *Playboy* May 2004, accessed Oct. 2010.  
<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/features/death-and-dishonor/death-and-dishonor-p1.html>

viewers *as though they were watching a documentary*. It is not only that documentaries make certain claims concerning their ability to gain direct access to the real, but that viewers also have expectations of documentary which are brought to any particular viewing context.<sup>662</sup>

The important factor is the ‘subjective relationship’ fostered between text and viewer, to paraphrase the definition of ‘documentary’ quoted earlier from Sobchack. Not that this relationship - what Lipkin et al call the ‘contract set up between producer and audience’<sup>663</sup> - is always open and clear. Examples of fictions that attempt to pass themselves off as ‘real’ documents are plentiful, though one interesting example from the early stages of the visual documentation of war is worth quoting. Robert Fyne writes that in the First World War, the fictional and the factual were being regularly combined, and the boundaries between the categories were frequently difficult to discern. Some resulting footage or photographs were ‘forgeries’ treated as genuine, as exemplified by the DW Griffith-directed *Hearts of the World* (1918), which supplemented genuine front-line footage with staged reenactments:

Never lax in his zeal, Griffiths made ‘war front’ documentaries with British troops going ‘over the top’ in such manageable geographic settings as Scotland. No one noticed the falsification at the time, and the footage is still used repeatedly in television documentaries and on covers of ‘historical’ publications. Apparently the images proved too convincing to be rejected, long after their fraudulent nature had been exposed.<sup>664</sup>

In this example, the fiction comes to possess its own sense of actuality even when its inauthentic origins are laid bare. However, while the more hermeneutically-consistent examples (those that extend their illusion over their entirety rather than restricting it to certain scenes or episodes) may confuse some viewers into accepting their verisimilitude as genuine, this is not necessarily the primary goal or effect of the pseudo-footage form.

One component seemingly borrowed from actual documentary practice is the extensive use of handheld cameras. Rhodes and Springer trace this not to early

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<sup>662</sup> Jane Roscoe, ‘*Man Bites Dog*: Deconstructing the Documentary Look’ in Rhodes and Springer *Docufictions*, p. 206

<sup>663</sup> Steve P. Lipkin, Derek Paget and Jane Roscoe, ‘Docudrama and Mock-Documentary: Defining Terms, Proposing Canons’ in Rhodes and Springer *Docufictions*, p. 17

<sup>664</sup> Robert Fyne, ‘Foreword’ in Rollins and O’Connor *Why We Fought*, pp. 26-7

actuality filmmaking, but to what they identify as a 'prophetic' shot in *Citizen Kane* that precedes widespread comparable practice in documentary form. When the titular character is filmed over a fence by unscrupulously invasive proto-paparazzi, the performed 'reality' of a hand-held camera 'liberated' from the tripod signals:

the beginning of a contemporary dialogue between non-fiction and fiction cinema. This dialogue flowers in the films of later decades in which the presence of handheld cameras becomes a signifier of a 'real' moment captured on film, even when that moment has been completely staged and scripted.<sup>665</sup>

The use of handheld camera is therefore highly coded. It is not merely a means of facilitating certain shots, or a way to increase visual mobility: it is a coded signifier connoting authenticity and reality. Lipkin et al. translate the relationship between actual and invented when mediated through such codes into semiotic terms as follows:

Hybridity depends upon indexical icons, re-creations that bear close, motivated resemblances to the real and to representations of the real.<sup>666</sup>

It is the resemblance to 'representations of the real' (not to the 'real' itself) that is of most interest. Classical Hollywood filmmaking frequently aims for a certain degree of verisimilitude in its fabrications, but these are not judged as anything other than absorbing fictions. It is the emulation of aesthetic codes associated with the factual narratives of documentary and related actuality-filmmaking that bestows a semblance of 'actuality' to hand-held camera footage. Geoff King links this to more widely adopted techniques in independent American filmmaking:

Unsteady hand-held camerawork, inexact framing, restricted views and sudden zooms are among devices that can be used to create an impression that the filmmaker is capturing events as they unfold, unpredictably before the camera - as is often the case, for practical reasons, in the world of documentary or newsreel - rather than that

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<sup>665</sup> Rhodes and Springer, 'Introduction', p. 8

<sup>666</sup> Lipkin, Paget and Roscoe, 'Docudrama and Mock-Documentary', p. 23

the events have been planned in advance and carefully staged for the camera.<sup>667</sup>

There is something near-paradoxical about such an effect: by deliberately drawing attention to the artificiality and constructedness of the image (through overt reference to the mode of capture), these techniques conversely code the results as less constructed than those texts that carefully disguise editorial intervention through subtle editing conventions.

Jane Roscoe notes that this association between certain conventions and ‘reality’ is not inherent in the form:

Documentary has developed a repertoire of specialised codes and conventions to promote and reinforce its claims of objectivity, access to the real and truthfulness. These have now become so familiar as to seem ‘natural’ and unconstructed themselves.<sup>668</sup>

Chapter nine argued that such codes and conventions in the context of the War on Terror often derive from the supposed status of ‘raw footage’. I now wish to offer examples of these conventions at work in three different fiction texts.

## 10.2 Over There, Vantage Point and In the Valley of Elah

*Over There*, the Iraq War-drama discussed in chapter eight, has a relatively consistent visual aesthetic across its thirteen episodes: a glossy, composed style common to expensive US cable television shows, shot on 16mm film with relatively steady camera movements, and colour correction to aid clarity.<sup>669</sup>

There is an exception to these emphases in episode five, ‘Embedded’, in which the squad is assigned a reporter who they initially distrust. By the end of the subsequent episode, ‘It’s Alright Ma I’m Only Bleeding’, following an act of bravery from the reporter that results in his abduction and beheading by insurgents, their opinions have been substantially altered, and they salute his sacrifice at a makeshift funeral. Throughout the episode, the image switches between the rich, cinematic quality typical of the show in general (*fig. 10.4*),

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<sup>667</sup> King, *American Independent Cinema*, pp. 107-8

<sup>668</sup> Roscoe, ‘Man Bites Dog’, p. 206

<sup>669</sup> Debra Kaufman, ‘FX Brings the War Home With *Over There*’ *Studio Daily*, 01 Sept. 2005, accessed Oct. 2010. [http://www.studiodaily.com/main/technique/craft/f/audio/FX-Brings-the-War-Home-with-Over-There\\_4513.html](http://www.studiodaily.com/main/technique/craft/f/audio/FX-Brings-the-War-Home-with-Over-There_4513.html)

and a grainy, poor quality image and unsteady framing designed to emulate roughshod TV journalism of the kind discussed in chapter nine (fig. 10.5).



Fig. 10.4: Embedded journalist in *Over There*



Fig. 10.5: Raw footage aesthetic in *Over There*

To proffer a second example, this time from cinema, *Vantage Point* depicts an elaborate terrorist attack involving the apparent assassination of the President of the USA (William Hurt) and the bombing of a busy plaza in Salamanca, Spain. The plot is narrated from the various ‘vantage points’ of a series of embedded narrators, the complete plot pieced together from each of their perspectives: the television news producer (Sigourney Weaver) covering the event (whose Global News Network is abbreviated, incidentally, to GNN...); a Secret Service agent (Dennis Quaid); the terrorist leader (Said Taghmaoui); the President (who



it transpires is safe, his body double taking the bullet); a Spanish police officer (Eduardo Noriega) and, importantly, a US tourist (Forest Whitaker) filming with his hand-held camcorder. Sections of the latter's video are inserted throughout, the shaky framing, muted colours, time markers and sudden zooms/pans of the former (*fig. 10.6*) contrasting starkly with the steady cinematography of the rest of the film (*fig. 10.7*).



**Fig. 10.6:** Pseudo-camcorder footage in *Vantage Point*



**Fig. 10.7:** Amateur cameraman in *Vantage Point*

Following the explosion, the professional news team is shown struggling to 'see' the big picture, scouring their banks of monitors for clues as to what has just happened; by the end, they are deliberately misleading the public by spreading a cover story that hides the full extent of the conspiracy. Their professional cameraman, initially appearing only inept, is later revealed to be criminal

(though his exact role in the terrorist attack remains vague). The non-professional observer, by contrast, is able to help ‘solve’ the puzzle; his accidental recording of a key moment in the attack proves crucial to unraveling the mystery. The footage is filmed with the necessary verisimilitude, the shaky composure and awkward framing connoting authenticity and trustworthiness.

Both of these examples adopt a similar aesthetic to the visual documents discussed in chapter nine. In both, the correlation between narrative proposition and visual design is overt: an episode about an embedded journalist mimics the visual conventions of embeds (and their martyr/execution video counterpart); while film scenes showing a tourist filming on his personal camcorder are rendered in the style of a personal camcorder wielded by a non-professional cameraman. *Vantage Point*'s structure points to a further correlation between the visual form and the narrative premise: its plot segments each begin at midday, with numerous shots of clock faces or electronic displays used to establish the repeated time. When one ‘vantage point’ concludes, the segment rewinds. It does not simply start again; the footage begins to reverse, the scenes running backwards at speed to return the plot time to its starting point. This allusion to video recording technology implicitly focalises the film through Howard Lewis, the US tourist, and by extension, his raw-footage recording. The film is rewound, the events replayed until a satisfactory understanding of chronology and causality is established, just as the characters themselves rewind and replay the accidental videotape in order to piece together the ‘Big Picture’. Later in the film one of the terrorists mocks perceived American arrogance, specifically their inability to ‘imagine a world in which they’re not always one step ahead’. *Vantage Point*'s structure suggests that not being one-step ahead is irrelevant; the act of bearing witness, accompanied by a real-time, conscientious response, can ensure America victory regardless. If compared directly to the apologetic narrative of *The 9/11 Commission Report* discussed in chapter one, *Vantage Point* comes across as wish-fulfillment: a complex, labyrinthine, multi-pronged terrorist attack may not be thwarted entirely, but its full terror is contained, its perpetrators captured, and the death toll kept relatively low. Despite its ensemble cast, this resolution is largely the work of two men: the diligent and determined US government-employed professional law enforcer (whose demeanour and actions bear a

certain similarity to Jack Bauer) and the accidental cameraman whose tape can be scrutinised until the truth becomes clear. And the film's very structure echoes that scrutiny, rewinding and replaying events until the chronology is clear.

In *In the Valley of Elah*, pseudo-footage is ostensibly captured not by a camcorder, but a mobile phone. When his son is murdered outside a US military base following a tour of Iraq, Hank Deerfield (Tommy Lee Jones) is confused and suspicious. A retired military detective, Deerfield conducts his own investigation into his son's death, trying to piece together a satisfactory narrative that explains *why* and *how* it happened. Central to this search is a short video on a mobile phone, taken by his son while on patrol in Iraq. Deciphering the murky, low-resolution visuals becomes an obsession, the contents of the video resisting decoding. While Deerfield seeks out contextual evidence through interviews with members of his son's squadron and others who might have last seen him alive, the film's structure begins to resemble an investigative journalist's report.<sup>670</sup> Visually, however, the characteristically artistic and composed cinematography from Roger Deakins confers it with an aesthetic common to glossy, star-studded, Hollywood drama - with the exception of the mobile phone clip, which returns at irregular intervals, haunting the narrative as it haunts the protagonist, frustrating the audience as it frustrates the investigation. At times the clip is embedded, a screen-within-a-screen (*fig. 10.8*); at other times it expands to fill the frame (*fig. 10.9*), its poor quality contrasting greatly with the classically composed scenes that contain it (*fig. 10.10*).

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<sup>670</sup> There are also suggestive similarities to earlier thrillers such as *The Conversation* (Coppola, 1974) and *Blow Up* (Antonioni, 1966), with the technologies updated – digital mobile recordings instead of analogue audio recordings and photographs – but the narrative structure relatively unaltered.

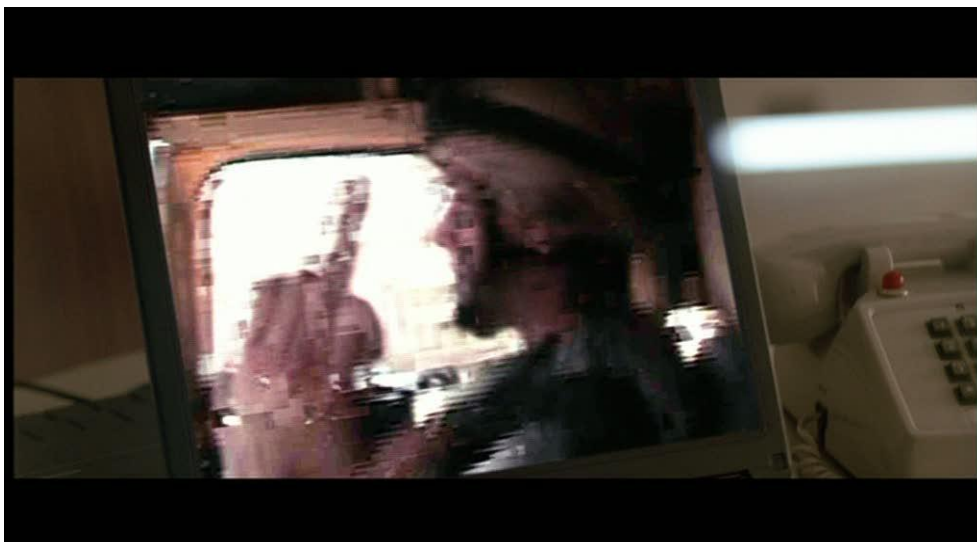


Fig. 10.8: Embedded screen in *In the Valley of Elah*

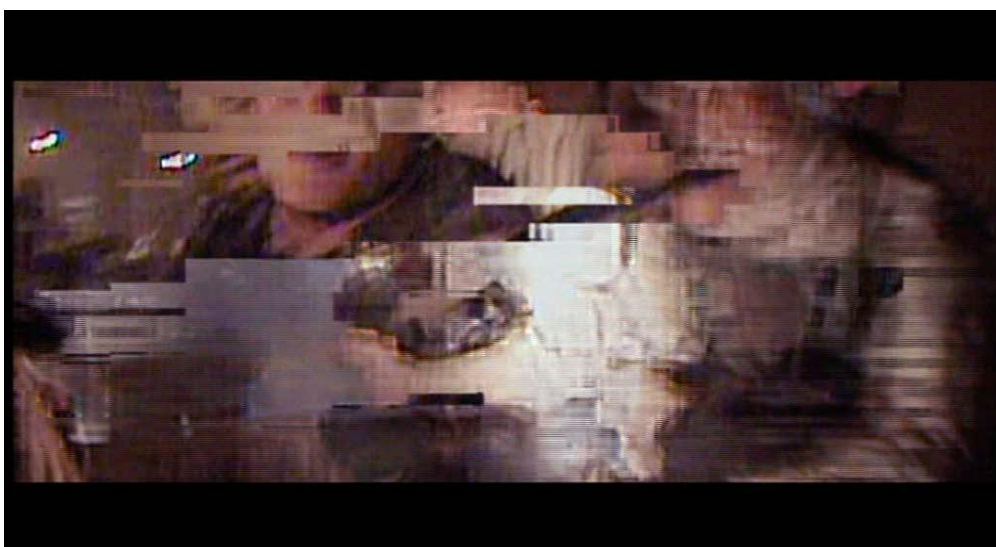


Fig. 10.9: Visual distortion in *In the Valley of Elah*

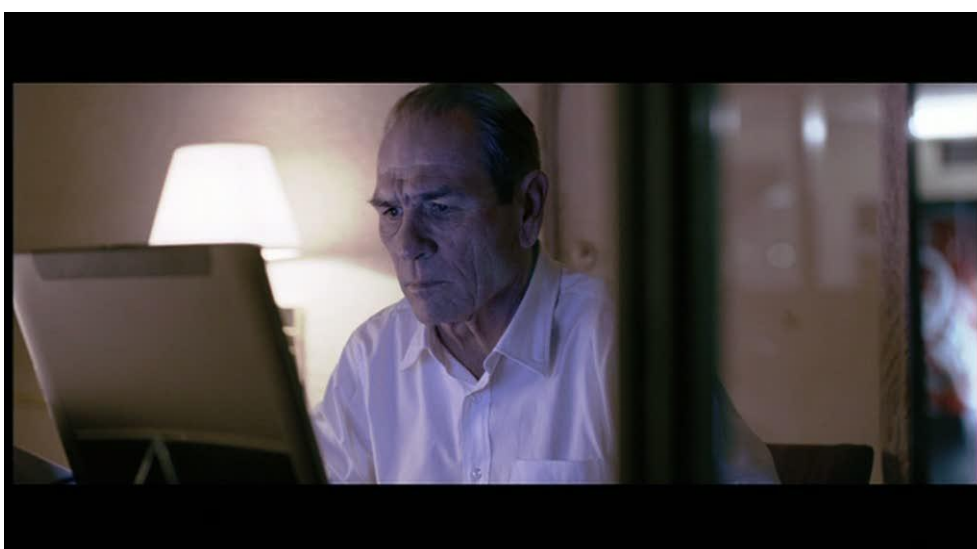


Fig. 10.10: Hank Deerfield investigates his son's death

Its centrality - both visually and as plot device - invites scrutiny. Information is not yielded readily by the image; it must be carefully extracted and explained. Its ambiguity yields the possibility of incorrect interpretations: Deerfield believes his son innocent, and it is only when it is explained to him what he (and the audience) have been looking at all along that he realises his mistake. Far from innocent, his son's involvement in prisoner abuse is brought to light, his cruel mocking of his victims earning him the nickname 'Doc' (he asked them where it hurt before pressing on their injuries). Furthermore, in an incident echoing that depicted (or more accurately, not depicted) in *The War Tapes*, Deerfield discovers his son was responsible for the death of a young child when he refuses to stop the vehicle he is driving for fear of ambush. Like *The War Tapes*, this incident is missing from the record, rendered only through unclear snippets and contextual testimony. Unlike *The War Tapes*, however, there are no practical reasons why such a scene is absent from *In the Valley of Elah*; should the filmmakers have wished, the event could have been staged for the camera and included in the plot directly. It is instead omitted for narrative purposes: the mystery it poses is integral to the central investigation. This is confirmed by a climactic staging of the events depicted in the video, shot this time in the same visual register as the rest of the film: clean and complete, the video clip's meaning finally unlocked. Additionally, the absence emulates the structural elisions of the unprepared raw footage aesthetic; furthermore, it downplays the loss of Arabic life while emphasising the traumatic effect such an incident has on the American perpetrator and his/her family. The structural effects of an unprepared and responsive documentary style are utilised in a fiction film to help engender a US-centric ideological perspective - the war cast as a predominantly American tragedy.<sup>671</sup>

During the first Gulf War, military footage of guided missiles hitting their targets (or, more frequently than the feted accuracy of the weapons should have allowed for, missing their targets) was similarly visually obscure. While technologically advanced, the resolution of such black and white images was poor, and explanations were necessary:

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<sup>671</sup> The more recent *Route Irish* (Loach, 2010) follows a similar plot, with an ex-soldier investigating the death of a close friend and fellow private military contractor. Like *In the Valley of Elah*, a mobile phone video clip is integral to the investigation.

This footage was more difficult for the untrained eye to decipher than the night-vision footage from CNN, so Schwarzkopf necessarily served as interpreter, helping the media ‘see’ what had occurred.<sup>672</sup>

This anecdote marks the moment when, Keith Solomon concludes, ‘war and cinema became the same thing’.<sup>673</sup> Solomon’s comparison is to night-vision CNN footage, but the embedded journalist report or low-quality mobile-phone clip are framed in a similar fashion. As in *In the Valley of Elah*, there is a need for contextual information: while actual newscasters parrot the phrase ‘what we are seeing here is...’, offering a responsive interpretation of footage deemed unable to carry its own explicit meaning, the fictional character of Hank Deerfield engages in textual analysis of his own, scouring the mobile phone’s screen for answers in an approximation of the conspiracy culture logic discussed in chapter four: if we look hard enough, the film promises, the truth will emerge.

In *In the Valley of Elah* - as in *Vantage Point* and the ‘Embedded’ and ‘It’s Alright Ma’ episodes of *Over There* - such footage is contained within a more traditionally organised and visualised narrative format. Other texts sustain the mimicry for their full duration. The rest of the examples I will use will be sustained pseudo-footage texts of the ‘found-footage’ variety. By ‘found footage’, I refer to those fiction texts that most closely cultivate the raw-footage aesthetic, in support of a central plot-conceit - that the text is made from footage recovered following a bombing, abduction or other such event, and which is being presented in its original state with minimal editorial intervention. In the last decade, such a style is far from rare,<sup>674</sup> but has particular nuance in the independent feature *September Tapes*.

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<sup>672</sup> Keith Solomon, ‘The Spectacle of War and the Spectre of ‘the Horror’: Apocalypse Now and American Imperialism’ *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 35:1 (2007), p. 24

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>674</sup> *Escape From Afghanistan* (Bekmambetov, 2002) similarly narrates a filmmaker’s experiences in Afghanistan (set during the Russian-Afghanistan conflict of 1979 to 1989); while *Diary of the Dead*, *[Rec]* (Balagueró and Plaza, 2007) and its US remake *Quarantine* (Dowdle, 2008), and *Cloverfield*, all adopt a similar conceit.

### 10.3 September Tapes

The less polished the film, the more credible it will be found.<sup>675</sup>

- *Stella Bruzzi*

A little over a week after the third anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, trade journal *Variety* reported upon a forthcoming Afghanistan-set drama that had premiered at the Sundance film festival earlier in the year. The article suggested that by the time it reached US cinemas, *September Tapes* would have been re-edited from its Sundance cut, with additional footage re-inserted that had allegedly previously been confiscated by the US government. 'Whether there's some truth to that', they suggest, 'or it's pure marketing chutzpah... [the film] is so craftily made that most viewers with no prior knowledge of the film would accept it as a documentary. For this sort of project that's certainly a compliment'.<sup>676</sup>

The illusion has certainly convinced some viewers of its documentary status, as angry message board reviews attest:

The movie was completely misleading... The claims made on the outside of the DVD box was overt fraud to take this fabricated death of a Journalist and present it as factual (sic)... I alerted the Video store that the movie should be removed from their "Documentary" section and be placed in the War-drama area for quasi fictional accounts of actual events.<sup>677</sup>

While I would not want to argue that such a hostile reaction is commonplace without any kind of quantitative audience data (nor call for the installation of 'quasi fictional accounts of actual events' sections in video stores so as not to potentially upset or mislead future renters) the sense of indignant outrage voiced by these few but vocal viewers, and the many online threads that begin by asking 'was this real?' - seeking clarification even after watching - is

<sup>675</sup> Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 6

<sup>676</sup> Lisa Nesselson, 'September Tapes' *Variety* 15 Sept. 2004, accessed Oct. 2010.  
[http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print\\_review&reviewid=VE1117924909&categoryid=31&query=september+tapes](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_review&reviewid=VE1117924909&categoryid=31&query=september+tapes)

<sup>677</sup> 'rockoandbill', 'I Want My Money Back' *imdb*, posted 14 Feb. 2007, accessed Oct. 2010.  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390468/usercomments?start=20>

testament to the film's close emulation of documentary conventions, and those of non-fiction recording more broadly.<sup>678</sup>

The confiscation of *Septem8er Tapes* footage has been reported elsewhere in greater detail:

Shot using hand-held digital video recorders, the film has the look and feel of a real documentary. Take away the context of the cinema and it would be quite easy to believe the film's conceit that the tapes were found by Northern Alliance troops somewhere near the Afghani-Pakistani border. Harsh sunlight, washed out backgrounds and pixelated edges are part of digital video's aesthetic, and one that is perfectly suited for this film. So much so that the Defence Department deemed it necessary, when the crew returned to the United States, to hold their footage for five months for examination. Even now, Christian Johnston, the director, has yet to recover about eight hours of footage.<sup>679</sup>

While objective proof verifying this claim is lacking, the fact that it is plausible and accepted is sufficient to the present argument: the appropriation of such tropes and codes in *Septem8er Tapes* is either convincing enough to fool the US Department of Defence, or convincing enough to fool audiences into accepting such a scenario as credible.

Despite this aura of actuality, the film is in fact an acted and scripted fiction. American filmmaker Don Larson (George Calil) travels to Afghanistan on the first anniversary of 9/11 to film an investigative documentary. He is fired upon, arrested and imprisoned, and eventually caught up in a battle in the Tora Bora mountains in which he swaps his camera for an automatic weapon, and is killed during the fighting. These final scenes are shot in the style of the genre of computer game known as the 'first-person shooter' in which a player navigates a virtual environment from the viewpoint of their avatar, with their weapon typically visible in the bottom part of the frame and breathing and gunfire

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<sup>678</sup> Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight discuss a text that did convince a large number of people that it was a genuine documentary, *Forgotten Silver* (Jackson and Botes, 1995), which provoked hostile responses from those fooled by its aura of actuality. See Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 144-50

<sup>679</sup> 'Shooting History' *The Economist*, 370.8360 31 Jan. 2004, accessed Oct. 2010.  
<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=15&hid=51&sid=39b202ac-d675-45c1-9977-084a3c832215%40SRCSM1&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=buh&AN=12120439>



dominating the soundtrack. His motive for conducting such a dangerous pursuit is revealed to be a mixture of grief and revenge: it transpires that an audio tape he is frequently seen listening to is the last phone call his wife made to him before her plane hit the World Trade Centre. These audio tapes perform a similar narrative role as visual footage does in *In the Valley of Elah*. At the beginning of the film, onscreen captions claim the completed film was made from eight tapes recovered from Northern Alliance soldiers in Afghanistan. To support this, the film is structured with the fragmented omissions typical of the raw footage aesthetic - there is missing time between segments, in which unseen events occur.

While a work of fiction, the director has been keen to stress the film's verisimilitude. The film was at least partially filmed on location in Kabul (an extremely dangerous place for a Western film crew to be in 2003/4), with the sound of live ammunition apparently audible.<sup>680</sup> Since the Department of Defence could not (or would not) support or endorse the film, the filmmakers reportedly approached 'Kabul's version of Don Corleone', who provided them with vehicles, Northern Alliance soldiers, AK-47s and RPGs.<sup>681</sup> Whether the Department of Defence was subsequently fooled by the illusion or not, the film is consciously identified by its blurring of a factual aesthetic with a fictional content.

Like the pseudo-documentary more generally, the film borrows 'generic cues derived from documentary's project of "representing reality"'.<sup>682</sup> Gerd Bayer argues that such cues:

make the production side of filming visible, thereby creating in their viewers a conscious awareness that they are indeed watching a film, that is, a constructed reality. This flaunting of a film's artifice ironically heightens the sense that what is witnessed must indeed be a genuine document, since it is not so much *represented*; but rather, *presented*.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid

<sup>681</sup> Ibid

<sup>682</sup> Gerd Bayer, 'Artifice and Artificiality in Mockumentaries' in Rhodes and Springer, *Docufictions*, p. 165

<sup>683</sup> Ibid, p. 165

As previously suggested, something seemingly contradictory occurs: such films emphasise their constructedness, and in doing so, downplay their artificiality.

Bayer continues:

The presentational characteristics of mockumentaries include a range of stylistic features: frontal camera shots in which the equipment, and, most frequently, unstable camera moves that aim to emphasise the un-staged and spontaneous filming process. As a result, the viewers are drawn into the cinematic narrative.<sup>684</sup>

This is, essentially, the power of a ‘caught-on-tape’ aesthetic as discussed in the previous chapter; the sense of ‘live’ and unprepared responsiveness produces a breathless responsiveness in the viewer. In *9/11* and *The War Tapes*, the rough actuality was corralled into shape by professional filmmakers, who sought to retain the immediacy and authenticity of the raw footage but framed it with a conventional documentary structure. The pseudo-footage aesthetic in fiction film, by contrast, displays ‘ostentatiously flawed material’ displaying the ‘perfect faultiness that actual documentary cannot have’.<sup>685</sup> Its performed aesthetic is built through a combination of: hand-held camerawork; digital camcorder quality; sudden edits; long, uninterrupted takes; direct to camera address; lack of focus; poor framing; obstructed audio, and other indicators of raw footage as discussed in the last chapter. Together, these create an ‘implication of authority’ drawn from apparent authenticity. The invisible cameraman also contributes to the sense of performed immediacy, the spectator sharing their technologically-mediated point of view, placed in the midst of events as an observer. Events unfold ‘in front of our eyes’, and we appear to experience them simultaneously with the characters. In pseudo-footage, the cameraman is part of the diagesis; by extension, so is the audience’s vantage point.

#### **10.4 Military technology and surveillance**

The pseudo-footage aesthetic has thus far been discussed only in one subjective form i.e. hand-held recording devices - whether mobile phones, personal camcorders or more advanced equipment - assigned to or aligned with an

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid, p. 165

<sup>685</sup> Ibid, p. 170

individual (or combination of individuals') perspective. The plots of the pseudo-footage examples discussed so far are thus all duly centered on the fate of their recording characters. However, not all such raw footage (pseudo or otherwise) is solely subjectively sourced. There is an objective equivalent in the impersonal, disinterested and technologically-mediated recordings of high-spec military technology. Related to this is a form of recording that combines subjective and objective modes, namely surveillance recordings.

Where the raw-footage aesthetic as currently defined foregrounds its means of capture so as to suggest spontaneity, unpreparedness and authenticity, the objective component fetishises its technological mode of capture: from missile-view shots of air strikes hitting their targets with precision, to aerial observation images taken by satellites. Such images were more frequently used to illustrate news reports during the first Gulf War, when first-hand footage was more difficult for news teams to come by, but they continue to play an important role in comprising the War on Terror's visual paradigm.

Like the subjective raw-footage aesthetic, the visual characteristics of this proposed military aesthetic are performable and can be evoked and recreated. *Body Of Lies* emulates high-tech satellite technologies on a number of occasions (*fig. 10.11*), even designing the DVD menu screen in the same style (*fig. 10.12*).

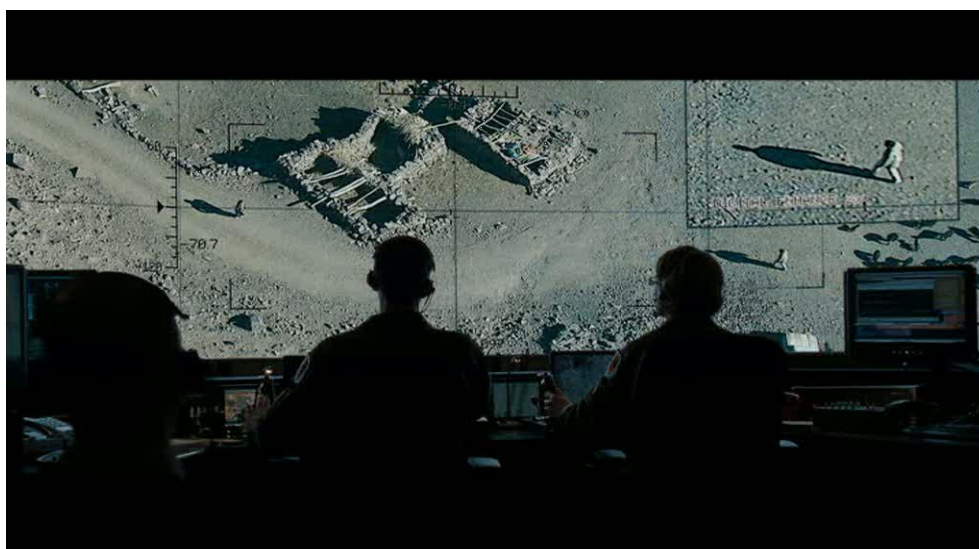


Fig. 10.11: Overhead surveillance in *Body of Lies*

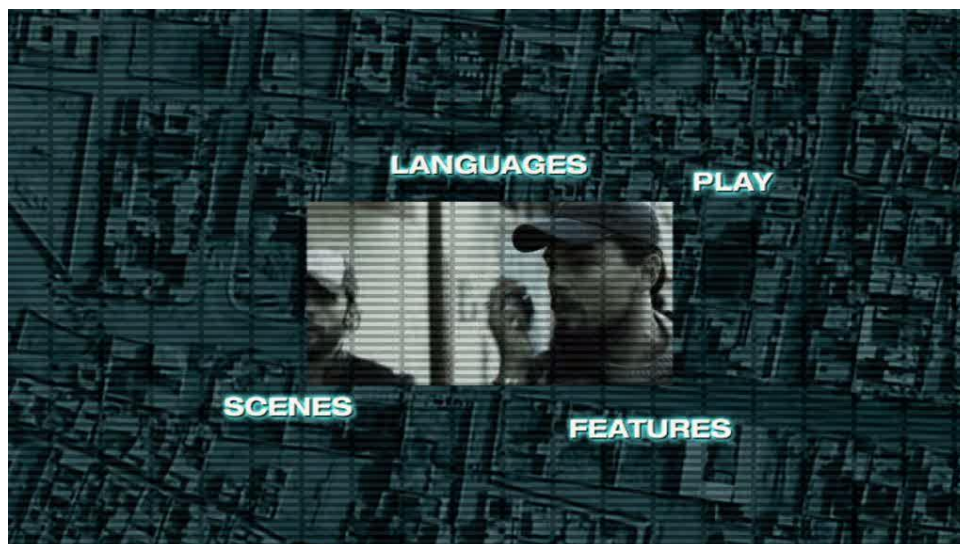


Fig. 10.12: *Body of Lies* DVD menu

Sometimes its use within the film is motivated by the plot: the lead characters are CIA agents, one of whom, Roger Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) spends time undercover whilst other intelligence agents observe his movements remotely using overhead satellites. This is shown to be of limited use when Ferris is kidnapped by a terrorist cell who, aware that they are under constant observation, stage an elaborate act of counter-subterfuge, stirring up a dust cloud that shields them from the satellite's cameras and allows them to send out multiple decoys. Nonetheless, the satellite is an extensively used intelligence tool, a core component of the depicted counter-terrorism activities. Once Ferris is captured, the film emulates raw footage in the depiction of his hostage video (fig. 13), with poor lighting, grainy texture and time markers, evidencing the way these various types of 'footage' often work in combination.



Fig. 10.13: Hostage video in *Body of Lies*

In addition to these plot-motivated examples, the overhead tracking shot is used in scene transitions (*fig. 10.14*); a more mechanical, technologically-mediated example of the classical editing convention of establishing a wide space before closing in on the protagonists that occupy it. This suggests the ease with which such technology permits users to view distant spaces and pick out individuals from the crowd (essentially, the same cognitive process of pattern recognition discussed elsewhere in the thesis). When introducing Washington, Langley, Amsterdam, Amman and other destinations, the aerial shot is at an angle, moving into the space gradually. When introducing Iraq, however, the angle is immediately overhead. This is not stylistically identical to the diagetic satellite example in *fig. 10.11* - lacking the grid references and filmed on a richer cinematic stock - but the birds-eye angle aligns it closely with the aforementioned technologies, suggesting the 'enemy territory' is constant scrutiny - though the distance is so great that identifying anything other than the municipal layout of the city seems impossible, again pointing towards the limitations of such intelligence gathering. Such connotations may become less distinct in future, with Google Maps allowing anyone to view cached versions of such images for anywhere on the planet (*fig. 10.15*), but in the context of *Body of Lies*, the connection between overhead establishing shots and espionage is more than plausible.



**Fig. 10.14:** Overhead tracking shot in *Body of Lies*



Fig. 10.15: Map of Samarra, Google Maps

Like *Stop Loss*, *Body of Lies* is otherwise shot in a conventional style. However, extended pseudo-surveillance examples in the vein of *Septem8er Tapes* exist also, notably *wmd.*, in which scenes are styled as if edited together from multiple sources. *wmd.* opens with a title card claiming that ‘in 2007 a collection of surveillance tapes, CCTV, and hidden camera footage was sent to us anonymously’, with ‘the past year has been spent piecing their story together’. The film is immediately framed in a pseudo-‘found-footage’ fashion, the narrative opening with a claim of authenticity similar to that which introduced *Septem8er Tapes*. Like the similarly-presented *Redacted*, the filmmaker is not present in the narrative as a character: the film, though overtly constructed, is thus without any specified author. The plot fragments together detail events leading up to the abduction of British MI6 desk officer Alex Morgan (Simon Lenagan) by unknown persons in April 2003. The various sections resemble: home video footage of Morgan with his wife and child; surreptitiously placed button-hole cameras (indicated by their low angle and the masking that obscures the edges of the frame); CCTV footage (complete with date and time marker in the top left of the frame); and surveillance organised by an unknown intelligence agency. In the latter, the line of sight is often obscured, with sudden zooms and pans occasionally losing sight of their subject, while the dialogue is made tinny to resemble sounds picked up by a long-range microphone

- aurally complimenting the rawness of the visuals. *wmd.* thus encompasses many of the modes under discussion: subjective self-documentation; the objective and impassive mechanical surveillance of the CCTV cameras; and anonymously performed but subjective surveillance.

The reasons behind Morgan's abduction involve his tenacious refusal to accept the official reasons for the UK and the US invading Iraq. The infamous dossier used to 'prove' the existence of weapons of mass destruction is, with a little investigation, revealed by the fictional Morgan to be false, and the insinuation is that willful ignorance from all levels of the decision-making hierarchy allowed it to be quoted as fact and used to justify military action. Furthermore, although the charge is not firmly made, his disappearance implies that not only were authorities turning a blind eye; they broke the law in order to maintain the illusion. The mixed aesthetic outlined above, then, is more than simply visual: it is congruous with the narrative content (the secrecy and implied 'seeing is believing' logic that allows the false satellite images to be passed for genuine dramatises the same tension between the fictional and the real at the heart of false actuality filmmaking - both are 'real' only if they claim to be), and the structure (like *The War Tapes* and *Septem8er Tapes*, moments are missed - the 'panoptical web' of visual surveillance is extensive, but not omnipresent).

The performed lack of composition and unprepared reactivity suggest similarities between *wmd.*'s surveillance aesthetic (which combines the subjective and the objective) and the subjective pseudo-footage of *Septem8er Tapes*. But there are important differences: the images of the former purportedly come from multiple cameras, including several fixed in position (predominantly CCTV), rather than limited but mobile sources. Secondly, as previously suggested, many of these fixed cameras suggest *inadvertent* technological capture rather than motivated attempts to document. The CCTV shots say more about the ubiquity of such recording devices in the UK than about the intelligence agencies' ability to spy on one man; presumably, an incomplete but extensive record of *any* individual would be possible with access to every CCTV camera. However, the important shared characteristic is, like the previous raw-footage examples, its 'caught on tape' characterisation. Unpredictability, uncontrollability and the capriciousness of the live moment are evoked, but contained within a fictional narrative that makes its way towards a dramatic conclusion. There is a

reassurance of sorts offered by these texts: while we may well inhabit an unpredictable, 'real-time' world filled with threats, they suggest familiar dramatic structures exist beneath the apparent chaos. This mixed aesthetic, evoking military technology, surveillance, news reports, documentary filmmaking and other visual documentations (to varying degrees in different texts) frames narrative itself as an accumulative process of data interpretation - or, to revisit a concept from chapter four, pattern recognition. The aesthetic might be fragmented or diffuse, but it yields to familiar dramatic content.

### **10.5 Background reality & persuasive power**

In addition to faked home videos and scenes of surveillance, actual news footage is used in *wmd.* to contextualise plot developments. This is a common technique in various War on Terror texts: for example, *Fair Game* (Liman, 2011), about the leaking of CIA agent Valerie Plame's name by White House officials, interjects its based-on-actual-events drama with contemporaneous footage from C-SPAN (a cable channel dedicated to broadcasting governmental affairs, in much the way BBC Parliament does in the UK) and news reports from the period in which the film is set (2002-03). Similarly, *A Few Days in September* (Amigorena, 2006) concludes its fictional thriller narrative - concerning a French secret service agent protecting a CIA agent's children from a mysterious assassin - with footage of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center, casting the preceding plot in a newly political light, as a dramatisation of the 'Letting It Happen on Purpose' conspiracy hypothesis discussed in chapter four (it is implied that the CIA were aware of the impending attacks). *Green Zone* (Greengrass, 2010), meanwhile, is one of many films to employ footage of the infamous 'Mission Accomplished' speech, conducted by President Bush aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in May 2003, for purposes of irony, the announcement of victory in Iraq laughably premature in retrospect. Chapter nine discussed the use of such secondary sources in the documentary *9/11*: footage gleaned from news reports helps 'fill in the gaps', bridging the caesuras that would otherwise punctuate the documentary. When such footage is included in an otherwise fictionalised text, however, there is an additional effect. The text is no longer 'acting' real; the actual and the invented are being combined.



The inclusion of actuality footage in an otherwise fictional film or television text is, like so many of the observations made in this thesis, not an invention of the War on Terror. Virilio writes about early incorporations of the actual into the invented:

scraps of news film lying about the cutting-room floor were no longer systematically swept-up... These began to be seen as ‘viewing matter’, recyclable within the film industry itself. Once that happened *background reality* resurfaced, with blazing fires, storms, cataclysms, assassination attempts, crowd scenes... but above all, a mountain of material of military origin.<sup>686</sup>

In addition to ‘bombings and magnificent shipwrecks’, combatants became:

chance extras whose ultimate talent was to reveal to astute members of the audience how impoverished the performances and special effects of the period piece really were; as though military or other facts gave themselves up more generously to the sleepwalker’s eyes of automatic cameras, or to the curiosity of unskilled photographers, than to the masterly contrivances of the top professionals, the elite of career filmmakers.<sup>687</sup>

The use of actuality footage in fictional contexts was expedient and pragmatic - staging epic battle scenes for the camera is a costly and logistically complicated process - but also an aid to verisimilitude. Interestingly, even here, unmediated ‘footage’ (as opposed to ‘filming’, which implies a greater degree of composition and intent) was considered a virtue, the subjective ‘curiosity of unskilled photographers’ and the objective ‘sleepwalker’s eyes of automatic cameras’ both highly praised. But we cannot assume the same motives are necessarily at work in more recent, War-on-Terror texts. As numerous examples have shown, the aesthetic through which the ‘reality’ of the War on Terror is presented is frequently incomplete, visually unimpressive and capable of being mimicked closely by the conscientious fiction filmmaker, so recreation is not a prohibitively complicated task. Verisimilitude and pragmatism are still possible motives, but with computer-generated effects relatively cheap (in that they no longer require the astronomical budgets reserved only for the biggest of blockbusters, but have spread to more modestly priced products) and no longer ‘impoverished’ in the way they once were, there is presumably another reason

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<sup>686</sup> Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, p. 50

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50

why we have yet to see a meticulous computer-modelled reconstruction of the World Trade Centre collapse in all its explosive and morbid detail. It also arguably evades responsibility for producing any further representation, via an implied reverence towards an event that is left to 'speak for itself'.

Some have explained this with reference to Theodor Adorno's dictum against poetry after Auschwitz and the comparative position expressed by Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), eliding 9/11 with the Holocaust and claiming it similarly 'unrepresentable'. 'Fiction is a transgression' Lanzmann wrote of his nine-hour Holocaust documentary, stating his belief that 'there are some things that cannot and should not be represented'.<sup>688</sup> A contemporary mainstream articulation of this opinion is 'too soon!', the charge of impropriety levelled at those that tackle controversial, traumatic subjects before the perceived appropriate interval. But 9/11 and War on Terror fictions are numerous, and the incorporation of actuality clips in lieu of representative fabrications is reserved only for specific moments.

Most films that feature the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 in their narratives utilise actual news coverage rather than recreations, often, as Mike Chopra-Gant notes, by using television sets within the diegesis - reflecting the way the event was first experienced by the majority of those who witnessed it. Chopra-Gant suggests this is simply a 'way of asserting the authenticity of their (fictionalised) accounts of the event',<sup>689</sup> though the manner in which interloping reality enhances a fiction's authenticity requires further examination. Lipkin et al offer one compelling explanation which they label the 'persuasive power' gained from a proximity to the real. By placing their fabrications alongside actuality, filmmakers tacitly argue 'that it is both logical and emotionally valid to associate cinematic proximity with moral truth'.<sup>690</sup> Actuality and invention are thereby symbolically aligned for rhetorical purposes, 'background reality' a creative blurring of tense, mode of address and subjectivity. More broadly, the raw-footage aesthetic arguably engenders a similar effect, imbuing fiction with a

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<sup>688</sup> Quoted in Kendrick (2008), p.512

<sup>689</sup> Chopra-Gant, *Cinema and History*, p. 93

<sup>690</sup> Lipkin, Paget and Roscoe, 'Docudrama and Mock-Documentary', p. 19

‘persuasive power’ it may otherwise lack by entwining it at a presentational level with conventions adopted from elsewhere.

## 10.6 Conclusion: *Rendition*

Garrett Stewart has argued that attempts to mimic such technological and journalistic tropes in narrative cinema has a profound effect on the representation of the War on Terror, arguing that ‘the most salient formal feature’ of most such films - namely ‘the blanketing of plot by a thick quilt of digital mediation’ - has resulted in ‘battle fatigue’ at a stylistic level.<sup>691</sup> The performed rawness identified here, in Stewart’s reading, is ‘not just a stylistic tic but a political symptom’. He argues that, in films such as *Body of War* and *Redacted*, ‘critique dissipates into technique’, their visual construction subsuming any potential political content:

These narratives can only project a visual ‘look’ where the graininess of the image, infrared or video, must stand in for the true grittiness of the mission. Without clear lines drawn in the sand, there is only dust on the nervous handheld lens.<sup>692</sup>

I wish to close the chapter by suggesting that the raw footage aesthetic can and does influence political readings of certain War on Terror texts, using *Rendition* as final case study. *Rendition* is an example of the GNN discussed in chapter six, with ‘four of five short stories’ (as director Gavin Hood describes its structure on the DVD’s director’s commentary) taking place in multiple locations around the world. It begins with Egyptian-American chemical engineer Anwar El-Ibrahimi (Omar Metwally) receiving a missed call to his mobile phone as he leaves a conference in South Africa to return home to Chicago. The call is purportedly from a terrorist group whose communications are being monitored, and although the evidence is circumstantial at best, it is enough to warrant his arrest and questioning under US anti-terror laws. Upon landing in the US he is abducted from the airport and flown in shackles to ‘North Africa’ (there is ambiguity as to whether this is an unnamed country in the Maghreb or a fictional country called ‘North Africa’); an example of the controversial practice of ‘extraordinary

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<sup>691</sup> Garrett Stewart, ‘Digital Fatigue: Imagining War in Recent American Film’ *Film Quarterly*, 62.4 (2009) p. 45

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid* p. 47

rendition' from which the film takes its name (echoing the argument made in chapter four concerning the exposé role of many War on Terror texts). Multiple plots circle the central act of rendition: the attempts made by Anwar's wife Isabella (Reese Witherspoon) to locate her husband, assisted by Alan Smith (Peter Saarsgard), an old school friend working as a senator's aide; the interrogation itself, led by the North African security chief Abassi Fawal (Yigal Naor), and observed by inexperienced CIA analyst Douglas Freeman (Jake Gyllenhall), suddenly promoted when the previous agent in charge is killed in a suicide bombing in a busy square; and the tentative romance between Fawal's daughter Fatima (Zineb Oukach) and Khalid (Moa Khouas), whose mosque promotes jihad.

Embedded pseudo-footage is used on two occasions: the first is a news report that interrupts a conversation between Fawal and Freeman. A news reporter announces the discovery of a short video tape taken by a tourist shortly before the explosion that appears to show two individuals confronting one another, their behaviour indicating their involvement in the attack (*fig. 10.16*). Later, the clip is shown a second time, the background figures now enlarged and circled so as to make them more visible, with Fawal trying to discern their identity from its grainy image; he frustratedly gives up and declares it 'useless' (*fig. 10.17*). Like *In the Valley of Elah*, the central investigation hinges upon the interpretation of a distorted and poorly-recorded piece of footage. Unlike *In the Valley of Elah*, the meaning of the clip resists decoding by its investigators (both Fawal and Freeman, and, by extension, the audience), allowing for a narrative twist in the final act.



Fig. 10.16: News report in *Rendition*



Fig. 10.17: Pseudo-raw footage in *Rendition*

As argued in chapter six, edits in the GNN usually suggest ‘meanwhile’; multiple plot lines are juxtaposed and contrasted, spatially separate but temporally concurrent. *Rendition* features three main locations - Chicago, Washington and North Africa. Temporal simultaneity is assumed since there is no reason to think otherwise, until it is revealed that the Fatima and Khalid strand has already taken place at an early point in the plot-time. They are the figures in the background of the tourist video, Fatima pleading with Khalid, while Khalid (whose brother, it transpires, was tortured to death in police custody), tries to exact his revenge on her father. In this way, *Rendition* subverts the expectations of the GNN format: rather than acting as a point of convergence,

the conclusion creates a new, insurmountable divide between characters. A causal relationship between the various events is affirmed, but not the one that the preceding scenes worked to suggest.

Fatima, Freeman and Fawal inhabit the same space - the unnamed North African city - but not at the same time - the two plots occur five days apart. The film disguises this disjunction throughout the earlier stages in various ways, including a seemingly realistic depiction of time zones applied consistently across the plot strands - for example, a phone call made at night from Washington is answered during daylight hours in Africa, and night scenes focusing on Anwar, Freeman and Fawal are shown in proximity to night scenes focusing on the young couple, morning scenes matched to morning scenes, and so on. This suggests shared experience and synchronous existence, Benedict Anderson's concept of organisation by 'clock and calendar'.<sup>693</sup> Scenes are also organised according to thematic similarities: a discussion between Fawal and his wife about their daughter's refusal to return her father's phone calls in one scene is echoed in the following scene in which Fatima's aunt asks her niece why she refuses to call her parents; later, the anti-Western rhetoric of the terrorist recruiters is intercut with, and played over, scenes of Anwar's clothes being cut from his body and his incarceration in a small windowless cell. A meaningful, causal relationship is suggested between the two occurrences: Islamic youth are angry because of the kind of wrongful detention typified by Anwar. Edward Branigan notes:

We use hypotheses about time to search for causation and, reciprocally, we use hypotheses about causality to establish temporal order.<sup>694</sup>

Since the spectator has no reason to doubt a single timeline, a link between two events otherwise combined only through editing is assumed. Such hypotheses can produce the logical fallacy *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after, therefore because of), a fallacy that becomes particularly pronounced when the film reveals 'before' and 'after' have been confused.

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<sup>693</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 25

<sup>694</sup> Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 48

The inability to correctly interpret the tourist video (by either Fassal or the audience) is key: were the picture quality clearer or the camera closer, their identities would be apparent, so the raw aesthetic is essential if the twist is to surprise the audience. The film draws attention to this video clip, self-consciously marking it as a ‘clue’, but withholds its full meaning. This lends credence to the rhetorical question asked by the first interrogator to question Anwar, where he lays out the ‘evidence’ (no more than co-incidence) and asks, ‘What are we to think?’; just as the US intelligence agencies act to apprehend Anwar based on assumptions drawn from co-incidence, the spectator assumes a causality that is revealed to be mistaken, due to an incorrect interpretation of the links between characters. So *Rendition*’s complicated time-structure does more than ‘trick’ the audience with its climactic revelation; in forcing a reconsideration of the film’s chronology, it entails a reconsideration of the causal relationship between events, while characterising the intelligence mistake as both understandable and excusable. The inability to parse the raw footage for clues is an inability to interpret chronology - a pertinent issue in an era of ‘preemptive strikes’ and the like.

Furthermore, it characterises the terrorism as inevitable by showing the effect before the cause in the Fatima/Khalid plotline. By revealing the end of their plot as the beginning of the others, all other events are shown to have been predetermined, while Fatima and Khalid’s fate is presented as inevitable. Maureen Turim writes:

By presenting the result before the cause, a logic of inevitability is implied; certain types of events are shown to have certain types of results without ever allowing for other outcomes than the one given in advance.<sup>695</sup>

The Khalid and Fatima plot line is revealed to be, essentially, one long flashback. Turim continues:

Many flashback narrations contain an element of philosophical fatalism, coupled with a psychoanalytic fatalism [which]... presents a

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<sup>695</sup> Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 17

cynical view of history as cyclical, guaranteed to repeat that which we have already seen...<sup>696</sup>

This holds true in *Rendition*: any alternative outcomes are denied, with all choices and events pertaining to the explosion shown to be irrevocable. As previously suggested, this has the effect of characterising terrorist violence, and the retaliatory violence of the extraordinary rendition itself, as inevitable.

This has wider parallels with the notion of ‘blowback’ - a term originating in US intelligence parlance, originally to describe the ‘likelihood that our covert operations in other people’s countries would result in retaliations against Americans, civilian and military, at home and abroad’.<sup>697</sup> The term has since entered more common usage, with an altered meaning that is approximately synonymous with ‘unforeseen consequence’, but the original definition is more revealing. Blowback is not precisely ‘unforeseen’, as it is factored into considerations: it is given a degree of likelihood. It is only entirely unforeseen to those not privy to the actions taken by militaries, intelligence agencies and government representatives around the world:

Actions that generate blowback are normally kept totally secret from the American public and from most of their representatives in Congress. This means that when innocent civilians become victims of a retaliatory strike, they are at first unable to put it in context, or to understand the sequence of events that led up to it...<sup>698</sup>

As Chalmers Johnson observes, ‘the American people may not know what is done in their name, but those on the receiving end surely do’, listing the coups in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), Indonesia (1965) and Chile (1973); the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Congo in 1960; the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961; the bombing of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the sixties and seventies; support of the Greek military junta of 1967-74; the backing of the military government in El Salvador and the contras in Nicaragua throughout the 1980s, as well as long-standing actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, as ‘only the most obvious cases’.<sup>699</sup> In a broader sense, Johnson suggests, ‘blowback is another way of

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid, pp. 17-8

<sup>697</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), p. ix

<sup>698</sup> Ibid, p. xi

<sup>699</sup> Ibid, p. xi



saying that a nation reaps what it sows'.<sup>700</sup> *Rendition* dramatises this circularity. It transcodes the general confusion that accompanies terrorist acts, before revealing the 'big picture' (i.e., what was hidden by the rawness of the tourist video) and arguing that the extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects to countries with poor human rights records, where torture is used to elicit confessions, compounds hostility and engenders further terrorism.

In *Rendition*, the chaotic confusion of cause and effect in the aftermath of a terrorist attack is rectified and resolved through the actions of a sole CIA agent. His moralistic act - intervening to free Anwar - breaks the cycle, and while the 'twist' is initially jarring, the extended version of the square-bombing, replayed at the end, is careful to leave no narrative loose-ends, in much the same way as the conclusion of *In the Valley of Elah* featured Hank Deerfield's mental recreation of events, resolving any outstanding mystery. In both films, the final version is clear and unequivocal, filmed in 35mm film stock (the 'footage becomes a movie', to paraphrase Pierce's earlier quote), raw footage processed into lucid dramatic shape. While raw footage may denote authenticity, conventional film stock is equated with veracity. The subjective, partial perspective of raw footage yields to an apparently objective overview, signaled by the switch to a more conventional film style. As long as we remain focused on the minutiae, we overlook the 'big picture' - a big picture that the Global Network Narrative, amongst other narrative forms, attempts to give dramatic shape.

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<sup>700</sup> Ibid, p. xi

## 11 Conclusion: ‘Unlike a movie, war has no end’<sup>701</sup>

This administration prefers to avoid using the term ‘Long War’ or ‘Global War on Terror’ [GWOT]. Please use ‘Overseas Contingency Operation’<sup>702</sup>

- *Dave Reidel, Office of Security Review*

If the intention of the Obama administration is to tone down the confrontational rhetoric being used by our enemies, the effort is already reaping results. This week, in a pronounced shift from its usual theatrical style, the Taliban announced that it will no longer refer to its favorite method of murder as “beheadings,” but will henceforth employ the expression “cephalic attrition.” “Flayings” - a barbarously exotic style of execution that has been popular in this part of the world since before the time of Alexander - will now be described as “unsolicited epidermal reconfigurations.”<sup>703</sup>

- *Joe Queenan, Wall Street Journal*

Officially, the War on Terror ended in March 2009. Its conclusion was wrought by neither military force nor diplomacy but, rather, was ushered out in a way comparable to its inauguration seven and a half years earlier - through alterations in rhetoric and adjustments in language. With the term War on Terror retired in favour of ‘Overseas Contingency Operation’, the administration of the newly-elected President Barack Obama emphasised its break from the previous administration of President George W. Bush. This was in-keeping with Obama’s rhetoric throughout the election campaign, and in his first months in office. To use the State of the Union message to Congress as a guide, in which the President ‘recommend[s] to their consideration such measures as he shall

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<sup>701</sup> Quote from *Gunner Palace*

<sup>702</sup> Al Kamen, ‘The End of the Global War on Terror’ *The Washington Post*, 24 Mar. 2009, accessed Dec. 2010. [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/23/the\\_end\\_of\\_the\\_global\\_war\\_on\\_t.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/23/the_end_of_the_global_war_on_t.html)

<sup>703</sup> Joe Queenan, ‘War By Any Other Name’ *Wall Street Journal*, 13 Apr. 2009 accessed Dec. 2010. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123958305263912309.html>

judge necessary and expedient’,<sup>704</sup> Obama’s 2009 address indicated the altered priorities. The word ‘terror’ in any of its manifestations (terrorist, terrorism, terrorise etc) was uttered three times in 2009, and again three times in his 2010 address. In Bush’s post-9/11 addresses, the tally was somewhat higher: thirty six times in 2002, twenty two in 2003, twenty in 2004 and so on. Lest this suggests a steady decline in usage, from the raw aftermath of the attacks of September 2001 to a less preoccupied, cooler state as time passed, his last two addresses in 2007 and 2008 featured variations on the word twenty-one and twenty-three times respectively.

The shift in tone did not go unnoticed,<sup>705</sup> nor was it unexpected. A significant component of Obama’s appeal was his marked contrast to Bush and John McCain with regards the war in Iraq, a difference also frequently emphasised during the Democratic primaries (Hillary Clinton had voted in favour of the war in 2002).<sup>706</sup> During the election campaigns - first during the Democratic primary race to gain the party’s nomination, then in the Presidential election itself - Obama declared himself opposed to many of the policies passed in apparent service of the War on Terror, and made promises to reverse certain decisions.<sup>707</sup> In almost every public pronouncement, the key words were ‘hope’ and ‘change’, and many, including Nancy Gibbs of *Time*, were effusive in their praise:

Some princes are born in palaces, some are born in mangers. But a few are born in the imagination, out of scraps of history and hope.<sup>708</sup>

But cancelling out the rhetoric of the War on Terror is more complicated than ceasing to use its metaphors and similes; as chapter one argued, metaframes are persistent by design. Crucial words have become part of the public lexicon, and cannot be retired with the same economy with which they were born. Key terms

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<sup>704</sup> Edward S. Corwin (ed.) *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 29

<sup>705</sup> E.g. “Obama was careful to avoid the phrase *global war on terror* in his Inaugural Address” (Joe Klein, ‘Obama Promises New Destiny, Work Begins Today’ *Time*, 21 Jan. 2009, accessed May 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1872924-2,00.html>)

<sup>706</sup> For example: Joan Walsh, ‘Hillary Clinton’s Long Strange Journey on Iraq’, *Salon*, 19 Mar. 2008, accessed May 2011. [http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/joan\\_walsh/2008/03/19/iraq](http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/joan_walsh/2008/03/19/iraq)

<sup>707</sup> Tim Shipman, ‘Barack Obama Attacks Hillary Clinton Over Iraq’ *The Telegraph*, 08 Mar. 2008, accessed May 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1581153/Barack-Obama-attacks-Hillary-Clinton-over-Iraq.html>

<sup>708</sup> Nancy Gibbs, ‘How Obama Rewrote the Book’ *Time*, 172.20 (2008), p. 32

continue to have a seductively evocative quality that ensures their continued usage in the media, amongst other politicians, and, as this thesis testifies, in certain areas of academia. Furthermore, Obama himself has not consistently resisted using inherited language when framing his stance on defence and international relations, even when stressing a change in policy; for example, arguing in 2008 that ‘we must recognise that the central front in the war on terror is not in Iraq, and it never was’.<sup>709</sup>

However, a lack of actual change to match the fresh rhetoric is conspicuous; as satirist Joe Queenan irreverently observes, cruel and unusual behaviours by any other name are just as cruel and unusual, just as a Global War against Terrorism continues to invite criticism from its opponents even if it is no longer referred to as such. Consistencies between the two administrations are many: the Global War on Terrorism Service medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Service medal are still awarded by the US military for ‘service in the Global War on Terrorism Operations on or after 11 September, 2001’;<sup>710</sup> George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defense Robert Gates continues to serve in the same capacity in Obama’s cabinet; the closure of Guantanamo Bay has been perpetually delayed since the Presidential order was first signed; and plans to try ‘unlawful combatants’ in courts of law (as opposed to secret military tribunals) in order to re-establish habeas corpus and legal transparency were scrapped when public opinion was gauged unfavourable. Furthermore, while some expected Obama to immediately begin winding down combat operations in Iraq (as his campaign had repeatedly suggested he would), he instead increased the number of deployed troops. The failed attempt to detonate a bomb on a US flight in December 2009, meanwhile, prompted certain figures to identify Yemen as the next front in a far-from-concluded War on Terror (a *Time* report identified the country as ‘the next Afghanistan’,<sup>711</sup> while a BBC report labelled it the ‘new frontier in the US War on Terror’<sup>712</sup>). With such continuities seemingly outweighing evidence of transformation, it is understandable that Obama’s reputation has been

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<sup>709</sup> Barack Obama, ‘Refocusing on the Central Front’ *Time*, 172.4 (2008), p. 21

<sup>710</sup> ‘Military Awards’ *Army Publications*, 11 Dec. 2006, accessed May 2011.  
[http://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/pdf/r600\\_8\\_22.pdf](http://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/pdf/r600_8_22.pdf)

<sup>711</sup> Andrew Lee Butters, ‘The Next Afghanistan? How Yemen Has Become the Latest Haven for al-Qaeda’ *Time* 174.13 (2009), pp. 34-5

<sup>712</sup> Humphrey Hawksley, ‘Yemen: New Frontier in US ‘War on Terror’, *BBC*, 24 Dec 2009, accessed Feb. 2011. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8429843.stm>

emphatically predicated on the favourability of his promises over the tangibility of his actions. In their statement outlining the reasoning behind his award of the Nobel Peace Prize, only ten months after taking office, the Norwegian Nobel Committee singled out his 'vision' and the 'hope' his election brought, rather than citing any concrete examples of actual change. The prestigious award was based on his role as 'spokesperson' for a certain diplomatic attitude, rather than for any specific outcome born of such diplomacy.<sup>713</sup>

Yet despite this, the urge to demarcate, label and retire an era is strong amongst journalists and historians. The retirement of certain phrases, the tentative steps made in altering certain areas of policy, and the election of a Democrat espousing hope and change, after eight years of a Republican stressing fear and danger, help support the association between Presidential handover and closure. In November 2009, *Time* offered various summarising labels for the period - the 'Decade from Hell, or the Reckoning, or the Decade of Broken Dreams, or the Lost Decade' - and identified it as 'book-ended by 9/11 at the start and a financial wipe-out at the end'.<sup>714</sup> This eight-year decade (historical epochs are rarely matched neatly with calendar dates, but rather 'watershed' events) is associated closely with Bush; with Obama now in charge, there is an implied sense that the bleak times are 'nearly over'. Similar claims surfaced in May 2011 following the death of Osama Bin Laden, seen by some to provide 'closure' for victims of 9/11 - though others, including President Bush, were careful to label it only a milestone in the ongoing 'war'.<sup>715</sup>

## 11.1 Finding closure

The early chapters of this thesis suggested that the rhetoric of the War on Terror preceded its actions, that language brought it into existence and that, ultimately, the War as a unified, focussed goal was an untenable illusion, riddled with irresolvable contradictions. While the recent attempts to find closure - to provide an end to a narrative that has a clear, striking beginning and a long,

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<sup>713</sup> 'The Nobel Peace Prize for 2009' *Nobelprize.org*, 09 Oct. 2009, accessed Feb. 2011. [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/press.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/press.html)

<sup>714</sup> Andy Serwer, 'The Decade From Hell... And How the Next One Can Be Better' *Time*, 174.22 (2009), pp. 22-8

<sup>715</sup> 'Osama Bin Laden's Death: Political Reaction in Quotes', *BBC News*, 03 May, 2011 accessed 03 May 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13256956>

drawn-out middle - have also begun life in rhetoric, reversal has proven considerably more difficult.

The struggle to bring official closure to a conflict that exists in rhetoric and ideology as much as in troop deployment and battle plans is echoed by the struggle to draw a satisfactory conclusion in these pages. At the time of writing, there are several new film and television texts overtly 'about' the War on Terror scheduled for release, or at various stages of development.<sup>716</sup> While their content is roughly known, their form is not. The former may undergo numerous changes on its way to screens and the latter's manifestation can currently only be guessed at. Furthermore, since the production cycle of a film or television show can feasibly last years, it is not appropriate to echo *Time* et. al. and place a closing bracket after March 2009, in order to claim something definitive about the 9/11 and War on Terror texts that came before, since texts that first begin life in one political context may be released in another.<sup>717</sup> The various arguments made in this thesis are not confined to these texts, nor have the trends discussed now coalesced and reached a static form about which clear, distinct and immutable conclusions can be drawn. The narrative of the War on Terror is inconclusive, despite the best efforts of the Obama administration, and this thesis must necessarily share that inconclusiveness, and resist the urge to package together its arguments as the 'final word' on the matter.

Each of the narratives discussed in these pages confronts a similar task: bringing their respective narratives to some degree of conclusion despite the events themselves lacking a clear resolution. Some texts focus on such a specific strand of the War on Terror that they are able to close with a degree of finality; for example, *United 93* ends at the moment the plane crashes into the Pennsylvanian earth, while *World Trade Centre* concludes with the rescue of the two trapped firefighters. They are able to achieve this closure only by isolating

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<sup>716</sup> For example: an adaptation of Marcus Luttrell's non-fiction work *Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seal Team 10* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007); *Exile to Babylon* (Mazuran, 2011), *Special Forces* (Rybojad, 2011), *The Boys of Abu Ghraib* (Moran, 2012), *Kill Bin Laden* (Bigelow, 2012) (undergoing re-writes following Bin Laden's death), and the in-development *24* movie, now scheduled for a 2012 release. Completed films awaiting release include: *The Dry Land* (Williams, 2010), *Afghan Hound* (Allesandro, 2010), and *Human Terrain* (Der Derian, Udris, Udris, 2010).

<sup>717</sup> See: Matt Singer, 'Bush Movies in Obama's America' *IFC*, 01 Dec. 2008, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.ifc.com/news/2008/01/bush-movies-in-obamas-america.php>.

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, treating it as an exceptional event without precedent, thereby treating it as its own distinct narrative and, in the process, echoing the War on Terror rhetoric that turned September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 into '9/11', the 'Ground Zero' that demanded retribution.

*World Trade Centre* also suggests a second mechanism for producing closure is to filter the political subject matter through the personal experiences of an individual or group of individuals. The protagonists' respective stories conclude, even if wider events do not; in *In the Valley of Elah*, for instance, the narrative comes to a close when the investigation is concluded and the protagonist has accepted the outcome. The final shot of the US flag flying upside down - earlier explained to be a symbol of distress - indicates that Hank Deerfield believes his country continues to be morally compromised, but his own story has, to use Tzvetan Todorov's terminology, reached a new, disillusioned-but-stable state of equilibrium.<sup>718</sup> The political-event as personal-story is a long-standing tradition in mainstream attempts to approach certain subjects, echoing, for instance, Hennebelle's aforementioned concept of the 'Z Movie'. Many of the films discussed in this thesis fall into this category: in *Stop Loss*, Brandon King chooses to reenlist rather than escape across the border to Canada; the CIA apprehend the mastermind behind *Body of War's* multiple terrorist attacks; *September Tapes'* Don Larson is killed in the Tora Bora mountains; and the sleeper cell in *Traitor* are tricked into blowing each other up, allowing the undercover agent to reclaim his identity. Partial closure is thus affected in each of these examples. The Global Network Narratives are invariably more open-ended due to the wider number of characters and connections explored, but there is still a sense of climactic closure in the way *Syriana* or *Babel's* plots converge, or the way *Redacted's* piecemeal structure yields to a relatively clear understanding of the sequence of events.

The sense that, after the plot comes to a close, something lingers and remains unresolved is, according to Garrett Stewart, symptomatic of the War on Terror's very conception:

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<sup>718</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, 'Structural Analysis of Narrative' *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 3.1 (1969), p. 75

The real problem is that it's too shapeless for plot. Fighting terror with terror is one thing; finding narrative drive or closure for the confrontation, let alone some modicum of catharsis, is another.<sup>719</sup>

The portmanteau films discussed in chapter four, specifically *11'09''01*, avoid the problem of 'closure' by being formally disjointed and conflicted, their sections fitting together only loosely according to theme or artistic remit, therefore allowing for oppositional views to intermingle. The various television texts, meanwhile, deliberately eschew closure, leaving their narratives open for pragmatic reasons: for example, the producers of *Over There* would have hoped the show would be commissioned for a second season, so would therefore not wish to draw their plots to too firm a close. In the case of *24*, Day Eight may have been designed in advance as the final season, but planned movie spin-offs ensure the finale is not irreversibly final; its last episode closes with Jack Bauer going into hiding to evade capture - which is essentially how seasons four and six ended, with various plot convolutions allowing for his return on both occasions. An ideological motive for such open-endedness can still be argued for - that a series like *24* is premised on the constant threat of terrorist attack, so to deny the continued existence of such threats by imposing too neat a conclusion on any of its seasons, even its last, would be to undermine its governing philosophy - but the practical and financial motivations should not be overlooked.

The tension between finding closure and acknowledging the difficulties in doing so is also evident in the charitable appeals or political calls to action that frequently appear either immediately before or during the credit sequences. This is most consistently observable in the documentary examples. Some pay tribute: *The War Tapes* concludes with a dedication to the New Hampshire soldiers accompanied by crisp snare rolls, while *9/11* closes on a photo montage of the FDNY firefighters killed on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. *Taxi to the Darkside*, meanwhile, emphasises the sheer number of detainees locked up during the course of the War on Terror (by its count, over 83,000), referencing the broader political subject of which the film is representative.

Some fiction examples achieve a similar effect, encouraging links between the fictional events in the process of concluding, and the ongoing political issues

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<sup>719</sup> Garrett, 'Digital Fatigue', p. 45



which have been dramatised. *Stop Loss* concludes with white-on-black text stating that '650,000 American troops have fought in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts'. The message fades to black, replaced by a second statistic: '81,000 of those American troops have been stop-lossed'. In this way, the film's final statement serves to underscore the narrative's representative qualities; the specifics may be fiction ('any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental' as the commonplace disclaimer puts it), but 81,000 comparable stories, it suggests, are taking place across the United States. More subtly, *Rendition*'s 'North African' setting could be seen to achieve a similar effect, its ambiguity allowing the location to double for a multitude of countries with ties to the extraordinary rendition programme - Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria - thereby increasing its referential range.

*Rendition* also indicates the way that the DVD format can help circumvent the need for absolute narrative closure. One plot-strand, involving Douglas Freeman's distrust of his girlfriend Safiya (Hadar Ratzon), was cut from the main film, but is included in the deleted scenes, adding additional interconnections and nodes to its network. Also included in the 'extras' is *Outlawed: Extraordinary Rendition, Torture and Disappearances in the 'War on Terror'* (Caldwell, 2006), a documentary about Khalid el-Masri, whose mistaken rendition inspired aspects of *Rendition*'s plot. Again, this opens out the film's plot to a wider array of meanings, while also countering the film's 'happy ending' - no valiant CIA agent emerged to rescue el-Masri, who spent seven months in a secret prison.

As this overview suggests, there is no singly applied method used to conclude the War on Terror texts under discussion. Some end with an appeal to political action, other commemorate the dead, while many feature protagonists either returning to war - *The Hurt Locker*, *Stop Loss* - or having never left - *Green Zone*, *Over There*. That said, the frequency with which any conclusion is accompanied by some degree of irresolution, suggests that the difficulty in narrating an ongoing conflict does not go unrecognised by the filmmakers and television producers themselves.

Garrett Stewart argues that the lack of firm resolution is a consequence of the War on Terror's lack of generic stability:

The original “shock and awe” was a war-film idea, the imperialist vestige of a genre fantasy, where part of the U.S. arsenal was the very spectacle of its unleashed power. What remains, and for the U.S. troops as well now, is a paranoid setting without a vivid scenario, a genre template left begging for the energies of plot. With no clear demarcation between the good guys and the bad, narrative itself seems stalled, balked. We found no WMDs in Iraq, just IEDs detonating everywhere. Strong storytelling is among the casualties of such “improvised” devices.<sup>720</sup>

This thesis has argued that, rather than destroy strong storytelling, film and television narratives about the War on Terror have instead found new strategies for containing their plots, strategies born of trans-media hybridisation, with news media, web navigation and globalisation as influential as the War on Terror rhetoric itself. In a sense, the structures and aesthetics discussed in this thesis are over-determined; they are not simply the product of War on Terror rhetoric, but are borne of myriad influences and are applicable to multiple topics. For the last decade, the War on Terror has been a ubiquitous metaframe, hence the Obama White House's difficulty in retiring the phrase. However, while ‘Overseas Contingency Operation’ has failed to usurp it, other metaframes are emerging in response to more recent developments in geopolitics.

## 11.2 The Arab Spring

Let me be clear: this is not the start of some ideologically driven mission, without limit, in which we set out to cure all the world's ills.<sup>721</sup>

- *David Cameron*

*Gaddafi Duck and Cover* - The explosive adventure of a freewheeling Middle Eastern dictator who, not knowing the meaning of defeat, wasn't going to let a little thing like a ‘no fly’ zone spoil his plans. You'll laugh, you'll

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid, p. 45

<sup>721</sup> Nicholas Watt and Patrick Wintour, ‘David Cameron Praised For Decisive Action Over Libya’ *The Guardian*, 18 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/mar/18/david-cameron-praised-action-libya>

cry as you watch the leader profess his hold over his country, all the while looking over his shoulder.<sup>722</sup>

- *Discdish.com*

The War on Terror has proven persistent; both in terms of its rhetoric and in the policies enacted in its name. This endurance is reflected in the resistance to closure in the texts under discussion, but there are indications that the metaframe's influence may finally be on the wane. For the last decade, the West has framed geopolitics in the Middle East - if not the entire globe - almost exclusively in relation to the War on Terror metaframe (for example, the Mumbai terrorist attacks described as 'India's 9/11').<sup>723</sup> It is therefore notable that the recent protests, revolutions and depositions across the Middle East and the Maghreb have largely resisted being assimilated into its metaframe, with 'War on Terror' replaced by 'Arab Spring'.<sup>724</sup>

The recent removal of Muammar Gaddafi from Tripoli by UN-supported eastern revolutionaries completes the dictator's transition from being the primary target of President Reagan's war on terror, to a named member of the extended 'Axis of Evil', to a prospective ally in Bush's War on Terror,<sup>725</sup> to having his rule violently challenged by domestic protests. The deployment of the US military in the region has inevitably compounded comparisons with the War on Terror, with critics of the strikes keen to draw parallels with the unpopular wars of George W. Bush.<sup>726</sup> But such comparisons are not as prevalent as might be expected; some have explicitly connected the Arab Spring and War on Terror

<sup>722</sup> 'Today's Special: Biopic Hazards, Perfect Titles For Celebrity Life Stories' *Discdish*, 26 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.discdish.com/index.php/2011/03/26/todays-special-biopic-hazards-perfect-titles-for-celebrity-life-stories/>

<sup>723</sup> Jyoti Thottam, 'After the Horror' *Time* 172.24, (2008), p. 20

<sup>724</sup> That said, *Time's* likening of the events to the European revolutions that began in France and emanated outwards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – suggests the Eurocentric horizons have not necessarily grown much broader: Kurt Andersen, '1848 Vs. 2011: In the Shadow of the Past' *Time* 177.11, (2011), pp. 27-11

<sup>725</sup> Eric Margolis, 'You Can't Keep a Good Dictator Down' *The Huffington Post*, 14 Mar. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-margolis/you-cant-keep-a-good-dict\\_b\\_835371.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-margolis/you-cant-keep-a-good-dict_b_835371.html)

<sup>726</sup> See: Andrew Green, 'Did the Debacle of Iraq Teach Us Nothing?' *The Daily Mail*, 22 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1367812/Libya-Gaddafi-Did-debacle-Iraq-War-teach-nothing.html>; Andrew North, 'Libya: Shadow of Iraq Hangs Over Western Action' *BBC News*, 22 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12814792>

metaframes,<sup>727</sup> but when the ‘history repeating’ argument is made by supporters of the strikes, it is the Rwandan genocide and the massacre at Srebrenica that are more often evoked to suggest the consequences of failing to intervene.<sup>728</sup> Barack Obama and David Cameron, meanwhile, have been careful to distinguish their decisions from those of their predecessors, with the opening quote from the latter emphasising limitations, rather than expansiveness.

The ‘Arab Spring’ metaframe was initially used by commentators in 2005 to describe a series of only nominally-connected reforms and revolutions - Iraq’s first democratic elections; the announcement of the first multi-candidate presidential elections in Egypt since Hosni Mubarak became head of state in 1981; the ‘Cedar Revolution’ in Lebanon; reform pledges from the newly-elected Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas; and small but significant municipal elections in Saudi Arabia - which were interpreted as indications of a burgeoning move towards democracy across the entire region. The term deliberately evoked the democratisation of socialist eastern Europe in 1989, the ‘Prague Spring’ of 1968, and the ‘Spring of Nations’ of 1848, and was at the time indelibly tied to the larger War on Terror metaframe: a wave of articles and reports connected the various events to the foreign policy of the Bush Administration - for example, Jeff Jacoby noted a perceived improvement in Bush’s reputation in light of the ‘Spring’, asking ‘Still Think Bush Was Wrong?’<sup>729</sup> Many, of course, still did, but there were nonetheless a significant number of commentators to whom the first Arab Spring was a vindication of the War on Terror - an unequivocal victory in the fight against tyranny.

Six years later, the Arab Spring metaframe has been revived in response to a fresh ‘wave’ of political developments: to date, Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali have been forced out of office in Egypt and Tunisia respectively, while protests have

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<sup>727</sup> Paul Cruickshank, ‘Analysis: Why Arab Spring could be al Qaeda’s fall’ *CNN*, 21 Feb 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-21/world/arab.unrest.alqaeda.analysis\\_1\\_zawahiri-al-qaeda-qaeda-style?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-21/world/arab.unrest.alqaeda.analysis_1_zawahiri-al-qaeda-qaeda-style?_s=PM:WORLD)

<sup>728</sup> Jake Tapper, ‘Clinton Cites Rwanda, Bosnia in Rationale for Libya Intervention’ *ABC News* 27 Mar. 2011, accessed Mar. 2011. <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2011/03/clinton-cites-rwanda-bosnia-in-rationale-for-libya-intervention.html>; Peter Preston, ‘Remember Srebrenica? The West’s Intervention in Libya is a No-Brainer’ *The Guardian*, 29 Mar. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/29/srebrenica-libya-intervention-no-brainer>

<sup>729</sup> Jeff Jacoby, ‘Still Think Bush Was Wrong?’ *The Boston Globe*, 11 Mar. 2005

taken place in Algeria, Oman, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Bahrain, Iran, Lebanon, Djibouti and, of course, Libya. This array of political upheaval is too complex and myriad to elaborate on easily, which is perhaps why the 'Arab Spring' metaframe has proven useful as an organising term. As with 'the War on Terror', 'Arab Spring' organises and explains events, in the process conflating the myriad motives, methods and outcomes traceable in the region. Much as there was little outside of rhetoric to connect Iraq and Afghanistan, there are only broad similarities between, for example, the protests in Morocco and Bahrain: in the former, demands for constitutional reform have not implicated King Mohammed VI,<sup>730</sup> while in the latter, protesters from the Shia majority have reportedly called for an end to the Sunni monarchy.<sup>731</sup> While geographic vicinity provides some degree of similarity (though the 'Spring' already extends beyond the Arab states, with recent protests in Iran included in most overviews), some have projected the 'Arab Spring' over a much wider space, with *Time* pondering its potential ramifications in China;<sup>732</sup> *The Guardian* pondering whether it might 'inspire a continent' and 'spread south' to Kenya, Swaziland, and other African countries;<sup>733</sup> and UK Foreign Secretary William Hague celebrating its potential ability to 'ignite greater demands for good governance and political reform elsewhere in the world, including in Asia and in Africa'.<sup>734</sup> Interestingly, Hague does connect the 'Arab Spring' to the events discussed in this thesis, but only so as to emphasise the former's significance, claiming 'it is already set to overtake the 2008 financial crisis and 9/11 as the most important development of the early 21st century'.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> Lisa Abend, 'Protests in Morocco: Just Don't Call it a Revolution' *Time*, 22 Feb. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2052901,00.html?xid=fbshare>

<sup>731</sup> 'Bahrain Mourners Call For End to Monarchy' *The Guardian*, 18 Feb. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/18/bahrain-mourners-call-downfall-monarchy>

<sup>732</sup> Austin Ramzy, 'State Stamps Out Small 'Jasmine' Protests in China' *Time*, 21 Feb. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2052860,00.html>

<sup>733</sup> David Smith, 'Summer of Discontent: Will the Arab Spring Inspire a Continent?', *The Guardian*, 30 Apr. 2011 pp. 30-1

<sup>734</sup> James Kirkup, 'William Hague : 'Arab Spring' Could Topple Robert Mugabe' *The Telegraph*, 22 Mar, 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8398938/William-Hague-Arab-spring-could-topple-Robert-Mugabe.html>

<sup>735</sup> Ibid

Organising these global strands in a comprehensible way is, as it was for the War on Terror, a primary purpose of the ‘Arab Spring’ metaframe. An interactive map on *The Guardian*’s web site (fig. 11.1) lays out events on a multi-grooved linear line - the ‘path of protest’ - with each groove corresponding to a country in the region, arranged in alphabetical order from Algeria to Yemen. This arrangement maps the temporal development of the protests and their responses, but dispenses with geography.<sup>736</sup>

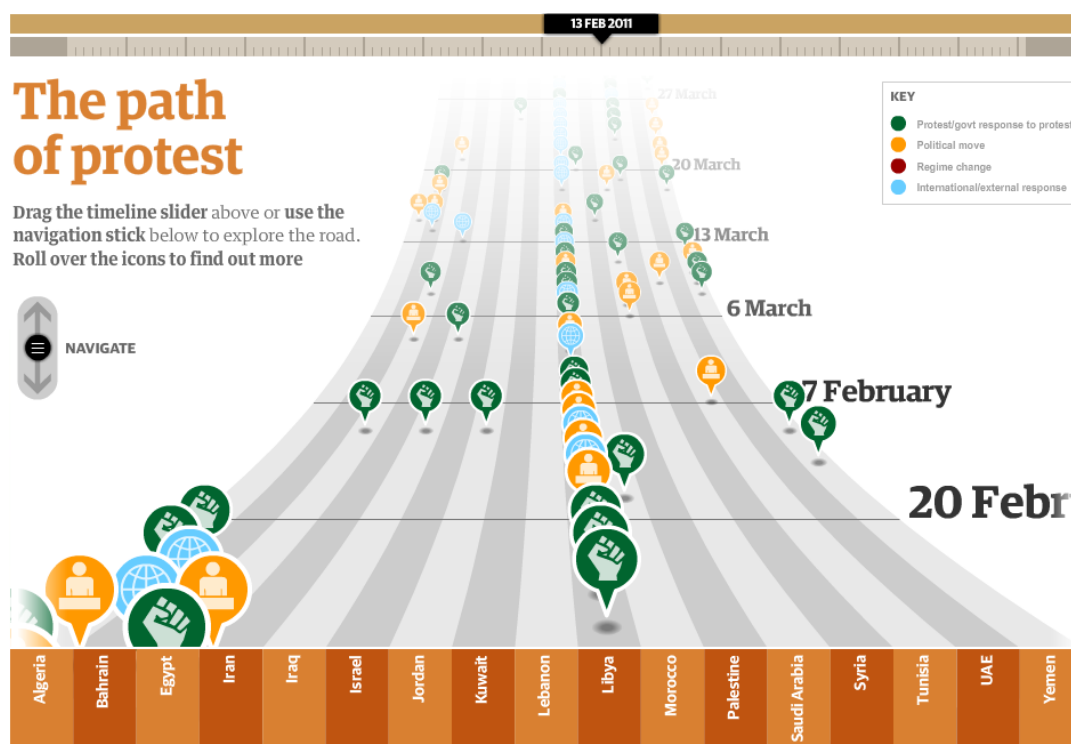


Fig. 11.1: Arab Spring timeline, *The Guardian*

There are similarities here to the attempts to map the events of 9/11 in the *Illustrated 9/11 Commission Report* discussed in chapter three, indicating the way that the trends sketched earlier in this thesis are utilised to organise other political narratives. Indeed, ‘Arab Spring’ films are already in development: producer Tarak Ben Ammar announced in January that he would be self-financing a political thriller based on the life of Mohamed Bouazizi, the street

<sup>736</sup> Garry Blight and Sheila Pulham, ‘Arab Spring: An Interactive Timeline of Middle East Protests’ *The Guardian*, 05 Apr. 2011. accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline> April 2011

vendor whose self-immolation was a catalyst for Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution.<sup>737</sup> Ammar argued that Bouazizi's 'story is one that needs to be preserved for future generations to understand that one person can make a difference',<sup>738</sup> reducing a multifarious political event to the desperate act of one man. In Egypt, actor Hani Ramzi has announced a project depicting the events in Tahrir Square;<sup>739</sup> while *The Cry of the Ants* (Abdelaziz, 2011), which began filming prior to start of large scale protests, was re-edited to include real-footage of the protests that led to Mubarak leaving office.<sup>740</sup> Finally, a portmanteau film entitled *18 Days* (Various, 2011), which featured ten short films relating aspects of the Egyptian revolution, was screened at the 2011 Cannes film festival, to the consternation of those who questioned the political affiliations of its participants.<sup>741</sup>

While these examples all originate within the countries in question, it is not inconceivable that a Western filmmaker will one day broach the topic onscreen (though presumably not in the 'Gaddafi Duck and Cover' form satirically suggested by discdish.com). If a Hollywood depiction does materialise, it remains to be seen whether the narrative forms used to depict the War on Terror will be adapted for this new context, or rejected; it is certainly possible to envisage a *Syriana*-style GNN that weaves together protests in Tunisia and Egypt, reactions in the Obama White House, a rebel-war in Libya backed multilaterally by the United Nations, and increased oppression in China in response to calls for a Jasmine Revolution against Beijing, with social networking and citizen-journalists sending images across borders and inspiring others to spread democracy across the Middle East and Africa.

But then again, depending on the way events ultimately transpire, the War on Terror metaframe may prove resurgent. The forthcoming Dan Bradley-directed

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<sup>737</sup> Chris Newbould, 'New Movie Set to Immortalise 'Jasmine Revolution'' *Digital Production Middle East*, 01 Feb. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.digitalproductionme.com/article-3851-new-movie-set-to-immortalise-jasmine-revolution/>

<sup>738</sup> Joshua L. Weinstein, 'Tunisian Producer Plans Jasmine Revolution Thriller' *The Wrap*, 31 Jan. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.thewrap.com/movies/column-post/tunisian-producer-making-thriller-about-man-who-inspired-jasmine-revolution-24342>

<sup>739</sup> 'Hani Ramzi Prepares a Movie About the Revolution' *Anayou*, 28 Mar. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://entertainment.anayou.com/movies/news/hotstory/20311>

<sup>740</sup> Jay Weissberg, 'The Cry of an Ant' *Variety*, 24 May 2011, accessed June 2011. <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117945310?refcatid=31>

<sup>741</sup> Nick Vivarelli, "'18 Days' Sparks Cannes Controversy' *Variety*, 13 May, 2011, accessed Jun. 2011. <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118036989?refCatId=13>

remake of the Cold War action film *Red Dawn* is a case in point. The original film's plot - Soviet troops invade the United States of America - was to be, a press release announced, 'updated to post-9/11 contemporary times', by revising the threat from Russians to the Chinese. With the US deficit at breaking point, Beijing decides to call in its debts (a recent estimate placed China's actual U.S. Treasury securities at one trillion dollars, lending the fantastical scenario the slightest patina of topicality).<sup>742</sup> While the script's depiction of fiscal relations between the two countries may contain a note of reality, the rest of the plot is somewhat less plausible: Chinese soldiers occupy the bankrupt United States, forcing a group of teenagers to take up arms against the foreign invaders.

MGM were due to release the film in 2010, but the studio's financial difficulties forced the date back. When attempts to sell the film to alternative studios were unsuccessful, the decision was made to remove China from the film entirely, and re-design the invaders as North Koreans. Since the film had already completed filming by the time this decision was made, the swap was done post-production, with special effects workers erasing Chinese flags, insignias and military symbols from shots, while editors re-structured the film to reflect this significant alteration. The producers have argued for the change on artistic ground:

We were initially very reluctant to make any changes. But after careful consideration we constructed a way to make a scarier, smarter and more dangerous *Red Dawn* that we believe improves the movie.<sup>743</sup>

The studio has a more straightforward economic imperative. Mike Vollman, executive vice president of worldwide marketing, is quoted as justifying the change on commercial grounds:

MGM has been working with the film *Red Dawn*'s director and producers to make the most commercially viable version of the film

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<sup>742</sup> 'China Holds More U.S. Debt Than Indicated' *The Washington Times*, 02 Mar. 2010, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/mar/02/chinas-debt-to-us-treasury-more-than-indicated/>

<sup>743</sup> Ben Fritz and John Horn, 'Reel China: Hollywood Tried to Stay on China's Good Side', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Mar. 2011, accessed Apr. 2011. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-et-china-red-dawn-20110316,0,995726.story>



for audiences worldwide. We want to ensure the most people possible are able to experience it.<sup>744</sup>

The change is therefore an effort to placate Chinese censors, so as to ensure that a significant market is not lost. But while the motive for altering the film in such drastic fashion seems clear, the choice of replacement villain remains dubious. The racist undertones to such perceived interchangeability aside, the notion that North Korea would have the resources to invade the United States - even a fictional near-future United States crippled by debt - seems destined to irrevocably dissolve the premise's already-thin credibility. The choice of North Korea can perhaps be explained with reference to Vollman's above quote regarding global accessibility: the isolated North Korea is one of the few markets which Hollywood cannot currently hope to profit from, so any offence caused is unlikely to impact upon takings.

There is, however, another potential influence: the War on Terror metaframe, specifically the 'Axis of Evil'.<sup>745</sup> North Korea only fully makes sense as a threat if based on the War on Terror rhetoric that sought to establish Kim Jong-Il as one-third of a powerful and dangerous trio of states 'arming to threaten the peace of the world'<sup>746</sup> (Iran was presumably discounted by *Red Dawn*'s producers since it was easier to replace one east Asian aggressor with another). A topical plot based on the escalating national debt of the United States of America and fears of an ascendant China that threatens to rival and eventually overtake the US to become a new global superpower, is replaced by one rooted in the reactionary politics of 2002.

Whether the changes are successful in broadening *Red Dawn*'s appeal can be judged when the film is released in 2012. The shape of the inevitable Arab Spring-narratives, meanwhile, will likely depend upon future developments in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere, and so can currently only be guessed. John Bolton's 'Beyond the Axis of Evil' speech named Libya and Syria

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid

<sup>745</sup> The fact that the main character Jed Eckert (Chris Hemsworth) is an Afghan veteran, and applies his experience of fighting the Taliban to combating the North Koreans - one front of the War on Terror superseded by another - only underscores the connection.

<sup>746</sup> 'State of the Union Address', 29<sup>th</sup> January 2002, *The White House Archive*, accessed Jun. 2011. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

as members of the extended axis, so there is undoubtedly potential for War on Terror-related rhetoric to re-emerge in this context as well - particularly if defence spending plays a central role in the 2012 presidential campaigns, or the UN decides to intervene elsewhere - Syria, for instance. Ultimately, while the 'Overseas Contingency Operation' and the 'Arab Spring' may be Obama administration's preferred metaframes, the War on Terror has had several years head-start.

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## Filmography

- Airport '77 (Jerry Jameson, 1977)
- All That Heaven Allows (Douglas Sirk, 1955)
- All the President's Men (Alan J. Pakula, 1976)
- Amelie (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001)
- American Soldiers (Sidney J. Furie, 2005)
- Amistad (Stephen Spielberg, 1997)
- Appaloosa (Ed Harris, 2008)
- Are You There? (James Williamson, 1902)
- Babel (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006)
- Batman Begins (Christopher Nolan, 2005)
- Battle: Los Angeles (Jonathan Liebesman, 2011)
- Battle of Algiers (Gilles Pontecorvo, 1966)
- Big Trouble (Barry Sonnenfeld, 2002)
- Blood Diamond (Ed Zwick, 2006)
- Blow Up (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966)
- Body of Lies (Ridley Scott, 2008)
- Body of War (Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro, 2007)
- The Boys of Abu Ghraib (Luke Moran, 2012)
- Brazil (Terry Gilliam, 1985)
- Celsius 41.11: The Temperature at Which the Brain... Begins to Die (Kevin Knoblock, 2004)
- Charlie Wilson's War (Mike Nichols, 2007)
- Chicago 10 (Brett Morgen, 2007)
- Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941)
- Cloverfield (Matt Reeves, 2008)



Combat Diary: The Marines of Lima Company (Michael Epstein, 2006)

The Conspiracy Files: The Truth Behind the Third Tower (BBC, 2007)

The Constant Gardner (Fernando Meirelles, 2005)

The Conversation (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

Conversations with Other Women (Hans Canosa, 2005)

Cradle Will Rock (Tim Robbins, 1999)

Crash (Paul Haggis, 2004)

The Cry of the Ants (Sameh Abdelaziz, 2011)

The Dark Knight (Christopher Nolan, 2008)

Death of a President (Gabriel Range, 2006)

Diary of the Dead (George A. Romero, 2007)

Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988)

Dirty Harry (Don Siegel, 1971)

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (Stanley Kubrick, 1964)

The Dry Land (Ryan Piers Williams, 2010)

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969)

18 Days (Ahmad Abdallah, Mariam Abou Ouf, Kamla Abu Zikri, Ahmed Alaa, Mohamed Ali, Sherif Arafa, Sherif El Bendary, Marwan Hamed, Khaled Marei and Yousry Nasrallah, 2011)

11:14 (Greg Marcks, 2003)

11'09''01 - September 11 (Youssef Chahine, Amos Gitai, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Shôhei Imamura, Claude Lelouch, Ken Loach, Samira Makhmalbaf, Mira Nair, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Sean Penn, Danis Tanovic, 2002)

Escape From Afghanistan (Timur Bekmambetov, 2002)

Escape From New York (John Carpenter, 1981)

Exile to Babylon (Domagoj Mazuran, 2011)

Fahrenheit 9/11 (Michael Moore, 2004)

Fahrenhype 9/11 (Alan Peterson, 2004)

Fair Game (Doug Liman, 2011)

The Fall of the House of Usher (Roger Corman, 1960)

Far From Vietnam (Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, 1967)

Fast Food Nation (Richard Linklater, 2006)

A Few Days in September (Santiago Amigorena, 2006)

Five Fingers (Laurence Malkin, 2006)

Flight 93 (Peter Markle, 2006)

Forgotten Silver (Costa Botes and Peter Jackson, 1995)

Forrest Gump (Robert Zemeckis, 1994)

Germany in Autumn (Alf Brustellin, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Maximiliane Mainka, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Peter Schubert, Bernhard Sinkel, Hans Peter Cloos, Edgar Reitz, Katja Rupé, Volker Schlöndorff, 1978)

Ghosts of Abu Ghraib (Rory Kennedy, 2007)

Go (Doug Liman, 1999)

Godzilla (Roland Emmerich, 1998)

Gone Baby Gone (Ben Affleck, 2007)

Good Night, and Good Luck. (George Clooney, 2005)

Gosford Park (Robert Altman, 2001)

Gunner Palace (Petra Epperlein and Michael Tucker, 2004)

Grand Hotel (Edmund Goulding, 1932)

The Grapes of Wrath (John Ford, 1940)

The Green Berets (Ray Kellogg, John Wayne, 1968)

Green Zone (Paul Greengrass, 2010)

Happiness (Todd Solondz, 1998)

Happy Endings (Don Roos, 2005)

Hearts of the World (D.W. Griffiths, 1918)

High Noon (Fred Zinneman, 1952)

Home of the Brave (Irwin Winkler, 2006)

Hope, Gloves and Redemption (Gédéon Naudet and Jules Naudet, 1999)

Human Terrain (James Der Derian, David Udris and Michael Udris, 2010)

The Hurt Locker (Kathryn Bigelow, 2008)

The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, 1997)

In the Valley of Elah (Paul Haggis, 2007)

An Inconvenient Truth (Davis Guggenheim, 2006)

Independence Day (Roland Emmerich, 1996)

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Stephen Spielberg, 1989)

The International (Tom Tykwer, 2009)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956)

Iraq in Fragments (James Longley, 2006)

Josie and the Pussycats (Harry Elfont and Deborah Kaplan, 2001)

The Kite Runner (Marc Foster, 2007)

Land and Freedom (Ken Loach, 1995)

Lantana (Ray Lawrence, 2001)

Last Days (Gus Van Sant, 2005)

The Last Samurai (Ed Zwick, 2003)

Lioness (Meg McLagan and Daria Sommers, 2008)

Lions For Lambs (Robert Redford, 2007)

Loose Change (Dylan Avery, 2006)

Love Actually (Richard Curtis, 2003)

Magnolia (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999)

Mammoth (Lukas Moodysson, 2009)

Man Bites Dog (Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel and Benoît Poelvoorde, 1992)

Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore (Rick Caine, Debbie Melnyk, 2007)

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (Peter Weir, 2003)

Memento (Christopher Nolan, 2000)

Men in Black II (Barry Sonnenfeld, 2002)

Michael Moore Hates America (Michael Wilson, 2004)

Mr Smith Goes to Washington (Frank Capra, 1939)

Monsters (Gareth Edwards, 2010)

Munich (Stephen Spielberg, 2005)

Nanking (Bill Guttentag, Dan Sturman, 2007)

Nashville (Robert Altman, 1975)

9/11 (James Hanlon, Rob Klug, Gédéon Naudet and Jules Naudet, 2002)

The 9/11 Faker (Channel 4, 2007)

9/11: The Falling Man (Henry Singer, 2006)

9/11: The Fireman's Story (Joseph Maxwell, 2011)

9/11: The Great Illusion (George Humphrey, 2006)

9/11: The Greatest Lie Ever Sold (Anthony J. Hilder, 2004)

9/11: In Plane Sight (William Lewis, 2004)

9/11: The Flight That Fought Back (Bruce Goodison, 2005)

No Country For Old Men (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2007)

No End in Sight (Charles Ferguson, 2007)

North By Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959)

102 Minutes That Changed America (Seth Skundrick, 2008)

One Night at McCool's (Harald Zwart, 2001)

Operation in Their Boots (Clint Van Winkle, Kyle Hartnett, Tristan Dyer, Chris Mandia, Victor Manzano, 2010)

Outlawed: Extraordinary Rendition, Torture and Disappearance in the 'War on Terror' (Gillian Caldwell, 2006)

The Passion of the Christ (Mel Gibson, 2004)

The Peacemaker (Mimi Leder, 1997)

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End (Gore Verbinski, 2007)

The Point Men (John Glen, 2001)

Quantum of Solace (Marc Foster, 2008)

Quarantine (John Erick Dowdle, 2008)

Raging Bull (Martin Scorsese, 1980)

Rambo: First Blood Part 2 (George Pan Cosmatos, 1985)

Rashomon (Akira Kurasawa, 1950)

[Rec] (Juame Balageuró and Paco Plaza, 2007)

Red Dawn (John Milius, 1984)

Red Dawn (Dan Bradley, 2011)

The Red Violin (Francois Girard, 1998)

Redacted (Brian De Palma, 2007)

Reds (Warren Beatty, 1981)

Rendition (Gavin Hood, 2007)

The Rookie (Rodney Charters, 2007-2008)

Route Irish (Ken Loach, 2010)

Saw (James Wan, 2004)

Schindler's List (Stephen Spielberg, 1993)

Septem8er Tapes (Christian Johnston, 2004)

Serendipity (Peter Chelsom, 2001)

Shoah (Claude Lanzmann, 1985)

Shooting Michael Moore (Kevin Leffler, 2008)

Short Cuts (Robert Altman, 1993)

Sicko (Michael Moore, 2007)

The Siege (Ed Zwick, 1998)

Sin City (Robert Rodriguez, Frank Miller, Quentin Tarantino, 2005)

Slacker (Richard Linklater, 1990)

Soundtrack to War (George Gittoes, 2005)

Special Forces (Stéphane Rybojad, 2011)

Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris, 2008)

Stop Loss (Kimberley Pierce, 2008)

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Tim Burton, 2007)

Swordfish (Dominic Sena, 2001)

Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005)

Taxi to the Darkside (Alex Gibney, 2007)

Team America: World Police (Trey Parker, Matt Stone, 2004)

Ten Minutes Older: The Cello (Bernardo Bertolucci, Claire Denis, Mike Figgis, Jean-Luc Godard, Jirí Menzel, Michael Radford, Volker Schlöndorff, István Szabó, 2002)

Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet (Kaige Chen, Víctor Erice, Werner Herzog, Jim Jarmusch, Aki Kaurismäki, Spike Lee, Wim Wenders, 2002)

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974)

The Thin Blue Line (Errol Morris, 1988)

Ticker (Albert Pyun, 2001)

Top Gun (Tony Scott, 1986)

The Towering Inferno (John Guillermin, 1974)

Traffic (Stephen Soderburgh, 2000)

Traitor (Jeffrey Nachmanoff, 2008)

Transformers (Michael Bay, 2007)

25<sup>th</sup> Hour (Spike Lee, 2002)

24: Conspiracy (Marc Ostrick, Eric Neal Young, 2005)

24: Redemption (Jon Cassar, 2008)

Twilight (Catherine Hardwicke, 2008)

United 93 (Paul Greengrass, 2006)

United 93: The Families and the Film (Keith Solomon, 2006)

Vantage Point (Pete Travis, 2008)

The War Tapes (Deborah Scranton, 2006)

Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden? (Morgan Spurlock, 2008)

wmd. (David Holroyd, 2009)

Woodstock (Michael Wadleigh, 1970)

World Trade Center (Oliver Stone, 2006)

The X-Files (Rob Bowman, 1998)

Z (Costa-Gavras, 1969)

Zoolander (Ben Stiller, 2001)

## Teleography

Alias (ABC, 2001-2006)

The Border (CBC, 2008 - present)

Burn Up (BBC/Global Television, 2008)

The Call (Fox, 2007)

The Colbert Report (Comedy Central, 2005 - present)

CSI (CBS, 2000 - present)

Deadwood (HBO, 2004-2006)

E.R. (NBC, 1994-2009)

E-Ring (NBC, 2005-2006)

Entourage (HBO, 2004 - present)

The Fresh Prince of Bel Air (NBC, 1990-1996)

Friends (NBC, 1994-2004)

Generation Kill (HBO, 2008)

The Grid (BBC/Fox/Carnival, 2004)

Heroes (NBC, 2006-2010)

Holocaust (NBC, 1978)

House (Fox, 2004 - present)

House of Saddam (BBC/HBO, 2008)

JAG (Belisarius/Paramount/CBS, 1995-2005)

The Kill Point (Spike, 2007)

Law and Order (NBC, 1990 - present)

Lost (ABC, 2004-2010)

Northern Exposure (CBS, 1990-1995)

Occupation (BBC, 2009)

Over There (FX, 2005)



Prison Break (Fox, 2005-2009)

Rescue Me (FX, 2004 - present)

Roots (ABC, 1977)

7<sup>th</sup> Heaven (The WB, 1996-2007)

Sex and the City (HBO, 1998-2004)

Six Feet Under (HBO, 2001-2005)

60 Minutes (CBS, 1968 - present)

Sleeper Cell (Showtime, 2005-2006)

Smallville (The WB, 2001 - present)

The Sopranos (HBO, 1999-2007)

Spooks (BBC, 2002 - present)

Spooks: Code 9 (BBC, 2008)

Star Trek Voyager (Paramount, 1995-2001)

State of Play (BBC, 2003)

The State Within (BBC, 2006)

10 Days to War (BBC, 2008)

Third Watch (NBC, 1999-2005)

Threat Matrix (ABC, 2003-2004)

Traffic (USA Network, 2004)

Traffik (Channel 4, 1989)

True Blood (HBO, 2009 - present)

24 (Fox, 2001-2010)

24: Day Zero (Fox, 2007)

The West Wing (NBC, 1999-2006)

Without a Trace (CBS, 2002-2009)