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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The principal purpose of p.o.v. is to provide a framework for collaborative publication for those of us who study and teach film at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus. We will also invite contributions from colleagues in other departments and at other universities. Our emphasis is on collaborative projects, enabling us to combine our efforts, each bringing his or her own point of view to bear on a given film or genre or theoretical problem. Consequently, the reader will find in each issue a variety of approaches to the film or question at hand – approaches which complete rather than compete with one another.

Every March issue of p.o.v. is devoted to the short film.

p.o.v.

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TERRORISM AND FILM
and other media

A Child Eating Ice-Cream Before the Explosion

Notes on a Controversial Scene in *The Battle of Algiers*

Francesco Caviglia

The problem: the function of two shots

After some French police officers are killed by members of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), French police officers and a civilian plant a bomb under the house of a suspected member of the FLN, which results in the death of a score of innocent civilians. When a spontaneous anti-French riot breaks out and a crowd of enraged Algerian men and women storm the streets, their demonstration is stopped by orders from the local FLN leader, Kader (Yacef Saadi), who promises to the angry crowd: "Leave this to us". The ensuing, lengthy scene follows three Algerian women while they disguise themselves in order to assume a French-like look and then leave time-bombs in public places crowded with French civilians.

Before the explosions, the viewer is compelled to look – through the eyes of the Algerian women – at the faces of the soon-to-be victims of the bomb. Of all the faces which we see on the screen, the hardest to forget belongs to a 4-5 year-old child eating his ice-cream, who is briefly shown right before the woman hides the bomb and then, again, a few seconds before the bomb goes off:

This long, tense scene almost forces the viewer to take a stance about the right of the oppressed to use violence in their struggle against their oppressors.

Interestingly, *The Battle of Algiers* (1965) was understood by left-wing militants in the late '60s as a clear endorsement or even glorification of political violence,[1] while several viewers declare today their appreciation of the film precisely because it prompts the viewer to reflect on the evils of political violence.[2]

The intent of this paper is to understand what this scene originally meant to the director and how the same scene can take on different meanings for different viewers, with special focus on the function of the child eating his ice-cream.

Pontecorvo's view of political violence

There is virtually no doubt that, in the intention of its authors, *The Battle of Algiers* did endorse the use of political violence, or at least saw violence as an inescapable force which drives history.

The film is explicit on the role of violence and terrorism: Ben M'Hidi, the political leader of the National Liberation Font (FLN) in Algiers, explains to the young and impatient Ali la Point that

> [...] wars cannot be won with terror attacks. Neither wars, nor revolutions. Terrorism is useful for starting a process, but afterwards the whole population has to act.

[1] Fausto Bertinotti, "«Questo Movimento è nuovo, la violenza non attecchirà»[This movement is new, violence will not find its way in it] (an interview with Carlo Bonini)", La Repubblica (November 2nd, 2003), p. 8. Valerio Morucci, A guerra finita. Sei racconti [After the war. Six tales], (Roma: Manifestolibri, 1994), p. 11.

[2] E.g., Valerie Orlando, "Historiographic Metafiction in Gillo Pontecorvo's 'La bataille d'Alger': Remembering the 'Forgotten War'," Quarterly Review of Film & Video 17/3 (October 2000), p. 261ff, or current (30.9.2003) comments to the film posted to the *International Movie Database* website (http://www.imdb.com).

Moreover, the struggle of the Algerian people against their oppressors also represented for Pontecorvo an opportunity for defending, indirectly, partisan guerrilla warfare during the Italian Resistance. When Ben M'Hidi is asked by a French journalist if it was not "a bit cowardly to use women's baskets and handbags to carry explosive devices that kill so many innocent people", he replies:

> And doesn't it seem to you even more cowardly to drop napalm bombs on defenseless villages, so that there are a thousand times more innocent victims? Of course, if we had your airplanes it would be a lot easier for us. Give us your bombers, and you can have our baskets.

To an Italian viewer in the '60s, such words sounded like a defence of analogous actions carried out by Italian partisans in 1943-45, such as the bomb – hidden in a waste bin – which killed 33 German soldiers in via Rasella in 1944 in Rome and led to the killing of 335 Italians prisoners in retaliation.

But, if it is true that Pontecorvo sides with the Algerian people, why does the camera linger on a heroine of the Algerian resistance while she places a bomb which, as she and the viewer are forced to see, is likely to kill many civilians, among them a child?

Pontecorvo's constraints and freedom in making the film[3]

Pontecorvo had been appointed to make the film by the Algerian authorities, who covered 40% (60%, according to Saadi Yacef) of the total costs of the film and gave full support during shooting in Algiers. Nonetheless, Pontecorvo enjoyed considerable freedom.

[3] Sources to this section: Irene Bignardi, "The Making of The Battle of Algiers," *Cineaste* 25/2 (2000), pp. 14-23, which presents a summary of a chapter from `Memorie Estorte a uno Smemorato (Memories Extorted from an Amnesiac),' an interview-based biography of Gillo Pontecorvo by Irene Bignardi; Edward Said, "The Dictatorship of Truth. An Interview with Gillo Pontecorvo," Cineaste 25/2 (2000), pp. 24-25; Gary Crowdus, "Terrorism and Torture in The Battle of Algiers. An interview with Saadi Yacef, " *Cineaste* 29/3 (2004), pp. 30-38; an interview with Gillo Pontecorvo and a documentary on the making of the film in the Italian DVD release by DNC Home Entertainment, 2003.

Following an initial contact with emissaries of the FLN, who wished to have an "international film" to celebrate their newborn nation, Pontecorvo refused an (in his words) "appalling" propaganda script written by former guerrilla leader Saadi Yacef and proposed instead to produce a new one with the help of screenwriter Franco Solinas. When the new script was accepted, Pontecorvo went looking for funds and, after established Italian producers had refused to risk their money in the project, persuaded a friend to start a production company with *The Battle of Algiers* as its first film. In Algiers, Pontecorvo and Solinas worked side by side with Yacef Saadi, one of the chief organisers of the insurrection in Algiers, who became deeply involved in the project and ended up as am actor playing himself in a central role.

In other words, Pontecorvo had full control over the film, but the Algerian FLN had asked him to make the film *also* because they wanted to work with someone who was politically on the same wavelength, and Pontecorvo's background as a partisan in the Resistance and as a left-wing militant gave him impeccable credentials. Pontecorvo declares now that he only felt committed to make a *truthful* film, and indeed he devoted a considerable effort to obtaining first-hand accounts of the historical events. At the same time, Pontecorvo wanted the film to be appreciated by the Algerians.

According to Pontecorvo, the only request from the Algerian side to make changes in the film for political reasons involved the presence of the child in the cafeteria: the Algerians repeatedly tried, "from the time they read the first draft of the screenplay until the day before the premiere at the Venice film festival", to get the

images of the child expunged, because the former freedom fighters "did not want to appear like criminals".[4]

But Pontecorvo was adamant that the child had to stay: otherwise, as he points out today, the scene would have lost its *truth* and *tragedy* (id.).

Different views about the film and about the scene

This same scene which disturbed the FLN emissaries has been sharply criticized recently for the opposite reason by *Cahiers* critic Jean-Luis Comolli (2004:71), who explains how the lingering of the camera on "images of a careless and futile life" are meant to induce the viewer to despise the soon-to-be victims and to look forward to their punishment:

> [...] (in film, waiting implies desire, fear implies wish and fright implies pleasure) [...]
>
> If the European victims (the " bad guys ") are individualized, this happens *without any doubt* in order to take the viewer to look with anticipation to their slaughter. But it is not irrelevant that these " bad guys " are shown to us, before they die, while they enjoy (one bit more) the small pleasures of colonial life: alcohol, tobacco, cha-cha-cha and search for sex. [...] The masters are rotten and don't deserve to live. (my italics) [5]

In more general terms, Comolli accuses the film of reducing the historical events of the battle of Algiers to an escalating competition between terrorism and anti-terrorism, thereby reducing the FLN militants to "machines" and missing the possibility for a more mature political understanding of the conflict.

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[4] Pontecorvo's declaration in the above mentioned interview, DNC Home Entertainment, 2003.

[5] The original quote : Attente au cinéma suppose désir, crainte implique souhait et peur, jouissance. [...] Si les victimes européennes (les « méchants ») sont individualisées, c'est *sans doute* pour conduire le spectateur à jouir davantage de leur massacre. Mais il n'est pas indifférent que ces « méchants » nous sois montrés, avant de mourir, en train de profiter (encore un peu) des menus plaisirs de la vie coloniale : alcool, tabac, cha-cha-cha et drague... [...] Les maîtres sont corrompus et ne méritent pas de vivre. In Jean-Louis Comolli, "L'attente du prochain coup [waiting for the next hit]," Cahiers du Cinéma (Septembre 2004), p. 71.

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In the same dossier of the *Cahiers* devoted to *The Battle of Algiers*, Tunisian writer and poet Abdelwahab Meddeb maintains, with reference to terrorism, that "we live in an environment, in a state of mind which Pontecorvo's film has contributed to construct" and underlines – on the basis of his own experience in discussions with Islamic extremists – how *The Battle of Algiers* "historically has taken part in the process, especially in Algeria, through which terrorism has been glorified, written in an epic dimension, appropriated as a heroic act".[6] However, he does not accuse the film itself, which in his words "has many qualities" (id.). Meddeb, who was once on Sartre's side and against Camus in their controversial debate about terrorism, now believes that "nothing can justify terrorism and the sacrificial element which terrorism implies" and explains:[7]

> The scenes of *The Battle of Algiers* which have become the more relevant for me are those in which the camera lingers on places and people at the sites where the bomb attacks are going to take place. The images of people who are alive, but destined to die, are horrible. These images are enough to reinforce my certitude that terrorism is unjustifiable.[8]

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[6] The whole original quote : « [...] nous vivons dans un environnement, dans un état d'esprit que le film de Pontecorvo a contribué à constituer. Je n'attaque pas le film lui-même, auquel je trouve beaucoup de qualités, mais historiquement il a participé, en Algérie notamment, à la manière dont le terrorisme a été glorifié, a été inscrit dans une dimension épique, intégré comme acte héroïque. Il est devenu une référence politico-militaire. Et c'est bien en tant que référence positive que le terrorisme est revenu en Algérie dans les années 1990.» In Abdelwahab Meddeb, "Quarante ans après. Conversation entre Marie-José Mondzain, Abdelwahab Meddeb et Jean-Michel Frodòn, à propos de «La Bataille d'Alger», revu aujourd'hui," *Cahiers du Cinéma* (September 2004), pp. 66-69.

Later in the same interview Meddeb recognizes that he could by no means envisage in 1965, when he first saw the film, that it was probably showing, without knowing it, the birth of Islamic radicalism.

[7] The original quote: "Aujourd'hui, je pense que rien ne peut justifier le terrorism, et le sacrificiel qu'implique le terrorism" (id., p. 68).

[8] The original quote: " Les scènes de la *Bataille d'Alger* qui ont pris pour moi le plus de relief sont celles où la caméra parcourt les lieux et les personnes présentes sur les sites où vont avoir lieu

*
* *

In the same interview, philosopher and writer Marie-José Mondzain objects to Meddeb:

> These camera movement on the faces, aren't they meant to make us understand how much a terrorist must overcome his own compassion, in order to actually perform his terror act?[9]

*
* *

As for Pontecorvo, he maintains now that *The Battle of Algiers* "does not teach how to make war, but how to make cinema".[10] This statement is consistent with another declaration in which a highly reputed author of political films maintains that he "really knows nothing about politics."[11]

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* *

All these explanations do make sense, since the same images can trigger different sensations in viewers with different backgrounds, dispositions and motivations.

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les attentats. Les images de ces gens vivants mais destinés à la mort sont terribles. Elles suffisent à ma certitude que le terrorisme est injustifiable" (id.).

[9] The original quote: Ces mouvements de caméra sur les visages ne sont-ils pas plutôt destinés, lorsque Pontecorvo les tourne, à nous faire comprendre ce qu'un terroriste doit surmonter de sa propre compassion pour passer à l'acte ? (id., 68).

[10] Gillo Pontecorvo, "La Bataille d'Alger apprend à faire du cinéma [The Battle of Algiers teaches how to make cinema] (an interview with Jean Roy)," *L'Humanité* (May 22nd, 2004). Pontecorvo's statement was given in response to a question on his feelings about U.S. officers watching *The Battle of Algiers* at the Pentagon as an instrument for better understanding of the current crisis in Iraq. I have taken the liberty of attributing a more general value to that statement, which was also chosen as the title for his interview in *L'Humanité*.

[11] Reported by Charles Glass, "The hour of the birth of death. Pontecorvo's long silence and the demise of political film-making," *Times Literary Supplement* (June 26th, 1998), p. 20.

I will try in the following sections to look for the cinematic elements that can support such radically different interpretations of the scene.

Elements inducing the viewer to side with the terrorists

THE WOMEN

Until the bombs go off, the viewers see the people in the cafés through the eyes of the women who are about to or have planted their bombs and prepare to leave. They are determined and do not hesitate; they are on a mission which entails sacrifice, from changing their appearance (below left) in order to appear "more French" to forgetting their humanity and killing innocent civilians, including a child. They represent their people, which respects and encourages them: see for example (below right) the almost imperceptible gesture of support from the man who guards the hideout in which the women receive the timers for their bombs. So far, these women are perfect militants of a revolutionary movement.

Are they "machines", as suggested by Comolli?

For one of the women, the older Zohra, sympathy has been built long before she leaves a bomb under a sofa at an Air France agency; although she shows the fiercest determination – she even takes her

own son with her through the French security control – her whole appearance is incongruous with the idea of an act of terrorism.

The viewer is induced to believe that, under normal circumstances, a woman like this would never have dreamt of placing a bomb and killing other people. Indeed we see two of her victims, a rich young couple who are almost certainly travelling for pleasure, but the camera does not linger on them nearly as long as it does on the future victims in the two cafés. In the brief moments in which the three sit on the same sofa, even their posture betrays their belonging to different worlds.

On the contrary, the two other young women (below) have been more successful in their disguise and they look disturbingly similar to their victims.


The expressions on their faces throughout the scene leave ample room for interpretation: they must not betray their feelings, neither to the customers in the cafés nor to the viewer. There are however small signs that can help the viewer to form her or his own opinion.

The woman in the figure above-left quickly averts her eyes when she spots the child; after a moment in which we can only imagine her thoughts, she checks the clock and then pushes the basket with the bomb under the bar with her foot.

We see the second woman (above right) from the moment she has just hidden the bomb until the moment she leaves. The other customers are dancing and do not even notice her; she is free to look at the people she is about to kill. Her gaze may betray her fear of being caught, but there is more in it: when the camera rests a few moments on a fat boy leaning on the juke-box and moving in time with the music, she casts a last, unnecessary glance at him before moving on (below: the still image cannot render the barely perceptible movement of the woman's head).

Although other interpretations are possible, my strong impression is that both women – non-professional actresses, as all the Algerian characters in the film – felt *guilty* about the lives they were

about to take; this is at least what one would expect from decent people killing fellow-human beings because they (believe they) have to,[12] and Pontecorvo's images convey well this kind of feeling. Their being women helps make their act both more disturbing (*history* has forced them), but maybe also less despicable than if it had been carried out by a man: these women have nothing to gain and are not enjoying what they are doing. They are 'involuntary heroines'.

THE CUSTOMERS

Most of the faces in the gallery of people, men and women, which we observe in the two cafés are not the kind of people one feels sympathy for at first sight (see below).




[12] The screenplay insists twice on the fact that there is "no joy" when the three women sit together and take on their disguises, or when they speak with their leader Kader/Saadi Yacef. Guilty feelings in freedom fighters before killing in cold blood are well documented in Peter Øvig Knudsen, *Efter drabet* [after the killing], (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2001), e.g. p. 330 ("Det værste tidspunkt ved en likvidering er en times tid før. [...] Man tænker på den opdragelse, man har fået som spejder, og den opdragelse, man har fået i sit hjem. Alt det kolliderer fuldstændig med at skulle dræbe").



A few other faces (below) would probably trigger different reactions according to the context in which they are seen and according to the viewer's expectations:




On the whole, most of the faces seem to have been chosen to suggest the picture of a parasitic and careless French society. After the first bomb goes off in the first café, the young people in the other one hear the explosion and soon resume dancing.

If the two shots with the child were edited out of the scene, not many viewers would feel too sorry for the victims of the bombs

(which would not be in contrast with dislike for the act of killing other people in cold blood).

Elements inducing the viewer to side with the victims

THE CHILD

Pontecorvo maintains that the FLN emissaries were not pleased with the presence of the child from the moment they saw the first script. Indeed, there is a significant difference between the last preserved script (curiously dated 1966) and the scene in the film.[13] First of all, there is no trace in the script of close-up images of other customers in the café, beside the child. Moreover, in the script the child has two proud and caring parents, he buys himself his ice-cream and we hear his voice. After the bomb, the child is shown covered in blood and his father is taken away, in shock. It is understandable that the FLN people were at least perplexed when they first read the scene.

In comparing the script with the images, one might suspect that Pontecorvo did accept at least in part the FLN worries and downplayed the role of the child, while placing a lot of ugly faces around him. We cannot even rule out that Pontecorvo pretended, when discussing the scene with Yacef Saadi, that he had reduced the importance of the child in the economy of the scene in order to please his Algerian friends, although he could not go so far as to remove the child altogether.

But it seems the FLN people were not persuaded and – in my view – they were in part right. The image of the child remains in the mind of the viewer: there is no need to explain that he has caring parents and not even to show him as an especially cute child. The

[13] Included in the DVD edition by DNC Home Entertainment, 2003.

child in the picture is just a normal, defenceless child, and almost any viewer will feel sorry for his fate just by catching a short glimpse of him. To accept or not to accept to kill that specific child for the sake of a political cause is, as already mentioned, a matter of personal disposition and background.

THE DEAD CUSTOMERS

Following the explosions, the portrayal of the French victims is no different from that of the Algerian victims. The same *religious* music – composed by Ennio Morricone and by Pontecorvo himself – accompanies the scenes of death after the bomb in the Casbah and in the French cafés.[14]

The scene in the Casbah is longer and there is a more lingering image alluding to Christ taken down from the cross (below left), but this visual element is also recognisable when the victims are French (below right). One shot – which may have replaced the one with the dead child – shows for long moments an especially handsome French victim (below center).

[14] Gary Crowdus, *op. cit*.

Conclusions

The scene of the bombs in the French cafés may have been made to appear less disturbing than it was in the original screenplay, since it lost elements which would certainly have displeased the Algerians (the insistent attention on the child) and gained a gallery of (for the most) unpleasant portraits of colonizers. However, this scene still remains memorable (and perhaps ended up being more so) because we are not told what to feel: indeed, viewers have found support in this scene for visions of violence quite different from those held by Pontecorvo.

According to Michael Ignatieff (2004),[15] the film "is a master-piece, at once a justification for acts of terror and an unsparing account of terror's cost, *including to the cause it serves*" (my italics).

I share his general view, but not the idea that Pontecorvo was *then* aware of the cost of terror for the cause it serves. Actually, Pontecorvo was to remain faithful to the idea that violence may be necessary at least until *Ogro* (1980), a film focused on four Basque militants organising the killing of General Franco's right hand man, Carrero Blanco. As much as *The Battle of Algiers* leaves room for viewers to draw their own conclusions, *Ogro* is almost didactic when it explains the difference between a legitimate use of violence *on the side of history* – Carrero Blanco's death probably eased the return of Spain to democracy – and gratuitous violence outside any shared, progressive political project, such as in the Basque terrorism *after* the return of Spain to democracy. The wave of left-wing political violence in Italy in the '70s may have diminished Pontecorvo's confidence in the political sensitivity of his audience.

[15] "The terrorist as auteur." *The New York Times – NYT Magazine* (November 14th, 2004), p. 50.

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Hostage videos: tropes of terror as social practice

Hanne Miriam Larsen

More than 200 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003 and the subsequent invasion by the U.S.-led military coalition. At least 60 of these hostages have been killed, in many cases after video footage of them pleading for their lives as they recited their captors' demands (typically that foreign military forces in Iraq be withdrawn) have been issued by their captors.[1] Disturbing as they are, the hostage videos are distributed worldwide in an instant via satellite TV networks and the Internet. While some of these hostage incidents – and the accompanying videos – have contributed to heated debates on national policy in relation to the situation in Iraq, none of them has led to an actual withdrawal of the military coalition. However, despite their apparent failure to successfully influence the military situation in Iraq, images from the hostage videos have become recurrent items in news media around the world.

In this essay, I wish to explore the idea that hostage videos can be seen as a form of social practice embedded in and put into play in the complex and contested field of mass media in which a range of aesthetic and politically potent strategies are applied. I am inspired by anthropologist Michael Herzfeld's concept of "social poetics" which refers to the creative social practice where countries and social agents make use of dominant and/or popular signifiers and tropes in an attempt to represent, reify and empower ethnic and

national groupings (Herzfeld 1997). According to Herzfeld, the rhetoric (or statements – or "texts") resulting from this appropriation is not a by-product of reality or a by-product blocking our access to reality. Instead, rhetoric is part of the everyday social interaction in which ideas, social identities and relations of power are continually reproduced and contested (Herzfeld 1997). Furthermore, drawing on Herzfeld's point that "[...] the ground each media covers is a contested one, involving multiple participants whose ends often compete but occasionally coincide" (Herzfeld 2001, 301), I will show how differently situated social agents relate to and are engaged in the hostage video phenomena in different fashions, and will indicate how these videos relate to other ways in which the short video message format is appropriated as a means of representation, persuasion, identity-building and empowerment. I do not intend nor pretend to provide an exhaustive contextualisation; rather, my aim is to point to the diversity of appropriations of and reactions to the hostage videos and related video productions. My starting point is the case of Douglas Wood, who was in captivity in Iraq from May 1st 2005 until he was freed as a result of a military rescue raid on June 15. As in the case of many other hostages before and after him, video images of Wood in captivity were distributed to a global audience via electronic and Internet-based media.

The Douglas Wood hostage video(s)

On May 2nd 2005, the Arabic television network Al-Jazeera broadcasted video footage featuring Douglas Wood (a 63-year old US-based Australian engineer) in captivity, pleading for his life and urging Australia and the United States to withdraw their military

[1] Estimated numbers of hostages and information on video releases from article "Foreign Hostages in Iraq" on CBC News Online. May 15th 2005 at http://www.cbc.ca

forces from Iraq. On the DVD which was released to Reuters and various news agencies in Baghdad, a group calling itself "The Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Iraq" claimed responsibility for the kidnapping.

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The video (duration approx. 1 minute) consists of five elements or scenes:

(1) A graphic image in brown and golden colours, showing a circle containing a sword and an automatic pistol crossing with an open Koran in the middle, flanked by text in Arabic.

(2) Another graphic image with more text in Arabic. In the lower right corner we see a picture from a Muslim funeral scene, two men carrying a dead body on a stretcher. These two graphic images together last about 9 seconds.

(3) Cut to a medium shot with no camera movement: We see Douglas Wood facing the camera with eye contact; the barrel of a machine gun is visible in the upper right corner of the picture; on the left side we see part of a uniformed person;

and in the upper left-hand corner we see a text in Arabic in bold red letters. Wood is in the center of the picture and looks directly into the camera as he speaks the message of his captors. This scene makes up about 2/3 of the video's content.[2]

(4) Cut to a camera movement, starting with a pan to the right showing a close shot of a uniformed person with his face masked by a scarf, carrying an automatic weapon which he points to the right. The camera pans to the left showing a similarly uniformed, masked and armed person pointing his weapon to the right. Then the camera pans to the right showing the two gun-barrels pointing at Wood, tilts down showing Wood kneeling on the floor with his hands cuffed and tilts upwards, briefly showing Wood's face looking straight into the camera before the scene ends.

(5) The circular "logo" from the beginning of the video appears again, now in black and white, flanked by a text in Arabic. This image lasts 3-4 seconds.

The DVD from May 2nd was followed by a second video issued on May 6th. The short and simple format and the visual setup were similar to the first video; however, Wood's head is now shaven, and wounds in his face indicate that he has been beaten. Kneeling on the floor between two masked people holding him at gunpoint, Wood reads out an ultimatum on behalf of his captors asking that troops be withdrawn from Iraq within 72 hours; otherwise he will be killed.

[2] During the subsequent global media coverage of Wood's captivity, various frame-grabs from this scene circulated in electronic as well as print and internet-based media, showing Wood

Two points: First, in their use of strategies such as rapid editing, direct address to the spectator, eye contact with the camera, iconography laden with symbolism, emotional appeal mixed with an urging of the audience to act, these hostage videos bear references to more familiar usages of the short video message format such as commercial TV-ads and political campaign videos. Second, these videos display agency and power, and, importantly, not just in the representational sense: this IS agency and power, real people exercising real power over a real hostage.

Strategic media moves

Shortly after the DVD footage displaying Douglas Wood as a hostage was broadcast by Al-Jazeera on May 2nd, news of the hostage situation accompanied by images from the DVD was issued worldwide by electronic news media and on the Internet. The news of the kidnapping was covered most extensively in English-speaking countries, and the video footage (or edited excerpts) was aired repeatedly on Australian television on May 2nd and the days following. The release of the hostage video led to a range of actions by the government and by Wood's family, with the mass media playing a vital role.

The Douglas Wood hostage video led to an immediate response in national and international mass media from Wood's country, Australia. Prime Minister John Howard reacted promptly with a statement to the Australian Broadcasting Corp on May 2nd which was distributed by news media worldwide including Al-Jazeera. He expressed his regret about Wood's ordeal but stressed that Australia would not be entering into negotiations with the captors:

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looking directly at the camera with the barrel of a gun pointed at his head.

> We can't have the foreign policy of this country dictated by terrorists, but we have got to do everything we can, nonetheless, to assist this poor man. (http://www.abc.net.au)

The Australian government immediately set up a task force to work for Wood's release, and on May 4 when the task force arrived in Baghdad, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer appeared in an interview with Al-Jazeera making a direct plea to Wood's captors to free him. When the second Douglas Wood hostage video was broadcast on May 7 with the 72 hour ultimatum, Downer responded immediately in a statement on Australian and Arab media, saying that Australia refused to give in to the demands of Wood's captors, and on May 12 a second direct appeal to Wood's abductors was made by Downer on Al-Jazeera. Throughout Wood's captivity, leading politicians including members of the opposition were cited in Australian and international media (including Al-Jazeera), assuring the public that Wood's capture would not influence Australia's Iraq policy and that the nation would work together in an effort to free Douglas Wood.

In addition to the efforts of the Australian Federal Government, Wood's family launched a media campaign, using television and the Internet in an attempt to obtain his release. When Foreign Minister Downer's plea was aired on Al-Jazeera on May 4, the Arabic television network also broadcast an appeal to Wood's captors from his Australia-based brothers Malcolm and Vernon, who expressed their concern about his fragile health. On May 7, following the release of the second video, Wood's family made a televised plea for his freedom, saying that they were shocked to hear of the ultimatum:

> Douglas is a warm man of generous heart and spirit. His work is to help the people of Iraq towards a better life. We respect the people of

> Iraq, their patriotic spirit and their right to independence. (http://english.aljazeera.net).

On May 11 "The Douglas Wood Family Website" was launched (http://www.thewoodfamily.info), a weblog in which the family appealed directly to Wood's captors to set him free, expressing their love for him and stressing their concern for his health. The weblog, written in both English and Arabic, included photos of Wood with his family, video footage of Wood's brothers meeting with Australian Muslim leaders in Sydney, a Baghdad telephone hotline for any relevant information, and a list of Wood's medical needs. The weblog initiative was expanded on May 15 with "The Wood Family Television appeal", as the family began a TV advertising campaign in Iraq in which they promised to make a donation to an Iraqi charity of the hostage-takers' choice if Wood were set free.

When Douglas Wood was finally released on June 15 as a result of a military rescue operation, he was reunited with his family in Australia. Wood's release and arrival in Australia drew an avalanche of news media interest, and the family hired a management company to deal with the media. On June 20 the family organized a press conference in Melbourne at which Douglas' brother Vernon made a statement to the nation and the media:

> We are holding this press conference because Douglas and the Wood family want to say thank you to Australia, the press, for the unwavering support we received. And a special vote of thanks is certainly due to you, the media. From our perspective, every Australian should be proud of the way our country unified to see Douglas free. (http://www.theage.com.au)

The Australian media were generally supportive and sympathetic in their coverage of Wood's ordeal and release. However, a few days

after his arrival in Australia, Wood sold his story to the Australian commercial television Ten Network and received an undisclosed sum of money for the exclusive interview aired on June 26. As a result, the sympathetic media approach gave way to new stories accusing Wood of trying to make a profit from his ordeal.[3] In the following weeks, news media interest in Douglas Wood declined, apart from occasional follow-up stories on his medical condition and his alleged financial losses or gains from the hostage experience.

Video messages: a weapon of mass persuasion

Within the past two decades, the increasing accessibility of electronic media technology and the advent of the Internet have made it possible for mass media consumers all over the world to produce and distribute electronic media content to a global audience themselves. Mass distribution of video productions has been appropriated by Islamic terrorist groups since the 1980's when video was used in recruiting campaigns for the Mujahedin who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In the 1990's the video production activities expanded, the new aim being the recruitment of Muslim men for the terrorist war against the U.S. and its allies. These media activities gave rise to the production company "As-Sahaab Foundation of Islamic Media," which has subsequently become labeled as Al Qaeda's media production company. Since the late 1990's As-Sahaab, along with a range of small-scale production companies, have issued what have become known as "Jihad-videos," a general name for a wide range of video material produced and distributed by Islamic terrorists and their supporters. The format, duration and content of these videos vary; from spoken statements

[3] Wood's contract with the Ten Network has been the object of much speculation. Some have claimed his fee was 400,000 Australian dollars, a figure Wood has refused to confirm or deny.

on various issues by different militant leaders to footage from recruitment seminars, training camps or actual terrorist attacks, and rap-style music videos in English with a striking MTV-quality in the editing style and use of animation. The "Jihad-videos" produced by As-Sahaab and others are sold on the streets in the border-regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, distributed in several Muslim bookstores in major British cities such as London and Birmingham, and downloadable free on the Internet. Also, terrorist-related video material is frequently distributed by TV news channels, especially in the Arab countries, notably Al-Jazeera, which repeatedly broadcasts video statements from Al Qaeda-leaders, hostage videos and footage of terrorist attacks produced and issued for public display by the terrorists themselves.

Since the terrorist attacks on 11/9 2001, the U.S. government under George W. Bush has put the war against terror at the top of its foreign policy agenda. As part of the anti-terror offensive, a department of "Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs" was established under the State Department in the fall of 2001. Charlotte Beers, a former top advertising executive, was hired to lead the department's campaign to counter the mass media activities of the Islamic terrorists and to improve the image of America in the Arab countries. The main thrust of Beers' efforts was the "Shared Values" campaign launched in 2002, a series of extended TV commercials intended for Islamic consumption, aiming to reposition the U.S. as a friend of Islam and of the Arab peoples. The video series broadcast in several Muslim countries featured a range of testimonies from Muslim citizens who had achieved success in the U.S., explaining

how America was a democratic, multicultural, tolerant society.[4] In a recent TV-interview, Beers stated that she sees the task of the U.S. anti-terror media campaign as a difficult one:

> This is a war of communication, and it is difficult really for the United States government to be comfortable with how overt that has to be, and how we have to use modern day skills of drama and emotional content and storytelling in order to be heard against the kind of outrageous but very interesting stories they tell" (TV2 *Dags Dato*, May 2005).[5]

In parallel with this strategic usage of video messages by Muslim terrorist groups and the U.S. government, video materials such as the "Jihad videos" and hostage videos are appropriated by a variety of homepages and weblogs on the Internet. The aims of the video distribution activities of these sites vary; while some distribute these videos in order to provide anti-establishment documentation as an alternative to mainstream media, others explicitly praise the actions of hostage takers, suicide bombers, etc. and distribute the videos in support of what they see as a "freedom fight". The user-comments that are displayed on these sites indicate that the audience includes a variety of people with different motives and agendas, and that visitors' reactions to the video material range from disgust to praise. An example is http://www.infovlad.net, a site that offers free downloads of a variety of terror-related video material, including a substantial amount of "Jihad videos," footage of terrorist attacks and hostage videos – such as the one featuring Douglas Wood, which is now long gone from the news headlines.

[4] For a detailed outline and discussion of U.S. government media strategies in relation to the war in Iraq, see Rutherford 2004.

[5] The "Shared Values" campaign was brought to a halt early in 2003 when it failed to secure a broadcast deal with major Arab TV-channels and subsequently obtained only limited distribution. Beers resigned from the State Department in March 2003.

Afterword

Hostage videos show us something that we do not want to see. By appropriating well-known mass media strategies, the producers manage to effectively put the personal ordeal of people in captivity on the public agenda. No matter how much of this footage we are confronted with, hostage videos will remain disturbing because of what they are: very real acts of social agency signifying and implying division, hostility and violence.

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The Empty Accountancy of Things

Reasons for Fundamentalism in Hanif Kureishi's and Udayan Prasad's *My Son the Fanatic*

Trine Winter Mortensen

The recent London bombings have made the 1997 film *My Son the Fanatic*[1] of current interest again. England is now asking itself the question 'Why do people born and bred in England turn to fundamentalism, and against the society they were raised in?'. This question is exactly what is central in the film that is directed by Udayan Prasad, but written by Hanif Kureishi. Kureishi, who has an English mother and a Pakistani father and is born and bred in England, has been preoccupied with this question for a while. He first explored these issues in the novel *The Black Album*,[2] which was inspired by the fatwah issued against Salman Rushdie in 1989. A few years later he wrote the short story *My Son the Fanatic*,[3] which he expanded and developed into a film script under the same title.

Colonialism, Immigration and Assimilation

The central character in the film is not the son referred to in the title, but his father Parvez. In the film, the conflict between father and son is used as a backdrop for the story of Parvez's personal development, but I will focus on the conflict between father and son. Parvez is a Pakistani taxi driver who came to England to feed his family, and in Britain he lives at the bottom of society, working long hours to make ends meet. Parvez's son Farid is getting engaged to Chief

[1] Udayan Prasad, dir., *My Son the Fanatic*, with Om Puri and Rachel Griffiths, Zephyr Films (for BBC), 1997.
[2] Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995).
[3] "My Son the Fanatic" appears in *Love in a Blue Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997).

Inspector Fingerhut's daughter and Parvez is thrilled, since this means that he will finally be able to climb up the social ladder. He is very eager to please Fingerhut and behaves in a submissive and inferior manner. Fingerhut, on the other hand, regards Parvez and his family with contempt, and is everything but pleased to be connected with this low status Pakistani family. This superior/ inferior relationship is replayed, though in a less obvious version, when the German businessman Mr. Schitz comes to town. Parvez offers him his services while he is in town, and Mr. Schitz calls Parvez 'little man' and Parvez behaves like a delivery boy eager to please. Their relationship resembles that of a colonial master and a native servant. Both Parvez and Mr. Schitz fall naturally into this pattern. Mr. Schitz uses Parvez, but does not respect him. However, this might not be clear to Mr. Schitz himself, since he is not unfriendly and quite enjoys Parvez's company. But the incident where he kicks Parvez in the bottom and laughs at him clearly shows a lack of fundamental respect. Parvez seeks to serve Mr. Schitz to the extent that he agrees to supply him with prostitutes for his business party. In general, Mr. Schitz exploits and uses others for his own pleasure. Parvez, though, does not feel that he is being exploited; his inferior behaviour has become internalised. Kureishi points out that "the backgrounds to the lives of these ... people includes colonialism - being made to feel inferior in your own country. And then, in Britain, racism; again, being made to feel inferior in your own country."[4] When Parvez joins Mr. Schitz and the prostitute Bettina in a comedy club he is, in a very direct manner, racially abused by the comedian. Mr. Schitz is shocked and wants to inform the police, but Bettina wryly informs him that "they

[4] Hanif Kureishi, "The Road Exactly". Introduction to *My Son the Fanatic*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p.xi.

were sitting at the next table".[5] Parvez and the other taxi drivers are also victims of physical racial abuse, since they are frequently attacked. As a result of this Parvez keeps a cricket bat in the taxi for protection.

Though Parvez inhabits the lower spheres of society, though he is regarded with contempt and disrespect, and though he is racially abused, both verbally and physically, he still does not turn his back on British society. He has left many old habits and beliefs behind him in order to become assimilated to the British society, and in many respects he prefers Britain to Pakistan. He sees himself as a gentleman, he enjoys a drink and he loves jazz, particularly Louis Armstrong. These virtues are not in keeping with his Pakistani self and therefore he has created a hide-out in the cellar where he drinks and listens to music – a sort of haven for his assimilated self. The soundtrack to the film highlights Parvez's two identities. The non-diegetic music is rooted in the East and represents his origins and his community, and the diegetic music is jazz, representing the Western world that he lives in now. This compound Muslim and Western identity is also expressed visually when he sips whisky wearing salwar kurta. In some respects Parvez is still a traditional man, but he feels at home in Bradford where he lives. This is evident in the scene where he drives Mr. Schitz from the airport and takes him on a guided tour of the city. When he talks about the city he talks about "our glory" (p.9), and expresses a sense of belonging.

Parvez's immigration and assimilation has not made him a happy man. He is working long hours and lives in a different world than his family and has become estranged from both his wife and son. Parvez has come to the point where he says, "Sometimes I think

[5] *My Son the Fanatic*, p. 47. (This analysis is based on both the film and the script. The two differ among themselves, but the present quotations originate from the script. Further references will

– if I hit that tree what difference?" (p.20). The only person he has a true relationship with is the prostitute Bettina. Their relationship is a friendship based on mutual respect and understanding that eventually develops into a love relationship.

Money Makes the World Go Around

The society that Parvez has assimilated himself to is dominated by capitalism and consumerism. He lives his life in a society ruled by money in which everything is for sale, even people. The people he meets represent different aspects of the economic system. Mr. Schitz is a businessman who is involved in the building of a large shopping centre, thus representing consumerism, and he thinks that everything and everyone can be bought. He buys Bettina and the other girls, and also Parvez's services, and seems to believe that you can make people do anything - as long as you pay them. Mr. Schitz buys and Bettina sells the only thing she has to sell, namely her body.

Both Parvez and Bettina want to belong to society, at any cost. As David Edelstein argues, "[They] are playing by capitalism's rules, trying to get a foothold in a society that closely guards access to its more 'proper' ladders to the top"[6]. Parvez does not seem to question the society he has assimilated himself to. June Thomas points out that "for Parvez, immigration to Britain represented a decision to prioritize materialism over spirituality"[7]. He no longer has a philosophy of life and says, "All I want is to pay mortgage" (p.16). His life has become empty, except for his relationship with

appear in the text).
[6] David Edelstein, "Generation Gap", (http://slate.msn.com, 1999), p.1.
[7] June Thomas, "The First 7/7 Movie", (http://slate.msn.com, 2005), p.2.

Bettina. She understands him, possibly because, as David Edelstein puts it, her "compromised purity seems to mirror his own"[8].

Like Father, Like Son?

During his upbringing Parvez's son Farid was also assimilated. He was even captain of the cricket team, thereby excelling at the colonizer's game. He was studying to be an accountant, was obsessed with clothes, trying to get into modelling and drinking and doing drugs - in fact, nothing in his way of life revealed that he was not Anglo-Saxon. Through this assimilated life he met Madeleine, the Chief Inspector's daughter, whom he, as the film begins, is about to be engaged to. Thereby he is finally going to enter the British society properly and Parvez is very proud of his assimilated son and thrilled about the prospects for the whole family. However, Farid is not satisfied. Somehow he feels lost in his life, and when he meets other young second-generation immigrants who have turned to Islam, they make him see his life in a new light. He suddenly sees his life, and his father's life, as being immoral and wrong. He says, "Evil is all around. The brothers have given me the strength to save myself. In the midst of corruption there can be purity" (p. 76).

Farid reacts against the emptiness in his own life and in society. Materially he has everything he could want, since Parvez is working hard to provide his only son with material goods. However, Parvez's choice to prioritise materialism over spirituality has resulted in a spiritual void, which afflicts Farid. Kureishi has said that "unlike their parents, who'd come here for a specific purpose, to make a life in the affluent West away from poverty and lack of opportunity, they, born here, had inherited only pointlessness and

[8] Edelstein, p. 1.

emptiness"[9]. Everybody wants life to make sense, and if it does not, then one has to search for meaning. Religion is that which brings meaning back into Farid's life. Carla Power argues that "rather than following their parents' immigrant path of job and measured assimilation and growing material prosperity, many have instead turned to the religion of extremism for identity and life's meaning."[10] Farid exchanges materialism for spirituality. He discards of all his possessions and says, "This [religion] is the true alternative to empty living from day to day ... in the capitalist dominated world we are suffering from!" (p. 69). As a result of his new perspective on life Farid gives up his accountancy studies, since it symbolizes everything he wants to turn away from. He states that "accountancy ... it is just capitalism and taking advantage" (p. 69) and that he does not believe "the white and Jewish propaganda that there is nothing to our lives but the empty accountancy of things ... of things ... for nothing ... for nothing." (pp. 69-70). He is disgusted by capitalism and, as Bart Moore-Gilbert argues, Farid's abandonment of his accountancy studies signals his refusal to be part of an economic system in which humans, too, are simply commodities to be bought and sold."[11]

Farid is pushed in the direction of fundamentalism both by spiritual emptiness, capitalism, and racism. Spiritual emptiness gives him the motivation to search for a new way of life, and capitalism and racism keep him, and other second-generation immigrants at the fringe of society, thereby making it more likely that he should turn against it. When they are not allowed to enter society, the benefits of that society can be seen as a provocation,

[9] Hanif Kureishi, "Bradford" in *Dreaming and Scheming* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.71.
[10] Carla Power, "The Lost Generation" (Newsweek, http://msnbc.msn.com, 2005), p. 1.
[11] Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi. Contemporary World Writers* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), p.167.

since it flaunts that which they could have, but are kept at arm's length from. Kureishi argues that "the central tenets of the West – democracy, pluralism, tolerance ... – could be treated as a joke. For those whose lives had been negated by colonialism and racism such notions could only seem a luxury and of no benefit to them; they were a kind of hypocrisy" (p. xi). The fact that Farid does not feel that he belongs is made evident in the scene where he gives a Muslim maulvi[12] a guided tour of the city. This scene parallels the scene where Parvez gave Mr. Schitz a guided tour, but whereas Parvez expressed pride and belonging, Farid only expresses disgust and detachment.

Farid is treated by society as being inferior, but he refuses to be inferior. He says, "Whatever we do here we will always be inferior. They will never accept us like them. But I am not inferior!" (pp. 65-66). He is ashamed and infuriated by Parvez's submissive behaviour and lack of self-esteem in relation to Fingerhut, and later says to his father, "It sickens me to see you lacking pride." (p. 65). Turning to fundamentalism has the effect that Farid no longer feels inferior. Janet Maslin argues that, "unlike his more liberal father, he [Farid] has found a way to escape feeling unwelcome in England"[13]. However, when Farid stops feeling inferior in the British society, he starts feeling superior.

Taking Action

This feeling of superiority leads Farid and his new friends to take action to clean up society and function as moral guards. When Farid and his friends begin their mission he becomes a Travis Bickle figure. Kureishi and Udayan Prasad both make references to

[12] Spiritual leader.

Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, both on story level (the Travis Bickle figure), with music (the jazz music that functions as a leitmotif for both Parvez and Travis Bickle) and with the visuals of the film (both films show both the decay and the beauty of the cityscapes as the taxi drivers drive through the cities at night). However, Farid is not an exact copy of Travis Bickle. In *My Son the Fanatic* the Travis Bickle figure is split up into two: what he does (Parvez) and what he thinks (Farid). Like Travis, Farid is disgusted by the filth in the society he is on the edges of. He calls it "a society soaked in sex" (p. 64) and he does not wish to be a part of it. He says, "They say integrate, but they live in pornography and filth, and tell us how backward we are!" (p. 64). As Harvey Thompson argues, "For him [Farid], religious fundamentalism seems to offer an alternative to a prejudiced and immoral society"[14]. Farid and his friends want to clean up society. Like Travis, they see prostitutes as the scum of the earth, and attack them in an attempt to clean up the streets and purge society of its filth. Farid has nothing but contempt for his father's way of life in general, and his relationship with Bettina in particular. He says, "If you break the law as stated then how can wickedness not follow?" (p. 62). Farid uses religion to keep wickedness and corruption at bay. By turning to religion he can find purity in the midst of corruption and create order out of chaos. Fundamentalism is a way of saying 'no' to a society that is too much. Kureishi points out that "constraint could be a bulwark against a self that was always in danger of dissolving in the face of too much choice, opportunity and desire" (p. x). In his research he spoke to a young Muslim who told him that "renunciation made him feel strong ...

[13] Janet Maslin, "The In-Laws as Outlaws," review of *My Son the Fanatic* (http://query.nytimes.com), p. 1.
[14] Harvey Thompson, "A Moving and Unconventional Love Story", review of *My Son the Fanatic* (www.wsws.org), p. 2.

while giving in made him feel weak" (p. ix). Even though the young men are restricted by their religion, it empowers them.

Reactions to Action

Parvez does not understand Farid and the other fundamentalists, but Bettina partly sees their motivation. She says, "Who can blame the young for believing in something beside money? They are puzzled why a few people have everything and the poor must sell their bodies. It is positive, in some ways" (p. 53). Bettina is not the only one who shows understanding. One day Parvez follows Farid into the mosque, which he has not visited for a very long time, and talks to one of the old Muslim men. He finds the young people annoying, but he also has respect for them. He says, "They are always fighting for radical actions on many subjects. It is irritating us all here, yaar. But they have something these young people – they're not afraid of the truth. They stand up for things. We never did that" (p. 58). Parvez cannot find any understanding or sympathy for Farid's new life. Bettina had advis
ed him to give Farid his philosophy of life hoping this would fill Farid's void. Parvez tells him, "There are many ways of being a good man" (p. 120). However, he is unable to make Farid listen to him, and in a fit of desperation, powerlessness and anger Parvez attacks Farid, trying to beat sense into him. The roles are reversed and Farid pinpoints this saying, "You call me fanatic, dirty man, but who is the fanatic now?" (p. 117). This final twist suggests that anyone can become a fanatic when pushed to the edge – even the liberal and good-natured Parvez. Fanaticism is born out of desperation and conviction.

Parvez and Farid both go too far, each in his own direction. Parvez chooses to be assimilated, giving up his background and

adopting the British way, and Farid chooses fundamentalism, turning away from Britain and towards Islam. Their approaches to dealing with life in Britain are both extreme, since neither of them include integration. Integration means preserving one's roots while knowing, participating and becoming a part of the society one lives in, and a successful integration where Parvez had preserved his roots and not uncritically adopted anything that is British, might have prevented him from feeling that his life is meaningless. It might also have prevented Farid from feeling rootless, and it is partly this feeling of being rootless and not belonging that makes him turn to fundamentalism.

9/11 as a Hollywood Fantasy

Bülent Diken & Carsten Bagge Laustsen

I

"Why does the World Trade Center have *two* towers?" asked Jean Baudrillard (1988: 143) years ago, at the beginning of the 1980s. The twin towers of the WTC were perfectly parallel surfaces which merely mirrored one another, thus demonstrating the irrelevance of difference and antagonism in a postmodern world. Cancelling out difference, upon which politics is based, the WTC had constituted a symbol of post-politics: an obscene political system in which political opposition or "dialectical polarity" no longer exists, a simulacrum, where acts disappear without consequences in neutral, indifferent images (Baudrillard 1994: 16, 32).

In other words: long before it was destroyed, the WTC was a symbol of destruction: the destruction of politics. To borrow Marcuse's concept, the WTC was a symbol of a "one-dimensional society" in which critique has disappeared and people can no longer imagine that another society, a different world, is possible. Without the image of a VIRTUAL world, a world of possibilities or potentialities, the actual world becomes the only world.

And of course, in such a one-dimensional world, you can freely choose to be an optimist or a pessimist. After all, the optimist is the person who thinks that the actually existing world is the best world. Moreover, the pessimist is the person who thinks that the optimist might be right. What is precluded in the

horizons of both the optimist and the pessimist, however, is the belief in the possibility of making a difference, that is, in the possibility of politics.

Politics is the ability to debate, question and renew the fundament on which political struggle unfolds, the ability to radically criticise a given order and to fight for a new and better one. Politics necessitates accepting conflict. Post-politics, on the other hand, cannot accept conflict.

Significantly, however, this one-dimensional world is not a peaceful world: the foreclosure of the political merely provokes naked, apolitical violence. Terror, a product not of antagonism but of "listless and indifferent forces", surfaces as the only available form of violence in post-political society (Baudrillard 1993: 76). No wonder terrorism demolished the WTC.

When Baudrillard looked at the WTC years ago, what he saw could be summarized in one word: transparency, or disappearance. Transparency is a flattening process characterized by the disappearance of differences, by the indefinite mutation of social domains (Baudrillard 1990: 7, 50). When everything becomes political, politics disappear; when everything becomes sexual, sex disappears; when everything is social, the social disappears, and so on. In such a society, social change tends to lose its historical dimension, information ceases to be an event, the political is foreclosed in post-politics, and the real implodes into simulation. In short, transparency is the answer to the rhetorical question about why the World Trade Center had *two* towers.

Because this society is a simulacrum, its "hysteria" is the production of the real (Baudrillard 1994: 23). We live in an immaterial, artificial universe, which provokes an unbearable drift towards the "real reality". This hysteria is exemplified, for instance, by the reality TV show *Big Brother* with its tragicomic reversal of panopticism. In contrast to Orwell's Big Brother, the contemporary Big Brother stands for a world in which "anxiety emerges not from being seen but from being forgotten, from the prospect of *not* being seen (Zizek 2001b: 249-51). Transparency, trans-appearance, or disappearance, is the very source of anxiety in contemporary society.

When the social disappears, the disenchantment with life becomes an object of perverse desire, invested in the hope that the real will return when the veil of simulacrum is lifted from everyday existence. Violence emerges in this context as a traumatic intervention of the "real" in this trans-parent un-reality. Violence, or terror, becomes, at least at the level of fantasy, an imaginary reaction to post-politics. And of course this was perfectly visible even before 9/11: the fantasy of a violent reaction to social "unreality" has been a regular theme in Hollywood movies.

II

An example of this is the movie *Fight Club,* which is framed by the fantasy of undoing the social, destroying consumerism, and exploding the American paranoiac fantasy of suburban security. In the final, "romantic" scene the protagonists walk hand in hand, while behind them an orgy of devastation is performed as buildings explode and collapse. With the collapse of the World

Trade Center, *this* fantasy is realised, and violence, once more, returns in the real, transforming the WTC into the symptom of contemporary network society and paralleling the manner in which the Titanic became the symptom of industrial society (Zizek 2002: 15-16).

It is as if on September the 11th the Hollywood fantasy of violence – that is, the image of violence without the real event – coincided with its exact opposite: the unimaginable, sublime event, or the event without an image. Hence the uncanny irritation caused by Stockhausen's infamous depiction of the attack as "the greatest work of art imaginable".

In *Fight Club*, experience is only real when it reaches out, adventures to the extreme and the extraordinary, risking life in the high speed collision. *Fight Club* stands as a testimony to a society in which everyday life is banal and the repetitive is death. In this world, experience is divorced from place and purpose, identity and relation, and is only "authentic" in so far as it mirrors the composition of a fantastic Hollywood film. The "real" is a simulacrum of fantasy. Subjects undergo, but never have, experiences – they live in what Walter Benjamin called a "dream world": a post-political world that lays claim to eternity.

Fight Club's protagonist, Jack, is a mobile individual: he has a career, travels in the space of flows, and fully participates in consumerism. He is constantly on the move, yet his attitude towards his environment is blasé. As a spectator of his own life, he paradoxically lives in inertia in the midst of a mobile network society. However, when he meets his doubleganger, Tyler Durden, everything changes. Tyler Durden is the embodiment of a colourful and dynamic contrast to Jack himself, his alter-ego.

When Tyler asks Jack to hit him as hard as possible, Jack hits him and Tyler returns the favour. Fighting becomes an addiction. They are exhilarated by violence and through fighting they discover the corporeality of their existence.

The most powerful twist in the film is when it becomes obvious that Jack is in fact schizophrenic, that Tyler is a product of his fantasy. Tyler thus materializes Jack's own fantasy. Similarly, terror materializes our own – Hollywood – fantasies. The shock caused by 9/11 did not really originate from the attack itself but from the fact that what was fantasised became real. What is astonishing is that the attack was in a certain sense expected, anticipated and visualised in Hollywood blockbusters (Zizek 2002: 16-7). With the attack, the American paranoiac fantasy of violence returned in the real.

Thus the British comedian Ali G was at his best when he said, in an interview he gave in the US last year, that he crossed the Atlantic "to help the US with some of the problems following 7/11" (Bowcott 2003). Of course, his deliberate confusion of 7-Eleven, the global convenience store chain, with 9/11 was found "tasteless" by most critics. Indeed, "one would think that Ali G was the Salman Rushdie of TV pranksters". Why? Because 9/11 is a sacralized event, elevated to a level above politics, dialogue and humor in a way reminiscent of the Holocaust.

But Ali G was right: the 'international terrorist organizations' are the obscene double of the big multinational corporations – the ultimate global destruction machine, omnipresent but nevertheless with no clear territorial base. Globalisation and terrorism, 7-Eleven and 9/11, share the logic of networking. The "network society" and "terror networks" mirror each other in a

mobile network space. Along the same lines, there seems to be a mimetic relation between the contemporary politics of security as a form of (political) fundamentalism and the religious fundamentalism that it seeks to fight. One should think like Ali G and deliberately confuse the conjugated categories of 7-Eleven and 9/11. In the same way that Tyler is Jack's spectral double, terror is globalization fighting with itself, its own spectral double.

Fight Club wanted to "go back to zero". It said, "the answer is not improvement but destruction, including self-destruction" (Palahniuk 1997: 49). *This* fantasy generated by *Fight Club,* and other Hollywood movies, was realized with the attacks on the WTC. We are tempted to say that terror is a continuation of American movies with other means.

So, once more, it seems that with terror the enemy is also our own fantasy. To be sure, we are not speaking of the terrorism of Bin Laden, which is able to mobilize the masses so effectively, and which is able to produce a "war president" even out of George Bush, but also the terrorism "in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour". It is too easy to be anti-terrorist on the level of the so-called "war against terror" and not even see the terrorist inside ourselves! As Baudrillard recently put it: "what no police could ever guard against is the sort of fascination, of mass appeal, exercised by the terrorist model" (Baudrillard 1993: 76).

III

Now, to clarify our points, we would like to focus on another film, *Independence Day*, which is perhaps *the* film on 9/11. And of course it was made before 9/11. In the film, the earth is attacked

by hostile powers from outer space. The gigantic spaceship approaching the earth is an evil empire inhabited by aliens who move from planet to planet and exploit their resources. They are prepared to annihilate the human race to realise their aim. The attack is initiated in a series of big cities, and the American army fast and resolutely counter-attacks the space ship. However, protected by an electro-magnetic shield, the alien ship turns out to be indestructible. The rescuer is a scientist, David, who discovers a strange signal emanating from the space ship. It turns out to be a timer mechanism. The time to attack comes, and Washington is the target. The residents of the White House are evacuated to an underground military bunker.

It turns out that the bunker contains an outer space research centre, which contains an unidentified flying object that had crashed in an American desert. All of this had, naturally, been top secret before the arrival of the aliens. Meanwhile, David's father-in-law happens to warn him against catching a cold when he sees him sitting on the floor. This – of course – triggers the redeeming idea: virus. David develops a virus that can penetrate the protective shield of the space ships. If *this* idea works, that is, if their protective shield can be destroyed, the aliens can also be attacked with conventional weapons. The plan is to contaminate the aliens' network with the virus. Having no choice, the president accepts the plan and contacts the other nations, which without hesitation "unite" against the enemy.

The film seems to have anticipated the American reaction to September the 11th. Evil alien powers attack the house of God and their actions are totally unexplainable. The film never attributes a depth to the aliens in the form of insight, ability, motives

or emotions. Further, they are invincible: their networked weaponry is infinitely superior to what is available on earth. The only choice is the choice between us and them, Good and Evil. As the sublime incarnation of humanity, the US gathers a world-encompassing alliance for the war against the enemy.

Such a reading, however, is slightly boring and, what is worse, reifying. It is much more interesting to play with the basic assumption of the film: that it is narrated from an American perspective. What if we saw the hostile space ship as a metaphor for a global American empire suffocating the local life forms with consumerism and indifference? Is it such a clean-cut matter to decide what Good and Evil consist of?

In the above description, we deliberately excluded an element of the plot. After the protective shield of the alien ship is penetrated, there emerges an intense battle between American fighter planes and the aliens. Towards the end of the film every American fighter gets shot down, except one. When the last fighter is to fire its missiles, it turns out that the missiles cannot be detonated. Then its pilot chooses to lead the fighter against the target, transforming his plane into a missile and himself into a suicide attacker. What if the 9/11 pilots conceived of their acts as such a heroic gesture whose aim was to destroy the empire of evil? Indeed, it is perfectly possible to say that *Independence Day* condenses the self-conception of the terrorists.

Terror and its adversary mirror each other. We have two networks that confront, mimic and justify each other. We have two camps, each of which claims to be good and to fight evil. And we have two strategies, which dissolves the democratic

habitus in a post-political condition. Thus Bin Laden's construction of "Americans" perfectly mirrors Bush's representation of Al-Qaeda, and the fundamentalist rhetoric of the extermination of evil is what unites the two poles in spite of asymmetries. A mental experiment might be helpful in this context: What if we universalise the right the US claims for itself? What if Israel claimed the same right against the Palestinians, and India did so against Pakistan?

Slavoj Zizek mentions one of Bush's speeches where he refers to a letter written by a seven-year-old girl whose father was a fighter pilot in Afghanistan. In the letter she says that even though she loves her father, she is ready to sacrifice him for his fatherland. The question is how we would react if we saw an Arabic Muslim girl on TV claiming in front of the camera that she will sacrifice her father in the war against America. We need not think too long to realize that the scene would be received as an expression of fundamentalism or a morbid form of propaganda. Yes, Muslim fundamentalists even exploit their own children without hesitation (Zizek 2002: 43). But what about "us" – aren't we even better at that?

The point of such a dialectic reversal is not to make excuses for terrorism. Of course, fundamentalists seek more than to demolish skyscrapers: they are the enemies of freedom of expression, democracy, the right to vote, Jews, homosexuals, women's rights, secularism, dance, and so on (Rushdie 2001). It is, however, also important to insist that the Western tradition is a tradition of democracy and criticism. Rather than undermining democracy in the war against terrorism, we must support it; and rather than refraining from criticising Bush and Blair's inter-

national policies in the name of patriotism, we must criticise them mercilessly.

"Independence", then, could refer to independence in the classical, Kantian, sense: independent thinking. The ultimate catastrophe is the simple and simplifying distinction between good and evil, a rhetoric that basically copies terrorist rhetoric and makes it impossible to think independently. It is in this sense that the dominant paranoid perspective transforms the terrorists into abstract and irrational agents, pushing aside every sociological explanation that refers to social conditions as indirectly supporting terrorism.

But terrorism is basically a mirror for understanding the contemporary post-political condition. Terror and the war against it say something fundamental about our society. The question is this: Are we to be content with a society in which the only radical acts are terrorist acts? Clausewitz wrote that war is the continuation of politics with other means. Terror, then, is the continuation of post-politics with other means (Baudrillard 2002: 34).

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Clouzot's Cruel Crow

Eric Gans

Le corbeau (*The Raven* or *The Crow*) is probably the most controversial film in French history. It was made in 1943, under the German occupation—and for the German-owned production company, Continental Films—by Henri-Georges Clouzot, best known today for his postwar films *Diabolique* and *Le salaire de la peur (The Wages of Fear).* To quote Evelyn Ehrlich's authoritative study of Vichy film, *Cinema of Paradox* (Columbia, 1985), "Of all the crimes committed by the film industry during the occupation, seemingly the most serious was having worked on *Le Corbeau*" (p. 176). Clouzot was banned from film-making after Liberation, at first for life, and was not allowed to work until 1947; Pierre Fresnay and Ginette Leclerc, the film's stars, were briefly imprisoned.

Both the Left (Resistance) and the Right (Vichy) agreed in finding *Le corbeau* demoralizing and "anti-French": unfounded rumors were spread that the film was shown throughout Germany as a demonstration of the decadence of French society. On the contrary, the Germans understandably disliked the film for its theme of anonymous letters; ironically, it was only because it was produced by a German company that it ever got past the censors. As a result, despite its immediate box-office success, *Le corbeau* was pulled from the movie theaters only three weeks after its release; it has led a checkered career ever since. Despite its masterful direction and acting, its powerful characterizations, and the extraordinary density of its social commentary, *Le corbeau* has never achieved the revered status of such films as Renoir's *La grande illusion* or Carné's *Les*

enfants du paradis. Nor has Clouzot ever received his due as the creator of some of the most distinctive and powerful films ever made. The filmmakers and theoreticians of the Nouvelle Vague treated Renoir and Cocteau with reverence and Carné with respect, and reserved a special admiration for Alfred Hitchcock, the subject of a book-length study by Eric Rohmer, longtime editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du cinéma*; Clouzot, although sometimes (in my opinion, mistakenly) called the "French Hitchcock" for his suspense films, was considered at best a skillful hack. The eclipse of his reputation is due in large measure to the enormous influence of the Nouvelle Vague/*Cahiers du cinema* on the French intelligentsia.

Even today, those who praise *Le corbeau* as Clouzot's masterpiece speak of its darkness and cynicism, its jaundiced denial of moral certainty. Yet my impression is quite different. I see it as a film about trust and love, on the one hand, and the harsh but real necessity of moral judgment on the other. No film more forcefully denounces mob persecution and scapegoating, not to speak of the notorious Occupation practice of informing on one's neighbors through anonymous letters. Although anything but a political propaganda piece, *Le corbeau* is an affirmation of humanistic values antithetical to those of the German occupiers and their Vichy collaborators. And in its affirmation of these values, it accepts the necessity, obvious in wartime but rarely faced so honestly, of violent extralegal means, means whose obvious interpretation in 1943—yet no one to my knowledge has ever suggested it—is as an apology for violent acts of resistance.

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Le corbeau is based on a real incident, in which the southern town of Tulle was subjected between 1917 and 1922 to a series of over 1000 anonymous letters, including pornographic drawings, signed *L'oeil du tigre*; the scandalous revelations of these letters provoked several suicides. After a lengthy dictation organized by a Lyon police doctor and graphologist, the handwriting was discovered to be that of one Angèle Laval, an amorously frustrated former civil servant; arrested and tried in 1922, she was given a suspended sentence and lived on for another fifty years. A screenplay inspired by *l'affaire Angèle*, originally entitled *L'oeil du serpent*, was written by Louis Chavance over the period from 1932 to 1937, then reworked with Clouzot in the course of production in 1943.

Le corbeau has many characteristics of a detective film. At the center of the story is a rash of anonymous letters signed (with a drawing) by *le corbeau*, the first of which accuses Dr. Germain (Pierre Fresnay), a physician-obstetrician suspected of being an abortionist because he cares more for the mother's life than that of the child, of illicit relations with Laura (Micheline Francey), the attractive young wife of the old psychiatrist, Vorzet (Pierre Larquey). The letters go on to reveal many secrets and denounce much dishonesty in the *sous-préfecture* of St.-Robin. One brutally informs a young hospital patient that his cancer is incurable, whereupon he cuts his throat with a razor. Germain, perturbed by the accusations, spends a night with Denise (Ginette Leclerc), the sister of his schoolmaster landlord, whose loose morals reflect her need to prove her sexual attractiveness notwithstanding a severe limp. Meanwhile, suspicions about the letters solidify around Marie Corbin, Laura Vorzet's unattractive sister who is a nurse at the hospital. Clouzot powerfully exploits the techniques of German expressionism to film Marie's

flight from the angry crowd through the empty crooked streets to her room, her black nurse's robe fluttering like a crow's wings in the wind; the two men who take Marie away have an unmistakable air of the Gestapo. But another letter floats down from the rafters of the church after Marie is jailed, demonstrating her innocence; the *corbeau* is still at large.

The dictation, supervised by Vorzet, although inconclusive, has thrown some suspicion on Denise. Shortly after, Germain catches her writing him a *corbeau* letter to announce that she bears his child, and immediately accuses her of having written the others. But in the film's most moving scene (and its only use of close-ups), Denise tells Germain to look into her tearful eyes to witness the truth that she is not *le corbeau*. Germain cannot refuse the truth; he and Denise decide to keep their child—and we assume they will marry and leave St.-Robin together.

Finally, it comes out that the first letter was written by Laura herself in an effort to seduce Germain; the others, she claims, were dictated to her by her husband. Insisting that Laura is insane, Vorzet gets Germain to sign internment papers, and Laura is carted off to a mental hospital in another scene reminiscent of a Gestapo abduction. But when Germain, on Denise's suggestion, returns to Vorzet's house to discover the truth, he finds Vorzet dead at his desk, bleeding onto a final, unfinished *corbeau* letter; the hospital suicide's mother, whom we see leaving the house in the final sequence, has cut his throat with her son's razor. Laura was right; Vorzet was the *Corbeau*.

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To read most descriptions of this film, one would never know that the story ends with, on the one hand, the punishment of those guilty of sending the letters, and on the other, the affirmation of life and love through the child awaited by the principals. Germain declares to Denise that he needs this child, that one should not refuse the future—and opens his window to hear children playing in the schoolyard, in evident counterpoint to his act of closing it to shut out their noise in the couple's first scene in the film.

Our situation as Clouzot's spectators is judiciously balanced. With respect to the satiric elements of the film—the mutual blackmail of the chief doctor and the bursar, the hypocritical storekeeper who abandons Germain for another doctor because of the letters, the postmaster taking for himself a *corbeau* letter addressed to his wife—we stand back ironically. But as regards the plot's driving enigma—discovering the author of the letters—we are put in the same position as the other characters, particularly Germain, and are induced to jump to the same conclusions, suspecting first Marie Corbin, then Denise, never Vorzet. Rather than being terrorized along with the victim, as in a *film noir,* or repelled by the mob, as in Lang's *Fury* or Duvivier's postwar *Panique*, we become part of the persecuting crowd. Yet there is no final lynching to pin on us. Like the good doctor, we learn that those we suspected were innocent. The guilty party, whom we presumably have not suspected, is indeed punished, but not by "us"; the mother, half-hidden by a veil, dons in the film's last shot the black plumage of the Crow.

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The best-known scene in the film, which provides the key to its overall message, is also the most misunderstood. Vorzet confronts Germain in a schoolroom at night. Germain affirms his moral reprobation for the *corbeau* and declares his certitude in knowing right from wrong. Vorzet, accusing Germain of being just as contaminated by the letters as the rest of St.-Robin, counters with a little demonstration. The two doctors stand in front of a globe; the room is lit by a single naked bulb hanging from the ceiling. Vorzet pushes the light fixture so that it swings back and forth, casting its moving shadow on the globe (on which Europe is visible) as he claims that the boundary between good and evil is similarly unstable. When Germain tries to grab the bulb to stop its swinging, he burns his fingers, whereupon Vorzet announces that his demonstration is conclusive: moral truth cannot be grasped by mere mortals.

This scene is inevitably cited by critics, and even by Clouzot himself in interviews, as a statement of the film's message about life in general and collaboration in particular: nothing is black or white, wholly good or evil, we are all sinners and none of us has the right to judge his fellow man—including those who make films under the Occupation for German production companies. Thus Ehrlich:

> The theme of the film is stated quite explicitly in a scene between Vorzet and Germain. . . . [description of the lamp-swinging scene] The moral ambiguity which Vorzet verbalizes in this scene is certainly Clouzot's (p. 185).

But the critics inevitably pass over the contrasting scene that follows. Vorzet departs, leaving Germain in the room. As the lamp continues to swing, Clouzot signals the passage of time by dissolving in a superimposed image of the lamp having come to rest. We tilt down to see Germain in the morning, asleep with his head on the teacher's desk, having clearly spent the night in the class-

room. He is awakened by the arrival of the suicide's mother, who tells him she is now working as a cleaning-lady at the school, ominously shows him her son's razor, and informs him that she has a good idea of the identity of the *corbeau* but is waiting to be absolutely sure before taking action. Germain expresses shock, but she is unmoved.

There is such a thing as objective symbolism. The matching of the still lamp with the moving lamp reflects not only the passage of time but the transition from a world of relativism associated with Vorzet to a world of moral certitude exemplified by the mother. Germain seems to side with Vorzet, and in his subsequent remarks about the *corbeau* and even about the priority of the mother's life over the child's he takes a more measured position than previously. But when the film ends with Germain opening the window curtain to show the mother's departure down the crooked street as Vorzet's blood stains the last letter of the *corbeau*, we can hardly assert that the film itself is on Vorzet's side, or even Germain's. On the contrary, it shows us that the scourge of the *corbeau* could be lifted only by the mother's brutal act, and that more delicate souls like Germain in fact depend upon such acts to maintain society's moral order. If we situate the film within the ethical context defined by the German occupation of France, then just as Vorzet's ambivalence relativizes the guilt of collaboration, the mother's act cannot but recall the deeds of the Resistance.

An important secondary element in *Le corbeau* is the pervasive undercurrent of sexual tension, visible in Laura's frustration with her aging husband, Marie Corbin's spinsterish bitterness, Denise's promiscuity, and most interestingly of all, in the sexual awakening of pubescent fourteen-year-old Rolande, Denise's niece, whom one

of the letters accuses Germain of seeking to make his mistress. In the pivotal scene with the swinging lamp, Vorzet even claims that Germain would sleep with Rolande if she seduced him. But if this suggestion of sexual disorder reflects the paranoid world of the *corbeau*, in Rolande's last appearance on screen we see her smiling as she uses her nascent feminine wisdom to reassure Denise that Germain will not leave town without her. In the same way as human truth and justice put an end to the social crisis fomented by the letters, the lovers' mature relationship takes over the sexual terrain from Rolande's adolescent longings, as well as from Denise's aimless licentiousness and from Laura's illicit desire for Germain that created the *corbeau* in the first place.

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The moral ambiguity that critics see in *Le corbeau* is not absent, but neither is it the film's ultimate message. We are offered visions of both Germain's broadened humanity and the mother's vengeful resolve. The first is more congenial and hopeful, and holds the future promise of a better world, but it relies on the second to put an end to the time of hatred and despair. Vorzet, played to perfection by Pierre Larquey in the supreme acting achievement of a long career, is a highly seductive character whose "demonstration" offers us the noble wisdom of *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. Yet as we should have learned from our earlier readiness to participate in the townsfolk's condemnation of the disagreeable Marie Corbin, *séduction n'est pas raison*. The truth is not to be found in mere appearances, the film tells us, but in Denise's eyes—and in the mother's razor.

The idea of "war against terror" and the exhibition of tortured bodies

Bodil Marie Thomsen

In Jean-Luc Godard's television series *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1A & 1B, 1988), he criticizes the desire for fictional cinema and American entertainment in the 20th century. He points out that the media not only lost its innocence due to the two World Wars but also lost significant artistic potential in the presentation of reality because of the dominance of Hollywood cinema. In this accusation reverberates Godard's avant-garde ambition to intertwine fictional stories with real history. Theodor W. Adorno's question as to how poetry and art based upon well-known topoi of (European) aesthetics and philosophy could be made after Auschwitz also seems to play a role for Godard. The obvious answer for many artists, including Godard, has been to fight oblivion in recalling the terror of the war and its aftermath: the mass societies of the Western world.

Godard considers Hollywood's fabrication of myths and fictional stories to have ruined the possibility for cinematically developing the documentation of reality. His accusation has become strangely contemporary in our confrontation with the images of torture and humiliation from the Abu Ghraib prison. Today, documentaries, blogs and moblogs on every topic imaginable are sent and seen everywhere through the global Web or television distribution. The real-time images of today raise a somewhat different question in regard to the interrogations of Godard and Adorno, which belong more or less to the tradition of negative dialectics. The question concerning contemporary art and media might be: Could

any image or text (fictional or documentary, artistic in its ambition or not) of torture and terror keep us from forgetting? This is the question I wish to address here by relating it to various contemporary debates in the aftermath of the war and terror in Iraq.

Methods of torture, methods of reporting

It's easy to agree that torture is often due to a neglect of human respect. Whenever someone is identified as a Jew, a Muslim, a Negro, a woman and so forth, individual traits can be disposed of in the name of a collective grouping of people. An individual in a group can be treated as a number or nailed to certain political, religious or other opinions. We have often seen this stripping of individuality in the killing of numbers – what comes to mind first is of course the Jews in World War II.

Recently, new material concerning the stripping of individuality in Iraq has been published. Mark Danner's book *Torture and Truth* (November 2004) provides evidence for the argument that the political decision to take action in a »war on terror« made in Washington D.C. immediately after 9-11 led directly to the methods of interrogation and torture of prisoners carried out in Afghanistan, Guantánamo and Iraq. Various websites bear evidence that those methods of torture were not random and ›invented‹ by accident in this action against terror. On the contrary, they have been practiced in American prisons for years (see Anne-Marie Cusac: "Abu Ghraib, USA"). The opposition over the last years towards another war fought on behalf of American democracy launched a growing awareness in America that being economically superior does not necessarily imply superiority in democratic skills. In fact, the reality of gaining power over one of the world's biggest oil fields is beginning to appear behind the poor but efficient rhetorical excuses for

attack (i.e., the notorious statement about the existence of "weapons of mass destruction").

While American soldiers are still stationed in Iraq and are being sent home in coffins one by one, the debate on the role of the press in the war is slowly growing. Michael Massing's book *Now They Tell Us*, on the lack of first-hand knowledge and will to bring evidence of what was really going on behind the lines in the whole "war on terror" is striking reading. Journalists who neither spoke nor read Arabic were installed in luxury hotels and mainly got their news from the American or British military press. As potential targets they had to be protected by Marines if they tried to explore the area on their own. Al-jazeera and the European and Arabic-speaking press with years of insight into Middle Eastern politics got much more material about the war along with different versions of what happened on a day-to-day basis. The American press operated independently. Massing offers an explanation for this on June 30, 2004:

> In the current climate, of course, any use of Arab or European material – no matter how thoroughly edited and checked – could elicit charges of liberalism and anti-Americanism. The big question is: have US news organizations achieved the necessary independence and nerve to withstand it? (Massing: 90)

Reading the collections of documents by Massing and Danner while living in Seattle (spring 2005) almost a year after the war was declared over but with no peace in Iraq, I still found the "human interest" stories on losses within local communities and the tales of soldiers being heroes fighting for their country far more dominating in the news media than real stories and documents of struggles and daily life 'over there'. War in Iraq seems so far away in an American everydayness.

Being a Dane with the sitting government so closely allied with President Bush in war as well as in politics, I do not feel comfortable when witnessing the Danish press coverage of the events in Iraq. Although Denmark is closer to Iraq, the television coverage of what is going on in the White House and at no. 10 Downing Street has been just as important as bringing news from Iraq. The stories told to the American public are imbedded in national interests, and so are many of the stories told in Denmark. And although the Danish casualties are on a much smaller scale, the stories are similar. The real stories from the battlefield and from the work of the UN soldiers are filtered through a selection layered with such ideas as what it means to be a good soldier. For that reason the raw quality of the Abu Ghraib images had a huge impact in the press in the spring 2004. But it had no real impact on the re-elections of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in Denmark and President Bush in the U.S. in November 2004. And the question is indeed whether the images and stories of the media have any provable impact on the minds of people in society. Michael Schudson, Professor of Communications and Sociology at the University of California – San Diego, considers that only the economic reality can make people change their minds (cf. DR 2 News, August 23, 2005). One might add that other forces such as sudden death or other strokes of the Real in life might also make people change their minds.

The war on the meaning of words

If this is true it's easier to understand the ongoing struggle over the meaning of words in today's politics. In a speech entitled "Illegal but legitimate – A Dubious Doctrine for the Times" at the University of Washington on April 20 2005, Noam Chomsky referred to the American bombing of Kosovo in March 1999 determined to be "illegal but legitimate" by an UN investigation after the deed. The phrase sanctioned the attack. This is also the case in Iraq where, according to Chomsky, the Bush-Blair invasion referred to "weapons of mass destruction" without evidence, hoping to produce evidence after the fact. When no evidence was found the whole rhetorical emphasis had to be put on the idea of "bringing democracy to the people" – as if this was something you could actually bring to people, like the chewing gum and nylon stockings the American troops brought to Europe in 1945.

It was Chomsky's point that the rulers of this war on Iraq – namely, the strategic and economic interests in the oil fields – declare democracy as good as long as it comes in a top-down form and is consistent with those interests. He ended by saying, "the policy is functional for the rulers, not the people," meaning 1) the majority of Americans do not agree with this policy and 2) American people cannot use their democratic power to get rid of the person who declared war – as they actually did in Spain. Chomsky then summed up his statement by referring to Kosovo, where the allied forces "had to bomb in order to maintain credibility". Maintaining the credibility and the rhetoric of leaders in order to secure the economic power of the opulent minority is, according to Chomsky, actually more important than the ultimate doom: the obliteration of the human race, an ecological catastrophe and so on. And although he does not blame the media, he actually says that democ-

racy does not really function in the U.S.; only economic arguments rule.

Another commentator on the political situation right now, Thomas Franck, held the media responsible. The rhetorical skills of the Republicans up to the November election in 2004 made all the difference (Seattle television channel, May 2005). It was significant, he said, to notice how Democrats' and leftists' viewpoints were always pinned down as "elitist" by the right-wing press. This is worth noticing for two reasons: 1) The real elite covers its trail by referring to topics every democratic soul can agree upon (like bringing democracy to Iraq) and refers to the democrats as the cultural or intellectual elite, who are bothered by words rather than real actions, real people, real wars. 2) The exact same rhetoric was used up to and after the Danish election in November 2004, where intellectuals and journalists were scolded for being elitist in their ambition to relate to people's cultural values – so-called "cultural radicalism". At the same time, the elitist ambition to create a canon of "what literature to read" – a bluffer's guide to Danish literary classics – was promoted by the same right-wing minister of culture, Brian Mikkelsen.

The actual war is in other words a war on the meaning of words, established by long-term democratic structures beginning to fade as a result of a new global world order where international corporations rule. We are witnessing the performative strength of the very rich classes in the world trying to enhance their power. More than ever we need journalistic ethics and the ability to move beyond the political and rhetorical spin in order to understand the new, globalized world.

The lack of reliability of the American press during the war in Iraq really had an influence on the world press, since the news

feeding chain was disrupted. When journalists do not meet the standard of a free democratic press, we all become hostages. As explained, the journalists in Iraq were restrained, but that does not explain the lack of communication between journalists of the Western world – or does it? According to Massing, the lack of real communication is not just the nightmare of prisoners but of journalists as well. He cites the correspondent Pamela Constable's report on a night's experience of attacks from "helicopter gunships, high-flying bombers, and insurgent mortar rounds" in a deserted factory sheltering seven journalists and a Marine battalion:

> I strained to listen for signs of humanity in the darkened city. I imagined holocaust – city blocks in flames, families running and screaming. But the only sounds were the baying of frightened dogs and the indecipherable chanting of muezzins, filling the air with a soft cacophony of Koranic verse (Massing: 79-80).

What she was really hearing was quite different, writes Massing, according to a report from one of Al-Jazeera's independent journalistic eyewitnesses inside the city:

> [T]he US bombings were causing hundreds of civilian casualties plus extensive physical destruction. As for what Constable took to be the Koranic chantings of the muezzins, Arabic speakers could tell that these were actually urgent appeals for ambulances and calls on the local population to rise up and fight the Americans (Massing 80-81).

Massing ends this story by concluding, "So while Arab viewers were getting independent (if somewhat sensationalized) reports from the field, Americans were getting their news filtered through the Marines" (Massing: 81). You could also add – along the lines of Godard's argument – that Pamela Constable's report is in fact an imagined and fictionalized story that has nothing to do with what really happened. It seems to me that this might be the real challenge

to news media journalists today (as it was and remains to the cinema). The battle of the meaning of words like "democracy" or "elitist" is very central to the development of real wars, real terror. If everything that really happens is almost always filtered through a fictional structure in order to give it a meaning for everyone to understand, we lose our ability to wonder. The mere rhetorical trick of indicating that a (clean) "war against (unclean) terror" can take place in a world of real bodies should bother any television viewer – but it is a very good example of how fiction takes over reality even before the fact (CNN had this ›banner‹ on the screen for months: right after 9/11 and even before the attack on Afghanistan).

I am convinced that the reason why the real-time showing of the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11 and the uncensored pictures of Abu Ghraib make such a strong impression is that they were NOT fictionalized. The editing room and military censorship were momentarily surpassed. In both cases we – the viewers – were forced to see with our own eyes, to be shocked, and to wonder about what was actually shown on the screen. Journalists of today have got competition from all the professional spin in politics and for that reason they must try more than ever to avoid fiction – i.e., they must document what they see and hesitate to interpret right away. They must give the viewers time for reflection, time for sensing, time to be affected.

The war as manifested in the torture of bodies

The fights that Pamela Constable was trying to report took place in early April 2004. During the same month the journalist Seymour M. Hersh obtained a fifty-three-page report on torture in Abu Ghraib, written by Major General Antonio M. Taguba. This report very clearly states the nature of the torture, and Hersch makes an inven-

tory of it in his already famous book, *Chain of Command. The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*:

> Breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees; pouring cold water on naked detainees; beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair; threatening male detainees with rape; allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell; sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick, and using military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting a detainee (Hersh: 22).

The list nevertheless did not report that this was going on at night – often many nights in a row. In the daytime detainees were treated with dignity, getting back their clothes and mattresses. Reading the fear and terror of this treatment in the sworn statements from the prisoners in Danner's *Torture and Truth* gives a nightmarish impression that is altogether different from Pamela Constable's account. This impression comes from the words chosen to describe what the prisoners witnessed done to their own bodies and the bodies of their fellow prisoners. In the daytime they were treated as if the night's torture never happened. And this was – to me – one of the most terrifying experiences I had reading those documents. In giving their statements, many former prisoners underline that *this is the truth*, that *this actually happened*, giving their oath in the name of Allah. Many had counted the number of nights and the number of guards, and some of them even refer to the photographic negatives, since they remember that pictures were taken. They also express a kind of relief at finally being able to talk about what happened during the night shifts.

Reporters working with witnesses commonly experience victims willing to speak of all the horrors they have experienced even though they know that their situation will not improve by speaking

to a journalist. To the victim it is a relief to finally be able to tell the truth from the perspective of the individual experience. Witnessing is, as it were, speaking from outside society and very often from outside "normality". By speaking the truth as a witness they are trying to find a voice for what happened, and this actually means making the huge and almost always impossible demand that society widen its borders to what is considered normal and what can be expressed. A victim has very often lost the sense of being someone. Some have even temporarily lost the ability to speak. But they all have a clear idea of somehow being dangerous to the myths of their society.

What happened here were the offences of seeing another man naked, of being forced to eat during Ramadan, of heterosexuals being exposed as homosexuals, of being raped, and so forth. On top of this, it is a disgrace to the individual prisoner to have this photographically documented with the help of raw neon light, the images now distributed on the World Wide Web for everyone to see in the future. The pictures cannot be erased. In fact, Hersh reports there is evidence that people wished to commit suicide or insisted on being killed after release, in compliance with their code of honor: "Innocent lives will be lost [so] their families can survive the shame" (Hersh: 44).

As reported by Hersh, the loss of dignity was central to a study of Arab culture and psychology entitled *The Arab Mind* (1973), by Raphael Pitai, who died long before the war (in 1996). According to this analysis, the connection between power, humiliation, and sexual display is obvious. Hersh quotes Pitai:

> "The segregation of the sexes, the veiling of the women…and all the other minute rules that govern and restrict contact between men and women, have the effect of making sex a prime mental preoccupation in the Arab world," Patai wrote. Homosexual activity, "or any indication of homosexual leanings, as with all other expressions of

> sexuality, is never given any publicity. These are private affairs and remain in private" (Hersh: 39).

This knowledge was of course used in the torture, as this book and its notion – "that Arabs only understood force and […], that the biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation", according to Hersh – was well known and quoted amongst Washington Conservatives before the invasion. According to a government consultant who is one of Hersh's informants, "the purpose of the photographs was to create an army of informants, people you could insert back in the population" (Hersh: 39). The fear of being exposed was thought to motivate information gathering in the U.S. forces. And this is the actual story behind the official military story of randomly acting and brutal guards from the Virginia countryside. This strategy was indeed a result of manipulative brains, based on an American book on Arab culture from 1973, rather than on experience with Arab people of today. This explains how an American soldier could reduce an Arab prisoner to an animal amongst other animals – becoming one himself in this deed and maybe going to prison for it, ridding the military system of suspicion by this very trial.

Images of reality

Massing wonders why the close-up images of war in Baghdad, the injuries of real bodies, the screaming and so forth, were not presented by American journalists. Apart from the fact that journalists risked taking a politically dangerous stand for themselves and their paper, Massing suggests there might be more to it:

> American movies feature scenes of people being blown up and gunned down; American TV programs show women being slashed and men being shot in the face. But television executives believe that when it comes to real war, Americans cannot bear to see bullet-ridden bodies and headless corpses. If they were shown, moreover, the effect might be to weaken support for the war. (Massing: 23)

Massing does not comment further on this, but in my opinion this is one of the main keys to understanding this fear of real bodies, real tears, real flesh, real wounds and terror. Godard – in the above-mentioned series – also just touches upon the similarity between Hollywood's (symbolic) control and the American (real) military control over the world, criticizing how the Hollywood storyline is held straight in praising happy endings, romantic solutions to cover up for pain, and so on.

As regards the somewhat altered world of today – where the web distributes day-to-day blog and moblog diaries, where fictionalized self-portraits and real personal traumas appear side by side with no indication of the truth level of what is communicated – I want to stress just one level of the (unintended) meaning of the Abu Ghraib photographs.[1] The Abu Ghraib documentaries were clearly produced in order to document some sinister activities. Whether these documented activities were produced on behalf of the military command or as part of a well-known method to break down the resistance of the detainees (as documented by Anne-Marie Cusac) is still uncertain. It is unlikely, though, that the images were produced only on behalf of a few minds gone astray to document war actions (the war trophy theory).

What strikes me is that these images are poorly produced fictional settings. It is rather noteworthy that the violent or sexual activities are ambiguous in most of the images. We clearly see bodies in different states of humiliation, which is what we (as relatives or friends of the prisoners) are meant to see. The images were produced for the purpose of someone to witness the act, which might

[1] In an essay written in Danish entitled "Real-time interface – om tidslig simultanitet, rumlig transmission og haptiske billeder" (Aarhus 2005 (in press)), I explore the Abu Ghraib photos from the perspective of real-time transmission.

also explain the blindfolding of the prisoners (apart from creating instant fear). The photos are indeed part of the act of terror. Putting prisoners in humiliating situations (real or fictional) supports the above-mentioned reports cited by Hersh: "the purpose of the photographs was to create an army of informants, people you could insert back in the population" (Hersh: 39).

The photographs were only meant to be used to infiltrate the Iraqi opposition. But although the target recipient of those photographs and the TV documentary of a humiliated Saddam Hussein were different, their common fictional ambition was stultification. Somehow – it seems to me – they did not succeed, since we do not believe in their fictions. The images of Saddam Hussein's tongue being examined were too exultant, too triumphant. Transmitted through the non-controlled media of the web, the dilettante setting of the images from Abu Ghraib were much more convincing in attributing reality to the scene. These settings, meant to humiliate Muslims, did indeed function as a boomerang. The setting of the scenes emphasized the ›reality effect‹ of the images. We – the viewers throughout the world – were really puzzled as to what we saw. We were and remained shocked and bewildered by the Abu Ghraib photographs, which are just as indelible as the sight of two towers collapsing real-time in the New York skyline. But again: this was not enough to impede the re-election of George Bush.

Finally, I shall provide my answer to the question raised at the beginning of this article: No image of or text on torture and terror can keep us from forgetting, but some images and texts witnessing reality (intended or not) can make us feel and sense a connection to the realities of this world. The few documentary images from World War II concentration camps can indeed touch us, as well as the few images from the bombing of Hiroshima. This sense of the real can

certainly be produced on a fictional level in new digital media, but our push for reality cannot be disputed today. Godard's version is as follows:

> It took nearly 50 years of darkness for men of dark minds to burn the imaginary to warm up reality. Now reality takes its revenge and demands real tears and real blood. (*Histoire(s) du cinema* 1A, 1988).

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Terrorism, Technology and Translation

Finn Olesen

> *We are never confronted with science, technology and society, but with a gamut of weaker and stronger associations; thus understanding what facts and machines are is the same task as understanding who the people are.*
>
> Bruno Latour

Introduction

This paper is concerned with an apparent paradox: To fight terrorism we maintain and solidify a life in terror. In recent years, not least after the September 11 attack in New York, the fight against terrorism has led to unprecedented steps in countering whatever possible action internationally operating terrorists may take. New national and international taskforces are set up; military forces are developing new means of intelligence, surveillance and combat; laws are enforced to allow a new level of scrutinizing and interrogating citizens; particular countries and ethnic groups are paid extraordinary attention based on terror profiles; the transport infrastructures have introduced new security measures; new patterns of behaviour have developed in everyday life, e.g. keeping an eye out for dubious bags or persons.

A statistical survey made in mid-September 2005 shows that 84% of all Danes are affected by terrorism, either in the way they behave in public spaces or in their thinking about everyday life situations. (Behrendtsen 2005). All this, to me, seems to keep us in the grips of a state of terror. Fear, anxiety and watchfulness are thus nurtured through our countermeasures against terrorism. If the initial paradox is correct, we may then involuntarily be teaming up

with terrorists in achieving the intended state of terror, and consequently providing the attention they desire.

In this paper I will reflect on how terror can be seen, not just as a mental state in the minds of citizens, but also as a vast network of relations between people, technologies, laws, facts, organisations, and symbols. In order to discuss these interrelated issues, I will unleash the terms 'terrorism' and 'technology'. Both are somehow closely tied to contemporary systems of signification, where the former is narrowed down to signify particular forms of terrorism, whereas the application of the latter seems to produce or to sustain terror. Let me begin by discussing the term ‘terrorism’ formally and historically.

The Methods of Terror

One all-embracing definition of terrorism, which seems generally applied, is:

> The systematic use of coercive intimidation usually to service political ends. It is used to create and exploit a climate of fear among a wider target group than the immediate victims of the violence, and to publicize a cause, as well as to coerce a target into acceding to the terrorists' aims (*Modern Thoughts*, p. 851).

According to this definition, terrorism is neither an ideology nor a movement, *terrorism is a method*. Below I will pursue that premise further.

Typical kinds of terrorism are bombings, shooting attacks and assassinations, hostage-taking and kidnapping, and hijacking. It is often feared that nuclear, chemical or bacteriological weapons may be used in terror-acts, but so far few examples are found (Hussein's regime used chemical weapons against the Iraqi Kurds; in Tokyo the

Aum Shinrikyo doomsday cult used the chemical substance sarin in the subway).

It is also important to distinguish between *state* and *factional terrorism*. State terrorism, like Turkey's suppression of Kurds, or Iranian suppression of non-Shiite groups, has been and is generally more lethal than factional terrorism. Often, state terrorism is an antecedent to the latter. Factional terrorism might thus be developed and directed against a state using terrorism to fight its opposition. Such fights may be cases of *internal terrorism* as opposed to *international terrorism* spreading across national borders. Today, terrorism is generally international, though, with terror groups looking abroad for weapons, supporters and shelter in friendly states. At the level of state terrorism there is also the methodic terror created by states against other states, most notoriously by the USA and USSR in the post World War II period, during the Cold War, where the *terror-balance* became a meaningful expression of the delicate balancing of nuclear powers, and the general climate of terror-effected behaviour.

Today, most acts of terrorism have the killing of innocent civilians as a basic feature. This sets it apart from *sabotage*, which is defined in a Danish dictionary as: 'The destruction of things, buildings, means of transport, goods and machines, to harm a political or economical rival." The word is derived from the French 'sabot' meaning 'wooden clogs', and sabotage initially meant 'destroying something by stamping ones wooden clogs'. Sabotage may of course lead to the killing of innocent civilians by accident, e.g. in an act of arson, but that does not undermine the distinction between terrorism and sabotage. Although the World Trade Center and other buildings were destroyed in the attack, and American finance was paralyzed, it has not been seen as a case of sabotage

executed by saboteurs. Rather, it was a case of terrorism intended to spread horror and panic in the minds of large numbers of people.

'Terrorism' is thus an ambiguous term, often defined by the parties in a conflict to characterize their opponent, subsequently creating an Us-Them opposition, where We are defined by not being like Them, i.e. not engaging in terrible, unjustified deeds as they do. (Foucault 1988). While we now consider it a common feature of terrorism to hit civilians, that has not always been a distinct feature of terrorism.

If one looks at its historical roots the term 'terrorism' has been used since the French revolution. In the years 1793-94 Robespierre's government, the 'régime de la terreur', ruled in France, using terror, including mass executions, to maintain the ends of the revolution, that is, modern democracy! Terror was then an instrument to create a revolutionary state. (Nauntofte 2002; Pinkowsky 2003). In the early 20th Century anarchists would use terrorism to fight governments, killing several heads of state. When the Serb Gavrillo Princip shot the Austrian-Hungarian prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, his act was characterized as terrorism although his action was directed against a specific person and not innocent civilians. Princip was seen as a terrorist because he wanted to change society through political violence. In the years following World War II a different kind of terrorism materialized around the world in independence movements fighting their colonial masters. Various nationalist movements applied terrorism as a method in their struggles to obtain this end and to become independent states, e.g. Israel, Kenya and Algeria. Usually, the terrorists went for military, structural or symbolic goals, and civilians were not a direct target of such actions. This began to change in the 1960s and 1970s with the emergence of a new political kind of terrorism, e.g. Rote Armee Fraktion, RAF, in

West Germany, and Action Direct in France. Their ends were nationally defined, e.g. to turn a government against the Vietnam war, or to force it to chose communism over capitalism, not least in light of the cold war. In Italy the Brigate Rosse kidnapped the leader of the Christian Democrats, Aldo Moro, and ended up killing him, because the Italian government did not meet the demands made by the group. A Palestinian group used terrorism in the hostage-taking at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. Here, innocent civilian lives were included in the use of terror, with Israeli athletes being killed, or threatened with death, if the hostage-takers' demands were not met.

In the following years, with the concurrent development of international media coverage and technologies to support police cooperation, the nationalistic focus in terrorist groups was gradually taken over by international ends and international cooperation nested in terror-networks. (Pinkowsky 2003). At this time, any one-dimensional picture of terrorism must be rejected. In 1968, 11 international terror groups were identified, and ten years later there were 55 such groups. (Hoffman 1999). In recent years we have seen e.g. an actor of terror over and in the Scottish town, Lockerbie, where a Pan-Am airplane exploded and crashed in 1988. Two Libyans were eventually pointed out as the terrorists, and with them a still unclear link to the Libyan government; the spreading of sarin by a cult group in the Tokyo Subway in 1995, mentioned above, was again a different kind of terrorist act with no political motive; and yet another kind was the act of terror in the Northern Irish town of Omagh, where a car-bomb exploded in 1998 during a carnival. A radical group, the Real IRA, was suspected of this act, which amongst other things led to the first condemnation of such acts from a Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams.

Of course, September 11 has added a whole new array of meanings to terrorism. The attack was planned and directed by religious fundamentalists, and that helped to produce a strong and easily followed polarization between Us and Them. The terrorists attacked the very symbols of American values, capitalism and military super power, and they killed innocent civilians. The attackers' clear background in Islamic fundamentalism has helped solidify a strong, contemporary conception of terrorism, as a fanatic fight against our world order and religious beliefs, motivated by their – primitive – world views and dogmatic religious beliefs.

Following this, I suggest that we see any dominant definition of terrorism as a *figuration* that includes humans, institutions, artifacts, facts, organisations, symbols, ideologies, etc. To appreciate the richness of this conception, let me say a few words about its origin in the work of the American social scientist Donna Haraway.

Donna Haraway has demonstrated the merits of trying to dissolve absolute ontological boundaries between material and symbolic dimensions of socio-technical life and practices. She has identified figures and figurations as explicit expressions of "... the tropic quality of all material-semiotic processes, especially in technoscience" (Haraway 1997, p 11). By that she wishes to point out that a *figuration* is not just a figurative ornamentation of literal speech. Neither are pictorial utterances 'just' images or symbolic expressions of literal meaning. Rather, we live with and through such figurations. Figurations are *performative images* that one may dwell in, and there are many such figurations (Ibid.; Lykke, Markussen & Olesen 2003). In Haraway's use of images, literal and figurative modes are always intertwined (Bartsch et al. 2001). It entails that rhetorical practices are also in effect political practices.

At present, it seems that the master definition of terrorism is *global terrrorism.* This figuration has solidified around a *list*, made by USA after the September 11 attack in 2001, of all their enemies including all organisations that participate in international terrorism. (Nauntofte 2002, p. 86f). To talk about global terrorism brings to life a number of figurations that are embodied and thus able to perform socio-technical work as such on top of human, verbal practice. For instance, *the axis of evil*, which very effectively, and instantly positioned North-Korea, Iran and Iraq as our most dreaded enemies. *Osama Bin Laden* may also be seen as a figuration. We are not sure that the actual person is still alive, but the figuration is doing things in the world in symbolic, political and military contexts. In a rare video with Osama Bin Laden after the September 11 terror attack, he was seen in conversation with other Al-Qaida members. (Fisk 2005) He talks about their expectations during the planning of the action: "Our hope was to destroy 3 to 4 floors" of the Twin Towers. The scale of the actual destruction, and the massive international reactions, changed the figuration of Osama Bin Laden from a dangerous terror leader to the most evil and wanted man on earth. Anti-terror programmes are fighting Bin Laden, he serves as symbol for Muslim anti-American movements and recruitment, etc.

To be included on the list of global terrorists is obviously bad, but it is equally bad to be excluded from having *access* to the list, for instance, to be able to suggest different views about international and national terrorism.

Countries like Israel and Russia have demonstrated that access to the list makes a difference as to what counts as international and national issues. The Israeli government wanted Hamas and Islamic Jihad put on the list. These organisations were not there in the first edition, because US found the Palestinian problem to be a national

matter. But the organisations were added to the revised list after Israeli pressure. The result has been that Hamas and Islamic Jihad are also weaved into the mesh of global terrorism. (Nauntofte 2002, p. 86ff)

Let me turn to 'technology', to discuss that term as well. The discussion will use an article written in a NATO context as its point of departure. Here it seems evident that a specific, modernist concept of human-technology relations is at play, sustaining the paradoxical situation suggested in the introduction, that the fight against terrorism maintains a state of terror. Narrow conceptions of technology may thus stop us from seeing the work of socio-technical systems to uphold terror in everyday life.

Combating Terrorism Through Technology

In a web-based newsletter, NATO News from Autumn 2004, some of the recent military leanings in the fight against international terrorism are sketched out in an article by Marshall Billingslea, who is Assistant Secretary General of NATO's Defence Investment Division, and Chairman of NATO's CNAD and the NC3 Board. The title of the article is: 'Combating terrorism through technology.' (Billingslea 2004). The first section sets the scene for NATO actions:

> The destructive capacity of terrorist groups is growing steadily as terrorists prove themselves adept at using modern technology for their own ends. NATO allies are working together to develop new and improved technologies to combat this increasingly sophisticated threat.

The reader is informed that at a recent NATO summit meeting in Istanbul, 2004, the leaders endorsed a 'Programme of Work for Defence against Terrorism'. The programme was put forward by NATO's National Armament Directors, who meet twice annually in

a group called Conference of National Armament Directors, CNAD. The aim of the programme is to promote national expertise and research programmes to create new and improved technology in the fight against terrorism. Primarily the programme aims at facilitating systems that will help to prevent particular kinds of terror attacks in the future; to supply the military with new and sophisticated technologies to trace and prevent terrorism; and to track down terrorists. More explicitly, the initiative is directed toward improving the capability of NATO's military systems in particular problem domains: to prevent terrorist bombs from exploding or doing harm; to airdrop special operations forces with precision; to protect airplanes and helicopters against missile attack; to protect harbours and ships against explosives carried by speedboats or underwater divers; to improve protection against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons; to implement intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition of terrorists; and to combat mortar attacks.

To make the argument about an insufficient view on human-technology relations in the NATO initiative, let me take a closer look at the problem domain which aims at implementing intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition of terrorists. This domain underlines the dominant viewpoint on human-technology relations. A lengthy quote will serve to underpin my argument:

> Anonymity and the ability to launch attacks at a time and place of their choosing are tactical advantages utilised by terrorists. NATO is working on reducing or eliminating those advantages. [...] In addition to a variety of technological measures that are being explored, the NATO Research & Technology Organisation and the NATO Science Committee are jointly exploring crucial areas in the behavioural sciences, such as "human factors analysis" and the psychological aspects of terrorism (Billingslea 2004).

In Billingslea's sketch of NATO's programme of Work for Defence against Terrorism a typical modernist assumption about technology is advanced. Technology and humans are separate phenomena with separate logics and logistics involved. Psychological factors are 'additional' factors to technological one. Hence, either we look into the technological realm of the fight against terrorism, or we look into the human factors including human psychology. The question then becomes: What plans are in the minds of terrorist and what are the technological means to execute those plans? How can we develop weapon systems to fight the – often – primitive technologies of terrorists, and how can we trace and calculate their thoughts? There are several good reasons to be skeptical of this stance, in spite of its dominant position today.

The Danish researcher on international affairs and terrorism, Birthe Hansen, has suggested that contemporary terrorism is "post-Fordist" in its approach to spreading terror. (Hansen, p. 19). Fordism is used to describe the 20th century as the industrial age with Henry Ford's assembly line as a basic metaphor. That age was characterized by mass culture, standardized goods, and uniform, monotonous work controlled by top-down management. Since the 1980s, however, Fordism has been supplanted or replaced by post-industrial society, information society, individualized social formations, multi-cultural life forms, etc. Let me add, that the event of postmodernism has been seen by many as a license to subvert any given set of regularities to obtain new and unprecedented social states and events.

Hansen argues, that contemporary terrorists have demonstrated proficiency in developing technology and means of productions based on the post-Fordist approach. Billingslea testifies to that in his

article: Modern terrorists have shown "...the expertise to fabricate explosive devices out of a wide range of objects - from mobile phones to doorbells - and materials - from military explosives to commercial dynamite to improvised fertilizer mixes."

The September 11 attack provided evidence for this new approach on several accounts. First, an airplane is usually associated with being a huge, airborne carrier of humans and things, a fast and reliable means of transportation. With the September 11 attack, the plane was translated by terrorists (and later the world) into a highly explosive device, almost a self-contained cybernetic system with a clear, preset goal: to hit particular concrete buildings, symbolizing American values such as capitalism and military power. Humans, things, and symbols were mixed into a hitherto unknown array of practices. Furthermore, some mundane technical devices underwent the same transformation. Stanley knives, usually associated with crafts as a means to cut into things, were turned into weapons and threats to cut into humans. Razor blades, normally used for shaving off beards, but *not* to cut the skin, were also turned into deadly cutting weapons. It is significant that these devices had not been considered weapon beforehand in this setting. Nonetheless, they were immediately translated as such in the hijacking situation. In other words, the translation of these technological devices from everyday inoffensive tools to murder weapons was done not only by the terrorists, but also by the passengers. If this two-stage translation had not been successful the hijacking could well have had a different outcome. The September 11 attack was marked by another fusion as well, besides the mix of tool uses. Two well-known styles of terror, hijacking and suicide-bombing, were fused into one with the crashing into the twin-towers of the World Trade Center and Pentagon. (Birthe Hansen 2001).

Hansen has applied a terminology, normally related to commercial product-improvement, from the Austrian economist, Joseph Schumpeter, to reflect on the September 11 attack. That enables her to talk about the introduction of new products, so far unknown to the consumers, and the introduction of new methods of production in a domain. Hence, airplanes were turned into bombs, commonplace tools were used as hand weapons, and hijacking and suicide-bombing were mixed to become a new method of terrorism. And I would add that flight training courses and flight-simulators, usually meant to improve pilots' skills in the name of safer flying, were used by terrorists to learn to hit particular targets.

In recent years a new conception of human-technology relations, somewhat similar to Hansen's, has developed within the social sciences. I find it a convincing approach to understanding contemporary socio-technical life, including the recent acts of terror. To give an idea as to what this approach involves, it is fruitful to discuss a distinction introduced by the French sociologist, Bruno Latour.

Translating technology

In modernist terminology new technological systems are often placed in abstract, purified categories. They may simply be classified as 'new technology' e.g. when a technical system is taken as a means to make a practical domain more efficient. This is also what NATO intends with its anti-terror programme. In contrast to such ideas I claim that 'new technology' *in practice* is an effect of a chain of complicated, dynamic processes, that happen in various places and ways. 'New technology' is what is left, when socio-technical processes of delegating responsibility have ceased, to use the words of Bruno Latour (Latour 1986).

The fight against terrorism, illustrated by the NATO approach, demonstrates both the military and political commitments to establish international standards for anti-terror technology, and the underlying modernist anticipation that 'new technology' will improve our means to fight terrorism.

To make this claim operational I suggest *diffusion and translation* as central models of technology, adapted and molded from Latour's proposals for a sociological understanding of power associations. The diffusion model encompasses the NATO view on technology, and the translation model underpins my own understanding of the dissemination of technical systems in society.

The diffusion model makes it possible to speak abut three moments in the circulation of technological artifacts and systems: 1) It is an original power or reason, that initiates the circulation of new technology; 2) This power is turned into a kind of inertia which is conserved during the entire transmission; and 3) The work of a social mediator may slow down or speed up the completed circulation. If we look out for these moments, it will be evident that there are rational human subjects, material objects and a mediating, social world, and consequently a number of a priori dichotomies to count on. Following this model, Osama Bin Laden and a few others, masterminded the September 11 attack. This very plan was transmitted in the secretive network of terror, where it was acted upon during the entire operation by those who hijacked the airplanes and used them as bombs.

In the translation model, on the other hand, one will assume that all participants, all agents – both humans and non-humans – receive and translate an original plan in accordance with their own projects and interests. What they dispatch to the next link in the chain is no longer 'the same' as that which they received, i.e. there is no simple

transmission going on. The fate of the 'original' plan is always in the hands of later users, since every link will translate and transform what they receive to make it fit with their own plans and projects. One is reminded of the Italian aphorism "*Traduttore, traditore*": The one who translates is a traitor (to the original text). But you can do nothing but translate if the text is to be passed on! In the process of translating a plan to attack the World Trade Center and passing it on, people and artifacts get enrolled in the socio-technical network in which such secret plans are at work. Not just facts and artifacts, like personal identification, or Stanley knives and airplanes, but also humans are changed in the course of actions, e.g. from Al-Qaida supporters, to students in Germany with a mission, to pilot trainees in the USA, to hijackers, to martyrs.

Hence, facts, artifacts and people must be studied concurrently if we want to understand socio-technical practices. People, facts and artifacts are constantly being delegated new positions and roles in networks of politics and terror. This model cannot excuse the horrible things that were done on September 11. But it might serve to assist our understanding of the initial paradox - that the fight against terror seems to install a state of terror. Instead of assuming that things and humans belongs to separate realms, we can look out for particular socio-technical associations, that keep social agency in narrow lines of behaviour, e.g. terror laws that censor critical thinking, or international harbour protection fences that stop leisure activities, or model-based predictions of possible sites of terror-acts, which scare us off from visiting foreign countries and people.

Conclusion

Terrorism, as such, has become a very important figuration to define normality, or Us, as opposed to extremism, or Them. As argued

above, 'global terrorism' is the dominant figuration to set its marks on the life we lead in important ways, by guiding us around, and determining our values and political inclinations. The tragic certainty is, however, that we will learn about new meanings of terrorism in the years to come, new figurations – often the hard way. In light of that – inexpensive – prediction, it seems wise to avoid the trap of developing strategies to fight terrorism without a keen eye on the historical diversity of the concept and phenomena. Otherwise we may not be able to develop relevant strategies to relate to future cases of terrorism, simply because our conception of terrorism is too narrow to encompass such cases.

To see technology simply as a rational means to fight terrorists and their actions will probably not lead to the intended ends. If terrorists are post-fordists in their treatment of technology, they have no problems in acting, e.g. as human missile-guides, or to crash computers to install socio-technical systems of anxiety in particular social groups. When we begin to see for ourselves, that technology is embedded in the social fabric, maintaining it, regulating it, translating it, and vice versa, then we can perhaps begin to grasp the dynamic workings of socio-technical agencies in current life, committing us to the ends of terror, by sustaining terror in everyday life situations.

Hence, the initial paradox may be confronted, if we want to, and broader interpretations of social values and world orders can be made. To look out for the practical and effective work of dominant figurations, and attempting to broaden our ideas about dynamic human-technology relations, may help to frustrate the effects of contemporary terror.

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A Note on "Terror(ism) and the Media"

Øystein Gaasholt

Quite by accident, at the initial stages of forming some ideas about how to honor a promise to contribute an article on terrorism and the media to this journal, I happened across a short piece on that same subject in one of the student newspapers at the University of Oslo, *Samfunnsviter'n* (02/05). Written by Brit Eli Nybakken, reporting on a guest lecture by an Australian scholar, the article is one of the clearest on the subject I have had the pleasure to read. It starts by noting that there is no necessary connection between terrorism and the media, but for many terrorists the kind of publicity that only the mass media can provide is essential. Thus, terrorist acts are often designed as theatre – as spectacular events with a dramatic content that spellbinds an audience, precisely the kind of story that attracts the media. Asking what interests they serve – the interests of society or the interests of terrorists – when, seemingly unencumbered by any concern other than reporting on the terrorist acts as fully as humanly and technically possible, and thereby turning these acts into irresistible theatre, the article closes with this reminder from Katherine Graham:

> Publicity may be the oxygen of terrorists. But I say this: news is the lifeblood of liberty. If the terrorists succeed in depriving us [the press] of freedom, their victory will be far greater than they hoped and far worse than we had ever feared. Let it never come to pass.

It is, then, hardly a matter of contention that terrorists, as that term has become widely understood and used in recent years, in many cases are dependent on the media in order to catch the imagination and bring fear into the hearts and minds of the general public in the societies the terrorists wish to hurt. And along with Katherine

Graham, I take it for granted that the services thus rendered by the media to terrorists are a price liberal democracies have to pay if they are to remain liberal democracies.

Israels' handling of the media during the recent evacuation of the Gaza strip and, also, settlements in the West Bank, provides supportive evidence of the claim that a free press is, on balance, always to the good. On the insistence of Miri Regev, the officer in charge of the media operations, journalists were given free access to the scenes of confrontation between settlers and soldiers assigned the task of removing them. As a result even Arabic media brought reports on the human side of both settlers and soldiers (*Aftenposten*, Aug. 25, 2005). And, certainly, empathy and reasonableness across lines of conflict has a greater chance of survival where the press can operate freely.

Here I wish, however, to call attention to a different problem. But before doing so, I find it necessary to take a closer look at our key terms: "terrorism" and "the media."

Terrorism certainly is more than 9/11 in New York. 3/11 in Madrid, and 7/7 in London. (Cf. Kumm, 2003.) Terrorism is a broad concept with fuzzy, not to say open, boundaries, and it arguably is a recurrent phenomenon in human history. None the less, at a very general level of agreement, terrorism is acts of violence, motivated by political goals, often intentionally aimed at civilians (e.g., Rasch, 2005: 11). A somewhat more elaborate and precise definition, but not substantially different from the one above, but emphasizing *the audience*, is that of the U.S. Department of State: "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant

targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (U.S. Department of State, 2003: xii, quoted in Evju, forthcoming). Personally I do not find it difficult to subscribe to these definitions. Still, I will point out one problem. In both definitions motive and intent are defining characteristics. Thus attention is taken away from terrorism's most central feature, which is terror, in favor of the perpetrators – "the terrorists." This is, of course, politically convenient for governments and their military forces fighting terrorism. It reserves the concept to acts initiated or carried out by "terrorists." But certainly, to the innocent victims of terror it makes little difference to what extent the acts that bring about their death and destruction or suffering are intended and politically motivated. Therefore the parenthesis in the heading of this essay.

Now, "the media," which is an equally broad concept. Technically it spans from the traditional printed press to the Internet. It also represents all the major languages and many of the minor languages in the world. And politically it spans the entire spectrum of ideologies and world views. With regard to the latter, and for the present purposes, the gap between Fox News and al-Arabiya is illustrative. It follows that I am in no position to make any claims about how "the media" in all their variety report on "terror(ism)" in all its variety. Therefore I will focus on how the mainstream US media report or, rather, fail to report, on what is happening in Iraq. And ironically, my claim is to a major extent based on what I get from the US media – and most especially *The New York Review of Books.* What follows, then, is for the most part culled from two articles in *NYR*, both in the December 16, 2004 issue: Chris Hedges, "On War" and Michael Massing, "Iraq, the Press & the Election."

The problem concerning terror(ism) and the media I have in mind is the underreporting of terror brought upon civilians by the troops engaged in the fight against terrorism. Commenting on this problem I will refrain from the conceit in which criticism often is anchored – not the least, perhaps, in the case of European intellectuals – and simply point to some uncomfortable facts of life that speak for themselves.

Western journalists covering the occupation of Iraq are typically "embedded" – that is, dependent on the military for food and transportation as well as security. Hedges writes:

> The embedded reporters […] have a natural and understandable tendency, one I have myself felt, to protect those who are protecting them. They are not allowed to report outside the unit and are, in effect, captives. They have no relationship with the victims, essential to all balanced reporting of conflict, but only with the Marines and soldiers who drive them through desolate and mud-walled towns and pump grenades and machine-gun bullets into houses, leaving scores of nameless dead and wounded in their wake. The reporters admire and laud these fighters for their physical courage […] And the reporting, even among those who struggled to keep their distance, usually descends into shameful cheerleading.

Also, in an environment where bullets and grenades that kill may come at the soldiers from out of nowhere, they are frightened. Massing writes: "Most of the soldiers in Iraq are young men who can't speak Arabic and who have rarely traveled outside the United States, and they have suddenly been set down in a hostile environment in which they face constant attack. They are equipped with powerful weapons and have authority over dark-skinned people with alien customs." And retelling an eyewitness account, Massing gives us an illustration of the terror fed by fear combined with arrogance and ignorance:

> Rosen [an Arabic-speaking American reporter] described how a unit he accompanied on a raid broke down the door of a house they suspected of dealing in arms. When the man, named Ayoub, did not immediately respond to their orders, they shot him with non-lethal bullets. "The floor of the house was covered with blood," Rosen wrote. "He was dragged into a room and interrogated forcefully as his family was pushed back against their garden's fence." Ayoub's frail mother, he continued, pleaded with the interrogating soldier to spare her son's life, protesting his innocence. "He pushed her to the grass along with Ayoub's four girls and two boys, all small, and his wife. They squatted barefoot, screaming, their eyes wide open in terror, clutching one another as soldiers emerged with bags full of documents, photo albums and two compact discs with Saddam Hussein and his cronies on the cover. these CDs, called the Crimes of Saddam, are common on every Iraqi street and, as their title suggests, they were not made by Saddam supporters. But the soldiers couldn't read Arabic and saw only the picture of Saddam, which was proof enough of guilt."

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Stuck in the middle with you: Dilemmas of the mass media when covering terrorism in the Information Age

Jody W. Pennington

Introduction

The mass media connect both democratically elected governments and terrorist organizations to large-scale audiences. The media realize governments and terrorist organizations attempt to manipulate them and to take advantage of the mass media's resources for circulating information. With terrorist acts, the media's gate-keeping function is complicated by the well-rehearsed fact that the terrorist event must be covered even though the event is the message. Terrorists depend on an equation of event plus mass mediation to achieve the ultimate effect. Terrorism places mass media in a peculiar light, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and, above all, their built-in dilemmas. By contrast, the threats posed by governments are censorship, misinformation, and propaganda. Limits imposed on the media by governments are perceived by most Westerners to limit a fundamental right to free expression. Because the media transmit information related to terrorist-related risk, their role as information providers is irreducibly complicated and dangerous. In this paper, I will look at some of the dilemmas faced by the mass media inherent in their role as mediators between terrorists and governments. In particular, I will look at the Internet as a mass medium, television as a conveyor of symbolic meaning to a mass audience, and government efforts to limit the press.

Terrorism and the media

Knowledge and information processing are central to the conduct of war today; this is applicable to states and non-state organizations such as Al-Qaeda. As Philip Taylor notes, "the ability to sustain peace will depend increasingly the acquisition, processing, dissemination and control of knowledge" (16). Information technology and the mass media became ever more central to the conduct of war and the maintenance of peace throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the role played by telegraph in the US Civil War and the significance of wireless communication technology for the development of modern naval fleets to radio's facilitation of Nazi Germany's *Blitzkrieg* and mass propaganda during World War Two, technological progress has influenced the course of warfare as it has in turn been influenced by it (Bishop and Goldman 116). Today's information landscape still includes scraps of paper and handwritten messages, but it has become increasingly dominated by cable, cellular, and satellite networks and the Internet. According to Philip D. Zelikow, the terrorists involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks used chat rooms, email, and the World Wide Web, the latter providing information about the targets, in plotting their attacks (quoted in Talbot 48). Information gleaned from terrorist training camps in Afghanistan disclosed how Al-Qaeda operatives surfed US government web sites to mine information provided by the US General Accounting Office, among others, for information about potential targets (Shultz and Vogt 18). It is no small irony that a decentralized information network—the Internet—designed to prevent the Soviet Union from incapacitating the United State's information system in a war, has been adopted by contemporary decentralized terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda has their

primary communication medium. "[E]xperts agree," writes David Talbot, "that the Internet is not just a tool of terrorist organizations, but is central to their operations" (48).

Regulating terrorists' use of the Internet as a mass medium of communication is difficult. The US Supreme Court has determined that the Internet is a cyber public sphere protected by the First Amendment:

> Through the use of chat rooms, any person with a phone line can become a town crier with a voice that resonates farther than it could from any soapbox. Through the use of Web pages, mail exploders, and newsgroups, the same individual can become a pamphleteer. … We agree with its conclusion that our cases provide no basis for qualifying the level of First Amendment scrutiny that should be applied to this medium. (Reno, Attorney General of the United States, et al. V. American Civil Liberties Union et al.)

A basic premise of US constitutional doctrine concerning the public sphere and freedom of expression is the idea that the regulation of expression, which includes regulation of the various media and channels that facilitate expression, should be proportionate, no more strictly or broadly defined than necessary. As Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote for the Supreme Court in its 1957 decision *Butler v. Michigan*, laws that restricted speech without being narrowly tailored amounted to "burn[ing] the house to roast the pig." Because terrorists have multiple media objectives—ranging from gaining publicity for their cause, frightening populations beyond immediate bystanders through media audiences, alerting sleepers, or gaining recruits—it is difficult within the framework of a liberal constitution for democratic governments to successfully regulate media coverage of terrorist events in a narrowly tailored fashion. Self-regulation on the part of the media is equally difficult, since censorship largely runs counter to media organizations' self-understanding.

Part of the difficulty the media face stems from the similarity of their needs to those of terrorists, which the latter have proven to be highly adept at manipulating. First, both terrorist acts and the mass media need a public sphere in which to function—both need an audience. In a sense, terrorism resembles a perverse version of reality TV. Both terrorism and reality TV require the boundary between the viewing audience at home and the contestants in the studio or on location be blurred so that all feel like participants. In the case of terrorism, the immediate participant is always a victim—a casualty or a hostage—who becomes a mediated participant parallel to the reality television contestant with whom the audience identifies. The blurred distinction between observer and participant is crucial if acts of terror are to achieve their intended effect within and on the public sphere: either we are victims or we are always potential victims, victims in waiting.

Second, the media function as a conduit of information for terrorists because terrorist events fit the criteria of newsworthiness. In the post-CNN, BBC World, Al-Jazeera, and WWW media environment, any significant terrorist act is guaranteed free air time with access to mass audiences, which translates into a propaganda coup and damaging psychological impact. The general public in a country and local community that has suffered a terrorist attack has a need for and a right to information concerning the event, particularly as that information pertains to public safety. As acts that induce mass trauma, terrorist acts are seen by the agencies that must respond to them as man-made disasters on par with natural disasters and requiring similar large-scale coordinated public safety responses.

Many authorities agree that terrorists seek psychological more than physical disruption (see, for example, Heymann and Belfer

Center for Science and International Affairs. 9). Psychological effects range from fear, intimidation, and insecurity to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and chronic stress. To optimize psychological impact, terrorists often choose targets that will maximize the psychological damage inflicted on a population. From the perspective of the terrorist, the strongest psychological impact on the target audience is often achieved through attacks on symbolic targets such as "[c]ultural symbols, political institutions, and public leaders [which] are examples of iconic (nearly sacred) targets," writes Gus Martin, "that can affect large populations when attacked" (246). Symbolic targets include structures such as the Washington Monument or the Eiffel Tower; the aim is to exact "a devastating psychological blow by demolishing a cultural icon" (Shultz and Vogt 17-18). Any psychological impact attained by successfully targeting symbolic structures is magnified by the mediated images of the destruction and its aftermath as well as by dissipation of the information about the attack through the media.

Terrorists also target infrastructure such as bridges, nuclear power plants, or public transportation nodes. Once again, mediated images and dissemination increase the impact. Such targets combine the symbolic value of the attack with the goal of killing large numbers of people (Shultz and Vogt 18). The attacks on the trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004 exemplify this kind of target, and its extensive coverage in Spanish and international media heightened its effect.

A third type of target for acts of terror is human—either large numbers at one time or public figures. The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001 combined all three types of targets: the Twin Towers were symbols of American financial power; the size of the skyscrapers and the large number of people

who worked in them (around 50,000 on a typical day) made them vital infrastructures, cities onto themselves; and the death of over 2,700 people made it the most devastating terrorist act in history.

A reality of Fourth Generation asymmetrical warfare is that information has come to stand alongside physical destruction as an element of contemporary combat. Because terrorists cannot confront an opponent like the United States armed forces directly, they attempt to achieve superiority or at least a parity of sorts on the information front. In other words, "terrorists and insurgents, who lack military parity, seek to achieve their ultimate objectives by being successful in the information environment. They cannot successfully engage a superior force in the physical environment, so they conduct selected acts in the physical environment (bombings and small-scale attacks, for example) to shape the information environment (that is, perceptions)" (Emery, Werchan and Donald G. Mowles 34). One asymmetrical warfare tactic terrorist organizations and other "conventionally overmatched groups " employ to manipulate media information flow involves "the deliberate manipulation of the moral scruples of the stronger side and of the wider world (now able to witness wartime atrocities with near real-time immediacy) by forcing, or attempting to force, violations in the rules of war" (Skerker 28). Another is pushing democratic governments toward restricting fundamental freedoms that could erode support for a war against the terrorists.

The media and government: Silky censorship

In United States, the freedoms of expression granted to the press are guaranteed by the First Amendment of the US Constitution and similar rights in state constitutions. The privileges granted to the media are based on various conceptions of how the press facilitates

democratic self-government. The media are responsible for providing citizens the information needed for effective self-governance through news coverage of public affairs involving the government and government officials, national and local communities, and international events. The media's relationship with government is complicated since the press also has a watchdog function to fulfill by exposing governmental abuse of power and any other official misdeeds. The American tradition of freedom of expression generally does not allow for prior restraint by the government, which improves the media's ability to expose wrongdoing.

In the virtual absence of prior restraint, more subtle forms of censorship have developed. Among these is what Matthew Felling of the Center for Media and Public Affairs has called "a silky form of censorship" (quoted in Jones and Kemper). Given the limits on prior restraint and the dictates of state and federal freedom of information acts, government denials of access to information are often couched in national security claims. As Doris Graber has documented, the Bush Administration has frequently employed national security claims to justify censorship (Graber 542-43). In the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Bush Administration encouraged government officials at all levels to hinder access to what it deemed sensitive information. The media were also encouraged to practice self-censorship in the name of patriotism and civic duty. For example, in October 2001, Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor, personally asked the CEOs of the major American television networks to refrain from broadcasting live, unedited video or audio clips from Osama bin Laden, because, she said, the administration was concerned that bin Laden's communiqués might contain coded directions for his foot soldiers. In an unprecedented move, the major networks acquiesced

in the Administration's request. President of CBS News Andrew Heyward told reporters he did not "see any conflict between patriotism and good journalism" (quoted in Jones and Kemper). Doris Graber's research into the rhetorical strategies adopted by both government and media spokespersons to justify censorship following the September 11, 2001 attacks shows that journalists themselves sometimes justify censorship by appealing to national security, public demands, patriotism or civic virtue, and defending common values (Graber 542-49).

The balance to be struck is between the citizen's right to reliable neutral information and faith in public authorities who may have legitimate national security reasons for withholding information, but who might also misinform or attempt to spin their policies and performances for personal or partisan gain. Numerous studies suggest the US media have been too uncritical in their coverage of the Bush Administration's policies implemented in response to the events of September 11. Critiques range from the media's failure to challenge the validity of a "war on terror" to a lack of critical analysis, reportage, and commentary on the war on terror (see, for example, Coe et al.; Kellner). The dilemma here is straightforward: if the press is too critical of the Administration, it risks incurring the Administration's wrath, as when former Attorney General of the United States John Ashcroft testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee:

> … to those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty; my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists—for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America's enemies, and pause to America's friends. They encourage people of good will to remain silent in the face of evil. ("Testimony of Attorney General John Ashcroft")

Although most journalists avoid compromising national security, many drew a line at Ashcroft's accusations. For example, the *San Francisco Chronicle* forcefully rejected Ashcroft's arguments: "A vigorous debate about the proper balance between law enforcement "tools" and civil liberties does not undermine President Bush or his war on terrorism; it is an affirmation of a system that is greater and more enduring than any individual who happens to hold office at any given moment" (Editorial).

Coverage of military activities highlights the mass media's dilemmas. Democratic governments establish conflict media policies for their military operations during the planning stages of a campaign. Such policies involve both cooperating with the media and impeding media access to unfiltered information. Press briefings replete with videos of apparently flawless air strikes, maps, charts, and accommodating, if reticent, officers provide the press with images, sound bites, and information that further military goals. From a strategic perspective, tightly controlled information environments allow the military to shape the perceptions of the media audience and in turn the perceptions of the public as a whole in such a way as to ensure support for the war effort. The media are indispensable to the military's efforts at creating and maintaining public support for war efforts as well as being a channel for disseminating disinformation targeted at adversaries. In their role of providing their audiences with information about critical events, the media are voluntary conduits of information (Taylor 145).

This conflicts with the media's watchdog function, which entails seeking alternative channels of information to the government and militarily sanctioned versions of events. The specter of threats to national security always looms when the press publish alternative

versions of events or information that the government prefers to suppress.

Conclusion

There are numerous parameters that have to be taken into consideration when considering the relationship between the media and terrorism. The relationship is complicated by the use of the media by terrorists to optimize the psychological impact of their acts of terror beyond the immediate location of the act itself, and what could cynically be described as the media's use of terrorism to attract audiences. The media's role is complicated by the divergent responsibilities of journalists. On the one hand, journalists have a professional interest in maintaining objectivity and neutrality in their coverage of terrorists' acts or groups; on the other hand, journalists are citizens with the same civic duties as other citizens. This dichotomy is sustained by the First Amendment, which can be interpreted as giving journalists greater leeway than other citizens in fulfilling certain civic duties. For example, journalists might infiltrate criminal (or terrorist) organizations in order to write an article but not reveal sources.

Although I argue that the paradox faced by mass media in democracies confronted with terrorist acts and threats of future terrorist acts is irresolvable, I do not agree with Jean Baudrillard's overly broad claim that "[t]here is no good use of the media: the media is part of the event itself, part of the terror, and its role plays in both directions" (Baudrillard 414). The mass media are indeed placed in a predicament by contemporary terrorism. It can be argued that the contemporary mass media epitomize the freedom versus security debates that have taken place since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Those debates

suggest that the dilemma of striking a balance that is widely acceptable within pluralist democracies is theoretically impossible, although in practice a workable albeit contested compromise is an ongoing work in progress.

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Butterfly and *Firing Squad*:
A comparison of two TV spots representing state terror

Richard Raskin

BUTTERFLY
Client: The Tibet Society (UK)
Writer, director, producer:
Arran de Moubray
Director of photography: Ivan Bird
Agency: none
Production year: 2000/2001
Running time: 60 seconds
Will be accessible at a link in the Web edition of this issue of *p.o.v.*

FIRING SQUAD
Client: Artists in Exile (UK)
Agency: TBWA, London
Group creative head: Frazer Jelleyman
Copywriter: Alasdair Graham
Director: Caswell Coggins
Actor: Stephen Scott
Production company; Harry Nash Film
Director of photography: Alwin Kushler
Production year: 2001
Running time: 65 seconds
Can be accessed at: http://www.boardsmag.com/screeningroom/commercials/102/

Introduction

Anyone unfamiliar with the full potential of 60-second TV spots might be skeptical as to how effectively a serious human rights issue might be dealt with in so short a time-span. But as the two spots to be discussed in this study clearly show, the brevity of the format in no way limits the power of the storytelling.

The two spots were made at about the same time (2000-2001) and deal with different forms of state terrorism. *Butterfly* evokes the subjugation of Tibetans by a foreign occupying power – namely China, while *Firing Squad* depicts the fate of artists living in countries ruled by military dictatorships.

However the focus of this study will not be on the forms of terror represented, but rather on representational strategies employed in these ads, which differ considerably in many respects. In comparing these two ads, I hope to describe as concretely as possible some of the major variables in play in their storytelling.

A shot-by-shot breakdown of *Butterfly*

In a cellar with enormous cobwebs blanketing the space and hanging across locked windows and metal gratings, a butterfly flutters helplessly, repeatedly attempting to disentangle itself from the webs and unable to escape from the enclosure. We hear the occasional flapping of the butterfly's wings and a resonant and somewhat eerie clanging of bells – sounds which continue when the titles appear, in small, uneven print, flickering and at times barely readable, either between or over the live action shots.

Shot 1 (5 sec)

Shot 2 (1 sec)

Shot 3 (3 sec)

Shot 4 (0.5 sec)

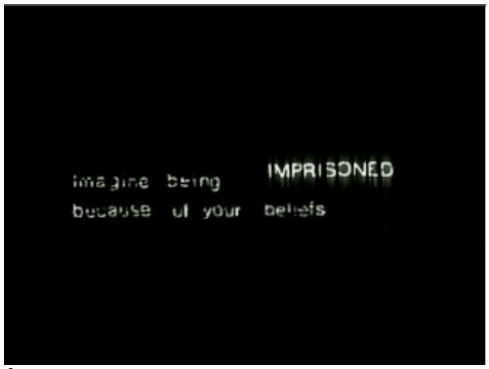
Shot 5 (2 sec)

Shot 6 (0.5 sec)

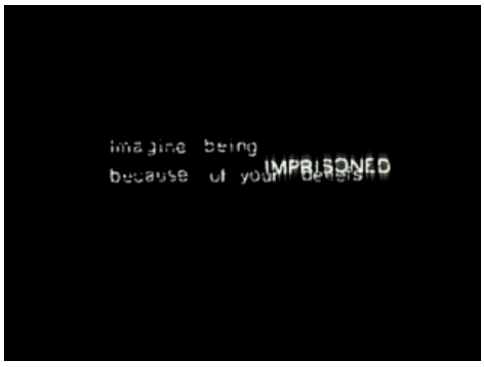
Shot 7 (2 sec)

Shot 8 (2.5 sec)

Title 1 (2 sec) **a** Imagine being IMPRISONED because of your beliefs



b Imagine being IMPRISONED because of your beliefs

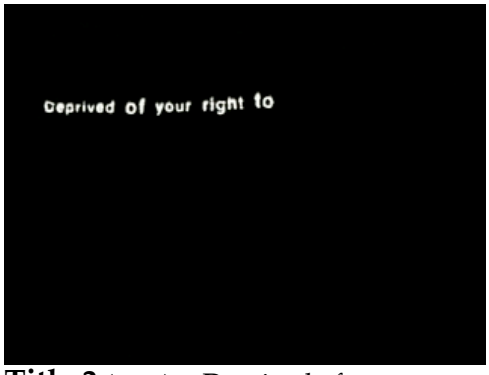


c Imagine being IMPRISONED because of your beliefs

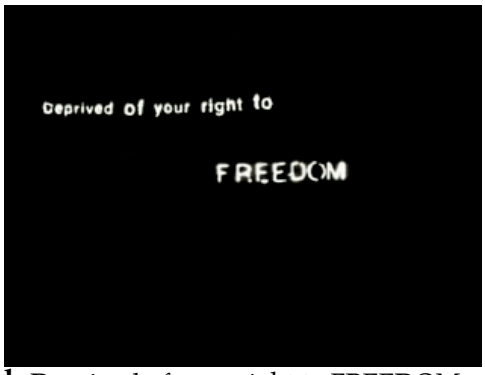
Shot 9 (3 sec) **a** Imagine being IMPRISONED because of your beliefs

Shot 9b IMPRISONED

Shot 9c



Title 2 (3 sec) **a** Deprived of your right to



b Deprived of your right to FREEDOM

c FREEDOM. your right to LIFE

Shot 10 (1 sec) a Your right to LIFE

Shot 10 b
[the text bleeds into a white line, then vanishes]

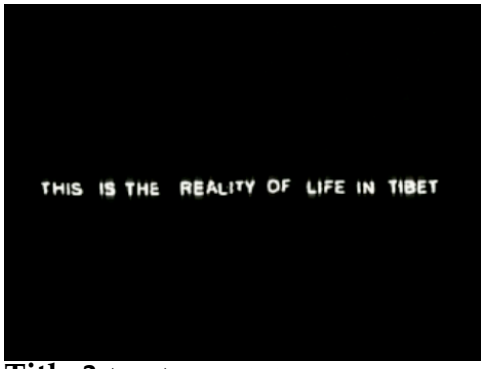
Shot 10 c

Shot 11 (1 sec)

Shot 12 (1 sec)

Shot 13 (0.5 sec)

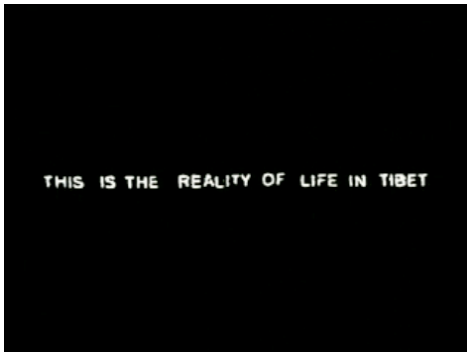
Shot 14 (0.5 sec)



Title 3 (2 sec) **a** THIS IS THE REALITY OF LIFE IN TIBET

b THIS IS THE REALITY OF LIFE IN TIBET

c THIS IS THE REALITY OF LIFE IN TIBET



d THIS IS THE REALITY OF LIFE IN TIBET

Shot 15 (2 sec)

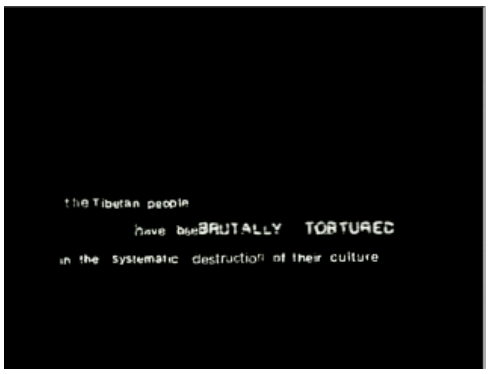
Title 4 (2 sec) **a + c + e**
Illegally occupied by China since 1950

b + d occupied by China since 1950

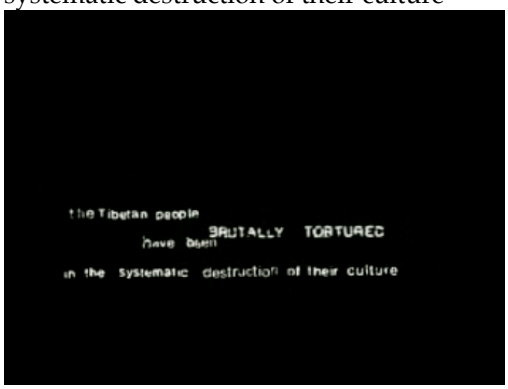
Shot 16 (2 sec) **a** Illegally occupied by China since 1950

Shot 16b

Title 5 (2.5 sec) **a** The Tibetan people have been BRUTALLY TORTURED in the systematic destruction of their culture



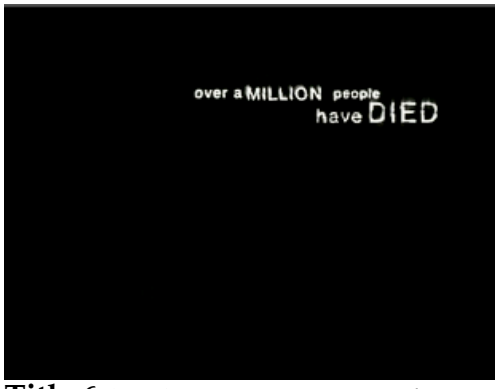
b The Tibetan people have been BRUTALLY TORTURED in the systematic destruction of their culture



c The Tibetan people have been BRUTALLY TORTURED in the systematic destruction of their culture

Shot 17 (2.5 sec) BRUTALLY TORTURED in the systematic destruction of their culture

Shot 18 (1 sec)



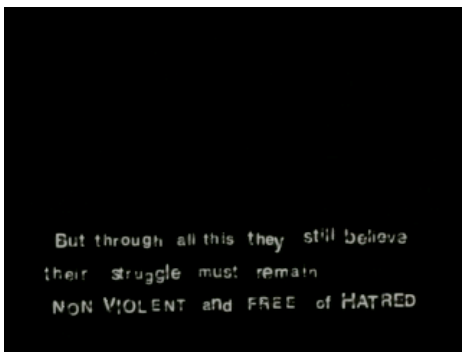
Title 6 (2 sec) Over a million people have DIED

Shot 19 (1 sec) Over a million people have DIED as a result

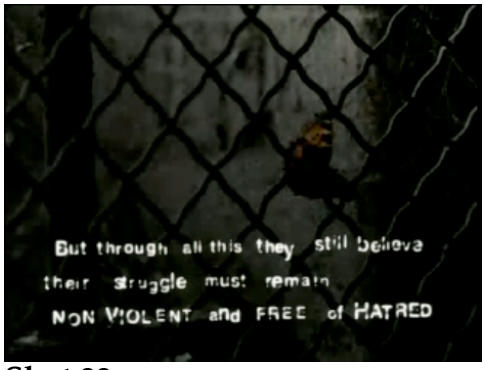
Shot 20 (0.5 sec)

Shot 21 (1 sec)

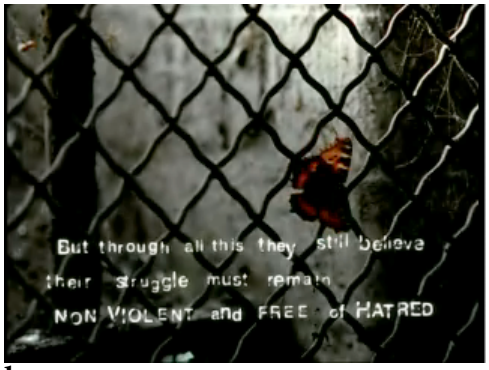
Title 7 (1.5 sec) **a** (black screen)



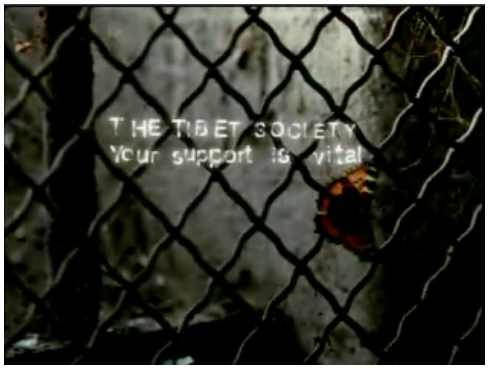
b (text gradually fades in**)** But through all this they still believe their struggle must remain NON VIOLENT and FREE of HATRED



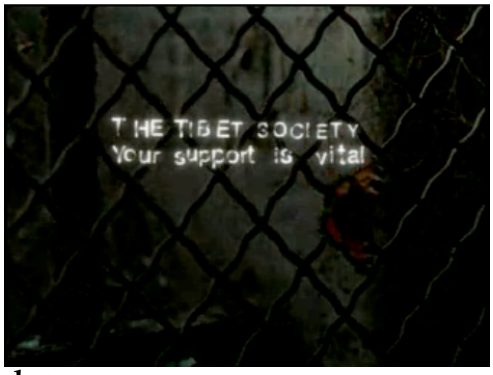
Shot 22 (6.5 sec) **a** (image gradually fades in) But through all this they still believe their struggle must remain NON VIOLENT and FREE of HATRED



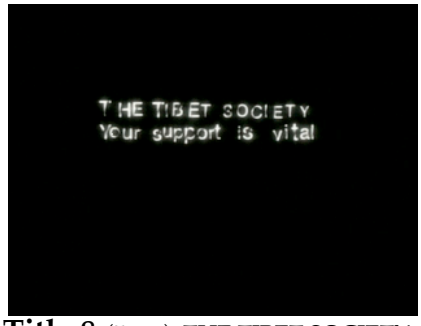
b But through all this they still believe their struggle must remain NON VIOLENT and FREE of HATRED



c (new text fades in) THE TIBET SOCIETY Your support is vital



d (image gradually fades out) THE TIBET SOCIETY Your support is vital



Title 8 (5 sec) THE TIBET SOCIETY Your support is vital

An interview with Arran de Moubray on *Butterfly*

I assume that the image of the butterfly was your own concept. Do you happen to recall how you arrived at that image? And did you discuss it at all with the Tibet Society before you actually made the film?

I have a friend who was doing a lot of work with the Tibet Society in his free time, and happened to talk to him about wanting to film something for them, as I had watched a documentary on the plight of the Tibetans a few days previously.

He came back and said that that'd be great, but it would have to be either sponsored, or shot for nothing, as there were no funds. But they could supply some free air time in the cinemas. He also said a lot of people wanted to do things, but never got round to it because of the time involved, and the financial constraints.

I was determined not to be one of these people, so I tried to think what I could do that was simple but effective. That very afternoon I had to on a location recce [recon], for a Nike commercial, in a very dark and atmospheric basement. While looking around, I saw several beautiful and fragile butterflies hibernating, waiting for the sun. And I thought this was a brilliant metaphor for the Tibetans – a beautiful culture waiting for its time to shine again. Then I noticed the spiders' webs in the windows – if I put a butterfly in there, and film it struggling to get out, I hardly have to say anything...

This metaphoric approach to telling the story is rather unusual in public service spots. Offhand, I can't think of another spot that works quite this way. Did you think of this as a somewhat bold move in designing the spot?

Not really. To be honest I hate the pigeonholing in commercials and public service spots. There are maybe only two or three different forms of each that everyone copies, with a slight change to try and

make it different... I didn't ever want to use crying children and crumbling icons – it's not new. I wanted to create something that would make people cry and want to help. I also wanted people not to realize what they were watching at first – to seduce them, rather than have them switch off – 'not another charity'!...

The irony about using a butterfly is that many people (and this is why using an animal works) said to me "but what about the poor butterfly?". I can't tell you how may times I had to say to these people " what about the million people?". They missed the point – at first – but maybe they would remember something later...

The many fragments of text remain on the screen for relatively short periods. And the script you chose to write them in is not always easy to read very quickly. I wondered whether you deliberately chose to do the opposite of imposing texts on the viewer – and instead, did the visual equivalent of speaking quickly and in a low voice, so that the viewer has to listen hard to catch the words. Or were there entirely different considerations in play?

No, absolutely correct. I used the text for two reasons: firstly to make it difficult for people to read, so that they had to really concentrate – almost 'discovering' the facts themselves, rather than being preached to. For this reason I kept a few words on for longer, so that if nothing else, they could associate the images and sounds with key words, and then think about it afterwards. The second reason was that I wanted to create (and this may be a little bit pretentious – I don't know!) typography that was simple and distressed – not only mirroring the subject matter, but also to make people feel a little awkward about the whole thing. If a spot is glossy and easy to read, people don't feel it...

Is there anything else you can tell me about your work on the spot?

Two days after seeing the butterflies I was shooting the Nike

commercial. In the lunch break, I took my director of photography over to the spiders' webs and asked him to shoot as soon as I placed the butterfly in the web. He didn't have to light it, and shot it beautifully. We burned off one roll of 35mm film and that was that. The next day I got into the edit suite and cut it together. It was immediately impactful. Then I got a student at the Royal College of Art to do the typo for me, and got a favor from the music designers to create a simple score (I wanted it to be just frantic fluttering sounds – they introduced the haunting bells, which I think work brilliantly).

Did you get any feedback from the Tibet Society about the spot?

When I showed it to Tibet Society, they loved it... (in fact so much, that one of them worked for Amnesty International, and tried to get me to give it to them for a world wide ident!).

One of the most important qualities of the spot is that it is visually stunning—- immensely pleasurable in a purely aesthetic sense (interplay of colors and forms). I have noticed this same quality is some of your other work. Could I ask you to comment on this aspect of the Tibet Society spot?

I wanted to do both the butterfly and the culture of Tibet justice!
I also believe people will take things more seriously if they are aesthetically pleasing and look 'professional'. This spot was for cinema, and you want a great impact before a film that looks great... and finally, I love to look at painters like Velasquez and Tintoretto – there's as much going on in the darkness as in the light...

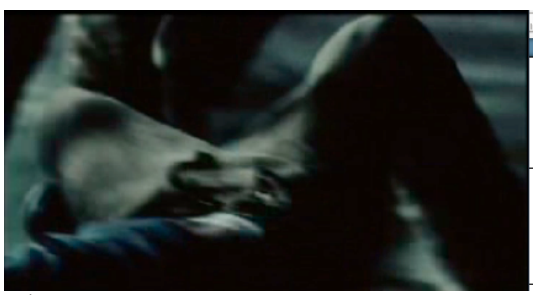
22 December 2004

A shot-by-shot breakdown of *Firing Squad*

In a deserted industrial space, soldiers brutally throw a man to the ground, kick him repeatedly and then drag him out to a place of execution, where other soldiers wait under a shelter as the rain pours down, both visibly and audibly. The prisoner is tied to a post in the rain, his hands bound behind him, as soldiers load or cock their weapons. The sound track goes suddenly silent as the first title appears: "Governments across the world silence what they fear the most." The sound of the rain returns as we see what appears to be a blindfold held up to the prisoner's face; the screen goes black, with the sound disappearing once again as the next title reads: "The free expression of their people." The live-action sound and image return, as a gag, which we had thought was a blindfold, is tied around the prisoner's mouth. Silence again as the third title reads: "Come and see what governments fear the most," followed by a final title bearing the name "Artists in Exile" plus a studio name and telephone number.

Shot 1 (3 sec)

Shot 2 (0.5 sec)



Shot 3 (1.5 sec)

Shot 4 (1.5 sec)

Shot 5 (2 sec)

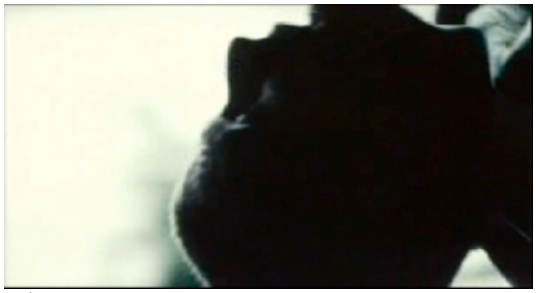
Shot 6 (3 sec)

Shot 7 (2 sec)

Shot 8 (1 sec)

Shot 9 (3.5 sec)

Shot 10 (1.5 sec)



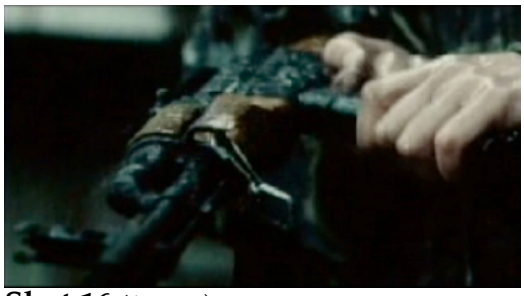
Shot 11 (2 sec)

Shot 12 (1 sec)

Shot 13 (2.5 sec)

Shot 14 (4.5 sec)

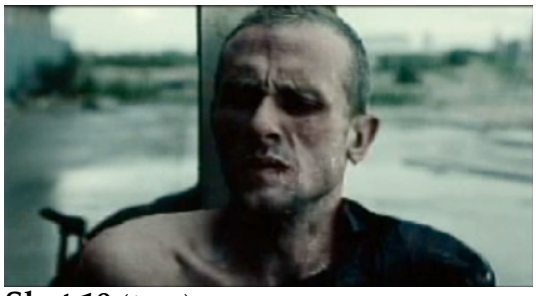
Shot 15 (1.5 sec)



Shot 16 (1.5 sec)

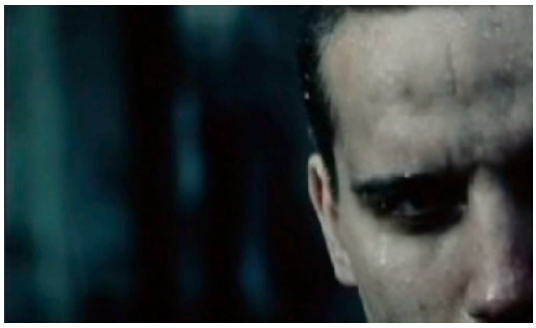
Shot 17 (0.5 sec)

Shot 18 (1 sec)

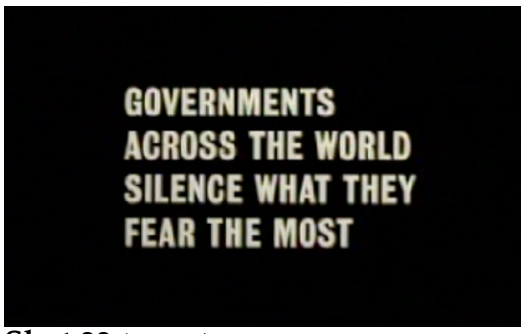


Shot 19 (1 sec)

Shot 20 (1.5 sec)

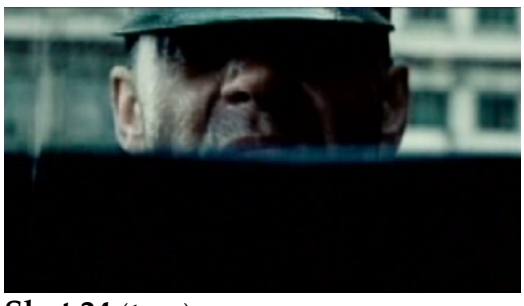


Shot 21 (1.5 sec)



Shot 22 (3.5 sec)

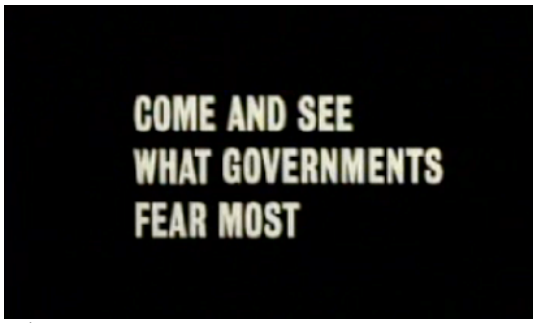
Shot 23 (1 sec)



Shot 24 (1 sec)

Shot 25 (4 sec)

Shot 26 (6 sec)



Shot 27 (2 sec)

Shot 28 (10 sec)

Some properties of the two spots

1. METAPHOR VS REALISM

The butterfly struggling for its freedom acquires a metaphoric status in the viewer's eyes at about a quarter of the way into the spot, once the first title establishes the theme of imprisonment because of one's beliefs. But it is not until the third title appears on screen, nearly half way into the spot, that the captivity in question is identified more specifically, and from that moment on, the butterfly becomes a metaphor for the people of Tibet. Likewise, the entrapping cobwebs, grids and enclosures appearing in the spot come to symbolize from then on the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

The butterfly and web-ridden cellar constitute what some theorists of metaphor would call the "source domain," while the things

they represent – the people of Tibet and the Chinese occupation – would be designated as the metaphor's "target domain."[1]

The main opposition within this particular source domain – a freedom-seeking butterfly vs. entrapping webs and spaces – is enriched by a number of corresponding polarities, including: bright, warm colors vs. cold, dark shades; beauty vs. ugliness; delicacy vs. bulk; movement vs. stillness; life vs. death. And these attributes are carried over to the respective entities in the target domain as well, so that the Tibetan people are not only represented by the butterfly as prisoner but are also infused with such traits as its colorful, delicate beauty; and the Chinese occupation is correspondingly identified with the grim and chilling qualities of the web-infested cellar.

While the live-action shots in *Butterfly* are metaphoric in the ways described above, those in *Firing Squad* embody a realist esthetic, to such a degree that a military advisor (Richard Smedley) was engaged in its production. Here, there is no distance between a source domain and target domain, though we are dependent on the spot's three titles to know that the man brutally beaten before our eyes and prepared for immediate execution, stands for all artists "governments across the world" attempt to silence. The images of his mistreatment and positioning for the firing squad require no decoding of the kind in play in *Butterfly*.

There is however one symbolic twist embedded in *Firing Squad*'s realism, in that the cloth raised to the prisoner's face in shots 23 and 24 turns out in Shot 26 to be to be gag, rather than the blindfold we had expected. This final image of the victim connects

[1] See for example Raymond Gozzi's *The Power of Metaphor in the Age of Electronic Media* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999), pp. 56-57. "Source" and "target" domain are also sometimes designated as "secondary system" or "vehicle," and "primary system" or "topic," respectively. See for example "Metaphor as change of representation: An interaction theory of cognition and metaphor," by Bipin Indurkhya in *Aspects of Metaphor*, ed. Jaakko Hintikka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers,1994), pp. 95-96.

with the reasons for his persecution in the first place: the government's fear of what he might say.

As the creative director and co-writer of the spot, Frazier Jelleyman, describes the central character:

> He's a kind of an artist everyman. The film culminates with a rug pull, the gag, that is a quick and graphic way to represent what is going on.[2]

Furthermore, the acting in the spot, and most particularly the face and body-language of the man playing the victim (Stephen Scott), carries much of the storytelling in this PSA. The director, Caswell Coggins, has described the casting of that role as follows:

> I started with the casting by writing a little background of who the actor was and where he came from. I think I called him Pavel and he was a poet with a daughter and a son who was dragged off the street two months previously, just a little story I created. […] Then the actors read this while I put a camera on them for three minutes and told them this is the last three minutes of their lives. Some didn't know what to do. The guy we cast slumped down on the floor and was really intense. His face also had a lot of story photographically (*ibid.*).

Both esthetics – *Butterfly*'s metaphoric and *Firing Squad*'s realistic images – bring tremendous power to these spots, each it in its own highly economical way, enabling each spot to make its point with great effectiveness in the interplay of live-action with titles.

2. LINEAR VS. NON-LINEAR STORYTELLING

The order in which the live-action shots are situated in *Butterfly* was determined more on the basis of visual esthetics than with respect to specifically narrative concerns. In fact, the live-action component of the spot has no real beginning, middle or end in the traditional sense. It is rather a montage of often stunning images that illuminate

[2] Sandy Hunter, "TBWA, Coggins and Nash create Artists in Exile PSA," *Boards Magazine*, Sept. 1, 2001, p. 62; available at http://www.boardsmag.com/articles/magazine/20010901/exile.html

the same situation in a number of ways and in a sequence that is not decisive for our understanding of the story being told. In this spot, it is the titles that move the story forward, carrying us from beginning, to middle and to end, while the live-action images are free of any linear logic of their own.

In *Firing Squad*, on the other hand, it would be difficult to change the overall order of the live-action shots without disrupting the story, which begins when the prisoner is thrown to the ground and repeatedly kicked, then dragged out to the execution post, and finally bound and gagged in preparation for being shot. Here it is the live-action that drives the story forward, while the titles fulfill a more explanatory function, ultimately connecting the story to the "Artists in Exile" event promoted in the spot.

3. VISUAL AND AURAL RELATIONS OF TITLES TO LIVE-ACTION

In *Firing Squad*, there is no overlapping of titles and live-action, either visually or aurally. When a title appears, the soundtrack suddenly goes silent and there are no dissolves in which the footage on screen even fleetingly contains both a title and any live-action. These two building blocks of the spot are kept entirely separate, each given its own moments in the film, so that live-action and titles *alternately* possess the exclusive attention of the viewer, without ever being blended.

In *Butterfly*, the relation of titles to live-action is more fluid, with the same continuous soundtrack underpinning both, and with titles repeatedly superimposed over live-action images. This occurs, for example, at the start of Shot 9, where the full text of Title 1 momentarily persists over an image of the butterfly dangling from a web: "imagine being IMPRISONED because of your beliefs." A moment

later, only the word "IMPRISONED" remains superimposed over the image, and just before the shot ends, only the image of the butterfly remains.

Other momentary superimpositions of text over image occur in Shots 10, 16, 17 and 19. And when Shot 22 is faded in from black, Title 7 persists on screen ("But through all this they still believe their struggle must remain NON-VIOLENT and FREE OF HATRED"), over the metal grid and locked window blocking the butterfly's path to freedom. Then as the image persists, Title 7 is faded out and the spot's end title is faded in ("THE TIBET SOCIETY / Your support is vital") and remains on screen as the live-action image is faded out.

4. TYPOGRAPHY AND TITLE DURATION

The titles in *Firing Squad* are like front-page headlines, printed in bold white capital letters over a black background and easily readable. The viewer is given ample time to take in each of the spot's four titles (Shots 22, 25, 27 and 28) without feeling rushed and the titles are clearly designed to deliver their full payload in a single viewing.

The titles in *Butterfly* are of another nature entirely. Here the white print over black background is small, flickering, sometimes even mobile (the word "IMPRISONED" for example changes position several times in Title 1), and sometimes momentarily overexposed or blurred (as in Title 2). Furthermore, these exceptionally unstable titles are often kept on screen for too short a time for the viewer to catch all the words. As the reader may recall, Arran de Moubray deliberately made the titles

> difficult for people to read, so that they had to really concentrate – almost 'discovering' the facts themselves, rather than being preached to. For this reason I kept a few words on for longer, so that if nothing else, they could associate the images and sounds with key words, and then think about it afterwards. The second reason was that I

> wanted to create (and this may be a little bit pretentious – I don't know!) typography that was simple and distressed – not only mirroring the subject matter, but also to make people feel a little awkward about the whole thing. If a spot is glossy and easy to read, people don't feel it... (p. 114 above)

Concluding note

The following table summarizes most of the points made above:

BUTTERFLY	FIRING SQUAD
live-action mode: metaphoric	live-action mode: realism
non-linear live-action; titles drive the story forward and link live-action to sponsoring organization	linear live-action narrative linked by titles to sponsoring organization and advertised event
overlapping of titles and live-action (shared sound and superimposition of titles over images)	titles and live-action kept separate (soundtrack goes silent under titles and no superimposition of titles over images)
titles in small, flickering, unstable print, intentionally designed to require an effort on the part of the viewer, to mirror the subject matter and to leave the viewer feeling awkward about the issue	titles in large, bold print, held on screen long enough to be easily readable, and designed get their point across to the viewer with maximum impact

Different as they are in many of their representational strategies, *Butterfly* and *Firing Squad* also have some important traits in common. In both spots, for example, the editing rhythm is unusually rapid, with an average shot length of only 2 and 2.3 seconds

respectively (though the figure for *Butterfly* depends of course on how the often overlapping titles are counted).

Furthermore, each spot has a clearly defined aggressor/victim polarity at its core, emphasizing in its portrayal of those suffering human rights abuses: 1) a denial of their right to life by an oppressive government; and 2) their physical harmlessness – the Tibetans' struggle remaining "non-violent" and "free of hatred" (Title 7) and metaphorically embodied by a butterfly, while the crime committed by the firing squad's prisoner had consisted of speaking his mind perhaps through the painting of a canvas. (It is true, however, that the victim in *Firing Squad* is feared by his government, while no such political threat is evoked in *Butterfly*.)

And while the cold-blooded practices of the aggressors are by no means downplayed in either ad, the focus of each of the spots is on supporting the victim, not on stigmatizing an enemy; though once again, in the case of *Firing Squad*, the viewer is invited to consider the disarmingly modest gesture of support he or she is asked to perform – simply seeing the works of Artists in Exile – as an act of defiance.

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