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# Syncretic Narrative: Method for Navigation of Power and Resistance in War and Conflict

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

## **SYNCRETIC NARRATIVE: METHOD FOR NAVIGATION OF POWER AND RESISTANCE IN WAR AND CONFLICT**

by

**DIANE DERR**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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In loving memory of my father, John Melvin Derr III

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

This thesis has been proofread by a third party; no factual changes or additions or amendments to the argument were made as a result of this process.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included composite sessions of the Planetary Collegium, relevant academic publications, lectures, and exhibitions. Relevant conferences were attended at which work was presented and workshops conducted; work has been exhibited at external institutions and papers published.

### **The following external institutions were visited for consultation purposes:**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Syncretic Narrative: Method for Navigation of Power and Resistance in War and Conflict**

**Diane Cain Derr**

This research is developed out of an observed phenomenon of narrative formation in the Arab Spring. Narrative, informed by and reliant upon communication models and technologies, enables us to navigate, negotiate, and elicit meaning both from and within complexity of information. As a primary model of communication during the Arab Spring, the networked model of communication facilitated a dynamic interface between the citizen witness and institutional journalism within the networked bounds of space and time.

This research investigates the operation of the citizen witness in the networked bounds of space and time, grounded in a syncretically generated geopolitical place of the Middle East, interfacing with institutional global journalism. Practice-based research was conducted in order to further investigate the identified theoretical underpinnings in the production, dissemination, and reception of narrative and to examine the role of the spectator in the shifting landscape of the author and the subject. As instruments of investigation the practice-based research incorporates interaction, generated by the spectator, as a primary mode of activation. To address the production of narrative co-created by the citizen witness and institutional journalism, within the networked bounds of space and time, the spectator's indeterminate generation of narrative is leveraged. In order to assess the citizen witness' position in simultaneously operating as the author and the subject, the spectator's physical presence, determined by proximity and duration, was used to consider the



exclusion of the citizen witness from the veracity gap.

This research identifies syncretic narrative as a methodological tool in unpacking narrative formation generated within the networked model of communication in instances of war and conflict. In doing so, it proposes a shift in narrative formation relative to a collapse of distance between the author and the subject due to an increase in the logic of speed.

As such, the methodology of this research is developed through the lens of syncretism and derived from the Event Indexing Situation Model (EISM). To investigate the observed phenomenon this research presents a procedural-driven approach undertaken to identify and analyze the indexes of the protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention. In demonstrating a shift in narrative formation relative to a collapse of distance between the author and the subject due to an increase in the logic of speed consideration is given of George Antonius as an original citizen witness in the syncretically generated geopolitical space and place of the Middle East. Accordingly, it addresses a weaponization of the citizen witness within narrative formation in the networked model of communication.

As an interdisciplinary course of study this research intersects practice and theory within the domains of media art practice, narratology, media studies, journalism, and Middle Eastern politics.

This dissertation is structured as a meta-methodology of the research. The intention of which is to demonstrate the proposed methodology through its own process of analysis in the investigation and exploration of narrative formation.

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## CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1. Introduction

Narrative is a mechanism through which we perceive, understand, navigate, negotiate, and experience complexity of information. It is a tool produced by language that enables us to communicate with this complexity verbally, audibly, visually, and aesthetically. In his 1991 article “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” philosopher Jerome Bruner suggested a shift in focus from the manner in which a narrative, as text, is constructed, to the manner in which it functions as an “instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (p.6). The communication models and technologies through which information is produced, disseminated, and received dynamically inform our understanding of the contained, requisite narrative. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in times of war and conflict.

Historically, in periods of war and conflict, models of communication coupled with communication technologies have inherently driven the



production and reception of narratives, resulting in various understandings and interpretations of said war and conflict. Early censorship and propaganda tactics during the 19th and 20th centuries proved extremely instrumental in garnering national pride and emotive responses toward an enemy. Reliant on one-to-one, one-to-many, and mass models of communication, these tactics operated within a clear hierarchy of power between governments, institutions, and the public at large. Within the networked model of communication, narratives can now be produced, disseminated, and consumed in dynamic, malleable forms no longer contained within the traditional bounds of space and time. Narratives can be emergent; they can continually start, stop, dissipate, and transform. Their manifestations are not simply driven by or from the perspective of a single author targeting a select, set spectator. Rather, they can be driven by an inadvertent, dynamic arrangement between shifting positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator.

Journalism has historically been a principal intermediary of information during war and conflict through its narrative formation of events. As such, it has been instrumental in framing both internal and external positions of power and resistance in war and conflict. In this role, journalism is the director and constructor of narrative; it is directly tethered to communication models and available communication technologies while having a symbiotic relationship with the political framework within which it operates.

Journalism reporting practices in war and conflict have transformed from heavily choreographed and censored images and texts in the late 19th century and 20th century to platforms for interactive reporting in the early part of the 21st century. With the evolution of both communication models and

communication technologies, the mediation and mediatization of war and conflict have continued to evolve. In his text *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, theorist Paul Virilio (1989) asserted that the “history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception” (p. 10). It is our perception driven by speed, Virilio contended, that shapes and informs our conception of the battle. The field of battle cannot be divorced from the field of perception.

### **1.1.1. Problem Statement**

During the Arab Spring<sup>1</sup>, journalism made a radical departure from reporting practices in previous wars and conflicts. This was due to a number of circumstances including the development of social media technologies such as Facebook and Twitter, a dramatic increase in regionally available communication infrastructure technology with access to personal mobile phones and the Internet, and a lack of access for institutional journalists on the ground. The result was a massive surge in both the amount of content being produced by citizen witnesses and a shift in reporting strategies by institutional journalism. The subsequent narrative(s), constructed from these seemingly disparate sources, not only informed an understanding of the conflict, but were also instrumental in a process of informing the construction of the conflict itself. This demonstrated an increase and shift in the mediatization of war. Information was produced and disseminated from multiple places, times, and agents regarding single events, creating an interwoven, intertextual, and inter-subjective narrative

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<sup>1</sup> The etymology and application of this term is addressed in Chapter 4.

mesh. Based on these shifts, the Arab Spring demonstrated both the syncretic production of narrative and the need for a method of analysis in navigating the complexity of events in their narrative formation.

### **1.1.2. Research Aims and Objectives**

This dissertation proposes syncretic narrative, as a methodological tool for navigating and negotiating the generation of narrative, for an alternate approach to addressing the dynamic complexity of narrative formation in power and resistance during instances of war and conflict. In doing so, it seeks to enable the navigation of systems and streams of information developed and disseminated within the networked model of communication.

The term syncretic is used to describe the unification of disparate entities, which results in the creation of new, alternate entities. Traditionally, the term has been considered to operate either as a result or a process. Consequently, syncretism is limiting in cultural and sociopolitical areas of inquiry. Considering syncretism as a process rather than a result allows us to account for the now real-time, dynamic, and indeterminate practices in communication. In his essay “Syncretic Reality: Art, Process, and Potentiality,” British artist and theorist Roy Ascott described syncretism as “now [serving] us in understanding the multi-layered world views, both material and metaphysical, that are emerging from our engagement with pervasive computational technologies and post-biological systems” (2005). Extrapolating from this concept, and proposing syncretism as a methodological tool, allows for a triangulation of information which is produced, disseminated, and received

within the networked model of communication, regarding a single event or set of relational events, to be integrated.

Narrative formation could potentially be generated not solely from a hierarchical top-down model, but rather from a bottom-up model wherein the distance between the author and the subject is decreased, leading to a more substantive engagement with the spectator and emerging world view. This could result in the formation of alternate, corresponding, connecting, and subsequent narratives. Within this processual method, the context and intent of the original source is not diminished nor is the embedded meaning of the original media obfuscated. The syncretic narrative proposes to navigate and negotiate the formation of narrative as a fluid entity in its intersection and integration of generated information, constructing dynamic threads in the intertextual narrative(s) which expand, contract, dissipate, start, stop, are cut off, and begin again within generative and iterative constructs. For example, the narrative of an event, to be clear the same event, constructed from information generated via citizen witness mobile phone footage, coupled with reportage generated from institutional journalism, results in an alternate narrative than narrative generated from a Facebook feed using citizen witness mobile phone footage. Each engenders, or rather speaks to, a different spectator, either internal or external. Each imbues meaning onto the subject differently and portrays the subject alternatively. The aesthetics and embedded meaning of one media inherently inform the reading of the other and vice versa. When “read” in their totality, an alternate narrative can be syncretically formed. This is in stark contrast to standard modes of information production, dissemination, and reception, through one-to-one, one-to-many, and mass models of

communication. Within these models of communication streams of information function in isolation producing standalone silo'ed narratives.

In their article "Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives" Palestinian scholars and activists, Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat characterize the structure and the function of narrative in conflict stating:

Whenever conflict arises, narratives diverge and multiply. Their dual purpose is to demonize and delegitimize the other and to emphasize the rightness, authenticity, legitimacy, and justice of one's own claims. For instance, in the dispute over who "owns" Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians brandish arguments from history and religion going back to antiquity (p. 55).

Daoudi and Barakat further describe the broad conditions of narrative in conflict, stating:

The entry of the term 'narrative' into the political science lexicon is fairly recent. It implies that the story being told by one side is not identical to the story told by the other. Narratives are designed to support certain positions; once endorsed by a critical mass of people, they become national narratives. Whenever a conflict arises, narratives diverge and multiply. The sharper the conflict, the wider the narratives diverge, and the more the competing narratives clash. Moreover, with time the prevailing dominant national narratives may change, evolve, and fluctuate, particularly in crisis situations. While some narratives change over time, others usually remain static (p. 60).

Within this binary dichotomy of construction and function, narrative, as an instrument, is limited in its ability to facilitate or provide opportunity for a fluid formation of wherein the integration of potentially divergent information may intersect and merge in the production of meaning.

In his text, “What makes a narrative? Interrogating the story of the ‘Arab Spring’” Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013), a cultural theorist and a faculty member at the London School of Economics, conducts an assessment of narrative formation and propagation within and around the Arab Spring through an examination of the fundamental aspects of where, who, why, what, and when. Al-Ghazzi attributes the chronology of events, across the region, as a principal element in “understanding how the Arab Spring narrative unfolded” (2013). He cites western involvement and engagement in the formation of narrative, evident in Western responses to uprisings in various countries. Uprisings and protesters in Bahrain, a “gas-rich Western ally”, were largely excluded from a broad narrative of the Arab Spring and did not receive significant support from Western countries. Whereas Libya, a gas-rich nation which was not considered a western ally and was “ruled by the erratic Al-Qadhafi,” received a significant level of support from Western nations (Al-Ghazzi, 2013).

The negotiation of power and resistance within war and conflict has become increasingly complex due to the continued development of communication technologies, the evolution of communication models, and the political framework within which they operate. The proposed syncretic narrative

presents a method for an increased understanding of the complex negotiation and navigation of power and resistance in war and conflict.

The primary aims of this thesis are as follows:

- to identify the syncretic protagonist in relation to the shifting roles and positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator in the mediation and mediatization process in war and conflict through the lens of dromology;
- to investigate the production, dissemination, and reception of narrative formation within bounds of space and time in the networked model of communication;
- to identify parameters of the Middle East as a geopolitical, syncretic space and/or place, in framing the mediated events of the Arab Spring;
- to investigate the position of the citizen witness, relative to institutional journalism, within narrative formation in the networked model of communication.

### **1.1.3. Research Question**

Based on the defined research territory, the primary research questions of this dissertation are as follows:

- How can syncretic narrative be applied as a methodological tool to

analyse the entangled formation of narrative in power and resistance in war and conflict?

- What new phenomena of narrative produced in the networked model of communication and observed in the Arab Spring can be identified and analyzed?
- What potential in narrative formation is afforded in the network bounds of space and time?
- How can the role of the citizen witness within the Arab Spring be addressed within the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator?

### **Research Methods**

Driven by these research questions I have structured this dissertation through a meta-methodology based on syncretism and derived from the Event-Indexing Situation Model (EISM). Within this methodology I have used a triangulation of methods including qualitative content analysis, literature reviews, case studies, and practice-based research. Throughout this research the relationship between, and within, the author, the subject, and the spectator, has been seminal in unpacking a syncretic narrative formation. Therefore practice-based research is applied in the methodology of this research as both an instrument of investigation and analysis. This application was determined by an identified need to galvanize and activate the position of the spectator within the bounds of network space and time relative to geopolitical and chronopolitical place.



Practice-based research is positioned within the structure and framework of this dissertation in an unconventional manner. In an effort to effectively demonstrate and assess the formation of the proposed syncretic narrative within the meta-methodology the practice-based research *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* and *Activating Distention* are positioned within chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

The practice-based research attempts to enable an investigation of the identified theoretical underpinnings in the production, dissemination, and reception of narrative and the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator within the networked model of communication through constructed hybrid narrative spaces. *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* in chapter 2 investigates the citizen witness' role as syncretic protagonist. Through the system's configuration, the spectator's physical presence activates a collision of their simultaneous positions as author and subject of the citizen witness. In an effort to unpack the of the citizen witness', the project aimed to analyze an observed collision of the author and the subject identified through the lens of, what Virilio defines as, dromology. In doing so, the position of the spectator was leveraged, operating as activator through a physical, bodily engagement. *Activating Distention* in chapter 3 investigates the production of narrative co-created by the citizen witness and institutional journalism. Framed by the networked bounds of space and time, the spectator is able to generate their own dynamic narrative from the two divergent sources of video footage produced by the citizen witness and institutional journalism - positioning them as both the author and the spectator. This configuration was developed in an effort to explore the potentiality of a contrapuntal reading enabled through the polyperspectivity of the narrative matrix. The project intends to analyze a dual

operation of the spectator as the author with an infrastructure of the space of flows within the public sphere.

The practice-based research is positioned within the respective chapters in an effort to unpack the identified, fundamental components of the of the author, the subject, and the spectator while maintaining the structural framework of the proposed syncretic narrative in its formation and reflective assessment of the documents meta-methodology.

### **1.1.4. Methodology**

This research developed out of an observed phenomenon of narrative generated within the networked model of communication evident in the Arab Spring. The research has been conducted through a triangulation of literature reviews, practice-based investigations, qualitative content analysis, and case studies.

Throughout this research, I focused on the interfacing of citizen journalism and institutional journalism as the pivotal point wherein narrative threads within the networked model of communication culminate and become manifest. Citizen journalism refers to an engagement of citizens in journalistic activities, or as Stuart Allen (2013), author and Professor of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University described it: “ordinary individuals temporarily adopt[ing] the role of journalist in order to participate in news making, often spontaneously during a time of crisis, accident, tragedy or disaster when they happen to be present on the scene” (p. 9). In his article ““Citizen Journalism”

in the Syrian Uprising: Problematizing Western Narratives in a Local Context” Al-Ghazzi (2014) explores the problematic nature of a prescriptive Western definition, understanding, and approach to citizen journalism within the context of the Middle East and the uprisings constituting the Arab Spring. According to Al-Ghazzi, the “concept of citizen journalism is implicated in this Westphalian imaginary and the modernist and rationalist bias of Western traditions of citizenship and journalism, which have different genealogies when situated in an Arab context” (2014, p. 444). Rather, an understanding and identification of the citizen engaged in a journalistic act or activity, in the formation of narrative, must be driven and informed by context at the local level. I have used the phrase “institutional journalism” in referencing news organizations as a means of eliciting the embedded political and corporate stakeholders which inevitably impact their journalistic practice. As I progressed in my research this shifted to a focus on an interface between citizen witnessing and institutional journalism. This shift was due to two primary factors: the identified significance of the citizen witnesses’ connection to the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, and their contextual position, as identified by Al-Ghazzi, within the “defining” roles of the author, the subject, and the spectator in the mediation and mediatization of war and conflict. The citizen witness, as opposed to the citizen journalist (a developing area of study), is valued for their subjectivity and their individual, distinctive connection to the intricacies of the event in its mediation and mediatization.

This research is grounded in the premise that syncretic narrative within the networked model of communication is in a constant state of flux and flow, with shared authorship and “dynamic,” indeterminate reception. When situated as a mechanism in war and conflict, it has the potential to be instrumental in

## CHAPTER 1

traversing territories of power and resistance. Therefore, a methodological approach was developed in order to effectively navigate such a formation. Modeled on syncretism, the approach of this thesis developed through the following dimensions: Mapping the Protagonist, Formation in Space and Time, Causation of Space and Place, Intention of the Protagonist, and Syncretization. This methodological framework is derived from the Event-Indexing Situation Model (EISM) developed by narratologists Rolf Zwaan, Mark Langston, and Arthur Graesser.

Mental (situation) models, according to the psychologist Philip Johnson-Laird (1983), incorporate the following dimensions (at a minimum): temporal, spatial, causal, intention, and person/object-related information. According to Johnson-Laird (1983) mental models are:

a central and unifying role in representing objects, states of affairs, sequences of events, the way the world is, and the social and psychological activities of daily life. They enable individuals to make inferences and predictions, to understand phenomena, to decide what actions to take and to control its execution, and above all to experience events by proxy; they allow language to be used to create representations comparable to those deriving from direct acquaintance with the world; and they relate words to the world by way of conception and perception (p. 397).

The Event-Indexing Situation Model is a framework for readers or viewers in the comprehension of a text. In their article “The Construction of Situation Models in Narrative Comprehension: An Event-Indexing Model,” Rolf Zwaan,

Mark Langston, and Arthur Graesser contended that within this model, events are the building blocks of integrated situation models and that each event may be indexed in five dimensions: time, space, causation, motivation (intention), and protagonist. The Event-Indexing Situation Model posits that as we perceive narrative, we discretize the narrative into events, or chunks of narratively important content (Zwann, Langston, & Graesser, 1995, p. 292).

In their article “Indexer: A Computational Model of the Event-Indexing Situation Model for Characterizing Narratives,” Cardona-Rivera (et al.) proposed the “indexer” as a tool for determining saliency of event experience. They contended that the indexer model would enable “an AI planner to generate a narrative which could directly operate on the salience of events in the audience’s mind” (Cardona-Rivera, Cassell, Ware, & Young, 2012, p. 37). As a “cognitive model of online narrative comprehension,” they proposed this framing for narrative formation of events, from the perspective of the viewer, based on the five indices of time, space, protagonist, causality, and intention (Flores & Thue, p.76). In their chapter “Goals as Generators of Activation in Narrative Understanding” included in *Narrative Comprehension, Causality, and Coherence: Essays in Honor of Tom Trabasso*, psychologists Gordon P. Bower and Mike Rinck (1999) stated:

Readers use their model of the referential situation to interpret a text, to draw inferences, to connect together different parts of a text, and to update their knowledge of a changing situation. That is, they imagine the mental tokens (representing persons, entities) changing their relationships as the text describes the characters moving around in the settings, performing actions as they carry out plans to achieve their

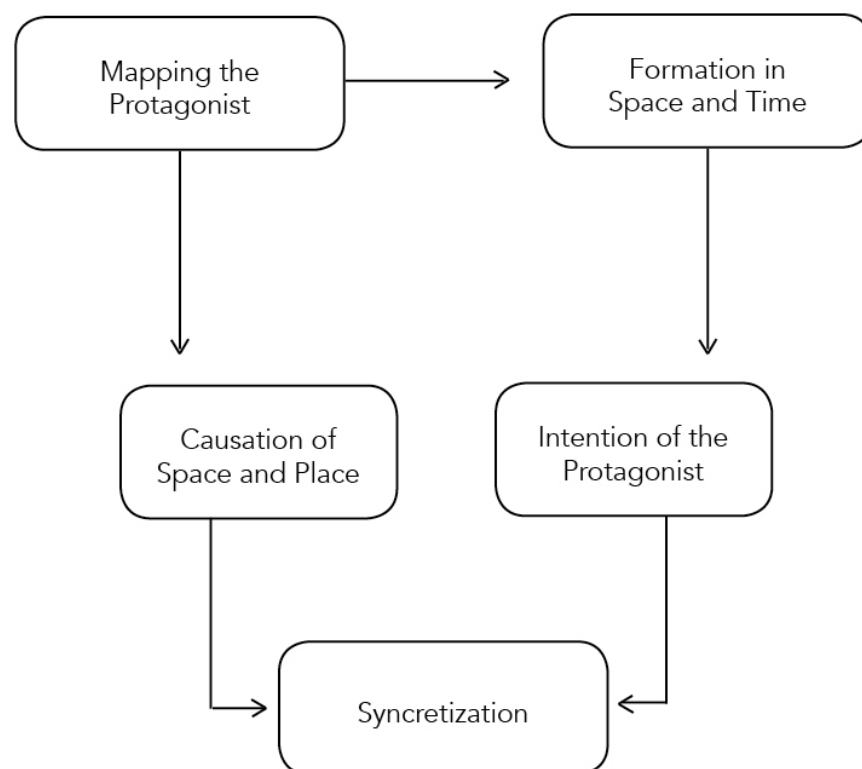
goals. (Goldman, Graesser, Broek, & Trabasso, 1999, p. 111).

The event index as outlined by Cardona-Rivera (et al.) consists of five indexes. These include the time index, which is the time frame in which the event occurs; the space index, which is the space in which the event takes place; the protagonist index, which is the main character; the causal index, which is the event's causal status regarding previous events; and the intention index, which is the event's relatedness to the intentions of a character. The Event-Indexing Situation Model is an interpretive method in outlining the formal characteristics leading to the viewer's constructed narrative. Extrapolating from their model and approach, this thesis will attempt to locate and identify the dimensions of the Protagonist, Space and Time, Causation, and Intention.

- **Mapping the Protagonist:** Assessment of the institutionalized, prescriptive roles of the author, the subject, and the spectator in the narrative mediation of events in war and conflict. Identification of the citizen witness as protagonist within narrative formation in the space and time of the networked model of communication.
- **Formation in Space and Time:** Exploration of the narrative production, dissemination, and reception within the networked model of communication.
- **Causation in Space and Place:** Investigation of the historical, geopolitical space and place of the Middle East and the Arab Spring.
- **Intention of the Protagonist:** Identifying the weaponization of the citizen witness (protagonist) based on content analysis through the dimensions of Protagonist and Space and Time.

- **Syncrretization:** Locating the syncretic form and function as a methodological tool.

These dimensions are used as the guiding framework for structuring this research. This dissertation is structured as a meta-methodology of the research. The intention of this is to demonstrate the proposed methodology through its own process of analysis in its investigation and exploration of narrative formation. The following diagram illustrates this meta-methodology.



**Figure 1** - Meta-Methodology, Diagram of Dissertation Structure. Source: Diane Derr

### **1.1.5. Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline**

Based on the above-mentioned meta-methodology this dissertation is apportioned into seven chapters.

Chapter 2, *Locating the Syncretic Protagonist Through a Dromological Lens*, attempts to identify the dimension of protagonist through an assessment of the shifting roles of the author, the subject, and the spectator in the mediation and mediatization of war and conflict through the lens of dromology. This chapter will assess these positions in six previous instances of war and conflict, addressing the instrumental role of media and journalism practice in the construction of power and resistance in war and conflict. Following this assessment of previous configurations of the author, the subject, and the spectator in war and conflict, this chapter will attempt to locate the citizen witness of the Arab Spring within these positions. In doing so, practice-based research is employed in order to further unpack the position of the citizen witness' simultaneously operating as both the author and the subject. The project's architecture is used as an instrument in analyzing an observed collision of the author and the subject in the position of the citizen witness; in speculating on the position of the spectator operating as activator; and in considering the spectator's physical engagement in their position as activator. Additional methods used in this chapter include a literature review and qualitative content analysis of videos produced by citizen witnesses.



Chapter 3, *Narrative and Network Bounds*, attempts to identify the dimension of space and time of narrative formation within the networked model of communication. The aim of this chapter is to hypothesize on the narrative formation in the space and time of the networked model of communication through an assessment of key narrative constructions within what Manuel Castells identified as the “Space of Flows” and the power of the public sphere in the network society. Practice-based research is undertaken in order to investigate a co-creation of narrative formation by the citizen witness and institutional journalism in the space and time of the networked model of communication. Through the creation of a hybrid narrative space the project analyzed a dual operation of the spectator as the author. Subsequently, it considered contrapuntal reading through the spectators’ simultaneous position as author and addressed an infrastructure of the space of flows within the public sphere. This intervention by the spectator could potentially enable a contrapuntal reading. Additional methods used in this chapter include literature reviews and qualitative content analysis of videos produced by citizen witnesses.

Chapter 4, *Geopolitical Space and Place*, aims to locate the dimension of causation in order to identify a foundation upon which future events of the Arab Spring will develop. The intent of this chapter is not to propose a didactic, cause-and-effect construct between colonialism, nationalism, or post- colonialism and the events of the Arab Spring. Rather, the intent it is to conceptualize and consider the Middle East as a syncretically generated place and the Arab Spring as a syncretically generated space. Therefore, this chapter will survey history of the Middle East stemming from Western involvement following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the etymology of the term “Middle

East.” Additionally, it will map the chronology and configuration of events characterized as the Arab Spring within the four identified countries and address the etymology of the term “Arab Spring.” Methods used in this chapter include a literature review and content analysis. These methods are being applied in order to ascertain a foundation from which the proposed syncretic protagonist and the dimension of space and time in syncretic narrative formation may operate. The social, cultural and political landscape of the Middle East is layered, multi-faceted, and highly complex. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to conduct and include a literature review in an effort to frame and ground the activities being investigated within the scope of this research. The structure of this chapter is divergent from preceding and subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5, *Case Studies: Identifying a Weaponization of the Citizen Witness*, aims to unpack the dimension of intention through an investigation of four case studies: Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, December 17, 2010, Sidi Bouzid; Anderson Cooper, Cairo Attack, February 2, 2011; Mediation of Muammar Gaddafi’s Death, October 20, 2011, Sirte, Libya; and Maria Colvin, February 22, 2012 bombing. The dimension of intention is concerned with mechanisms through which the citizen witness (protagonist) and international institutional journalism are interfacing in their formation of narrative. Building from the preceding chapters, the case studies will be conducted through qualitative content analysis of the dimensions presented in chapters two and three: protagonist and space and time. Methods used in this chapter include a qualitative content analysis and four case studies.

Chapter 6, *Syncretic Function: As a Methodological Tool*, aims to hypothesize syncretic narrative as a methodological tool and identify its form

and function demonstrated in the meta-methodology of this dissertation.

Addressing the etymology of the term “syncretic,” this chapter will consider its historical application in territories of inquiry and its conception as a result and as a process. It will speculate on its potential as a methodological tool, within systems of mediated communication, through reflection and assessment of its application in the meta-methodology of this dissertation.

Chapter 7, *Conclusion* will discuss and summarize the primary research aims and outcomes. Additionally, this chapter will discuss limitations encountered and future directions.

#### **1.1.6. Contribution to Knowledge**

This research offers a potential contribution of knowledge in the following areas:

- identification of syncretic narrative as a methodological tool for analysis of narrative formation in the networked model of communication in instances of war and conflict;
- demonstration of a shift in narrative formation relative to a collapse of distance between the author and the subject due to an increase in the logic of speed;
- consideration of George Antonius as an original citizen witness in the geopolitical space and place of the Middle East;
- consideration of the weaponization of the citizen witness within

narrative formation in the networked model of communication.

### **1.1.7. Author Background**

Due to the nature of this dissertation I have included this subsection contextualizing my background in order to inform the reader of how this research is situated within my professional practice, activities, and objectives.

My media based, interdisciplinary practice is framed within the areas of narratology, interaction aesthetics, critical design, and systems of communication. Within this framework I have two primary areas of inquiry; the construction of inter-textual narratives across systems of communication; and the phenomenology of interaction enabled by emergent media technologies. As such my practice has been continually grounded in an investigation of the role and formation of narrative in perception of experience. My 2007 master's thesis *The Marriage* explored a re-configuration of narrative driven by the year 1865 and based on geopolitical activities occurring that year including: the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, the activities of the American Civil War, and the political and colonial implications of the processing of the sugar plant. The thesis examined a confluence of binary and non-binary forces, culminating in alternative narrative threads demonstrated through the production of a series of photographic images, videos, and audio pieces. Upon completion of my Master of Interdisciplinary Art and Media (MFA), I continued to develop my research through creative practice in numerous forms including the production of interactive installations and video projects exploring the role of the spectator in the generation of narrative, and engagements in cross-disciplinary

collaborations assessing the role of narrative in spectator engagement with historical, intangible data. I have also conducted workshops investigating the role of narrative in data-driven visualization and navigation of urban areas. Additionally, I have published papers and given lectures and conference presentations at numerous venues internationally on the intersection of mediation and mediatization, narrative, and the syncretic.

In 2010 I relocated from the United States of America to the State of Qatar upon accepting a faculty position in the Graduate Studies in Design program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar). As a Westerner with a media driven creative research practice living in the Middle East, I became acutely aware of the forming levels of mediation in events contained within and around the Arab Spring through discussions with my students, colleagues, and individuals in the region.

Media in creative practice is an inherently political engagement. The culmination of my professional practice coupled with my relocation led to my observation of a phenomenon of narrative in the networked model of communication which I found evident in a dynamic convergence of events collectively characterized as the Arab Spring.

#### **1.1.8. Delimitations**

This dissertation traverses a territory of inquiry that is both nebulous and contentious. It is not an analysis or treatise on the political, social, or cultural history or contemporary affairs of the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region,

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the religion of Islam, or regional, national or international terrorism. Although it does, and must, take the political frameworks of the MENA region into account in addressing the Arab Spring, it is not a commentary in support of or against the political landscape of the region or the substantial and complex history of colonialism or postcolonialism.

Since the start of this research in 2011, significant events have occurred relative to this topic. These include, but are not limited to: Brexit, the U.S. Trump Administration's use of social media in reaction to journalism practices, Russia's possible usage and manipulation of social media in order to impact the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and the possible Facebook/Cambridge analytics infraction. In all likelihood, there will continue to be significant events relative to this topic while this document is under review.

This dissertation is addressing a specific phenomenon of narrative within the networked model of communication, observed within the very specific time and place of the Arab Spring in the Middle East. It is not addressing this phenomenon as potentially evident within political configurations in Britain, the United States of America, Russia, Europe or elsewhere.

## CHAPTER 2 | PROTAGONIST

### 2. PROTAGONIST

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### 2.1. Locating the Syncretic Protagonist Through a Dromological Lens

This chapter attempts to identify the dimension of syncretic protagonist. In order to do so, it will locate the triangulated positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator in the mediation of war and conflict through the lens of dromology. These positions have historically been instrumental in the mediation and mediatization of war and conflict within journalistic practice. Media and journalism practice have been instrumental in the construction of power and resistance in war and conflict. Their collective configuration has been driven by transforming and evolving communication technologies and models in relation to government and institutional stakeholders. The role of the protagonist, within the positions of the author, the subject and the spectator,

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in war and conflict has been impacted by communication technology and institutional and/or government oversight. As such, the protagonist has been instrumental in shaping and increasingly constructing war and conflict during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Locating the configuration of a syncretic protagonist could provide insight in identifying evolving constructs in the construction of war and conflict.

The first section, *Positions: Author, Subject, and Spectator*, will address the evolution of these positions within journalism practices with increased modes of acceleration in the logic of speed in the Crimean War, World War I, World War II, the Palestinian / Israeli conflict, the American / Vietnam conflict and the Iraq War. Evident in these select wars and conflicts, the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator of mediated events was largely dictated by government oversight, objectives, and agendas coupled with available communication technologies. The section will address ways in which these factors have had an impact on the role of the protagonist within the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator. The second section, *Identifying the Citizen Witness in the Arab Spring*, attempts to identify the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist of the Arab Spring in the collapse of distance between the roles of the author and the subject due to an acceleration in the logic of speed. The Arab Spring, in its collective configuration, operated in a distinct configuration due in large part to developing communication technologies that enabled the position of the citizen witness. This chapter will conclude with the practice-based research, *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*. This investigation was conducted as a means to further explore key findings in locating the protagonist through a dromological lens, unpacked in the preceding literature review. The system's architecture is designed to enable an analysis of



an observed collision of the author and the subject in the position of the citizen witness. Additionally, it speculates on the position of the spectator as activator, and consider the spectator's physical engagement in their position as activator. Driven by an acceleration in the logic of speed culminating in a collision between the act of authorship and the simultaneous position of the subject it will address the citizen witness in the Arab Spring as the protagonist of the syncretic narrative: the "death witness."

### **Speed and Position**

The French cultural theorist Paul Virilio is a seminal figure and pioneer of a substantial body of knowledge in the territory of politics of perception as phenomena of warfare. His theoretical developments are deeply rooted in a phenomenological perspective heavily informed by Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This is evident in that a central focus of his work revolves around the relationship of technology to the body in sensorial, lived experience. Principal among his territory of research is dromology – the "science"<sup>2</sup> or logic of speed. Virilio devised this term from the Greek word "dromos" meaning "race" or "race track." Dromology, according to Virilio, is concerned with speed and the way in which it structures phenomena of perception in shaping (social and political) space. In this conception he is not addressing space as a geometric, 3D construct but rather a sensorial experience understood by changes in the speed of movement in terms of acceleration and deceleration. In *Lost Dimension* he defined acceleration and deceleration as "the only dimensions of space, of a speed-space, a dromosphereic space which would no longer be defined as substantial and

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<sup>2</sup> Although Virilio does reference science in terms of the theory of relativity and Newtonian physics he is not applying natural or physical scientific concepts to the components of dromology; rather he is addressing our perception of the world based on the phenomena of sensorial experience.

extensive, as volume, mass, density...extension or surface” (Virilio, 1991, p. 102). The logic of speed operates as both a process and a result. As stated in his text *Negative Horizon*, it is “a destiny at the same time as being a destination” (Virilio, 2005, p. 42).

This dromosphereic space, as he defines it, has two primary elements, movement and light: the perception of the movement of objects in relation to the body, and light which enables our ability to perceive such movement. In *Open Sky* Virilio (1997) described his approach to the speed of movement, claiming, “In effect, speed does not solely permit us to move more easily, above all it permits us to see, to hear, to perceive and thus to conceive more intensively the present world” (p. 12). In *Negative Horizon* he used the example of a person traveling in a car, viewing space through the car’s windscreen. In demonstrating Virilio’s conception of dromosphereic space as a speed-space he described:

the ground [fond] of the landscape rises up to the surface, inanimate objects are exhumed from the horizon and come each in turn to permeate the glaze of the windscreen, perspective becomes animated, the vanishing point becomes a point of attack sending forth its lines of projection onto the voyeur–voyageur, the objective of the continuum becomes a focal point that casts its rays on the dazzled observer, fascinated by the progression of landscapes. The generative axis of an apparent movement materializes suddenly through the speed of the machine, but this concretization is totally relative to the moment, for the object that hurls itself upon the layer of the windscreen will also be as quickly forgotten as perceived, stored away in the prop room, it will soon disappear in the rear window (Virilio, 2005, p. 105).

The second element that forms the dromosphere is speed-light or the light of speed which exposes perception of the movement. It is the speed at which light makes phenomena visible. Based on Virilio's phenomenological approach to the logic of speed as an integral component of sensorial experience, temporality and spatiality cannot be divorced. They are fundamentally tethered to one another in our perception of phenomena. As speed changes, our corresponding perception of time and space change with it. Virilio proposes a shift from chronological time to what he refers to as "light-time." He proposes a procession of events in their "exposure" rather than a successive order of events in duration (past, present, future).

For Virilio, speed itself is not the phenomena; rather it is the delineation of speed which is fundamental (Virilio, 1999). In his assessment, Thomas Hauer (2014) asserted that "the history of the world is not only about the political economy of riches, that is, wealth, money, capital, but also about political economy of speed. If time is money, as they say, then speed is power. You see it with velocity of the predators, of the cavalry, of railways, of ships and maritime power" (p. 1). This is evident in the velocity of modes of networked communication such as instant messaging and social media.

According to Virilio "the speed at which something happens may change its essential nature, and that which moves with speed quickly comes to dominate that which is slower. Whoever controls the territory possesses it. Possession of territory is not primarily about laws and contracts, but first and foremost a matter of movement and circulation" (Armstrong, 2000). As the logic of speed continues to accelerate, the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator have continued to shift and evolve in the production,

dissemination, and reception of information. This is evident in the wars and conflicts surveyed below.

According to Paul Virilio (1989), “there is no war without representation” (p. 6). For representation to operate, the positions of authorship, subject, and spectatorship are necessary. These positions in narrative formation are bound to the construct of power and resistance. Derived from Virilio’s delineation of the dromosphere, we can potentially identify the positions within our perception in the increasing acceleration of speed: the author as the windscreen, the subject as the objects moving through the horizon into the vanishing point, and the spectator as the car traveler in the vehicle. When considering the flow of information in a traditional narrative, the author is disseminating the subject to the spectator (figure 2). It can be linear, nonlinear hierarchical, or nonhierarchical. It can exist in communication models of one-to-one, one-to-many, and mass. The crucial element or distinction is the relationship that exists between the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator, and how they are interfacing with one another in their respective configuration(s). However, when approaching a flow of information from a dromological perspective, the author becomes the mediator between subject and spectator (figure 3). The speed of movement and the speed of light, in the rate of transfer and instance of access between the object (subject) and the car traveler (spectator), become orchestrated by the windscreen (author).



**Figure 2** - Information flow in a traditional narrative. Source: Diane Derr



**Figure 3** - Information flow through dromological lens. Source: Diane Derr

Below, I have attempted to approach these positions through the lens of dromology, assessing the speed of exposure shifting between the positions of the authorship of journalism, the subject of information coupled with the medium, and the spectatorship of the viewer. In doing so the following section surveys five previous instances of war and conflict: the Crimean War, World War I, World War II, the Palestinian / Israeli conflict, the American / Vietnam conflict, and the Iraq (Gulf) War.

### **Journalism and Media**

Journalism and media in war and conflict have been contingent upon developments in communication technologies and models of communication. Since the Crimean War's initial orchestration of the battlefield for the spectator's benefit, the relationship between institutional journalism and war has been twofold: the battle of the territory of perception, and the arbitrator of power

and resistance between institutional governance (albeit governments or corporations) and the public. These constructs are dependent on available communication technologies.

According to journalist John Lloyd (2011), the power of journalism stems from its “organization into professional institutions.” Lloyd asserted:

All journalism is a matter of power, for only by exercising power of various sorts can journalism have any effect. That power includes the major one – to stimulate and organise public opinion in one direction or another, and in so doing put pressure on the political level – being part of the political process, which journalism has always in some measure been ( 2011).

As the intermediary of information in situations of war and conflict, journalism can be understood as a point of negotiation between, and instrumental in, the formation of positions in power and resistance. This act of negotiation is tethered to two primary elements: the communication technologies in its employ, and the political frameworks within which it operates. These elements have historically had an intertwined relationship. This landscape of media and journalism in the production, dissemination, and reception of information in war and conflict can most aptly be considered and understood in terms of mediation and mediatization.

### **Mediation and Mediatization**

The concept of mediation, developed in large part by Roger Silverstone, Director of Media at the London School of Economics and Political Science, is a tool or device that negotiates an understanding of information in terms of

its production and dissemination. As both communication technologies and structures have evolved so has the role and application of mediation. The development of mediation in war and conflict has heavily crafted and shaped the result and process of narrative formation. This is evident in the use of censorship and propaganda, and reflective of the state of communication technology. Roger Silverstone (2002) delineated:

Mediation, in the sense in which I am using the term, describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the world wide web), are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life (p. 3).

In his text *The Mediation of Power*, Aeron Davis, Professor of Political Communication and Co-Director of the Political Economy Research Centre (PERC) at Goldsmiths, University of London, described mediation as “social shaping” in social and political practices. He sees his delineation of the term as opening useful questions such as, “how do individuals and institutions use media and communication, and, conversely, how do media and communication shape individuals and institutions? How, in other words, do individuals in their use of media, inadvertently alter their behaviors, relations and discursive practices?” (Davis, 2007, p. 13). Media scholar Nick Couldry (2008) described mediation as “the overall effect of media institutions existing in contemporary societies, the overall difference that media make by being there in our social world” (p. 379). Mediation can be seen as an essential element in the act of communication. In each of these delineations, mediation is a conduit in the

transmission of information. It is not considered to be implicated in the shape or formation of the information with which it is producing or disseminating.

Conversely, the concept of mediatization, developed in large part by media and communication theorists Stig Hjarvard and Winfried Schulz, has a more complicated and complex relationship to, with, and between the author and the spectator of information. The mechanisms through which media is produced (photography, telegraph, film), disseminated (news-reels, newspapers, the internet), and received (theatre, posters, television, radio, and handheld personal devices with multiple points of input and entry), is inherently tethered to the actual construction of the information. According to Hjarvard (2007):

As a concept mediatization denotes the processes through which core elements of a cultural or social activity (e.g. politics, religion, language) assume media form. As a consequence, the activity is to a greater or lesser degree performed through interaction with a medium, and the symbolic content and the structure of the social and cultural activities are influenced by media environments which they gradually become more dependent upon (p. 3).

The past century witnessed an increase in an institutional understanding of the importance of perception of the battlefield. Initially, censorship and propaganda played substantial roles in the mediation of information in war and conflict. It was primarily an issue of control. As technology evolved, and along with it communication models and structures, there grew an institutional manipulation of the system of information with an increasing acknowledgement of the impact and importance of perception. It is through the mediation and mediatization of



war and conflict that we can begin to see the logic of speed in its acceleration – in shifting the positions and subsequent roles of the author, the subject, and the spectator. Evident through the wars and conflicts surveyed in this chapter is the development of mediation and the development and incorporation of mediatization. As scholars Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin pointed out, these are not mutually exclusive entities; rather, they operate on a variable scale (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010).

In the development of mediatization in the narrative of war and conflict, media is not only a force in shaping the conflict, it became a tool in the construction of the conflict itself. Mediatization is twofold, both shaping political discourse and operating as a weapon of war and conflict; it became an active force in the acceleration of speed in Virilio’s conception of dromology.

Hoskins and O’Loughlin referred to mediatization as a process wherein cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the embedded development of the media’s influence, stating that “As a result of changes in the communications technologies available to news media, citizen media and to militaries themselves, media are becoming part of the practices of warfare to the point that the conduct of war cannot be understood unless one carefully accounts for the role of media in it” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010, p. 4). They contended that mediatization has gone through two phases to date. The first is characterized as “international news coverage dominated by a small number of western media organizations and driven by satellite television” [...] with “actions and effects largely predictable and measurable” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010, p. 19). The central questions in the first phase address the mechanisms of mass media production and dissemination as well

as the causal relationship between broadcast media and the spectator. They characterized the second phase of mediatization by explaining that “Continuous connectivity creates diffuse audiences and messages and media themselves are weaponized” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010, p.19). The central question of this phase considers the transformed role of the actors, the design of a reciprocal relationship between war and media, and the resulting analysis of war. Building on the work of Paul Virilio, Hoskins and O’Loughlin contended that mediatization is essential in war and conflict as the perception of war is inherent in the function of war. In his collection of essays *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard contended that the Gulf War was not in fact an actual war, due to its virtual reality of simulated camouflage relative to the human experience of the war. The mediatization caused a lack of awareness to viewing spectators of the on-the-ground casualties of Iraqi civilians. To the hyperreality of the Western spectator the fighting did not really take place (Baudrillard, 1991). Due to both the reportage by institutional journalism mitigated by government oversight and the state of communication technologies, perception of the Iraq (Gulf) War functioned in a virtual reality.

Communication scholar Mette Mortensen addressed mediatization of war as a process of interrelation with two dimensions. The first dimension refers to a top-down model which involves the “interdependency between the media and state/military” (Mortensen, 2015, p. 47). She framed her description of this dimension with the war propaganda of World War I and discussed the evolving relationship between media and the state through the Iraq War, primarily based on communication technologies. The second dimension refers to a bottom-up model wherein “citizens, grassroots, NGO’s, activists, military employees, and others engaged in either structured, strategic or random, uncoordinated acts of

publicly circulating and recirculating information” (Mortensen, 2015, p. 47). She described this dimension as being “by definition decentered because of how it may be initiated by various actors” (Mortensen, 2015, p. 48), in that there is not an “absolute dominance of actors from one dimension or the other, but rather [...] with the rise of digital media, the power distribution between elites and non-elites finds few forms and patterns” (Mortensen, 2015, p. 49).

### **2.1.1. Positions: Author, Subject, and Spectator**

This section will survey the relationship and trajectory between war and media in six Western wars and conflicts during the 19th and 20th centuries. These include the Crimean War, World War I, World War II, the Palestinian / Israeli Conflict, the American / Vietnam Conflict, and the Iraq (Gulf) War. This section will look at the role of mediation and mediatization through dromology. In assessing the roles of the author, the subject, and the spectator, these select wars and conflicts each demonstrate shift(s) in mediation and mediatization in the structuring of power and resistance. The intention is not to conduct an analysis of the political implications or ramifications of the wars, but rather to consider the evolving landscape of media and journalism used in their construction of the positions of the authors, the subjects, and the spectators.

In order to foreground the position of journalism in the Arab Spring in terms of mediation and mediatization, I have surveyed the role of journalism informed by the relationship between war and media in the aforementioned conflicts. These wars and conflicts have been selected based on their broad and varied demonstration of the evolving relationship between war and media

in relation to developing communication technologies beginning with the 19th century Crimean War through the 20th century Iraq (Gulf) War. They are by no means demonstrative of the full impacts and implications of the conflicts themselves, due to the scope of this research.

### **Crimean War, 1853 - 1856**

In his text *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War*, historian Ulrich Keller (2001) identified the Crimean War as “the first media war” (p. 251). According to Keller (2001) it was the first conflict orchestrated for the media (i.e. for the spectator) and “was the first historical instance when modern institutions such as picture journalism, lithographic presses and metropolitan show business combined to create war in their own image” (p. ix). Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2010) attributed Keller’s text with highlighting the shift in representation, stating that it “illuminates a significant phase in the history of shifting representations of warfare, along with the shifting perceptions of warfare by those whose collective name wars are often fought or claimed to be fought in” (p. 4). The mediation of the Crimean War was an initial and principal step in the developing role and impact of information and communication technology in the reporting practices and politics of war and conflict.

Media coverage of the Crimean War was not solely due to the development of the camera and the press as communication technologies. The technological development of the steamship and the electronic telegraph enabled journalists to send dispatches directly from the battlefield. Two principal journalists (among others) attributed with providing significant coverage of the war were William Howard Russell and Roger Fenton. Russell, a *Times of London* reporter, documented the errors by the British military and

the abysmal hospital and military camp conditions. His reporting has been attributed to enabling the British government to permit Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole to join the front lines. Additionally, his reportage has been attributed to inspiring Alfred Lord Tennyson to author his poem “Charge of the Light Brigade” based on the event of the same name, at the Battle of Balacava. While these narratives were not produced by institutions of power, these are romanticized outcomes from the institutional mediation. The spectacle of the war was resulting in an illusion of warfare as romanticized fantasy.

Fenton, a campaign photographer paid by the British government, produced numerous wet-plate images of the battlefields, military camps, and officers. He was reportedly sent to renew public opinion of the war following the detrimental reportage of Russell. Fenton’s images were often staged due in part to the technical limitations of photography at the time and due to a government effort to garner support by the public (Harding, 2013).



**Figure 4** - Roger Fenton, 'Brigadier McPherson & officers of the 4th Division Captain Higham 17th Regiment'. Source: U.S. Library of Congress. Source: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2001697678>

According to world historian Michael H. McNeill (1982), the Crimean War demonstrated the “industrialization of war” (p. 223). It was the first instance wherein developing technologies of information communication, transportation, and the military “came together” in the configuration of the image of war, both intentionally and unintentionally shaping public opinion. According to Keller, the eyewitness in the Crimean War was in a privileged activity reserved for society’s elites. The mediation of the war itself demonstrated clear bounds between the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator. The position of the spectator was paramount in terms of how it shaped the conflict. It was an initial

and possibly seminal step in demonstrating the significance of the spectator within the bounds of mediation and mediatization in war and conflict. While the position of author was largely impacted by the position of the spectator it could conceivably be considered the protagonist of the war. As Kellner (2001) described as institutions were “creat [ing] the war in their own image” coordinated for the benefit of the spectator (p. ix).

### **World War I, 1914 - 1919**

Virilio (1989) attributed the use of film documentation as the “growing derealization of military engagement [...] where the representation of events outstripped the presentation of facts [and] the image was starting to gain sway over the object, time over space” (p. 1). The author and the subject experience an acceleration. During World War I the communication technologies available to journalists included film cameras, photographic cameras with increased capabilities, and the telegraph. The public primarily received reports via newspapers, leaflets, and posters. This war saw the rampant employment of censorship and propaganda in an institutional acknowledgement of the power of mass media and a perceived need or opportunity for the control of information. Public opinion and morale were recognized as significant in foreign policy (Vaughn, 1977, p. 300). World War I experienced increased speed in technology and increased distance due to control via censorship and propaganda.

Both the Allied and Central powers imposed severe censorship policies which prevented the majority of images produced from being available to the public prior to the end of the war. In the United States, President Wilson launched the Committee of Public Information and appointed George Creel,



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a newspaper editor as its head. The committee was charged with releasing official government news, maintaining citizen support for the war, and overseeing press censorship (Vaughn, 1977, p.2). According to President Wilson, “Public opinion is a factor in victory no less than ships and guns, and the creation and stimulation of a healthy, ardent national sentiment is the kind of fighting that the press can do” (Creel, 1917, p. 4). The Committee was comprised of 37 divisions and produced a weekly report of official war news which was distributed to 12,000 newspapers. In 1914, the British House of Commons passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) giving the government a range of power including widespread censorship. It stated that “No person shall by word of mouth or in writing spread reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm among any of His Majesty’s forces or among the civilian population” (*London Gazette*, 1914). Government control over the dromosphere, over the speed of exposure between journalistic endeavors and the public, was palpable.

Access to the front lines was a principal tactic in censorship. Few journalists were permitted on the front lines and reports were heavily regulated and edited by the Allied government powers. The war was based on the fundamentals of geopolitical territorial control, therefore information regarding troop movement and various details on tactile maneuvering could have had a detrimental impact if reported and published. Media scholar Robin Andersen (2006) attributed the lack of reportage from the front lines of the war to four factors: “Lack of access to battlefield conflict, the reliance on official briefings, blanket censorship and the war correspondents’ own sense of patriotism [which] left the public ignorant of the magnitude of human loss on all sides until the war was over” (p.12). Andersen cited the Battle of Somme as a key demonstration of the failure in reportage from the front lines (Anderson, 2006, p. 12). On July



1, 1916, the German army killed 20,000 British soldiers and wounded another 40,000 with no advancement of the front. Philip Gibbs, a reporter for the *Daily News*, wrote in his dispatch that “We may say it is, on balance, a good day for England and France. It is a day of promise in this war” (Gibbs, 1917). By the end of the Battle of Somme on November 18, 1916, there were over one million casualties between the Germans and the Allies (Miles, 1938). Australian journalist Phillip Knightley (2002) criticized the journalists of the time in his text *The First Casualty*, stating:

They identified themselves absolutely with the armies in the field; they protected the high command from criticism, wrote jauntily about life in the trenches, kept an inspired silence about the slaughter, and allowed themselves to be absorbed by the propaganda machine (p. 84-85).

Following the war, Gibbs (1923) described his experience, saying:

We identified ourselves absolutely with the armies in the field. We wiped out of our minds all thought of personal scoops and all temptation to write one word which would make the task of officers and men more difficult or dangerous. There was no need of censorship of our despatches. We were our own censors.

Propaganda was an equally important tool as censorship in the mediation of World War I, with governments taking an active role in the production of propaganda. In 1914 the British government created the War Propaganda Bureau (initially known as the Wellington House). The “Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages” was a major piece of propaganda produced by the bureau. This report included brutal accounts of murders

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and rapes by Germans, however, it was later discovered that there was no evidence (Roberson, 2014). Although Germany had made significant efforts in the production of war propaganda, neither the military nor the government had made a centralized, coordinated effort (Nübel, 2006). According to psychologist Leonard Doob (1935), the “Germans bungled because they were naive: they thought the success of the war depended almost solely on military strategy and therefore they tended to neglect propaganda” (p. 304). Their lack of acknowledgement of the need for a mediating engagement with the spectating public was detrimental.

World War I bore witness to an increased convergence of military, political, and communication technologies. The severity of government sponsored employment of mass media through censorship and propaganda has had a lasting impact on the landscape of war and media. The narrative of World War I was heavily produced through mass communication of propaganda and severely mitigated by institutional censorship. The control of speed and distance between the author and the subject was paramount. This disenfranchised or rather dislocated the position of the subject. The position of the author was instrumental, as protagonist, in the extreme privileging of representation over fact in the formation of narrative. In 1927 Harold Lasswell, a political scientist and communication theorist, conducted a study of World War I propaganda. He offered a simple explanation of a binary of good vs. evil, stating,

The war must not be due to a world system of conducting international affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes, but to the rapacity of the enemy. Guilt and guiltlessness must be assessed geographically, and all the guilt must be on the other side of the frontier.

If the propagandist is to mobilize the hate of the people, he must see to it that everything is circulated which establishes the sole responsibility of the enemy (Lasswell, 1927, p. 47).

### **World War II, 1939 - 1945**

Field reporting became an integral component of institutional journalism during World War II. The censorship occurring during World War II was much less severe than that which occurred during World War I. However, due to the reliance of journalists on the military to access the frontlines, they rarely criticized the war effort. In January of 1942 the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press was issued by the U.S. government. This document defined the proper and improper methods to be used by institutional journalism in reporting on military troops, operations, and information that could potentially compromise their war effort. This was followed by the establishment of the Office of War Information (OWI) in June of 1942, which was responsible for generating public support for the war effort. Additionally, it approved roughly 60% of all government news releases (Creery & Creech, 2014).

There were two significant developments in communication technologies impacting the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator: radio and newsreels. Radio offered a new, heightened level of intimacy in and acceleration of the logic of speed wherein listeners were able to tune in to reports from the field in their homes. The physical personal space of the spectator had become infiltrated.



**Figure 5** - 'It's Everybody's War'. Short propaganda film produced by 20th Century Fox and distributed by the Office of War Information in 1942. Source: <https://archive.org/details/ItsEvery1945>

During World War II newsreels were disseminated to the American public via the local movie theater. This practice proved to have numerous implications in the mediation and mediatization of the war. Newsreels offered a new level in shaping public opinion of the war effort. They were instrumental tools in heightening the theater of war through the constructed narrative produced by skilled camera operators and editors then disseminated in the cinematic theater.

In their article "The Journalistic Value of Emerging Technologies," communication scholars Stephen McCreery and Brian Creech stressed the importance of understanding, in addition to their narrative formation, how the newsreels were distributed. According to Scott L. Althaus, a political science scholar, production companies of newsreels "pioneered complex systems of

production, distribution, and editing that mirror contemporary practicalities of television news production” (Creery & Creech, 2014, p. 179). The speed of viewing the subject by the spectator irrevocably impacted the requisite authorship. However, distance, dictated and driven by propaganda, was evident. In the mediation and mediatization the position of the author could conceivably be understood as remaining in the role of protagonist. In demonstrating the necessary speed of propaganda, Virilio cited Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, who asserted that “Propaganda must be made directly by words and images, not by writing [...] Reading implies time for reflection, a slowing-down that destroys the mass’s dynamic efficiency” (Virilio, 1986, p. 5). Propaganda was becoming an increasingly central weapon of warfare.

### **Palestinian / Israeli conflict, 1948 - ongoing**

The Palestinian / Israeli conflict is an ongoing struggle beginning in the mid-20th century. This conflict encompasses numerous wars and uprisings including (but not limited to) the Palestine war (1947–1949), the Arab–Israeli War (1948), the Suez Canal Crisis (1948), the six day war (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), the first Lebanon war (1982), the first Palestinian Intifada (1987), the second Palestinian Intifada (2000), and the second Lebanon War (2006).

Journalism and media reportage, throughout this decades long conflict, is widely known to be plagued by rampant partisan bias on both sides as well as western and regional nations. This bias is evident in the vast use of a wide range of propaganda techniques and strategies in the plurality of narratives entangled in and of the conflict. Amongst these tactics, the exploitation of language has been a key and routinely used formidable weapon in the conflict.

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Language can play an instrumental role in forming a spectators' nuanced understandings and interpretations of conflict. The terminology used to characterize various aspects and events of the Palestinian / Israeli conflict can speak to ideological and emotive attributes as well as motive and intent. Daoudi and Barakat characterize the use of terminology in the narrative of the conflict through the seminal 1948 event, stating:

...terminology plays a major role in shaping perceptions of clashing narratives. Terminology has become basic for constructing the framework through which we view any situation, shaping our cognition and patterns of thinking. For instance, the term Palestine is in dispute. The Palestinians call the 1948 dispossession 'al-nakba, al-karithah, [the calamity, the catastrophe, the disaster], in recognition of the national tragedy caused by their expulsion and flight from their Palestine homeland. Israelis, and even third-party scholars such as Bernard Reich, in his book *An Historical Encyclopedia of the Arab Israeli Conflict*, call it the '1948 War', the 'War of Independence/Liberation' (p. 57).

Writer and cultural theorist Randa Abdel-Fattah, characterizes the significance of language in the conflict in her 2014 article "How language changes views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over Gaza" stating, "Self-defence. Occupation. Apartheid. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is as much a struggle over language as it is a battle over land." Terms such as "murdered" or "assassinated" versus "killed" can be powerful tools which can be used to elicit and reveal alternate positions and motives. They are capable of framing and perpetuating alternate and potentially contrasting narratives of the same incident from opposing views

or contradictory perspectives. In stark contrast to the term “occupation,” the term “settlement” according to the British writer and journalist Steven Poole:

...conjures the idea of a virgin, unpopulated territory: an image of building log cabins in the wilderness... “Settlement” also has a useful secondary sense “agreement”, but Israeli settlements were deemed illegal by the UN Security Council and the International Court of justice...” (2007, p. 85).

In 2013, the International Press Institute (IPI) published the handbook “Use With Care, A Reporter’s Glossary of Loaded Language in the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict.” The handbook provides guidance for distinguishing between terms such as “apartheid wall” versus “separation barrier,” “execution” versus “assassination,” “riots” versus “protests,” and “territories” versus “Palestinian Authority,” “west bank” or “gaza strip.” The handbook seeks to facilitate a reporter’s “obligation to professionalism and unbiased reporting,” stating:

The language that reporters use in covering this or any conflict can perpetuate stereotypes, can incite hatred or can simply deflect from more pressing issues. How this conflict is covered is important, almost as important as what is covered (p. 3).

This decades long geopolitical and chrono-political struggle comprised of numerous wars and uprisings has shed light on the power of engendered bias in the terminology of war and conflict. Anthropologist and Middle Eastern scholar Julie Peteet states “Words circulate and acquire meaning and intensity in a field of power. In the ‘hierarchy of credibility’, the dominant group’s narratives are accepted as ‘objective and legitimate’; while those of the lower-ranked, often



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defeated, group are derided as crudely fashioned propaganda and thus met with contempt” (Peteet, 2005).

### **American / Vietnam conflict, 1965 - 1975**

The American / Vietnam conflict ushered in a radical change in terms of the reportage of institutional journalism. This had a significant impact on the respective positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator. The United States never made a formal declaration of war during this conflict and therefore were unable to legally require U.S. based journalists to apply for press passes from the U.S. government as in previous wars.



**Figure 6** - Jan. 7, 1965. Malcolm Browne, Associated Press Saigon correspondent, on patrol near Binh Hoa, South Vietnam with South Vietnamese troops. Source: <https://flic.kr/p/CkRFgX>

This resulted in journalists enjoying relatively full access to the conflict. Political and cultural theorist Fredric Jameson (1991) described the conflict:

This first terrible postmodernist war cannot be told in any of the traditional paradigms of the war novel or movie—indeed, that breakdown of all previous narrative paradigms is, along with the breakdown of any shared



language through which a veteran might convey such experience, among the [principal] subjects of the book and may be said to open up the place of a whole new reflexivity (p. 44).

In terms of communication technology, journalists now had access to portable, 16mm film cameras and lightweight audio equipment allowing them to shoot directly in the field with increased ease. Once the footage was shot it was then transported by airplane to the United States, edited, and on televised broadcast within 48 hours. At the height of the war, there were more than 100 million television sets in the United States and newscasts had increased from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.



**Figure 7** - Family watching television, c. 1958. Evert F. Baumgardner. Source: National Archives and Records Administration. [https://web.archive.org/web/20071226081329/teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer\\_pol\\_hist/thumbnail427.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20071226081329/teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer_pol_hist/thumbnail427.html)

Footage of the war was now broadcast directly into American homes. The writer Michael Arlen (1968) described it as “the living room war.” With this new mode of receiving news there was an increased level of intimacy for the

spectator. Again, with a drastic shift in intimacy and the logic of speed, the image of war had entered the privacy of the home. The mediated image of war now lived in our sensorial environment. Additionally, the spectator operated to a large extent as a passive recipient.

Although a geopolitical war, elements of the chronopolitical were beginning to surface as the media itself was becoming increasingly weaponized. As philosopher Marshall McLuhan (1968) asserted, “The public is now participant in every phase of the war, and the main actions of the war are now being fought in the American home itself” (p. 134). The time between filming the events of the conflict and viewing them had rapidly diminished. In his text *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq*, Hoskins (2004) asserted that the Vietnam War “became an intersection between the military and the media” (p. 13). The increase in visibility due to both developments in technology and a significant decrease in government and institutional oversight laid ground for questioning the role of protagonist within the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator. The conflict highlighted the danger of visibility, the danger of the windscreen entering into the realm of the vehicle. As the windscreen moves closer to the vehicle the objects moving through the horizon with increasing speed.

### **Iraq (Gulf) War, 1990 - 1991**

The control of real-time, instantaneous communications became a key element of warfare during the Iraq War. According to Virilio, the transition from the geopolitical to the chronopolitical began during the Iraq War. While the U.S. government was actively seeking to impose strict censorship policies on news

reporting, they were unable to do so as a result of agency access to the satellite technology.

**Figure 8** - BBC Footage, Bombing of Baghdad has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

Press access during the Iraq War differed greatly from the relatively open access enjoyed during the American / Vietnam conflict. The U.S. government focused on the flow of information through, among other things, tightly controlled press access to the war in the establishment of a pool system. This system allowed the government to select which agencies would have access to the field. Their reportage would then be disseminated to the entire press corps. Additionally, the U.S. military controlled and in many cases hindered the transportation of footage and images from Iraq back to the United States, causing the reports to become outdated and rendered useless. In the midst of the renewed public information policies regarding censorship and propaganda, satellite technology had become readily available.

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According to Robin Anderson (2006), “Operation Desert Storm also changed the landscape of the American and international news media forever” (p. 185). There were three key and interwoven components which impacted this: the implementation of U.S. censorship and propaganda, access to new satellite technology, and CNN’s exploitation of their international network of news affiliates. In terms of the author, the subject, and the spectator, these can be discussed in terms of the “Arnett syndrome,” the “CNN effect,” and satellite technology.

**Figure 9** - CNN Broadcast, March 19, 2003, Bombing of Baghdad has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

The “CNN effect” refers to an observed phenomenon of the resulting impact of CNN’s use of imagery on public engagement and governmental

intervention in situations of crisis. Critic and theorist Hal Foster described the impact of the CNN effect on himself during the Gulf War saying:

I was riveted by the images, by a psycho-techno-thrill that locked me in, as smart bomb and spectator are locked in as one. A thrill of technomastery (my mere human perception become a super machine vision, able to see what it destroys and to destroy what it sees) but also a thrill of an imaginary dispersal of my own body, of my own subjecthood (1993, p. 19).

In response to new technologies of instantaneous communications and an effort to prevent “perceived mistakes of Vietnam,” the Bush administration took an active role in the control of “information flow in a way that supported the operation’s political goals and avoided the perceived mistakes of Vietnam” (DeParle, 1991). Douglas Kellner (1995), a cultural and media theorist, explained that “the Bush administration and the Pentagon carried out one of the most successful public relations campaigns in the history of modern politics in its use of the media to mobilize support for the war” (p. 198). According to Thomas B. Rosenstiel, media critic and reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and Director of the American Press Institute, the pentagon had imposed the harshest restrictions of press coverage in its military history (Rosenstiel, 1991). Captain Wildermuth, chief aide for public affairs to General Norman Schwarzkopf, wrote the “Annex Foxtrot,” a document outlining Operation Desert Storm’s public information policy. In this document he specified that “News media representatives will be escorted at all times. Repeat, at all times” (Wildermuth, 1996).

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In addition to the U.S. government's tight military control over the media and image of the war, imposed through censorship and the use of disinformation and propaganda, U.S. news agencies themselves became hyper-critical of any perceived propaganda tactics by the Iraqi government and dismissive of U.S. tactics. According to Kellner (2004) this was due to consumerism of the spectator, and he claimed:

Mainstream media in the U.S. are commercial media, subject to intense competition for audiences and profits. Consequently, mainstream television, newspapers, and news magazines do not want to alienate consumers, and thus are extremely cautious in going against public opinion and the official government line. The mainstream media also favor official government sources for their stories, especially in times of crisis. Thus, they tend to be conduits for U.S. government policies and actions, though there are significant exceptions (p. 137).

This approach in the triangulation of the author, the subject, and the spectator became problematic from a dromosphereic perspective and highly evident in what was later termed the "Arnett Syndrome." Peter Arnett, a reporter for CNN, was one of the few American, foreign journalists to remain in Iraq. He was highly criticized for his reporting of civilian casualties from the ground. During the bombing of Baghdad, he, along with Bernard Shaw and John Holliman, produced 16 hours of live coverage via access to a phone line routed through Amman, Jordan.

**Figure 10** - Peter Arnett after interview with former President of Iraq Saddam Hussein (shaking hands), 1991. Source: AFP

Arnett was accused of being a propagandist and sympathizer for the Iraqi government and of producing “unpatriotic journalism” (Blais, 2012). In early 1991, the U.S. military bombed a target which they had identified as a chemical weapons plant. Arnett reported that it was, in fact, a factory for baby milk in the region (Rosenstiel, 1991). In a *Washington Post* article published February 16, 1991, Tom Shales (1991) describes the “Arnett Syndrome” as “a seemingly inexhaustible concern for the welfare of the Iraqis.” The distance between the positions of authorship were moving away from the prescriptive stakeholder narrative. The role of the author, the subject, and the spectator became problematic in their relationship to power.

While the U.S. government was actively seeking to impose strict censorship policies they were faced with broadcast news agency access to new

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satellite technology. The control of real-time, instantaneous communications had become a key element of warfare. Satellite technology allowed for viewers to watch live missiles strikes. Rather than the living rooms, as was the case in the American / Vietnam conflict, “it was in people’s faces,” as stated by CNN reporter Bernard Shaw (Moore, 2001).

At the time of the Iraq War, CNN, which was established in 1980, had been developing an international network of news gathering for some time:

Its organizational strategies focused on setting up a complex system of foreign bureaus, barter agreements and satellite hookups at a time when other major outlets were moving toward corporate conglomeration and cutting back funding for international news bureaus and staff worldwide. By 1990, CNN had established an information flow able to circulate materials from and among many countries, including those traditionally shunned by the established news networks (Andersen, 2006, p. 185).

Through their international network of affiliates CNN was able to capitalize on the new satellite technology, running a 24/7 news cycle reporting on the Iraq War. As the first live broadcast of war, there was substantial opportunity for more in-depth reportage. However, this did not occur. As Andersen (2006) described:

The vast majority of airtime was filled with reporting that revolved around a narrowly defined military perspective [...] the hours were filled with minute details of activities in the “theater of operation,” anticipation of upcoming confrontations with seemingly endless speculation of battle strategies. The briefings, speeches and addresses by U.S. officials



were often carried live, and then excerpted segments were repeated throughout the day with very little additional information. Soundbites punctuated the coverage, such as James Baker asserting that Desert Storm was “a just war in a just way,” or President Bush assuring “so that peace will prevail, we will prevail.” A critical posture to such pronouncement was abandoned in favor of the official redundancies that were left unchallenged (p. 188).

The extended news cycle resulted in an interrupted posturing of the U.S. government’s official line. “CNN presented the world to the world, but through the highly filtered prism of a U.S. lens” (Anderson, 2006, p.188), a complex, posturing dance between the potential that existed in CNN’s harnessing of satellite technology coupled with its international network of affiliates and the U.S. government’s control of the flow of information. While government and military rhetoric was spilling out in reportage, images of destruction and civilian deaths were being displayed. As Baudrillard (1995) claimed, “Unlike earlier wars, in which there were political aims either of conquest or domination, what is at stake in this one is war itself: its status, its meaning, its future” (p. 32)

Additionally, institutional journalism became self-referential. In a report by Bryant Gumbel on NBC, Gumbel gazed cautiously at footage of Arnett interviewing Hussein. He had arranged for a psychological expert to view the footage with him. In the news clip Gumbel asked the expert, “Is he saying that for our benefit?” (Anderson, 2006, p. 186). A meta or hyper-awareness began to take place between journalism and government stakeholders in driving narrative authorship. This hyper-awareness shifted the ground of the protagonist in that it was no longer a single agent driving a single primary narrative. However, the

author, the subject, and the spectator still operated separately; albeit in a realm of hyper-awareness.

### Summary

As stated by Silverstone, “Mediation [...] describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the world wide web), are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life” (Couldry, 2008, p. 8 and Silverstone, 2002, p. 762). The Crimean War and World War I established the use of media in journalism as a tool for crafting public opinion through censorship and propaganda. World War II witnessed a significant increase in this role and use of media and journalism with radios in homes and newsreels via movie theaters. This is particularly significant in terms of spectator engagement. The radio was a voice of the war which fed directly into the home of spectators, creating a level of intimacy which had not previously existed. Newsreels operated in the theatrical nature of the cinema. This created a heightened sense of grandeur and importance of information for the spectator. The decades long Palestinian / Israeli conflict has continually demonstrated the exploitation of language and bias terminology as a fundamental and formidable propaganda tactic. The American / Vietnam conflict experienced the results of a decrease in government and military control over the institutional journalism in terms of production, dissemination, and reception. The Iraq (Gulf) War experienced a radical shift and increase in government and military control over the flow of information in response to new satellite technology, CNN’s development of an international network of news affiliates, and a staunch fear of repeating the American / Vietnam conflict’s lack of public support. The mediation of the conflict is credited with the American defeat in Vietnam. The fact that it

seemingly co-opted the war effort lends itself to the initial defining stages of a mediatization of war.

These factors in the mediation and mediatization of war and conflict are not mutually exclusive and they have, in some instances, operated simultaneously. They range from efforts in shaping public opinion and understanding of complex national and international issues and agendas to shifting the institutions between which they operate. The wars and conflicts surveyed in this section demonstrate what Virilio had delineated and forecasted in the acceleration of speed. As the speed of technology accelerated, perception inevitably altered. In the transformation of mediation and mediatization of war and conflict, the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator continued to evolve. Using a dromological lens through which to identify the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator within this evolution demonstrated three elements: a structural adjustment in their positioning relative to one another; a shift in their configuration within power and resistance; and a shift in the role of the protagonist. Through mediation and mediatization, acceleration in the temporally and spatially bound interaction, engagement and/or exchange between the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator increased throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as demonstrated in the wars surveyed in this chapter.

### **2.1.2. Identifying the Citizen Witness in the Arab Spring**

In previous wars and conflicts the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator, while reliant, operated separately from one another.

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As communication technologies continued to develop, the logic of speed accelerated. The Arab Spring bore witness to a significant shift in the author, the subject, and the spectator positioning, evident in the citizen witness. A collapse of distance between the positions of author and subject occurred due to a decrease in distance from a rapid acceleration of speed. This was due to a number of circumstances including access to ICTs and developments in social media, the (typically) dual role as activist and witness, and formation of mediation<sup>3</sup>. The aim of this section is to identify the citizen witness, within the positioning of the author, the subject, and the spectator, in the Arab Spring through the lens of dromology. Based on this identification it proposes the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist.

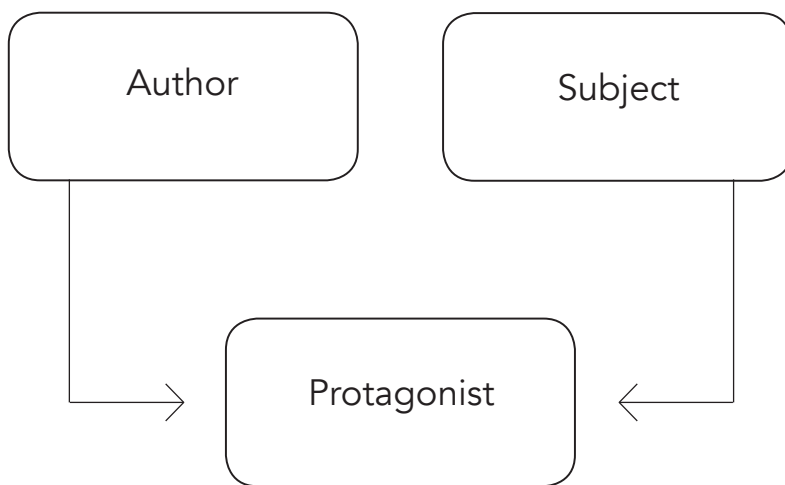


Figure 11 - Syncretic Protagonist, Diagram. Source: Diane Derr

The role of citizen witnesses in the production and dissemination of information in the Arab Spring was far more complex as they were, most often, simultaneously protesters and activists. They were active participants in resistance to the state, disseminating content both inside and outside of the

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3 Developments in ICT's and social media usage is addressed in chapter 5.

state. During the Arab Spring the citizen witness became a prominent figure, acting not as a representative or agent of a government or corporate news agency, but rather a figure of resistance. According to Lena Jayyusi, Middle Eastern scholar and a faculty member at Zayed University in the U.A.E, the foundation of the regional witness was laid in the decade preceding the Arab Spring, following the mediated, live-broadcast of the Israeli military withdrawal in May 2000. She characterizes this shifting engagement, stating:

The cascading events that the region was to witness during the next decade were covered by the new media in ways that seemed to transform the ordinary Arab spectator often into a live “witness” wherein a sense of “vested engagement, “rather than mere spectatorship, was inscribed and mobilized. The witnessed events are experienced as endogenous to, or embedded in, the individuals’ own lived concerns, and the engagement with them serves to expand his/her live repertoire and imaginaries. Thus, the nexus between political activity and media forms and practices had become very salient well before the tumultuous events of the Spring of 2011, and their subsequent trajectories. With the diffusion and increasing sophistication of social media in the first decade of the 21st century, ordinary individuals would repeatedly constitute themselves as virtual real-time “participants” in the mediated events they were witnessing, and indeed sometimes as mediating agents themselves, through their own uses of new media. (p.2)

The mediatization of the Arab Spring demonstrated a shift from a top-down to a bottom-up model, as discussed earlier in this chapter by Mortensen (2015) in that “actors outside the conventional institutions of guarding and governing

information” were the primary agents in producing information for dissemination (p. 49).

In his seminal article “Witnessing,” published in 2001, John Durham Peters, a social theorist, identified law, theology, and atrocity as the three interrelated sources for understanding witnessing (Peters, 2001). According to Peters, in terms of the judicial, “the notion of the witness as a privileged source of information for judicial decisions is ancient, and is part of most known legal systems” (Peters, 2001). In terms of religion, particularly early Christianity, a witness was conceived as a martyr. In fact, the term “martyr” (or “martus”) means “witness” in Greek (Peters, 2001 and Thomas, 2009). Gunther Thomas, a theologian, asserted that the eighth commandment “thou shall not bear false witness” coupled with the court process (in some countries) of requiring witnesses to swear an oath on the Bible, demonstrates the way in which the judicial and religious contexts are entangled (Thomas, 2009). Peters (2009) claimed the source of atrocity “dates from the Second World War: the witness as a survivor of hell, prototypically but not exclusively the Holocaust or Shoah” (p. 25).

These three sources can be understood as representing two disparate modes in subjectivity and (assumed) objectivity. The witness in the historical context of law and religion operates under an assumed (albeit impossible) level of objectivity. As Peters noted, in many cases torture was used as an instrument to get the “truth” and witness testimony was previously understood as a legal tool. Whereas in the contextual source of atrocity, as described by Peters, there is a clear authority of the witness due specifically to their subjectivity in their proximity to the event through their lived sensorial experience. Witnesses

in the Arab Spring also garnered an authority based on their subjectivity and proximity to the events; however, their authority or perhaps authenticity is relative to a level of distance based on speed in the dromosphere. As they were operating as both the author and the subject, distanced had collapsed due to the acceleration of speed.

Peters (2001) asserted that witnessing accounts for “all three points of a basic communication triangle: (1) the agent who bears witness, (2) the utterance or text itself, [and] (3) the audience who witnesses” (p. 709). He claims that a key element of a witness (or what he refers to as eyewitness) is that he or she is not conscious of their role in the event until the event has ended. Peters made this claim in 2001, prior to the onslaught of commonplace, everyday production of information through personal recording devices such as smartphones and disseminated through networked platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. With the evolution of communication technologies witnesses are now aware of their role and are able to produce and disseminate information through personal social media networks with ease. This is highly evident in the global phenomenon of the “selfie.” As Mortensen described in 2015, “eyewitnesses have become self-mediated by incorporating digital media technologies into their practice and adapting to the logistics of the current media system” (p. 13).

In his text *Documentary: Witness and Self-Revelation*, John Ellis (2000), Professor of Media Arts at the University of London, claimed that broadcast media “brought citizens into a relationship of direct encounter with images and sounds [...] the experience of witness” (p. 9). Peters (2001) countered this claim, stating “Witnessing places mortal bodies in time. To witness always

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involves risk, potentially to have your life changed . . . You can be marked for life by being the witness of an event” (p. 714). Peters (2001) asserted that there are four formations which enable a process of witnessing:

Of four basic types of relations to an event, three can sustain the attitude of a witness. To be there, present at the event in space and time is the paradigm case. To be present in time but removed in space is the condition of liveness, simultaneity across space. To be present in space but removed in time is the condition of historical representation: here is the possibility of a simultaneity across time, a witness that laps the ages. To be absent in both space and time but still have access to an event via its traces is the condition of recording: the profane zone in which the attitude of witnessing is hardest to sustain (p. 720).

Peters is highly conscious of the veracity gap of witnessing, which communications scholar Paul Frosh (2009) described in his essay “Telling Presences: Witnessing, Mass Media, and the Imagined Lives of Strangers” as:

difficulties afflicting the practice of bearing witness: difficulties of memory (does the witness remember everything he or she saw?), honesty (is the witness being truthful?), presence (was the witness really there at the crucial moment?), perception (did the witness see and hear everyone important?), and scale (was the witness traumatized and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the event?) (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009, p. 51).

The distinction between witness and spectator (viewer) is important in that the “witness and the viewer stands the opacity of discourse; the fragile thread linking the event to its representation is always in peril” (Frosh & Pinchevski,



2009, p. 54). The concept of media witnessing was pioneered as a way for survivors of atrocities such as the Holocaust to document and share their stories so that viewers or spectators could “bear witness.” The intention was to invite the audience of the mediated information to become a version of witness. According to communication scholars Amit Pinchevski and Paul Frosh (2009), “media witnessing [...] casts the audience as the ultimate addressee and primary producer, making the collective both the subject and object of everyday witnessing, testifying to its own historical reality as it unfolds” (p. 12). Frosh (2009) described the problem with the veracity gap:

dwelling upon the infinite gap between experience and discourse, the techniques for bridging it and their fragility, and in setting out a hierarchy in which the ‘paradigm case’ of witnessing is the experience of spatial and temporal presence at the event, this triangulation mutates into a line. The witnessing agent becomes a point of transmission and the audience one of reception (the utterance or text is the line itself, becoming increasingly fuzzy and broken as it approaches the audience) (p. 55).

The citizen offers an additional layer to approaching the concept of witness. According to Stuart Allen (2015), Professor and Head of the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, a key distinction between media witnessing and the citizen witness is in what could be aptly described from Virilio’s perspective as the lived sensorial experience. In their article “Visual truths of citizen reportage,” Allen and Christopher Peters (2015) asserted:

citizen witnessing requires one’s physical, embodied presence to engage with the experiences of others. To bear witness is to do more than

observe images of distant events on flickering screens, as important as that may be; rather, it is to affirm an ethical ethos on behalf of those encountered firsthand, and as such, brings to the fore the interpretive work of a testimonial act of representation in the service of epistemic truth-telling. Bearing witness consistently encounters formidable difficulties, however, not least because incidents deemed 'witnessable' will always prove unruly, disruptive and frustratingly elusive (p. 4).

The citizen witness of the Arab Spring operated routinely as both the author and the subject in their production and dissemination of information. As activists and protesters at events demonstrating resistance to the state, the citizen witness was documenting in real time in their sensorial lived experience. A significant occurrence I observed in attempting to identify the citizen witness in the Arab Spring was essentially the "death witness." According to Peters (2001) "To bear witness is to put one's body on the line. Within every witness, perhaps, stands a martyr, the will to corroborate words with something beyond them, pain and death being the last resort" (p. 713). However, unlike what Peters deemed as the "atrocious" source of witnessing, evident in the Holocaust, events of the Arab Spring, again due in large part to available technologies for the production and dissemination of communication, resulted in a number of citizen witnesses capturing their own deaths while recording the events around them. The speed between the body and technology, in lived sensorial experience, had accelerated at what I found to be an unprecedented rate.

### 2.1.2.1. Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap

Practice-based research was conducted in order to investigate the citizen witness' position as a syncretic protagonist in simultaneously operating as the author and the subject through an activation by, and of, the spectator. The interaction was orchestrated in an effort to speculate on the role of the spectator in the activation of the collision of the author and the subject. This collision was identified through the dromological lens due to an increase in the logic of speed. In order to do so the following objectives were addressed:

- further analysis of the collision of the author and the subject in the position of the citizen witness;
- speculation on the position of spectator as activator;
- consideration of the spectator's physical engagement in their position as activator.

### Aim and Objective

In order to unpack the position of the spectator within the configuration of the citizen witness as syncretic protagonist I produced an interactive video-based installation, in 2012, titled *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*. The project, produced using appropriated footage, Arduino hardware and software and Processing software, was comprised of a small collection of five videos of citizen witnesses capturing their own deaths in their act of documenting events of the Arab Spring.

The image and audio quality of all of the videos is extremely poor, pixelated, shaky, and grainy. The videos vary in duration from six seconds to forty seconds. Each video begins with the scene in which the citizen witness, the author, is documenting. We, the spectator, then see the physical fall of the citizen witness from the perspective of the camera. The authors face is not shown in any of the five videos. Trained as a spectator of television and movies, the distance I felt between myself and the citizen witness (as simultaneously author and subject) was substantial and palpable. Upon viewing and analyzing the footage I observed a collapse or rather a collision of the author and the subject in the citizen witness which I describe as the “death witness.” Authored content of death has been so highly mediated in the multitude of television, film, and video games, that videos of the death witness presented themselves as something unreal in the hyper-reality of the virtual. The collision of the author and the subject was undeniable. The collision of the positions is not necessarily a prescriptively reciprocal relationship, wherein they are exclusively contingent upon one another. However, it could be characterized as an inadvertently contingent relationship facilitated and activated by, and within, the mediatized space.



**Figure 12** - *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, (video still #1, Gun Pointed at Camera).  
Source: Diane Derr



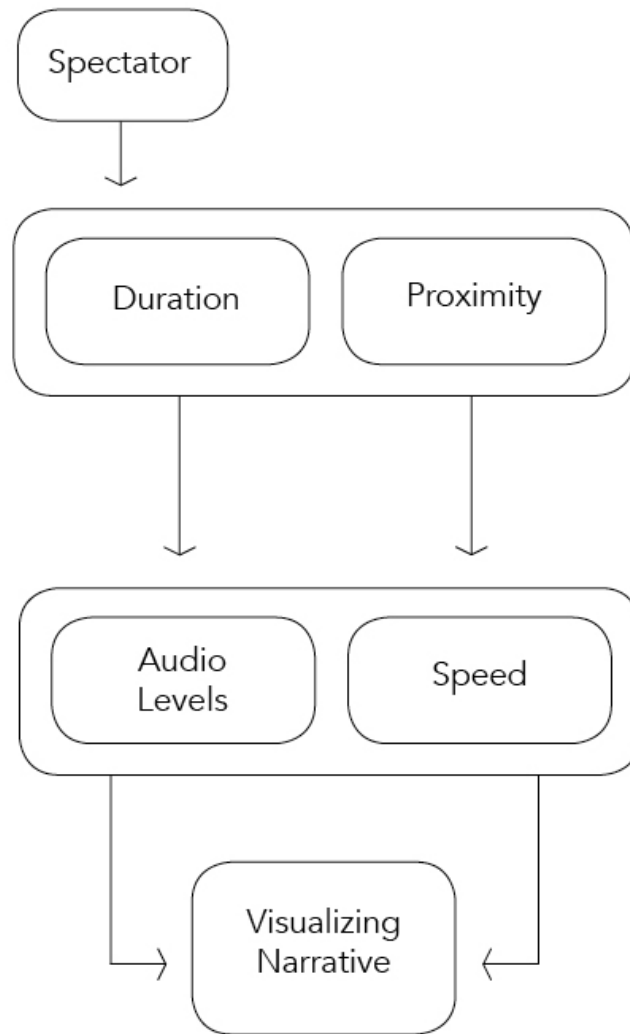
**Figure 13** - *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, (video still #2, Legs on Ground).  
Source: Diane Derr

In one video, we the spectator see the man who fires a gun and shoots the witness from the top of a building across the street; gun and camera pointed directly at one another (figure 12). Each piece of equipment, the gun and the camera, are aimed and targeted at the other, for alternate purposes and

subsequent results. Technology of warfare and technology of communication are operating, inadvertently, in coordination in the field of perception and the field of battle. The collapse of the author and the subject in that instance speaks to Virilio's claim "War can never break free from the magical spectacle because its very purpose is to produce that spectacle: to fell the enemy is not so much to capture as to 'captivate' him, to instil the fear of death before he actually dies." (1984, p. 5). In another video we see a portion of the citizen witness' body on the ground once the mobile phone has landed, still presumably in their hand. We hear the sound of the gun and visually experience the movement of the camera phone as it descends to the ground. The video concludes with an image of the individual's legs and feet laying on the ground (figure 13). These witnesses are anonymous to the online, networked spectatorship. They, as the author, are excluded from the veracity gap of the citizen witness. The concerns, as pointed out by Frosh (2009), of memory, honesty, presence, perception, and scale cease to be relevant. The utterance, or rather the subject, become entangled with the death of the citizen witness, the author.

Project documentation for the practice-based research, *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, is available in a google drive folder through the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/shared-destination-2012>. The documentation folder contains the following items:

- Arduino software program file;
- processing software program file;
- individual (five), original videos recorded by citizen witnesses;
- project documentation of interactive system in use.



**Figure 14** - *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, System Diagram. Source: Diane Derr

The interactive system was designed and produced in order to position the spectator as activator of the inevitable collision of the author and the subject resulting in the death witness. Without this activation by the spectator the death witness may not be realized within the spectacle of this specific instance of war and conflict. Viewing this collection of videos was controlled through an interactive system wherein viewers trigger and interact with the appropriated footage (See Appendix B). The footage was produced by citizen witnesses

in the Syrian Civil War in which the individuals are unknowingly documenting their own death. In the making of this project I collected videos from online sources from which they had been publicly disseminated and previously made available. I assessed the videos to understand, as much as possible, the scope and range of activity preceding the citizen witnesses' death. The footage was then compiled into a small database. The video footage database is activated on the monitor through the use of a proximity sensor (ping sensor), Arduino software and Processing software. The presence of a viewer is detected based on their physical distance, their proximity, and the duration of their presence. The longer the viewer watches and the closer the viewer is to the monitor, the faster and louder the clips become. When there is no viewer present no footage can be seen or heard; the system appears shut down. The viewer is intended to experience the orchestrated interaction in such a way as to highlight their role of spectatorship as a tool of activation. As opposed to a more passive viewing experience with film, television, and (most) video games, this system required the spectator's physical response and engagement in order to control and activate the death witness. The syncretic protagonist as the citizen witness in their syncretic formation as both author and subject becomes a definitive element in the dromosphere. The act of viewing, by the spectator, activates the death of the author. The viewer's engagement determines the intensity and speed of the author - subject collision. In stark contrast to Foster's (1993) description of his own experience in observing the Gulf War and the CNN effect stating "as smart bomb and spectator are locked in as one" the death witness activated by a physical engagement of the spectator potentially locks in or rather entangles the spectator to the author and the subject of the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist.





Figure 15 - *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, Installation. Source: Diane Derr

The aim of this practice-based research is to further unpack a primary research question “How can the role of the citizen witness within the Arab Spring be addressed within the positions of the author, subject, and spectator?” The intended narrative formation achieved through the design of the interactive system, does so in exploring a bottom-up model of production. The distance between the author and the subject is decreased enabling a potentially more substantive engagement with the spectator.

### Context and Reflection

*Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* was installed in an open corridor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, in 2012. The project was viewed and interacted with by the University community at-large inclusive of students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of national and regional backgrounds including Qatari nationals, long-term local and regional MENA residents, and western and non-western expatriates. The University is located in Education City, a development of Qatar Foundation housing eight international Universities, with limited access to the outside local community.

As previously discussed, the quality of the video footage is extremely poor, with substantial pixilation. Each of the videos is small, and the resolution is very low. Due in large part to the image quality, spectators were not able to immediately identify the content they were viewing, interacting with, and physically activating. However, spectators did demonstrate an almost immediate awareness of their physical presence acting as the trigger controlling both the speed and the volume of the footage. This appeared to result in an unexpected playfulness on the part of the spectator, potentially informed by their own existing associations with video games and the use of physical engagement and interactivity.

In this investigation of the citizen witness' as syncretic protagonist, the system's interactive configuration is reliant upon the physical presence of the spectator in order to activate a collision of their simultaneous positions as the author and the subject. The spectator plays a fundamental role in activating the 'death witness' within the spectacle. It is through this activation we may identify the citizen witnesses' role as syncretic protagonist. As mentioned, the

majority of spectators were able to immediately identify the relationship between their body and the shift it was causing in the speed and volume of the footage. However, based on my observations and follow-up discussions, there was a lack of immediate awareness and understanding of the content which they were activating in the death witness. Once spectators became aware (or were made aware) of the content they were physically activating there was a tangible shift in their sensitivity. The correlation between the spectators' body and activation of the death witness, felt by the spectator became palpable.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter attempted to identify the citizen witness in the Arab Spring as the protagonist of the syncretic narrative. The dimension of protagonist was investigated through the lens of dromology in the triangulated positions of the author, the subject and the spectator.

The first section, *Positions: Author, Subject, and Spectator*, presented an assessment of the shifting positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator in select previous wars and conflicts. Developing communication technologies and government oversight were principal components in the acceleration of speed and decrease of distance. As illustrated in this section, the role of the author, the subject, and the spectator has historically been instrumental in the mediation and mediatization of war and conflicts within journalistic practice. The evolving role of journalism, in these terms, has been directly impacted by developments in technology and communication models and structures. While mediation and mediatization are not mutually exclusive, as Hoskins and O'Loughlin pointed out, the mediation of the Crimean War, World War I, and World War II set the stage for initial developments in the mediatization of the

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Palestinian / Israeli conflict, the American / Vietnam conflict and the Iraq (Gulf) War. Dromology, as conceived by Virilio, enables an examination of the shifting positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator in terms of speed in the acceleration of movement and light.

The second section, *Identifying the Citizen Witness in the Arab Spring*, explored the citizen witness' position and function as both the author (generating content) and the subject (participant in that which they are disseminating). In identifying historical approaches to the role of witnessing in religious and judicial contexts, a desire for a contradictory alignment of objectivity and authenticity unfolded. The section concluded in presenting the practice-based research project *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*. The project explored the “death witness” as a means to further explore the relationship between objectivity and authorship, potentially demonstrated in the formation of the citizen witness in the Arab Spring.

## CHAPTER 3 | SPACE AND TIME

### 3. SPACE AND TIME

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### 3.1. Narrative and Network Bounds

The preceding chapter investigated the role of the protagonist, within the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator, through the lens of dromology, in five previous wars and conflicts. In doing so, it attempted to locate the configuration of the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist during the Arab Spring. This configuration was identified through the citizen witness' function as both the subject as well as the author, simultaneously and independently. The activation of the citizen witness as "death witness" was further explored through practice-based research in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*.

Therefore, this chapter attempts to identify the dimension of space and time of narrative formation within the networked model of communication.

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This model of communication was instrumental in demarcating the bounds of production, dissemination, and reception of narrative(s) formed in the Arab Spring. The aim of this chapter is to hypothesize on the syncretic narrative formation in the space and time of the networked model of communication. The syncretic formation of narrative has the capacity to operate in a constant state of flux and flow, wherein authorship is shared and dynamic with indeterminate reception. The first section, *Toward Narrative Space and Time in Networked Communication*, presents an assessment of space and time within narrative formation in advance of the network society and the networked model of communication through the elements of polyperspectivity, the narrative matrix, contrapuntal reading, and storyworlds. The second section, *Interfacing Communication in the Networked Model*, attempts to identify the space and time of the networked communication model based on Manuel Castells' identification of the "Space of Flows" and the power of the public sphere in communication space as key structural components of the network society. The final section, *Activating Distention*, presents primary research conducted in the form of practice-based research of the same title. The dimension of space and time as I have approached it stems from a position wherein Western news agencies are interfacing with regional citizen witnesses. It is not addressing regional news agencies interfacing with local citizen witnesses. The practice-based research was instrumental in investigating and unpacking the identified attributes of shared, dynamic authorship and the potential for indeterminate reception.

### **3.1.1. Toward Narrative Space and Time in Networked Communication**

Narrative is a principal mechanism in how we perceive, understand, and negotiate experience through visual and audible language(s). It is a method through which we make meaning. According to authors M. Carolyn Clark and Marsha Rossiter (2008):

Everyday we are bombarded by a dizzying variety of experiences and we make sense of those by storying them, by constructing narratives that make things cohere. Coherence creates sense out of chaos by establishing connections between and among these experiences.

Sometimes it's a matter of locating experiences within a particular cultural narrative (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 62).

Narratology has become recognized as, and is considered to be, a mechanism within systems which informs our cognitive construction in the perception of experience. This transition began with the advent of post-classical and post-structural narratology and the sub-domain of cognitive narratology (Herman 1999, Alber & Fludernik, 2010).

With the development of new and alternate systems, structures, and modes of communication, the discourse of narratology has expanded accordingly. As such, it operates as a mechanism within systems which inform our cognitive construction of meaning through perception of experience. The 1980's and 1990's ushered in post-classical narratology. This was demarcated by an increase in the scope of narratology as well as the importation of concepts, theories, and approaches from outside disciplines (Ryan & Van Alphen, 1993, p. 112). The structuralist narratology, developed in the 1960's based on work in the 1920's, principally examined, identified, and defined narrative in terms of language-based narratives. With the development of new

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and alternate systems, structures, and modes of communication, the discourse of narratology has expanded accordingly. The personal computer, while developed in the 1960's and 1970's, became more accessible and available to the public in the mid-1980's. Email became commonplace in the West in the late 1990's. This integration of communication devices made readily available in the home allowed for narratives to be produced, disseminated, and received via personal communication devices.

The study of cognitive narratology or the “the nexus of narrative and mind,” as described by the post-classical narratologist David Herman, has become a rapidly expanding territory of inquiry in recent years. In his essay “Narrative and Cognition in Beowulf,” Herman (2003) defined narratives as breaking down our experience “into units that are bounded, classifiable, and thus more readily recognized and remembered” (p. 173). Narrative enables us to cognitively “articulate” the continuous flow of information into sets of events. As Walsh (2007) noted, narrative “reduces the chaos of sense data to comprehensible terms” (p. 110)

Herman pointed out that although the phrase “cognitive narratology” was not used until 1997 when it was first coined by Manfred Jahn, there have been numerous points of inquiry in various fields which have touched upon this territory of study. These fields include literary studies, cognitive psychology, and sociolinguistics. Within the domain of literary studies, Herman (2013) identified philosopher Roman Ingarden’s “account of literary texts as heteronomous vs. autonomous objects” in his 1931 text *The Literary Work of Art* wherein the potential meaning of a text is necessitated by the reader’s cognition (Ingarden, 1931, 1973). Within the domain of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Herman identified



psychologists Roger Schank and Robert P. Abelson's 1977 text *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: an Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* as exploring how "stereotypical knowledge reduces the complexity and duration of many processing tasks, including the interpretation of narrative" (Huhn et al., 2014, p. 49). Within the domain of cognitive psychology, Herman identified psychologist George Mandler's 1984 text *Mind and body: Psychology of Emotion and Stress* in "postulating the existence of cognitively based story grammars or narrative rule systems" (Huhn et al., 2014, p. 49). Cognitive narratology introduced the idea of narrative as no longer being constructed solely from the author and solely contained within the medium. It opened the discussion regarding the role of the reader in the construction of narrative.

Narrative is a key component in how we build meaning and navigate the complexity of information around us. According to literary scholar Peter Brooks (1985), "Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories we tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves" (p. 3). Similarly, psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991) asserted that reality is a cognitive construct developed through "cultural products, like language and other symbolic systems" and is based upon narrative principles in his 1991 article "The Narrative Construction of Reality" (p. 3). He defined narrative through the ten characteristics: diachronicity, particularity, intentional state entailment, hermeneutic composability, canonicity and breach, referentiality, genericness, normativeness, context sensitivity, and negotiability and narrative accrual. Bruner considered these characteristics both in terms of reality being constructed by narrative as well as narrative informing the nature of reality as constructed by the human mind. Louis Mink (2001), a philosopher of history, stated that "it remains true that narrative is a primary cognitive

instrument - an instrument rivaled, in fact, only by theory and by metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible" (p. 213).

The conception of narrative, as outlined above, led me to consider a number of key elements in laying the groundwork for identifying space and time of narrative in the networked model of communication. These include polyperspectivity, the narrative matrix, contrapuntal reading, and storyworlds.

### **Polyperspectivity**

Prior to the advent of the network society and networked communications, approaches were transforming in the formation of narrative relative to space and time. Polyperspectivity (also referred to as multiperspectivity) is an approach to narrative construction in which multiple viewpoints are utilized for producing narratives with conflicting representations of information (Hühn, 2018). It is a useful technique in mapping the plot of a story space through the activities and from the perspectives of the characters. Examples of polyperspectivity in literature can be found in Plato's *Symposium* (380BC), Geoffrey Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowles" (1382), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988). *Rashomon* (1950) by Akira Kurosawa is a significant example of polyperspectivity in film. The narrative of the film centers on a crime that is presented through four conflicting and contradictory accounts. These four incompatible viewpoints provide the viewer with incompatible voices in the construction of the narrative. The space and time of the narrative are represented through each of the four protagonists' perspectives. The characters' perspectives, and subsequently the viewer's, define the construction of space and time in the specified narrative. This creates a framework for the

viewer to become a principal factor in the construction of a narrative which is individualized. *Activating Distention* presents the viewer with two incompatible sources in the potential construction of narrative. However, rather than the viewer operating as a passive recipient or spectator of the constructed narrative they are positioned as the author. Through their navigation of the content they are constructing their own independent narrative.



Figure 16 - Rashomon, Theatrical Release poster Akira Kurosawa, 1950

The term polyperspectivity has been criticized for its semantic vagueness as it is used to describe numerous frameworks dealing with multiple, alternate viewpoints without regard to contextual placement within the narrative. For example, the term has been used to describe the conflicting viewpoints in frameworks of character-to-character, character-to-narrator, and character-to-author, without distinction. Polyperspectivity is static and confined to the bounds of its own internal, material structure of the medium within which it is contained. Its defining characteristic of shifting or adjusting the reader's understanding of space and time based on the characters' perspectives is instrumental. During the Arab Spring, polyperspectivity became manifest as a defining characteristic in the process of institutional journalism, sourcing content produced by citizen witnesses, in the generation of narrative from often conflicting voices and viewpoints regarding events.

### **Narrative Matrix**

The narrative matrix provides an approach for addressing narrative constructed through polyperspectivity in terms of the external contextual integration.

The cultural critic Martin McQuillan (2000) posited the production of the narrative matrix as defined by the narrative, the narrative mark, and the counter narrative. The narrative matrix can aptly be characterized as a narrative that is mutually contained both within and beyond the text. McQuillan (2000) described it as:

without limits that folds itself back along a path, which it produces but which has always already begun. The narrative-matrix provides the

simulation of narrative through its inexhaustible writing, generating limits just as those limits collapse back into the matrix. The narrative-matrix produces a narrative (contiguous and within limits) as simulacra of itself, disguising its own recounting which effaces the act of telling, speaking in a way that problematizes recounting as an adequate description (p. 13).

McQuillan recognized the problematic nature of recounting the narrative within the matrix. This is due to the inter-subjective and contextual nature of the narrative mark, which is a distinguishing characteristic of the matrix. He characterized the production of the narrative mark as the result of “a moment of inter-subjective experience” (McQuillan, 2000, p. 21). Just as an individual telling a lie is dealing with two subjective realities, the polyperspective, produced by the citizen witness and institutional journalism, presents multiple subjective realities generating numerous narrative threads for considering narrative formation in space and time.

The mark elicits what is outside to a set narrative contained within a medium. The narrative mark contains contextual possibility within both the narrative and the counter-narrative. The prominent literary theoretician and cultural critic Edward Said (along with Henry Gates and Walter Benjamin) saw the mark’s production as the result of a communal narrative matrix. Said took this notion of the communal narrative matrix further in a method, derived from Western musical theory, which he described as contrapuntal reading.

### **Contrapuntal Reading**

Said, whose work is situated in the critical theory field of post-colonialism, published the seminal text *Orientalism* which provides an analysis of Western representations of Eastern cultures. Said argued that Orientalist scholarship is



## CHAPTER 3

inextricably tied to the imperialist societies from which it is produced, and that the inaccurate representations were the foundation of a Western understanding of the Middle East. In addition, Said (1980) criticized the ruling Arab regimes for internalizing and propagating the false representations constructed by Orientalists, stating,

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression (p. 62).

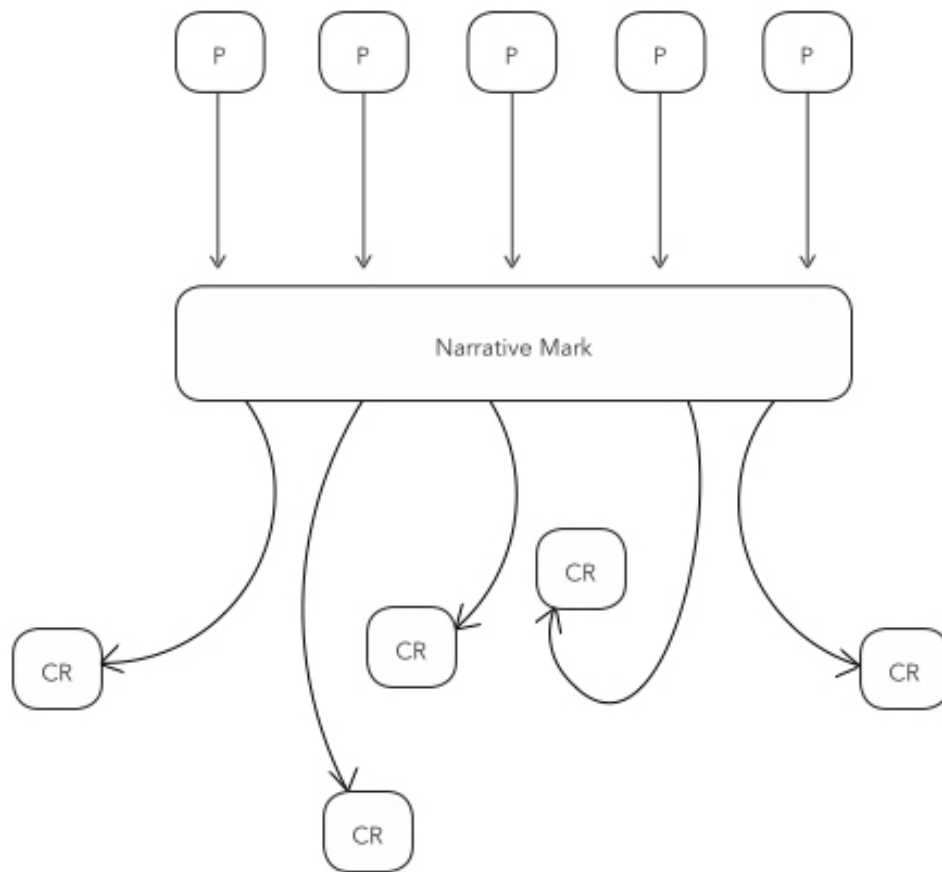
Said first introduced the method of contrapuntal reading of a text in his essay "Reflections on Exile." He developed it further in his text *Culture and Imperialism*, wherein he described it by saying:

In practical terms, contrapuntal reading as I have called it means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England...the point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded (Said, 1993, p. 66).

According to the political science scholar Geeta Chowdhry (2007), the intention of Said's contrapuntal reading or analysis is to consider the comprehensive totality provided by the interweaving of the embedded histories. One reading of the narrative is not placed above the counter narrative reading but rather they are placed in context of one another. Again in *Culture and Imperialism* Said (1993) stated,

we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others (p. 36).

Said's extension of the matrix in contrapuntal reading or analysis provides a political lens through which to consider dynamics of power and resistance within the formation of narrative in war and conflict. Information produced and disseminated by citizen witnesses (as the syncretic protagonist defined in chapter 2), sourced by institutional Western journalism, and broadcasted in forms of mass communication, highlights an intersection of networked interpersonal and mass communications, potentially allowing for a contrapuntal reading within the formation of narrative. Through the configuration of its system *Activating Distention* sought to further investigate the function of contrapuntal reading of including, in one reading of a text, that which is excluded from the text. It attempted to do so through the position of the spectator, as author. Through the architecture of the system the spectator was able to literally interweave two contextually rich narrative sources. Either of the two sources could be considered the primary narrative and the counternarrative within the narrative matrix.



**Figure 17** – Polyperspective in the Narrative matrix for a contrapuntal reading, diagram.  
(P=Perspective, CR=Contrapuntal Reading) Source: Diane Derr

## Storyworlds

The conception of narrative as storyworlds stems from notions of worldbuilding or worldmaking as a narrative process. Herman considered “narrative worldmaking as a central heuristic framework” to address mechanisms through which cognitive narratology can extend and build upon the structuralist, classical narratology study which was heavily framed by Saussure’s linguistic system of semiotics (2012). He described the process of narrative worldmaking as “prompt[ing] interpreters to engage in the process of co-creating narrative worlds, or “storyworlds” – whether they are imagined, autonomous worlds of fiction or the worlds about which nonfictional accounts



make claims that are subject to falsification.” (Herman, Phelan, Rabinowitz, Richardson, Warhow, 2012, p. 15).

The storyworld acts as a space for containing or demarcating narrative formation. In her text *Storyworlds Across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, literary scholar and critic Marie-Laure Ryan (2014) defined the storyworld as a “cognitive construct that consist of recurring elements” (p. 129). Storyworlds are internal worlds constructed individually through the mechanism of, and driven by, narrative. They are cognitively constructed by the reader or spectator. A principal component in understanding storyworlds is the relationship between media and narrative. The term “media” here is used in reference to production tools, forms of creative practice, and semiotic structures. In addressing the definition of media Ryan, (2014) identified “three kinds of criteria: semiotic substance, technological dimension, and cultural dimension” (p. 29). She suggested that the storyworld is comprised of four primary elements: “existents (characters and objects with special significance for the plot); setting; physical laws; social rules and values, events and mental events (i.e. characters’ reactions)” (Ryan, 2014, p. 129). Ryan used the term “storyworld” to replace “narrative.” She claimed this shift reflected a change in the “emergences of the concept of ‘world’ not only in narratology but also on the broader cultural scene” (Ryan, 2014, p. 1). A key component of the narrative space is driven by the spectator’s independent, personal experiences in the world relative to cultural and social knowledge. Within the storyworld she proposed “a basis for distinguishing two types of narrative elements: intradiegetic elements, which exist within the storyworld, and extradiegetic elements, which are not literally part of the storyworld but play a crucial role in its presentation” (Ryan, 2014, p. 37). This interplay between intradiegetic and extradiegetic elements allows for

a contrapuntal reading within the matrix. Storyworlds act as the containers of these primary elements in the process of building narratives. They can develop across media. They are not bound to or within a single medium but are able to traverse numerous media. Each medium shapes the storyworld and provides a mechanism for behavior in producing, disseminating, and/or receiving the narrative.

Henry Jenkins (2007) referred to narratives built across media as “transmedia storytelling,” defined as “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.” However, in a spectator’s construction of a storyworld, elements across media can potentially operate or be conceived of in terms of the contrapuntal – wherein distinct points of mediated information come together not to form a single narrative but rather to inform one another, their own “internal coherence and system of external relationships [...] co-existing and interacting with others (Jenkins, 1993, p. 36).

The 2004-2010 television show *Lost* is a relatively prime example of a formal, commercial narrative developed as a storyworld with these key elements. The character names Jeremy Bentham and John Locke are strategic elements embedded in the television show. Season one, episode three, titled “Tabula Rasa,” which translates to “blank slate,” incorporates the philosophical concept of the blank slate initially conceived of by Aristotle but popularized by the 18th century philosopher John Locke.

**Figure 18** – NBC, 'Lost', season one, episode twenty-one, 'Tabula Rasa'

Season one, episode 21, titled “The Greater Good” addresses moral correctness which was a central concept in the work of the 19th century philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The use of these names elicits reference to that which is outside of the narrative while simultaneously explicating or embedding an alternative lens through which a spectator may read the narrative.

Ryan's delineation of storyworlds speaks to a deeper insight, in that our conception of narrative has become recognized as an essential cognitive tool in navigating experience. Worth quoting at length, Ryan (2007) described narrative in its contemporary conscription:

few words have enjoyed so much use and suffered so much abuse as *narrative* and its partial synonym, story. The French theorist Jean-François Lyotard invokes the “Grand Narratives” of a capitalized History; the psychologist Jerome Bruner speaks of narratives of identity; the philosopher Daniel Dennett describes mental activity on the neural level

as the continuous emergence and decay of narrative drafts; the political strategist James Carville attributes the loss of John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election to the lack of a convincing narrative; and “narratives of race, class and gender” have become a mantra of cultural studies. Gerald Prince regards the contemporary use of the term narrative as a hedging device, a way to avoid strong positions: “One says ‘narrative’ instead of ‘explanation’ or ‘argumentation’ (because it is more tentative); one prefers ‘narrative’ to ‘theory,’ ‘hypothesis,’ or ‘evidence’ (because it is less scientific); one speaks of a ‘narrative’ rather than ‘ideology’ (because it is less judgmental); one substitutes ‘narrative’ for ‘message’ (because it is more indeterminate).” Another narrative theorist, Peter Brooks, attributes the surging popularity of the word to a more positive cause: “While I think the term has been trivialized through overuse, I believe the overuse responds to a recognition that narrative is one of the principal ways we organize our experience of the world - a part of our cognitive tool kit that was long neglected by psychologists and philosophers” (p. 22).

The project *OurSpace* by Klasien van de Zandschulp, James Bryan Graves, WhyNot, illustrates the nature through which space and time can impact narrative formation. The project is described as:

OurSpace is a participatory performance that zooms in on the virtual and the physical space between people, their online and offline identity and social encounters.

Ourspace is a quirky social experiment and performance that choreographs the bodies of participants using a chatbot in WhatsApp. The performance tests the boundaries of space in our hyperconnected world. It's a productive way to reflect on the seemingly normalized things we do in virtual social networks like following, zooming and liking -- and to highlight the embodied experience of these media practices.

The audience is guided by an artificial chatbot on WhatsApp. This artificial companion is sharing stories and responding with assignments that translates online social habits into physical movements. These storylines can vary from simple actions "If you think somebody looks interesting, tap this person on the shoulder" to more intimate actions "Observe your new friend closely: smell them, feel them" (<https://www.klasien.nl/ourspace>).



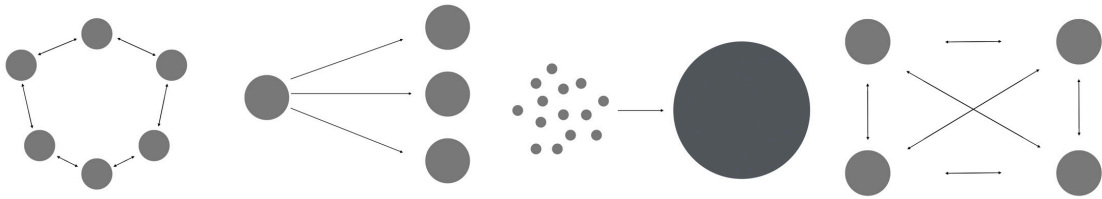
**Figure 19** - OurSpace (Installation). Source: <https://www.klasien.nl/ourspace>. Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Klasien van de Zandschulp

The audience, or rather the spectator, is paramount in realizing the project through their own narrative formation in building meaning between and within space and time of the nebulous territory of engagement on and offline. The orchestration and formation of these elements is dictated by the space and time of the networked model of communication.

### **3.1.2. Interfacing Communication in the Networked Model**

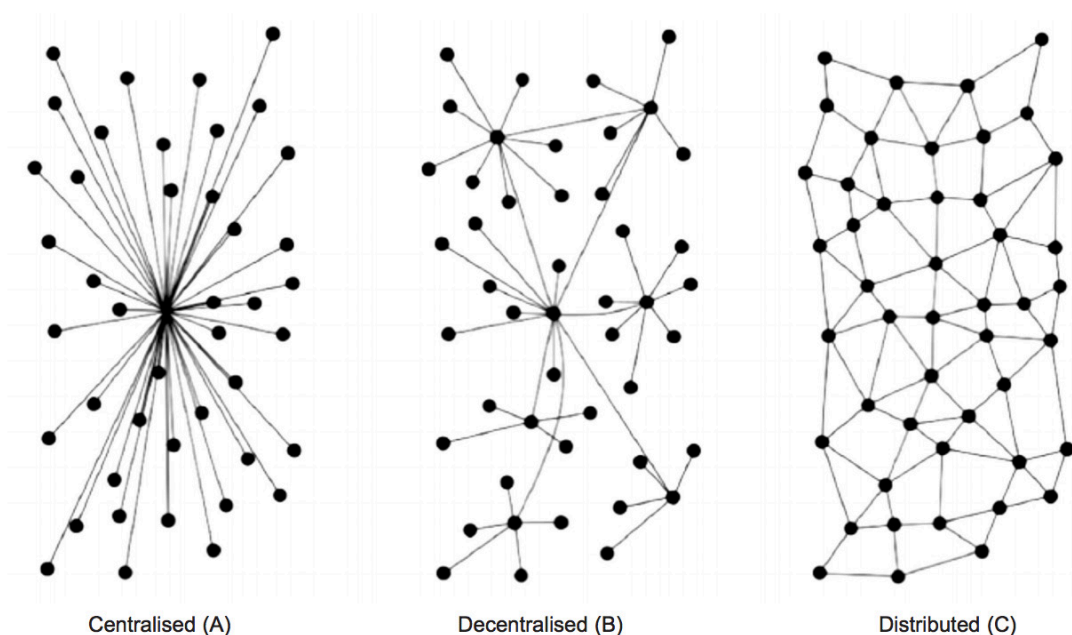
The networked model of communication is comprised of interpersonal and mass models of communication encompassing the production, dissemination, and reception of information across a spectrum of devices inclusive of textual, visual, and auditory modes. Within this model, as theorized and described by communication theorist Gustavo Cardoso in his seminal article “From Mass to Networked Communication: Communication Models and Information Society,” information is propagated through multiple communication models (2008, p. 618). He delineated the composition of the model as being “shaped by three main features: 1) Communicational globalization processes; 2) Networking of mass and interpersonal media and consequently, networked mediation; and 3) Different degrees of interactivity usage” (Cardoso, 2008, p. 587). Cardoso (2008) prioritized networked organization of our current media system over convergence in that “the organization and development of the media system depends, to a large extent, on how we socially appropriate the media and not just how media companies and the state organize communication” (p. 589). For the purpose and scope of this section I have

focused on his delineation of “Networking of mass and interpersonal media and consequently, networked mediation” (p. 587).



**Figure 20** – Communication Models: One-to-One, One-to-Many, Many-to-One, Many-to-Many (left to right).  
Source: Diane Derr

The networked model of communication incorporates and intersects networked interpersonal communication produced via the one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many communication models such as email, social media, blogs, and wikis with mass models of communication such as broadcast television, film, radio, and newspapers. It is a dynamic territory traversing geographic and temporal boundaries. This model of communication provides an alternate conception of space and time for constructing new forms of narrative resulting in a furthering of our formation of meaning and narrative understanding.



**Figure 21** – Forms of Networked Communication, Paul Baran, 1964. Source: 'On Distributed Communications'



Mass communication can and will typically be produced by an institution, organization, or individual of authority, power, or control, and received by a widespread, non-cohesive group of individuals. It is, as communications scholar Kevin Pearce (2009) described,

the process by which a person, group of people, or organization creates a message and transmits it through some type of medium to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience. In mass communication, the source is typically a professional communicator or a complex organization that incurs a great cost. The message is typically rapid and public. And, as stated, the receiver is generally large, heterogeneous, and anonymous. Feedback in mass communication is generally indirect and delayed (p. 623).

News reportage by international organizations such as BBC World, Al Jazeera English, and CNN disseminate globally, influencing public opinion and perception to an audience of individuals crossing cultural, national, racial, gender, and socioeconomic divisions.

In their article “The internet as a cultural forum: Implications for research,” authors and communication scholars Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Rasmus Helles (2010) distinguished between six communicative practices in terms of their operation as asynchronous or synchronous (see figure 22 below). In demonstrating the key distinction of temporality, between asynchronous and synchronous communication, they used the example of a person talking to someone on the telephone (in real time) versus listening to a recorded message



from the person. They do not privilege one over the other but rather indicate the allowance of reflection in the latter. Asynchronous networked communication provides a space for temporal flexibility. The user may access the information at their chosen time.

	<b>Asynchronous</b>	<b>Synchronous</b>
<b>One-to-one</b>	Email, text message	Voice, instant messenger
<b>One-to-many</b>	Book, newspaper, audio and video recording, Web 1.0 / webpage, download	Broadcast radio and television
<b>Many-to-many</b>	Web 2.0 / wiki, blog, social network site	Online chatroom

**Figure 22** - Six Communication practices. Reprinted from "The internet as a cultural forum: Implications for research" (519), by K. Jensen & R. Helles, 2010, *New Media & Society*, 13(4) 517-533.

Networked interpersonal communication has evolved significantly with the development of the internet. The model of many-to-many enables individuals to disseminate information with increased anonymity and to receive information with anonymity. It is not centralized; individuals are able to produce, disseminate, and receive information from multiple points of entry and exit in space and time. The footage of Muammar Gaddafi's death, captured by citizen witnesses, was posted on YouTube by individuals with low-identifiability. Individuals receiving the information were able to access it in their own space and time, with no identifiability by the author. Their viewing and reception

of the information was not contingent on the space and time of the author's production.

In his article "Networked Expertise in the Era of Many-to-many Communication: On Wikipedia and Invention," communication scholar Damien Smith Pfister (2011) asserted that Wikipedia is the "signature example of many-to-many communication" (p. 19). Whereas Jensen and Helles (2017) saw it as a form of mass communication due to its "few authors and many readers" (p. 18). As opposed to mass media communication, networked interpersonal communication necessitates feedback and response. In this model, the space and time of narrative formation is contingent upon multiple authors and spectators in an active engagement of production and reception.

Communication produced by participants within the Arab Spring developed within this model of communication generated by and within networked interpersonal and mass communication models. This intersection created an alternative structure of narrative formation in terms of space and time. The citizen witness produced, disseminated, and received information through the networked interpersonal communication of social media tools such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. This information was, in many cases, sourced by organizations of institutional journalism and further disseminated through mass communication.

An illustrative example of this hybrid intersection of networked interpersonal and mass communication during the Arab Spring can be seen in the reportage by Andy Carvin, a correspondent for the U.S. based National Public Radio (NPR). In his coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions he

sourced tweets generated from citizen witnesses to produce and disseminate his reportage through mass media<sup>4</sup>. The citizen witness operated as both the author and the subject. In this case Andy Colvin is operating as both the author and the spectator.

### **Space of Flows**

There are two key components shaping space and time for narrative formation in the networked model of communication: space of flows and power of the public sphere.

In his article, “Communication, Power and Counter Power in the Network Society,” communication theorist and pioneering figure in the theorization of the network society Manuel Castells supported Cardoso’s delineation of the networked model of communication in pointing out that the boundaries are blurring between existing models of communication. He attributed this to the configuration of what he described as “the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect the local and the global in chosen time” (Castell, 2009, p. 65). Castells identified the “space of flows” and “timeless time” as key elements in the structure of the network society within which this model is situated (1996, 2000, 2009).

The space of flows considers the concept of space as established by the transmission of information from one networked location to another, as opposed to space determined by physical distance or proximity. For example, an internet user viewing a website may move from one location to another instantly. The

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<sup>4</sup> This reportage is addressed further in chapter 5.

space is not dependent or contingent on physical movement in tangible space but rather on the time of the user accessing the information. According to Castells (2009):

the space of the network society is made of the articulation between three elements: the places where activities (and people enacting them) are located; the material communication networks linking these activities; and the content and geometry of the flows of information that perform the activities in terms of function and meaning (p. 34).

If our relationship to time in networked communication is determined by our access to and use of information, these core components of space in networked communication aptly speak to the role of production and reception in forming narrative. The space is contingent on the place of the author's activities, the dissemination of these activities through network linkage, and reception by the spectator in building meaning. In Castells' estimation, the time of communication distribution is no longer relevant; rather, the time of production and reception are of principal importance. If time is identified as the moment of accessing information, the duration or process of its dissemination is immaterial.

In his conception of timeless time, Castells (2009) distinguished social time of the network society from what he refers to as bureaucratic time, biological time, clock time, and disciplinary time in its function based on the "use of information" (p. 34). The author and spectator determination and experience of time are independent of one another. According to Castells, "Space and Time, the material foundations of human experience, have been transformed, as the space of flows dominates the space of places, and timeless time supersedes clock time of the industrial era" (2000, p. 1). Communication scholar

Philip Howard (2011) described this as “our sense that past and future converge in the present because digital media brings us things that have already happened and [allows] us to immediately experience culture produced far away” (p. 81).

Space of flows is a place that allows for “social simultaneity without territorial contiguity” (Castells, 2009, p. 34). This is to say, it refers to the “possibility of practicing simultaneity without contiguity. It also refers to the possibility of asynchronous interaction in chosen time, at a distance” (Castells, 2009, p. 34). For example, the posting of videos by citizen witnesses on YouTube created an asynchronous interaction between themselves and institutional journalism wherein they were sourced for mass broadcast. This was evident in the case of Andy Colvin’s reportage of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, as described previously. Subsequently, it necessitates a consideration of the ways in which such activity operates in the public sphere.

### **Public Sphere**

The public sphere plays a significant and strategic role in the politics of power in society. Pioneered by Jurgen Habermas in 1962, the public sphere is a space in which public opinion can take shape and develop. Habermas (1974) contended that media is capable of facilitating this space if unimpeded by institutional influence and control, otherwise it can be isolating and divisive as a pseudo-public sphere. Castells (2006) believed that is an essential component in the space of flows in the network society, stating:

since politics is largely dependent on the public space of socialized communication, the political process is transformed under the conditions

of the culture of real virtuality. Political opinions, and political behaviour, are formed in the space of communication (p. 14).

Nationalism in the digital, networked environment is weakened with the increasing rise of alternate identities (2009). Castells (2009) contended that “Power relationships are embedded in the social construction of space and time” (p. 34). In “Social Media and Revolutionary Waves: The Case of the Arab Spring,” political scientist Theodor Tudoroiu (2014) described social media of networked communication as “the space where power strategies are played out [...] Arab countries have provided a good example of how virtual and public spaces come into a mutual synergy and produce a formidable potential for mobilizing a broad variety of actors” (p. 349).

In February 2011, Wael Ghonim, a computer engineer, Google executive, and prominent figure in the Egyptian Revolution, was interviewed by Harry Smith on the U.S. based CBS news program *60 Minutes*. During the interview he described the revolution as developing similarly to Wikipedia, due to the fact that participants contributed content while remaining unnamed. He explained, “Everyone contributing small pieces, bits and pieces. We drew this whole picture of a revolution. And no one is the hero in that picture” (2011). While Wikipedia as a many-to-many communication model could be argued, as Jensen and Helles have, to be a form of a mass media model, here it is reflective as the public sphere in the space of communication, of the public sphere in opposition to institutional power. The “whole picture of the revolution” as Ghonim described, is a conceivable example of the contrapuntal through the polyperspective of the narrative matrix (Smith, 2011).

### 3.1.3 Activating Distention

Practice-based research was conducted in order to investigate the potential for a syncretic narrative formation in the space and time of the networked model of communication. The architecture of the system and the subsequent interaction was designed in an effort to unearth the potential of a contrapuntal reading within the polyperspectivity of a narrative matrix. In order to do so the following components were addressed:

- Analysis of a dual operation of the spectator as the author;
- consideration of a contrapuntal reading through the spectators' simultaneous position as author;
- consideration of an infrastructure of the space of flows within the public sphere enabling a contrapuntal reading.

#### Aim and Objective

In order to address this potential for a contrapuntal reading within the space of flows in the public sphere I produced an interactive installation, in 2013, titled *Activating Distention*. The project was produced using the software MaxMSP and the modular control interface TouchOSC coupled with sourced and appropriated video footage. The physical installation consists of a wall-mounted LCD monitor or projected image and an iPad. The project operated as an interactive, mediated system of narrative formation wherein the position of the spectator was simultaneously positioned as the author.



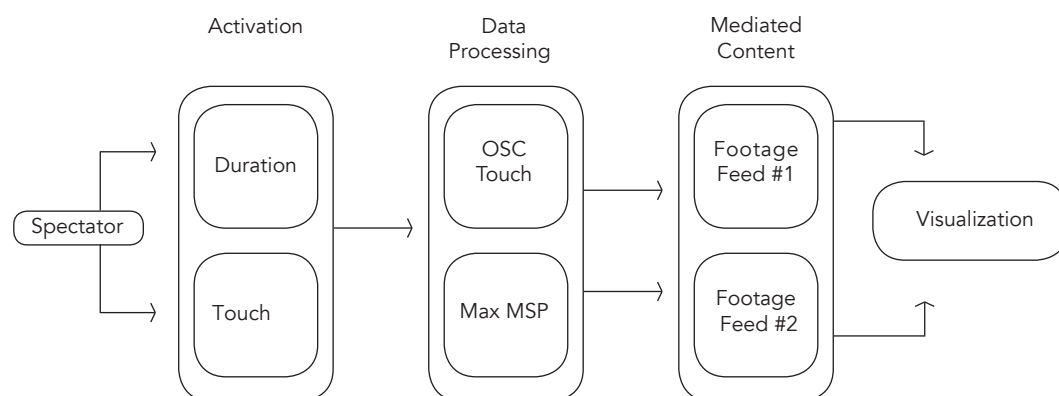
Figure 23 – *Activating Distention*, installation still (2013). Source: Diane Derr

The project investigates the potential for producing narrative through a process of syncretically merging and integrating video footage produced by citizen witnesses and institutional journalism. The video footage produced by institutional journalism was recorded from a far and seemingly safe distance. The shots appear controlled and orchestrated for the purposes of clarity and effective and efficient reading by the spectator. This is in blatant contrast to the video footage produced by the citizen witnesses which is up-close and personal, shaky, and moves quickly from one focal point to another. This video footage is seemingly un-staged as the camera movement, framing, position, and stability appear to not be a concern of the author and is at times difficult to watch. The aim of this practice-based research is to further unpack a primary research question “What new phenomena of narrative produced in the networked model of communication and observed in the Arab Spring can be



identified and analyzed?” In doing so, it explores a hybrid of a narrative space and time produced by an intersecting engagement with content generated by citizen witnesses and content generated by institutional news organizations. As a processual method, the context and intent of the original source is not diminished. The inherent and embedded meaning of the original media is not replaced or supplanted. Rather the resulting narrative(s) are reliant upon the context, intent, and embedded meaning of the original source material.

The collection of videos produced and disseminated by citizen witnesses were sourced online and curated by the author. Footage of news organization reportage was purchased from Getty Images (in Dubai, United Arab Emirates), and funded by a faculty research grant from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar. Due to copyright restrictions, this video footage and subsequently this project, are not available for distribution but will be made available for viewing with this dissertation, pending its publication, through the link provided below.



**Figure 24** – *Activating Distention*, system diagram. Source: Diane Derr

The video footage was parsed into two separate feeds: one feed consisted of content produced by citizen witnesses and the other feed consisted of content produced by institutional news footage (See Appendix C). The video

footage of each feed was produced during the 18 day Egyptian Revolution. Participants were invited to navigate between the two feeds of video footage through touch-based interaction using the iPad. The software interface contains three slider bars each controlling the horizontal pixels, the vertical pixels, and a full crossfade of both image and audio between the two video feeds. In adjusting each of the three slider bars on the screen, the pixels and audio from one source would overtake the pixels and audio from the other source. This enables an indeterminate range of dynamic visual and auditory possibilities wherein the narrative formation is fluid, starts, stops and varies in degrees of clarity. The resulting visual and auditory interplay can be as direct or as abstract, as the spectator chooses. The two sources can remain intact, in terms of legibly conveying their own embedded meaning and intention or become abstractly inter-mixed.

Project documentation for the practice-based research, *Activating Distention*, is available in a google drive folder through the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/activating-distention>. The documentation folder contains the following items:

- MaxMSP software program file(s);
- touchosc program file;
- individual (eighteen), original videos recorded by citizen witnesses;
- individual (twenty-four), original videos recorded by news organizations;
- project documentation of the interactive system in use (includes footage of software patches being configured in the MaxMSP program).

The interaction generated through the system architecture created a hybrid narrative space comprised of networked interpersonal and mass media content. The intention of this was to investigate an infrastructure of the space of flows within the public sphere. Each narrative produced by the spectator was individually generated by their own response to the video footage feeds; therefore, no two narratives were identical. The spectator produced their own subjective narrative from the two subjective narratives they were provided. The space and time of the narrative existed in their accessing of the information. Through the architecture of the system and the position of the spectator, as author, the project attempted to unearth the potential of a contrapuntal reading within the polyperspectivity of a narrative matrix. The spectator could view the reportage of an event produced through institutional news footage then extend their reading by incorporating video footage produced by citizen witnesses. In this process the spectator and author are literally able to experience and navigate the two potentially divergent viewpoints. This could allow for the process of a contrapuntal reading in what Said describes as “extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded (Said, 1993, p. 66).

### **Context and Reflection**

*Activating Distention* was installed in an enclosed, auxiliary gallery space at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, in 2013. Similar to *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, discussed in chapter 2, this project was viewed and interacted with by the University community at-large inclusive of students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of national and regional

## CHAPTER 3

backgrounds including Qatari nationals, long-term local and regional MENA residents, and western and non-western expatriates. The University is located in Education City, a development of Qatar Foundation housing eight international Universities, with limited access to the outside local community. Additionally, the project was exhibited at the Gezira Art Center during DI-EGY Fest 0.1 in April 2013.

In this investigation, the spectator is able to generate their own independent narrative from two divergent sources of video footage captured during the 18 day Egyptian revolution; citizen witnesses and institutional journalism. This configuration positions the spectator as both the author and the spectator. The visual and auditory aesthetic of the two channels of source material from citizen witnesses and institutional journalists is readily apparent. This legibility allowed the spectator to more efficiently and immediately identify the two sources as they entered into their role as author.

The individuals viewing and interacting with the installation appeared to have an acute and immediate awareness of their role as the author, generating their own narrative. This awareness was evident in their responsiveness to and navigation between the two channels of source material from citizen witnesses and institutional journalists. While the spectators appeared to be engaged in an exploratory process, in their generation of narrative, they did not appear to have a similar level of playfulness in their interactivity, as was observed in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* (chapter 2). Rather, the spectators appeared to be mindfully engaged in their generation of narrative, many of whom appeared to approach their authorship in a critical, comparative exploration between the two divergent sources of material. Based

on my observations, no two narratives generated by spectators were identical. Each narrative was produced by the spectators' own, independent, subjective, and indeterminate responsive process. The spectator was able to read each of the texts (source material) through the lens and context of the other. Their individual narrative only existed within the time of their authorship and spectatorship.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the dimension of space and time within the bounds of the networked model of communication. As a component of syncretic narrative (as a methodological tool), space and time in the networked model of communication can potentially provide the necessary bounds for syncretic narrative formation.

The first section, *Toward Narrative Space and Time in Networked Communication*, investigated narrative within the space and time contained within storyworlds, as emergent in their formation. Through the polyperspective within the narrative matrix, I found that contrapuntal readings can manifest. They can elicit that which is not contained within the text and they can speak to the counter narrative; they can point to that which enables the formation of the narrative itself.

The second section, *Interfacing Communication in the Networked Model*, investigated the conception of space, dependent on the time of accessing information, as enabling narrative formation to continually start, stop, dissipate, and transform based on spectator behavior. They can engender attributes of polyperspectivity and elicit contrapuntal readings or counter narratives within

the matrix, challenging conscriptions of power of the public sphere within the space of flows. The network bounds of space and time in the networked model of communication are capable of eliciting a contrapuntal reading in the public sphere of communication through the application of polyperspectivity, the narrative matrix, and elements within the spectator's storyworld.

The section concluded with the practice-based research project *Activating Distention*. This project was undertaken in order to further investigate the spectator's production of a storyworld. Through the elements of polyperspectivity and the narrative matrix, the intent was to explore the potential for a contrapuntal reading potentially manifest in a co-creation of narrative from the citizen witness and content generated by institutional journalism.

## CHAPTER 4 | SPACE AND PLACE

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### 4.1. Geopolitical Space and Place

Chapter 2 attempted to locate the configuration of the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist during the Arab Spring. As such it identified the citizen witness' function as both the subject as well as the author, simultaneously and independently. Additionally, within this identified function, practice-based research in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, attempted

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to unpack an acceleration in the logic of speed with a collision between the act of authorship and the simultaneous position of the subject evident in the death witness. The preceding chapter investigated the dimension of space and time of syncretic narrative formation within the networked model of communication as instrumental in demarcating the bounds of production, dissemination, and reception of narrative(s) formed in the Arab Spring. In doing so, it hypothesized on the syncretic narrative formation as having the capacity to operate in a constant state of flux and flow, with shared, dynamic authorship and indeterminate reception. Practice-based research in the project *Activating Distention* was employed to explore the spectator's production of their own narrative stemming from the two divergent sources of video footage from the citizen witness and institutional journalism.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to locate the dimension of causation in order to ascertain the foundation from which the proposed syncretic protagonist and the dimension of space and time in syncretic narrative formation may operate. The chapter approaches the dimension of causation as an identification of the ground upon which future events of the Arab Spring will develop. It is not addressed in a didactic, cause-and-effect construct. This chapter addresses the Middle East as a geopolitical space and place which was syncretically produced through colonialism. The topic of international relations in the Middle East is a complex and formidable territory of inquiry. This chapter does not seek to investigate the underlying implications of such a study. Rather, it provides a framework in foregrounding the configuration of the Arab Spring through an account of both Western colonization and post-colonization activities and implications within the Middle Eastern region. Due to the layered and multifaceted complexity of the Middle East, it was deemed necessary to conduct and



include the following literature review. This was done in an effort to frame and ground the activities being investigated within the scope of this research and to further identify the intricate bounds of causation. Therefore, the structure of this chapter is divergent from previous and subsequent chapters.

The first section, *Syncretic Determinacy of Place: Middle East*, will provide an overview of the history of international relations within the Middle East. It will begin by addressing the etymology of the term “Middle East” as it ostensibly foreshadows the trajectory of international relations in the region and defines a geopolitical space within which the case studies in chapter 5 operate. This section will foreground the mediated events of the Arab Spring in framing the role of nationalism and the citizen witness in the Middle East. Additionally, it will propose George Antonius, author of *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* as a potential original citizen witness in the Middle East (Antonius, 1939). It will then survey events in the four countries contained in the forthcoming case studies situated in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. The second section, *Syncretic Determinacy of Space: Arab Spring*, will begin by addressing the etymology of the term “Arab Spring.” It will then address conditions of the Middle East, in advance of the Arab Spring, according to the reports produced by the Regional Bureau for the Arab States of the United Nations Development Program and the International Monetary Fund. It will conclude with a breakdown of the chronology and configuration of events within the specified countries.

#### **4.1.1. Syncretic Determinacy of Place: Middle East**

To claim that the historical landscape of conflict in the Middle East is complex would be an extraordinary understatement. Nonetheless, with this complexity comes an interwoven array of divergent (sometimes convergent) narratives. Historically, narratives of the region nebulously deemed the “Middle East,” were beleaguered in a mode of non-binary opposition with the “West.” These events outlined in this section do not present a single narrative but rather overarching conditions which contributed to the macro narrative of Arab and Pan Arab nationalism, and the region’s geopolitical landscape in the 20th and 21st centuries. It is through the micro, meso, and macro narratives of and within the ‘Middle East’ wherein a syncretic generation of place can be seen to emerge.

In his essay “Narrative and Conflict in the Middle East,” Rolf Tanner (2014), a council member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, cited a letter to the editor published in the *Financial Times* in 2013, stating:

Sir, Iran is backing Assad. Gulf states are against Assad!

Assad is against Muslim Brotherhood. Muslim Brotherhood and Obama are against General Sisi.

But Gulf states are pro Sisi! Which means they are against Muslim Brotherhood!

Iran is pro Hamas, but Hamas is backing Muslim Brotherhood!

Obama is backing Muslim Brotherhood, yet Hamas is against the US!

Gulf states are pro US. But Turkey is with Gulf states against Assad; yet

Turkey is pro Muslim Brotherhood against General Sisi. And General Sisi

is being backed by the Gulf states!

Welcome to the Middle East and have a nice day (al-Sabah, 2013).

This letter is emblematic of the complexity of conflict and narrative in the Middle East which he referred to as “fertile ground” in that “The stronger and stickier the narrative, and the more intense and violent the conflict, the likelier it is that people will fall victim to conspiracy theories” (Tanner, 2014, p. 91).

### **Etymology of the term “Middle East”**

Alfred Mahan, a U.S. Navy officer and historian, had been credited with first use of the term “Middle East” to describe the territory (Koppes, 1976). He used the term to “designate the area between Arabia and India” (Lewis, 1964, p. 9). Mahan published the term in his 1902 article “The Persian Gulf and International Relations” in the British journal *National Review*. In this article he stated:

The Middle East, if I may adopt a term which I have not seen, will someday need its Malta, as well as its Gibraltar; it does not follow that either will be in the Persian Gulf. Naval force has the quality of mobility which carries with it the privilege of temporary absences; but it needs to find on every scene of operation established bases of refit, of supply, and in case of disaster, of security. The British Navy should have the facility to concentrate in force if occasion arise, about Aden, India, and the Persian

Gulf (Mahan, 1902, p. 38).

Mahan's reference to Malta and Gibraltar was due to their significance to the British Royal Navy. His designation of the region was based on its usefulness to British naval endeavors. It was not derived from the history, the culture, or the politics of the location.

It was later discovered that General Sir Thomas Edward Gordon used the term in 1900 in his article "The Problems of the Middle East" published in *The Nineteenth Century* (Koppes, 1976 and Bilgin, 2005). In the article he assessed the issue of the region as "involving the defense of India in connection with Persia and Afghanistan" (Gordon, 1900). Following Mahan's publication, the chief of the foreign department of *The Times* (UK), Sir Ignatius Valentine Chirol, popularized the term in a series of articles between October 1902 and April 1903 with the heading "The Middle Eastern Question" (Koppes, 1976). According to Koppes, Chirol's use of the term in his articles and subsequent book *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence*, "marked the first sustained use of the term" (Koppes, 1976). In 1911, the Viceroy of India and British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, used the term to describe the territories of Turkey, the Arab Gulf, Iran, and Asia (Mady, 2005). After becoming the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1921, Winston Churchill established the Middle East Department. This department oversaw the Palestinian, East Jordanian, and Iraqi territories (Addison, 2007). The United States' first official use of the term was in 1957, in reference to the Suez Crisis in the Eisenhower Doctrine[5]. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles defined the Middle East as "the area lying between and including Libya on the west and Pakistan on the east, Syria and Iraq on the North and the Arabian

Peninsula to the south, plus the Sudan and Ethiopia” (Davidson, 1960, 665).

The following year, the U.S. State Department defined the region as including only Egypt, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar (“Near East’ Is Mideast, Washington Explains,” 1958). In 2004, the George W. Bush administration coined the term “Greater Middle East” to refer to the Muslim world (Haeri, 2004). The term was used to include Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Carothers & Ottaway, 2004, p. 62).

The term “Middle East” is highly problematic for a number of reasons including its creation stemming from a Western perspective based on its own varying agendas, and its lack of defining geographic or cultural boundaries. Several scholars including Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said, Hassan Hanafi, and Kaveh Farrokh (among others) have conducted significant study in this area and agree with this assessment.

The term nullifies the overt and covert differences within the region including, but not limited to, religion, ethnicity, culture, history, customs, and dialect. The term is far less geographical and more fully political in its creation and historical usage. As indicated above the term has been applied at the discretion of the speaker. According to Dr. Hassan Hanafi Hassanien (1998), philosopher and former chairperson of the department of Philosophy at Cairo University:

The expression Middle East is an old British label based on a British Western perception of the East divided into middle or near and far, which are two relative concepts having Britain as a referring point.

The expression is a projection from outside, not emerging from inside,

conceiving the other in relation to the self as it was always the case in classical orientalism, the periphery in relation to the center, which is already a power relationship (p. 1).

In his essay “The ‘Middle East’ as a framework for analysis: Remapping a region in the era of Globalization,” Rashid Khalidi<sup>5</sup>, a prominent historian of the Middle East, analyzed the Western construction of the “Middle East” and posited the need for a remapping the Arab geography. Khalidi cited geography, religion, language, and institutional study as the primary problematic factors. The geographic terms “middle” and “east” are immediately indicative a Western viewpoint. As illustrated previously, the terms have been used to designate a number of varying geographic boundaries. It is a misconception to align the Middle East by religion. There are millions of non-Muslims residing in the region including Christians, Druze, Judaism, Yazidi, and others. While the primary historical languages are Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, they are not the only ones. Others include Kurdish, Hebrew, and Berber. Additionally, Khalidi asserted that “the institutional processes whereby they [area studies] are defined, studied, and processed into knowledge in universities and elsewhere,” is problematic. This is due to the “genesis” of area studies (“Middle Eastern studies,” “African studies,” “South Asian studies,” “Latin American studies”) which he likened to Western imperialist approaches (Khalidi, 1998, p. 75).

In the initial conception and usage, as demonstrated by Mahan, Gordon, Chirol, and Curzon, the term ‘Middle East’ was applied as a means of describing the unification of disparate entities resulting in the creation of a new

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<sup>5</sup> Khalidi is the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University and director of Columbia’s Middle East Institute. Khalidi’s research has shed light on the development of national identities within the region and role of the West in their development during the 20th century.

alternate entity. This endeavor embodies a syncretic process and result in the demarcation of place. Due to the history of the term in both its syncretic creation and application, it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to limit the term to a specific geographic area. The term “Middle East” is a geopolitical construct and is considered as such in this project. The intent in this dissertation is not to identify or define a prescribed geographical region as the “Middle East” for its own purposes (as seen above). The term is being used to refer to a geopolitical space, not solely a geographical place.

#### **4.1.1.1. Transition from Ottoman Empire to Colonial Occupation**

This section will provide an examination of the transition from the Ottoman Empire into direct and indirect Western colonial occupation of the Middle East. It will consider the role of Arab nationalism in the region's transitions through Ottoman rule, Western colonization, and post-colonization. Additionally, it will address the role and impact of conditions which led to the British and French establishment of territorial divisions in the region.

For more than 120 years the Arab states of the Middle East region have been combatting Western imperialist ambitions and military occupation. In the early 1880's France began its occupation of Tunisia and Britain began its occupation of Egypt. Italy followed in 1911 with its colonial occupation of Libya. With the end of World War I in 1918, the European powers of Britain and France divided the remaining Arab states, establishing artificial borders and retaining local potentates to act as puppets, enforcing the political and economic agendas of their colonial rulers. The imposition of Western power and

influence further complicated the syncretic formation of place within the region. Saudi Arabia and Yemen were the only states previously under Ottoman control to remain unoccupied by colonial powers. Between World War I and World War II (interwar period), European colonial powers maintained their hold over the region through both direct and indirect rule. While Britain granted both Egypt and Iraq supposed independence during this time, the period was marred with revolts and uprisings against the colonialists which were brutally put down by military force on typically unarmed civilian populations (Khalidi, 2004).

### **Arab Nationalism**

Nationalism is a complex issue. As described by author and Middle Eastern scholar Zachary Lockman, “nationalism always means different things to different people in different contexts” (Gershoni, 1997, p. ix). The complexity of Arab nationalism was increased due to numerous issues extending from the time of the Ottoman Empire through post-colonialism. Arab nationalism was largely considered by many scholars to have been at its height of popularity during the 1950’s and 1960’s, however its roots can be traced back to the mid-19th century in opposition to the falling Ottoman Empire (Khalidi, 1993 & 1995, Ernst 1991).

Martin Kramer (1993), a Middle Eastern scholar, attributed the line “Awake, O Arabs, and arise!” in the 1868 poem “Awake and Rise” by Ibrahim al-Yaziji as “[plotting] the trajectory of the Arab national consciousness” (p. 171). C. Ernest Dawn (1991), a Middle Eastern historian, attributed the early formation of a nationalist view with the adoption of the concept of patriotism. Dawn (1991) cited Rifa’a Rafi al-Tahtawi, an influential leader in this early phase of the movement, as he “expounded the ideas that the earth was comprised



of countries with their own special characteristics, and that inhabitants of each such country had a peculiar relationship to and a special love for it” (p. 4).

Khalidi (1991) described early Arab Nationalism as:

a child of the intellectual atmosphere of the nineteenth century and one of many responses to the process of incorporation of the world into a single system with Europe at its center which that century witnessed. Like these other ideologies, Arab nationalism in its fully developed form represented an expression of identity and of group solidarity within the projected new format of the nation-state by an amalgam of old elites and new social forces at once desirous of seeing their society resist control by outside forces and deeply influenced by the example and the challenge of the West (p. 1364).

In the early to mid-20th century its prominence returned in opposition to Western influence, power, and involvement. According to Mahmoud Haddad (1994) “there was a cultural crisis of self-view in relation to the power of Western influence” (p. 202). In his seminal text *The Arab Awakening: A History of the Arab National Movement*, George Antonius outlined four key elements of Arab nationalism during the 20th century: secularism in the movement, privileging Pan Arab loyalty over “smaller” loyalties, the role of colonial powers, and the significance of Palestine.

According to Dawn (1993), “By the first years of the twentieth century, Muslim Arabs had developed an Arab nationalist self-view that was to provide the nucleus of Arab nationalist ideology for the twentieth century” (p. 10).

Dawn, along with many other scholars, believed that early Arab Nationalism and Islamic Modernism were closely bound; others, including Sylvia G. Haim,

editor of *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, do not connect Arab nationalism with Islamic Modernism. Rather, her interpretation considered Arab nationalism as being “created by the spread of European theological and political doctrines that weakened the hold of Islam and Christianity” (Dawn, 1991, p. 9). She believed that true Arab Nationalism was an importation from the West at the time of World War I (Dawn, 1991). There are two primary camps of scholarly debate on the topic: the link between Arab nationalism and Islamic Modernism, and Arab nationalism as an importation from the West (Khalidi, 1993). The purpose of this section is not to explore the two positions but rather to more closely consider the implications of the geopolitical landscape of Antonius’ seminal text.

In his essay “The End of Arab Nationalism,” Middle Eastern scholar Fouad Ajami claimed that Antonius’ *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* was written for an outside, “Anglo-American audience” and represents, “the narrative nationalist history with its gaze fixed on the outside world, petitioning, alternating between a search for foreign patrons and an equally frenzied search for foreign scapegoats and demons” (Ajami, 1991). A glaring endorsement of this claim, of the narrative being constructed for a Western audience, is most evident in the language in which it was written – English.

George Antonius was an Orthodox Christian of Lebanese-Egyptian decent born in Lebanon. He was educated at Victoria College in Alexandria (1902 - 1910) before earning a degree in Engineering from Kings College at the University of Cambridge (1910 - 1913). He worked in the Public Works Department in Alexandria prior to World War I as a war correspondent for the British forces during the war, and in the Public Services Department for the

British Administration in Palestine at the end of the war. From 1919 to 1921 he publicized and solicited attention for Arab concerns in England and Europe as a member of King Faisal's European delegation. He became a deputy to the Director of Education in Palestine in 1921. From 1925 to 1927 he worked with the Civil Secretary to the Government of Palestine, Sir Gilbert Clayton, in negotiating the borders of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and Jordan. In 1927, he was awarded the Commander of the British Empire distinction. Three years later, he resigned from the mandate government and began working for the Institute of Current World Affairs in New York.



**Figure 25** – George Antonius, portrait (date of image unknown). Source: *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*

He became an unofficial adviser to the British High Commissioner in Palestine in 1931. In 1935, he gave a series of lectures in the United States

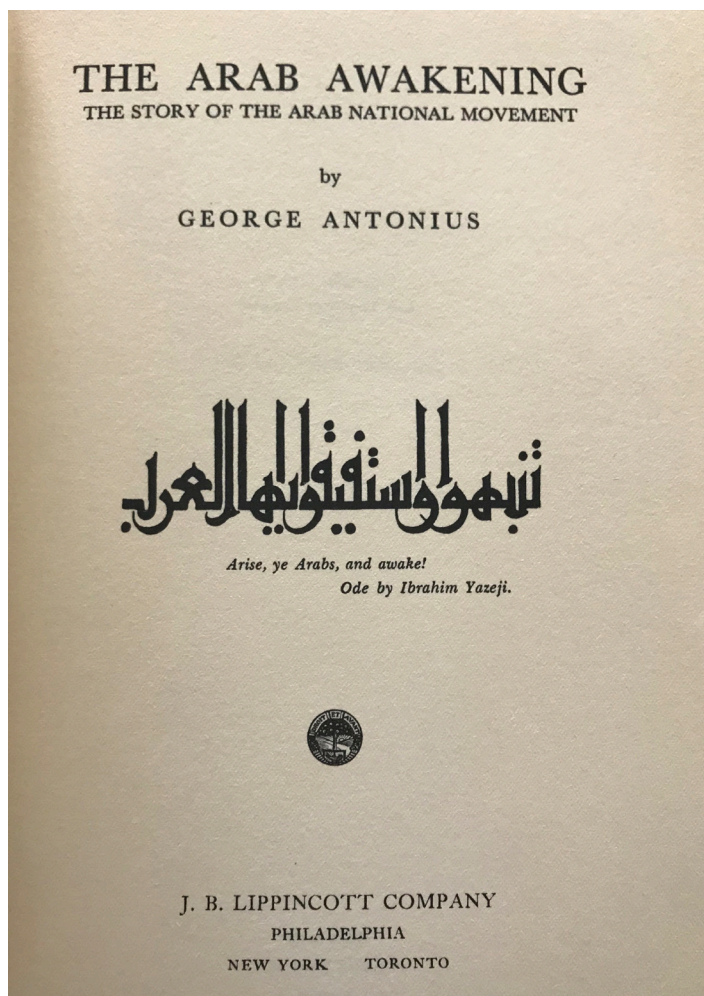
and Canada, warning of the volatile situation in Palestine in response to Britain's pro-Zionist policies. During the late 1930's, as he was writing *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, he testified in front of the Peel Commission as a witness to the Great Palestinian Rebellion. During his testimony he stressed the partiality toward the Zionists on the part of the British. He was appointed Secretary of the Palestinian delegation to the London conference in 1939. Antonius did not witness the shift in Arab nationalism following the end of World War II as he died in 1942, prior to the end the mandatory system.

The narrative Antonius constructed in *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* has been controversial and highly debated by scholars in the field since its initial publication. In his text "George Antonius: The Historian as Liberator," Chandler Rosenberg, a historical sociologist, painted a very contentious and antagonist portrayal of Antonius' text. He did so, interestingly, in terms of Antonius' firsthand experience vs. his documentation and portrayal of it for historical posterity. He asserted that "Antonius wrote his history of Arab nationalism with one eye firmly fixed on the events swirling around him" (Rosenberg, 2005, p. 18), further stating that "It is surely a concern of historians that flawed material claiming the authority of history not migrate into other fields without challenge — especially when those academic disciplines are often as prone to the seduction of making history as was George Antonius himself" (Rosenberg, 2005, p. 20). Albert Hourani, a Middle Eastern scholar and historian, saw Antonius' structural alignment of the text in a different light, stating that it "is a slightly uneasy combination of two different kinds of writing. It is a work of historical narrative, but also of political advocacy" (Hourani, 1981, p. 199). Khalidi described the text in terms that celebrate what

Rosenberg saw as a problematic issue between experience and objective reportage or analysis:

Antonius's book is a seminal exposition of the theses of Arab nationalism, as well as a detailed account of crucial episodes in its genesis and development, much of it based on Antonius's access to both Arab and British documents not before published, interviews with key participants in events, and personal experience (Khalidi, 1991, p. 1367).

The scholars who saw Antonius' experience as adding value to the information he was reporting vs. those who saw it as problematic due to the unavoidable,



**Figure 26** - The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement.  
Source: Diane Derr



increased level of subjectivity seem interestingly tethered to their own political leanings toward the Middle East itself. None-the less it is significant that Antonius functioned as both witness and author, just as Rosenberg and Hourani point out, albeit to a means to cast doubt on his authority.

Due to Antonius' background, education, and array of positions held within the British and Egyptian governments, Palestinian territory, and the U.S. Institute of Current World Affairs, he was afforded a unique perspective on the developing regional events at that time.

Antonius' production of the narrative contained in *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* is in and of itself syncretic. It was informed by his own experiences in his positions within two desperate sources: the West and in the Middle East. His function as both the author and the subject of the narrative positions him as the original, or precursor, to the region's citizen witness, as identified in chapter 3. His reportage was based on his firsthand experience creating a narrative produced in a bottom-up model rather than top-down model. The conditions of his reportage were indicative of his position between Western power and regional resistance.

### **Foregrounding Events**

There were a number of consequential events following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the division of regional territory. These events had a significant impact on the subsistence and development of the region in the 20th and 21st centuries. For the purpose of providing a foundation in framing the background geopolitical conditions of the Arab Spring, the following six events have been surveyed including: Ottoman-German alliance (1914), the Great

Arab Revolt (1916), the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), the Balfour Declaration (1917), the San Remo Conference (1920), and the British Mandate of Palestine (1922). These events are far from compressive of western involvement in the region. However, they demonstrate the syncretic process of a large-scale imposition of one power over another resulting in substantial and far-reaching future implications wherein alternate power-dynamics may emerge.

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered into World War I in a secret alliance with the German Empire, signed on August 2, 1914 and enacted on October 29, 1914. The groundwork for this alliance began two decades prior when the newly crowned Kaiser Wilhelm II considered Turkey to be ideal for the “growth of German influence” (Mansfield, 2013, p. 94). This alliance resulted in the Empire’s defeat, and the division and occupation of its Arab provinces by France and Britain (Cleveland, 2013 and Mansfield 2013), which opened the doors for the Allied powers to reconfigure the region.

Beginning in 1915, Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner of Egypt, began negotiating terms with Husayn ibn Ali al-Hashimi (Sharif of Mecca) for a substantial amount of land to be an independent Arab state, in exchange for his charge of the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. Husayn negotiated for the territory from “Mersin and Adana (in modern Turkey) to Persia in the north, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, excluding the British colony of Aden” (Rogen, 2013, p. 44). This is essentially the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq (Cleveland, 2013). McMahon accepted the terms with the exception of “two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo” (Hurewitz, 1979, p. 50).

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Following the negotiations Husayn led the Great Arab Revolt in July of 1916; however the terms of the agreement was never recognized.

While McMahon was negotiating with Husayn, the British Foreign Office began negotiations with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a partition of Ottoman territory. Commonly referred to as the Sykes-Picot agreement, named for its authors Sir Mark Sykes and Charles Francois Georges-Picot, the agreement (officially the Asia-Minor agreement) was signed in May 1916. This agreement contradicted portions of the agreement negotiated with Husayn. It granted France an area of “direct control” along the Syrian coast and a “sphere of exclusive indirect influence in the Syrian interior” (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, 150). Similarly, Britain was granted “direct control” over areas in Mesopotamia and “exclusive indirect influence from Gaza to Kirkuk” (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, 150). The areas granted to Husayn for his Arab Kingdom in exchange for his initiation of the Great Arab Revolt were now both directly and indirectly within British and French influence. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire the Arab territory (excluding the Arabian Peninsula) was divided into two separate regions. In the agreement, the territory of modern-day Syria and Jordan were placed under the French “sphere of influence” and modern day Iraq was placed under the British “sphere of influence.” Additionally, the terms of the agreement stipulated that Palestine would fall under international rule (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).

The agreement between Husayn and McMahon was documented through a series of ten letters exchanged between July 1915 and March 1916. The Husayn-McMahon correspondence “lie at the root of an immense controversy over whether Britain pledged to support an independent Arab state



and then reneged on the pledge” (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 145). While the letters had been partially published in 1923, they were made public, in full, in Antonius’ publication of *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*.

The Balfour Declaration was a letter written by Arthur Balfour, the United Kingdom’s Foreign Secretary, to Lord Walter Rothschild, a leader in the British Jewish community on November 2, 1917. In the letter Balfour (1917) stated:

His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

The declaration would subsequently contradict a portion of both the agreement with Husayn and the Sykes-Picot agreement when it became incorporated into the British Mandate for Palestine (Rogan, 2013).

The Treaty of Sevres was signed in 1920 at the San Remo conference, which among many other things, divided the former provinces into mandates based on the Sykes-Picot agreement (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). The League of Nations later sanctioned these mandates during the interwar period. According to Article 22 of the League’s Covenant, the mandates “were inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world” and were to be administered by the respective “advanced nations” “until such time as they are able to stand alone” (League of Nations,

1938). The former regional territory of the Ottoman Empire was divided into five states: Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. At this time Yemen and Saudi Arabia established themselves as independent political states. The British mandate for Palestine was confirmed in July 1922 by the Council of the League of Nations. The document was a political instrument which temporarily authorized British rule of Palestine. During the interwar period Britain and France maintained administration over the newly created states from the fallen Ottoman Empire (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). According to historians William L. Cleveland and Martin Burton, the interwar period of (primarily) British and French control in the region resulted in a need for Arab identity and unification, which resulted in “regionalism, Pan-Arab Unity and Islamic solidarity” (Cleveland, 2009, p. 234). Neither Pan-Arab unity nor Islamic solidarity would trump regionalism with the local rulers navigating the tumultuous territory between the mandate power and the local resistance.

### **4.1.1.2. Shifts in the Geopolitical Landscape**

This section will outline shifts in the geopolitical landscape in terms of nationalism in the Middle East following World War II. It will then address the involvement of Western countries within Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria by providing an outline of the key shifts in each country's, previously established, syncretic political landscape. In doing so, it will address the Western use of local potentates, direct wars, corporate alliances, military cooperation, indirect political involvement, and government support which resulted in staunchly anti-Western regimes in the Middle East region.

With the end of World War II the Middle East experienced a shift in the geopolitical landscape. The decades following World War II saw staunchly anti-Western regimes take power, with the end of European mandates and sovereignty of Arab states across the region. This coupled with the emergence of the Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union resulted in the dramatic change in political leadership throughout the region.

Economic control and access to resources such as oil became the dominant Western agenda in the region. With the end of European colonialism, the West took a different approach to maintaining their power and influence in the region. This involvement ranged from direct wars, corporate alliances, military cooperation, indirect political involvement, and government support. During the interwar period rulers were typically upper-class and well educated. In the 1950's these rulers were replaced with young, lower-class, military officers (Cleveland, 253). During this period Arab nationalism reached its peak in the late 1950's under the leadership of Egyptian President Colonel Gamal Abdul al-Nasser (Dawisha, 2003). In his article "The Arab Middle East: Arabism, Military States, and Islam," Ira M. Lapidus, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern and Islamic History at University of California, Berkeley, described the shift in Arab Nationalism following World War I to the aftermath of World War II:

In the colonial period Arab nationalism became the shared ideology of both the political elites and the intelligentsia opposition. The coalescence of ideologies was based on the shared desire for independence, the need to integrate non-Muslim minorities into the political system, and

the awareness of the need for a modern national form of political identity corresponding to the actual state structures. After World War II, Arab identity became the basis of political goals such as anti-imperialism, struggle against Israel, and the formation of political regimes. From the 1950s to the 1970s the two crucial themes in Arab nationalist thinking were the struggle for unity and socioeconomic development. At this stage some form of socialism generally became a part of Arab nationalist ideologies (1988, p. 580).

During the Cold War the Middle East became entangled between the two superpowers, further complicating their already complex syncretic configuration. According to Tanner (2014) “The Cold War narrative fostered a fratricidal confrontation among Arabs” (p. 96). The countries of Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Iran received substantial aid from the United States of America and its European allies while Iraq and Syria aligned themselves with the Soviet Union.

Arab nationalism fell into decline with the defeat of the Arab coalition in 1967 in the Six-Day War. Fouad Ajami (1991) described it as literally “the end of pan Arabism.” In the early 1970’s Arab nationalism began to lose all momentum and by and large left the geopolitical landscape (Khalidi, 1991). According to Marc Lynch (2012), a political scientist, the emerging regimes developed “pervasive social and political surveillance and control” (p. 44).

In recent decades, the ruling governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have been developing substantial political and economic ties with Western governments and corporations. As Tunisia’s former colonial ruler, France was ranked as one of the highest investors in Tunisia and their number one trading partner according to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs with “Investments of

French origin reach[ing] €136 million in 2009 and €101 million in 2010” (www.diplomatie.gov.fr, 2012). France was widely criticized for its slow or even paused response to the Tunisian Revolution. An article published by the New York Times on January 16, 2011 indicated that this reluctance was due in part to their strong economic ties. The United States enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship with the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak for nearly 30 years. The 2011 congressional report *U.S. Foreign Assistance to the Middle East: Historical Background, Recent Trends and the FY 2011 Request*, stated that “Since 1979, Egypt has been the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance, receiving an annual average of close to \$2 billion in economic and military aid” (Sharp, 2011, p. 4). A subsequent congressional report *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* stated that “Between 1948 and 2011, the U.S. government provided Egypt with \$71.6 billion in bilateral foreign aid including \$1.3 billion a year in military aid” (Sharp, 2012, p. 6).

In recent years the close relationship between Libya and its former colonial ruler Italy has continued to flourish. Libya also strengthened its ties to the United States and Britain. In 2003 President Muammar Gaddafi agreed to end Libya’s production of weapons of mass destruction in exchange for an end to two decades of sanctions. This allowed for an onslaught of lucrative defense and oil deals. In 2004 Prime Minister Tony Blair signed the infamous “Deal in the Desert” with Libya’s president Muammar Gaddafi. In this deal, according to the UK based news agency The Telegraph, they agreed to “exchanges of information and views on defense structures, military and security organizations...exchanges of information on current and developing military concepts, principles and best practice, and the conduct of joint exercises” (Prince, 2011). The following surveys demonstrate the syncretic conception of

place through Western imposition in the regions of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria.

### **4.1.1.2.1. Tunisia**

The Ottoman Empire first took control of Tunisia in 1534. It later reclaimed control in 1574 from the Spanish. Under the Bey, Tunisia essentially became an autonomous province with virtual independence from the Ottomans. The Hussein dynasty of Beys, which began in 1705, ended in 1956 when Tunisia gained independence (Bosworth, 2004).

Following a French invasion of 36,000 troops, the Bey signed the Treaty of Bardo in 1881, marking the beginning of France's role in Tunisia in an official capacity. The pretext for this was Tunisia's mass debt and its incursion into French controlled Algeria (Gearon, 2011). While recognizing the Bey's sovereignty, the treaty placed the Bey's army under the command of a French general. Tunisia's external relations were placed under the command of a French resident minister and permitted France to station as many French troops throughout Tunisia as it considered to be essential in maintaining order (Perkins, 2014). In 1882 France installed the puppet ruler Ali Bey. In a report made in *Revue d'Histoire Maghrébine* titled "L'avènement d'Ali Bey en Octobre 1881," French General Cambon boasted that Ali would do nothing without his approval. On June 8, 1883, at the La Marsa Convention, Ali signed off on terms which permitted the French resident general administration control over national reforms in exchange for France's guarantee to repay Tunisian debt. Tunisia had now converted to a French protectorate (Perkins, 2014). The Destour

Party, formally known as the Constitutional Liberal Party, was a political party in Tunisia founded in 1920. The principle objective of the party was to liberate Tunisia from French colonial occupation. In 1934, Habib Bourguiba formed the Neo-Destour party (New Constitutional Liberal Party) as the result of a split in the Destour party. The Neo Destour was the ruling party until the 2011 revolution. Due to failing health in 1988 Bourguiba was removed from power by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in a bloodless coup. Ben Ali had previously served as Tunisia's Prime Minister.

The Tunisia Campaign (November 17, 1942 to May 13, 1943) consisted of a series of battles between the Allied Forces and the Axis Powers during World War II. In 1956, led by Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia gained independence from France. Habib Bourguiba then became the first President of Tunisia.

#### **4.1.1.2.2. Egypt**

Egypt became a province of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 following the Ottoman-Mamluk War (1516-1517). Although there was a brief invasion by the French from 1798 to 1801, the Ottomans maintained control until 1882 when Egypt became a British veiled protectorate. In 1914 Egypt became a formal protectorate of Britain.

Following the exile of the revolutionary leader Saad Zaghlul, the Wafd Party organized the 1919 revolution. This event led to Egyptian independence in 1922, and later the establishment of a constitution in 1923. However, Britain refused to withdraw its forces from the Suez Canal Zone, which caused

## CHAPTER 4

decades of turmoil and eventually resulted in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952. In 1914 Britain declared martial law in Egypt during the Caucasus Campaign of World War I between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt officially ended in 1914. Due to numerous issues during the war the Egyptian population became increasingly dissatisfied with the British occupation. These issues included the conscription of over 1.5 million Egyptians into the Labour Corps and the requisition of buildings, crops, animals, and other resources for army use. Following World War I there was mass support for the Wafd Party and Egyptian independence. The British then arrested and deported Saad Zaghlul and two other leading members of the Party on March 8, 1919. From March 15-31, 1919, approximately 800 Egyptians were killed and mass quantities of property were destroyed.

In December 1919, following continued protests and strikes across Egypt, the British government commissioned the “Milner Mission,” to determine the political future of the country. The report was published in February of 1921 and recommended that the protectorate status of Egypt be abandoned. Following the continued revolts and the recommendations of the report, Britain issued a unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence on February 22, 1922. In 1952 the Muhammad Ali Dynasty, which ruled Egypt and Sudan since 1805, was overthrown. Since that time Egypt has had five presidents: Mohamed Naguib (1953 - 1954), Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956 - 1970), Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat (1970 - 1981), Mohammed Hosni El Sayed Mubarak (1981 - 2011), Mohammad Morsi El Ayat (2012 - 2013), and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (2014 - present).



#### 4.1.1.2.3. Libya

In 1517 the Ottoman Empire began its occupation of the eastern region of Cyrenaica. In 1551 they began their occupation of Tripolitania. Following internal conflict the Qaramanli Dynasty began in 1711 and lasted until 1835 when the Ottoman Empire began their reoccupation. The Tripolitanian War (also known as the Italo-Turkish War) took place from 1911 to 1912. On February 25, 2012 Italy formally announced the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Eight months later the Empire and Italy signed the Treaty of Ouchy. In accordance with the Treaty of Ouchy the Ottomans withdrew from Tripolitania in 1912. From 1912 to 1927 the territory of Tripolitania was renamed the Italian North Africa, and from 1927 until 1934 the region was divided into two colonies. These colonies were known as Italian Cyrenaica and Italian Tripolitania, each run by Italian governors. Then in 1934, Italy changed the official name of the colony to “Libya.” The colony was then divided into three provinces: Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fezzan. Between World War I and World War II Idris al-Mahdi as-Senussi led the resistance against Italian Occupation (Vandewalle, 2006 & 2012).

With the Allies’ defeat of Italy and Germany in North Africa, Libya fell under British and French occupation from 1943 to 1951. The British Military Administration oversaw Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and the French Military Administration oversaw Fezzan. In 1951 Libya declared independence as the United Kingdom of Libya. At that time a constitutional and hereditary monarchy was established and Idris al-Mahdi as-Senussi became King Idris. In 1959 Libya discovered vast quantities of oil and transformed from a severely impoverished country to one of great wealth. Due to the vast concentration of

wealth in the hands of the government and the King, a great deal of resentment built up amongst the citizens of Libya. In 1969, then Army officer Muammar Gaddafi led a coup d'état against King Idris, starting the Al Fateh Revolution (Simons, 1993).

In 1977 Libya became the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and power was supposedly passed to the General People's Committees (Wynne-Jones, 2011). Libya's system of government was now based on the theories Gaddafi outlined in the text *The Green Book*. According to Geoff Simons (1993), much of Libya's wealth began to be spent on funding paramilitary operations and terrorist organizations around the world.

#### **4.1.1.2.4. Syria**

Syria encompassed the territories of present day Syria, Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon following its conquest by the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. The Ottomans conquered Syria in 1516 and continued to reign until 1918.

Although it only lasted four months (March 8-July 24, 1918) the Arab Kingdom of Syria was the first modern Arab state. One of the primary factors that led to this was the McMahon-Hussein correspondence wherein the British made promises of independence in exchange for an uprising against the Ottomans (Zeine, 1977). In October of 1918 the Emir Faisal bin Hussein led troops, supported by the British forces, and captured Damascus, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule. The Emir then attended the Versailles Peace Conference to support Arab self-rule. This was followed by elections for a

Syrian National Congress. In March of 1918 congress declared Emir Faisal the King of Syria. Four months later, following the San Remo conference, Syria and Lebanon were placed under French mandate.

The Great Syrian Revolt began in 1925 and ended in a French victory in 1927. In 1936 France and Syria signed the Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence; however, due to a number of factors, the treaty wasn't ratified until after World War II. In 1946 the now Syrian Republic became independent from the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon. In 1961, following a brief alliance with Egypt as the United Arab Republic (1958-1961), it changed its name to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Ba'ath Party, currently in power, was founded in 1947 by Michel Aflaq and Salah-al-Din al-Bitar. Following a complex trajectory of events within the Ba'ath party, Hafez Al-Assad became President of Syria in 1970. Upon his death, his son Bashar Hafez al-Assad became the current President of Syria.

#### **4.1.2.            Syncretic Determinacy of Space: Arab Spring**

This section will map the chronology and configuration of events characterized as the Arab Spring within Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria beginning in 2011. This first section will begin with the defining of the term "Arab Spring." It will then address the political, economic, and social conditions of the Middle East region in advance of the Arab Spring.

### **Etymology of the Term “Arab Spring”**

The usage of the term “Spring” to describe political uprisings was first used in reference to “The Spring of Nations” Revolutions of 1848 in Europe (El Husseini, 2014). In 1968 the term “Prague Spring” was used in reference to a brief interval of democratic reform in Czechoslovakia before being quickly suppressed by the Soviet Union (Stolarik, 2010).

The term “Arab Spring” was first used by George Packer in a 2003 *New York Times Magazine* article, “Dreaming of Democracy.” In the article Packer (2003) referred to the possible outcome of the Iraq War stating that it was more likely to “provoke governments to tighten their grip than to ventilate the region with an Arab spring.” The term surfaced again in 2005 when Egyptian political sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim (2005) used it to describe promises of Presidential elections in Egypt, stating that they “may well usher in an Arab spring of freedom, one long overdue.” Marc Lynch (2012) took credit for coining the term in his 2011 Foreign Policy article “Obama’s ‘Arab Spring?’” in stating, “Arab Spring — a term I may have unintentionally coined in a January 6, 2011 article” (p. 9). Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and prominent Iranian activist and human rights lawyer, characterizes the term “Arab Spring” as:

not an accurate description of the popular uprisings that have taken place in the Muslim countries of North Africa” (2012). According to Edadi, “the true ‘Arab Spring’ will only dawn when democracy takes root in countries that have ousted their dictatorships, and when women in those countries are allowed to take part in civic life” (2012).

Another common term used to describe these events in their collective configuration has been “Arab Awakening.” I am not using this term, as it is the title of the text by George Antonius, discussed previously in this chapter regarding Arab nationalism in relation to Western colonialism in the early part of the 20th century, which is not reflective of the events being addressed here. Rather, I am using the term “Arab Spring” as it is indicative of earlier uses of the term “spring” in reference to political uprisings. For the purposes of this research I am addressing the Arab Spring, as characterized by Western and Middle Eastern broadcast media outlets, in constituting a series of democratic revolutions, armed revolts, uprisings, and protests in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region beginning in 2011 with the act of self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia.

### **Conditions in the Middle East in Advance of the Arab Spring**

Beginning in 2000, the Regional Bureau for the Arab States of the United Nations Development Program commissioned six reports assessing the current state of human development in the Arab World. The Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR) include 22 countries spanning from the Gulf to the Maghreb including Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The reports were conducted by independent, prominent scholars and stakeholders in the region, assessing a wide range of regional challenges and opportunities for development. The reports have been used by governments and institutions both within the region and internationally.

The 2002 AHDR, *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, identified the three primary regional issues to be “freedom, empowerment of women, and knowledge” (AHDR, 2002, p. VII). Citing the 2002 AHDR in her assessment of women’s rights in the MENA region in advance of (and during) the Arab Spring, Middle East scholar and Political Scientist, Hayat Alvi, states:

For decades, we have observed severe repression in these regions, resulting in restrictions and violations of human rights, as well as constricting individual and societal choices. As a result, we see trends in educational and intellectual deficiencies (i.e., lack of a knowledge-based society); repressive and entrenched authoritarianism; and gender inequalities (especially restrictions on women’s choices) that have contributed to lack of socioeconomic progress. (p. 299)

The following three ADHRs addressed each of these broad areas in more depth. The 2003 AHDR, *Building a Knowledge Society*, found the quality of education to be extremely low from preschool to higher education and claimed “The most serious problem facing Arab education is its deteriorating quality” (AHDR, 2003, p. 52). The report cited numerous causes of this including a lack of policy standards, lack of access to media, and high levels of censorship. The report specifically recommended that “The Arab world needs to join the ICT revolution much more decisively” (ADHR, 2003, p. 171). The 2004 AHDR, *Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, considered freedom in terms of “not only civil and political freedom (in other words, liberation from opposition), but also the libertarian from all factors that are inconsistent with human dignity” (AHDR, 2004, p. 62). While the report identified governance as the primary issue it also

identified issues such as personal safety, physical health, and the right to quality education. The 2005 AHDR, *Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, provided a thorough analysis of the broad challenges experienced by women in the region. These included social structures, legal status, economic issues, and health concerns.

The 2009 AHDR, *Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries*, addressed a broad set of conditions impacting “human security” of individuals living in the region. These ranged from governments, high unemployment rates, poverty, and health care issues. The report argued:

that the trend in the region has been to focus more on the security of the state than on the security of the people [...]. The result is an all-too-common sense of limited opportunities and personal insecurity, witnessed in the world’s highest levels of unemployment, deep and contentious patterns of exclusion, and, ultimately, strong calls from within for reform (AHDR, 2009, p. V).

The report identified what it referred to as “seven dimensions of threat.” In addressing the threats, the report specified a clear need for the region to become more capable of dealing with conflicts, stating:

Distressingly, Arab regional organizations have been remarkably weak, showing themselves to be incapable of playing a decisive role in crisis management and conflict resolution. This incapacity is itself partially a product of the fragmentation and tensions that characterize the region. The League of Arab States, which is premised on Arab cultural unity, functions as an arena to establish or exhibit consensus among the Arab

states; however, specific conflict management and dispute resolution efforts have been handled by individual actors outside the scope of the League (AHDR, 2009, p. 206).

In preparation for the 2011 G8 summit, the IMF published the report, *Economic Transformation in MENA: Delivering on the Promise of Shared Prosperity* (ETM) to examine the economic conditions of the region in advance of the Arab Spring. According to the report, from 1980 to 2010, GDP (per capita) grew at an annual rate of three percent. In comparison, the remainder of developing economies grew at a rate of four and a half percent (IMF, 2011). The report claimed that the region had some of the highest rates of unemployment in the world, ranging from 10-12 over the last two decades, and asserted that “social and political stability will only be assured if the region creates 50–75 million jobs over the next decade” (IMF, 2011, p. 3).

The UN published its latest AHDR in 2016. The report, *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, was the first report in this series to be published after the start of the Arab Spring. The report cited the Arab Spring as demonstrating the “pivotal role of youth (by which we mean young women and young men) in society” and saw youths as “a key resource in resolving the problems of development in the region” (AHDR, 2016, p. 6). The report proposed three levels of reform:

[1] redirecting macro-policies that regulate the social contract between the state and its citizens, [2] sector-specific policies, particularly in the fields of education, health and employment, and aims to ensure the availability and quality of the services that will enhance young people’s capabilities, and [3] to enhance coordination amongst all stakeholders



to ensure a greater role and wider participation of young people in formulating public policies, scrutinizing budgetary allocations, and monitoring accountability (AHDR, 2016, p. 8).

The primary challenges facing the Middle East in advance of the Arab Spring as cited in AHDRs and ETM ranged from the immediate challenges of unemployment and poverty to education, gender equality, and broad governance issues. It is significant that the AHDR reports, in assessing conditions prior to the Arab Spring, were produced by leading regional scholars and stakeholders, and not generated by outside entities or regional government affiliates. It demonstrates an internal mandate for addressing issues in governance and the social implications on citizens.

#### **4.1.2.1. Chronology of Events and their Collective Configuration**

This section will outline the chronology of events (protests, demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, uprisings, civil wars, and revolutions), which have collectively comprised the Arab Spring in the countries of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria.

As indicated previously, there were a number of factors that led to the collective configuration of the Arab Spring. These include historical Western involvement in the region, brutal dictatorships, rampant corruption, high unemployment rates, poverty, and food price inflation. In her article *The Role of Women in the Arab World: Toward a New Wave of Democratization, or an Ebbing Wave Toward Authoritarianism?* Middle Eastern scholar and

faculty at the American University of Cairo, Nadine Sika, describes this period of the “Arab Spring” as the last of four waves of “...social contention on the streets of the Arab World” driven by the “rise of corruption, inequalities, and increased political repression” (Sika, 2012, p.1). In an interview with the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, James Curran, Director of the Goldsmith’s Leverhulme Media Research Centre and Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths College, discussed the dominant role that the political, economic, and historical factors played in enabling the Arab Spring, stating “It wasn’t technology that produced the protests, it was technology in addition to underlying causes” (Curran, 2013). The technology to which Curran is referring did not simply facilitate communication of internal events to an internal and external audience. Rather, they facilitated an initiation of a space of flows within the public sphere. They connected the local and the global within the networked bounds of space and time. The mediatization of these events, through the networked model of communication, activated the collision of the author and the subject in the production of narrative formation. In mapping the Arab Spring I have included an abbreviated survey of the history of Western involvement and impact on political and economic issues in the region, building upon section 4.1.

### **4.1.2.2. Profile of Events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria**

Bouazizi’s act of self-immolation triggered the Tunisian revolution resulting in the overthrowing of then president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. The Egyptian Revolution, which lasted 18 days, resulted in the

overthrowing and imprisonment of President Hosni Mubarak and the election of Mohamed Morsi, a leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood. Libya's revolution ended with the capture and public recording of President Muammar Gaddafi's death. What began as a revolution in Syria in January 2011 is now being described as a civil war. On April 1, 2014, the Reuters news agency reported the death toll at over 150,000 (Evans, 2014). In 2016 the World Bank reported the death toll to be greater than 400,000. The UN reported 5 million Syrians seeking refugee status and 540,000 people currently living under siege.

#### **4.1.2.2.1. Tunisian Revolution (December 17, 2010 – January 14, 2011)**

The Tunisian Revolution, also known as the “Jasmine Revolution,” and the “Revolution for Dignity,” was sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, on December 17, 2010. Bouazizi was a 26 year old fruit and vegetable street vendor frustrated by both his inability to earn a livable wage and the repeated altercations with authorities' municipal regulations. On December 17, 2010, Fedi Hamdi, a Municipality worker (often referred to as a police officer), confiscated Bouazizi's produce and scales as he was selling his produce without official government authorization. He later immolated himself in front of the provincial governor's headquarters (Aleya-Sgbaier, 2012). Protests and demonstrations broke out the same day in Sidi Bouzid and quickly spread across the country. This resulted in the brutal crackdown by the government with mass arrests and a temporary shutdown of the Internet. President Zine Abidine Ben Ali and his family fled Tunisia,

taking refuge in Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011. This was perhaps the first time in the Middle East region that an Arab President had been removed by a revolution rather than a coup d'état. Additionally, it was the first popular uprising to overthrow a regime in the Middle East region since the 1979 Iranian revolution. In her article *Tunisian Women in the "Arab Spring": The Singularity of Article 46 in the 2014 Constitution*, Lilia Labidi, a Tunisian Anthropologist and activist, attributes activities of the "Arab Spring" as contributing to numerous political gains for women of Tunisia. According to Labidi "regional turmoil during the summer of 2013 in which Tunisian opposition forces, inspired by the military coup that overthrew Egyptian president Muhammad Morsi, threatened the al-Nahdha-led Tunisian government, strengthened the supporters of "equality", and contributed to the constitutionalization of women's rights in Tunisia in 2014.

### **4.1.2.2.2. Egyptian Revolution (January 25, 2011 - February 11, 2011)**

On January 25, 2011, the national holiday "Police Day" demonstrations broke out in protest of state corruption, rampant injustice, poor economic conditions, and the 30-year-old regime of President Hosni Mubarak (Fahim & El-Naggar, 2011). The demonstrations grew into a national movement that lasted 18 days and resulted in the overthrowing of President Mubarak and the National Democratic Party (NDP). The government reacted to the mass protests with violence by police and supporters of the ruling party as well as a shutdown of the Internet on January 27. The Egyptian army, which is compulsory for all Egyptian men, decided not to act against the demonstrators.

Mubarak eventually made numerous concessions including the appointment of Omar Suleiman as vice president on January 29, installing a new cabinet on January 31, and conceding that he wouldn't run again for president, nor would his son Gamal, after he finished his term in September 2011. Mubarak resigned from office on February 11, 2011.

#### **4.1.2.2.3. Libyan Civil War (February 15, 2011 - September 2011)**

Protests in Libya began on February 15, 2011 in front of Benghazi's police headquarters following the arrest of a human rights attorney who represented the "relatives of more than 1,000 prisoners allegedly massacred by security forces in Tripoli's Abu Salim jail in 1996" ("Libya protests: Second city Benghazi hit by violence," 2011). What had begun as a series of peaceful demonstrations turned into confrontations which were met with military force.

A "Day of Rage" was declared for February 17 by the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. Libyan military and security forces fired live ammunition on protesters. On February 18, security forces withdrew from Benghazi after being overwhelmed by protesters and some security personnel also joined the protesters ("Libya, Bahrain (and Beyond) LiveBlog: Confrontation," 2011). The protests spread across the country and anti-Gaddafi forces established a provisional government based in Benghazi called the National Transitional Council (NTC) with the stated goal to overthrow the Gaddafi government in Tripoli.

During his 42-year rule, Gaddafi had a contentious and unstable relationship with the West, demonstrating a staunchly anti-Western position beginning in the 1970's and 1980's. In 1979, the U.S. government declared Libya to be a "state sponsor of terrorism" (St John, 2003). The 1980's were riddled with overt and covert acts of aggression including the "Gulf of Sidra" event, the bombing of a nightclub in Germany, and the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 and UTA flight 772. During the 1990's and 2000's Gaddafi began to shift his policies on international relations and began to develop ties with the United States, France, and Italy. In recent years, the close relationship between Libya and its former colonial ruler Italy began to flourish. Libya also strengthened its ties with the United States and Britain during this time. In 2003, Gaddafi agreed to end Libya's production of weapons of mass destruction in exchange for an end to two decades of sanctions (Marcus, 2006). This allowed for an onslaught of lucrative defense and oil deals. In 2004 Prime Minister Tony Blair signed the infamous "Deal in the Desert" agreement with Gaddafi. In this deal, according to the UK based news agency The Telegraph, they agreed to "exchanges of information and views on defense structures, military and security organizations...exchanges of information on current and developing military concepts, principles and best practice, and the conduct of joint exercises" (Prince, 2011). According to the 2007 article, "Libya and France sign £200m arms deal" published by *The Guardian*, Libya and France signed an arms deal worth £200 million (Willsher, 2007). In August 2008, Gaddafi and the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi signed a treaty of cooperation in Benghazi wherein Italy agreed to pay \$5 billion to Libya in compensation for its former military occupation. Additionally, Libya agreed to combat illegal immigration into Italy from Libya ("Italy to pay Libya \$5 billion," 2008). In

November of 2008, the U.S. Senate confirmed the appointment of the first U.S. ambassador to Libya since 1972.

Just one month after the successful revolution in Tunisia in February 2011, a civil war broke out in Libya against its government and then President Muammar Gaddafi. The government quickly lost traction and the support of its newfound Western allies. By September 2011 the United Nations formally recognized the NTC, led by rebel forces, as the legal representative body of Libya.

#### **4.1.2.2.4. Syrian Civil War (January 26, 2011 - present)**

The Syrian Civil War has lasted more than eight years. Protests and demonstrations began on January 26, 2011. They escalated on March 15, 2011, “Day of Rage,” in reaction to a group of children being tortured by Syrian security forces for creating anti-government graffiti. In April 2011 the government began its military crackdown on protesters.

Protesters were demanding increased freedom, democratic reforms, and the elimination to the Emergency Law (established in 1963). By the summer of 2011 protesters were demanding the removal of the Assad regime. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was established in July 2011. Following an early attempted ceasefire in 2012 mediated by the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross declared the conflict a civil war. The Syrian government has been accused of deploying chemical weapons (including chlorine, mustard, and Sarin gas), thermobaric weapons, and cluster bombs.

The civil war has been conducted through a complex mesh of factors and agendas. Religion and international politics has played a role in the civil war. President Assad is a member of the Alawite minority community. The majority of the population is Sunni. Assad used this as a propaganda tactic early in the conflict to turn the communities against one another. The United States, the Arab League, and the European Union have condemned the Assad regime, whereas Russia and China have vetoed several attempts at a UN Security Council Resolution to condemn the atrocities of the Assad regime.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter attempted to identify the vastly complex landscape of the Middle East as a geopolitical space and place informing the dimension of causation in the syncretic narrative. Causation, again, as a syncretic space and place, lays the ground for future potential in syncretic practices to form and manifest. This chapter did not propose a didactic linear approach to colonialism in the Middle East as causing the Arab Spring. The Middle East, as a Western, colonialist construct, demonstrates a syncretic formation of space. A geopolitical space produced, not based on geographical divides, but rather the imposition of Western agendas on a non-Western territory. Based on Peter J. Claus, Sarah Diamond, and Margaret A. Mills' delineation of syncretism, The Middle East is syncretic in that it is the "product of the large-scale imposition of one alien culture, religion, or body of practices over another that is already present" (Claus, Diamond, & Mills, 2003, p. 587).

The first section, *Syncretic Determinacy of Place: Middle East*, investigated colonialism and nationalism as historical factors driving the geopolitical space. The section proposed George Antonius as an original



citizen witness in the region. As a citizen witness Antonius demonstrated this unique role, operating as both the author and the subject of the narrative he generated. As the author, this afforded him minimal objective space. As the subject, he was experiencing, first hand, the impact of the events occurring around him as he was documenting them. His narrative formation was built in a bottom-up model rather than a traditional top-down model. In George Antonius' more concretely defined manifestation of nationalism in his text *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, a relationship between citizen witnessing and nationalism (or more appropriately defined as simply a relationship to power, albeit the state or outside Western powers) was established.

The second section, *Syncretic Determinacy of Space: Arab Spring*, surveyed the geopolitical space of the Arab Spring. It presented events, beginning in 2010, collectively termed "Arab Spring" in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. It sourced quantitative data from the Arab Human Development Reports produced by the Regional Bureau for the Arab States of the United Nations Development Program and the International Monetary Fund which identified crucial political, social, and economic factors as well as social conditions preceding the unfolding of events on December 17, 2010. The section concluded in surveying the four countries of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria in an attempt to provide a contextual overview foregrounding the case studies in chapter 5.

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## **5.1. Case Studies: Identifying a Weaponization of the Citizen Witness**

The preceding chapters have attempted to locate and identify the dimensions of protagonist, space and time, and causation. Through the lens of dromology chapter 2 investigated the configuration of the citizen witness as a syncretic protagonist of the Arab Spring. The citizen witness was identified as functioning simultaneously and independently as both the subject as well as the author. Chapter 3 attempted to identify the dimension of space and time within

the networked model of communication. In doing so, it determined this model of communication to be paramount in demarcating the bounds of production, dissemination, and reception of narrative(s) formed in the Arab Spring. Chapter 4 attempted to frame the dimension of causation. This was done in an effort to establish a foundation from which a syncretic narrative may form and operate. In addressing the Middle East as a geopolitical space and place syncretically produced through colonialism the chapter sought to provide a framework in foregrounding the configuration of the Arab Spring.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to unpack the dimension of intention through an investigation of four case studies. Intention, as it pertains to this study, is concerned with the ways in which the protagonist operates in the space and time of the networked model of communication, grounded in a syncretically generated geopolitical place of the Middle East converged in an interfacing with institutional global journalism. The case studies will be conducted through qualitative content analysis of the dimensions presented in the previous chapters: protagonist and space and time. This chapter proposes that the weaponization of the citizen witness is a key component of the syncretic narrative.

The case studies investigate the following mediated events which occurred during the Arab Spring: The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia on December 18, 2010; the attack on Anderson Cooper in Cairo, Egypt on February 2, 2011; the mediated death of Muammar Gaddafi in Sirte, Libya on October 20, 2011; and the death of Maria Colvin in Homs, Syria on February 22, 2012. The criteria I used in selecting these cases was driven by two primary concerns: the potential implications of the event being mediated

and the composition of its mediation. Events were selected which I determined to be indicative of the overall conflict or having far-reaching political implications. In terms of the mediated composition, I selected events that were distinct in demonstrating unique ways in which institutional journalism was interfacing with citizen witnessing. Each case study analysis will be prefaced with information relative to the individual case including ICT access, usage of social media platforms, and reported activities within the countries.

### **5.1.1. Content Analysis of the Dimensions**

The preceding chapters presented research in the identification of the dimensions of the protagonist, space and time, and causation. The citizen witness was identified as the syncretic protagonist in chapter 2, *Dromosphere of the Author, Subject, Spectator*. This was due to the acceleration of dromosphereic speed creating a collapse of the author, the subject, and the spectator. Chapter 3, *Narrative and Network Bounds*, identified syncretic narrative formation in space and time as contingent upon the spectator's "use of information" within the networked model of communication. It was revealed to be capable of eliciting a contrapuntal reading in the public sphere of communication through the application of polyperspectivity and the narrative matrix elements within the spectator's storyworld. As discussed in chapter 4, causation, relative to the status of previous events, is a geopolitical space created through a syncretic process with an inevitable syncretic result.

### **Content Analysis**

As a multi- disciplinary method, content analysis allowed for the examination of media in order to explore both explicit and covert meanings contained within the interface as well as engagement between institutional journalism and the citizen witness. In their text, *The comparative study of symbol: an introduction*, Lasswell, Lerner and Pool (1952) described it, saying:

content analysis operates on the view that verbal behavior is a form of human behavior, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process ... content analysis is a technique which aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time (p. 34).

However, there has been much debate between the use of content analysis as a quantitative or qualitative method. A commonly cited quantitative definition of content analysis put forth by Bernard Berelson (1952), a behavior scientist, described it as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). Berelson’s definition was found to be controversial for two reasons: his use of the term “objective” and his use of the term “manifest content.” In their text *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann pointed out that scientific methods in social research are not capable of producing fully objective findings. As described by Jim Macnamara (2005), a public communication specialist, “media texts are polysemic – i.e. open to multiple different meanings” (p. 5). Ahmed Abdollahi found the primary issue to be the use of “manifest content” in that the content will simply not always be manifest (Abdollahi, 1983).

Qualitative content analysis is being conducted in an effort to describe the message content, to facilitate inferences on the production of content, and to hypothesis on the interfacing between mediation content. Communication scholar William Benoit (2011) described it as:

The measurement of dimensions of the content of a message or message in a context. Content analysis can be employed to describe a group of related messages, draw inferences about the sources who produced those messages, or draw inferences about the reception of those messages by their audience (p. 269).

### **Social Media Tools**

In addressing ICT availability and access, OpenNet Initiative (ONI) and Freedom House have been principally sourced. The OpenNet Initiative, a collaboration between the Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, and the SecDev Group (Ottawa), developed internet freedom rankings based on individual country filtering practices. Their filtering assessment is based on a number of key indicators including legal frameworks, internet status, and surveillance. Freedom House is a U.S. based independent watchdog organization established in 1941. In addressing the usage of social media platform data from the Arab Social Media Report, information collated and analyzed by the Dubai School of Governance has been principally sourced. The case studies will be preceded by a synopsis of citizen witnessing and institutional journalism.

The use of social media in the MENA region increased substantially between 2011 and 2013 (Salem and Mourtada, 2011 & 2012, El Ahmad, 2013). The primary social media platforms being used in the region during this time were Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). Beginning in January 2011, the Dubai School of Governance published its first report in the series, *Arab Social Media Report* (ASMR) in order to “analyze usage trends of online social networking across the Arab region” (Salem and Mourtada, (Jan) 2011). The following data (in outlining the usage of social media platforms) was sourced from the school’s first three reports: *Facebook Usage: Factors and Analysis* (Jan 2011), *Civil Movement: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter* (May 2011), and *Social Media in the Arab World: Influencing Societal and Cultural Change* (July 2012).

In June 2011, the total number of Facebook users in the region was 29,845,871. In June 2012, the total had reached 45,194,452 (Salem and Mourtada, 2012). By March 2013, the total had climbed to 49 million (El Ahmad, 2013). Due to the broad range of Facebook penetration rates of countries in the Arab region, the ASMR assessed factors impacting this range through the following indicators: digital access index (DAI), internet penetration, income (per capita), internet freedom, global gender gap index, and human development index (HDI)<sup>6</sup>.

The DAI measures the overall ability of individuals in a country to access and use ICTs. This measurement is based on infrastructure, affordability, knowledge and quality, and actual usage of ICTs (ITU, 2009). According to the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) “World Economic Outlook Database,”

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<sup>6</sup> Facebook penetration rates are determined by dividing the number of Facebook users by country population.

there is a correlation between income (GDP per capita) and countries with high and low Facebook penetration, which is not evident in countries with medium Facebook penetration (IMF Report, 2009). According to the ASMR, a correlation between internet freedom and Facebook penetration is not evident. The ASMR speculates that this could be the result of creative strategies in finding ways to circumvent filters and censorship. Additionally, the ASMR assessed Facebook penetration in relation to the HDI. The HDI was developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Their 2010 *Human Development Report*, which assessed a country's progress in terms of life expectancy, education, and GDP per capita, found with a few exceptions, that there appeared to be a correlation between these factors and Facebook penetration.

Twitter has witnessed substantial growth since its launch in 2006 as a powerful platform for microblogging and as a newsfeed, among its many users. In the Arab region, Twitter played a significant and dynamic role in the facilitation of disseminating and receiving information during the Arab Spring. The ASMR estimated the number of active Twitter users in the Arab region by the end of March 2011 to be 1,150,292. Additionally, they estimated the number of tweets generated in the Arab region between January 1 and March 30 of 2011 to be 22,750,000. They further estimated the number of tweets per day to be 252,000 which equates to 175 tweets a minute and roughly three tweets a second. (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). In viewing the daily fluctuation of tweet volume in specific countries, the ASMR speculated that significant increases seemingly coincided with events in said countries. While this does indicate a substantial degree of circumstantial evidence connecting the event to the increased twitter volume, it is not conclusive (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). During this time the most popular trending hashtags across the Arab



region were: #egypt (with 1.4 million mentions in the tweets generated during this period), #jan25 (with 1.2 million mentions), #libya (with 990,000 mentions), and #bahrain (640,000 mentions). (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). The ASMR asserted that the levels of Facebook penetration are “good indicators of twitter usage.” However, they did indicate that there was a language barrier, at that time, as Twitter was not available in Arabic until 2012.

In addition to Facebook and Twitter, YouTube was also credited as a widely used platform of communication during the Arab Spring. In 2012 YouTube playbacks doubled in the Arab region, with 167 million video views per day and one hour of video content being uploaded to YouTube per minute. Statistically, this placed the Arab region as the second highest user of YouTube in the world, behind the United States (Salem and Mourtada, 2012).

While acknowledging the premature nature of determining the level of impact of social media on the events, the report stated that “empirical evidence [suggests] that the growth of social media in the region and the shift in usage trends have played a critical role in mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions, and influencing change” (Salem and Mourtada, 2011, p. 24). For the purposes of this project, understanding the rates of social media usage is not in an effort to assert that social media did or did not play a key role in impacting the events of the Arab Spring – which is a highly contested debate. Rather, it is to have a foundation through which to understand the use of these tools in the narrative formation of an event when coupled with the narrative framing by institutional journalism.

Citizen witnessing, more commonly referred to as citizen journalism, is still a relatively new territory of study and highly debated by scholars in its terminology, its impact on, and its relationship to institutional journalism. Courtney C. Radsch (2014), Advocacy Director for the Committee to Protect Journalists, characterized citizen journalism as:

an alternative and activist form of news gathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a response to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism (p. 159).

The term “user generated content” (UGC) is used, at times, interchangeably with “citizen journalism.” As noted by Simon Cottle (2014):

[The term] originated in the professional world of broadcasting, “user-generated content” offers a particularly stunted and proprietorial view of “its: user audience and the corporate utility of “their” generated content [...] The industry view of UGC simply loses sight of the civic richness, motivations and appeals (p. X).

Citizen journalism gained increased prominence in the 2009 Iranian Green Movement and the 2010 Haiti Earthquake. Twitter has been both attributed and refuted as being a significant factor in the burgeoning role of the citizen journalist. Nonetheless, the company delayed its scheduled network maintenance during the Iranian protests in order to prevent its temporary shutdown of coverage in Iran. This action was done at the request of U.S.

State Department official Jared Cohen, who stated that, “delay scheduled maintenance of its global network [...] would have cut off service while Iranians were using Twitter to swap information and inform the outside world about the mushrooming protests around Tehran” (Landler and Stelter, 2009). According to Mark Pfeifle (2009), a former U.S. National Security Advisor, “Without Twitter the people of Iran would not have felt empowered and confident to stand up for freedom and democracy.” He later called for Twitter to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (Khan, 2009).

In his text *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis*, Stuart Allen (2013) proposed the term “citizen witnessing” in place of “citizen journalism” as a means to reconsider the role of the citizen within the domain of journalistic practices. This chapter is looking at the use of content generated by citizen witnesses rather than the emergent (and contested) field of citizen journalism, therefore the term “citizen witness” will be used. Based on my assessment of the term “citizen witness,” I find it to be more reflective of the conditions of the individual and their activities, specifically during the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and subsequently the Arab Spring. The content they generate is produced from their perspective of firsthand experience, typically as protesters (in various forms). Additionally, the term is more illustrative of their relationship to the state and position within constraints of power and resistance.

Contrary to the potential usefulness of Twitter and other social media platforms, the author and journalist Malcolm Gladwell finds social media tools to be ineffective in social activism. In his 2010 article “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted,” he compared traditional 20th century

activism with more recent social activism reliant on social media. Gladwell cites two primary contributing factors: the strong vs. weak personal ties between protest participants and the usefulness of a hierarchical organizational structure. He noted the significance of strong ties amongst participants in the 1960 Woolworth's lunch counter sit-in, the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, and the 1970's Red Brigades, in contrast to the weak personal ties amongst participants in online activism such as in the 2009 Iranian Green Movement. What he referred to as the strong-tie phenomenon motivates protesters and activists in a way that social media is incapable of doing. According to Gladwell (2010), "Social networks are effective at increasing *participation*—by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires." He also stated that "Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice" (Gladwell, 2010). In contrast to Gladwell's position, Middle East scholar and activist Amna Abdullatif describes the experiences of Muslim women in the region as often being represented and reported in the media by male Arabs or Western journalists. Abdullatif credits social media networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as an essential aspect of the Arab Spring in that they circumvent the influence of western media from overshadowing or mitigating the voices of Arab women, stating:

For women, the internet offers anonymity and protection where they can be free to discuss issues of concern without worrying about the backlash it might create. Along with this, within an online community, gender and sexuality are protected. They do not become the primary focus and therefore women are provided with an equal platform in which

to have their voices heard and not be judged negatively for it (p. 21)

In analyzing BBC, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* in his essay “The Rise of Social Media and the Impact on Mainstream Journalism,” Nic Newman (2009) concluded that “so far at least, the use of new tools has not led to any fundamental rewrite of the rule book – just a few tweaks around the edges” (p. 39). Regarding *Time Magazine*’s naming of the protester as the 2011 “Person of the Year,” Kurt Andersen, stated:

Calling the Arab uprisings Facebook and YouTube and Twitter revolutions is not, it turns out, just glib, wishful American overstatement. In the Middle East and North Africa, in Spain and Greece and New York, social media and smartphones did not replace face-to-face social bonds and confrontation but helped enable and turbocharge them, allowing protesters to mobilize more nimbly and communicate with one another and the wider world more effectively than ever before. And in police states with high Internet penetration — Ben Ali’s Tunisia, Mubarak’s Egypt, Bashar Assad’s Syria — a critical mass of cell-phone video recorders plus YouTube plus Facebook plus Twitter really did become an indigenous free press. Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, *new media* and *blogger* are now quasi synonyms for *protest* and *protester* (Andersen, 2011).

In his 2015 article “Disciplines of truth: The ‘Arab Spring’, American journalistic practice, and the production of public knowledge,” Brian Creech, faculty in Journalism and Media Communication at Temple University, looked at the Arab Spring as a case study in analyzing epistemological conditions of knowledge production in American journalism. According to Creech (2014), Andersen’s

statement “reveals a critical linkage between journalism’s normative, liberal democratic ideals and the use of technologies by marking social media activity as a truth-revealing function of the protest” (p. 6).

In 2014 researchers at the University of Minnesota and the University of British Columbia conducted a case study on Twitter usage by Andy Carvin, an NPR correspondent reporting on the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions titled “Sourcing the Arab Spring: A Case Study of Andy Carvin’s Sources on Twitter During the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions” (2014). The report considered the two ways in which Carvin was using twitter: broadcasting and engagement. In terms of broadcasting it referred to his process of re-tweeting as an institutionally sanctioned practice. In terms of engagement it referring to the conversations and communication he maintained with his respective sources. The report indicated that while the mainstream institutional media accounted for a substantial percentage of Carvin’s sources, non-elite, non-institutional sources had a higher percentage of visibility. Carvin himself, described his Twitter network as “my editors, researchers & fact checkers - you are my newsroom” (Carvin, 2012). In this “instance” Carvin, an institutional journalist, was using the citizen witness as both the subject and the author (as discussed in chapter 2).

According to the report by the United States Institute for Peace titled *Blogs and Bullets: New Media and Conflict* after the Arab Spring, it became increasingly difficult to separate new media from old media. The report found that in the Arab Spring, the two reinforced each other. While Al-Jazeera and other satellite television channels leaned heavily on Twitter and other online sources, new media often referred back to those same television networks (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, & Freelon, 2012). According to the report,

It is increasingly “difficult to separate ‘new’ media from ‘old’ media. In the Arab Spring, the two reinforced each other. While Al Jazeera and other satellite television channels leaned heavily on Twitter and other online sources, ‘new’ media often referred back to those same television networks (Blogs and Bullets, p. 21).

### **5.1.2. Case Studies**

In order to locate intention of the syncretic protagonist, the investigation of each case study has been conducted through content analysis of institutional journalism reports and their respective usage of and interfacing with citizen witness content. *Case Study: Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, December 17, 2010, Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia* and *Case Study: Mediation of Muammar Gaddafi’s Death, October 20, 2011, Sirte, Libya*, sourced reportage from BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. These organizations were selected due to their broad global base and divergent institutional approaches. *Case Study: Anderson Cooper, Cairo Attack, February 2, 2011, Cairo, Egypt* followed the chronology of Cooper’s reportage through CNN, NBC, and Comedy Central. *Case Study: Maria Colvin’s Death, February 22, 2012 bombing, Homs, Syria* sourced reportage by CNN and NBC immediately preceding and proceeding her death. The case studies are presented in chronological order.

#### **5.1.2.1. Case Study: Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, December 17, 2010, Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia**

This event was selected as a case study due to its recognized significance as a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution (also known as the “Jasmine Revolution”) and recognized inspiration for numerous uprisings across the region.

At approximately 11:30 am on December 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi conducted self-immolation in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. According to the majority of global journalism organizations this event was a breaking point in political and economic tensions that triggered both the Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring.

In the narrative formation of this event there was an immediate exchange of information from citizen witnesses to institutional journalists. Within hours of the event, information had spread from citizen witnesses using social media to broadcast news in a hybrid network of media convergence (Lim, 2013). Ali Bouazizi, Mohamed’s cousin, captured the event on his cell phone and uploaded it to YouTube. Mohamed’s uncle contacted independent journalist Zouhayr Makhoulf who subsequently disseminated the news through his email and Facebook contacts, which included reporters at Al Jazeera’s headquarters in Doha, Qatar (29 days, 2012). Al Jazeera located Ali’s video on Facebook and on the evening of December 17, Al Jazeera Mubasher broadcast it along with an interview with Ali (Ryan, 2011).

During the six months prior to Bouazizi’s self-immolation, nine other individuals also self-immolated in reaction to the same economic and political issues (PEN American, 2012). While these acts resulted in local protests they did not generate national, regional, or international response. This could be an



indicator of the significance of institutional journalism sourcing directly from the citizen witness.

Merlyna Lim, Canada Research Chair in Digital Media and Global Network Society at Carleton University, attributed the narrative developed around Bouazizi's act as sparking the revolt (Lim, 2013). In her 2013 article "Framing Bouazizi: 'White lies,' hybrid network, and collective/connective action in the 2010 - 11 Tunisian uprising," she cited a number of key elements including his act being recorded on video, the narrative of misinformation built around his act by citizen witnesses, and media convergence following his act. Ali Bouazizi built the narrative that Mohamed was a graduate of Mahdia University, was reduced to working as a fruit street vendor, and had been slapped in the face by Fedia Hamdi, a female police officer. However, Mohamed was not a University graduate (Ryan, 2011) and as Lim (2013) pointed out, "nobody knew whether the slap really happened," which Hamdi continually refuted after being taken to trial and found innocent (p. 927).

### **ICT and Social Media**

In advance of Bouazizi's self-immolation there were a number of mitigating circumstance that enabled the confluence of media factors. These included access to and usage of both ICTs and social media in the country.

The Tunisian Revolution was preceded by decades of government censorship and a lack of access to ICTs. This is in contradiction to the Tunisian Constitution which states that "liberties of opinion, expression, the press, publication, assembly, and association are guaranteed and exercised within the conditions defined by the law" (Tunisian Const., art. 8). Additionally, Ben

Ali had publicly stated his support for a free press. In his presidential address in 2000 he stated, “It is pivotal that we give support and importance to the press. This sector has earned our attention for its role in reinforcing the pluralist and democratic path in our country and strengthening the components of civil society” (Miladi, 2011).

In 1991, Tunisia became the first country in the Arab region to have the Internet. In 1996, the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) was launched and the Internet became publicly available. The ATI imposed harsh censorship. Ben Ali eliminated prison sentences for criminalizing criticism of the government from the Press Law in 2001. However, according to “Human Rights Watch, False Freedom: Online Censorship in the Middle East and North Africa: Tunisia,” harsh penalties including imprisonment, remained in the penal code.

In December 2010, there were 1,820,880 Facebook users in Tunisia (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). By April 2011 there were 2,356,520 (Salem and Mourtada, 2011). The proportion of Tunisian citizens connected through Facebook increased by 8% during the first two weeks of January 2011 alone. Marc Lynch (2012) cited the substantial use of Facebook in the country as a result of the regime blocking YouTube, Dailymotion, and Flickr.

In March 2011, the Dubai School of Governance conducted a survey on the use of social media in Arabic, English, and French. They received 105 respondents from Tunisia. According to the survey, 22.31% of respondents used Facebook to organize actions and manage activist activities, 33.05% used Facebook to spread information to the world about the movement and related events, 31.04% used Facebook to raise awareness inside the country on the

causes of the movements, and 10.74% used it for entertainment and social uses (Salem and Mourtada, 2011).

In evaluating the primary impact on the civil movements of the authorities blocking the internet and Facebook, 59.05% responded with “positive” (making people more determined, pushing undecided people to be more active, mobilizing people to find creative ways to organize and communication), 28.57% responded with “negative” (disrupting the main communication channel people were using to organize and communicate with each other), and 12.38% claimed they suffered “no impact” in the shutting off of the internet or that blocking Facebook did not have any impact on the civil movement (Salem and Mourtada, 2011).

Of the 105 Tunisian respondents, 88% claimed they received their news/information on events during the civil movement from social media sources (social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter, blogs, etc), 62.70% claimed they received their news/information from local, independent, or private media (tv, newspapers, radio, online sources), 56.85% claimed they received their news/information from regional or international media (satellite tv, newspapers, radio news reports), and 35.71% attributed state-sponsored media (tv, newspapers, radio sponsored by government) as their sources (Salem and Mourtada, 2011).

### **News Reportage**

Following Al Jazeera Mubasher’s local broadcast (in Arabic), Al Jazeera English published the report *Riots reported in Tunisian city on December 20, 2010* (at 08:08:31 GMT+0000 local Qatar time). The report cited Bouazizi’s

act of immolation as inciting local youth to riot in Sidi Bouzid, “breaking shop windows and smashing cars” (Riots Reported, 2010). The report includes video footage<sup>7</sup> posted on YouTube and Facebook by citizen witnesses as well as posts on Twitter.

On December 25, 2010, CNN published the report *Tunisian forces kill 1, hurt 4 protesters*. The report did not cite Bouazizi by name but stated that “a man who committed suicide reportedly had cited bad living conditions and unemployment as his reasons” (Tunisian Forces, 2010). The report referenced the state-run TAP news agency as listing a number of violent actions on the part of demonstrators including setting fire to a railway engine and three national guard vehicles, as well as attempting to break into a national guard building and throwing Molotov cocktails at police. According to the report, government officials announced they would spend \$5 million to launch 306 projects in order to provide work for citizens with college diplomas.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP0ZGsAD\\_6M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP0ZGsAD_6M)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6chjIV--QII>

**Figure 27** – Former Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali visiting Mohamed Bouazizi at the hospital on December 28, 2010.  
Source: Handout / AFP from Tunisian Presidency of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali.

The above image (figure 27) displays individuals of power (Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali) and resistance (citizen Mohamed Bouazizi) ‘meeting’ in a hospital room. The image, in its orchestration, production, and dissemination, conceivably acts as evidence in the unfolding of power and resistance in the public sphere. As Castells (2006) describes “...the political process is transformed under the conditions of the culture of real virtually. Political opinions, political behaviour, are formed in the space of communication” (p.14).

On December 28, 2010, BBC published the report *Tunisian president says job riots ‘not acceptable.’* The report began with Ben Ali’s response to the demonstrations stating “The use of violence in the streets by a minority of extremists against the interests of their country is not acceptable” (Tunisian

President, 2010) It goes on to propagate Ali Bouazizi's false narrative of Mohamed being a University graduate unable to find a job.

### **Identifying the Protagonist in Space and Time**

Ali Bouazizi built a narrative (albeit false) and disseminated the information, gaining attention regionally and internationally. As mentioned previously, there were several cases of self-immolation in the country prior to Mohamed Bouazizi's in reaction to similar conditions. It could be argued that a key distinction between those and his was that an exchange of information began between citizen witnesses and institutional journalism. The narrative co-created by the citizen witness coupled with the news reportage of institutional journalism provided the ingredients for the construction of the spectators' storyworld. This storyworld is formed through a polyperspective. The plurality of authorship stems from divergent and potentially incompatible voices providing the spectator with diverse viewpoints. In this syncretic process, developed between these disparate entities of the citizen witness and institution journalism, narrative threads between Marie Laure-Ryan's demarcation of the intradiegetic and extradiegetic can emerge. The bounds of space and time in the development of the storyworld are made possible by an "asynchronous interaction in chosen time, at a distance" (Castells, 2009, p.34). The citizen witness videos uploaded and posted online by Ali Bouazizi (among others) were subsequently sourced by institutional journalist organizations. In this exchange power and resistance between the state and the citizen, within the public sphere, presumable begins to unfold.

### **5.1.2.2. Case Study: Anderson Cooper Cairo Attack, February 2, 2011, Cairo, Egypt**

This event was selected as a case study due to two key shifts in the narrative framing: its demonstrative use of the emerging aesthetic of the citizen witness, and the adoption (whether done consciously or unconsciously) of the citizen witness, identified in chapter 2, as protagonist by a Western journalist. An ICT assessment is not included in this case as it does not pertain to the configuration of this event.

During the 18 days of the Egyptian Revolution, activities ranged from demonstrations, strikes, marches, and civil resistance. On February 2, 2011, a group of tourism workers from the Pyramids rode horses and camels into a group of anti-Mubarak demonstrators in Tahrir Square, Cairo. Three people died and 600 were injured. It is unclear as to whether the men were paid supporters of Mubarak or, as they claim, were trying to “safeguard their jobs” (Spencer, 2011).

Reporting from Egypt the same day, CNN news correspondent Anderson Cooper, among many other Western journalists, was attacked by supposed pro-Mubarak demonstrators. The event was captured on mobile phone cameras by Cooper, his producer Maryann Fox, and his cameraman Neil Hallsworth. Cooper subsequently recapped his experience on the CNN programs *In the Arena* (February 2, 2011), *Anderson Cooper 360* (February 2, 2011), and *American Morning* (February 2, 2011). Following the broadcasts on CNN, Cooper was interviewed on the entertainment programs *The David Letterman*

*Show* (February 9, 2011) and the *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (February 22, 2011).

**Figure 28** – CNN correspondent Anderson Cooper attacked in Cairo (2011). Source: CNN.

The aesthetic of the mobile phone footage overwhelmingly mirrors that of the citizen witness in terms of image, audio quality, and shot framing. The footage appears to have two edits in it, showing three perspectives, and lasts one minute and 45 seconds. In the first segment we see what appears to be Cooper walking at a rushed pace through an angry crowd. The camera appears to be held by Cooper. The imagery is very poor quality, pointing primarily at the ground, and is extremely shaky. We hear Cooper say “I’ve been hit now like ten times [...] the Egyptian soldiers are doing nothing” (CNN, 2011). Following the first perceived edit, the second segment (:52), appears to be taken from the camera man Neil Hallsworth (as we can see his producer Maryann Fox and Cooper in front of her). The final segment (1:03) appears to be taken from the producer (as we can now only see Cooper) (CNN, 2011). These edits, again, appear to show three perspectives subsequently edited together.



## News Reportage and Interviews

In his report aired on *In the Arena*, Cooper described his objective as a desire to hear from both sides of the protest and was then “set upon by pro-Mubarak supporters punching us, kicking us, trying to rip the clothes off of my producer, trying to take the camera from my cameraman, punching me in the head several times” (CNN, 2011). Cooper went on to say, “Ever since the police left the street it’s been incredibly peaceful among the anti-Mubarak forces” (CNN, 2011). Cooper described being told by anti-Mubarak demonstrators that the pro-Mubarak demonstrators were being paid by businessmen associated with Mubarak or that the secret police had infiltrated the group as instigators. He ends in stating he cannot confirm these claims (CNN, 2011).

**Figure 29** – CNN correspondent Anderson Cooper, interview on ‘The David Letterman Show’ (2011). Source: ‘The David Letterman Show’

In his interview with Letterman, Cooper began to shift the narrative. He became fairly vocal in his support for the anti-Mubarak protesters and his

disdain for President Mubarak and his supporters. He described Egyptians as wanting “basic human rights” (2011). He characterized anti-Mubarak protesters as “demonstrators,” and pro-Mubarak protesters as “thugs.” (CNN, 2011).

### **Identifying the Protagonist in Space and Time**

Through this sequence of mediated events, Cooper adopted and adapted the position of the citizen witness. Whether intentional or unintentional, he inadvertently capitalized on the power of the citizen witness in the public sphere through his use of the aesthetic of poor quality footage and haphazard framing. The mobile phone footage was overflowing with reference to citizen witnessing. His reportage was driven by information in his authorship of what he captured during his experience and his own subjective reflection as the subject. He operated as both the author and the subject in the dromosphereic space. The act of Cooper’s reporting appeared to be either more highly valued than the revolution being reported or as circumstantial evidence of his claims regarding pro and anti-Mubarak supports. This is certainly not uncommon with war correspondents, however his language and characterization appeared to indicate that he identified with the position of the citizen witness. As he was not a protester, activist, or member of the local community, but rather an international, Western journalist, it could be argued that he was, additionally, the spectator. As discussed in chapter 2, through the dromological lens, the author acts as the mediator between the subject and the spectator. Access of the subject by the spectator is orchestrated by the author.

Cooper’s “exposure”, in Virilio’s delineation of the term, enables him to possess a territory within the space of flows due to the logic of speed. The space is dependent upon Cooper’s activity and the subsequent dissemination

of his reportage through networked activity which informs the spectators construction of meaning. Through the mediation of this event we are presented with a polyperspective: the mobile camera phone footage from Tahrir Square and Cooper's reflection on his experience in proceeding news reports and entertainment shows. These perspectives, which we the spectator are presented, stem from the same protagonist. Through the polyperspective we can potentially begin to engage in a contrapuntal reading. As Said described, the contrapuntal reading is that which enables us to see underlying driving factors. In Cooper's adoption of the protagonist in the development of activities, the underlying framework of power in the public sphere becomes evident.

#### **5.1.2.3. Case Study: Mediation of Muammar Gaddafi's Death, October 20, 2011, Sirte, Libya**

This event was selected as a case study due to the significant political implications of Gaddafi's capture and murder in ending the Libyan Civil War and the mediated nature of it being recorded on mobile phone cameras and subsequently disseminated by institutional journalism acquired through social media platforms. On October 20, 2011, following an eight-month civil war, the former president of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, was captured and killed by rebel forces outside of the town of Sirte. His death was captured on the mobile camera phones by citizen witnesses and disseminated by both institutional journalists through Western and Middle Eastern news agencies as well as individuals through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The Libyan Civil War began on February 15, 2011. By September of 2011 the United Nations formally recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC), led by rebel forces, as the legal representative body of Libya. According to BBC World News, NATO bombers attacked Muammar Gaddafi's convoy and destroyed approximately eleven vehicles, killing roughly 53 members of his entourage while they attempted to flee Sirte at around 8:30 am on October 20 ("Video shows Gaddafi captured in Sirte," 2011). According to CNN, the "U.S., NATO and French officials said transitional government fighters captured Gaddafi's convoy after French warplanes and a U.S. drone forced it to a halt on the way out of Sirte" (Basu and Smith, 2011). The convoy scattered and Gaddafi took shelter in a construction site hiding inside a drainage pipe. He was then captured by the Misrata militia.

Several videos captured on mobile camera phones documenting Gaddafi's death were disseminated on YouTube. Each video provides an alternate perspective of his gruesome death. One video shows him saying *haram alaikum* which roughly translates to "this is a sin for you," before his bloodied, half-naked body is pulled onto the hood of a pick-up truck and falls off as it drives away (Chulov, 2012). Rupert Colville, the spokesperson for Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, told BBC World News, "There are two videos out there, one showing him alive and one showing him dead and there are four or five different versions of what happened in between those two cell phone videos. That obviously raises very, very major concerns" ("Row over Muammar Gaddafi's body delays burial plans," 2011). Another video[10] shows him in a pool of blood with what appears to be a gunshot wound in the head while surrounded by celebratory rebel fighters. The videos were subsequently published on BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera as well as

numerous other international agencies including (but not limited to) Reuters, *The Guardian*, RT, *The Telegraph*, and Euronews.

### **News Reportage**

On the same day as his death, October 20, 2011, BBC News published the report *Video Shows Gaddafi captured in Sirte* at 18:41 GMT+1:00. The report showed a 20-second clip of citizen witness footage. The report provided little supplemental commentary, simply stating:

Amateur video has been shown on Libyan TV showing Col Muammar Gaddafi moments before he was shot dead in Sirte. The mobile phone pictures show the Libyan leader pleading with his captors as they hold a gun to his head (Hawley, 2011).

In the CNN report also published on October 20, 2011 (10:00 EST), *Gadhafi killed in crossfire after capture, Libyan PM says*, Anderson Cooper interviewed Ben Farmer, an embedded journalist with Britain's *Daily Telegraph*. Cooper showed the clips of footage acquired from citizen witnesses while Farmer describes the additional clips he has been shown on phones first hand, stating:

He looked bloody. He looked as if he had a wound to the upper body or head. He looked confused. He is definitely alive. And the rebel said he was talking as well. He was saying — he was pleading for his life, according to some reports. He was confused. He was saying, what are you doing, what's going on? (Cooper, 2011).

Al Jazeera's report, *Video footage shows Gaddafi's killer*, published October 24, 2011, addressed the fact that the footage, shot by citizen witnesses, could

be used by the United Nations to further investigate the deaths of Gaddafi and his entourage. The report indicated that the footage could reveal what is truth and what is myth surrounding the order of events that day. According to Khadija Magardie,

there have been many versions of what happened. At first it was said he died of his wounds on the way to the hospital until reports began circulating that it may have been an execution possibly with Gaddafi's own custom made gold pistol. There have now been suggestions by the NTC that he may have been killed in cross-fire or by one of his own men. (2011).

Each of these reports was hyper-focused on the footage shot by citizen witnesses. There is a clear interest by institutional journalism in understanding the narrative that can be formed through piecing the footage together in a sequential and chronological manner, attempting to unweave the entangled complexity of information. As discussed in chapter 2, the documented, witnessed experience can still be considered a source of authenticity – as garnering some semblance of objectivity.

### **Identifying the Protagonist in Space and Time**

The mediatization of this event developed through a bottom-up process. Multiple members of the Misrata militia were documenting the attack on Gaddafi as they were simultaneously conducting the attack. Here again, the citizen witness (as syncretic protagonist) is operating as both the author and the subject. However, rather than demonstrating this operation in the author (citizen witness) documenting their own death, as investigated in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, these individuals were members of the Misrata militia.

These rebel forces, leading the National Transitional Council (NTC), were recognized as the legal representative body of Libya by the United Nations in February 2011. Power and resistance in the public sphere shifted through the space of flows. The polyperspectivity of the protagonists is presented through both the multitude of footage shot and narrative versions reported. Similar to Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, the diverse perspectives create conflicting and contradictory accounts. The footage produced by citizen witnesses became a meta-narrative, self-referencing its own use and application within institutional journalism.

#### **5.1.2.4. Case Study: Maria Colvin's Death, February 22, 2012, Homs, Syria**

This event was selected as a case study due to the demonstrative acceleration of the dromosphereic space within the bounds of the space and time of the networked model of communication.

On February 22, 2012, Marie Colvin, a prominent foreign correspondent for the Sunday Times of London, reporting from the city of Homs in Syria, was killed in a rocket attack carried out by the Assad regime. French photographer Remi Ochlik was killed as well and three other journalists were injured. In her last report on February 19th 2012 at 3:01 pm Colvin described her entry into the country and the excitement of the "rebels" at her arrival:

I entered Homs on a smugglers' route, which I promised not to reveal, climbing over walls in the dark and slipping into muddy trenches. Arriving

in the darkened city in the early hours, I was met by a welcoming party keen for foreign journalists to reveal the city's plight to the world. So desperate were they that they bundled me into an open truck and drove at speed with the headlights on, everyone standing in the back shouting "Allahu akbar" — God is the greatest. Inevitably, the Syrian army opened fire (*Guardian*, 2012).

Colvin gave Skype interviews with BBC and CNN the night before the bombing on the 21st. In these interviews she described watching a one-year old child die from shrapnel wounds in a makeshift medical center (*Intercept*, 2012). It has recently been determined that the Syrian government deliberately targeted Colvin. In April 2018 a U.S. court ruled that the Assad regime had in fact located Colvin via satellite detection from her Skype interviews on the 21st (Bowcott, Dwyer & Gallagher, Mckernan, Craver).

The Syrian government capitalized on Colvin's death for traditional propaganda purposes. In a state run media broadcast the Assad regime claimed that Colvin was an enemy from the West, essentially citing her death as an act of protection for the Syrian people. Colvin, as with citizen journalists, was perceived as a weapon against the Syrian government. The production of this broadcast was reminiscent of a Hollywood film with a dramatic audio score coupled with romantic images of a war-free and economically prosperous and thriving Syrian state.

### **ICT Infrastructure**

Freedom House described Syria's telecommunications infrastructure as one of the least developed in the Middle East as of 2017. According to BuddeComm, an independent research and consultancy firm,



“Telecommunications in Syria have become decentralized and there is reportedly damage to infrastructure and equipment<sup>8</sup>” (Wansink, 2018). ITU, the United Nations’ specialized agency for information and communication technologies, collated statistics on mobile subscriptions and internet usage in Syria from 2000 to 2016. According to their statistics sourced from the Syrian Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, mobile phone subscriptions in 2010 were at 11,696,000. In 2012 they increased to 12,980,000, and in 2016 to 13,349,860. The percentage of individual internet usage in 2010 was 20.70%, in 2012 it was 24.30%, and in 2016 it reached 31.87%. Although there have been minimal increases in mobile phone subscriptions and individual internet usage, the Syrian cyberspace remains a key component of the war. Freedom House remarked on this:

Syrian cyberspace remains fraught with conflict, often mirroring the brutality of the war on the ground and its complex geopolitics. Citizen journalists were killed during air raids, regime opponents were tortured in state prisons, and the so-called Islamic State (IS) murdered individuals for chronicling the hardships of life under the religious extremists. Hackers linked to Russia, Iran, and the Syrian government conducted malware and spear-phishing attacks against human rights organizations and opposition groups.

Because of the war, Syria’s telecommunications infrastructure is severely damaged and highly decentralized. In areas controlled by the regime, the state-owned service provider employs sophisticated technologies to filter political, social, and religious websites. Meanwhile,

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the civil unrest in Syria current statistics are not available as the level of destruction to ICT’s cannot be determined.

individuals in rebel-controlled areas often rely on Turkish mobile internet beamed in from across the border, or in many cases, expensive satellite connections. Authorities regularly shut down internet access to prevent the dissemination of information, particularly before and during military operations. Shelling and sabotage have led to the destruction of infrastructure, affecting internet and power connections in several provinces (Freedom House, 2017).

In 2018, Reporters without Borders ranked Syria 177 out of 180 countries in the press freedom index. They described the conditions as follows:

Professional journalists and citizen-journalists alike are victims of violence by all parties: the Syrian military and its allies; the various armed opposition groups including the Islamic State and Hayat Tahrir al Sham; the Kurdish forces; and more recently the Turkish incursion into Afrin in early 2018. Frequent intimidation, arrests, abductions, and murders constitute a horrendous environment for the media. Since the start of the uprising, citizen-journalists have created new media outlets to shed light on the various aspects of the war (Reporters Without Borders, 2018).

### **News Reportage**

In her interview with Anderson Cooper on CNN during which Colvin shared the footage of the dying toddler, she said, “That baby will probably move more people to think ‘what is going on?’ and ‘why is nobody stopping this murder in Homs that is happening every day?’” (Smith, 2012). In sharing this information, she was highlighting the need for her presence and the gravity of the information and events not being reported. Cooper attempted to contextualize the footage, stating:

it is sickening to watch and there's no denying that. That is just what the Assad regime is doing, flat out denying it. Denying it that artillery crews are pounding civilian neighbourhoods in that city and levelling apartment buildings until the improvised hospitals and makeshift morgues fill up with men and women and children like that little boy, Adman. Which is why we are showing you his death tonight and sharing his story tonight so the people who erased his life cannot also erase the truth (2012).

Immediately following Colvin's death on February 23, civilians in the Al-Qusoor neighborhood, a province in Homs, began using the attention of her death to garner international sympathy and support for their plight. A video posted on YouTube showed a large crowd of Syrian civilians at night holding posters of Colvin, Ochlik, and Rami Al-Sayed, a prominent Syrian citizen journalist killed on February 21, 2012, in front of the camera, chanting and holding signs reading "we will not forget you" (*Telegraph*, 2012). Based on the poor pixelated image quality, the video appears to have been shot on a mobile camera phone. The signs are in English, indicating that they were made for an international audience. *The Rachel Maddow Show* on the NBC network shared the video posted on YouTube in an episode aired on February 23, 2012. In the segment she described the protesters' reactions, adding, "there is something, I've got to say, all the more amazing, about seeing the depth of feeling for these journalists from the people whose story they were trying to tell" (Maddow, 2012).

**Figure 30** - Syrian activists, following Marie Colvin's death in Homs, Syria (2012). Source: 'The Rachel Maddow Show'

### **Identifying the Protagonist in Space and Time**

Colvin's act of reporting from the positions of both the author and the subject directly and unequivocally resulted in her death. This was due to the communication technologies used by both her, in disseminating her reports to CNN and BBC, and the Syrian government in locating her based on data generated from her act of communication. The acceleration in the speed of communication and military technologies of destruction converged. As Virilio asserted in his 1999 interview with Philippe Petit:

When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash; and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution...Every technology carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress (89).

Unlike what was discussed in chapter 2's practice-based research, *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, wherein citizen witnesses in Syria had captured their own death through video and audio recordings, Marie Colvin unknowingly networked her death. Her act of using communication technology in warfare converged – resulting in her own death. Just as a soldier inputs coordinates for a bomber jet or a drone to strike a target, Colvin input her coordinates in her act of transmitting her report through the online network. Through the ability of the networked model of communication to traverse geographic and temporal boundaries, Colvin's networked death acted as tool for analysis of the syncretic configuration of power and resistance in warfare within the space of flows of the public sphere. In doing so, it revealed palpable significance of the networked bounds of space and time.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented four case studies in an attempt to identify the dimension of intention within the syncretic narrative. The chapter introduced and surveyed regional access and usage of social media tools and platforms which demonstrated a marked increase beginning in late 2010. Content analysis of the previously identified dimensions of protagonist and space and time was conducted in each of the case studies.

The following elements were identified in locating the protagonist intention of its own weaponization in the following case studies:

*Case Study: Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia* highlighted the potential for a syncretic generation of narrative co-created by the citizen witness and institutional journalism. The false narrative

developed by Ali Bouazizi that streamed through social media was picked up by both regional and global news organizations. As indicated, the nine cases of self-immolation which occurred during the six months prior to Mohamed Bouazizi's did not receive the same level of attention from institutional journalism. It could be argued that this was due to available ICTs coupled with the developing formation of the citizen witness. The citizen witness acted as the intradiegetic author, while institutional journalism acted as the extradiegetic author.

*Case Study: Anderson Cooper, Cairo Attack, February 2, 2011*

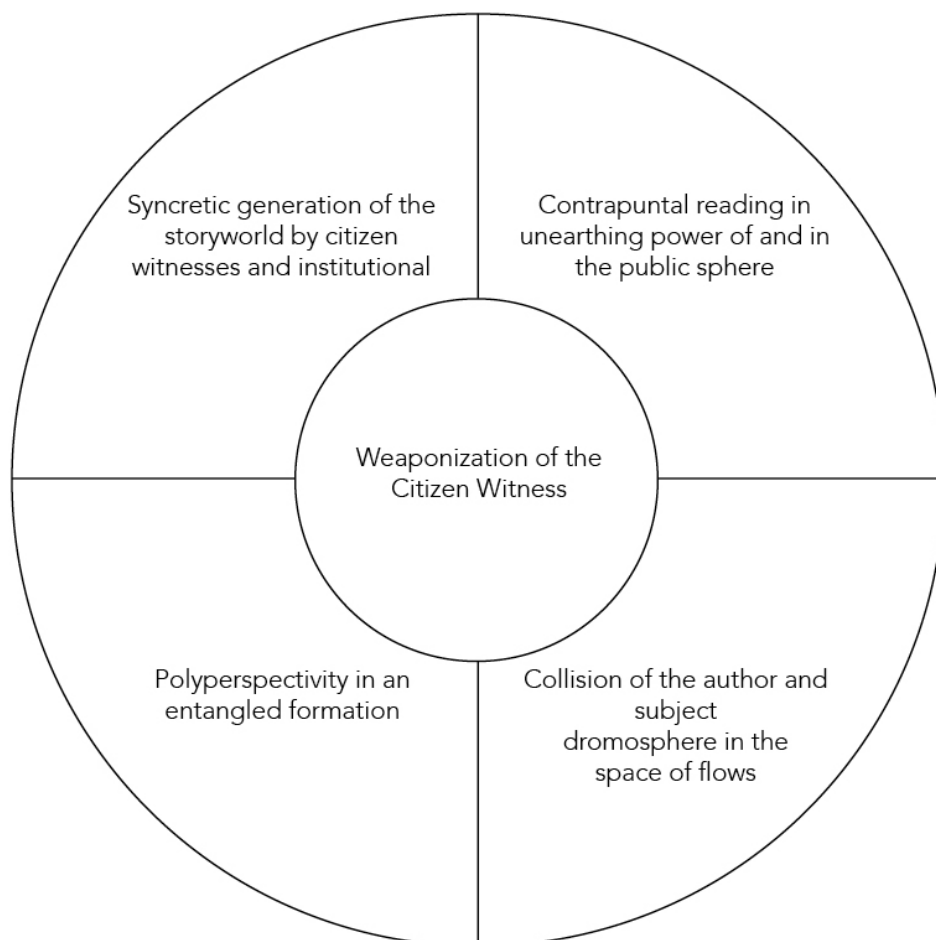
underscored a prospect for a contrapuntal reading in unearthing power of and in the public sphere. Anderson Cooper positioned himself as both the author and the subject. In his news reportage and interviews following his attack he, as the author, was reporting on himself as the subject. Additionally, he adopted an aesthetic of the citizen witness. Through a contrapuntal reading these elements highlight the power of the citizen witness in the public sphere.

*Case Study: Mediation of Muammar Gaddafi's Death Sirte, Libya*

demonstrated the possibility for a polyperspectivity in an entangled formation. The polyperspectivity of the protagonists was presented through both the multitude of footage shot and narrative versions reported. Rather than capturing their own death, as discussed in chapter 2, they were capturing their act of murder while committing the murder. Evident in the approach by institutional journalism, the citizen witness was addressed as a source of subjectivity and authenticity - while seeming to maintain a desire for objectivity.

*Case Study: Maria Colvin, February 22, 2012 bombing, Homs, Syria*

demonstrated a collision of the author and the subject in the dromosphere of the space of flows. As opposed to capturing her own death, as discussed in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*, Colvin effectively networked her own death. Her act of reporting resulted in her own death based on her use of networked communication technologies. In addition to operating as a tool of warfare as spectacle, in this instance communication technology became an extension or rather an apparatus of the missile launcher.



**Figure 31** - Weaponization of the Citizen Witness. Source: Diane Derr

**CHAPTER 6 | SYNCRETIZATION****6. SYNCRETIZATION**

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**6.1. Syncretic Function: As a Methodological Tool**

The aim of this chapter is to hypothesize on the syncretic narrative as a methodological tool and identify its proposed form and function demonstrated in the meta-methodology of this dissertation. The first section, *Unfolding the Syncretic in Form and Function*, will first address the etymology of the term “syncretic,” and then consider its historical application in religion, culture, creative practice, and cognitive areas of inquiry. In doing so it will delineate between its conception as a process and a result. The second section, *Syncretic Narrative: Potential as a Method in Practice*, will attempt to demonstrate its potential as a methodological tool, incorporating the identified aspects of syncretic result and syncretic process in its proposed form and function. In doing so, it will assess the dimensions (protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention) presented in the previous chapters.



### 6.1.1. Unfolding the Syncretic: In Form and Function

Syncretism has historically lacked a fixed discourse driven by meaning. Rather its meaning has been shaped and formed by the various agendas to which it has served, albeit in areas of sociology, anthropology, cognitive studies, or political science.

The term “syncretic” comes from the Greek term *synkretismus*, meaning “Cretan Federation.” *Synkretismus* stems from the Greek prefix *syn* and the Greek term for the Cretans, *kretismos* (Pakkanen, 1996). The term was first used by the Greek philosopher Plutarch in 100 AD to describe the alliance of Cretans in order to defeat a common enemy (Willetts, 1955, p. 180). In the chapter “On Brotherly Love” in his text *Moralia*, Plutarch described the term, saying:

this further must be born in mind and guarded against when differences arise among brothers: we must be careful especially at such time to associate familiarity with our brothers’ friends, but avoid and shun all intimacy with their enemies, imitating in this point, at least, the practice of Cretans, who, though they often quarreled with and warred against each other, made up their differences and united when outside enemies attacked; and this it was which they called “syncretism” (Plutarch, 313).

The term re-surfaced in the 1600’s during the Protestant Reformation in a collection of Latin and Greek proverbs titled *Adagia* by the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Roterodamus. In this text he described the use of the

term “to designate the coherence of dissenters in spite of their differences in theological opinions” (Erasmus, 1518). It was only in a letter from Erasmus to Melanchthon wherein he applied the term to describe Cretans of Plutarch. It engendered a negative connotation in its reference to the mixing of religions. According to the 19th century religious scholar Hermann Usener, the modernist use of the term is derived from *synkerannumi*, meaning to mix incompatible entities (Leopold and Jensen, 2005, p. 14). This use marked a shift in its descriptive function as a “unification against a mutual enemy” as demonstrated by the Cretans, to one of “incompatibility of different forces” (Levinskaya, 1993). In this shift from unification to separation, ground is provided for the alliance of disparate beliefs, systems, and/or practices, albeit in a negative sense. In the 1800’s the term surfaced once again in studies of the Roman and Hellenistic period. Syncretism was characterized in terms of disorder and confusion, used in reference to Roman emperors conquering and assimilating enemies. In this application the term is used as a weapon of assimilation (Bryson, 1992).

While etymologically rooted in religion, syncretism has manifest in numerous territories including culture, creative practice, and cognitive studies, as both a result and as a process. Syncretism is related to social power in that it can be inclusive or exclusive. As a cultural or social imposition one entity can assert its own dominance over another, leading to the creation of a social hierarchy of power.

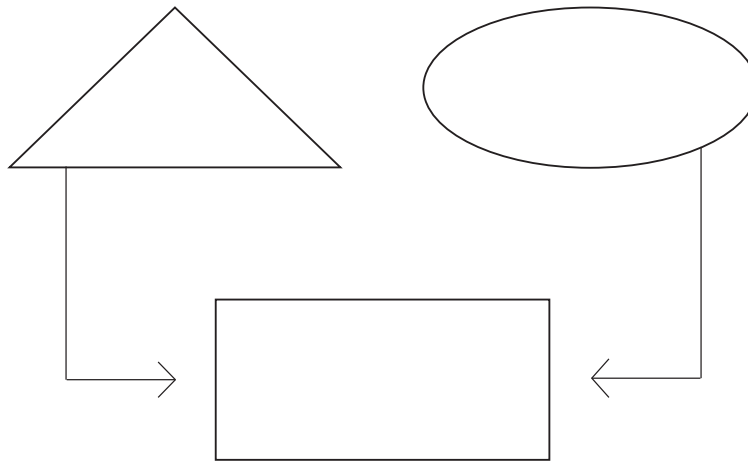


Figure 32 - Diagram of Syncretism. Source: Diane Derr

### Syncretic as Process

As a process it can be considered as existing in a continual state of transition and transformation. It can be indeterminate, in that various factors cannot be taken into consideration until they have in fact entered into the process, until they have become factors. Therefore, the process is one of emergent generation—potentially a continual state of evolving and becoming.

### Process in Religious Production

Michael Pye (1971), a religious studies scholar, defined the syncretic process as “the temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern” (p. 93). Pye saw the ambiguity of the term as leading to three possible determinations: assimilation, a new religion, and dissolution. He characterized assimilation as the effective elimination of one entity by another. He characterized the production of a new religion as the synthesis of separate elements of multiple entities resulting in a single configuration of meaning that results in a new religion. He characterized dissolution as a separation of multiple meanings. Pye defined syncretism as a process of production in the context of religion. His

conception does not infer a social hierarchy but rather a continual process. Even his assessment of dissolution is one based on a process of separation.

### **Creative Process of Production**

It could be argued that creative practice in and of itself is a syncretic process in an indeterminate production of emergent generation. The process of creative production necessitates an individual to pull from multiple disparate sources (material, physical, emotive, or cognitive) to create a new entity. Due to the subjective nature of the perception of experience they cannot be predetermined. It operates in a hybrid space.

The projects *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* and *Activating Distention*, discussed in chapters 2 and 3 respectively, explored the bounds of narrative formation between the author, the subject, and the spectator. The projects examined the collapse of distance between the author and the subject as an indeterminate narrative formation generated by the spectator's act of spectating. Through these practice-based explorations I found the hybrid space between the author, the subject, and the spectator to be contingent on a syncretic process of production based on the indeterminate factors presented by these interdependent agents within their prescribed roles. *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* was undertaken in order to further investigate the citizen witness in their position as both the author and the subject. Through the lens of dromology an ultimate collapse of distance, based on the logic of speed, between the two positions became evident in the 'death witness'. *Activating Distention* was undertaken in order to further investigate the spectator's production of a storyworld. Through the elements of polyperspectivity and the narrative matrix, the intent was to explore the potential

for a contrapuntal reading potentially manifest in a co-creation of narrative from the citizen witness and institutional journalism generated content.

The British artist and theorist Roy Ascott addressed the term much more as a process than a result. In his essay “Syncretic Reality: art, process, and potentiality,” he described syncretism as “now serve[ing] us in understanding the multi-layered world views, both material and metaphysical, that are emerging from our engagement with pervasive computational technologies and post-biological systems” (2005). Additionally, Ascott outlined the formative factors of syncretic reality as being hybrid-space (emergence), field consciousness (spiritual coherence), material (agency), world-building (quantum coherence), ars technoetica (creativity), and connectivity (cultural coherence). In Ascott’s conception these components are not formed as a result of, nor are they indicative of, social hierarchical power. Rather they are processual. They are in a continual state of becoming. In furthering an understanding of multi-layered worldviews, they do not exist or operate within fixed points of starting, stopping, beginning, or ending.

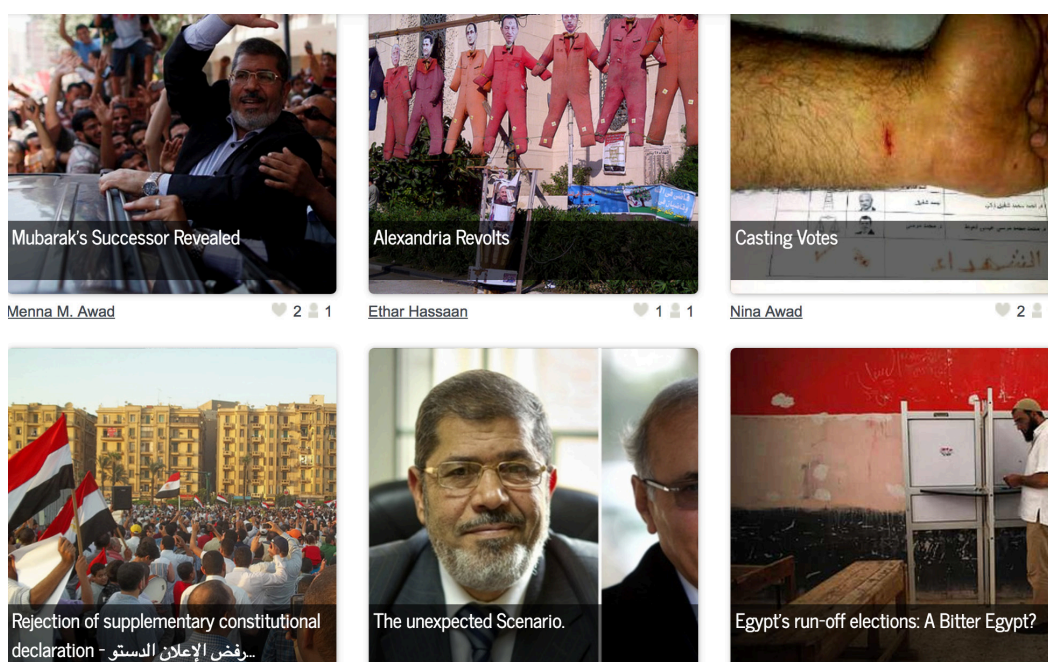


Figure 33 - 18 Days in Egypt, Screenshot of Stream. Source: beta.18daysinegypt.com

In a mediatized space of narrative formation, a syncretic process of production necessitates shared authorship, emergent subjects, and spectator activation of the spatial and temporal bounds of the networked model of communication. *18 days in Egypt* is a useful example of syncretism, particularly in terms of mediated space of narrative formation in creative practice, in terms of production. The project is an online platform for interactive storytelling developed in 2011 by journalist Jigar Mehta and artist Yasmin Elayat. The intent of the project was to “re-envision the documentary of the future and to get the audience closer to the storytellers. In our case, the storytellers are the people that actually lived these experiences” (2011). Mehta and Elayat refer to the revolution as “one of the first ‘real-time’ revolutions of the digital era” (2011). The project was developed through crowdsourcing tweets, cell phone videos, and other media created by citizens protesting in Cairo’s Tahrir Square as well as individuals observing the situation globally. Using the interactive storytelling software GroupStream, a stream of images, videos, and text was brought together.

According to the project creators, “As site visitors jump from stream to stream, they engage with multiple perspectives on the revolution” (2011). The project developed through a syncretic process of production. Citizen witnesses collectively authored this dynamic narrative. With each new upload the narrative continues to shift and evolve. The polyperspective in the emergent matrix enables a diverse array of readings and contrapuntal readings. The narrative is not static; it is an indeterminate, fluid, and living construct. It exists in an evolving process in its continual process of production.

### **Syncretic as Result**

Considering syncretic as a result can be limiting in that it does not take into consideration the nuances and indeterminate variables. However, it can underscore social power structures and the potential dominance of one entity over the other. Rather than highlighting the co-emergence and co-development indicative of a syncretic process, a syncretic result can potentially identify dynamics of power and resistance in one entity overtaking another, albeit cultural or social.

### **Religion Manifest as Result**

In her essay “Syncretism the term and the phenomenon,” Irina Levinskaya pointed out that the definition for the term provided by the Oxford English Dictionary treats it “as a result and not as a process” (1993, p. 117). However, considering syncretism as a result presents limitations in its manifestation in culture and the sociopolitical – particularly in terms of its relation to social power.

In their essay “Syncretism,” religious studies scholars Tony K. Stewart and Carl Ernst asserted that modern-day syncretism can be formed through four models. These include: influence and borrowing, the “cultural veneer”, alchemy, and biological. Their models approach the syncretic as both a result and a process. According to Stewart and Ernst, the model of influence and borrowing addresses interactions between separate parties wherein they are impacted through contact. The model of “cultural veneer” is “artificially conjoined.” The model of alchemy is one of metaphoric chemical reaction and the model of biological reproduction refers to the production of an “offspring” that does not

mirror an obvious mixture of the parental units (Stewart & Ernst, 2003, p. 586). They described this use of the term: “In the history of religions, syncretism was applied particularly to the “mixed” religions of the Hellenistic and Roman eras, in implicit or explicit contrast with “pure” Christianity (Stewart & Ernst, 2003, p. 586).

The term has been used extensively in religious contexts as a result in both monotheistic religions as well as polytheistic. These include Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Mormonism. Religious syncretism refers to either the merging of multiple spiritual belief systems resulting in the formation of a new alternate system, or the application of one system into another. Essentially, religious syncretism conceived of as a result fits somewhat neatly within the models outlined by Stewart and Ernst. It is indicative of social power and hierarchical dominance of one entity over another.

In their text *Syncretism in Religion*, religious studies scholars Anita Marie Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen described syncretism as being “about the negotiation and interaction of new elements into a particular group or domain that stem from ‘essentially’ different groups or domains” (2005, p. 3). There are numerous examples of syncretism in religion throughout history and around the world including but not limited to: Christian Nestorians, Gnosticism, Mahayana Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Sikhism. While perceived as predominantly Islamic there are numerous examples of religious syncretism in the Middle East including but not limited to: Alawites of Syria; Alevism from Turkey; Bahaism developed out of Iran; the Druze of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel; and Sufism which did not develop in a specific region but rather from British orientalist (Chittick, 2000, p. 6).



When couched in the discourse of anthropology “Syncretism” took on an affirmative meaning. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (1994), religious studies scholars, asserted that “Anthropology itself is both a syncretizing and creolizing discourse (as the translation and/or invention of culture), a discourse about syncretism” (p. 22). Stewart and Shaw’s assessment inferred an inclusive syncretic result, one in which the social hierarchical power is not acknowledged as a key or defining element.

### **Cognitive Process and Result**

In the early 1900’s the French psychologist Jean Piaget developed a theory in cognitive development wherein syncretic cognitive development was a stage. In Piaget’s application of the term, it is not necessarily a process or a result, but rather a developmental cognitive stage. His theory contained four stages of development including the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage. Piaget contended that children experience a cognitive state which he termed “syncretic thought” in the preoperational stage. During this stage the child is characterized as being vastly egocentric. What the child sees, feels, wants, and desires, everyone sees, feels, wants, and desires. As a pre-language-driven form of association, Piaget conceived of this as a mechanism for informing or reconciling the external world with our internal processes. Children use syncretic thought during this stage with a limited ability to consider a range of elements. In his text *Psychology: An International Perspective*, psychologist Michael W. Eysenck (2004) described syncretic thought:

Syncretic thought is a limited form of thinking in which only some off the relevant information is considered. It is revealed on tasks where children

are asked to select various objects that are all alike. Intuitive children tend to perform this task accurately, for example selecting several yellow objects or square objects. Pre-conceptual [pre-operational] children show syncretic thought. The second object they select is the same as the first on one dimension (e.g., size), but then the third object is the same as the second on another dimension (e.g., colour). Thus, syncretic thought occurs because young children focus on two objects at a time, and find it hard to consider the characteristics of several objects at the same time (p. 525).

In Piaget's conception of the developmental stage of syncretic thought there is a relationship between cause and effect. The result informs the generation of the following stage in the child's cognitive development, the concrete operational stage. As a result, it is not indicative of social power or hierarchical structures. As a process, it is not fully indicative of a continual state of transformation.

### **6.1.2. Syncretic Narrative: Potential as a Method in Practice**

As a methodological tool syncretic narrative offers an opportunity for considering the syncretic as both a process and a result. It can operate as an emergent, self-referential, generative, and process-driven method while simultaneously identifying power and resistance as evident in its conception of result. It embodies a meta-ness in its own formation and operation, its own form and function. The following attributes have been identified based on the research presented in the previous chapters.

### **Syncretic Protagonist: Citizen Witness**

As I claimed in chapter 2, I identified the citizen witness as syncretically operating as both the author and the subject in the generation of narrative formation. The previous wars and conflicts discussed in chapter 2 established the demarcated positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator based on communication technologies coupled with institutional and government oversight. As technology evolved and government policy and oversight fluctuated, the distance between these positions decreased and the logic of speed increased. The distance between the windscreen and the movement of objects through the horizon began to rapidly decrease. The acute acceleration in the logic of speed within the dromosphere resulted in a collapse of distance between the author and the subject, evident in the death witness discussed in chapter 2. The citizen witness' dual position, as discussed in chapters 2 and 5, is self-referential and not hierarchical. They would not be able to operate as the author if they were not simultaneously operating as the subject. As a witness they traverse ground between objectivity and subjectivity, between authenticity and legitimacy.

### **Syncretic Bounds of Space and Time: Networked Model of Communication**

The networked model of communication provides the spatial and temporal bounds within which narrative may be generated and formed. The construction of narrative becomes a fluid entity in its intersection and integration, orchestrating dynamic threads of the intertextual narrative, which are generated across multiple media platforms, both in terms of production and dissemination. As I claimed in chapter 3, this leads to corresponding, connecting, and subsequent narratives of related information. This construction

allows for multiple and varying entry points, exit points, diversions, and emergence as a generative process. Polyperspectivity within the narrative matrix potentially enables a contrapuntal reading of the storyworlds within the network bounds of space and time in the space of flows and the public sphere. Narrative formation is contingent upon the spectator's access to and use of information within the networked model of communication, enabling alternative narrative threads which start, stop, and expand. Therefore, similar to the syncretic protagonist, it enables a non-hierarchical ordering of information. This is reflective of the way in which the spectator's engagement activates the public sphere.

### **Syncretic Geopolitical Place and Space: Middle East and Arab Spring**

As a complex geopolitical territory, the Middle East can be conceived of as a syncretically formed space and place, due in part to Western colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries. The potential for this is evident in the Western development of the term "Middle East," the establishment of externally imposed geographical divides, and developments of internal geopolitical nationalism. Additionally, I found that these attributes laid the ground for an original, regional citizen witness, George Antonius, in his production of *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*. As a syncretic geopolitical territory, the Middle East established locational and territorial bounds for syncretic narrative to emerge and form. It fostered the emergence of the citizen witness in its specific regional configuration. It conceivably shaped approaches by Western institutional journalism interfacing with the citizen witness.

### **Intention of the Protagonist: Weaponization**

I identified the intention of the protagonist through the content analysis of the dimensions of the protagonist and space and time. In doing so, the analysis considered the integration of information produced from multiple sources regarding a single event or set of relational events and resulting in the formation of alternate narrative(s). As I claimed in chapter 5, the intention of the protagonist, in its weaponization, was identified through: the interfacing between the citizen witness and institutional journalism, the demonstrated power of the citizen witness in the public sphere, their contradictory function of being both objective and subjective in their authority, and weaponization “against” themselves – death witness and networked death.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I summarize my contributions to knowledge by hypothesizing on syncretic narrative as a methodological tool, demonstrated in the structural orchestration of the dissertation. I propose the syncretic as both a process and a result in its delineation and operation.

The first section, *Unfolding the Syncretic in Form and Function*, surveyed previous conceptions of syncretism functioning as both result and process. It assessed religion, creative practice, and cognitive study as key areas of application. The intention was to unearth the parameters of form and function demonstrated in both process and result. As a process, these were identified as emergent generation and operating in a continual state of transition and transformation. As a result, they were identified as highlighting structures and hierarchies of social power. The second section, *Syncretic Narrative: Potential as a Method in Practice*, identified the key elements within the narrative dimensions discussed in previous chapters: the protagonist, space and time,

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causation, and intention. It proposed the methodological tool as engendering an emergent, self-referential, and generative process coupled with a capability of highlighting power and resistance as evident in its conception of result.

**CHAPTER 7 | CONCLUSION****7. CONCLUSION**

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**7.1 Research Summary**

This research was driven by an observed phenomenon of narrative formation within the collective configuration of events deemed the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring, beginning on December 17, 2010, highlighted a rising departure from reporting practices in previous wars and conflicts. I identified and claimed a core component of this shifting landscape as the collapse of distance between the author and the subject, evident in the emergent role of the citizen witness. This coupled with the development of networked communications established the network bounds of space and time within which narrative may be produced, disseminated, and received. These narrative threads and streams facilitated polyperspectivity in the narrative matrix, enabling the potential for a contrapuntal reading within the storyworld.

As an interdisciplinary course of study investigating this generation and formation of narrative, the preceding chapters drew from territories of narratology, media studies, communication studies, media art practice, journalism, and Middle Eastern politics. Therefore, a methodological approach

was developed to unfold the layers of disciplinary territory and involvement in order to unpack the observed phenomenon.

This research focused on the formation of narrative generated within the spatial and temporal bounds of the networked model of communication driven by the citizen witness and grounded in the Middle East. The methodology of this research developed through a syncretic approach in navigating its own formation and operation through the dimensions of protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention derived from the Event Indexing Situation Model (EISM).

### **Research Question**

The primary research question of this dissertation is as follows:

- How can syncretic narrative be applied as a methodological tool to analyze the entangled formation of narrative in power and resistance in war and conflict?
- What new phenomena of narrative produced in the networked model of communication and observed in the Arab Spring can be identified and analyzed?
- What potential in narrative formation is afforded in the network bounds of space and time?
- How can the role of the citizen witness within the Arab Spring be addressed within the positions of the author, subject, and spectator?



In order to address these questions I have used a triangulation of methods including qualitative content analysis, literature reviews, case studies and practice-based research. Practice-based research was applied in the methodology of this research as both an instrument of analysis and investigation. As a method, comparative analysis of video footage produced by the citizen witness and institutional journalism was conducted. The footage, was subsequently structured within two interactive systems *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* and *Activating Distention*. This enabled further investigation of narrative formation and operation between and within the author, the subject and the spectator. This application and use of practice-based research was determined by an identified need to unpack a syncretic narrative formation within the author, the subject, and the spectator relationship. This was done so through an activation of the position of the spectator within the bounds of network space and time relative to geopolitical place.

### **Revisiting the Research Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research, discussed in chapter 1, is to consider syncretism as a way to navigate and negotiate the threads of information which inform the generation of narrative within the bounds of the networked model of communication. Therefore, a syncretic approach was adopted as a meta-methodology in order to identify and locate the narrative dimensions of the protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention.

Chapter 2, *Locating the Syncretic Protagonist Through a Dromological Lens*, attempted to uncover the dimension of protagonist in an investigation of the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator through the lens of dromology. A literature review of previous instances of war and conflict

revealed an increase in the logic of speed and a collapse of distance between the positions. An investigation into the simultaneous positions of author and subject was conducted through practice-based research in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap*. An interactive system was designed to enable further analysis of the collision of the author and the subject in the position of the citizen witness, to speculate on the position of spectator as activator, and to consider the spectator's physical engagement in their position as activator. This project attempts to unpack an ultimate acceleration in the logic of speed with a collision between the act of authorship and the simultaneous position of the subject as a "death witness." In doing so, it uncovered an impermeable moment between warfare and its own reciprocal bond to spectacle. The spectator, and therefore their residual role within the spectacle, becomes entangled through their activation of the death witness. Without an activation, by the spectator, the death witness may not be fully realized within the spectacle.

Chapter 3, *Narrative and Network Bounds*, attempted to identify the dimension of space and time determined through the networked model of communication. A literature review of four elements in narrative formation was conducted in an effort to identify the ways in which they are woven within networked space and time. Additionally, a literature review of the networked model of communication was conducted in order to identify key parameters and a theoretical approach of its functionality. Practice-based research was conducted in *Activating Distention* in an effort to further investigate a hybrid configuration of narrative in addressing the role of the spectator in activating and navigating the bounds of space and time. An interactive system was designed in order to analyze a dual operation of the spectator as the author, to consider a contrapuntal reading through the spectators' simultaneous position

as author, and to consider an infrastructure of the space of flows within the public sphere enabling a contrapuntal reading. In addressing narrative produced in the networked model of communication the practice-based research explores a hybrid of a narrative space and time produced by an intersecting engagement with content generated by citizen witnesses and content generated by institutional news organizations. Each narrative produced by the spectator was individually generated by their own response to the footage feeds; therefore, no two narratives were identical. Rather than two separate narratives, operating with their own embedded meaning, intention and requisite motivation *Activating Distention* invites the spectator to literally merge the narratives into their own singular narrative. This single narrative, while stemming from and built upon the source material, is independent. The project attempts to expose the potential for a contrapuntal reading in the space of flows in the public sphere.

Chapter 4, *Geopolitical Space and Place*, attempted to identify the dimension of causation in (not of) place in an effort to unpack the geopolitical landscape in foregrounding events. A literature review of the etymology of the term Middle East coupled with colonial and post-colonial activities in the Middle East following the fall of the Ottoman empire is conducted in an effort to ascertain the foundation from which the proposed syncretic protagonist and the dimension of space and time in syncretic narrative formation may operate. An assessment of reports produced by the Regional Bureau for the Arab States of the United Nations Development Program and the International Monetary Fund revealed a range of social, economic, and political issues impacting the region preceding the Arab Spring. These reports coupled with the preceding literature review revealed a syncretic process in the formation of place through western imposition resulting in a space wherein alternate power dynamics may emerge.

Through an additional literature review and content analysis George Antonius was determined to be a potential original, regional citizen witness, relative to his actions and authorship of and his 1938 text *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*.

Chapter 5, *Case Studies: Identifying a Weaponization of the Citizen Witness*, attempted to ascertain the dimension of protagonist intention. This was conducted through qualitative content analysis of the dimensions of the protagonist and space and time in four case studies. The dimension of intention was approached in terms of the potential ways in which the protagonist operates in the space and time of the networked model of communication while grounded in a syncretically generated geopolitical place of the Middle East. The case studies revealed a number of elements in the weaponization of the citizen witness including: the potential power of the citizen witness in the public sphere, the value of the citizen witness' subjectivity in lieu of institutional journalism's desire for objectivity. Additionally, the use of networked communication in a new report resulting in a networked death was uncovered. Rather than capturing one's own death in a time-based recording as investigated in *Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap* discussed in chapter 2, this event revealed a networked death; an extended use of communication technology in the field of battle.

Chapter 6, *Syncretic Function: As a Methodological Tool*, hypothesized on the syncretic narrative as a methodological tool demonstrated within the meta- methodology of this research. A literature review was conducted in assessing the application of the term syncretic as a process in religious and creative production and as a result in religion and cognitive development. This

assessment revealed a potential for incorporating both applications in its form and function as a methodological tool. The chapter attempted to assess the proposed tool through its application in the structure of the dissertation. In doing so it considered the dimensions protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention as presented in the previous chapters. It proposed the methodological tool as necessitating an emergent, self-referential, and generative process.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This research proposes a contribution to knowledge in the development of a methodological tool for navigating the complexity of information generated within the networked model of communication during instances of war and conflict. It proposes this tool, as a framework, wherein narrative dimensions of the protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention may syncretically function to investigate and analyze the generation and formation of narrative observed during the Arab Spring. Within the dimensions of this framework I propose the following:

- a collapse of distance between the author and the subject, due to an increase in the logic of speed, resulting in a demonstrated shift in the narrative formation;
- the polyperspective within the narrative matrix enables the contrapuntal reading, which may facilitate the counter narrative and speak to that which enables the formation of the narrative itself;
- George Antonius as an original citizen witness in the geopolitical space and place of the Middle East;

- a weaponization of the citizen witness within narrative formation in the networked model of communication.

The proposed contribution to knowledge seeks to leverage the latent power and significance of syncretism in unfolding and revealing alternate opportunities in narrative formation. A process of unpacking the fundamental components of the author, the subject, and the spectator was conducted in an effort to unearth residual layers of meaning afforded and entangled within mediated narrative.

Informed by the domains of journalism and Middle Eastern politics, in an intersection of practice and theory, this research declares the syncretic narrative, within a hybridized territory of inquiry in media art practice, narratology, and communication (media) studies. Approaching the triangulated configuration of the positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator as malleable, fluid, and emergent, has significant implications within this hybrid territory. Speculatively, such an approach could enable alternate systems, shifting positions of power, hierarchy, and agency within the formation of meaning in the mediation of traditional narrative structures.

The proposed methodological tool, inclusive of the framework of identified dimensions and application as a primary mechanism for the formation of narrative, has the potential to be applied within alternate contexts, situations, and incidents. The specific, nuanced components and parameters constituting the individual dimensions of protagonist, space and time, causation, and intention require independent assessment within their own individual

configurations and parameters. The positions of the author, the subject, and the spectator bound by communication models, systems, and structures, and grounded in their contextual complexity, require their own independent assessment through the identified dimensions.

Speculating on the application of the methodological tool, in the 2016 conflict between Russia and the United States of America (U.S.), wherein Russia (potentially) infiltrated the U.S. Presidential election, conditions and parameters within the identified dimensions could be approached as follows:

- Protagonist: Identification of the configuration (positions, roles, and functions) of the author, the subject, and the spectator between the actors and agents of the respective governments producing and disseminating information, and United States citizens receiving and further disseminating information;
- Space and Time: Assessment of narrative generation within the networked model of communication and the algorithmic constraints and conditions of proprietary social media platforms driven by information production, dissemination, and reception by the identified protagonist;
- Causation: Contextual investigation of the geopolitical and chronopolitical conditions (current and historic) of international relations between Russia and the U.S.;

- Intention: Identification of the intention of the identified syncretic protagonist based on content analysis of the dimensions of Protagonist and Space and Time, grounded in the contextual geopolitical and chronopolitical space.

### **Reflection on Limitations**

This research is situated and bound within the confines of the specific time, place, and set of events collectively deemed the Arab Spring. This research developed out of a specific observed phenomenon of narrative formation within the Arab Spring. The proposed methodological tool was not applied or analyzed in different contexts. Therefore, an assessment could not be made as to the adaptability regarding the context of location or the conditions of alternate communication models.

The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East developed during the previous two centuries is an immensely complex territory. Bias perspective of the region from the global community can be palpable. The research attempted to remain within the bounds it established in the research question, aims, and objectives, and to minimize any indication of the author's potential conscious or unconscious bias. However, a reader's own potential bias toward the region could impact their reading of the document.

As discussed, this research drew from the networked model of communication. This model has its own distinct conditions, parameters, opportunities, and limitations. As the broad spectrum of communication strategies and structures evolves with the continued development of emergent technologies, the potential for alternate models of communication may develop.



Such alternate models may not be applicable to the proposed methodological tool.

## **7.2. Future Directions**

The mediatized landscape of information which generates narrative formation is in a constant state of flux and flow. The continual evolution of communication technologies and the political frameworks within which they operate will continue to impact the formation of narrative and dictate the lens through which we form and comprehend narrative in and of itself.

The future direction of this research is focused on the potential for adaptation and application of the methodological tool in alternate contexts. Future occurrences of war and conflict will present their own unique set of conditions within nuanced facets of power and resistance in its mediatization. Further exploring this methodological tool, applied and adapted in future wars and conflicts, could provide useful insight into its integrity and durability.

Additionally, there is opportunity to assess ways in which the methodological tool can be employed through additional media including (but not limited to) augmented reality, virtual reality, and mixed reality. This will present unique opportunities for further exploration into the generation and formation of narrative within emergent models of communication. The potential impact could be considered in algorithmic forms of authorship, continued loss of private (or reduction in) spectatorship, the continued decrease in the visibility of

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war and conflict and continued increase in the weaponization of communication as a primary mode of geopolitical warfare.

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## **APPENDIX B: Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap**

### System Description

A parallax ping sensor detects and measures the physical presence of an individual through a sonar, ultrasonic pulse. The distance measured by the ping sensor is determined by the code written in the Arduino sketch; 2 cm to 400 cm. The processing sketch calls videos from the catalogued collection, randomized. The processing sketch controls the speed and the volume of the video playback based on input data of distance and duration recieved from the Arduino sketch. As the detected physical distance decreases the speed of the video playback increases. As the detected duration of the detected physical distance increases the volume levels increase.

File structure of folder linked in google drive:

### Shared Destination Beyond the Veracity Gap\_2012

#### Program Files

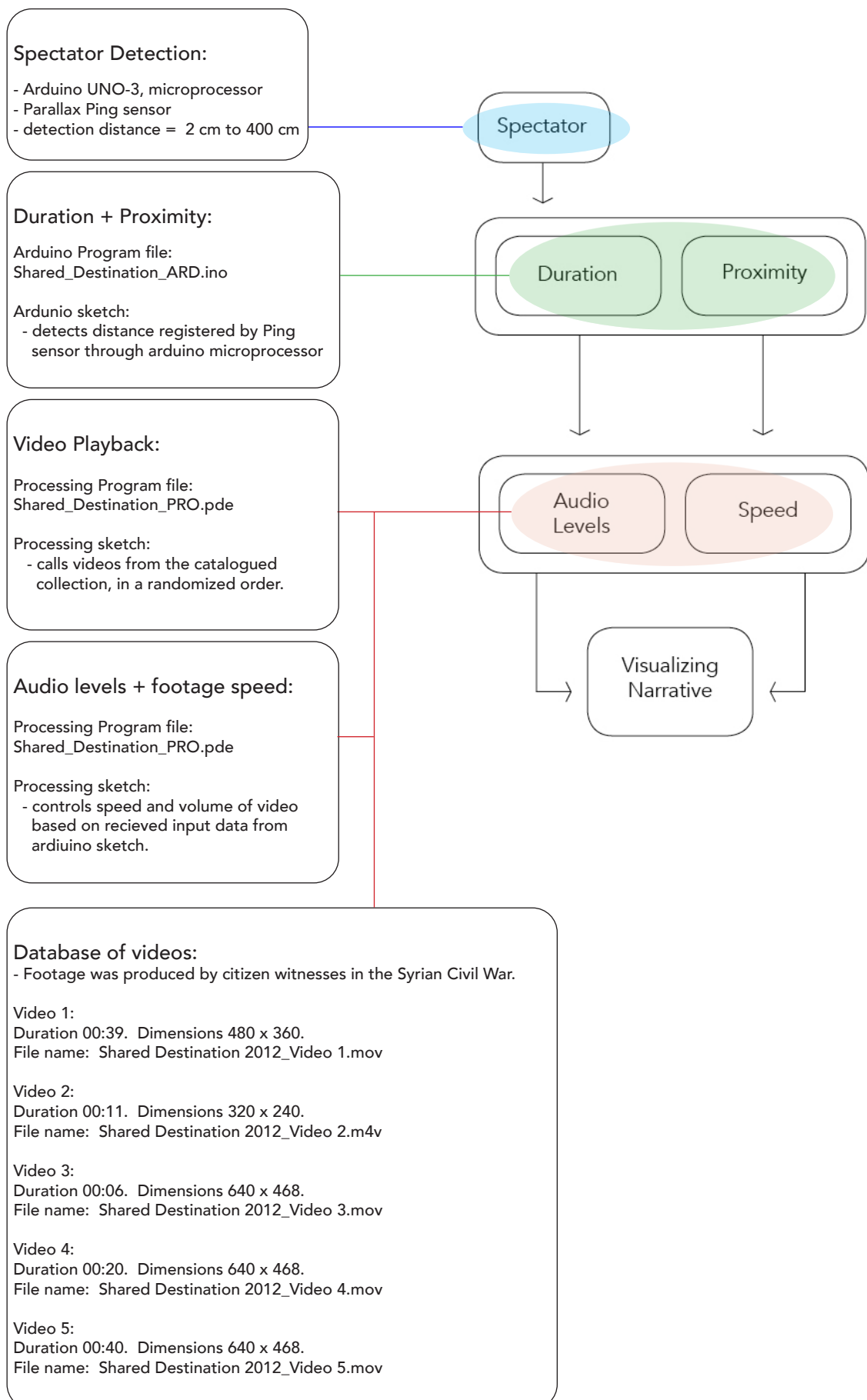
- Shared\_Destination\_Arduino
  - Shared\_Destination\_ARD.ino
- Shared\_Destination\_Processing
  - Shared\_Destination\_PRO.pde

#### Videos

##### Original Videos

- Shared Destination 2012\_Video 1.mov
- Shared Destination 2012\_Video 2.mov
- Shared Destination 2012\_Video 3.mov
- Shared Destination 2012\_Video 4.mov
- Shared Destination 2012\_Video 5.mov
- Shared\_Destination\_Derr\_2012.mp4





## APPENDIX C: Activating Distention

### System Description

A modular touch interface, using TouchOSC, on an iPad controls the manipulated playback of two sources of video feeds. The interface consists of three slider bars controlling the horizontal pixels, the vertical pixels, and a full cross-fade of both image and audio between the feeds. MaxMSP software receives the TouchOSC input data collected from the iPad interface. Using patches in MaxMSP, the input data is connected to the corresponding video source feeds with the respective controllers adjusting pixilation, crossfading, and mixing between the sources (including audio levels).

File structure of folder linked in google drive:

Activating Distention\_2013

Program Files

- Activating Distention.maxproj
- code > viewrnamer.js
- data > pixl8r-presets.jsons
- Footage Folder (see below)
- media > efx-data-button.png
  - > playr-transport.png
  - > pvr-daisy-button.png
  - > pvr-data-button.png
  - > pvr-sliderlink2.png
- patchers > Activating Distention.maxpat
- touchosc > AD\_iPad\_Interface\_Derr\_2013.touchosc.zip

Videos

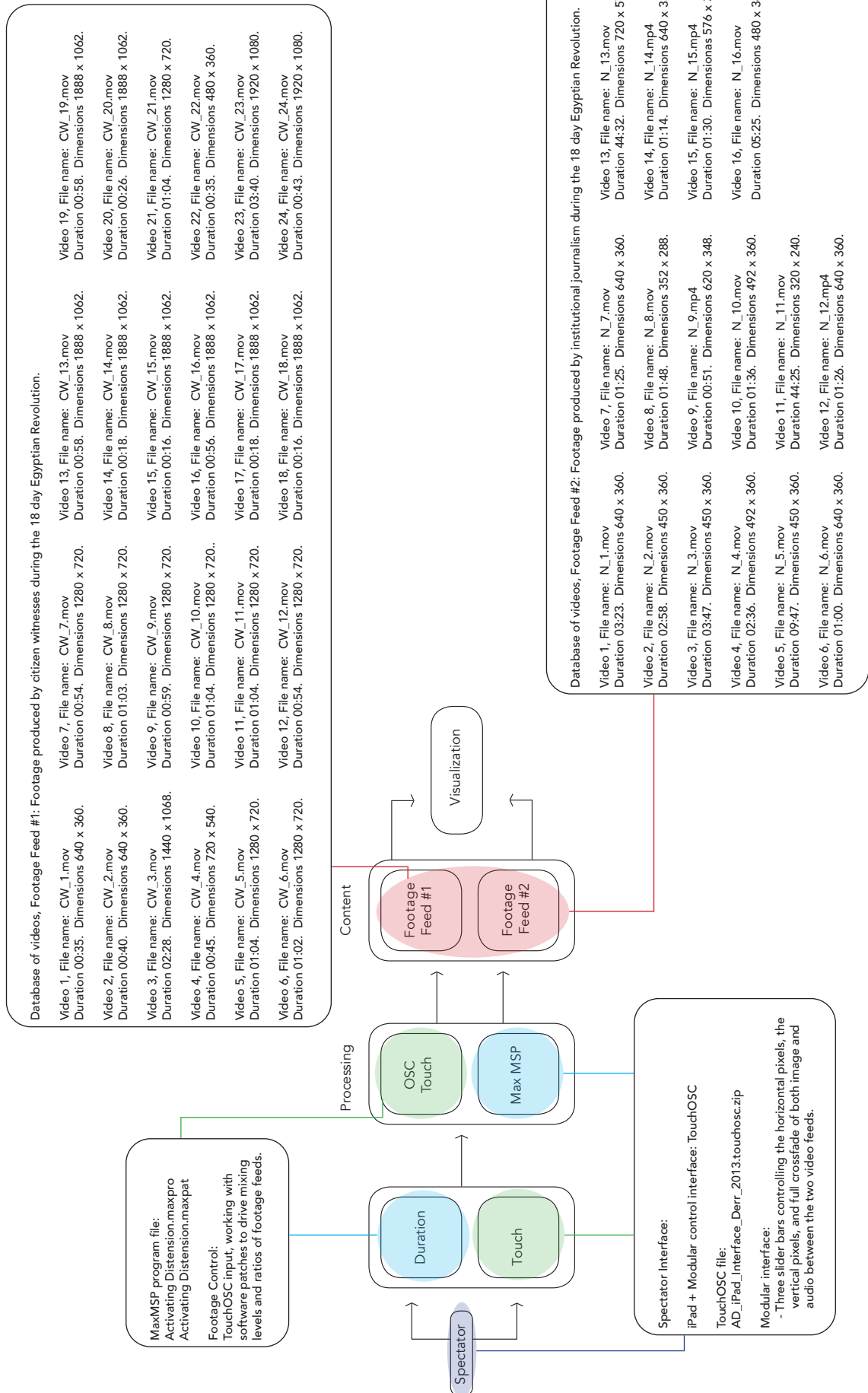
Citizen footage

- CW\_1.mov
- CW\_2.mov
- CW\_3.mov
- CW\_4.mov
- CW\_5.mov
- CW\_6.mov
- CW\_7.mov
- CW\_8.mov
- CW\_9.mov
- CW\_10.mov
- CW\_11.mov
- CW\_12.mov
- CW\_13.mov
- CW\_14.mov
- CW\_15.mov
- CW\_16.mov
- CW\_17.mov
- CW\_18.mov
- CW\_19.mov
- CW\_20.mov
- CW\_21.mov
- CW\_22.mov
- CW\_23.mov
- CW\_24.mov

News Org Footage

- N\_1.mov
- N\_2.mov
- N\_3.mov
- N\_4.mov
- N\_5.mov
- N\_6.mov
- N\_7.mov
- N\_8.mov
- N\_9.mp4
- N\_10.mov
- N\_11.mov
- N\_12.mp4
- N\_13.mov
- N\_14.mp4
- N\_15.mp4
- N\_16.mov

Activating Distention\_Derr\_2013.mp4



## APPENDIX D: RELEVANT ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE WORK

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### D1.1. Composite Sessions Attended

The composite sessions consisted of a one-hour presentation by the research candidates, one-on-one tutorial sessions with advisors, and peer-review critiques by all fellow researchers. Candidates present an hour long comprehensive status update of research. Individual one-hour tutorial sessions were conducted with each of the advisors: Roy Ascott, Dr. Jane Grant, and Mike Phillips. The sessions included a critical response from all peers and a response presented to the group at the conclusion of the session.

2015: Cephalonia, Greece

2014: Vassouras, Brazil

2014: Johannesburg, South Africa

2014: Cephalonia, Greece

2013: Syros, Greece

2013: Cairo, Egypt

2012: Prague, Czech Republic

2012: Cephalonia, Greece

2011: Lisbon, Portugal

### **D1.2. Publication List**

Derr, D. (2014). 'Capturing Gaddafi: Narrative as system currency', *Technoetic Arts: Journal of Speculative Research*. Vol. 12, Issue 2-3. <https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.12.2-3.365-1>

Derr, D. (2013). 'Syncretic narrative: Data in flux.' *Technoetic Arts: Journal of Speculative Research*. Vol. 11, Issue 2. <https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.11.2.115-1>

Derr, D. (2012). 'Fictionalizing the Figuration: (In) Consideration of the Arab Spring's narrative matrix'. *Technoetic Arts: Journal of Speculative Research*. Vol. 10, Issue 1. <https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.10.1.39-1>

Derr, D. (2011). 'Economy of the moving image', *Presence in the Mindfield: Art, Identity and the Technology of Transformation*, published in collaboration with Direcção Geral das Artes - Portuguese Ministry of Culture.

### **D1.3. Conference Presentations**

Derr, D., Mir, S., & Alsobrook, L. (2020). 'Configuring Kommos: Narrative in event, place, and memory', International Conference on Narrative. New Orleans, Louisiana. March 2020. (forthcoming)

Derr, D., & Cohn, R. "Make By Qatar: Casting for Sustainability." Panel presentation on 'Contemporary Art and Petrocultures of the Middle East' at the College Art Association annual conference. New York, New York. February 13, 2019.

Derr, D. "As Method: Negotiating the Construction of Syncretic Narrative." Consciousness Reframed conference. Shanghai, China. November 20-22, 2015.

Derr, D., & Petersen A. "Art and Artifacts: Immersive and interactive technology in the preservation and engagement of built cultural heritage." Presentation at the Alliance for Arts in Research Universities. Hosted by Iowa State University. Ames, Iowa. November 7, 2014.

Derr, D. "Urban Space and Qatar's Built Cultural Heritage." International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA). Hosted Zayed University. Dubai, United Arab Emirates. November 3, 2014.

Derr, D. "Field and flow: netting the nature of Nature." roundtable discussion, CAC4, 4th Computer Art Congress. Hosted by Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. September 3, 2014.

- Derr, D. "Embedded Function: Creative Computing within Interdisciplinary Practice." Exploring the Definition and Practice of Design Education Symposium. Hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar. May 18, 2014.
- Derr, D. "Syncretic narrative: Data in flux." XARTS: From the Virtual to the Real. Hosted by University of Aegean. Syros, Greece. July 20, 2013.
- Derr, D., & Dalal, R. "International Collaborative Arts: Conversations on Practice, Research, and Education." Panel Chair, College Art Association annual conference. New York, New York. February 13, 2013.
- Derr, D. "A Contrapuntal Reading of Data Journalism." Behind the Image and Beyond. Hosted by the German University of Cairo. Cairo, Egypt. April 1, 2013.
- Derr, D. "Morphological Mapping of the Arab Spring through an Ecological Lens." MutaMorphosis II: Tribute to Uncertainty, CIANT International Center for Art and New Technology. Prague, Czech Republic. December 6, 2013.
- Derr, D. "Fictionalizing the Figuration: (In) Consideration of the Arab Spring's Narrative Matrix." Technoetic Telos: Art, Myth and Media, Ionion Centre for arts and Culture. Kefelonia, Greece. May 2, 2012.
- Derr, D. "Economy of the Moving Image." Presence in the Mindfield: Art, Identity and the Technology of Transformation, Centro Cultural De Belem. Hosted by University of Oporto and University of Aveiro. Lisbon, Portugal. December 1, 2011

## RELEVANT ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE WORK

Derr, D. "Constructed: Fictional Realisms." New Narrative IV: Image and Spectacle. Hosted by University of Toronto. Ontario, Canada. May 6, 2011.

Derr, Diane. "Media Literacy in the Art and Design Curriculum." International Perspectives in Art and Design Pedagogy. Hosted by Leeds College of Art. Leeds, United Kingdom. October 8, 2010.

Derr, D. "Toward an Operational Dialogue." Interpolating the White Tower, Are Place and Material Valid in a Contemporary Art Education?. Mid-America College Art Association Annual Conference. Hosted by University in Indianapolis. Indianapolis, Indiana. October 17, 2008.

Derr, D. "In the Act of Watching." The Art of a Practice, Southeastern Regional College Art Association Annual Conference. New Orleans, Louisiana. September 25, 2008.

### **D1.4. Grants**

Derr, D., Mir, S., Alsobrook, L. (2019). 'Configuring Kommos: Narrative in event, place, and memory', Presidential Research Quest Fund (PeRQ), Co-Principal Investigator. Virginia Commonwealth University. Richmond, Virginia.

Derr, D., Mir, S., Alsobrook, L. (2019). 'Configuring Kommos: Narrative in event, place, and memory'. Faculty Research Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.



- Derr, D. & Petersen, A., (2018). 'Mapping History', (Cardiff International Airport)  
Faculty Research Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha,  
Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2015). 'Variable There, II: Visualizing narrative through urban data",  
Faculty Research Grant Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha,  
Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2015). 'Syncretic Narrative', Faculty Research Grant Virginia  
Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.
- Derr, D. & Alsobrook, L. (2014). 'From There to Then', Faculty Research Grant,  
Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2013). 'Interacting with Qatar's Past', Faculty Research Grant, Virginia  
Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2012). 'For the People', Faculty Research Grant, Virginia  
Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2011). 'For the People', Faculty Research Grant, Virginia  
Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.
- Derr, D. (2011). Qatar National Priorities Research Grant, 'Visualizing Qatar's  
Past'. Co-Lead Principal Investigator. VCUQatar, the Department of  
Islamic Archaeology at the University of Wales and Qatar Museum  
Authority.

### **D1.5. Awards**

Derr, D. (2016). Distinguished Faculty in Teaching Award, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.

Derr, D. (2013). Distinguish Faculty in Research Award, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.

### **D1.6. Exhibitions**

Derr, D., et al. (2020). 'Qatar Soundscapes', Venice Biennale. Time-Space-Existence exhibition in the Design & Innovation project, Venice, Italy.  
[international / invited / group] (*forthcoming*)

Derr, D., Mir, S., & Alsobrook, L. (2020). 'Configuring Kommos: Narrative in event, place, and memory', Ionion Art Center, Kefelonia, Greece.  
[international / invited / solo] (*forthcoming*)

Derr, D., et al. (2020). 'Digital Fanoos', Katara Art Center. Doha, Qatar.  
[national / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2019). 'Window to the Past', (curatorial) Old Madinat Shamal Police Station, Al Ruwayda, Qatar. [local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2018). 'Made By Qatar: Casting for Sustainability', 4th Annual Istanbul Design Biennale, 'Transitional School'. Istanbul, Turkey.  
[international / invited / group]

- Derr, D. (2018). 'Speech to Form', 20th Anniversary Digital Arts Exhibition, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.  
[local / juried / group]
- Derr, D., et al. (2018). 'Bidden', Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar, Project Space. Doha, Qatar. [international / invited / group]
- Derr, D., et al. (2017). TADAEX, Tehran Annual Digital Art Exhibition, Mohsen Gallery. Tehran, Iran. Curated by Ali Phi. [international / curated / group]
- Derr, D., et al. (2017). 'Bidden', Anderson Gallery, Islamic Art Symposium. Richmond, Virginia. [international / invited / group]
- Derr, D. (2016). Diffrazioni Media Art Festival, The Conservatory of Florence. Florence, Italy. Curated by Paola Lopreiato.  
[international / curated / group]
- Derr, D. (2016). 'Location', Czong Institute for Contemporary Art Museum (CICA). Gyeonggi-do, Korea. Curated by Leejin Kim.  
[international / curated / group]
- Derr, D. (2016). Design Days Dubai, The Venue. Dubai, United Arab Emirates.  
[international / curated / group]
- Derr, D. (2016). VCUarts Qatar Faculty Exhibition, VCUQatar Gallery. Doha, Qatar. Juried by VCUarts Qatar Gallery committee. [local / juried / group]
- Derr, D. (2015). VENTRILOQUIST: Photo Issue. Produced by Whitney Lynn. San Francisco, California. VENTRILOQUIST / Photo Issue / San Francisco, California. Curated by Whitney Lynn. [local / invited / group]

## RELEVANT ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE WORK

Derr, D. (2015). Next Nature, Ionion Art Center. Kefelonia, Greece.

[international / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2015). Next Nature, ART-ATHINA (Athens International Art Fair).

Athens, Greece. [international / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2014). Lines in the Sand, VCUQatar Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth

University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar. [local / invited / solo]

Derr, D. (2014). Strange Wonders, Msheireb Enrichment Center. Doha, Qatar.

Cuerated by Caitlin Doherty. [local / curated / group]

Derr, D. (2013). DI-EGY FEST 0.1, Gezira Art Center. Cairo, Egypt. Curated by

Haythem Nawar. [international / curated / group]

Derr, D. (2012). F is for Faculty, VCUQatar Gallery. Doha, Qatar. Juried by

VCUarts Qatar Gallery committee. [local / juried / group]

Derr, D. (2011). 'Kaleidoscope', VCUQatar Gallery. Doha, Qatar.

[local / juried / group]

Derr, D. (2008). 'Decoy', LoBot Gallery. Oakland, California.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2007). 'NabLab: Video 1'. Nab Gallery, Chicago, Illinois.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2006). 'The Mind / Body Problem', Artist Space Gallery, New York,

New York. Curated by Christian Rattemeyer. [local / curated / group]

Derr, D. (2006). 'Cinema-scope PAM', Scope Hamptons, New York, New York.

[international / juried / group]

Derr, D. (2006). 'Cinema-scope PAM', Scope London, London, United Kingdom.

[international / juried / group]

Derr, D. (2006). 'Working Frameworks', C33 Gallery, Chicago, Illinois.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2006). 'Working Frameworks', SkyLab Gallery, Columbus, Ohio.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2004). 'Urban Works', Light Works Gallery, Richmond, Virginia.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2004). 'Consumption Carnival', Polkadot Gallery, Richmond, Virginia.

[local / invited / group]

Derr, D. (2002). '214', Shockoe Bottom Art Center, Richmond, Virginia.

[local / invited / group]

### **B1.7. Affiliations**

2018 - present. Associate Professor, Graduate Studies in Design. Virginia

Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.

2016 - 2018. Associate Professor and Curator of the Innovative Media Studio,

Graduate Studies in Design. Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar.

Doha, Qatar.

## RELEVANT ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE WORK

2013 - 2016. Assistant Professor and Curator of the Innovative Media Studio, Dual-Faculty appointment, Graduate Studies in Design and VCUArts Qatar Libraries. Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.

2010 - 2013. Assistant Professor and Media Technology Coordinator, Dual-Faculty appointment, Graduate Studies in Design and VCUArts Qatar Libraries. Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar.

### **D1.8. Workshops**

Derr, D., Blackwell, R., & Cohn, R. "Made By Qatar." FireStation Doha, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar, and Land + Civilization Compositions. Doha, Qatar. August 12-18, 2018.

Derr, D., & Cardini, P. "Sensing the City." Rhode Island School of Design. Rome, Italy. June 4-July 2, 2017.

Derr, D., & Alsobrook, L. "Variable There: Reconfiguring narrative through urban data, II." Art Present: Mapping Space that Could Return to Earth Again. Havana, Cuba. June 2-6, 2015.

Derr, D., & Alsobrook, L. "Variable There: Reconfiguring narrative through urban data, I." Fak'ugesi African Arts conference. Hosted by the University of Witwatersrand. Johannesburg, South Africa. December 3, 2014.

Derr, D. "Physical Computing to Augment Experience." Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Doha, Qatar. November 23, 2013.

Derr, D., Baldes, P., & Kaputof, B. "VJ'ing the Narrative." Virginia  
Commonwealth University in Qatar, Doha, Qatar. March, 2013.