

DAVID AND GOLIATH RETOLD:
A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF CNN'S COVERAGE OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

by

ARIELLA BENSHMUEL

(Under the Direction of Carolina Acosta-Alzuru)

ABSTRACT

Much criticism has been leveled at CNN for its coverage of Israel and Palestine, highlighting the need for a close examination of its newscasts. The following is a textual analysis of CNN's programming from the region, attempting to uncover the dominant CNN discourse regarding the Palestinian and Israeli people. This, from Lule's perspective of news as myth. The CNN text was found to utilize the structure and imagery of myths of old in its coverage of Israel and Palestine: namely Lule's master myths of the hero, the victim, the scapegoat and the foreboding future. As opposed to Israel's image as powerful aggressor, the Palestinian populace was portrayed as the "heroic victim" within the CNN text. Both Israeli settlers and Palestinian "militants" were deemed the "scapegoats" responsible for the ills of the region. The prospects for the Middle-East were portrayed as bleak, in keeping with the myth of the foreboding future.

INDEX WORDS: Israel, Palestine, Textual Analysis, Lule, News as Myth, CNN.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my friends and family who have stood by me throughout this entire long and arduous process. A special thank you to Dr A., my advisor and personal guide through this long journey. I hope we can sit at that Café in Tel-Aviv one day! To my parents for their constant love and guidance, you are my support system through everything, and I love and appreciate you both more than you know! And to my friends—Deanna, Seema, Arthie and the rest of our wonderful and close-knit group—thank you for understanding when Ariella was a bit of a basket case, and for getting me out of the house to breathe free air every once in a while....

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Israel. A tiny speck of land nuzzled in-between Lebanon and Egypt. It has a population of roughly 6.8 million people—both Jewish and Arab. It has an area of only 7,886 square miles; slightly smaller than the size of New Jersey. But for such a small country, it certainly holds a large renown.

For some—it is the Holy Land. It is a territory sacred to all three major religions. Jews have long considered Israel to be their national home — the biblical ‘promised land’ entrusted to the Jewish people. The land of Israel holds a special place in Jewish religious obligations, and contains the remnants of the ancient Jewish temple. It is also the place where Christianity was born. It is the birthplace of Jesus; where Christ both lived and died. Israel, and most notably its capital Jerusalem, contains many other sites of great spiritual significance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—such as the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock—just to name a few.

Most people, however, associate Israel with images far removed from this aura of spirituality and sanctity. In most minds, the mere mention of Israel conjures images of charred buses, mangled bodies, bloody street battles and whizzing bullets. As stories of turmoil inundate the mainstream press, most people know little about Israel beyond those troubling images. Furthermore, Israel is now inextricably linked to a conflict; that is, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Context: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The continual conflict between Israel and the Palestinian populace which inhabits its borders, a struggle generating violence and counter-violence on both sides, is actually symptomatic of a far broader struggle between Israel and the Arab neighbors which surround it. This Arab-Israeli conflict is a long-running Middle East quarrel regarding the existence of the state of Israel, its defined borders and its relations with the Arab world surrounding it. This includes the Palestinian people residing within Israel's borders.

The Arab-Israeli conflict actually began far before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. It already evolved after World War I, when the emerging Palestinian national movement clashed with the emerging Zionist movement, in what was then Palestine under British mandate. In the spring of 1920 and 1921, as well as during the summer of 1929, Arab nationalists opposed to the British mandate and the Jewish National Home, instigated riots against Jews in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa and Haifa. Fueled by rumors that Jews intended to build a synagogue at the Wailing Wall and encroach upon the El-Aqsa Mosque, the riots were chiefly incited by two emerging leaders of the Palestinians: the Muslim Cleric Haj Amin El-Husseini, later Grand Mufti (Muslim Cleric) of Jerusalem, and Arif-El Arif, a prominent Palestinian journalist. They represented the radical element within the Palestinian community, and saw the Zionist movement as a major threat to the Palestinian cause. (Isseroff, 2005). This growing antagonism between the Jewish and Palestinian national movements peaked in 1929, with an attack on the city of Hebron. Sixty Jews were killed, and the remainder driven out of the city. Similar atrocities transpired in the ancient Jewish city of Safad. (Dershowitz, 2003).

The British responded to this ongoing violence with the Passfield “White Papers.” Based on the recommendations of the Hope-Simpson commission, these papers called for severe limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine, noting that further Jewish immigration would infringe on the position of the existing Arab population. These were “odious documents in Jewish eyes,” seeing as they not only limited Jewish immigration to Israel, but had also forbidden the purchase of land by Jews in all but 5% of its area(Eban, 1972, p. 12). Ultimately, British MPs and the Zionist movement sharply criticized the new policy, and PM Ramsay MacDonald issued a "clarification" stating that Jewish immigration would not be stopped (Isseroff, 2005).

Between the years 1936 and 1939, these riots evolved into full scale clashes between the Arab and Jewish communities. These conflicts became known as the “Grand Arab Revolt” against the British mandate and the Jewish community. This rebellion was aimed at weakening the emerging Jewish community in Palestine, which was growing tremendously at the time due to major immigration from Europe prior to World War II. The Palestinians, concerned about the growing number of Jewish immigrants, wanted to limit the number of Jews arriving in Israel. The Arabs began by proclaiming a general strike and boycott of Jewish products. The strike quickly led to a campaign of violence against Jewish people and lands. Arabs attacked Jewish villages and vehicles, as well as British Army and police forces. The violence continued through 1938, and then was crushed by British and Jewish forces, ending in early 1939. (“The Arab Israeli Conflict”, 2004; “What Happened During the Arab Revolt”, 2005).

The next watershed moment in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict came after WWII in 1947, when Britain relinquished its mandate of Palestine. The United Nations then proposed what came to be known as its “partition plan” for Palestine. Under this plan, Palestine was to be divided into two states: one Arab and one Jewish. The Jews accepted this plan, whereas the Arabs rejected it flat-out. They viewed Zionism as a colonialist movement, and deemed the partition plan an “unfair plan based on the minority (which was Jewish at the time) getting equal rights to that of the majority” (Dershowitz, 2003, p.63). Ultimately, the United Nations voted in favor of the establishment of the state of Israel. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004). On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, announced the birth of the new state of Israel. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004). But Israel’s birth was not the whole story of this day. A day later, on May 15th, the new nation was invaded by the armies of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. Israel, as Eban writes, “was experiencing the joy of birth and the fear of death in a single taste,” as the prospect of Arab victory seemed certain. (Eban, 1972, p. 12). Against all odds, however, the Arab armies were beaten back. By the autumn of 1948, Israel won its War of Independence, and armistice-demarcation lines with the Arab states were established. (Eban, 1972, p. 12).

To the Palestinians, however, Israel’s independence was known as Al-Nakba or “the catastrophe.” Al-Nakbah meant the destruction of Palestinian society, and “Palestinians' dispossession, dispersal, and destitution” (Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997, p. 123). Palestinians saw Zionist policy as striving to secure as much as possible of the land of Palestine for a Jewish state, without indigenous Arab Palestinians.

From an estimated population of 900,000 Palestinians in the areas occupied by Israel in 1947-1948, 750,000 to 800,000 became refugees. In a matter of a few weeks in the spring of 1948, the Palestinians became an “abruptly and haphazardly segmented” society. (Farsoun & Zacharia, 2001, p. 123).

From the end of the war until 1967, Israel was isolated in the region. The new nation was not recognized by its Arab neighbors, and clashes on different scales—especially guerilla and militia warfare—continued. In 1956, Nasser of Egypt began training Arab “Fedayeen” or terrorists, to engage in hostile action on Israel’s border, and infiltrate Israel to commit terrorist raids. This escalation continued with the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran, and Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956. Israel—along with Britain and France —no longer had free access to this international waterway. This led to the Sinai Campaign between Egypt and Israel—which had British and French backing. The result of this war—known in Israel as “Operation Kadesh”—was that the entire Sinai Peninsula fell into Israeli hands, at a cost of 231 soldiers’ lives. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Eban, 1972).

To the Palestinians this was—yet again— an act of aggression and imperialism, in which “Israel, in collusion with Britain and France, invaded the Sinai Desert and the Suez Canal zone of Egypt through the Gaza Strip” (Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997, p. 175).

1964, another hallmark year in Israeli-Palestinian relations, marked the founding of the Palestinian Liberation Organization or PLO. The PLO and the PLA—its official military branch— were “created by the Arab League as organizational mechanisms for Palestinians to express their identity and political aspirations” (Farsoun& Zacharia, 1997, p. 177).

Ahmad al-Shuqayri was named the first chairman of the PLO, and the organization became the representative voice for the Palestinian people.

To the Palestinians, the PLO was a mechanism for uniting the dispersed Palestinians and calling attention to their cause. (Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997, p. 177). As the sole voice of the Palestinian people, the PLO vowed to reclaim the land of Israel for the Palestinians, and called for the destruction of the state of Israel. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Dershowitz, 2003; Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997).

Three years later, on June 5, 1967, came the “Six- Day War.” To Israelis, this war was a preemptive strike. Nasser once again blocked the straits of Tiran, and denied Israel access to the Suez Canal. Furthermore, Egyptian troops were amassing along the Israeli border. Syria and Jordan were likewise threatening to strike. As Eban (1972) notes, “Israel was surrounded by greater Arab armies than had ever been arrayed against her. Exuberant Arab crowds were dancing in the streets, intoxicated with the prospect of revenge and bloodshed” (p. 213). This revenge was not to come. In the course of six days, Israel managed to defeat the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian armies, and to capture the Golan Heights from Syria, the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza from Egypt, and the West Bank (as well as the Old City of Jerusalem) from Jordan.

According to Palestinian pundits, however, “Israel started the Six- Day War by launching air attacks on Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and 1.5 million Arabs, mostly Palestinians, came under Israeli occupation” (Dershowitz, 2003, p. 91). Palestinians and their sympathizers furthermore claim that Israeli “occupation” of these territories was in direct violation of international law. The Six-Day War was a pivotal moment in the history of the conflict, seeing as subsequent peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians have centered on a return to 1967 borders. (“The Arab-Israeli-Conflict”, 2004; Eban, 1972; Dershowitz, 2003).

From 1967 on, there were more wars and clashes, but also a turn towards normalization and settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The last major war after 1967, which also signaled a shift in policy in parts of the Arab world, was the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In this confrontation, Israel was attacked by surprise by both Syrian and Egyptian armies. This, on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement. Jews typically spend this day in fasting and prayer, but in 1973 it turned into disaster, as Israel was wholly unprepared for this attack. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Dershowitz, 2003).

The outcome of this war was considered a military victory for Israel, but also a strategic achievement for Egypt and Syria, because of limited military success during the beginning of the war. Syrian tank forces almost succeeded in breaking through Israel’s thin defense lines and infiltrating its northern cities. On the Egyptian front, too, the initial days of the war were disastrous as far as Israel was concerned. Egyptian forces nearly succeeded in crossing the Suez Canal into southern Israel. A tiny number of soldiers had to face the Egyptian onslaught virtually single-handed. Moshe Dayan, Israel’s defense minister, sent a message to the commander of the Israeli air-force that the “the Third Temple” –his code for the state of Israel—was in danger. Dayan considered mobilizing high-school students and people who were too old for reserve duty. The feeling was that another holocaust was imminent. Israel ultimately won the war—but at a heavy cost of 2,700 casualties. (Dershowitz, 2003). As quoted in Dershowitz (2003) , Arabs contended that “the responsibility for this military flare-up in the Middle East lies wholly and completely with the Tel-Aviv leaders. Israel continues its aggression, started in 1967, against the Arab countries” (p.100).

From then on, we begin to see a shift in parts of the Arab world towards a more pragmatic political resolution to the conflict. This began with the historic visit of President Sadat of Egypt to Israel, and the subsequent peace accord between Israel and Egypt—the leading Arab country. Egypt, led by Anwar Sadat, and Israel, led by Menahem Begin, signed the Camp David framework agreements, leading to a Peace treaty in 1979. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for peace. This peace treaty with Egypt was at first rejected by most of the Arab world. Egypt, in fact, was under immense pressure from other Arab countries not to sign this accord. Sadat paid the ultimate price for his decision to make peace with Israel. He was assassinated at the hands of Muslim fundamentalists in 1981. The Camp David Accords he signed were nevertheless, a major breakthrough in the relationship between Israel and the Arab world. They led to a more moderate attitude in other Arab countries, as well as amongst the Palestinian leadership. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Isseroff, 2005; Dershowitz, 2003).

Beginning in 1987, an uprising began in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The revolt, known as the first Intifada, was initiated by spontaneous demonstrations by local Gaza residents, and involved mostly low-level violence, such as rock throwing. This Intifada was a populist revolt, which succeeded in garnering attention to the Palestinian cause, and winning sympathy for the struggle of the Palestinians against the Israeli occupiers. The “image began to shift to that of youthful rebels resisting, under great odds, the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sensational television footage of Palestinian youths being beaten mercilessly by Israeli soldiers contributed to the change in image. For the first time, the long-cherished Western perception of a little, beleaguered Israel facing the Arab Goliath was reversed” (Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997, p.9). The Palestinians were now officially designated the underdogs. By 1991, this first Intifada had all but ended. (Isseroff, 2005, Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997).

In 1993, another major breakthrough occurred in Israeli- Palestinians relations. The historic Oslo agreement between Israel—led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin— and the Palestinians, led by Yasser Arafat. (“The Arab- Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Isseroff, 2005). This agreement aimed at gradually establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza strip in exchange for normalization of the relationship with Israel, and an end to armed conflict. The Oslo peace accords effectively ended Israeli occupation of most Palestinian cities, towns and villages. Palestinian Authority police assumed control over most Palestinian territories in Gaza and the West Bank. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Isseroff, 2005; Dershowitz, 2003). The “handshake between Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, and Yitzhak Rabin, prime minister of Israel, following the signing initiated a new reality that would change the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict , and the future of the Palestinians and the Middle East for generations to come”(Farsoun& Zacharia, 1997, p.2). These agreements —many thought—would usher in a new era of peace and prosperity to the Middle East. The Oslo peace process, however, gradually lost momentum, due especially to continual attacks by Palestinian militant groups against Israeli civilians. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Isseroff, 2005; Dershowitz, 2003).

On November 5, 1995, Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin—one of the chief actors in the Oslo accords— was assassinated by a Jewish right-wing fanatic, Yigal Amir, at a peace rally in Tel-Aviv. The death of Rabin, which not only signed the Oslo accords but also an additional peace agreement with Jordan, served as a knock-out blow to Israeli morale. Never before has an Israeli prime minister been assassinated. Especially painful was the fact that Rabin was murdered at the hands of a fellow Jew. Rabin’s death left Israel reeling. People gathered to lay flowers and candles at the site where Rabin was shot—which was later renamed and dubbed “Rabin square.”

The country was in a collective state of shock and mourning. In an article written by Eric Hanson for the *Houston Chronicle*, Dr. Alon Liel, director general of the Ministry of Economy and Planning, is quoted as saying “It (Rabin's death) was a huge trauma for Israel, and also a huge trauma for Jewish people all over the world” (Hanson, 1995).

While Rabin’s policy of peace-making and territorial compromise continued with his successors Shimon Peres (one of the main architects of Oslo) and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Oslo agreements he signed began to unfurl due to unrelenting Palestinian terror. The Palestinians accused Israel of failing to live-up to the Oslo agreements, and of attempting to annex Palestinian territories through the continual expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas. To many Palestinians, Israel still “retained ultimate control over the lives of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip whenever it wished to exercise its power” (Farsoun & Zacharia, 1997, p.270). In return, came a rash of Hamas terrorist bombings in the spring of 1996, targeting Israeli men, women and children in Jerusalem and other Israeli cities. (Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005). During February and March of that year alone, four deadly suicide bombs killed 58 people in Israel, and wounded 200. (“Terror Attacks in Israel”, n.d.).

The situation in Israel deteriorated further during the late 1990s and beginning of 2000, when Ehud Barak—then Israeli Prime Minister—and Yasser Arafat failed to negotiate a peace accord in a Camp David Conference brokered by then U.S. President Bill Clinton. Arafat rejected the Israeli offer to reach an agreement based on major territorial concessions and the establishment of a Palestinian state on more than 90% of the West Bank and Gaza District. Barak also offered the Palestinians East Jerusalem as the capital of this new Palestinian state.

Arafat, however, maintained that Israel insisted on annexing key portions of the Palestinian areas and on leaving most settlements intact, and offered only a limited form of Palestinian statehood. He was also adamant about evoking the “right of return”—that is allowing Palestinian refugees displaced during the 1948 War of Independence to return to Israel. This would effectively turn the entire state of Israel into a Palestinian state. Arafat, however, made it clear that “he would never surrender the right of more than 4 million Palestinians to return to Israel, rather than live in the Palestinian state with compensation” (Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005). Barak ultimately suspended negotiations. He was voted out of office at the beginning of February, and replaced by a right wing government headed by Ariel Sharon.

The failure of this peace summit resulted in a new wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Renewed Palestinian violence erupted on September 28, 2000. Palestinians argue that this second Intifada was triggered by Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which is also the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam’s holiest sites. They deemed his visit to the Temple Mount as needless provocation. Israelis contend that Palestinian violence was already coordinated by Arafat well in advance of Sharon’s visit. (Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005). Palestinians launched terror attacks on major Israel cities, which resulted in hundreds of casualties. Israel made increasing incursions into Palestinian areas, and confined Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat to his “Mukata” in Ramallah, and Palestinians intensified attacks on soldiers as well as suicide bombings. (Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005).

In 2002, after a massive suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Nethanya, which killed 27 people as they were celebrating Passover, Israel launched a massive raid, operation Defensive Wall, intended to root out terror cells in Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm and other towns. (Isseroff, 2005). Palestinians charged that during these incursions, Israeli soldiers had

committed a massacre in the Jenin refugee camp, killing over 500 people. Israel claimed that only 50 Palestinians were killed in the Jenin refugee camp, and these were members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs suicide brigades. The massive wave of suicide attacks continued. (Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005). This “Second Intifada” lasted almost four years, and served to further fuel hostilities between the two people. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Isseroff, 2005; Dershowitz, 2003).

In the last year, especially after the death of Yasser Arafat, which was perceived as a major obstacle towards peace and reconciliation, as well as other developments in the region such as the fall of Saddam Hussein, there has been a decrease in terrorist bombings as well as major new strides towards the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the new Palestinian leadership headed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas—popularly known as Abu Mazen.(Isseroff, 2005; Dershowitz, 2003). Immediately after his election, Abu Mazen was invited by President Bush to the White House—unheard of during the Arafat era—and Israeli Prime Minister Sharon agreed to arrange a meeting. Again, a major shift in attitude towards the Palestinian Authority (Isseroff, 2005).

Another important development in this ongoing conflict is Israel’s recent decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza district, and to dismantle settlements in that area. This is the so-called “disengagement plan” which has made headlines recently, and which necessitates the evacuation of Israeli settlement on what is deemed Palestinian land.

Politically, unilateral withdrawal is the first complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and dismantling of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories since the War of 1967; and is an indication of Israel’s willingness to give back territories taken during the 1967 War in exchange for peace. After this withdrawal, there won’t be any Israeli presence in Gaza—an area where 1.3

million Palestinians live. Furthermore, Nearly 430,000 West Bank Palestinians will no longer be under Israeli security control after the withdrawal. This –in turn – might help foster political resolution of the conflict. (“Israel’s Disengagement Plan”, 2005; “Sharon’s Disengagement Plan”, 2004). This withdrawal from Gaza—along with Abu Mazen’s more pragmatic leadership—offers a major boost to negotiations between the two warring parties, and is a major step toward a final peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. (Dershowitz, 2003).

The situation, overall, is still tense, since there is still very strong opposition within the Palestinian community and the Arab world to any type of peace agreement with Israel. (“The Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 2004; Dershowitz, 2003; Isseroff, 2005). However, it does seem as though there is now a new opportunity for political settlement in the region, though the road ahead promises to be very bumpy.

The Security Fence

Also known as the “West Bank Wall”, this is a security barrier erected by Israel between its territories and Palestinian territories in order to prevent terror attacks within Israel. It is important to note that “West Bank Wall” is, in fact, a misnomer. This security barrier is, in fact, part-wall, and part-fence. Most of its 640-kilometers (440-mile) length is made up of a concrete base with a five-meter-high wire-and-mesh superstructure. Rolls of razor wire and a four-meter-deep ditch are placed on one side.

In addition, the structure is fitted with electronic sensors and has an earth-covered "trace road" beside it, where footprints of anyone crossing can be seen. Parts of the structure consist of an eight-meter-high solid concrete wall, complete with massive watchtowers. However, 97% of it is, in fact, chain-link fence. (“Israel’s Security Fence”, 2003; Isseroff, 2005).

Israel says this barrier is vital to protect its citizens from terror attacks. In fact, terror attacks have declined substantially—by more than 90%—since its erection. (“Israel’s Security Fence”, 2003; “Saving Lives –Israel’s Security Fence”, 2003). Furthermore, other countries also deem it their right to erect security barriers and border crossings between themselves and neighboring countries. A wall 20 miles long stands between the United States and Mexico, for instance, in order to prevent drug trafficking and illegal immigration. This “wall” is also meant to protect the United States against terror infiltration. Israel is thus not alone in seeking to defend itself and its citizens.

Israel’s security fence, however, has been condemned by Palestinians and their advocates. They see it as an “apartheid wall”, and a visceral sign of brutal occupation. They claim that Palestinian land is confiscated to build the barrier, and that hundreds of Palestinian farmers and traders are cut off from their land and means of economic survival. (Isseroff, 2005; “Sharon Gets His Way Again”, 2003). Israel, however, is trying to minimize the negative impact on Palestinians in the area of construction, by providing agricultural passageways to allow farmers to continue to cultivate their lands, and crossing points to allow the movement of people and the transfer of goods. Moreover, property owners are offered compensation for the use of their land and for any damage to their trees (“Israel’s Security Fence”, 2003).

Another major Palestinian grievance concerning the fence is that it creates "facts on the ground," and imposes unilateral solutions which preclude negotiated agreements in the future. The fence was originally supposed to follow the green line—or 1948 borders— more or less, and protect Israeli towns and villages from incursions by terrorists. After the re-election of Ariel Sharon, the path of the fence changed, and it now incorporates some areas of the West bank that were once on the other side of the fence. The Palestinian Arabs have referred to the barrier as a

"land grab", designed to incorporate as many Jewish settlements as possible. The fence's political status is, however, open for negotiation. It can be readily rerouted— or even taken down—once permanent status agreements are reached with the Palestinians. ("Israel's Security Fence", 2003; Isseroff, 2005; "Sharon Gets His Way Again", 2003).

Israel and the Media

The ongoing and bloody conflict has been widely covered by the mainstream media, and lies at the forefront of most people's perceptions and conceptions of the region. When people think about Israel, they most likely envision another suicide bombing in Tel-Aviv, or another Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Extensive media coverage of Israel, which focuses almost exclusively on the hostilities which transpire in the region, undoubtedly contributes to these perceptions.

Media attention afforded Israel, both in the print and broadcast medium, has been extensive to say the least. In relation to other international news, and even other international conflicts, Israel figures very prominently in the press' agenda. "With over 900 articles on this conflict emerging on an average day from English-language media outlets, Israel—a tiny nation the size of the state of New Jersey—receives approximately 75 times more coverage than other areas of equal population" ("The Over Reporting of Israel", 2004).

In comparison to other nations involved in armed conflicts—where world media attention increases— Israel receives over 10 times more coverage by population. On the AP wire, Israel and the West Bank's coverage-to-population ratio far outweighs those of anywhere else in the world. ("The Over-Reporting of Israel", 2004). As reported by the Wikipedia website, Israel and the territories have one of the highest concentrations of journalists in the world, reflecting intense worldwide interest in the conflict. ("Media Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", 2005).

There are 350 foreign news organizations based in Jerusalem alone, employing 800 reporters, cameramen and technicians. Since the beginning of 2004, another 1,300 accredited journalists have visited the region. As a Jerusalem correspondent from a major American paper recently told the Honest Reporting website, “My editor wants a story from me every day –even on very slow news days—and that's unique in our international coverage.”(“The Over Reporting of Israel”, 2004).

Due to this intense media scrutiny, the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is fought over the pages of newspapers and magazines and on TV screens, to as great an extent as it is fought on the streets of Gaza. Both sides are cognizant of the immense amount of power that the media harbor in today’s society and want to project a favorable image in the world press. Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi told Reuters: "The media are... crucial. It [sic] presents a version of reality. It creates awareness of what's happening, and the perceptions that are presented affect public opinion." (“Media Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, 2005, section 1 para. 2).

Furthermore, as quoted in Wikipedia, Yehudith Orbach, head of the journalism and communications department of Bar Ilan University, points out that Palestinians and Israelis were fully aware of the importance of media image. (“Media Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, 2005, section 1, para. 3). "The Palestinians definitely have an advantage... that they know how to make the most of media coverage. In war... television is a battlefield," Orbach told Reuters. "The picture is worth more than 1,000 words. The fact that it is a cliché does not mean that it is any less true." (“Media Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, 2005, section 1, para. 3).

It is thus not surprising that accusations of bias in media coverage of the Mid-East conflict have been frequent and rampant on both the Palestinian and Israeli ends of this conflict. Both sides have repeatedly alleged that the media portrays the opposing side in a favorable light, and is hostile to their cause. Almost every mass media outlet has been accused by both Israeli and Palestinian pundits of media bias. Often, the same outlet is accused of unfair reporting by both sides at once. For example, *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *National Public Radio* are regularly accused by pro -Palestinian groups in the United States of being uncritically favorable towards Israel, while right-wing, pro-Israel groups claim that these media outlets have a pro-Palestinian bias. (Burress, 2003). Not surprisingly, similar accusations have been directed toward Cable News Network or CNN, which today has become a globally viewed and accepted news medium.

Cable News Network (CNN)

CNN is the preeminent foreign news network in the Mid-East and throughout the globe. It is among the world's leaders in news and information delivery. Its website (CNN.com) alone is staffed 24 hours, seven days a week, in its world headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and in 42 bureaus worldwide. CNN relies on a global team of almost 4,000 news professionals to deliver the news to the world all day—everyday. With its pervasive presence, CNN is watched by millions around the globe, which have come to rely on it as their preeminent—and sometimes only— source of news. (“About us”, 2005) .

CNN was founded in 1980 by Ted Turner and Reese Schonfield. It was the first cable network to offer 24-hour news coverage, and is largely credited with pioneering the notion of round-the-clock broadcast news. (“Cable News Network”, 2004). The news network grew throughout the 80s, expanding its channel line-up, and debuting shows such as “Larry King

Live” and “Crossfire.” CNN came to gain international prominence, however, during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. It was the only foreign network to remain in Baghdad, and broadcast live from the line of fire. From the moment the first bombs fell on Baghdad, CNN was there with Wolf Blitzer, Bernard Shaw and Peter Arnett live on the scene. (“Cable News Network”, 2004). Many around the world came to rely on its saturation coverage of that war. Many Israelis knew about imminent scud missile attacks from Baghdad through CNN, rather than local channels. In essence, CNN was the first to bring a war— live and in living color—into all of our living rooms (“CNN”, 2004).

By 1995, CNN was the media hyper-conglomerate that we see operating today. It had bureaus around the world and more than 2,500 employees on its editorial staff. That same year, Turner Broadcasting system—CNN’s parent company – was bought by Time Warner, Inc., and the two companies merged. Time Warner then merged with the Internet service provider America Online in 2001, creating the world's largest media conglomerate. In January, 2003, Ted Turner resigned as Vice Chair of Turner Broadcasting Systems. (“CNN”, 2004).

By the late 1990s, other cable news channels, such as MSNBC and the Fox News Channel (both of which were launched in 1996) came on the scene, and started competing with CNN. CNN, however, was the pioneer. It changed news coverage forever—for better or worse—and provided the blueprint for these 24-hour news stations. (“CNN”, 2004).

As of December 2004, CNN is available in 88.2 million U.S. households and more than 890,000 U.S. hotel rooms. It broadcasts primarily from its headquarters at the CNN Center in Atlanta, as well as from studios in New York City and Washington, DC. Globally, the network is available to more than 1.5 billion people in over 212 countries and territories—Israel included. (“CNN”, 2004). Since CNN's launch on June 1, 1980, the network has turned into a media

industry. It now has expanded far beyond a single cable news channel. CNN now owns a number of cable and satellite television networks (such as CNN Headline News), 12 web sites, two private place-based networks (such as CNN Airport Network), and two radio networks. (“CNN”, 2004). CNN debuted its news website *CNN.com* (then referred to as *CNN Interactive*) on August 30, 1995. This was, in essence, the first major news and information website on the Internet. CNN, thus, is much more than a news channel. It is an international media conglomerate which supplies news and information to the United States and the world. Many CNN personalities, such as Christiane Amanpour, Wolf Blitzer and Larry King, have become house-hold names. People have come to know—and trust—these world renowned anchors. To many around the world, CNN is their only source of news, rivaling such media giants as BBC and Sky News. (“CNN”, 2004).

There are basically three distinct versions of the CNN network. The U.S. version of CNN, emanating mainly from its headquarters in Atlanta, the international version of CNN (CNNI), which is broadcast around the world and CNN en Español, broadcasting in Spanish. The international version of CNN is the one broadcast in Israel.

CNN International is a cable and satellite television network available outside of North America. (“Cable News Network”, 2004). It carries mostly news and current affairs programming, but also has some music and sports related programming, as well as other programming which reflects the character and interests of the area that it broadcasts to. A CNN international sports broadcast, for instance, will cover sports— such as cricket and rugby—which are of great interest to international viewers, but have little appeal to U.S. audiences. CNN international is geared toward a broader-based international audience, and aims to give those audiences a less U.S.-centered view of important news events. (“CNN”, 2004).

Occasionally CNNI cuts to the main CNN channel (that is the American version) for news coverage and programs such as Larry King Live. In rare circumstances, the CNN domestic U.S. network will turn to CNNI newscasts (primarily when major international news breaks during the night-time in the U.S.). CNNI will also air CNN domestic U.S. newscasts whenever major events happen in the United States. This was the case, for instance, during the September 11th attacks. The two networks are thus distinct and mutually exclusive, but will often join forces on major stories. (“CNN”, 2004).

CNN and its Viewers: A Contentious Relationship

CNN’s success and far reaching influence, however, do not come without controversy. Many viewers fear what has been dubbed the “CNN effect”—that is the notion that CNN’s pervasive news coverage has a major impact on real world decision making in the political, diplomatic, economic and military realms. Beyond covering the news, therefore, many viewers contend that CNN actually holds the power to make news. (“CNN, 2004”)

One of the major accusations leveled against CNN, for instance, deals with what viewers contend are its leftist leanings. CNN has been continually racked with accusations of liberal bias, with conservatives accusing the network of liberal editorializing in the guise of news. Sites such as www.fairpress.org, the Media Research Center, and countless others, are set up by conservative groups to expose instances of what they construe as liberal bias in CNN’s coverage. Some conservatives have jokingly dubbed CNN the “Clinton News Network” during the Clinton era, or the “Communist News Network,” in reference to what they perceive as its leftist leanings. (“Cable News Network,” 2004). Similar accusations of conservative bias have been leveled against CNN’s chief competitor Fox News (Ackerman, 2001), but no such allegations have been leveled at CNN.

CNN, Israel and Palestine—Hostilities Flare

CNN's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has similarly led to nothing short of an uproar. CNN's coverage has infuriated parties on both ends of this ongoing struggle. The relationship between CNN and its Israeli viewers has been especially contentious. Israelis have long accused CNN of harboring an Anti-Israel bias, and of being blatantly pro-Palestinian in its coverage. At best CNN has been accused of a subtle—or not so subtle—anti-Israel skew. At worst, it has been accused of being blatantly anti-Semitic. (Cashman, 2000). Many Israelis maintain that CNN constantly misses the mark when it comes to covering the Mid-East conflict. They feel that CNN often casts Israel in the role of the violent aggressor. CNN and other media, including *The New York Times*, have been the target of harsh criticism from supporters of Israel who claim they don't offer enough coverage of Israeli victims of terrorist attacks, while giving too much attention to the plight of Palestinians. (Halperin, 2005). Many Israelis feel that the Western media (e.g.: BBC, CNN) has become a voice for the Palestinians.

Even as Israelis see their children's schoolmates killed by suicide bombers, they feel that CNN and BBC reporters sympathize with the bombers. (Schonfeld, 2002). Some Israeli viewers even go so far as to maintain that being anti-Israel is part of an institutional culture at CNN. This, following remarks made by CNN founder Ted Turner, equating Israeli army actions to terrorism, and stating that Israel and the Palestinians “terrorize each other.” (Halperin, 2005). Turner later apologized to Israeli readers in the *Yediot Achronot* daily newspaper, but it was perceived as too little too late.

CNN correspondent Andrea Koppel likewise set off a fire storm of controversy when she remarked to a group of Jewish businessmen that the current crisis could very well mark the “beginning of the end” of the state of Israel. Again, this statement sparked allegations of intense pro-Palestinian bias and anti-Semitism amongst CNN’s Mid-East correspondents. (Lynne, 2002).

This media battle eventually came to a head in June 2002, when Israel’s three cable networks considered dropping CNN from their broadcast line-up, and instead opening the door to arch-rival Fox News. A deal with Fox had been in the works for months, but the “YES” satellite provider, which reaches 300,000 Israeli homes, pressed for an earlier start date following the Turner statement (Furman, 2002). Ostensibly, this decision to yank CNN off Israeli cable was a contract dispute. But undoubtedly the bad blood between Israeli viewers and the network also contributed to the Israeli network’s decision. Ultimately, CNN remained on Israeli television, and Israel’s “YES” satellite television provider continued to carry CNN International and BBC World, despite public calls to pull the two news channels off the air for alleged pro-Palestinian bias (Furman, 2002). “We are not censors and will not decide for our subscribers what to see and what not to see,” CEO Shlomo Liran said in a statement. (Cohen, 2002).

In turn, Eason Jordan, CNN's Chief News Executive and Newsgathering President, also agreed to review CNN’s coverage of Israel and determine whether it is balanced. While in Israel, Jordan announced that he issued a directive ordering staff to “go to extremes” to avoid any impression the company sees moral equivalence between terror victims and their attackers (Rosenblatt, 2002).

The incessant battle between CNN and Israeli—as well as Jewish American—viewers continues to this day. CNN has made attempts to focus more on the victims of Palestinian bombings, and to highlight the toll that these attacks are taking on ordinary Israeli civilians.

Many, however, still contend that little— if anything— has changed when it comes to CNN coverage. Some Jewish and Israeli viewers jokingly refer to CNN as “PNN” or “Palestinian News Network,” and feel that— in spite of their efforts to attain fair and balanced coverage— CNN still simply does not get it right. (Rosenblatt, 2002). Pro-Israel Media watchdog groups, such as honestreporting.com or camera.org, still complain of problematic reporting by several of CNN’s correspondents in the Middle East. Clearly, this media battle for hearts and minds is proving almost as contentious as the Middle East conflict itself. (Rosenblatt, 2002).

Palestinians and the Media

Palestinian groups similarly allege that the “Arab perspective remains misunderstood and stereotyped today, and many American publications and televised news networks have accepted the official Israeli viewpoint in order to explain the ongoing violence” (Ibrahim, 2003, p. 88). Palestinian groups—in similar fashion to the Israeli stance—claim that CNN consistently reports that the Palestinians are the aggressors, while ignoring what they deem “Israeli atrocities committed by Israeli soldiers and settlers against innocent Palestinian civilians.” (“A Petition”, n.d.).

Palestinian-Americans, and other pro-Palestinian groups, have accused the media of ignoring or downplaying alleged Israeli human-rights violations. Many Palestinians contend that Palestinians remain marginalized and stereotyped in media portrayals. They are rarely given the benefit of the doubt, and typically portrayed as rock-throwing fanatics, rather than a people with legitimate grievances.

Similarly to what was seen on the Israeli side, there have also been numerous Palestinian protests against CNN, alleging that it is biased against their cause and point of view. (Schechter, 2000). Ahmed Bouzid of the Palestine Media Watch website, was quoted in an article by Adeel

Hassan (2003) as saying: “If we were talking about news coverage, I'd say that most "respectable publications" do make an effort to be fair and balanced. But the effort more often than not ends in failure, and almost always in favor of the official Israeli point of view.” In a 2003 article to the Jordan time, Bouzid noted that “what is truly appalling and unconscionable is the blatant, long-standing double standards routinely adopted by the supposedly free US mainstream media when it comes to covering the suffering of Israeli versus Palestinian victims of violence. It is simply a hard fact — notwithstanding repeated assertions by editors and journalists that they are “fair” — that Palestinian victims of Israeli violence — even children and the elderly — receive a mere fraction of the attention received by Israeli victims of Palestinian violence” (Bouzid, 2003, para. 2).

These allegations are similar—if not identical—to accusations leveled by Israeli groups which, as noted above, likewise contend that CNN ignores Israeli suffering and portrays Palestinians as innocent victims.

Bouzid— like many Jewish watchdog groups— lists a series of incidents that he perceives as indicative of CNN’s blatant bias, and provides textual evidence to back his assertions. Like his Israeli counterparts, Bouzid feels that CNN reporters sympathize more with Israeli victims of terror and Israeli soldiers—than what he deems their Palestinian “victims.” (2003). What can we make of these paradoxical allegations? What does the CNN text tell us about Israelis and Palestinians?

Purpose of Study and Significance

Clearly, CNN has been the setting of a media battle between Israeli and Palestinian pundits, in many ways similar—and as bitter— as the physical war waged between the two sides. Both sides agree on this alone: they do not approve of CNN, or the way in which it covers the

conflict. Both Palestinian and Israeli audiences construe the CNN text as biased and hostile to their cause. Both sides simply do not like the CNN network or its coverage and have launched innumerable complaints about the network.

These allegations of bias should be taken at face value, however, seeing as audiences—and especially highly partisan ones—are prone to what is known as the “hostile media effect.” As defined by Schmitt, Gunther and Liebhart (2004), this refers to a tendency—especially prevalent in highly partisan groups, to view the media as hostile to and biased against their point of view, and as espousing the opposing point of view. This, even if coverage is neutral and objective. Schmitt et al’s study (2004), suggests that even neutral news reports will be seen by partisans on opposing sides of the issue as biased in favor of the other side.

A study by Christen, Kannaovakum, and Gunther, (2002), for instance, investigated partisan perceptions of hostile bias in news coverage of the 1997 Teamsters Union strike against United Parcel Service (UPS), and the processes by which Teamster and UPS partisans formed impressions of public opinion regarding the strike. As predicted, both partisan groups perceived neutral news coverage as biased against their respective sides.

More pertinent to the Mid-East conflict, Vallone et al. (1985) have found clear evidence of the hostile media effect vis a vis Mid-East coverage. When pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian pundits both watched the same footage of the 1982 Beirut massacre, both sides deemed the footage hostile to their cause. This is similar to CNN’s reception paradox, with supporters on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict expressing clear dislike for CNN and its coverage.

Clearly, these anecdotal lamentations on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli spectrum serve to reveal very little about CNN’s coverage of the region. A more thorough examination of the CNN text is thus needed in order to ascertain the manner in which CNN not only covers the

conflict, but more importantly, portrays and depicts the Israeli and Palestinian people on both sides of this bitter feud. This, because the war over CNN media coverage is—in essence—a war over media depictions and representations. CNN is the locus of a struggle over media representation of these two warring factions. A war to adjust the lenses through which viewers see Israelis and Palestinians in the CNN text—and through which Israelis and Palestinians see themselves.

Representation is the “production of meaning through language” (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel, 2002, p. 141). In other words, it reflects the manner in which both meanings and language are related to culture. Since the media serves such a paramount role in our culture, and the meanings and images which they generate are vital in forging both our own identities and our conception of the “other,” such media representations have been widely examined by countless researchers.

Media representations are of crucial importance, as they play a key role in the articulation and construction of identity. Not only are media representations critical sites where we articulate our national identity, that is answer questions about who we are, but also they are important grounds for defining our identity of place—that is our sense of where we are. This refers to the environment, including cultural traditions—in which we as individuals are embedded. Often, this is intimately linked to our sense of self. (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

In the context of this study, media representations are thus one of the sites where viewers cultivate their sense of self as either Jews living in Israel or Arabs living in Palestine—and therein lies their vital importance and inherent value. In looking at media representations, we essentially hold up a mirror to ourselves and the environment that we live in. Not surprisingly, we seek to ensure that the reflected image be as flattering as possible. The media can clearly

influence how we—the reader or viewer—understand and interpret places, events and people. By selecting and utilizing certain words and images, they focus our attention on specific phenomenon and give meaning to events and problems. These media representations and portrayals thus have an immense impact on the formation of social reality. They do not “only portray social phenomena, but also contribute to our knowledge and understanding of them. Moreover, these representations do not only reflect occurrences in the real world, but simultaneously make claims about them” (Pietikainen & Hujanen, 2003, p. 252).

The news media also serve an inherently ideological and symbolic function far beyond merely showing us what happened, where, when and to whom. News, as suggested by Korn (2004a), is “not a neutral and natural phenomenon, but rather a manufactured product of ideology” (p. 211). Media messages define “not only the subject at hand, but also ways to see the world” (Acosta-Alzuru & Roushanzamir, 2003, p. 50). In other words, the manner in which CNN portrays the Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves, beyond merely generating images and meanings, to also construct the consensus for the social order (Hall et al, 1978).

The news media, therefore, as one of our primary sources of cultural knowledge, shapes meanings and identities. They are the site where we struggle to define how others conceive us, and how we conceive ourselves, through this omnipresent cultural medium. The media constitute the site where identities are articulated, and where political values are negotiated and validated. Through the media, we absorb our knowledge of ourselves and others. Through the media, we learn how to conceive and understand the world. Through the media, cultural meanings are negotiated and defined.

In light of this, and given the long, tortured history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, several research questions warrant this study:

How does the CNN text portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

How are the protagonists—Israel and Palestine—represented in CNN's coverage of the conflict?

What discourses are present in CNN's news segments concerning events in the region?

The purpose of this study will be to describe the portrayals of the Israeli and Palestinian populace inherent in CNN news programming, and its coverage of the mid-east conflict.

Furthermore, the dominant discourse concerning events in the region and the prospects for peace in the Middle-East will be dissected and scrutinized. In short, this study draws on theories of news construction and uses textual analysis to examine CNN's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its participants.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our society ascribes an immense amount of importance and worth to the mass media. Many researchers see the media as fulfilling a vital function in within any democratic society. The mass media—they contend— fulfill the vitally important role of fourth estate. That is, they are the guardians of democracy and defenders of the public interest. According to Carlyle (1905), who first coined the phrase, the press was a new fourth estate added to the three existing estates which ran the country at the time: the priesthood, the aristocracy and the commons. Modern commentators likewise see the press as a fourth estate or institutional power checking and counterbalancing the three branches of government—the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Clearly, thus, the media serve a vital societal function—especially in today’s media saturated society—in ensuring that the other major institutions of power do not abuse the trust vested in them by the public.

Furthermore, the press— an omnipresent force in our society today— is also seen as playing a major role in shaping public dialogue and discourse concerning major world events. The press is “seen as having the power to engage public interest in certain pressing issues,” notes Robinson (2002), and therefore “the question of how media organizations decide what stories are important, and how to cover them, becomes a matter of great importance in our society” (section 1). America today has undeniably become a media saturated society. The media have become the vehicle through which most people not only attain information about the world, but also through which many people have come to view the world.

Mass Media and the Social Construction of Reality

The structuralist perspective—that is the notion that reality is socially constructed—has become a veritable staple of mass communication research. The media—as noted by the following studies—help forge our understanding of our world and its social, political and economic realities. In other words, the news does not just reflect society—it exists within it—and this must influence its interpretation of reality. (e.g., Adoni & Akiva, 1978 ; Adoni & Mane, 1984; Cohen, et al., 1990 ; Wolfsfeld, 1997). How the mass media construe and interpret a particular story, and the manner in which they put it together, thus helps us—in many respects—make sense of the reality depicted on screen and in newspapers and magazines.

News stories are thus created within a certain narrative framework, which places the day's events within a wider societal context. The above mentioned—and other—studies have deemed the news story a funnel of sorts through which the mass media view and interpret events or issues. Not only do the media thus focus our attention on certain societal issue and problems, but they also construe the framework within which these issues will be discussed and interpreted.

Social reality is thus a product of the interaction between the “objective” reality out there, and a society's unique realities and needs. (Cohen, et al., 1990). Some of these cultural and societal needs are fulfilled by the omnipresent and pervasive news medium.

Park argued that news is "one of the earliest and most elementary forms of knowledge" (Park quoted in Vhang et al., 1998, p. 84). It is a way of seeing and thinking about the social world and understanding its realities. The manner in which this cultural knowledge is organized and distributed may, as defined by McQuail (1972), “shape the individual and collective consciousness” of a society about its everyday life and realities. In the media, there is the “provision of a consistent picture of the social world which may lead the audience to adopt this

version of reality, a reality of 'facts' and of norms, values and expectations. On the other hand, there is a continuing and selective interaction between self and the media which plays a part in shaping the individual's own behavior and self-concept” (McQuail, 1972, p.13). In other words, the media shape not only the way in which we view reality— but also how we view ourselves and the individual roles that we see ourselves playing within greater society.

Journalists and editors —like all of us—live in a social world, and are part and parcel of its realities. According to Hallin (1994) journalists are encumbered and constrained by their social location as citizens, family members and participants in social reality. Like all of us—their perspective on the world is limited by where they stand, and the limited range of experiences and insights available to them. This location creates the rich interplay between the media text, and the social, political and economic context in which it is created and forged. News, as a form of knowledge, argue Vhang, et al. (1998) is thus “socially articulated and circulated” (p. 290) and is, in many respects, as much a product of greater society as it is a reflection of it.

Ample prior research—both qualitative and quantitative in nature—has thus examined the media text and attempted to scrutinize the complex societal discourse embedded therein. Many studies have attempted to answer the question: What is this newspaper article or TV news broadcast telling us? What is the underlying dialogue inherent in a particular media text, and where does it fit into the broader social context?

This becomes especially important, seeing as the news text, as a cultural medium and product—and TV news in particular— tends to “present different social groups and their respective social identities as stereotypes.” It thus becomes “vital to examine the representation of images in the television news, as in other products of the culture industry, because this

representation provides the materials from which individuals construct their sense of class, ethnicity, nationality, and race, and their conception of “us” and “them” (First, 2002, p. 174). The media is thus the site where we grapple with many of our social roles and identities—as well as those of the people around us.

Many researchers have consequently examined the role that the media play in helping us construct our respective roles and sense of self in greater society. Das (2000) examined portrayals of men and women in Indian magazine advertisements, and found that although these depictions have changed, Indian men and women are still portrayed in stereotypical ways. Lind and Salo (2002) examined representations of women in ABC, PBS, NPR and CNN news and public affairs content. Not only did they find that feminists were portrayed less often in the electronic media, but when they did, they were often demonized and set apart from the realm of regular women.

Apart from aiding us in cultivating a sense of self, media images also help us develop our sense of the ‘other,’ that is of groups that are foreign and alien to us. This becomes of vital importance when it comes to groups which we do not typically encounter in the ordinary course of our lives. In these instances, the media is the only site where we encounter these groups and cultivate our sense of who “they”—that is the foreign and alien “other”—truly are.

Thompson Young & Burns (2000), for instance, examined the images that emerged from news stories of criminal gangs, and society’s response to such stories. These images were discussed “in light of their importance in the construction of social problem discourse and the maintenance of symbolic power and social control” (p. 409).

Shields (2001) examined media portrayals of homelessness in nightly television stories, and the effects of these portrayals on our perceptions of the problem of homelessness, and how it ought to be rectified. Most media portrayals, he contends, deem homelessness as an individual problem that can be rectified through individual efforts, rather than a systemic and societal problem. Beyond mere representations, these media images play a vital role not only in impacting our perception of social groups alien to us, but also our perception of social issues and problems and how they ought to be treated. Media images thus have the power to organize societal discourse, and can act as a bonafide mechanism of societal regulation and control.

The media is furthermore the site where we cultivate our racial, ethnic and national identities— that is our sense of self as members of a particular races or national groups. This, as opposed to members of other races or groups, which are conceived of as the “other.”

Gulriz Buken (2002), for instance, examined how media images serve to construct the notion of the “mythic Indian” through stereotypical portrayals of the “bad Injun” and the “noble savage,” and how American Indian artists have attempted to demystify these stereotypical portrayals. Smith (1997) examined how race, image and national identity are portrayed in Canadian and American movies, and how these portrayals contribute to the articulation of group identities in both countries.

Banerjee and Osuri (2000) similarly focused on newspaper coverage of a shooting of 40 people at Port Arthur, Tasmania, and why this was termed “Australia’s worst massacre,” to the exclusion of Aboriginal massacres. They demonstrate the need to “articulate Aboriginal histories in the context of everyday narratives of Australian nationhood” (p.280).

Gavrilos (2002) examined news stories about Arab Americans and their reactions to the second Gulf War, and how the media reinforced and represented “a hegemonic construction of America as a unified, inclusive imagined community through ethnic differences” (p. 426).

In this instance, examinations of ethnic differences were utilized by the media in order to cultivate a unified sense of American community— a sense of a nation rallying around the flag post 9-11. These racial and ethnic differences thus became the site where the struggle over American national identity transpired, and where the media helped define a strong and unified sense of American nationhood. Media images and national identity again proved to be inextricably linked. Here, the media helped initiate a discourse of inclusion in order to develop a unified sense of American nationhood. This was one rare instance where media images served to create a sense of unity and inclusion.

More often, however, media images are instrumental in developing a discourse of exclusion—that is in helping us cultivate a sense of self by setting us apart from the ‘other.’ Chung, for instance, (2002), analyzed how images of the other are constructed in both the Taiwanese and South Korean media, and argue that both nations construct their national identity through the media by means of “discourses of exclusion” (p. 99).

Wasburn (1997) similarly Radio Japan’s coverage of U.S.-Japanese Trade disputes, and how during times of economic conflict the media present news in support of their nation’s positions. He relates such coverage to the ideological function that the media play during times of war. “In reporting political and military conflicts,” he notes, “media throughout the world have constructed enemies and allies as central components of the stories they were telling. War lends itself particularly well to appropriation by such narrative” (p. 191).

This ideological component of the press comes into sharp focus when examining coverage of clashes and wars, where representations and constructions of the conflict and its participants heighten the stakes and define the discord for others. Does the CNN text encompass a similar ideological component in its coverage of Middle-East hostilities?

News construction has also been found to play a vital role in the international news context, seeing as media images are typically our only source of knowledge when it comes to far-off lands. Robins (2003) examined US newspaper coverage of Sudanese refugees that were being resettled in the United States after fleeing the Sudan. These refugees, she notes, were portrayed as “coming from a situation beyond understanding, vessels waiting to be filled by US material culture” (p. 29). Beyond putting a human face to this tragedy, however, Robins notes that these portrayals only offered a surface explanation of what was a complex and intricate international situation. Fair and Astroff (1991), similarly examined US media representations of the violence engulfing South Africa, and how media characterizations of such violent actions as “black on black” serves as “part of a larger ideological practice of classification and marginalization” (p. 58). They note that Black-on-black violence is “the site at which the U.S. news media reconstruct Black Africa as “tribal,” threatening, savage, and incapable of self-government and democracy. Africa is made monolithic and its people marginalized, objectified and deprived of their voices” (p. 73).

Again, we see an instance where monolithic and simplistic media imagery serves to marginalize—and unfairly portray—an entire country and its people in the international context. Does the CNN text similarly stigmatize the sticky Middle Eastern situation?

The Media and the Middle East

Much attention has been afforded by researchers to the Middle East—and media coverage of the region. Many of these studies have attempted to ascertain the relative objectivity or bias of the media text in its depictions of the Middle-East conflict. This, in light of the perpetual accusations of bias leveled at the media by both Israeli and Palestinian pundits.

In 1978, Belkaoui performed a content analysis of the print media, and of Arab and Israeli images found therein. She also examined the link between these press images and economic and political interests. Morad (1981) content analyzed news stories on ABC, CBS and NBC in order to determine how the leading Arab states and Israel were treated in these newscasts. He found that in 1979, when the study was conducted, Egypt was the recipient of more favorable coverage than was Israel, and that the Palestinians and the PLO made similar gains on network television.

Barranco and Shyles (1988) conducted a content analysis of *New York Times*' coverage of Arab versus Israeli news in 1976 and 1984. They found that in these years—the *New York Times* gave more coverage to issues of importance to Israel. Furthermore, they suggested that a link exists between press coverage and foreign policy—further underscoring the importance of examining media coverage of foreign news, and news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular

Burton and Keenleyside (1991) analyzed the content of Canadian newspapers in order to examine allegations of press bias against Israel. Newspaper articles were coded and categorized as either being favorable or unfavorable to Israelis, favorable or unfavorable to the Palestinians, or as being neutral. Their study found that although the Canadian press was inclined to lash out negatively at the side seen as responsible for the most immediate and publicized acts of violence

during the Intifada—be it Palestinian or Israeli—it did so within an overall balanced view of the rights of both Israel and the Arabs. In other words, they found no clear evidence of so called press bias in the Canadian press' depictions of the Middle-East conflict.

Viser (2003) analyzed articles appearing in the *New York Times* and the Israeli *Ha'aretz* newspaper in order to determine whether these publications exhibit a bias toward either the Palestinian or Israeli side in their coverage of the conflict. He found both the *New York Times* and *Ha'aretz* were markedly more favorable toward the Israeli side.

Beyond assertions of objectivity and bias— and quantitative examinations of media texts— much scrutiny has also been directed at media portrayals of the two warring factions in this conflict, as well as to representations and depictions of the region itself. Both sides in this bloody struggle have quickly conceived of media images as a potent cultural weapon, and thus both sides have thoroughly examined the media text in order to ensure that these representations are as fair—and favorable— as possible.

On the Arab and Palestinian side, most early media portrayals were stereotypical and downright offensive. Media frames typically depicted Arabs simplistically in highly unflattering terms. Said (1979) examined representations of Arabs in the Western media, noting that most portrayals depicted Arabs as backwards and emotionally volatile. Most early media portrayals of Arab Americans cast them in the role of hijackers, terrorists or religious zealots. This is if Arabs were not portrayed as the exotic others, or as oil-laden sheiks. As quoted in Weston (2003) “Most Americans picture Arabs as backward, scheming, fanatic terrorists who are dirty, dishonest, oversexed and corrupt,” Edmund Ghareeb wrote in the 1970s. Other images he cited were the “bumbling, cowardly Arab” after the 1967 war, the “Arab terrorist” and the “super-rich Arab sheikh controlling world oil, squeezing the jugular vein of the Western World” (p. 94).

Shaheen (1981) examined the images of Saudis and Palestinians on television, claiming that the Arab has become the latest victim of media stereotyping. He equates these media stereotypes with the unfair media treatment Orientals have received by both the motion picture and news industries after World War II. "Today's television villain," states Shaheen, "is often the Arab, simplistically and unfairly portrayed" (p. 89). Shaheen laments that Arabs are exploited and "caricatured for the purposes of Hollywood and Prime Time television," and that "Arab people are not easily explained in two-minute news stories." (p. 104). Zaharna (1995) described this as the so called "Arab-villain" scenario.

Gerbner (1995) argues that images of Palestinians in the media have been far from consistent. These depictions have varied from stereotyped Arab villain to hapless refugee, from victim to brutal terrorist. Most researchers contend, however, that stereotypical depictions demonizing the Arab villain still predominate, though these portrayals have softened considerably after the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993.

These stereotypical and often simplistic—and unjust—portrayals of Palestinians are closely related to similarly narrow and prejudicial media depictions of their Muslim and Arab brethren. Akram (2002) has similarly found stereotypical portraits of the Arab/Muslim villain in the popular media—especially film. She notes that "Feeding already-existing stereotypes in American society about Arabs and Muslims, media and film have found a ready audience for dangerous and one-dimensional images" (p. 63). She notes that in most Hollywood movies Arabs or Muslims are portrayed as terrorists or dishonest sub-humans; again stripping them of ordinary lives and morality. Furthermore Arabs are pigeonholed into only five 'types': villains, sheikhs, maidens, Egyptians and Palestinians. Arab women, on the other hand, are portrayed primarily in two roles: as weak and mute, covered in black, or as scantily clad belly dancers.

Due to grave concerns about stereotyping and blame-casting—even downright retaliation—towards Muslims and Arab-Americans post-September 11th, most news stories during that period were of Arab-Americans resisting stereotypes and discrimination. Post September 11th reports depicted Arab American sympathetically as loyal and patriotic Americans, and welcome members of US society. The images often focused on intimate looks at the daily lives of Arab-Americans, and on descriptions of their cultures and religion. Such portrayals were in stark opposition to earlier stereotypical portrayals of the Arab “terrorist.”

Gavrilos (2002), for example, noted a concerted effort post 9-11 to depict Arab Americans as loyal members of the American community, in spite of cultural and ethnic differences. As noted by Weston (2003), US media portrayals of Muslim and Arabs did shift somewhat post-September 11th, attempting to avoid stereotyping and vilification of Muslims to the greatest extent possible.

Stereotypes and simplistic depictions of Arabs and Muslims persisted, however. Manning (2003) examined two years of articles/texts located around the concepts of "Arab" and "Muslim" within Sydney's two major daily newspapers, and found similar—and simplistic—portrayals of Muslims in the Australian media. Muslims— he notes—are “seen as violent to the point of terrorism — especially Palestinians. Israel, the United States and Australia — ‘us’ — are seen to be under attack from such people and they are seen as both an external and internal threat. Their violence is portrayed as without reason, humanity or compassion for its victims” (p. 69).

Baker (2003) examined media images of Islam post 9-11, and contends that in spite of efforts to soften criticism and avoid stereotyping “Islam has survived as the Western enemy of choice into the global age” (p. 34). The predominant image of Islam –he contends—remained

that of violence and fundamentalism. He stressed the need for the world to “understand the power of Islam as identity. It needs to recognize the humanity of Palestinians, their national and human rights. It also needs to hear and see, just around the corner, that nine-year-old Muslim boy who wants to play” (p.33).

Van Teeffelen (2004) addresses and compares stories and representations of Palestine and Palestinians in various narrative genres: on the one hand, semi-fictional Western bestsellers, and on the other hand cases of "writing back" genres, internet blogs of internationals living in Palestine and a diary writing projects by Palestinians. She contends that especially in best selling-novels, stereotypical images of the Arab terrorist still persist. “The Palestinian world is shown not only to be detached from human stories and roles other than that of the terrorist, but also from any dialogical, "flowing" voice that morally reflects upon and tests one's identity and actions and that is typical for a community rooted in the values of daily life”(p. 440). This in contrast to Israeli portrayals, which she deems noble and heroic. Western and Israeli agents hunt down the terrorist sources of evil and “eliminate, or momentarily halt the terrorist threat in an all-or-nothing mission and display the rough non-conformism characteristic of the popular hero” (Van Teeffelen, 2004, p. 441).

These portrayals of Muslims in general and Palestinians in particular as terrorists, claims Sait (2004), even extend to Palestinian children, which are victimized in the Western media to the same extent as their older brethren. Palestinian children, she claims, are represented in the media as “as dangerous props of irresponsible parents, a conniving Palestinian Authority and desperate militant groups,” rather than innocent victims of terror—as Israeli children are often portrayed (p.217). In other words, even Palestinian children are demonized in the press and portrayed as ruthless aggressors—miniaturized versions of their terrorist brethren.

Studies on Palestinian and Arab media portrayals thus present an inconsistent picture. Media images of Arabs and Palestinians appear to shift and vacillate between two extremes: stereotyped villain and helpless victim. On the one hand we see the “good Muslim” which wants to live in— and ought to be incorporated into— Western society, and on the other the “bad” Muslim (the militant and radical) which is nothing more than a vilified terrorist waging war against the west.

On the Israeli end, considerably less work is available on media portrayals and images of Israelis in the international media. More attention has been devoted to Arab portrayals in the Israeli media, both in fiction and in televised news, as well as to how these portrayals have shifted and transformed during periods of strife and relative calm in the region. (Oppenheimer, 1999; First, 2002; Korn, 2004a; Korn, 2004b). Other studies have examined Israeli representations in the Arab media, and how these representations reflect the socio-political realities of the time. (Lewin, 2000; Wolfsfeld, Khouri, & Peri, 2002). Few researchers have examined the representations of Israelis prevalent in the Western press, and how these media representations might shape Western attitudes and perceptions of Israel and its people.

Lazarus (1999) is one of the few researchers to study Israel’s media image extensively, as well as noting the changes in media depictions of Israel from its establishment to this very day. Therefore, much of the following section will be devoted to his findings and observations.

If anything, images of Israeli people appear to be intertwined with those of their country—and those images are predominately those of the ruthless aggressor; the Goliath to the Palestinians’ David. The few studies that have examined Israeli media depictions have found these portrayals to be— to a greater or lesser extent—superficial and simplistic, depicting Israel as the mighty and oppressive aggressor.

Roeh (1981), for instance, studied televised US media portrayals of Israeli involvement in Southern Lebanon during 1979. He found that “the stories that flowed from network newsrooms about Israel and southern Lebanon were continuously packaged to fit simplistic, conventional norms and inherited patterns of storytelling” (p. 86). Many of these stories, he states, were packaged as simple tales of aggressor versus victim; with Israelis playing the part of ruthless aggressors, and Palestinians deemed the helpless victims. These simplistic stories and the use of the victim-aggressor labels, helped shape US public opinion regarding this war in Lebanon, and aroused American sympathy for the PLO and the “Palestinian underdogs.” Thus Roeh not only sees media portrayals of Israel as simplistic and stereotypical, but also as playing a vital role in shaping public opinion and conceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Paraschos and Rutherford (1985) conducted a similar study regarding network news coverage of the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982. They ascertained—like Roeh—that the networks made some loaded and non-neutral assertions concerning this invasion, and went on to describe the anti-Israel bias that they witnessed in network coverage.

Other studies, however, seem to indicate that Israel’s media image may have undergone a transformation inverse to that of the Palestinian side—shifting from the hapless David to the mighty Goliath, depending on the socio-political milieu. According to Lazarus (1999), immediately prior to the creation of the State of Israel the Jewish people, having just endured the unfathomable horrors of the Holocaust, were considered weak and desperate. In 1948, Israel was “David, small, weak, and swordless, fighting the Goliath of the Arab world with the shadow of Auschwitz still on the horizon” (section 1, para. 2). The State of Israel was perceived as surrounded by enemies and helpless—the very epitome of victim. Lazarus (1999) notes that televised coverage of the 1967 Six-Day War brought Israel’s fight for survival to the world in

living color. “The ability to see the faces of young Israeli soldiers fighting for the survival of their country was far more dramatic and entertaining than reading about it. Television, the ultimate entertainment medium, had found a new outlet” (section 1, para. 3).

This image of the brave underdog, however, quickly shifted after the Six-Day War. “The might of Israel, despite the new disaster of 1973, the Yom Kippur war, became a new obsession for the media.” Israel was now seen as “all powerful, and a bastion state. It was militaristic and ruthless, and supported by its mighty ally the U.S.A.” (section 2, para. 3).

Israel’s media image was now reversed; the helpless victim had become the powerful aggressor. The transformation became complete during the first Palestinian Intifada of 1987. Israel was now depicted as a ruthless, heartless, face-less fighting machine. Images of Israeli soldiers fighting “defenseless” stone-throwing Palestinian youths filled TV screens in the U.S. and beyond.

Israel’s image—like that of the Palestinians— improved slightly in the late 1990s with the Oslo peace accords and the widely televised handshake between Rabin and Arafat. As noted by Jayakar and Jayakar (1999) in their examination of the *New York Times*’ coverage of the Indian and Israeli elections, “the predominant news frame in coverage of this election was the Middle East peace process, with the elections contextualized as the process by which the Israeli people will choose their principal negotiator for peace” (p. 140). For a brief instant, thus, Israelis were conceived as the peace-makers. The predominant media frame regarding Israel — however— remained that of ruthless and powerful invader.

Barbara Bloch (2003) again notes the use of the victim versus aggressor (or David versus Goliath) metaphor in Australian coverage of the Middle-East, and explains how it has framed the conflict for both media and audiences. She argues “that the accusations of media bias against

Israel circulate around a sense that the Israeli and Jewish narrative has been, to some extent, decentred by sections of the international media and other bodies” (p.165). The Western media—she asserts— choose instead to focus on the tale of the long-suffering Palestinian; a far more newsworthy and interesting media frame.

In sum, Israeli media images—while predominately those of the militaristic and ruthless aggressor—maybe just as illusive and slippery as those of their Palestinian brethren. More research is clearly needed on media representations of Israel and its people, in order to ascertain what media (especially news) texts may reveal about Israel and its people. Perhaps what can best be gauged from these studies of Israeli and Palestinian media representations is that not only do both sides deem them of vital importance, but also, as First (2002) notes, these representations are “fickle and fluid, subject to changes in not only the symbolic reality of the media, but also to actual changes in the sociopolitical reality” (p.173).

CNN

Much academic attention has been devoted to studying CNN or Cable News Network—undoubtedly due to its pervasive presence on the media landscape, and its pioneering strides in 24-hour news coverage. Many of these studies have been aimed at surveying the ever-changing landscape of televised cable news, and on studying viewers’ patterns of televised news consumption.

Foege (2004), for instance, examined media coverage of the 2004 presidential election in the U.S. by cable news networks, and the intense competition between CNN, MSNBC and the Fox network for viewership ratings.

Other studies have also focused on the mounting competition between Fox and CNN (Farhi, 2003; Schmuckler, 2003; Boylan, 2004; Teinowitz, 2004; Lowry, 2005), and how this relentless drive for viewership and ratings has impacted the nature of televised news, and forever altered both networks as well as the nature of cable news.

Other studies have examined how 24-hour news networks have increasingly reverted to “infotainment”—rather than news—in their coverage of “hard” news issues such as politics, and how this trend has impacted the news consumer, as well as journalistic coverage of news-events such as political debates (Cooper, 2004 ; Ottosen, 2004;).

Many other studies have investigated the so called “CNN effect.” This notion, pioneered by Piers Robinson (2002), refers to the power of media images to drive foreign policy—especially during instances of humanitarian crises. More specifically, Robinson maintained that intense mass media coverage of humanitarian crises by 24-hour news networks, such as CNN, can—on occasion—compel governments to use—or threaten to use—force. His work is especially important in the context of this study, as it suggests that beyond merely winning hearts and minds, media images have the potential to influence foreign policy concerning international conflicts and crises.

Proponents of the CNN effect argue that CNN, and other global media networks, drive Western conflict management by forcing Western governments to intervene militarily in humanitarian crises against their will. Both Cohen (1994) and Shaw (1996) have argued that global television coverage by CNN and other networks—and the ensuing public outcry—directly prompted the intervention to save the Iraqi Kurds, as well as the U.S. humanitarian intervention in Somalia.

Other studies similarly state that the 24-hour- news medium has become a direct and substantial actor in foreign affairs; citing conflicts such as the massacre in Tiananmen Square, the war in Kosovo, the civil wars in Rwanda and Somalia and in Northern Iraq, as well as other examples of instances when media images led to direct UN or foreign intervention (Gilboa, 2002).

Other researchers reject this direct effect hypothesis, and argue for a more limited CNN effect. Moeller (2002), for instance, notes that media images produced by “real time” news stations— such as CNN— cannot directly effect the deployment of troops and the mechanizations of state. He notes that they can, nevertheless, “draw attention to the moral as well as the strategic and tactical decisions made by governments and organizations engaged in peacekeeping operations.” The media cannot control the actions of governments and politicians, but “they hold political actors accountable by being eyewitnesses to events, by communicating what they see and hear to their audiences” (p. 382).

Gowing (1994) also argues that the while media images may draw attention to international conflicts and prompt public outcry, there are many other factors—more important than media attention— that determine whether diplomatic or military intervention will ultimately occur in such conflicts.

The sheer attention devoted to the CNN effect, however, clearly indicates that many researchers deem the 24-hour news medium—as exemplified and pioneered by CNN—to hold an immense amount of power as one of the preeminent ideological institutions operating in our society.

Apart from the CNN effect, many studies have furthermore examined CNN's brand of war coverage. CNN—after all—came into prominence during the Persian Gulf War, and war coverage, to this day, appears to be what CNN does best. Zelizer (1992) examined CNN's coverage of the war that led to its ascendancy—the Persian Gulf War and how it served as a critical turning point for journalism professionals. “This real-time war problematized for journalists the hows and whys of the newest dimension of news-gathering technology—the satellite-fed television news report” (p. 68).

Katz (1992), similarly notes how Gulf War coverage forever changed the face of war reporting and coverage—and perhaps not for the better. He notes that CNN's brand of instantaneous and immediate coverage can be journalistically problematic, and calls CNN's coverage of the Gulf War “the beginning of the end of journalism as we know it” (p. 9). Rather than “collecting information and trying to make sense of it in time for the evening news broadcast,” he states, “the CNN ideal is to do simultaneous, almost-live editing, or better yet, no editing at all. CNN journalism almost wants to be wrong.”

As noted by Gerbner (1993), “instant history is made when access to video-satellite-computer technologies blankets the world in real time with selected images that provoke immediate reactions, influence the outcome, and then quick-freeze into the official text of received history. Instant history is the simultaneous, global and mass living, telling, and making of history in brief and intensive bursts. Past, present, and future can now be packaged, witnessed, and frozen in a flash, into the memorable moving imagery of instant history” (p. 3). Beyond merely covering the world in a flash, CNN—in that one instant—also has the ability to shape the world and our conceptions of it. It can shape and reshape history—our collective societal narrative—with sound bites and imagery.

These studies all suggest the power of CNN's coverage—from both a journalistic and global/societal point of view. Very few studies, however, examined the narrative frameworks that the CNN text employees in its coverage of foreign news—especially that of foreign conflicts and crises. As noted by Kavoori (1999), studies of television news have “not explored the “meanings” television news reproduces on a global level” (p. 386). He notes the value and importance of examining “how news events become narratives and how audiences relate to these narrative frames,” especially when it comes to “political conflict” stories which are “staples of foreign television news coverage” and are part and parcel of CNN's international news coverage (p. 386). One of the few studies that does just that is Dimitrova's (2001) examination of CNN's coverage of the war in Kosovo, and of the atrocities committed against Kosovar Albanians in the region. This study is of special importance in the context of this study, seeing as Dimitrova went on to analyze the narrative frameworks which CNN journalists utilized in order to cover the conflict in the region, as well as how they utilized these narrative frames to construct meanings and shape public opinion. She examined the “narrative frames, their structure, the identity of the sources, and the substance of their messages, as well as the footage journalists relied on in their coverage” (p. 1).

Not only did Dimitrova note that “journalists author the frames within which atrocities appear,” but that these frames are of crucial importance, seeing as “in times of crisis, international correspondents' narratives provide domestic audiences with the language to think about the participants in a faraway conflict and their agendas” (p. 1). Examining the CNN text—and its depictions of conflict-ridden Israel and Palestine—thus becomes of paramount value. What narrative framework does CNN utilize in its coverage of Israel and Palestine; and what are the possible implications of its use of that particular discursive frame?

Many studies have thus focused on CNN –the pioneer and trailblazer in 24-hour world-wide news coverage. Very few, however, have noted how global news networks like CNN can reproduce meanings on a global level and create an “international discourse” of sorts.

As Jayakar & Jayakar (1999) note, “in addition to its reporting function the media also takes upon itself an interpretive function, especially if the subject of the news story is far removed from the domain of the experience of the reader.

In international news reporting, the interpretive function of the media thus becomes more important” (p. 127). This thesis is a contribution to this unexplored area.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY AND METHOD

Theory: News, Narrative, Ideology and Myth

“In a very important sense, news stories are versions of reality” (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000, p. 303).

News as Narrative

We all tend to conceive of news reports as accurate recordings of fact. As quoted in Koch (1991), Murdoch describes the “canon of objectivity” which leads us to expect news accounts to “offer as complete a capture of events in the world as possible, and that the presentation of those accounts should not be shaped by the personal values or commitments of the journalists involved.”(p.15) .We expects news to be a perfect reflection of reality; a collection of verifiable facts presented in a neutral manner without fear or favor. In other words, we tend to view news as an exact and accurate recording—or transcription—of reality.

Far from our widely held conceptions of the news story as a neutral, balanced presentation of factual evidence, many scholars have conceived of news reports as representations of reality—rather than perfect reflections of it. Their research has challenged the popular conception of news reports as factual transmissions of information. For instance, Hall argues for a “view of media representations as an active, creative process through which images signify different meanings rather than merely presenting themselves as objective reflections of reality” (quoted in Rotstein & Henkel, 1999, p. 100).

This does not mean that news stories are not true, or are inherently biased; and thus journalism's most cherished tenants of objectivity and truth telling should be cast aside. Instead, as Lule suggests, "news tells the great stories of humankind for humankind" (Lule, 2001, p.15).

News stories utilize narrative forms, structures and themes in their accounts of real-world people and events. Michael Schudson maintains that "news in a newspaper or on television has a relationship to the "real world," not only in content but in form; that is, in the way the world is incorporated into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration, and then transfigured, no longer a subject for discussion but a premise of any conversation at all" (quoted in Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 111). Thus, by conveying real-world events in narrative form, news accounts not only depict—but also transform—those events. They do not passively describe reality—they fashion it.

Storytelling and narration are a vital and instrumental part of human communication. According to Hall, the transformation of events into stories is a necessary part of communication (1980). "Narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (Barthes quoted in Feldman et al., 2004, p. 147). It is through story telling, as Lule (2001) suggests, that we make sense of reality and the world around us.

As noted by Van Dijk (1988), many researchers have consequently focused on analyzing the use of narrative patterns and structures in such disparate cultural and discursive forms as comic books, films, poems, crime-stories and even ordinary conversations. Clearly, narrative is the fabric from which we weave the very tale of our lives.

As one of the preeminent and omnipresent narrative forms permeating our society today, the news story has received special attention as a unique form of societal narrative, through which we make sense of our shared reality. News, thus, is a system of representation, through which shared meanings are produced and exchanged.

Like other narrative forms, news accounts help us construct our view of the world, by allowing us to “share stories within culturally and socially explicit codes of meaning” (Zelizer, 1993, p. 82). Like any other narrative text, the news text fashions and transforms our joint societal reality—it co-constructs, articulates and attributes. Through story telling, journalists “tend to reflect broad cultural assumptions about reality,” and communicate the joint experiences of our lives. (Gerbner, 1995, p. 28).

The news story thus plays an inherently symbolic—in addition to informative— function in shaping and reshaping our joint societal narrative. As Carey(1989) notes, it is through symbolic systems—such as news or advertising—that we not only produce and maintain reality, but also have the ability to repair and transform it.

News as Ideology

But the news story or narrative does far more than shape or common understanding and comprehension of the world. It also plays an inherently ideological function by reinforcing our shared values and creating societal cohesion and solidarity. Ettema & Glasser (1998) note that “seeing as narrative form is fundamentally metaphorical, it “*tells us* what images to look for in our culturally encoded experience in order to determine how we *should feel* about the thing represented” (emphasis in original, p. 113). Herman and Chomsky (1988) similarly noted that media messages and images serve to create societal status quo and “manufacture consent” among the viewing public.

In this same vein, McNair (2003) stated that “in the manipulation and manufacturing of consent which the elites of liberal democracies require, journalism is a key institution” (p. 71). Media images, then, do much more than help us understand the world around us. They shape and hone our commonly held beliefs and values.

News narratives—in many respects—adjust our perception of real-world events, and demarcate societal discourse regarding particular happenings. They are representations and reaffirmations of our common worldview as a culture. Jameson (as quoted in Durham, 1998) explained that the “production of narratives is ideological,” and referred “to the process of containing social meanings as the use of “narrative strategies”(p. 102). In journalism, notes Jameson, “this has been accomplished through the consistently empirical repetition of certain frames, or ‘social narratives’” (quoted in Durham, 1998, p. 102). News narratives offer audience members a way to think of the same things, in the same fashion, at the same time. News accounts, thus, control and organize the dominant constructions of reality and competing social narratives of our society. The news story—as societal narrative— creates and adjusts our perceptions of the nature of social reality. (Chen & Meindl, 1991).

As such, news narratives play an inherently ideological function—representing people and events within a joint system of socially determined meanings and values. It is through this societal and cultural function, that news narratives become more than mere tales, and acquire a mythical dimension.

News as Myth

Myth, as noted by Koch (1990), “does not, here, mean a fairy story or ancient tale told long ago around camp fires in early or preliterate worlds. Myth describes, in Barthes's language, a consistent system of narrative representation in which symbols (words) have cultural and

contextual relevance. Myth is an attempt to describe the cultural context of specific human events, actions, or artifacts. To say that a news report presents a mythic, narrative system, is to say that it describes actions or events that are presented through a series of cultural filters, which include values of the reporting and reading culture” (p. 23).

The news narrative— like any myth— thus selectively represents our societal realities. It depicts as uncontested and eternal truths events that have been processed and shaped by our common societal rules, norms and values. News accounts, much like myths of old, forge and transmit our joint cultural beliefs. Lule (2001) defines myth as a “sacred societal story that draws from archetypal and universal forms to create exemplary models for human life”(p.15). Myth employs basic fundamental figures and images that are familiar to us all— mental structures utilized by mankind for centuries— and uses them to warn, instruct and convey societal ideals and values. Like ancient myths, today’s news stories provide us with models for proper behavior and blueprints for conducting our lives. These symbolic societal tales shape our conceptions of people and events by appealing to our collective fears, hopes, aspirations and mutual understandings as a culture. (Dobkin, 1992). Lule saw the modern resurgence of ancient myths in the news narrative. Like myths— Lule maintains— news stories repeat certain themes or motifs; common issues that we all confront as part of the human condition. (2001).

Jung referred to such recurring themes and motifs as collective archetypes. (Noll, 1999). He believed that “ that there was a myth-making substratum of mind common to all people: a ‘collective unconscious’ which lay beneath the merely personal, and which was responsible for the spontaneous production of myths, visions, religious ideas, and certain particularly impressive varieties of dream which were common to various cultures and different periods of history” (Bishop, 1999, p.xii).

Like mythic archetypes, news stories tell the same familiar tales and invoke familiar images time and time again—stories of heroes, and villains, tragedies and disasters, floods and births, which we all have heard countless time before in different forms.

Furthermore, like myths, news stories are public stories that seek to inform and instruct us as a society or collective whole. (Lule, 2001). They reinforce and maintain the existing social order—stressing our common ideals and values— and warn us not to overstep certain societal boundaries.

Several researchers have consequently focused on the mythological elements inherent in news narratives. Lule (2001), for instance, examined the mythological elements inherent in print journalism, and has identified seven master myths evident in many news stories— the victim, the hero, the good mother, the scapegoat, the trickster, the flood and the myth of the other world. Lule (2001) maintains that in spite of our view of news as objective and as playing a mainly informative role and function in our lives, the heart and soul of news still resides deeply within the realm of storytelling. Reporters are the tribal storytellers of our times— at times entertaining, at times instructing, at times admonishing and warning—but always weaving the intricate fiber of our common attitudes and beliefs. CNN and the *New York Times* are thus our modern societal scribes, keeping alive our joint societal tales.

As noted by Lule (2001), intellectuals as disparate as Jung, Kerenyi, Eliade, and Campbell all saw myths as stories that are deeply engrained in, and connected to, the societies in which they are forged. Campbell noted that “no human society has been found in which mythological motifs have not been found rehearsed in liturgies; interpreted by seers, poets, theologians and philosophers; presented in art; magnified in song; and ecstatically expressed in life-empowering visions”(quoted in Lule, 2001, p. 17). In our news stories, Lule suggests, we

are telling and retelling these same mythical stories of old that highlight the shared values and beliefs of our society; eternal stories that help guide, teach and inform. The mythological framework of the news helps us make sense of who we are, and define our place in the world.

Koch (1990) notes a similar connection between news accounts and mythical tales. He likewise stresses the strong cultural components embedded within the seemingly descriptive—and purely factual—news report. “To the extent news can be described as myth,” he notes, “it presents as objective “truth” a specific and proscribed reality that is based on a cultural inflection”(p. 29). Myth thus labels as self-evident and eternal, stories created within the narrow and limited bounds of our shared cultural point of view. News –like myth—thus serves an inherently ideological function in maintaining the social order and preserving the societal status quo. As noted by Himmelstein (1994), “myth transforms the temporal common sense of the dominant ideology into the sacred realm of cultural prehistory and thus of eternal truth”(p. 5).

In sum, like myths of old, news stories tell public stories that are meant to instruct and inform. They reiterate age-old images and themes in order to reinforce common societal beliefs and values. Like myths, news stories are— in many respects—public morality tales designed to create a common and hegemonic perception of reality. They tell and reiterate the eternal stories of our time. And television seems to lend itself particularly well to this mythic societal function. The televised news story, in particular, appears to be a rich and prolific source of myth.

Lule’s Master Myths

In his analysis of editorials surrounding September 11th, Lule (2002) suggests four master myths that might prove useful in understanding events in Israel and Palestine— namely the hero, the victim, the scapegoat and the myth of the foreboding future.

The victim myth has been present in stories surrounding figures ranging from Iphigenia to Jesus. It transforms “victims into heroes and death into sacrifice,” thereby imbuing “life with purpose and death with design”(Lule, 2001, p. 282). The victim represents society, and we see ourselves in the tragic victim. The myth stresses the role of fate; but for a random twist of fate the victims could have been us, and we could have been the victims. This myth “reconciles people to the tragic and seeming randomness of human existence. Plans and lives can be shattered in an instant by a lightning strike, a rare disease, a betrayal. Life must be lived in the presence of death” (Lule, 2001, p. 22).The victim myth “elevates life in the face of death,” and helps reconcile us with the inevitability of death in all of our lives. (Lule, 2001, p. 22).

Another important myth, especially prevalent during tragic circumstances, is the hero myth (Lule, 2001). During uncertain times we need someone to rise to the occasion—to come to the rescue, if you will. The hero myth has been present in our stories and legends ever since time and memorial, as evident by Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, as well as the *King Arthur* stories. Invariably, in times of trouble, we draw upon our political leaders to play the part of heroes; we legitimize their authority and buttress their leadership role. In tragedy, we call upon our heroes—our role models— and paint them as the best of our society, to which we can look up to and aspire. The hero is one of humankind's most enduring archetypes. “Perhaps every culture has confirmed core beliefs, dramatized ideals, and personified values in stories of the hero”(Lule, 2002, p. 283). In the context of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict, this myth of the paternal figure to whom the people can turn in troubled times, may prove to be highly useful. Does the CNN text see any heroes in this Middle-East conflict? Can anyone rise to the challenge in the complex and tortured Middle-Eastern milieu?

Another important myth in the Middle-East context is the myth of the foreboding future. (Lule, 2002). This myth prepares and readies people for long periods of strife and conflict, replete with unavoidable sacrifice and loss. The future is uncertain and frightening; all that can be expected is more war and suffering—if not worse. As noted by Lule in his examination of *New York Times* editorials post September 11th, “myth often serves to ready a people for conflict and strife, suffering and sacrifice. Myths of war, such as those of Ares and Mars, the Greek and Roman gods of war, heralded the need for conflict, but also prepared people for unavoidable costs and inevitable losses”(p. 285). This myth serves an important role in collectively preparing us for troubled times ahead—and thus is of paramount value in examining coverage of the always volatile Middle-East.

Another important myth in the Middle East context is the scapegoat myth. This myth highlights— in dramatic detail— what happens to those who defy societal convention, all the while “vilifying and shunning” those who dare go against the societal status quo. (Lule, 2001, p. 23). As noted by Lule (2001), one of the major roles played by mythical stories is forging society’s collective values, and upholding the societal status quo. The scapegoat is the very embodiment of this social function of myth. The myth of the scapegoat derogates and belittles those that defy the prevalent social order. “Myth offers order, but also demands order, recounts beliefs but also restricts beliefs, confirms tradition but also conforms tradition,” notes Lule (2001, p. 63). The scapegoat is the embodiment of guilt and evil. It must be symbolically expelled and isolated from the group.

The origins of this myth lie “in the quite natural practice of transferring a physical load onto the shoulders of a beast of burden, such as a mule or ox” (p. 63). This eventually evolved into a myth “whereby the misfortunes of society are transferred onto an individual or sacrificial

animal (typically a goat), which is then driven out of greater society –literally or symbolically—in order to cleanse and purify those left behind” (p. 63). The scapegoat embodies the ills of society. Typically, it is punished in dramatic fashion and expelled from the social scene, so that those left behind can prosper and thrive

Seeing as these master myths are not only readily evident in many news accounts, but are also highly befitting in the troubled Middle –East context, I chose to analyze the CNN text utilizing the framework of Lule’s (2001) master myths of the hero, villain, scapegoat and foreboding future, and furthermore examine how both Israeli and Palestinian images and identities are articulated within this theoretical context.

In particular, I noted how the basic narrative structure of Lule’s “master myths” resounded and resonated in CNN’s news coverage of Israel and Palestine. Frye(1957) states that Western literature is so impacted by classic myths, that it employs their "grammar" or basic structural principles in its organization or account of historical developments. The same, I believe, holds true for news stories—and the way in which they structure and organize the tales of our modern world.

I therefore paid special attention to the manner in which CNN structured its coverage of the Middle–East, and whether it utilized forms, themes, and structures employed in myths of old. I essentially broke down each of Lule’s myths of the hero, the villain, the scapegoat and the foreboding future into its constituent elements and themes.

For instance, the hero myth can be broken down into several constituent elements: It begins with the humble birth of the hero, who is essentially the “everyman.” This ordinary, humble person then is called on a remarkable quest or adventure. Striving for his goal, the hero faces many trials. He then reaches an experience that challenges him to his very limits. This is

what Campbell calls a "supreme ordeal." The hero is forever changed by his ordeal and experiences. Eventually, he returns home with his new found gifts and abilities, restoring the society from whence he came. This is known as the triumphant return. (Leeming, 1998).

The victim myth can similarly be broken down into constituent elements. Components of this myth include the sacrifice of the victim, the grief of those left behind, and the victim's subsequent elevation to status of hero. At its heart, this myth is about the reconciliation of life and death, and the transformation of death into heroic sacrifice. Furthermore, identification with the victim is at the very heart of this myth. We see ourselves and our fate intertwined with that of the victim. We are the victim and the victim is us. (Lule, 2001).

The myth of the foreboding future prepares readers for the possibility of a frightening future "transformed by undreamed of terrors and unthinkable fears"(Lule, 2002, p. 12.). It "heralds the need for conflict, but also prepares people for unavoidable costs and inevitable losses" (Lule, 2002, p. 285). It is very much an apocalyptic myth, preparing people for the worst.

The scapegoat myth can also be broken down into its constituent elements or phases: namely the isolation of the scapegoat, transference of the burden (denigration)—that is the ills of society— onto the shoulders of the scapegoat figure, expulsion of the scapegoat and finally— ultimately—its annihilation.(Lule, 2001). Does the CNN text— in its coverage of Israel and Palestine — cast any group in the scapegoat role, maintaining that only through its removal or expulsion can true peace and coexistence be achieved in the Middle East?

In this thesis, I draw on Lule's theory of news as myth, and on some of the master myths he identifies, in order to analyze CNN's depiction of the Arab-Israeli story— and the complex and intricate portrait of both people that the CNN text strives to create. After all, the tale of a

land of strife, struggle, epic battles and an epic quest for peace; a land of blood, sweat and tears, can only be told through eternal stories as old as humankind itself. What better vehicle is there than myth, therefore, for relaying the Israeli-Palestinian tale?

Method: Textual Analysis

A textual analysis was performed on CNN's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in order to examine and uncover the portrayals of both Israelis and Palestinians inherent therein.

Textual analysis—also referred to as close reading or explication—deems all cultural artifacts and phenomena as “texts” worthy of study and exploration. (Stern, 1996). This, in turn, means that anything from a comic book, to a news report, to an ordinary conversation can be considered a text, and an appropriate subject for analysis and examination. (Potter, 1996). In the context of this study, the entire body of CNN programming covering Israel and Palestine—including both the verbal and visual elements comprising the news broadcast—was considered the “text” to be analyzed and studied.

Textual analysis seeks to analyze the text from a literary perspective or point of view, as well as examining the relationship between any given text and the greater culture. (Potter, 1996). The text is thus viewed as existing in a symbiotic relationship with other societal forces; both influencing and being influenced by our greater culture. More importantly in the context of this study, which conceives of news as a societal narrative or myth, a textual analysis approach views culture as a “narrative or story-telling process, in which particular “texts” or “cultural artifacts” (i.e., a TV program or news broadcast) consciously or unconsciously link themselves to larger stories at play in the society” (“Textual Analysis”, 2002).

Textual analysis can thus underscore the strong and intrinsic link between any media artifact or text—such as CNN’s televised programming— and its role in fashioning our greater societal beliefs, tales and myths. Textual analysis allows us to peer behind the media text—and the images/representations found therein—and find the story that lies behind. It, therefore, can be instrumental in giving us an understanding of the possible societal narratives and ideologies which the media text co-constructs, and in allowing us to explore the rich array of societal meanings woven within the text as a cultural artifact. Textual analysis is not only about “the close examination of language and rhetoric, of style and presentation,” but also how these textual elements are supported by, and linked to, the social, political, and cultural context in which the texts are produced. Hall, 1975, p.15). It seeks to understand not only the text itself, but how it defines our culture—and is defined by it.

Textual analysis seeks to delve beneath the obvious surface meanings— that is the literal meaning of words or terms that Barthes referred to as denotation— and examine the complex web of implicit (connotative) social meanings that lay beneath. That is, textual analysis seeks to unearth and discover the underlying shared meanings that the words and images within any given text invoke. (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991). The purpose of this textual analysis was thus to describe the “economy” or wealth of meanings constructed by the CNN text. Furthermore, this analysis examined how those meanings were produced through its various textual elements. (Acosta-Alzuru & Roushanzamir, 2003, p. 49).

As distinct from content analysis, which is interested in patterns evident in the manifest content, textual analysis seeks to get at latent content— as well as at the societal ideologies imbued within the text. It seeks to examine how these latent cultural meanings are constructed within the text— that is to get at the “textual edifice” and how it works.(Acosta-Alzuru, 2003).

My analysis also attempted to uncover how the latent cultural meanings embedded in the CNN text are related to the articulation of identity (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003). How did the CNN text—and the societal narrative it helped con-construct vis a vis Israel and Palestine—help shape and articulate Israeli and Palestinian identities? What was the “public face” or image of both people that it presented to the world—as well as to the Israeli and Palestinian people themselves? What is the Middle-Eastern reality that the CNN text forges for us?

Textual analysis can help uncover how meaning is constructed and produced within CNN’s journalistic discourse, and help us “discover some of the regularities of reporting, not simply for specific audiences, but for the more significant purpose, of producing reality”(Acosta-Alzuru & Rushanzamir, 2000, p. 307). By analyzing the CNN text, the conceptual framework through which the CNN text explicates and examines events in Israel and Palestine could be examined and unraveled, and the reality that it co-constructs along with its viewers vis a vis Israel and Palestine can be better understood.

Procedure

In examining the mythic structure of the CNN text, I looked for thematic and narrative elements invoked by the words and images evident in the CNN text and its portrayals of Israel and Palestine. As Lule (2001) suggests, “the most direct way to study the news is to study the articles themselves as illustrations of myth.... to fully understand what is being said, to probe all the possible meanings and implications of the language” (p.5). Like Lule, I concentrated on coverage of individuals and events—story-by-story and word-by-word. I deconstructed each CNN segment, and looked for elements that constitute evidence of mythic narrative structure and themes. By doing so, I sought to uncover (and perhaps challenge) the underlying assumptions, myths, and stereotypes that shaped CNN’s coverage of the region. (Meyers, 1994).

My analysis followed the three-pronged approach suggested by Hall (1975). The time frame for analysis was from November 2004 to March 2005. After taping all CNN segments pertaining to Israel during this time period, I started with a “long preliminary soak” in the CNN text in order to identify specific elements in the text, while maintaining focus on the big picture. (p. 15). This is, in essence, “a preliminary reading to select representative examples which can be more intensively analyzed” (p.15). I then selected a body of 50 CNN newscasts covering Israel and Palestine. The newscasts were chosen from both the U.S. version as well as the international version of CNN (which I received via the Internet from Israel).

I essentially selected stories which centered on significant events and occurrences in the region during the time period—that is the death of Arafat, the Palestinian elections, homicide bombings and Israeli incursions into Gaza. These were stories that I felt were more emotionally charged and less prone to dry, bland “just the facts” reporting. These were human interest stories akin to the stories that Lule utilized in his examination of news as myth. Furthermore, I felt that these stories were more indicative of CNN’s overall reportorial framework concerning Israel and Palestine and their overall outlook on the region. I also specifically included in my analysis almost all of the stories emanating from the CNN text surrounding the death of Arafat (and the manner in which CNN portrays him as statesmen and historical figure), seeing as this was such a vital, momentous and emotionally loaded event in the region.

My focus was thus mainly on human interest and event-driven stories. Event-driven stories are news stories that occur spontaneously; dramatic news stories and the story cues for reporters that arise from such events. Such event driven news coverage is on the rise, as suggested by Livingston and Lance (2003), especially as pertains to international news coverage.

Technology today “frees reporters to go directly to sites of serious events such as ethnic wars and terrorists bombings, and transmit high quality images and original interpretive images”

(Livingston & Lance, 2003, p. 364). Homicide bombings, shootings— and other such events frequently transpiring in Israel and Palestine— are a clear and illustrative example of event driven news; and coverage of such events was found in abundance in the CNN text .

I included many of these types of stories in my analytical framework, seeing as highly dramatic and emotionally laden incidents typically lend themselves particularly well to narrative story-telling and mythic portrayals. Furthermore, I felt that these stories were more indicative of CNN’s overall attitudes towards, and portrayals of, both parties in the region.

These are the stories that grab viewers and incite an emotional, almost visceral reaction in those watching CNN’s programming. These are the human interest stories that we remember and that stay with us. I thus felt it was vital to examine precisely these emotionally laden stories, and unravel the tale they weave in respect to Israel and Palestine.

After being selected, the CNN segments I ultimately chose to examine were viewed again, re-examined, and then transcribed. In transcribing the segments, I utilized a two-column system as suggested by Rose (2001). The first column described the visual elements and what was shown in the piece, including camera angles, camera positions (close-ups or long-shots), and the predominant visual images captured by the frame. I also noted the editing employed in the segment. How were the visual image and the verbal narrative juxtaposed? This interplay between visual and verbal components is of particular importance seeing as “the function of film or video footage is to accompany and illustrate the verbal text”(Burns, 1989, p. 169). How did videotaped segments in the CNN text help tell and illustrate the Israeli-Palestinian tale?

Furthermore, I strove to connect these strong and often emotive visual images with the “cultural baggage” that they carry and invoke: Barthes suggested that the denotative and connotative ‘levels of meaning’ apply also to the analysis of visual signs. In a photograph, for instance, we may distinguish between the denotative level, which carries the innocent, factual meanings available to any observer irrespective of cultural background, and the connotative level, which carries the visual meanings that a specific culture assigns to the denotative message. (Jensen, 2002, p.111). What did the images filling the CNN frame invoke beyond their surface connotative meaning?

The second column utilized in my transcripts described the verbal aspects of the news segment. This, in spite of the fact that television is a predominately visual medium. As suggested by Kavoori (1999), lexicon, syntax, metaphors and language were all assessed and noted. Language is especially important when examining the mythical elements inherent in the CNN text. After all, these are the building blocks through which the text builds and invokes mythological themes and elements. It is through words that news events become news stories. It is through words that we tell the eternal and timeless stories of the human race. Like myths of old, news stories are, as Lule (2001) notes, nothing but “words, words, words” (p. 5).

After transcribing the text, and noting carefully the visual and verbal elements inherent therein, I then proceeded—in keeping with Hall (1975) — to read the chosen text closely and carefully, in an attempt to isolate the discursive strategies and overall themes inherent therein.

I took a holistic approach to examining the selected text, rather than breaking it down into smaller, more manageable units. This, seeing as textual analysis—as opposed to content analysis which breaks the text down into smaller units— looks at the text in its entirety.

Textual analysis examines the textual edifice as a meaningful whole, and acknowledges that no individual segment or story can tell the whole tale. I therefore continuously conceived of my selected text as a coherent whole throughout my analysis. (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991).

As noted by Fiske (1987), during this “close reading” or examination, attention was also given to the placement of ideas, concepts and groups in binary opposition to one another—a fundamental trait of mythical narrative and its structure. Fiske notes that that “myth is an anxiety-reducing mechanism that deals with irresolvable contradictions in a culture, and provides imaginative ways of living with them. These contradictions are usually expressed in terms of binary oppositions, and form the deep structure of a number of apparently unrelated myths. These binary oppositions are large, abstract generalizations such as good versus evil, nature versus culture or humankind versus gods” (p. 131). Was the Israeli- Palestinian conflict framed in terms of “good” versus “bad” or “villains” versus “victims”? As such, did it take on a mythic narrative structure?

I also paid close attention to strategies of foregrounding and backgrounding present in the CNN text. (Huckin, n.d.). These terms refer to the writer's emphasizing certain concepts (by giving them textual prominence) and de-emphasizing others. More accurately, I paid attention to significant omissions and emphases within the CNN text. What elements of the Israeli Palestinian conflict does the CNN text prominently display and bring to the viewers' attention and what aspect of the conflict does it leave out? As such, how does it frame the Israeli Palestinian conflict? This, I felt was instrumental in attempting to analyze the CNN narrative in respect to Israel and Palestine. What facets of the Israeli-Palestinian story are brought to the fore and what are we—the viewers never told or shown?

Also the time devoted to covering each side in the conflict was noted. Airtime given to the Israeli point of view (interviews with Israeli civilians and or Israeli spoke-persons) versus the Palestinian point of view (Palestinian civilians, spoke-persons, etc...) was noted and examined.

Finally, in keeping with Hall's three-pronged approach (1975), the findings were interpreted in line with the study's larger framework. Both examples that fit into the studies conceptual framework, as well as those that contradicted it, were assessed and examined.

The meanings inherent in the CNN text were examined and uncovered in order to ascertain whether CNN's coverage contained narrative and mythical elements consistent with Lule's framework, and how this narrative structure served to frame and impact CNN's consequent portrayal of both the Palestinian and Israeli people, as well as of the region itself.

The aim of this textual analysis was therefore to describe the narrative strategies and name the discourse surrounding CNN's coverage of the Middle-East conflict. This, in order to try and understand what story the CNN text tells us about Israel and Palestine, and how it goes about telling this tale.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Before examining the various depictions and portrayals of the Israeli and Palestinian populations in the CNN text, it is first necessary to note several important factors about CNN's coverage of the region.

First and foremost, compared to other international news and even other international conflicts, news about Israel tend to receive a fairly extensive amount of attention in CNN's overall news coverage. Whereas hostilities rage on in Sudan, in the Kashmir region and elsewhere around the world, it is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that receives the most attention in the CNN text; this is true even in the international version of CNN which tends to cover a wider range of events and regions than the regular CNN stations. Coverage of Yasser Arafat's death, for instance, received prominent—almost incessant--coverage during the days following his death. Entire newscasts were devoted to his funeral and to retrospectives on his life.

The relatively extensive attention afforded Israel and Palestine is directly related to several factors. First, the region is, quite simply, newsworthy. It generates a great deal of interest among Jewish, Muslim, and other viewers across the globe. This marked viewer interest drives coverage. Being that the region is so important to so many, the CNN text treats it as such.

Second, conflict makes an event or a region both interesting and newsworthy. For better or worse, almost all of CNN's coverage of Israel tends to center on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We did not hear on CNN, for instance, that Israeli scientists developed a miniaturized pill that can photograph the human body from the inside ("FDA Clears Camera Pill", 2001). This pill has the potential to save hundreds, if not thousands of lives, yet we seldom hear about such things in the Israeli context. Conflict drives interest. It is one of several factors journalists utilize in order to determine news value. As one of the preeminent and most news-oriented networks in the world, it is not surprising that this is the angle that CNN would utilize when covering Israel. However, CNN completely fails to consider or explore any other facets of the region that are unrelated to the conflict.

It is also important to consider that, as compared to other conflict-ridden areas, Israel is far friendlier to journalists and news coverage. It is a democratic country, free and open to the press. Furthermore, it is also a modern and technologically advanced nation—a must when dealing with a broadcast medium. In addition, being a small country, Israel is fairly easy to cover. Getting from Ramallah, which is a Palestinian Authority territory, to Jerusalem the capital of Israel, takes 15 minutes by car.

It is thus not surprising, considering all of the above mentioned factors, that Israel receives considerable attention from CNN. The spotlight is firmly on the region within the network's overall coverage, and in particular on the conflict transpiring therein. By sheer weight and volume of coverage, thus, CNN lends importance and significance to events in the region.

Reporting From

When examining the CNN text, it is first important to note the locales from where CNN journalists broadcast their reports about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the end of each segment, CNN broadcasters state the area they are reporting from—their “dateline”.

They clearly state their names, CNN affiliation, and the location they are reporting from. “This is John Vause, CNN, Ramallah,” for instance. This might seem like a trivial detail, but is of marked importance from a reporting point of view. These datelines are where the text originates, is anchored and set. If CNN is presenting the Israeli-Palestinian drama to us, this is where the scene is set. This is the stage on which our drama unfolds. More importantly, this is where reporters are stationed. These are the streets and alleyways that they see every morning. These are the shops and cafes where they find their sources. This is the area on which reporters focus their attention, and in which they ground their stories. This is their “beat”—the streets and neighborhoods which they cover and whose tale they tell. When examining the CNN text, it thus becomes vital to examine the locales where it is forged; the areas where it begins its journey, and the windows the text provides the audience for experiencing the conflict.

Palestine

Most CNN reporters tend to broadcast from Palestinian Authority territories—that is the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These are narrow stretches of land roughly the size of Washington D.C., which lie within the boundaries of the state of Israel. The Gaza strip lies between Israel and its neighbor to the south, Egypt; whereas the West Bank lies west of the Jordan River, encompassing cities such as Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Jenin.

John Vause typically broadcasts from West Bank cities such as Ramallah, the headquarters of the Palestinian authority and their administrative and legislative base. Before Arafat's death it was the city in which his headquarters—a compound known as the “Mukata”—was situated. It is from this city, as well as Gaza, another major Palestinian stronghold, that most CNN reports concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict come from. Fionnuala Sweeney, Ben Weideman, Christiane Amanpour, Matthew Chance, Guy Raz and other senior CNN Middle East correspondents, anchor their newscasts from Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jericho, Badia and other cities and towns in the West Bank. The “occupied territories in the West Bank” as they are typically described in the CNN text. This term connotes much more than a definition, but a host of related propositions about the disposition of the land:

- 1) That these territories are under military control of a nation that does not have sovereignty over them.
- 2) That the nation in control of these territories, i.e., Israel, is obliged (as a matter of right as well as by international law) to "return" these territories to their rightful owners.
- 3) That these territories belong by right to the Palestinians.

Moreover, CNN correspondents frequently enter refugee camps within Palestinian territories, the Al-Shatie Refugee camp in Gaza for instance; where many Palestinians make their homes and go about their daily lives. Many reports originate from these makeshift shanty towns. One CNN report airing 1-21-2005, even took us into a Palestinian refugee camp in Northern Lebanon. These refugee camps are the most impoverished of Palestinian locales, the most downtrodden and the most in need of infrastructure. CNN discourse is thus effectively framed in terms of mostly Palestinian locales and territories. It is West Bank towns and villages that are the focus of the CNN camera.

It is also vital to note how these locales are portrayed and represented within the CNN text. Invariably, CNN's images present these locations as shabby, impoverished and ravaged by non-ceasing violence. Small shops and dirty streets paint a portrait of poverty and much suffering. Scenes of firefights in streets and alleyways lined with rubble, debris and burning tires are common fodder for the CNN camera.

For instance, in a CNN segment recorded days before Arafat's death, on November 10th, 2004, the CNN camera pans languidly across an old, dilapidated building-- the remains of Arafat's "Mukata" compound in Ramallah. The camera slowly closes in on the rubble surrounding the Mukata, now being cleared away to make room for a mausoleum for Arafat. The surrounding walls are filled with graffiti. Heaps of old, crushed cars are stacked by the roadside. Dirty and scorched, these vehicles have clearly seen better days. Concrete blocks and spikes line the compound, lasting evidence of street battles waged along these roads. Arafat has been "living in the rubble of his Ramallah compound all these years," the CNN segment states. "Rubble of Israeli incursions, crushed cars and twisted metal," are now being cleared away, the anchor continues.

Another segment airing January 16, 2005, features a 12-year-old boy helping his father sell vegetables during his winter break from school. The segment takes us into the small, crowded family home; described as "cold and damp" by the reporter. Babies and children lay crying. Laundry hangs in the sun to dry outside the make-shift home. The haggard mother scrapes the last remnants of the flour to make bread. Against this bleak backdrop the reporter states that "according to the UN around 65% of Gaza's population live below the poverty line, defined as a daily income of \$2." Reporter Wedeman goes on to state that "the vast majority of the people here are far too busy scraping by to be involved in radical politics."

A haggard Palestinian hotel owner shows the shabby remains of his once elaborate hotel—now lying in ruins outside the West Bank wall. The February 2nd segment crosscuts from pictures of Wallid Ayad’s lavish hotel where people sang, drank and partied, “The spot in the Palestinian Village of Abu Dis,” as described by the reporter, to the hotel as it stands today—a broken-down shell of what it used to be. There is no longer an elaborate ballroom or a crowded bar. This is a dilapidated building barely left standing. “All that’s left are memories of a time Wallid Ayad ran a simple hotel,” laments the reporter.

Miriam Solami, running for Deputy Mayor of her West Bank Town of Badia, is hailed in a January 6th segment as a “democratically elected reformer, someone who is pushing the boundaries and demanding better living conditions for the people here.” She walks through the musky marketplace in her town to her small, dingy office in city hall, in which the need for refurbishing is clearly illustrated. The houses are badly in need of repair. The children who eagerly greet her as she walks through the city streets are plainly dressed and dirty.

A February 18th report highlights the making of the movie “Paradise Now,” which depicts Palestinian youths chosen to carry out a suicide bombing in Tel-Aviv. The segment takes us to the Nablus streets where the movie was filmed. The homes are in various stages of decay, and riddled with bullet holes. Burning shells of cars, barely recognizable as such, line the streets. Burning tires roll down the street and smoke billows from the alleyways. Gunfire and numerous explosions are heard in the background. Filming, says the reporter, was interrupted several times by gunfights that broke out in the streets. The picture is clear—this is a war zone ravaged by violence, an impoverished area reduced to shards and rubble by constant battles.

The reporter states that the lead actor in the film has spent enough time in Nablus “to appreciate the desperation under Israeli occupation.” This is indeed a scene of death, desperation and hopelessness. It is an all too common one within the CNN text.

A CNN segment broadcast on Christmas Eve 2004, notes a resurgence of tourism to Bethlehem, the city of Christ’s birth, and describes a new spirit of optimism in that city. “This is a hopeful Christmas,” John Vause notes. “We are told that there are pilgrims here this year, a few thousand by some estimates, and their numbers are way up on the last few years. This is good news for the people of Bethlehem. Their economy has been struggling for the last few years. This is a city which relies on tourists, and they have not been coming.” A portrait emerges of a city—modest and with little means-- struggling to survive during the holiday season. Nevertheless, despite the wretched poverty, there is hope. There “are choirs singing in the background,” and the faithful gather for midnight mass. “Christmas pilgrims to Bethlehem find hope amid crisis,” states the anchor, and indeed, we see children lighting candles amid the war – torn streets. Israeli soldiers are seen giving pilgrims candy and welcoming them to the holy land. There is a brief glimpse of hope amidst the Christmas season.

But hope is brief indeed. The end of the segment takes us back from this optimistic setting of candles, singing and joy to the security fence erected by Israel between its territories and Palestinian cities, in order to prevent terrorist infiltrations into Israel. This “West Bank Wall” is described by the anchor as a “barrier” which is “strangling” the city and leading to more poverty and misery. “The optimism in the city of Bethlehem is tempered by the giant concrete slabs which are slowly surrounding this city, Israel's barrier designed to stop suicide bombers and other militant attacks.” states John Vause. “This is a city divided,” he notes. “Israel has built another barrier around Rachel's tomb to protect Jewish worshipers. Rachel is considered

one of the matriarchs of the Jewish people. To the Palestinians, though, it's another Israeli land grab," he states. Bethlehem, after a brief respite of hope, is again portrayed as a city of suffering. We are immediately thrust back into the misery and chaos, as the wall looms large, menacing and foreboding around the city. Bethlehem is portrayed as a city divided, entrapped, even besieged .

Incidentally, the West Bank wall is a prominent backdrop for many CNN texts. Ample attention is given in the CNN text to this so-called "West Bank Wall". Even the name has clear ideological implications: Like the Berlin wall or even a prison wall, it serves as an impediment to freedom and unity. The Palestinian people are portrayed as being imprisoned or "walled in"; surrounded by this insurmountable barrier put up by Israel, which they cannot cross. The most foreboding stretch of this wall is typically shown; the harsh and unrelenting concrete barrier. In this frequent visual display of the concrete wall and its representation as a "strangling device", the text never mentions that only 3% of Israel's security barrier is actual concrete wall. Ninety-seven percent is actually chain link fence. Most Palestinians are on the eastern side of the fence. Therefore, they have access to their commercial and urban centers. In addition, no Palestinians had to relocate because of this barrier. The wall is depicted as a barrier against Palestinians' freedom and not as Israel's defensive device against suicide bombers ("Saving Lives: Israel's Security Fence", 2003).

A February 2nd CNN segment focused on a Palestinian hotel owner whose property lay on one side of this barrier, while he resides on the other. He peers at his hotel through cracks in the wooden fence, as he slowly walks along the barrier keeping him from his property. "Although it is only a few feet from his house, Wallid Ayad can only look at his property through this fence," laments reporter Guy Raz as he accompanies Ayad on a walk along this

seemingly never-ending . “This barrier would stretch 440 miles when completed,” the text notes. Raz mentions that Ayad’s broken-down and bullet-riddled hotel is now used by Israel soldiers as a lookout outpost. The wall is constructed as a barrier; as a hindrance to normalcy and everyday life. It is seen as an impediment to peace. It divides the Palestinian people from their livelihood and property. It even divides them from one another.

Israeli military checkpoints are also the focus of the CNN text. Long lines of Palestinians are often filmed waiting patiently at these gray, bleak crossings of concrete and stone, waiting for the chance to cross over into another town or village. They wait simply for the opportunity to go on with their everyday lives. For instance, A CNN segment airing on January 4th (just before the Palestinian elections) focused on one of the candidates for Palestinian Authority President, Mustafa Barghouthi, who had to cross these checkpoints in order to campaign in an adjoining city. The CNN cameras focus on the endless lines of people waiting to pass the Israeli checkpoints. Reporter Vause mentions the innumerable delays Barghouthi encountered while attempting to make a 10 o’clock campaign stop. It is early in the morning, but hoards already wait to pass through the checkpoints and get to their jobs, their businesses and their lives. It is a sea of humanity, cramped into endless lines under a makeshift shelter at best.

A similar January 21st segment focuses on Palestinian refugees making their way back into Israel from Egypt. At the border entrance from Egypt into Gaza, long lines of Palestinians stretch endlessly as they inch their way back home. A man carries mattresses atop his head. Women carry their wares in baskets. Yet again, the emphasis is on the dire poverty in which Palestinians live, and on the agony and hardship that they must endure in order to make their way home.

A November 8th segment features Mid-East analyst George Mitchell speaking about the impending Palestinian elections. “Now, they cannot have an election without Israeli cooperation and American support,” he states. “Is it because of the roadblocks?” the anchor interjects. The implication is that these security measures are a real impediment to Palestinian freedom and democracy. They even keep Palestinians from holding the free and fair elections that can dramatically alter and improve their lives.

The CNN text thus focuses attention on and amplifies the limited hindrance that the security fence and checkpoints may cause, yet gives little explanation as to why these barriers are there and why they were erected in the first place. The protective function of the fence and the checkpoints in securing Israeli towns and villages is downplayed and virtually ignored.

Before the construction of the security fence, and in many places where it has not yet been completed, a terrorist need only take a short walk to cross from the West Bank into Israel. A barrier of any kind will at least make the terrorists' job more difficult. During the 34 months from the beginning of the violence in September 2000, until the construction of the first segment of the security fence at the end of July 2003, terrorists carried out 73 attacks in which 293 Israelis were killed and 1,950 wounded. Between the erection of the first segment at the beginning of August 2003 and the end of June 2004, only three attacks were successful. In other words, since the construction of the fence began, the number of attacks has declined by more than 90%. The number of Israelis killed or wounded has likewise decreased by more than 70% (“Israel’s Security Fence”, 2003). Quite simply--This security barrier saves lives. However, in portraying Palestinian locales, CNN dramatized the anguish and misery that these barriers help maintain and perpetuate. The text focuses on the delays and impediments that these barriers create, and on their disruptive and obtrusive nature.

With its incessant focus on the poverty which Palestinians have to endure, on the makeshift buildings and rubble, on the gray and foreboding barriers and the ceaseless violence; the CNN text stages the Palestinian story on a stage which is rather glum, dour, and oppressive. There is a considerable amount of misery, poverty and violence in these Gaza and West Bank towns, yet the CNN camera seems to magnify it, compound it, even relish in it. The locales shown are the poorest of the poor. The scenes depicted are those of bloodiest violence and most dire of misery. In the intensity and magnitude of such coverage, in the texts' wallowing in these scenes of dire need and misery, there is a hint as to the story unfolding in the CNN text.

Paradoxically, in spite of the poverty and devastation shown, these Palestinian scenes are remarkably ordinary and domestic: market places, cafes, towns and villages. This is where life transpires in these news stories. Schools—for instance—the signifiers of innocence and normalcy—are a favorite CNN locale for illustrating the Palestinian drama. School children stand behind the fence of their school building, as the CNN anchor tells of a 10-year-old girl hit and ultimately slain by Israeli tank fire in a February 1st segment. The playground equipment in the school yard, plain and modest at best, is badly in need of both painting and repair. The children, modestly dressed, make the best of these conditions and enjoy the rudimentary equipment as children are apt to do. A January 6th segment shows Miriam Solami, the candidate for Badia Deputy Mayor, reading to school-children. The classroom is as bare-bones as possible. A green chalkboard lines the wall, several old desks stand in rows. There are no whiteboards, computers or audio-visual equipment in this meagerly funded school. Yet again, an indication of how impoverished most of these locales actually are. Yet Solami tenderly reads to one of the children. There may not be much—but what she has, she is certainly willing to give and share.

The Palestinian side of the Israeli –Palestinian drama thus plays out primarily where the ordinary business of Palestinian life occurs. In spite of these modest surroundings, the Palestinian locales shown in the CNN text are replete with the energy of everyday life and everyday activity. Modest as they are, and struggle as much as the Palestinian people undoubtedly do, life prevails and is stronger than the forces of violence and poverty. CNN segments show us fruit and vegetable stands lovingly tended to by Palestinian men, women and children trying to eke out a living. A woodcarver proudly displays a portrait of Yasser Arafat, which he hangs in his shop. On crumbling walls, posters of the various political candidates for the Palestinian Authority elections offer some semblance of decoration. A portrait emerges of a people trying to build a better life for themselves and their children. The reporters take us through streets and alleyways where Palestinian women carry goods from the marketplace for their families.

CNN cameras take us into the dirty, crowded streets of Gaza where people shop, eat, struggle and work. Women sit on street-corners, baking the traditional Pita bread for the day's meal. In a refugee camp, as seen in a January 21st segment, men drink coffee while playing a traditional game of dice. They gather at a barber shop and watch Egyptian soap operas on TV. Children while away the hours chasing old soccer balls in the streets. In many of these scenes, we can see ourselves and the ordinary business of our lives. We, too, shop, play and live in these bustling locales of everyday life. In these minute depictions of bustling towns and children attending school, we see what could have been our own lives. But in many respects, this is a world far removed from anything that we know or have ever encountered. This is a world gone mad; ordinary life that in an instant can turn to disaster.

A January 16th segment describes a firefight in Gaza between Palestinians and Israeli forces, pending a mortar attack on Israeli settlements. The camera zooms in, as the somber anchor notes that “violence continues in the occupied territories. Palestinian officials say seven people were killed by Israeli forces in Gaza on Saturday, and Israel says three people were wounded in rocket and mortar attacks.” The segment then cuts to heart-wrenching scenes of funerals for the fallen Palestinian youths, draped in cloth and carried through the city streets.

January 16 and 17th segments feature images of Israeli tanks hurtling down the city streets and narrow alleyways; yet another Israeli incursion into Gaza. Firefights send billows of dust and smoke into the air, as Israeli soldiers race after militants through the city streets. Young teens carry their fallen friend’s cloth-draped body, and attempt to get it out of the line of fire. In other words, this is more than just a description of events. This is a gut and heart wrenching look into what is undoubtedly a war-zone. CNN over dramatizes and glorifies the violence.

A December 12th segment describing a bombing at a military checkpoint in Gaza, focuses on the “ton of explosives and the hail of gunfire,” which made it a “deadly day for Israeli troops.” As the anchor laments the ongoing violence, he immediately shifts to the Israeli reaction: “eight Palestinian children were hurt when an Israeli tank shell landed in their schoolyard.” Violence and terror thus enters even the bastion of innocence.

The Palestinian stage is thus a drab and austere series of shanty towns, lacking many of the necessities of everyday life, where life nevertheless goes on in the face of wretched poverty. This is a world of rubble and wreckage, of barbed wire and fences, where kids play soccer one minute and carry the body of fallen friends the next. It is clearly not an environment of hope, it is a world where life is clearly intermingled with death and where joy can turn in an instant into pain and despair.

Israel

Israeli locales, on the other hand, are virtually absent from the CNN text. Rarely do we see a report stemming from ordinary Israeli towns and villages. Only a handful of CNN reports, notably those by correspondent Paula Hancocks, utilized Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem as their dateline. Even in those instances, the city streets are utilized mainly as a sterile backdrop. We merely see a fuzzy outline of the city sky-line behind Vause or one of the other CNN reporters, but we do not get a close-up view of the city and its streets.

Seldom are we taken to the streets of Tel-Aviv to see the sights and sounds. Rarely do we see the everyday locales of Israeli life—cafes, marketplaces, homes and schools. In many respects, Israeli locales remain overlooked and unexplored within the CNN framework. We do not enter the stage on which the ordinary rhythms of Israeli life transpire. It is Palestinian faces that the CNN camera captures, Palestinian lives into which it delves. Rarely are the homes and shops of the average Israeli citizen explored or examined. The faces of ordinary Israeli citizens are obscured, their voices muted.

When CNN newscasts emanate from Israeli territory, the CNN text usually depicts one of two locales: Either the calamity and disaster that tend to follow terror attacks, or a drab and sterile studio setting in Jerusalem where Israeli officials, mere “talking heads”, are asked to comment on recent events that transpire in the region.

Jerusalem is the most common Israeli locale permeating the CNN text. Usually CNN enters Jerusalem in order to interview Israeli government officials-- such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Olmert, Sylvan Shalom and Shimon Peres--and get official comment on the latest strides toward peace, or the latest bombing. A sterile green or blue backdrop and a cold studio locale, effectively distance viewers from Israeli territories and sources. Jerusalem

becomes synonymous in the CNN text with the Israeli government. It is the capital, the seat of officialdom. The government line provides a distant and cold scene, removed from real lives and real events. Usually, after a bombing or other tumultuous event in the region, an Israeli political personality will provide the official line. For instance, “Israel will not negotiate under fire, terror must be stopped and only then can Israel move forward and make strides toward peace.”

“Stopping the terrorists is what it’s all about,” says the Israeli ambassador to the United States Danny Ayalon in a January 14th segment following the election of Mahmoud Abbas. “You do not stop these terrorists with words. So what we expect from Mahmoud Abbas now is action. If indeed he spares no effort in fighting terror and stopping it, than we are willing to move forward,” says Aylaon. The same message is repeated many times over, first a stop to terror and only then a return to the negotiating table. It is easy to speak of the need for peace away from the smoke and the charred rubble. It is easy to outline the need to fight terror away from the shrieks and the anguish.

Reports from Tel-Aviv, on the other hand, usually signal disaster and devastation. These CNN segments typically depict suicide bombings. Glazing over the mangled and charred bodies of terror victims lining the streets, we see religious Jews in traditional garb (skullcaps, side-curls) scurrying about in an attempt to find bits and pieces of body parts to bury. Young people frantically try to phone home and let their parents know that they are unharmed. “The familiar scenes are now occurring outside of that site,” states John Vause as he reports on a February 25th Tel-Aviv bombing. “Emergency vehicles and hospital workers are also rummaging around, trying to get the wounded and the dead into their facilities.”

We are introduced to scenes of madness and chaos; charred wreckage of what is barely recognizable as a building, smoke and haze still thick on the scene. “It's a chaotic scene,” says reporter John Vause. This is CNN’s Tel-Aviv. We see only death; we do not see the affirmation of life that comes daily on Israeli streets, as people live and thrive in the face of terror, grief and pain.

Incidentally, Vause initially reports on this February 25th bombing from a Jerusalem setting—not Tel-Aviv-- where the blast actually occurred. He is far removed from the blood, the smoke and the haze filling the streets of Tel-Aviv. In fact, most CNN reports on this February 25th Tel-Aviv bombing originated in Jerusalem studios. From this locale, Vause gives us the official line and the cold, unrelenting facts, figures and damage assessment: “The Israeli radio is, in fact, reporting that there are 30 casualties. There are fatalities in that number. Many of these people are being rushed to hospital. It's a chaotic scene.”

Guy Raz similarly reports on this blast from a sterile studio setting in Jerusalem, reporting second-hand the sights, sounds and scenes as captured by the local Israeli media, providing the official death toll and official reaction. “Police say it is a terror attack,” he says. His sterile report adds: “We understand that at least, as you say, three people have been confirmed killed, and as many as 50 people are wounded now according to what we're hearing from Israeli media,” states Raz.

We are thus distanced from the sites, sounds and wreckage on the scene. We are removed from the victims, whose faces we don’t see and whose stories we don’t hear. In fact Soledad O’Brien, the CNN anchor, asks Vause to provide more details about the area and to set the scene a bit more accurately for the viewers. “All right. And it's just after midnight local time there, a busy Friday night. If you can just characterize this area a little bit more for us. Would the streets

just be packed with people, typically, on a Friday night with good weather?" she asks Vause. We are merely told by Vause that this "area is a very popular area of Tel Aviv. There are a lot of restaurants, a lot of nightclubs. About two or three streets back from the beach in Tel- Aviv." He adds, "It's a nice night. The weekend's already started. Many people would have been out. It's an area popular with young people. There's a lot of outdoor cafes, a lot of coffee shops, a lot of restaurants and nightclubs, that kind of thing. It's the hip part of town, if you like. And it's only one street back from the beach in Tel Aviv." A brief description of the scene, and then Vause immediately goes on to analyze what this latest attack could mean for the peace process. "And, Miles, this is the first suicide bombing in quite some time. It's the first one since the Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed to a truce on February 8th at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference in Egypt."

Out of all the segments I recorded about this particular bombing, not one focused on the everyday life of these cafes and lively beachfront area. In other words, if Israeli locales are portrayed at all, these are mainly scenes of destruction and devastation. Even then, they are not given the intimate attention and vivid depictions that we see on the Palestinian side.

Vause ultimately reports from the Tel-Aviv scene of this February 25th bombing, and we see what is left of the bombing scene and the devastation that's left in its wake. Shards of glass; bits and pieces of nails and shrapnel line the streets. The ambulances and emergency crews have already left. But Vause only dwells on the scene momentarily: "It happened outside a nightclub not far from the beach in Tel Aviv. The nightclub was about to open. The blast happened around 11:30 p.m., local time. That's about an hour and 30 minutes ago. There were a lot of people standing in line, a lot of people waiting to get in, and that blast wounding, as I said, at least 50 people," he states. A cold, clear statement of the journalistic 5 W's, and then Vause immediately

proceeds to relay how this latest attack could possibly impact the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Pilgrim, the anchor immediately inquires: “John, what is your assessment of how this impacts the political situation going forward? This, of course, a setback after such a nice period of peace, and a devastating attack at that. There are very, very widespread casualties in this one.”

There is no sense of everyday life and normalcy in these depictions of Israeli locales. We are seldom introduced to the commonplace, as we are in the Palestinian tale. We only get a brief glimpse of the victims and the scene. We do not see the beachfront as it was, we do not hear the stories of the teens that stood in that line.

By not showing everyday life, CNN fails to give its viewers images for them to identify with. Israel is only one bombing after the next. There’s nothing—no life—between these attacks. The CNN text leaves the victims bleeding by the way side. Seldom are their stories and experience heard: What happened as they waited in line to get into that club? What did they feel during those few seconds of terror? The CNN text offers only muted images of inexplicable horror, emblems of silent suffering.

Thus, from the outset, CNN makes a powerful statement. If it is the tale of this conflict that CNN is telling, they shine the spotlight on one cast of characters and paint a vivid portrait of mainly one locale—that being the Palestinian territories. Israeli locales are cloaked in sterility and official rhetoric. If present at all, they are scenes of madness and death.

Israeli and Palestinian Voices and Faces

The divergent locales that I noted in the previous section, directly determine the voices and faces present in the CNN text. As I had previously mentioned, the frequent use of Jerusalem as a locale ensures that most Israeli voices are of official nature. Seasoned politicians in suits and ties, stating the same well worn and packaged PR. The anchors typically let them speak,

asking maybe three or four predictable questions. The stage is theirs, it is their forum. Somber, official, and immaculately dressed, these government agents tow the official line. Brought in to “balance coverage” of the conflict and to give “the Israeli perspective and point of view,” they are asked to “talk about what’s ahead” or to “give some perspective on the deployment of forces in Gaza.” Their cold analysis seems remote, cloaks Israelis’ quotidian life, and sterilizes the disruption of the latter. In this way, Israel is the personification of power: the government’s face and voice; while Palestine is about a shattered everyday life.

That is not to say that Palestinian officials are not also frequent visitors to the CNN set. Saeb Erakat, and Hanan Ashrawi—both prominent spokespersons for the Palestinian authority—appear often in various CNN segments. Like their Israeli counterparts, they give the official Palestinian reaction to events such as terrorist bombings, or the latest strides towards peace. They, too, tow the official Palestinian line: Terrorism must be stopped, but Israel, too, has to make strides toward peace by withdrawing from settlements and ending their incursions into Palestinian territories. For instance, Mustafa Barghouthi of the Palestinian National Initiative was brought in to the CNN studios on February 7th in order to “talk about Israel’s offer of immunity to Palestinian fugitives.” Saeb Erakat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, was brought in alongside Israeli spokesman Raanan Gissin in order to speak about the aftermath of a terrorist bombing in Tel- Aviv on the 25th of February. And, Hanan Ashrawi gave her reaction to the death of Yasser Arafat in a November 11th interview.

There is no doubt that these official reactions are of paramount value and are a cornerstone of sound journalism. However, this is only one facet of Palestinian society that CNN portrays. The CNN text also introduces the shop-owner who wants to live in peace, the families and the children.

The CNN camera captures the ordinary Palestinian citizenry, so that a more complex portrait of Palestinian society emerges. In contrast, sterile and alienating officialdom is almost the only Israeli facet present in the CNN text.

The other representation of Israelis that is pervasive in CNN's coverage is that of the mighty and well-armed soldiers. A frequently broadcast scene is one in which an Israeli soldier, gun slung over his back, rummages through the belongings of a Palestinian worker seeking to enter Israeli territory. Variations of this portrayal abound. For instance, a January 21st segment depicts Palestinian refugees inching their way back into Israel from Egypt, as Israeli soldiers hold them back, rummage through their possessions and check their identity cards. Meanwhile, women and children eagerly wait to get home, as Israeli soldiers impede their return.

In another example, a January 4th segment depicts Israeli soldiers forcibly holding back demonstrating Palestinian crowds, and knocking one protestor to the ground. The presence of Israeli tanks is pervasive in CNN's coverage. Images of Israeli tanks moving into Gaza are ever-present.

In this way CNN creates an imbalance of power in the conflict. The face of Israel is one of power, control and brute force. The face of Palestine is one of regular people trying to live regular lives. What can a helpless Palestinian possibly do in the face of an armed soldier? Can rocks possibly defeat tanks and armor? It is a portrait of conqueror versus conquered. Virtually no context is given as to why the guns, the tanks and the checkpoints are there in the first place.

In a November 10th segment, correspondents describe the Mukata, Yasser Arafat's headquarters, as "a rubble of a building knocked down by Israeli forces two years ago." As the camera pans across the mounds of stone and heaps of rubble, the power differential is evident. It is indeed Israeli forces that have the power. Even Arafat, the Palestinian leader, is rendered

helpless in the wake of the Israeli military. It is indeed Israeli soldiers who have the might. No word, again, as to why Israel acts as it does, and why Israeli forces elected to take this course of action. Israeli army actions are neither explained nor contextualized.

The language surrounding the Israeli military is also of paramount importance. Israeli military personnel are often referred to as “Israeli forces,” rather than troops or soldiers. In this way, power and might are underscored. Israeli military activities are labeled “offensives” or “incursions,” denoting invasive power and implying a position of might. Many CNN segments follow terror attacks’ coverage with images of Israel’s reaction: a shot of the bomber’s home being demolished while his wife, children and family look on in grief.

Israel’s power is emphasized also by being contrasted with a representation of Palestinian leaders as incapable of controlling its militants. For instance, in a January 17th segment, the anchor notes, “But either way Mahmoud Abbas is running out of time. Israel says that unless he can carry out the job (crack down on militants) on its behalf, the Israeli army will do it itself.”

The emerging picture is one of aggression and might; of an army which strikes whenever and wherever it deems fit. Images of wounded and killed Palestinians reinforce this portrait. On January 16th, CNN takes us to the funerals of six slain Palestinians. On February 10th, a segment features a 10-year-old Palestinian girl who we are told was shot by Israeli fire. She is shown limp and intubated, lying in a hospital bed. A 10-year-old girl versus the mighty Israeli military. This is a tale of David versus Goliath, indeed.

Even when a news segment reports on violence against Israel, there are mentions of Palestinian victims. For instance, a December 12th segment depicts a bombing at an Israeli military checkpoint, which killed four Israeli soldiers and wounded six. After reporting on the bombing itself, the anchor notes that “Just today Palestinian doctors say eight Palestinian

children were hurt when an Israeli tank shell landed in their school yard.” The death of the Israeli soldiers is forgotten, and the enduring image is that of innocent schoolchildren being shelled and fired upon by trained, professional soldiers.

Violence is frequently personified in Palestinian children. On January 12th, CNN featured 15-year-old Isa Rabin who lost his leg when Israeli tank rounds exploded near his home. “The blast killed seven other boys ages 11 to 17, all from the same extended family,” notes correspondent Ben Wedeman. Isa is photographed in his hospital bed, intubated and bleeding. He screeches in pain as his bandages are changed—and his family (and us) look on. “The people here, caught between militant attacks and Israeli retaliation feel helpless,” notes Wedeman as Isa’s father tenderly kisses his head.

Israeli aggression is furthermore embodied in portrayals of its leader, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. He is depicted as the powerful and ruthless leader. Often he is portrayed in the CNN text standing behind a podium, strong and menacing, with an Israeli flag draped behind him. He is filmed walking with a purpose to a cabinet meeting, donned in suit and tie, the aggressive leader ready to conduct the affairs of state. Rarely is his voice heard. Not once are we told anything about his life to create a softer portrait of the man. “Mr. Sharon has been very aggressive, some would say far too aggressive, in his handling of particularly the occupied territories,” notes Aaron Brown in a November 11th segment. A November 12th segment notes that Sharon is a “former army general who spent little effort over the years trying to kill the Palestinian leader. Some saw it as a case of two old men trying to settle scores.” Sharon is every bit the embodiment of Israeli strength and aggression—the mighty Israeli military at his disposal. Israel and its leader are thus depicted as aggressive—even brutish—in contrast to the struggling Palestinian people.

The Israeli army is, furthermore, not only portrayed as the ruthless aggressor, but also as a divider; especially with respect to the roadblocks and security barriers which it employs. A CNN segment airing before the Palestinian elections on January 4th, focused on the difficulties that one of the candidates—Mustafa Barghouthi—faced while campaigning. The segment reports on the countless delays he experiences at checkpoints. The anchor reports that he was also “roughed up or detained by the Israeli military on at least three occasions.” These obstacles are contrasted with Barghouthi’s idealism and drive. He is a “revolutionary” and “idealist,” a “young man who wants to shake up the system, and hopefully the region as well.” His ideals face impediments and barriers—in the form of Israeli soldiers and checkpoints.

Even in wake of Arafat’s death, notes the text, the Israeli army refuses to let up its stringent restrictions. A November 11th segment features an interview with Hanan Ashrawi—a spokeswoman for the Palestinian Authority. The anchor asks her: “People are unable to get here from other parts of the West Bank. Does that bother you, or do you understand Israel’s security concerns when they have instituted closures on other cities in the West Bank, and indeed, have sealed off Ramallah from the rest of the West Bank?” In this way, the focus widens from Arafat’s death to the Israeli army, as it prevents Palestinians from bidding a final farewell.

In sum, the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is constructed in the CNN text as a tale of David versus Goliath. “Israel has an army, Palestinians have a will to fight,” notes a November 11th segment.

In addition to the official voices and military images, there is one segment of the Israeli populace on which the CNN text dwells, and which it represents and depicts at length. These are the Israeli settlers, who, for ideological and other reasons, live in areas that are predominantly Palestinian.

The Settlers: Newsworthy Radicals

CNN has given particular attention to this group since the Israeli Prime Minister's decision to disengage or unilaterally withdraw from Palestinian territories and demolish these settlements. To a great extent, these settlers are portrayed both as an anomalous part of Israeli society, and as a radical element or lunatic fringe, which must be rooted out in order to allow both Israelis and Palestinians to achieve normalcy and peace. Furthermore, the most radical and extreme elements amongst the settlers are featured, and portrayed as the majority.

"At first glance there is nothing unusual about the life led by the Tzvaig family," notes a February 1st segment about a family living in the Gaza settlement of Gush Katif. "The morning routine is hurried: school lunches are packed, breakfast is prepared. The children are showered with love and affection," states the reporter. But the Tzvaig family is quickly stripped of this veneer of normalcy. "What Sara Tzvaig describes as paradise is the fortress settlement of Gush Katif," notes Guy Raz. "Just beyond Gush Katif is the Palestinian city of Han Yunis. Now over the past four years, militants from Han Yunis have launched thousands of rocket and mortar attacks on settlements like Gush Katif," Raz adds.

Correspondent Raz notes that Amitai, the father, often diffuses unexploded mortars that fall on the village, and that his wife Sara's sister was shot dead by a Palestinian militant. A portrait thus emerges of people living in a hostile and lethal environment of chaos and anarchy. Gush Katif has become a "dangerous place," notes the reporter.

A February 8th segment again takes us to the settlement of Gush Katif. "The mourning period winds down for Gideon Rivlin, killed more than a week ago in an explosion outside Gush Katif settlement," notes the somber CNN anchor.

Religious Jews donned in traditional skullcaps and prayer shawls are portrayed reciting the Kadish—the Jewish prayer for the dead—by Rivlin’s grave. Along with these images of nationalism and religious fervor, we once again we see the danger inherent in these settlements, portrayed as bastions of danger, violence and death.

Unlike the Palestinians, however, who are also seen as living amongst incessant violence and death, settlers are portrayed as thrusting themselves willingly into the line of fire due to their ideology and beliefs. The most extreme elements among the settlers are thrust into the CNN spotlight—those settlers that would resist any attempt to leave their settlements, and are even willing to fight the Israeli soldiers that will come to evacuate them. “The government can say that, but only God commands us,” notes a religious settler in a February 1st segment. “There is the Prime Minister, but God is the king of us all,” he states. Donned in a talit, a traditional Jewish prayer shawl, and in a kippa or Jewish skull-cap, religious settlers are typically photographed in or near synagogues. “Ronen Batchi surveys the settlement from the roof of his synagogue,” notes a February 8th segment. Batchi stands above the house of worship, gazing at the land below him, as the camera gives us a bird’s-eye-view of this settlement.

Many other settlers are pictured praying, as is the case in a February 1st segment. Settlers mourn their fallen compatriot and recite the prayer for the dead. They carry or wave Israeli flags. Bearded and donning side-curls, they are the very stereotype of Jewish nationalism and zealotry.

These “extremists,” notes the CNN text, are even willing to endanger themselves and their families for their beliefs. “Do you really think this is still a good place to raise children?” asks the CNN reporter of the Tzvaig family in a February 1st segment.

Gush Katif—the settlement which the Tzvaig’s call home— is portrayed as a veritable war zone, which the Tzvaig’s ought to summarily leave. Their dogged ideology and radical beliefs—preventing them from leaving—are thus construed as endangering their children.

More than mere misguided radicals, the settlers are also portrayed as a threat to “normal”, civilized Israeli society, due to their dogged, unorthodox and radical beliefs. “Some settlers say the protests could turn violent if the Israeli army attempts to force them from their homes,” notes a February 1st segment. As frenzied settlers are portrayed dancing with the Israeli flag, the CNN anchor notes that “they [the settlers] will ignore the government’s call for them to leave.” “Settlers in the Itza outpost in the West Bank,” notes the segment, “protested against soldiers trying to pull down buildings. If this is what happens when a couple of makeshift buildings are demolished, demolishing the established homes of about 8,000 settlers in Gaza seems likely to generate far greater resistance.”

The settlers are especially portrayed as a threat to Ariel Sharon, the Israeli PM, who seeks to dismantle these settlements .An entire segment airing February 16th, describes the numerous death threats that settlers sent to Prime Minister Sharon and other government officials. “Government ministers say they have been targeted,” notes the text. “One was jeered and hackled while attending a memorial service. Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had his tires slashed while attending a wedding,” notes correspondent John Vause. He also mentions that settlers threatened to dig up the remains of Ariel Sharon’s late wife, buried on Sharon’s ranch in Southern Israel. Guy Raz, in a February 8th segment, states that the “government privately fears civil war.” The aforementioned February 8th segment features John Vause reporting from the memorial erected in honor of Yitzhak Rabin, an Israeli Prime Minister slain by a Jewish extremist in 1995. He immediately equates the current climate created by settler groups with the

atmosphere pending Rabin's assassination. "Even security services believed it was impossible that a Jew could kill an Israeli Prime Minister," says John Vause. "But not now." The somber implications are clear, the settlers—or extremists-- are a renegade element that is a clear and present danger to Israeli society at large—not to mention the fragile Israeli-Palestinian peace process in particular. They are a direct threat to the Israeli government and the Israeli establishment—to the soldiers and officials which are the foundation of orderly and civilized Israeli society. They are also portrayed as outlaws in "illegal settlements" or "illegal outposts."

The settlers are also outside of international law: "Israel has occupied the Gaza strip since the 1967 war," notes Guy Raz in a February 1st segment. An Israeli flag is pictured fluttering in the breeze above one of the makeshift buildings. "The Geneva Convention," notes Raz, "prohibits occupying countries from settling occupied land with their own citizens."

There are elements amongst the settlers that are opposed to peace, and voice their intentions to actively and violently oppose Israeli soldiers should they come to evict them from their homes. These consist of the fringes of the settler population. Most settlers will ultimately leave their homes—be it begrudgingly-- and start their new lives within Israel. According to Mathew Kalman (2004) nearly 1/3 -- 2,000 of the 7,500 settlers-- have acknowledged privately that they would accept a reasonable compensation package and leave without a fight. Freedman (2003) similarly notes that as many as 60% of the settlers would not only obey a lawful order to evacuate, but would also be "prepared to accept a withdrawal from the settlements in exchange for suitable financial compensation."

Freedman (2003) furthermore notes that most of the settlers are not fanatics. They went to live in the settlements because the government presented them with expensive villas, which they could not even dream about in Israel proper. Eighty percent of the settlers currently living in

the West Bank relocated in order to improve their quality of life. For the last 20 years, Israel's government has offered settlers persuasive economic incentives to move to the West Bank and Gaza. These include tax breaks, subsidized down payment and mortgage interest rates, and per capita spending per settler that is more than double that for Israelis living within Israel's borders. It is thus clear that most of the settlers currently living in the West Bank are not zealots. Most settlers came to the territories in order to escape crowded low-income neighborhoods — to take advantage of a quality-of-life offer they could not resist. When the government tells them to move, they will take the compensation and move on.

It is on the radical element, however, that the CNN text appears to dwell and which the CNN camera captures. When the more moderate settlers are presented, their voices are drowned by the sheer volume of the zealots. For instance, a February 17th segment features Meir Rosenstein, a moderate settler, who is eager to leave the “dangerous” settlements because of the “terror” and go house hunting in Israel. Rosenstein reports that he has been “ostracized by neighbors and ignored by friends ever since he told them that he wanted to leave.” “The leaders of the settlers warn that Meir and the others are an insignificant minority,” states the reporter. “Most, they say, will not leave Gaza so easily.” The hardliners and the radicals are portrayed as the dominant majority among the settlers. A majority that will go to almost any lengths in order not to be evacuated.

The settlers are furthermore portrayed as elements that must be “sacrificed” and rooted out of Israeli society if the peace process has any chance of succeeding. They must be “evicted” or “withdrawn” as part of the disengagement plan. If only the settlers would leave, the conflict will be resolved peacefully, and both nations could resume a more normalized existence.

The settlers are thus a barrier to peace enflaming hostilities in the region. They must be isolated and expelled if negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians are to succeed. The reality is that this is a conflict that has been waging on for centuries, at the very least since WWI, far before these settlements were even conceived. Nevertheless, the settlers are portrayed as one of the main barriers to peace in the region. They are placed at the very heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and are deemed its root cause. It is only their eviction and evacuation from Palestinian territories that will lead to peace in the region.

“Israel plans to withdraw Jewish settlements from Gaza unilaterally before starting serious talks because they think that will strengthen their negotiating position,” notes John Vause in a February 7th segment. The implication is that withdrawal from these settlements is a prerequisite to serious negotiations and peace talks.

“The killing of a Palestinian girl is endangering an unofficial Israeli-Palestinian cease fire, and prompted militants to fire mortar shells at an Israeli settlement,” notes a February 1st segment. After describing the shooting of 10- year-old Palestinian Norhan Deeb, the text goes on to note “Now next July Israel plans to begin withdrawing more than 1,000 Jewish settlers from Gaza and four isolated settlements in the West Bank.”

The settlements are thus portrayed as the root cause and focal point of Palestinian anger and discontent. They are prime targets for militants, and the root cause of the Palestinian uprising. Without these settlements, this violence would not occur. Once they are dismantled, 10-year-old girls would no longer be mortally wounded. The settlements are thus construed as a major—if not the primary—impediment to peace in the region.

“Israel’s government believes that protecting these settlements is untenable,” notes a February 1st segment. “Untenable, because Israel’s government is under intense international pressure to dismantle these settlements.”

However, most settlers are portrayed as unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices for peace. In other words, this is a problematic element that won’t “go quietly,” if you will, and is thus a threat to not only the peace process, but to Israeli society itself. “Houses are still built here,” reports CNN’s Guy Raz in a February 8th segment from Gush Katif settlement, “and almost no one in this settlement believes that the government is serious about disengagement. The residents say they have heard it before.” “As the deadline for evacuation approaches,” notes a February 16th segment, “authorities expect there will be those that will be increasingly desperate to stop it.” Violent scuffles between Israeli soldiers and settlers are shown in the background.

The portrait that emerges of most settlers, thus, is one of religious and nationalist zealots that refuse to sacrifice their homes, and thus serve as a barrier to peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. These dissenter are delegitimized and stigmatized as radicals who are out of touch with reality. Only if they are renounced by Israeli society, can those left behind engage in a life of peace and normalcy.

The Palestinian Populace

The CNN text offers two primary portrayals of the Palestinian people. On the one hand—as I have explained—we have the hardworking “everyman” or woman on the street. On the other hand, we have the Palestinian fringe elements--the “militants”—which are in many ways portrayed similarly to their “extremist” Israeli counterparts, the settlers.

These two faces of Palestinian society are clearly evident in CNN's portrayal of a man that-- in many respects-- embodies the Palestinian cause and is the face of the Palestinian people—Yasser Arafat. The dominant CNN portrayal of the Palestinian populace is that of battle-weary and hardworking families anxious to live their lives in peace and tranquility. These are husbands, wives and children. These are families that, as CNN anchor John Vause notes in a January 16th segment, “must endure this unending conflict in poverty and disillusion.”

Women and children--the most vulnerable members of any society—are often the focus of CNN's portrayals of the Palestinian populace. On January 11th, we meet Samima Tamami as she makes a cup of tea for her family. “She didn't vote for Mahmoud Abbas,” notes the anchor. In fact, she didn't vote at all. “But she still hopes a new president will make life a little easier. Jobs for her daughters, better health care, less corruption.” Simple requests from a humble woman who wants a better life for herself and her family.

A January 21st segment takes us into a refugee camp in Lebanon. The refugees sit around a barber shop and while away the time sipping coffee and getting their hair cut. Simple, everyday routines that we all recognize and identify with. Honest, hardworking people, they are far removed from the tumultuous world of politics and officialdom. They do not even tune in to coverage of the elections in the West Bank. They display photos of their homes in Israel—homes they hope to return to one day. Children play soccer in the street, and women pick up their bread from a local bakery. A peaceful, domestic scene depicting people who “want to return to their own country.”

A February 1st segment begins by stating that “the killing of a Palestinian girl is endangering an unofficial Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire.” The segment goes on to recount in graphic detail that “10- year-old Norhan Deeb was buried on Sunday. Witnesses say she was hit in the face by Israeli fire while standing in her school yard.” Scenes from Deeb’s funeral fill the screen. Her mother weeps. Relatives latch on to her coffin. Through her relative’s grief, Norhan’s death becomes imbued with meaning. Her tragic death becomes heroic sacrifice. CNN thus elevates and dramatizes the suffering of the innocents. This is not to imply that it isn’t genuine or real—but CNN can be melodramatic at times and exaggerate the extent of this human drama.

Yasser Arafat: The Face of Palestine

Even Yasser Arafat—a highly controversial figure-- the Palestinian leader for some 40 years before his passing in November 2004, is portrayed more as the common man or man of the people than as a well –polished and contentious leader.

Coverage about Arafat, which often removes him from the political arena, and portrays him more as a charismatic populace leader—a` la Che Guevara or Fidel Castro. In this sense, his portrayal has no common elements with those of Israeli government officials, neatly dressed in suits and ties, which CNN presents us from Jerusalem. For instance, a November 11th segment notes: “There are no trappings, no visible perks, and no pretensions, to the contrary Yasser Arafat lived in a ruined compound on the West Bank, dressed humbly to say the least. He was, by all appearances, as impoverished as his stateless Palestinian people.” In this way, Arafat signifies the Palestinian people.

Indeed, Arafat is deemed something of a folk hero. “For 40 years Yasser Arafat was the singular face of the Palestinian people’s identity, the single repository of their hopes and dreams for an independent state,” states Christiane Amanpour. A November 12th segment covering Yasser Arafat’s funeral focuses on the little girl that he left behind. “One of the most poignant moments of today’s service here in Cairo,” notes Christiane Amanpour, “was the sight of his little daughter, 9-year-old Zahwa, who had not seen her father for years and had left the occupied territories with her mother many years ago. She had not been with her father during the final two weeks as he lay on his deathbed in Paris. And there she was, sobbing and saying goodbye to the father that, by many accounts, she never knew.” This segment not only humanizes Arafat, but also establishes a kinship between the young girl and the Palestinians. She is an innocent victim—exiled from her homeland and not even given the opportunity to bid her father a final farewell.

Furthering Arafat’s humanization and the David and Goliath quality of the conflict, a November 11th segment notes, “Yasser Arafat’s favorite show was Tom and Jerry. And the reason? Because the mouse always won.” Arafat thus becomes emblematic of the powerless Palestinian people—the “mice” in this conflict.

To recount—this is the predominant CNN portrayal of the ordinary Palestinian people, as embodied in Arafat. Ordinary people—with a marked focus on women and children—victimized by their fate and the on-going conflict which they must endlessly endure. This in contrast to the mighty and ruthless Israelis.

The “Militants”: On the Fringes of Palestinian Society

Aside from the Palestinian mainstream, CNN also presents vivid portrayals of the Palestinian extremists or militants. Unlike “regular Palestinians,” they are portrayed as the very root of Palestinian misery and suffering, not unlike the depiction of the Israeli settlers.

A January 16th segment features the story of an ordinary Palestinian family at the Al-Shatie refugee camp in Gaza. The father, Isam, owns a vegetable stand, which his son helps him tend. The family lives far below the poverty line. The children, says wife Samara, are always ill. Many of this family’s ills can be blamed on the militants, suggests the text.

“Back in his cold damp home at the Al-Shatie refugee camp, Isam recalls better days before the uprising,” states reporter Ben Wedeman. “Of course it was better,” says Isam. “We worked, we had money, we had a life.” “Like many people here, Isam is hesitant to criticize the militants on camera. But he had no words of praise for their attack Thursday night on the Carni crossing, the main entry port for commercial good into Gaza, now closed until further notice,” notes Wedeman. “It is a source of income,” Isam says. “It was a mistake, people depend on it.”

“Near one of the clash points outside Gaza City,” states a January 17th segment, “ Hamas (one of the main militant groups in Gaza) gunmen have taken up positions in civilian neighborhoods.” The gunmen are portrayed standing, armed with rifles and grenade launchers, as schoolchildren—backpacks in tow—pass them by. These militants thus enter the bastion of the innocents and threaten to disrupt it. Like the Israeli settlers, the militants are portrayed as the major impediment to peace in the region; an obstacle that keeps both Israelis and Palestinians from living normal lives.

Furthermore, like the settlers, the militants are an impediment to the normal functioning of the existing political and social system and to the established status quo. “And while Abbas was being sworn in,” states a January 16th segment, “armed gunmen clashed with Israeli forces in Gaza City. Israel was trying to stop mortar attacks being fired at a nearby Jewish settlement. At least six Palestinians were killed. According to residents, three they say, were militants.” While Palestinians were electing a new leader, the militants’ actions served to hamper and disrupt this political transformation. A January 17th segment dealing with a militant attack on a commercial crossing into Gaza, serves to strengthen this assessment. “That attack,” notes the text, “and Israel’s subsequent suspension of all contacts with the Palestinian Authority, have thrown Mahmoud Abbas’ leadership into deep crisis.”

The militants—like the settlers, are a marked barrier toward peace. A segment pending a suicide bombing in Tel-Aviv on February 25th notes the following: “It certainly is the mainstream groups, the mainstream bodies are moving towards a lasting peace, it certainly appeared over the last couple of weeks. But the elements on the extremes are going to become increasingly desperate to try and stop it. Both sides have warned and have expected some kind of attack,” continues the text.

Militant activities are directly linked in the CNN text to subsequent Israeli military incursions, which, as previously noted, are the cause of much Palestinian anguish. A February 25th segment depicting a suicide bombing in Tel-Aviv, later notes: “And in the past several weeks there's been a considerable reduction in violence, not just in Palestinian militant activity, but also in Israeli military incursions, as well, into Palestinian neighborhoods.” In other words, violence begets violence. Militant activity leads to violence against Palestinian women and children—the ordinary Palestinian populace that CNN so poignantly portrays.

The militants are thus an obstacle to peace and normalization between these two nations, and a threat to the political and social status quo that seeks stability in the region.

Militant actions are also portrayed as a clear impediment to the Palestinian cause, that is, the Palestinian desire for an independent homeland. A January 21st segment notes that “Abbas has called recent attacks on Israeli communities counter-productive to the Palestinian cause, potentially jeopardizing Israel’s plans to pull settlements out of Gaza this year.”

The militants are thus the main source of misery, not only for the Israeli people, but also their Palestinian brethren. Their actions directly lead to Israeli incursions, retaliation and violence. “The pressure is on to reign in the militants or give up all hope of reviving the peace talks,” notes a January 17th segment.

As is the case with the Palestinian mainstream, elements of the Palestinian militant fringes are evident in CNN’s portrayal of Yasser Arafat. Like the militants, Arafat is deemed in some CNN segments not only as a controversial figure, but also an impediment towards peace. In a November 12th segment pending his death, Arafat is deemed a “lightning rod for controversy. Revered and reviled. Courted and cajoled.” Far removed for earlier portrayals of a “simple man of the people,” the text notes that “Arafat’s legacy will be one of terror and greed.” The CNN text goes on to acknowledge that many people reviled Arafat and viewed him not only as a “corrupt leader of a corrupt government, ” but also as a terrorist and an impediment to peace. The CNN texts notes that President Bush adamantly refused to view him as a partner for the peace process, and made no secret of his contempt for him. Arafat was “a convenient villain, he earned it in many respects,” states Aaron Brown.

A November 11th segment mentions that Arafat is “a deeply flawed figure who descended his people into a spiral of violence and could not close a deal that would seal a permanent peace between Israel and the Palestinians.” Only after his death are there “renewed prospects for peace talks between the two sides.” Like the militants, Arafat is a barrier to lasting peace.

The CNN text creates a very schizophrenic portrait of Yasser Arafat. He is “a folk hero who Arab leaders publicly expressed admiration for but privately considered a nuisance and trouble maker,” “he is at once revered and reviled.” In his one hand he “carried an olive branch, and in the other a gun.”

This schizophrenic portrait is emblematic of Palestinian society at large. On the one hand, the civilians who are wearied by this ongoing conflict, and want to live their lives away from the destitution and violence that this conflict affords. Simple people who long for peace—the olive branch which Arafat grasps with one hand. On the other hand, there are the militants-- the cause of much Palestinian suffering. They lie far outside the margins of “normal” or “civilized” Palestinian society. They seek only violence and chaos, and must be rooted out of Palestinian society if both sides have any prospects of living in peace. They are the gun in Arafat’s other hand. Arafat’s complex portrait thus truly reflects the complex character of the people he championed.

The Future of the Region

In light of these Israeli and Palestinian portrayals in the CNN text, how does CNN view future prospects for the region? What does CNN foresee for these two nations? Does it deem a lasting peace in Israel possible, or does it see this conflict enduring and escalating, as it has over the past 50 years?

Although CNN forecasts for the future of the Mid East tend to vary, they range from incredibly grim to cautiously optimistic. CNN tends to portray the Mid-East conflict as a perpetual and devastating entanglement-- a blood-soaked feud that will never end.

A January 16th CNN segment, following the election of new Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, paints a picture of this conflict as an old and never-ending grudge. "While there is a new President for the Palestinian Authority, for now it looks like the same old, vivid conflict," states the reporter." Images of teenagers carrying the flag-draped coffin of their fallen friend fill the screen. All that can be expected is more fighting, more blood, more children saying goodbye to their friends too soon.

"Shortly after Abbas' arrival," notes a January 17th segment, "another suicide blast in Gaza, this one claimed by Hamas. One Israeli intelligence officer left dead. Seven others wounded. And the rocket attacks against Israeli communities go on. Both sides have heard the rhetoric before. Israel is demanding an immediate end to militant attacks. Palestinian militants say Israel must first stop assassinating their leaders. Mahmoud Abbas is squeezed by both sides." Images of masked militants firing rockets and mortars fill the screen. Ambulances wail through the streets, rushing to evacuate the wounded soldiers. This is a hopeless situation that has no end in sight. There is little hope for peace and reconciliation. Only chaos and bloodshed ensue.

The conflict is portrayed as an historic, ancient grudge that has been raging on for centuries with no end in sight. A November 11th segment, following the death of Yasser Arafat, describes his contentious relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "These are long-standing adversaries in the region, almost literally from the beginning of the Israeli state. These two men have grown old together, clashed together. Agreed, frankly, on virtually nothing." This is an ancient feud, dating back to the establishment of Israel, which has still not been resolved.

The prospects for future resolution of this adversarial relationship appear to be slim. Peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians are often described in the CNN text as being “stalled” or “at a standstill.” There is much talk of the need to “revive.” or “resurrect” the peace process, or to get it “back on track.” Presumably, thus, it is all but dead or derailed with no hope for success. Prospects for peace in the region are “fragile” or “shaky” at best. A far from optimistic assessment.

Even in wake of an historic summit between Israelis and Palestinians in Egypt, there is only a sense of guarded or cautious optimism in the CNN text. A February 8th segment covering this summit begins as follows: “The never-ending quest for peace in the Middle-East. The Israelis and the Palestinians are off and running once again, with their first summit in years, and a cease-fire pledge. It may all sound familiar, but it may, then again, be very different. This time around, there's no Yasser Arafat in the mix.” “They've been down this path before,” notes anchor O'Brien, “I think it's fair to say, maybe 10 times before with cease-fires that are agreed upon, and then, of course, fall apart.”

The summit is doomed to failure before it even begins. The summit may offer a “glimmer of hope,” but the situation in the Mid-East is deemed “hopeless.” It is a region of “perennial pessimism.” Not even a small window is afforded for peace to succeed.

Another February 8th segment describes this Sharm El Sheikh summit as a mere charade. “Flags are flown .Lofty speeches are delivered. Promises made. Then everyone goes home and reality sets in again.” And that reality is blood-shed and death. “Perhaps nowhere more than in the Middle East does blood beget blood so easily,” notes Guy Raz in a November 11th segment. According to the CNN text, this is a region where the prospects of an end to bloodshed and violence are slim. “While it is calm one day, and violent the next,” notes Guy Raz in a March 1st

segment, “the two sides, as always, are still oceans apart.” An image of a small child splashing in the ocean in Gaza appears on the screen. Apparently, the next generation will continue to endure this never-ending conflict .

Guy Raz sums it up best in a November 9th segment about burial plans for Yasser Arafat: “Nothing is easy or simple in the Middle East, not in Iraq and not in the rest of it. Not in life—and as it turns out, not in death, either. Nothing is easy or simple in the Middle East.” And that glum assessment is unlikely to change anytime soon.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This study helps contribute to the field of mass media studies, seeing as it is probably one of very few studies that examined how global news networks like CNN can reproduce meanings on a global level and create an “international discourse” of sorts. Very few studies, for instance, examined how CNN covers foreign news and, more importantly, how it utilizes narrative and mythic frameworks in its coverage of foreign news—especially of foreign conflicts and crises. Furthermore, few studies have examined the possible links between such narrative frameworks and our broader societal conceptions of such global crises. Even fewer studies have examined news coverage of Israel and Palestine utilizing quantitative and textual analytical techniques. Especially when it comes to examining depictions of Israel and its people in the media, there has been very little work done in the field. Clearly far more work is still needed in order to uncover the “true face” of Israel not only in CNN’s programming but in other news and media outlets as well.

Most studies dealing with news portrayals of Israel and Palestine have looked at notions of objectivity and bias and utilized content analytical techniques to codify news broadcasts as “neutral” or “slanted”. Very few studies have gone beyond that and examined the latent messages, portrayals, and images that can be found in such newscasts and how these depictions are related to our broader societal conceptions of Israel and Palestine.

And that is the true contribution of this study. It helped touch on the public images that the CNN text helps generate vis a vis Israel and Palestinian and how it uses tales of old as the perfect vehicle to generate and perpetuate these images.

In conveying the Israeli-Palestinian tale, and recounting the tortured story of the Middle-East conflict, the CNN text relies heavily not only on mythic language and imagery, but also on the very narrative structures and themes that Lule highlights within his “master myths” of the hero, the victim, the scapegoat and the foreboding future (Lule, 2001; Lule, 2002). Clearly this never-ending struggle (especially when depicted through the televised news broadcast) lends itself particularly well to somewhat simplistic—yet epic and resonate— depictions of heroes and victims, good versus evil, or David versus Goliath.

This is in no way implying that CNN distorts facts or misleads its viewers, nor that it is “biased” and prejudiced against one side in this conflict or the other — as so many critics, both Israeli and Palestinian, often charge. This is also not to say that CNN fails to inform us, and chooses to tell us simplistic fairytales. But by choosing to show us certain events in the region and failing to depict others, and by portraying events in Israel and Palestine through a certain lens or framework, the CNN news report becomes more than mere dry, bland representation of unadulterated reality. Perhaps unconsciously, perhaps through certain editorial choices, the CNN news account becomes narrative. It becomes our joint societal tale; our mutual mythical narrative of Israel and Palestine.

The CNN news text, like many other media portrayals, thus essentially strives to tell us a story—not objectively transcribe and record reality. Stories— and myths in particular—are the way in which we understand each other and the world. Tales are the way we reconcile ourselves with reality—especially one that is as harsh and unfathomable as the Middle East conflict.

Narratives are the manner in which we articulate our experiences as human beings and, more importantly, they are the manner in which we interpret historical events and occurrences. Thus, it is not the sheer and utter factuality of the CNN text that is at issue here. Whether CNN “gets it right” can be forever discussed and debated, as is the question of whether any historical reality can be accurately depicted in absolute terms.

What I seek to examine is the role that CNN’s Middle-East reporting—among other societal forces and factors—plays in helping fashion our ideas and conceptions about Israel and Palestine, as well as their inhabitants. The value of the CNN news story thus lies in helping us fine tune and refine our understanding of the conflict and the meanings that we attach to it. It creates a working hypothesis for us from which point we can refine our understanding of Israel/Palestine—as individuals and as a collective society. As such, CNN’s coverage—as societal narrative or myth— is as “true” and valuable than any recording of what we deem “pure” fact.

CNN is thus elevated to the status of our wise, mutual elder, telling us tales of land and of a conflict far removed from our ordinary experiences. It helps us make sense of a complex and troubling reality—as do all myths, which help reconcile us to contradictory and confusing realities. Hence, it is not surprising that is through narrative structure, and through archetypal myths in particular, that CNN structures its coverage of Israel and Palestine.

Before unraveling and deconstructing the myths inherent in the CNN text, it is also important to note that these media representations and televised images are as fickle and fluid as the Middle-East situation itself. It is not wise—therefore— to deal in absolutes and say that these are the only— and definitive— images of the region that CNN conveys. Not all CNN news accounts employ a mythical—or even narrative— structure. Not all CNN reporters think alike,

nor do all of them tell us the same tale. Not all CNN segments depict Israel and Palestine in the same monolithic manner. Furthermore the narrative structures utilized in the CNN newscasts—as well as the tales that they tell—often change and transform over time.

Furthermore, it is also important to note my own unique viewpoint and biases entering into this study. As an Israeli and a Jew, I hold a unique view of—and harbor a marked interest in—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More accurately, I have a marked interest in examining how my home country is portrayed in a widely pervasive—and internationally renowned—news medium like CNN.

Being a diplomat's daughter, I have also had the occasion to spend considerable periods of time away from Israel—in places as diverse as South Africa, Houston, New York, and Atlanta, where the only true media constant is CNN. Wherever I was, I could count on this global news network to deliver news of home. Being an Israeli abroad—a fish out of my cultural pond—also gave me ample chance to notice how outsiders tended to view my home country through the CNN spectrum.

I therefore acknowledge that I may harbor some biases of my own vis a vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but putting aside personal feelings and misconceptions is part and parcel of qualitative work. No form of research can be entirely objective, and it is not possible for researchers to be totally impartial. This, because total objectivity is not humanly possible (Crotty, 1996; Schutz, 1994). Most qualitative researchers, however, are able to acknowledge their inherent values and biases, and put them aside.

The means by which qualitative researchers endeavor to put aside their assumptions, and not impose their own understanding and constructions on the data, is known as reflexive bracketing (Crotty, 1996). Reflexivity acknowledges the fact that qualitative researchers are part

of the social world that they study (Frank, 1997), and that their own experiences and values are just as important as an object of study. As researchers, our interests and experiences are what stimulates our work—and where our journey as researchers begins.

Reflexivity was thus part and parcel of this research study. As suggested by Ahern (1999), I kept a research journal in which I clarified my own personal value system, the potential role conflicts that arose as I conducted my study, as well as feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality. Pending this study, I also conducted a post analysis, reflecting on how I wrote up my account of the study, and whether I have successfully acknowledged—and attempted to abandon— any potential biases.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that I examined a limited amount of CNN news accounts which were broadcast during a specific period of time. News accounts change and evolve; as do the socio-political realities in the Middle-East. Media depictions do not exist in a societal vacuum. They are both a reflection of— and contributor to— our socio-political realities. As the political realities in the region shift, there is no doubt that the myths and narratives we tell—the vehicles by which we capture and understand these societal realities— change and evolve as well. The triumphant news hero on any given day, can easily be demonized and depicted as the villain on the next. Nevertheless, there is one constant. As members of the human family we will always tell stories and capture our lives through tales.

As such, examining the CNN mythical narrative vis a vis Israel and Palestine can tell us much about how we view them and their people as a society, and about the images of the region that we fashion as a collective whole. More research is needed, however, in order to clarify and examine the audience and reception facets of the CNN text.

In this study, I examined the CNN text and the possible meanings encoded therein. How audiences interpret and “read” this text— and whether it shapes their conceptions of Israel and Palestine— is a whole different matter, and a fertile arena for further investigation and research.

Palestinians as Heroic Victims

It is not surprising that the two most predominant myths permeating the CNN text were those of the hero and the victim. Especially when we try to conceive of a struggle, we strive to figure out who is “right” and who is “wrong”. As human beings, we strive to take sides. We long to rally on the side of what is morally pure and good, and avoid what is deemed aggressive or evil. Thus, it is not surprising that there is ample evidence for Lule’s myth of the heroic victim in CNN’s portrayals of Israel and Palestine. More accurately, I found that it is predominately the Palestinian people that the CNN text casts in the role of victims; and heroic victims at that.

In the sacrifice—and often death—of these Palestinian “victims”, the CNN text portrays a quiet heroism and nobility. The CNN portrayal of the Palestinian populace is the classic tale of the innocent victim, who struggles in the face of adversity and unimaginable odds.

This tale of the innocent victim is first and foremost woven by the locales that the CNN text chooses to show us. Like any tale—or good drama—the setting is of paramount importance. CNN takes us into the mundane, everyday lives of Palestinian men, women and children living in Gaza and the West Bank. We see men sitting outside a barber shop and whiling away the afternoon. Children playing soccer in dirty, impoverished streets. This, to the significant exclusion of any scenes of everyday normalcy from Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, or any other Israeli city. CNN reporters are primarily stationed in Palestinian territories, and thus these territories are virtually all we see. This creates the identification and “bond” between viewer and mythical victim that is such an important and intrinsic part of this tale.

According to Lule, in myth the victim is a symbol of the self. We mourn for the victim primarily because it could very well have been us. (Lule, 2001) . Myth in news stories helps establish that link between victim and audience. By taking us to the street of Gaza and showing us its streets and alleyways—its women and children striving for a life of peace and normalcy—the CNN text allows us to see ourselves in these innocent victims. We identify with their pain, their grief, and their never ending struggle for a better life for themselves and their families. We readily see our lives in theirs. We, too, buy groceries for our families, go to school, and engage in the mundane routines of everyday life.

Furthermore, the Palestinian locales that CNN takes us to are typically very humble, impoverished and plain. Streets that are replete with violence and chaos. Gunfights and burning tires fill the CNN frame. Children on their way to school encounter soldiers, bullets and tanks. It is in such humble and violent surroundings that we encounter the Palestinian populace, and this rather bleak setting adds an extra dimension to the victim myth. The Palestinians are a victimized and helpless population caught in a never-ending cycle of poverty and violence.

Furthermore, CNN chooses to show us the weakest and most vulnerable segments of Palestinian society. Women and children are the epitome of the hapless victims, Lule's powerless victims of fate and circumstance—children literally being punished for the sins of the father. Mere women and children pitted up against an armed, professional and rather ruthless Israeli army. We meet a 12-year-old girl in her hospital bed, intubated and helpless at the hands of a bullet from Israeli soldiers. We see a 12-year-old helping to tend his father's fruit and vegetable stand in order to earn extra money for his family. We encounter countless Palestinian youngsters gunned down in the prime of their lives or carrying the cloth-draped bodies of their fallen comrades. We see ordinary families experiencing extraordinary loss, and witness innocent

children killed while going through the simplest routines of everyday life—like going to school or simply playing out in the street with their friends. What can these vulnerable and helpless victims possibly do in the face of Israeli might?

Nevertheless, we see a population that struggles against the odds and strives for a better future in spite of these dire circumstances. We see a Miriam Solami that strives to improve conditions in her town, and build a better future for coming generations. We see a Mutafa Barguti who runs for Palestinian Authority President, and strives to build a better life for the struggling Palestinian populace. As such the sacrifices of the Palestinian people, and their struggle to maintain a normal life—as well as their nobility in the face of poverty and despair—become heroic.

Heroes, as noted by Lule (2001), come from humble circumstances and surroundings, rising above their fate to achieve glory and greatness. The humble birth is an integral part of the hero myth. In the Palestinian struggle, therefore, we see what Lule termed the heroism of the everyday (2001). Furthermore, in the death of Palestinian civilians—typically youngsters in the CNN text—the CNN newscasts portray heroic sacrifice.

Often, as Lule ascertains in his analysis of the victim myth (2001), we see the grief of the family members and loved ones that the innocent victims left behind. In tight close-up, we see tearful mothers weeping at the funerals of their children. We see teenagers carrying the cloth-draped bodies of their friends who have died in the prime of their lives. The family and friends of the victims are thus utilized to depict their death within the drama of heroic sacrifice. They “sanctify and exalt those that are left behind” (Lule, 2001, p. 42), and turn their death into heroic sacrifice. The lives and deaths of the victims thus take on special poignancy and significance. We are reconciled with their fate and with the harsh realities that they face, because in their death,

suffering and sacrifice there is heroism and there is meaning. The CNN texts, thus, as noted by Lule (2001), reaffirms Palestinian lives through death and sacrifice. They are not helpless victims of a fickle fate; they are heroes struggling against the odds.

It is also interesting to note that CNN portrayals of former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat tend to reinforce this Palestinian portrait of the helpless—yet valiant— victim. Arafat was, after all, an emblem for the entire Palestinian populace. He was the one—and only—leader that Palestinians had known for over 40 years. In many respects, he was the face of the Palestinian people, and the voice for the Palestinian struggle. And like the Palestinian populace, the CNN text portrays Arafat as every bit the hapless victim. His “Mukata” compound is filmed in ruins at the hand of Israeli bulldozers and soldiers. He stands defeated and powerless against this Israeli might. He is dressed modestly—as meek as his impoverished people. He admires the mouse in the “Tom and Jerry” cartoons—the very animated symbol for the loveable underdog that we all cheer and root for.

Like his Palestinian populace, also, Arafat never stops fighting against the odds “holding an olive branch in one hand and a gun in the other.” He is the very essence of Lule’s heroic victim, and the emblematic extension of his long –suffering—but always valiant— people.

Faces of Israel: The Ruthless Aggressor

Myth primarily operates in terms of binary opposites. It clarifies and explicates in terms of contrast. Nowhere is this more evident than when we examine Israeli and Palestinian portrayals in the CNN text.

In sharp contrast to the long-suffering Palestinian people, we do not get a glimpse into ordinary, mundane Israeli lives. We are not taken into Israeli streets and homes. Rarely do we see a CNN segment stemming from the streets of Tel-Aviv. Even though Israelis are also

victims of violence and terror attacks, we do not see the mothers, relatives, friends, or families of these victimized Israeli civilians. At most, we are only given a cold report detailing “casualties” and “official Israeli reaction.”

If Israeli victims of terror are shown at all, we see only the hapless victim, the individual who was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time—the casualties, the blood, the doctors. These are the unfortunate victims of terror. But the heroic element subsides. We do not see these victims in the normal course of their mundane routines. We do not see them valiantly struggling to rebuild their lives. We are merely glad that it wasn’t us. The terror- as Lule notes—“as opposed to disgust over the slaughter or grief over the loss, resides in a personal, primarily unconscious understanding that the victim is a symbol of the self: it could have been me” (Lule, 2001, p. 57).

Typically we are only taken to the streets of Tel-Aviv in the wake of a terror attack or bombing. We get a brief glimpse of the terror scene, of hapless victims of circumstance; crying and bleeding. Lying in a hospital bed, they can not even articulate what they have experienced. These are victims of fate, of coincidence. They happened to be in the line for the discothèque when the bomb blew up. They happened to be on the bus when the explosives detonated. They were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time. CNN reports on terror bombings inside Israel focus on the potential set back for the peace process—offering us nary a glance at the countless civilians who were injured or killed in the attack. The people are an afterthought. It is the setback for peace that is of paramount importance. Even in the face of untold Israeli suffering, we get only official word and reaction.

In other words, Israelis are unequal victims. Not heroic and noble in their struggle to survive in the harsh and volatile Middle –East environment, they are different than their struggling and suffering Palestinian brethren—their lives deemed unworthy of focus and examination. We do not see the “scenes of horror and irony” –as Lule deems them—that we regularly see emanating from the Palestinian territories. (Lule, 2001, p.46).

Mythic narrative conveys meaning through significant omissions. The omission of ordinary Israeli locales and voices is a significant omission indeed. Even in wake of terror attacks—which readily lend themselves to mythic depictions of innocent victims—little attention is given to Israeli civilians. They are not victims, the text seems to say. Their suffering is not mythologized or depicted in dramatic and visceral terms. Their lives are not affirmed as are those of their noble and suffering Palestinian counterparts. Their stories are—to a great extent – untold. Their voices remain for the most part muted. We do not get an emotional glimpse into their lives and experiences, as is the case with the Palestinian populace.

Furthermore, when Israeli portrayals do exist , they seem to be those of power and fierce aggression. We see Israeli soldiers—the very icon of power, control, and ruthless force, with guns slung over their shoulders. We see the same soldiers stopping harangued and impoverished Palestinian civilians at innumerable roadblocks. Ad nauseum, we see the infamous West Bank Wall—an iconic emblem of brute power and domination. If the Palestinian population is victimized, we need not look too far for their victimizers and for the source of their misery.

The CNN text operates through binary oppositions, and significant omissions or inclusions. It is typical of the manner in which myth and narrative generate meaning. For example, the segment of the West Bank Wall that is typically filmed in the CNN text is one of the few that are actually concrete and stone; not the countless miles of chain link fence that

actually comprises the “wall.” The soldiers that are depicted in the CNN text are videotaped next to school-children—the very bastion of helplessness and innocence. What can a young child do against an armed soldier? How can we—the viewers—possibly not view these Palestinian children as powerless victims?

It is also important to note that most of the voices heard on the Israeli end of the conflict are of an official nature—again a significant omission of ordinary men, women and children. In the CNN text, we typically hear from Ariel Sharon—or one of his spokespersons—speaking of peace and reconciliation from behind the comfort of their podiums. Donned in suits and ties, these officials are filmed in sterile studio settings far removed from our ordinary lives and experiences. Far from the life and vibrancy inherent in Palestinian depictions and portrayals, these Israeli depictions are cold and alienating images in life-less surroundings and settings. Israeli officials—furthermore—are the very epitome of authority and power, and a reminder of the power imbalances depicted in the coverage. Usually filmed with an Israeli flag behind them, they loom foreboding and strong. This, in stark contrast to the impoverished Palestinian population, which has no government to care for them, no centralized authority to defend their women and children. How can we, the viewers, identify with this cold and official Israeli perspective? How can we see our lives in theirs—a requisite of the heroic victim myth? This, especially as these alienating and cold portrayals of Israeli officials are juxtaposed in stark contrast to the heroism of everyday life, as Lule deems it, that we so readily see in the intimate portrayals of Palestinian lives and deaths inherent in the CNN text (Lule, 2001).

These mythic narrative portrayals of Israel and Palestine furthermore have strong ideological implications. As noted by Schmoyer (1998), everybody likes to cheer for the downtrodden underdog—especially if he manages to rise above the odds.

We pull for the tortoise to beat the hare. We thrill over the Alamo. We cheer for the underdog in sports. Why? It's so easy to identify with the underdog. We all feel that way from time to time in life. That's why we pull for the underdog. The Bible is full of underdog stories: Daniel and the lions, his friends and the fiery furnace, Moses at the Red Sea, Joshua and Jericho. Perhaps the best known and loved is the story of David and Goliath. David's victory over the giant gives hope for all us little guys as we face giants in our lives.(section 2. para. 1)

Thus the victim—the outnumbered underdog—is a very powerful symbol and archetype in Western society. From movies such as “Rocky” to biblical tales, we empathize with the “heroic victim,” with the underdog, and construe his or her struggle as our own. If the weak and helpless underdog can thrive and endure, surely so can we. By casting the Palestinian population in that role, the CNN text invites us—the viewers—to identify with their cause, and cheer on their struggle. Sacrifice and loss are very prominent themes in Judeo-Christian ethic.

By focusing on the sacrifices, the death and suffering of the Palestinian population—to the exclusion of the difficulties that the Israeli population must endure and the sacrifices that they must make throughout the never-ending Middle-East Struggle—CNN portrays the Palestinian populace as occupying the moral high-ground, and as just in their struggle against the Israeli aggressors—the “goliaths” in this tale. The CNN coverage completely negates the possibility of suffering and loss on the Israeli side of the conflict. In its incessant focus on the suffering of the innocents, in its dramatization of the losses suffered by the Palestinian population to the exclusion of Israeli lives, CNN undoubtedly casts Palestinians in the role of the heroic victims.

“Israelis have an army, Palestinians have a will to fight,” said Walter Rodgers in a November 11th segment following the death of Arafat. This sums up the CNN perspective on the conflict. It is the oldest story in the book: David versus Goliath. The weak and helpless victims valiantly struggling against the mighty aggressors. The underdogs struggling against the odds.

And in the CNN text, the Palestinian people are the heroic and suffering David struggling to maintain their lives and dignity in face of unfathomable odds. This, in stark contrast to the ruthless, aggressive and powerful Israeli “conquerors.”—the sinister goliaths in this tale.

Scapegoats

There are clear elements of Lule’s scapegoat myth that are evident in CNN’s portrayals of “radicals” on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: that is the Israeli settlers, as well as the Palestinian “militants”—radical groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Both groups are depicted in the CNN text as fringe elements that are the anomalous part of their respective societies. Denigrated, and cast for the most part in the role of deranged fanatics, both groups are deemed zealots that are slightly out of touch with the reality that is transpiring around them. Not only that, they live in—and create— a dangerous and potentially lethal environment for themselves and their children.

Both groups— furthermore— are a clear impediment to the peace process, and therefore must be cast aside and symbolically “shunned” from their respective groups so that those left behind can live in peace and tranquility. This is especially prevalent in CNN’s portrayal of Israeli settlers. Depicted as “abnormal” or “strange”— and donned in the skull-caps and fringes of Orthodox Jewry— they are depicted as an anomalous part of Israeli society. Typically they are filmed next to a synagogue, praying or fervently dancing with the Israeli flag. As such, they are isolated from the rest of their Israeli brethren, and depicted as “different”—a virtual prerequisite for the isolation phase of the “scapegoat myth.” They are thus symbolically removed from the rest of “normal” Israeli society. (Lule, 2001).

Furthermore they are depicted as a threat to “normal” Israeli society and a major cause for its ills, as well as for the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The settlers—according to the CNN text— refuse to acknowledge the looming reality of disengagement. They are furthermore a threat to order and civility in Israeli society—as personified by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other government ministers. Many CNN segments imply—directly or indirectly—that settlers might harm Prime Minister Sharon in order to stop the process of disengagement and the withdrawal from the settlements.

CNN’s representation of the Israeli settlers strongly suggests the presence of the scapegoat myth. They are the fringe elements of society that threaten its legitimate existence. They are the scapegoats, symbolically carrying the troubles of Israeli society—and perhaps of the entire region—on their shoulders. (Lule, 2001). They are seen as renegades living violent lives in order to support their extreme ideology and religious beliefs.

Unfortunately, it is this radical segment of Israeli society that is featured and portrayed most prominently in the CNN text. It is one of the few faces of Israel that we are actually privy to in CNN programming.

Furthermore, like mythical scapegoat , the settlers are the ones who must bear the burden of Mid-East troubles, and evict their homes in order for the peace process to succeed. They must be expelled, in this sense quite physically, in order to cleanse or purify those left behind; i.e. greater Israeli society. Only when the settlers are evicted, can the peace process possibly succeed. Only when they abandon their homes, can other segments of Israeli society symbolically be “purified” and live lives of peace and normalcy. This is a clear illustration of the “expulsion” or “annihilation” phase of the scapegoat myth. (Lule, 2001).

Again, this portrayal has strong ideological implications. The Israel-Palestinian conflict began long before they were “occupied territories” or settlements. Casting settlers in the role of scapegoats implies that they are at the root of the conflict, and are responsible for both Palestinian and Israeli ills—a rather simplistic framework for understanding a conflict that is anything but. Again, this stems from a very human need to place the blame for our collective troubles on somebody—or something. As such, we can take comfort in knowing that if this source of trouble is expelled or removed (in some cases even symbolically annihilated or killed) then all will be right once again. Unfortunately, reality is far from that clear-cut. Through the scapegoat myth, we attempt to simplify and resolve a complex and sticky situation, which in reality is far more difficult—perhaps impossible—to resolve.

Portrayals of the mythical scapegoat can also be found on the Palestinian end of the conflict. In the Palestinian case, it is the militants that are the mythical scapegoats. Like the settlers, they are portrayed as a radical and lunatic segment of Palestinian society. Grenade launchers in hand, veiled, with ominous eyes peering out from beyond black cloth, they are as bizarre and sinister as the Israeli settlers. In other words, like the settlers, they are removed and isolated from ordinary Palestinian society in keeping with the scapegoat myth.

Like the Israeli settlers, the militants, furthermore, embody the ills of Palestinian society. Often they are filmed in civilian neighborhoods, and are deemed the direct cause for the poverty and dire misery of their Palestinian brethren. In one CNN segment, they loom ominously on a street corner which is frequented by young school-children on their way to their class. One can only wonder if the children will be harmed by the militants’ actions. Furthermore, the “radicals” or militants” are also deemed directly responsible for the destabilization and delegitimization of Mahmoud Abbas’ government.

This is a direct echo of CNN's portrayal of Israeli settlers, which similarly seek to topple the Sharon government—and even intend to do some of its ministers actual physical harm. Therefore, the militants, like the settlers, are symbolically assigned the “burdens” or troubles of Palestinian society—very much in line with Lule's mythical scapegoat. (Lule, 2001).

Finally, like the settlers, the “militants” must be driven out of Palestinian society in order to cleanse or purify those left behind, i.e. allow them to live in peace. If only militant actions could be halted, then the conflict would abruptly end. If only Abbas could reign in the militants, then the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations are virtually guaranteed to succeed. In other words—militant actions are the root cause of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, and halting such actions is a magical and instant cure for all that ails the Middle-East.

Like their extremist Jewish brethren— the settlers— the Palestinian militants are the mythical scapegoats. They bear the misery and suffering of their fellow Palestinians, and their actions ultimately lead Palestinians to live in squalor, misery and violence. Like the settlers, they are marginalized and delegitimized. They are radicals living on the fringe of society, and their actions lead to misery and poverty for others. They are the Palestinian epitome of the scapegoat. They must be “reigned in” or symbolically removed from Palestinian society in order for other “normal” Palestinians—the innocent and heroic victims— to live in peace.

Yet again, this mythic portrayal has strong ideological ramifications extending far beyond the CNN text or narrative itself. The scapegoat myth is a convenient way to make sense of , and simplify, a situation that is sticky, convoluted and not prone to such simple or easy resolutions. CNN doesn't lie, distort and conceal; perhaps this conflict can be resolved if militant and radical groups on both the Israeli and Palestinian side are “removed” from legitimate Israeli and Palestinian societies. But the incessant focus and emphasis within the CNN text on these

groups simplifies a convoluted situation, and places *all* blame for the conflict on these two marginalized elements. Placing the entire blame on any particular group is a rather simplistic—but quintessentially human—way of understanding (or attempting to understand) a situation that is difficult and perhaps unfathomable. The scapegoat myth “explains” away a conflict that is hundreds—if not thousands of years old—by reducing it to two radical fringe elements. It avoids dealing with the issues and grievances that both groups—settlers and “militants” may raise vis a vis this conflict. It creates absolutes where there are none. Both of these groups—“militants” and settlers—depart from Western society’s accepted thinking and societal conventions. Isolating and symbolically annihilating these groups is an easy way to reduce the Mid-East conflict to manageable elements.

The Foreboding Future

In CNN’s portrayals of Israel and Palestine, we also see much of Lule’s myth of the foreboding future. The CNN text anticipates a prolonged period of war, sacrifice and suffering for the region. All that can be expected in the Middle-East, hints the CNN text, is more strife and warfare—and considerably more victims.

The CNN text constructs the Middle-East conflict as an age-old feud, an ancient grudge which very doubtfully can be resolved. “Nothing is easy and simple in the Middle-East, not in life and not even in death,” notes a March 1, 2005 segment following the death of Yasser Arafat. This sums up the CNN sentiment towards the region. The Middle East is constructed in the CNN text as a region perennially embroiled in conflict and blood. The situation in the region is often described as “hopeless” or at a “stalemate”—not offering much room for resolution of the conflict, or any prospects for peace.

More often than not, the Israeli-Palestinian peace-process is termed “stalled”, “halted” or— in more dramatic fashion— as needing to be “revived” or even “resurrected.” The images emanating from the CNN text—children carrying the cloth-draped coffins of their friends, fire fights through the streets of Gaza, Hamas gunmen standing with grenades at the ready in civilian neighborhoods frequented by school children—furthermore frame this conflict as one that will carry on for generations to come with no foreseeable end or resolution in sight.

After Arafat’s death, a picture of him and Sharon was plastered behind anchor Aaron Brown. He described them as two men that have grown old together, and spent most of their adult lives fighting each other. How could peace possibly reign in a region that has known such historic, generations-old animosity? How could such a deep and enduring blood-feud possibly be resolved? Many others leaders will grow old fighting— and dying— together, the CNN text seems to say. The hatred in the Middle-East runs too deep, the animosity too intense for their to be any hope for a brighter Mid-East future.

Furthermore, as typical of Lule’s myth of the foreboding future (2001), the CNN text asks its viewers to forsake any illusions of a more hopeful tomorrow in Israel and Palestine. Even in wake of hopeful occurrences in the region, such as a seemingly successful peace summit, the CNN tests offers only a “glimpse of hope” for a situation that it deems “perennially pessimistic.” The two sides have been down this road before, states the CNN text, and countless times at that, so there is no real reason to believe that this next attempt at peace and reconciliation could possibly succeed. Thus, all that can be expected in the region is more violence, more blood, and more children who die— or must bury their friends— far before their time.

The CNN text thus prepares us for a prolonged (and perhaps never-ending) period of struggle, strife and sacrifice in Israel and Palestine, and warns of more pain and devastation to come—the very epitome of the myth of the foreboding future.(Lule, 2001). Its forecasts for the region range from catastrophic, to cautiously optimistic at best. The two warring sides—Israeli and Palestinian— are forever oceans apart, and the animosity and hatred between them merely grows and escalates. The future for the region is tenuous and frightening at best—a bleak and foreboding future indeed.

This myth— like the others— has a strong ideological component, and is inextricably linked to societal conceptions of the region and its inhabitants. CNN frames its coverage in terms of hostilities, hatred and violence—animosity that perhaps can never be surmounted. Its prospects for the region are incredibly and viscerally bleak—perhaps dramatically more so than is the actual case. Granted, the Middle-East situation is indeed discouraging. Furthermore, animosities in the region have run high for generations. But the CNN text does not offer even the tiniest glimmer of hope for peace and reconciliation. It offers a dramatic—and almost apocalyptic—vision for the region. CNN dramatizes the conflict, it relishes in the violence and the pain, thus painting a portrait of a region that consumes itself in strife and violence—an unflattering portrait of Israel and Palestine indeed.

Perhaps framing the Middle-East in this manner—in dark and ominous absolutes—helps CNN's viewers make sense of a situation that is foreign and unpalatable to most of them. All of Lule's master myths—as a matter of fact—and the narrative structure that CNN employs in weaving the Israeli-Palestinian tale—are instrumental in translating the convoluted and unfathomable history of the region into a language that is universal, palatable and natural to us all—the language of myth.

As such, CNN portrayals can be simplistic—perhaps even stereotypical. This is probably at the root of grumbling on both the Israeli and Palestinian side at these sometimes overly dramatic and unflattering depictions. The Middle East conflict is, perhaps, too complex a tale, and too convoluted a situation, (especially for those removed from the realities of the region) to be conveyed and recounted in any other form, but through stories as old as human society itself.

Israel and Palestine, countries so steeped in history and ancient tradition— in which the quintessentially human and visceral forces of life and death, war and peace, hatred and reconciliation are at play—can probably only be understood in terms of myths: eternal stories as old as time itself.

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