Abu Musab Al Zarqawi: The Making and Unmaking of an American Monster (in Baghdad)

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Abstract

On June 7, 2006, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the United States' 'public enemy number two', was killed by two 500lb bombs, dropped by US forces on the safe house in which he and others were hiding. This paper is about the making and unmaking of Al Zarqawi as a monster, and his curious afterlife as a governmental technology. As we pass the fifth anniversary of his death, this detailed study of Al Zarqawi offers an invaluable general lesson for the political analysis of terror. Zarqawi's monstration – his making and unmaking as a monster – tells us about the powers of naming and linking that characterize executive power in the age of globalized media systems, and the productive relation between diurnal practices of security work and the nocturnal phantasms of cultural memory carried by media which, this paper argues, drive and sustain wars in the twenty-first century.

'The sleep of reason produces monsters.'

–Goya

'And never forget: everything has its moment to be believed, however unlikely or anodyne, however incredible or stupid.'

–Javier Marias, *Fever and Spear*

'Stories have no point if they don't absorb our terror.'

–Don DeLillo, *Mao II*

Introduction: Of Monsters and Memory Banks

Tony Blair was unfazed by the heckles from the public gallery. Making his final statement to the Chilcot Inquiry, Britain's ex Prime Minister offered an assessment of his actions, culminating in the following comment:

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> I feel responsibility but no regret for removing Saddam Hussein. I think he was a monster. I believe he threatened not just the region but the world, and in the circumstances we faced it was better to deal with his threat and remove him from office. The world is better as a result.[1]

By following the making and unmaking of another infamous monster of the war on terror, this article investigates the active processes of making a monster out of a political antagonist, and the retrospective activity of vanquished monsters, from beyond the grave, in the work of government.[2] What is offered here is not the true, complete history of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, nor an analysis of the veracity of the many claims made by mobilizing his name and the phantasms that cling to it. Rather, this article follows several key movements of his shifting shape, from his initial appearance, disappearance, reappearance, and eventual vanishing, in order to open potential spaces for thinking politically about the relations between humans and the monsters of their making, between rational plans and proliferating nightmares, between day and night. In order to begin doing so, I first offer some conceptual frames understanding the processes to follow.

Scripting: Monsters, Outlaws, and Inlaws

What are monsters? Following Michael Foucault's development from Georges Canguilhem,[3] monsters have a primary relation to law. Monsters are entities that manifest "against the law" in the broadest sense. The terms that follow should be interpreted in this basic, diagrammatic fashion, beginning with Foucault:

> [W]hat defines the monster is the fact that its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature. Its very existence is a breach of the law at both levels. The field in which the monster appears can thus be called a 'juridico-biological' domain . . . The monster is the limit, both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases. The monster combines the impossible and the forbidden.[4]

In this first schematic sense, I want to suggest, monsters should be thought of as creatures in every way out of line, beyond the pale. Their existence, as living violations, has a primary function *for* law: it draws the circle within which the lawful community of peace, order, and goodness takes shape and retains form.

Monsters' primary and creative relation to law also helps us understand the immediately connected second sense in which the monster, as violation incarnate, simultaneous sets up *and upsets* this horizon, from which the law-abiding community withdraws into its negatively defined identity. At stake here is the movement from a primary moment of the delineation of law to the ongoing maintenance of a lawful community—and note well the first outline linking law, community, and culture. Following Mary Douglas' exploration in *Purity and Danger* in this direction, monsters, considered in this sense, are the incarnations of each culture's *dangers*, and yet, simultaneously, these dangerous figures are also attributed great *power*. She writes: "[e]ach culture has its own special risks and problems. To which particular bodily margins its beliefs attribute power depends on what situation the body is mirroring. It seems that our deepest fears and desires take expression with a kind of witty aptness."[5]

Beyond their simultaneous ambivalent activity as powers and dangers, the further implication from Douglas is twofold. First, it implies that each community gives birth to *its* monsters, no others. Second, it implies that all communities exist in ongoing, mutually shaping relations with their monsters—relations that, in times of terror, can become integral for the maintenance and stabilization of that community's identity.

Taken together, this suggests a certain temporality of recognition, relation, and destruction: first the lawful community bands together to ban the monster it has identified as such (constituting a unified community in the process), then the ongoing existence of the monster, especially in time of

dread or darkness, recalls the community to itself, its shared terrors, its deepest, impossible, forbidden incarnations, and its constitutive violations.

Third, as I will explore in depth later, the existence of this monster in relation to the community whose laws it becomes the living violation, sets in motion a desire for that entity's destruction. For the purposes of this article, and expanding on the point about the necessary relation between a monster and the lawful community of which it is a threatening breach, what this means is that, as two infamous monsters of the Coalition of the Willing, Saddam Hussein and Abu Musab al Zarqawi are neither arbitrary nor indifferent to the identity of the lawful community in whose name they are descried and condemned. Both are intimately proper to those they frighten and appall. Not only that, but there is also a troubling relation between their deaths and the renewed life of the community—for the death of the monster invigorates, revitalizes, and remoralizes. It is also vital to note before proceeding further that I am not suggesting that either Saddam Hussein or Al Zarqawi can or should *only* be understood as monsters; the monster does not exhaust every aspect of either figure. Rather, the monster is a powerful name that, in being said, attaches itself to the figure, loading it with bad associations that can become a vital, damaging, damning aspect of their being. Having been attached to the person, the name of the monster is often linked to and used for later political purposes. For the purposes of this article, this process will be called monstration.[6]

Taking all the above senses together as I have interpreted them, we can now offer the following schematic outline: every monster is the impossible, forbidden conjunction of the "unlawful" and the "abnormal" imagined by the specific terrors of a given culture whose identity as a community is restored and renewed by the enaction of that monster's destruction.

But which community? Whose identity? The state, the nation, The Coalition of the Willing? This is apt to be vague, but I intentionally wish to resist further specification at this point: one of the key characteristics of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) is the blurring lines of the conflict, the indeterminacy of its key figures and their movements, and the uncertainty of its antagonists and their final fixed form. The political lesson here is twofold. First, as we will later see in greater detail, this indeterminacy can become weaponized as a key political technology. Second, in a war in which each side's captivation by the other is so intensely productive, surprising twists and turns—as well as the suspension of finality and certainty—become integral to the operation of the operation. Pace DeLillo's quote that heads this article: stories have no point if they don't absorb our terror. *How* that story absorbs us then, in all its specificity, *is* the point. The best way to understand Zarqawi's monstration, therefore, is to show aspects of the process as they actually unfolded, in all their strangeness. The truth offered here involves its audience in a strange kind of fictioning.

The story of Zarqawi also strongly suggests that winning a war on terror depends on the suspension of disbelief. Thus, I use terms such as "community" and "Coalition of the Willing" not only to indicate those forces directly involved in the combat operations of the GWOT as allies of the United States but also the *necessarily indefinite* number of people, in several, mostly Western countries, who comprised (and perhaps still comprise) the invested audiences of the conflict. In this sense, the "lawful community" would be any of those within the circle of the invested, whose lives, norms, and mentalities are shaped by the conflict, through vulnerability, a desire to be protected, or a link—real or imagined—to 9/11 and the various events in its wake. It is easy to dismiss the Coalition as the cynical cobbling together of incongruous, incompatible elements—a thing without merit, truth, or substance. This has the crystal ring of an incredulous truth. And yet, for the purposes of political analysis, this would be a great mistake. For once we take the Coalition of the Willing seriously, we are credulous about their credulity as a *genuine suspension* involving the holding in abeyance of a number of elements and associations that would otherwise appear as unlikely, incredible, unbelievable, or just stupid, we can begin to see the real operation of terror, the way it absorbs "us" into its stories, its conflicts, and its horrifying monsters. In a certain sense, the lawful community so constituted by their intersubjective suspension really did believe in *Operation Infinite Justice*. They were compelled to.

The conceptual schematic I have offered also strongly suggests that monsters are our intimate members. Monsters are not only outlaws; they are also inlaws—they not only shape the limit of the *nomos*, they dwell, or once dwelt, or are hidden as a dreadful secret, within the *oikos*. This can be seen clearly through the ways in which, as a trope, the monster is often the subject of a marvelous, horrendous transformation or has been placed on a terrifying trajectory by a life-changing encounter. Mythologically, this is true of Western monsters like vampires, zombies, and werewolves, as well as many of the most famous comic book superheroes and Hollywood villains. In contemporary media, evidence of traumatic, intimate, ''monstering'' encounters in the familial past are often used try to understand the media-revealed actions of sex criminals, as with *Capturing the Friedmans* or Josef Fritzl, or media representations of serial killers, as with the Hollywood retelling of the story of female serial killer Aileen Wuornos, in 2003's *Monster*. Popular stories such as these indicate the ways in which monstrations are often repercussions of the earlier impacts of broken homes past. Here, prior assault, incest, rape, torture, or other abuses are said or shown to have planted the perverting seed of a home-defiling later monstrosity: an initial taboo-breaking violation generating the grounds for the birth and later rampage of a full-blown monster.[7]

This simultaneous, double imaginative positioning of monsters as outlaws and inlaws helps further understand the third aspect of monsters briefly introduced a little earlier: the fact that they tend to provoke an irrepressible desire on the part of terrified communities to quest after them to hunt down, destroy, vanquish or in some respect ''bring them to justice.'' This desire is often stirred when monsters move out of the borderlands into the streets of the community, destabilizing the prudent self-identity of the lawful ''we'' while reminding us of the fragility of (and our fragile position in) the unifying circle of peace, order, goodness, and purity within which the ideal community imagines itself to be safely dwelling. This perspective would suggest that monstration might simply be another way of talking about scapegoating[8] or political demonology.[9] These studies raise interesting and important points, and I have benefited from reading them. And yet, although the process of monstration may in certain circumstances involve scapegoating or demonization, I would like to suggest three reasons why it is insufficient as a conceptual model.

First, the monster does not just carry the sins of a community; it is loaded with the full weight, colors, and textures of the phantasms of an invested culture. Second, the banned animal, chased out of town, is an inadequate description of the wild, insatiable, predatory entities who devour the ''lambs'' and terrorize the ''shepherds'' of the community, then return the following night larger, stronger, smarter, with an ever greater appetite, having fed on ''our'' fears and wrongs. Third, the ''many unhappy returns'' of monsters, while potentially restoring unity to the community through a collective negative identification, also destabilizes the self-assurance of the order of that community's law by revealing what must be actively forgotten: the ease with which constitutive violations take place, take hold, and take over. Monsters grip our imagination because we discover, in an alarming moment of recognition, that we are also holding the hand of a reviled part of our possible selves. As noted oncologist Harold Varmus remarked in his Nobel Prize Banquet speech, ''[w]e have only seen our monster more clearly and described his scales and fangs in new ways—ways that reveal a cancer cell to be, like Grendel, a distorted version of our normal selves.''[10] Scary fangs and scales notwithstanding, it is because we are never immune from our many possible imminent and future monstrosities that the monster's presence—in us and around us—provokes such terror and horror, and calls forth a desire for destruction. Angels, devils, demons, ghosts, and gods all dwell beyond us, in other realms. In contrast, any living human is capable of producing, becoming, or being seduced by a monster, even succumbing to a monstrosity that is either hopelessly contagious or secretly desired. It is the irrepressible force of human desire, and the contagion of its passions and violations, that draws and keeps our monsters in our sights. If monsters are always about to jump out of the shadows, it is because the shadows in question are those we cast ourselves.

The perspectives explored thus far in this section suggest ways of understanding our investment in the terrifying production and anxious, compelling maintenance of monsters as outlaw inlaws, as well as opening grounds toward understanding the enormous, durable appeal of monsters in myths and moving pictures, even in a world as apparently disenchanted as our own.

One final point about monsters is necessary before moving on to the next section, and that concerns where we place monsters in the daily news cycle—and this will become vital for understanding the way the fantastic and phantasmic weaves its way back in to the sober work of securing politics, as I am arguing. Tony Blair was happy to call Saddam Hussein a monster on the stand. And yet, typically, the threefold sense of the monster as outlaw, inlaws, and the entities whose killing makes the world a better place is seldom accorded discursive presence in the diurnal practice of government. Rather, the avowal of the monster takes place during nocturnal processes of fictioning, followed by diurnal factual reports, which disavow the monster their accounts nonetheless draw force from. Here, I would like to emphasize the movement between day and night and its role as a primary imaginative division, which I will use in the following sections as a way of thinking about the relations between the sober business of conflict and the wild play of the phantasms that, I argue, drive it. My concern here is to consider how the political effects of this can be analyzed. One way of opening this question is to consider how the tremulous border separating this day and night is constructed and maintained.

There is a tendency to set up a primary bipolarity of fact and fiction, with the former, in the world of "adult common sense," taking precedence over the latter.[11] At one pole, there is "serious information;" at the other, opinion, speculation, rumor, and storytelling. Information is typically regarded as being "what counts" historically, and during the day time fictions are discounted as silly, unimportant, and mere "colour." It is worth noting how this operates in relation to the media cycle, even in this era of rolling deadlines and continually updated online content. In mainstream media, fictions are taxonomically and temporally bracketed off from the "serious daily business" of conflict, represented in the "nonfiction" world of news, current affairs, history, economics, and politics, a world said to be exclusively inhabited by facts, truth, and reality. Indeed, this is the material of which our daily news is said to consist. Fictions, in contrast, deal with the nocturnal remainders generated by this primary division: the fictional, the poetic, the romantic, the fabular, the fantastic, the phantasmatic, the impossible, and the forbidden.[12] This point should be understood holistically as it is applied, intentionally and reflexively, to give an overall effect to statistically known audiences with specific needs and interests: the effects of scheduling, genre and relational placement; the patient and careful use of a full range of cinematographic, stylistic, and editing techniques; the subtle, culturally attuned deployment of language, voice, and tone; and the casting and gathering of names and faces. Thus, monsters do not appear *in the news* as monsters; but at the same time, when a person like Tony Blair calls Saddam a monster, this is reported *by the news* without a blink.[13] Moreover, Blair's comments can and are clearly conveyed through "serious news" sources, and may be so only an hour before a popular drama dealing with the romantic difficulties of share-housing werewolves[14] is screened on the same channel.

The serious political point I would like to suggest from this is that the fictional elements must be accorded full recognition as equally constitutive forces shaping our common life—they are governing. At times of crisis, panic, or terror, they may even come to be determining and dominating. I urge that we cannot fully understand contemporary conflicts and the practices of government that generate and respond to them without affording considered attention to the day *and night* of the world—both reason and its sleep. Not only that, but, as the GWOT has shown, and as I will shortly explore, sometimes it is the most far-fetched, unbelievable claims that eventually have the greatest repercussions. But neither works alone, both sides of the line shape the course of action: the daily news cycle works in tandem with the nightly dream machine. They feed and bleed into one another. The reason-dominated reality of whatever political situation rises daily, refreshed by that night's worth of dreams, or rises rattled from the nightmares of its nocturnal imagining, ready (or not) to move against the enemies, foes, and monsters of the hour.

Zarqawi I: Casting Zarqawi

Abu Musab Al Zarqawi's biography is a demographic typology: poverty, early exposure to the traumas of a neighboring conflict, a life of petty crime on the margins of a dilapidated, poor, disenfranchised urban landscape; arrest and imprisonment, torture, radicalization, release; commitment to a movement intended, in its own words, to redress the cumulative pain and humiliation these conditions had imposed on his existence through the infliction of an even greater counterterror. These aspects of Zarqawi's biography have been explored and analyzed extensively elsewhere.[15] Essential in this section is how Zarqawi was cast in his role as "public enemy number two" through the power of naming evidenced by Colin Powell in his speech of February 5, 2003, to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Powell's speech was primarily and intentionally a matter of *making links* between Saddam Hussein and the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), links unambiguous and undisputable enough to justify the invasion of Iraq (a "fact" which in itself should give us sufficient pause, given the loss and destruction that has unfolded since). It also bears emphasizing, with Bruno Latour, that:

> Every one of the slides was a blatant lie—and the more that time has passed, the more blatant it has become. And yet their showing was prefaced by these words: 'My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence.' Never has the difference between facts and assertions been more abused than on this day.[16]

While I substantively agree with Latour "in fact," the emphasis of my concern here—which will become decisive in the final section of this analysis—is with how a linking was effected; how Powell took an invested audience's prescience, its nocturnal imagination of terror, horror, and destruction and wove it through the diurnal frame by frame of "facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence" into the actual practices of government in relation to conflict processes—in this case, the invasion and occupation of a whole country. It is within this frame-by-frame insertion, naming and linking that Zarqawi's monstration began.

Powell introduced Al Zarqawi to the UNSC by describing him as being at the center of a "potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the al-Qaida terrorist network." In Powell's words, it was a new, even more sinister nexus that "combines classic terrorist organisations and modern methods of murder."[17] Powell then metonymically enchained Zarqawi from this central position in the nexus by mentioning his network's activities in relation to events that allegedly took place in Palestine, Jordan, Afghanistan, Baghdad, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan; that involved terrorist training camps, poisons, explosives, regional safe havens, assassination, money, weapons, murder, attack, weapons, and explosives for further operations; and that named Saddam Hussein, Ansar al-Islam, and Al-Qaeda as figures involved, willy nilly, in all of the above. Powell then asserted that "[t]he network remains in Baghdad. Zarqawi still remains at large to come and go." After making this assertion, Powell continued by describing the far-flung operations of Zarqawi's network in Europe, where, he asserted, he and his associates had already plotted terrorist actions against France, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia. All of which was known, Powell argued, "because the detainee who provided the information about the targets also provided the names of members of the network"—suggesting that information-driven torture also has a power of naming equal to that of a US government officer. Powell concluded his weaving of links by expressing his lack of astonishment at all of this: "[w]e are not surprised that Iraq is harbouring Zarqawi and his subordinates. This understanding builds on decades long experience with respect to ties between Iraq and al-Qaida." Powell's speech *made* all these extraordinary links—of Zarqawi to Iraq and Saddam Hussein, of Islamist terror to several countries of the
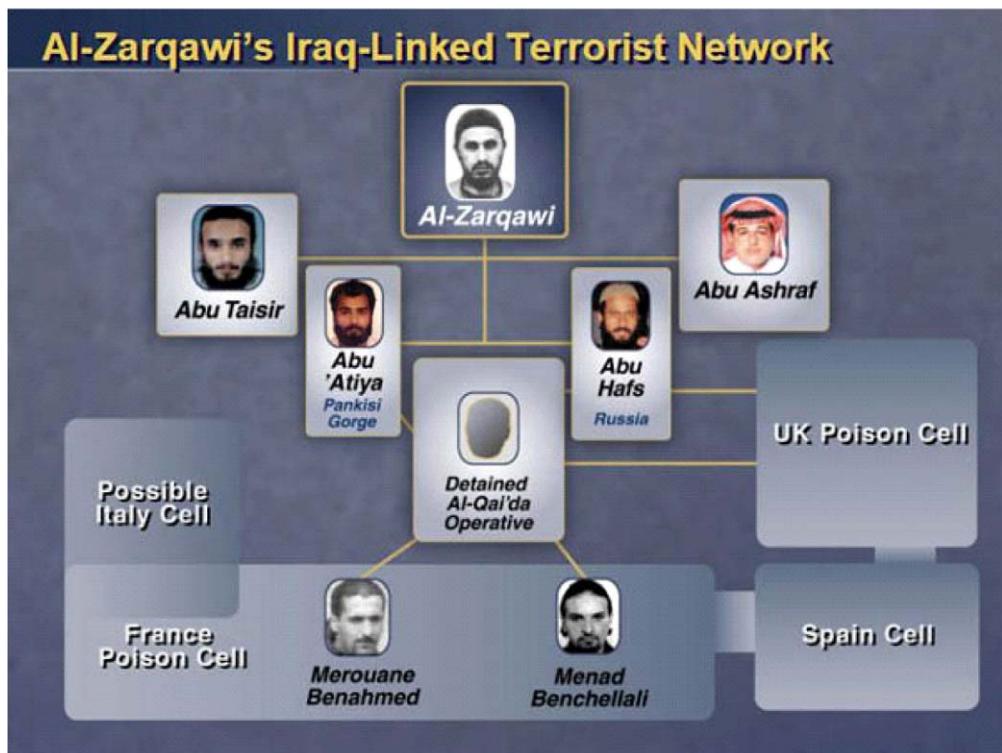
Figure 1. Al-Zarqawi's Iraq-linked terrorist network. Slide from Colin Powell's speech to the UNSC, February 5, 2003. *Source:* Wikipedia.

Middle East, of Zarqawi to Al Qaida, and the whole "sinister nexus" to plottings, attacks, and murders throughout Europe, finally claiming that this was unsurprising knowledge that the United States has known for decades, sufficiently corroborated by recent torture (Figure 1).

In hindsight, the speech sounds unbelievable. Knowing what "we" do now, eight years on, Powell's presentation would never have worked: we are all sobered cynics, "Wikileaks wise" to the US government's unraveled, unraveling fabulations, hypocrisy, and lies in relation to all of the above. Yet, recalling the point in the previous section, how quickly we forget the effects and affects of terror, and how, being so invested, the terrorized reach for the plausible names, links, and, eventually, narratives that make it meaningful. And how quickly we forget: this speech worked.[18] It worked not only because a "we" was terrorized, but also because, fundamentally, these are stories. Facts must be true, but stories only have to be plausible, believable—they rely on a disbelief the invested are all-too-willing to suspend. The story of Al Zarqawi *made* a kind of sense; it fabricated a set of links into a prefabricated narrative whose meaning, should we assume the position, enabled the translation wild claims and implausible associations into links, with the links then indicating meaningful targets calling for immediate destruction, disseminated with matter-of-fact reportage.

Zarqawi II: Covering Zarqawi

Through acts of naming, framing, insertion, and weaving in, Colin Powell's speech effectively nominated Al Zarqawi as the "missing link" the Coalition of the Willing wished him to be. If Zarqawi had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him. Luckily for the Coalition,

Figure 2. Simulacra of the beheading of Nicholas Berg. *Source:* Google images.

Zarqawi himself heard the call loud and clear. Propelled by Powell's naming, not to mention the 25 million dollar bounty the US placed on his head,[19] Zarqawi began his swift rise from the margins of Islamist terror groups to the center of attention, obliging the atrocity-hungry media with claimable involvement in any number of acts: attacks, bombings, and, of course, the beheading videos.

It is very difficult to assess the precise nature and extent of Al Zarqawi's position and role in the various terror groups and the Sunni insurgency with which was repeatedly associated. The deeper consistency further reading discovers is the gap: first, that between the claims made and what can be gathered about the materialities involved, and, second and decisively here, the political role of this gap in transforming a man into whatever his representatives needed him to be. For agencies of the US government and military, Zarqawi was the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and a leader (or even *the* leader) of the Sunni insurgency, or, in other common interpretations, its "most notorious" combatant. For President Bush during his campaign for reelection in the second half of 2004, he was "the guy that beheads people," as well as a "guy" with a "long history of pursuing and even using weapons of mass destruction." The unforgettable lesson Bush drew from Zarqawi is "that after September the 11th, our country must think differently . . . We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize."[20]

For more skeptical and critical journalists, on the contrary, Abu Musab al Zarqawi was also functional proof of the tenuousness of the links, the dubiousness of the associations, and the fraught nature of the relationships that fabricated the war on terror. There is even a school of thought that suggests, not unconvincingly, that Zarqawi was the unblinking invention of the US military.[21] This is hardly the "true history" of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, which is important and worth pursuing. My interest in relation to the point I am developing in this section is in *the political power and danger of the gap*—for that is the point of twilight from which imagination performs its nightly work of making. The following artifact captures this perfectly (Figure 2).

This is a simulacra of the image circulated in the media at the time of the beheading of Nicholas Berg, the pivotal event from which Zarqawi's second transmutation began. Powell had successfully made Zarqawi out to be a terrorist mastermind, actively linked to Al Qaeda, WMD, and Saddam Hussein; the Berg beheading, disseminated through print and broadcast media, further effected Zarqawi's monstration. The figure in the center, indicated by the red circle, was reported as being Zarqawi. The veracity of this image, at the time, was not widely disputed or debated. The censored

video version was disseminated by TV news, while the uncensored version also circulated widely through YouTube. I want to forgo an analysis of its veracity and consider, instead, four artifactual qualities of the image and the political effects they have when disseminated through networked media systems:

1. Low resolution: a striking feature of this particular still and a general trope in analogous images, the low resolution of this image is, paradoxically, an indicator of its authenticity. Post 9/11, this has become a well-recognized feature of Islamist-attributed videos, but increasingly it is what bears witness to many of the acute horrors of the contemporary world as they are broadcast, from large catastrophes like the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2006 through to whatever CCTV, mobile phone, or YouTube footage ends up on the nightly news as evidence of that day's evils

2. Red circle: postproduction additions like the red circle are seldom captioned or explained, yet instantly signify to the spectator that the image has been viewed by a person with the techniques and expertise to know and recognize. An incredulous glance at the image reveals a darkness; indeed, it would be impossible for a viewer not already familiar with the context to identify *any-one* in the picture, except perhaps Berg (even then). Yet the credulous imagination of the willing fills this gap with its own imaginings, underpinned by the forensic know-how implied by the bold circle. Seen in this way, the red circle is, at once a vicious circle of knowledge (in which what is known is knowable because already known) and a truth-stamping semiautonomous halo based, somehow—but how, and by whom?—on "sources," "solid intelligence," and "decades of understanding."

3. Facelessness: connected with both the previous point about the function of the red circle and the larger point about "the gap" made in this section, the very facelessness of the figures in this still provides sufficient space for imagination, simultaneously confirming prior understanding of the "shadowy and obscene"[22] nature and acts of Islamist terrorists as well as driving an insatiable curiosity, both to follow terror into its abyss and to tear the veil from its face—a final moment of unmasking which, as we will explore, often signals denouement in the process of monstration.

4. *mise en scène*: previous descriptive analyses[23] have drawn attention to the ritualized, "execution-style" setup of the frame. All five of the "executioners" are within frame; Zarqawi has a central position above the person reported as Nicholas Berg, who is dressed in an orange suit, which was reported to be a deliberate reference to Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib detainees. These are all important considerations, however, what is also worth emphasizing is the instantly recognizable position of Zarqawi within his faceless "network of associates," whose existence *and character* has been established by the viewer on prior occasions. A brief glance back at Powell's slide indicates a possible work of mimetic reproduction: Zarqawi flanked by two associates, Berg in the position of the "detained operative," and the camera operators, out of frame, occupying the place of Benahmed and Benchellali. This connection may well be coincidental, but I would like to retain it as a mere suggestion, while noting the effect that this suggestion—as yet another possibly dubious link—has on the reader's imagination. Phantasm-loaded images are extraordinarily contagious; to the extent that we are willing to suspend our disbelief, they reproduce and recombine virtually endlessly, fertilized by the undismissible possibility of possibility, the mere suggestion of a suggestion. And this is something all sides of this mediated conflict understand all too well. This is key among the ways in which the unfolding story of Zarqawi absorbed our terror.

The beheading videos had a striking effect on all sides, convincing the already terrified of the limitless brutality of "the terrorists"; capturing the attention and dividing the sentiments of partisans fighting against the United States and its allies; and elevating these poorly examined semblances of Zarqawi into the "undeniable" central figure of the insurgency. In October 2004, after some

correspondence, Osama bin Laden is reported to have finally granted Zarqawi official status as an emir, solemnizing, *a posteriori*, the link that Powell had earlier fabricated. Yet it was Zarqawi's agency among the various acts from the time of Berg's decapitation onward that elevated his status into something unlike and indeed categorically "even worse" than the "softly spoken son of a billionaire" bin Laden and "upper-middle-class doctor" lieutenant al Zawahiri. Journalists began drawing contrasts between Zarqawi and the "old Al Qaeda": "Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who is thought to have murdered Kenneth Bigley, is also stressing his willingness to kill with his own hands—in contrast to bin Laden who is up in a cave on a mountain sending others out to die for him." In assessing the significance of this pivotal difference, Jason Burke connected this willingness to murder anyone, directly, with one's own hands, with the disseminability of such murders through media systems.

> The execution videos invade our consciousness. They are shocking and distressing. Even if we do not watch them, their very existence is upsetting. This is crucial. We watch human beings begging for their lives and we feel complicit . . . What the execution videos have done is take our technology, the spearhead of our invasion, and turned it back on us . . . And we don't like it. We are used to controlling the output on our screens. Indeed every development with the media in recent years has been aimed at increasing our control over the material we watch. Now, suddenly someone else is manipulating us, placing material in our way that is deeply challenging and won't just go away.[24]

In Burke's description, Abu Musab Al Zarqawi turns day into night, translating our informational technologies into weapons and our TVs into portals from which nightmares can "invade our consciousness," even during the daytime—even if we do not turn on, or even watch, the television. Seen in this way, what is alarming about Zarqawi's "theater of terror" is the way it upsets the taxonomies of fact and fiction, day and night, information and terror—Zarqawi severs the mediating line of remote control The Coalition of the Willing placed between itself and its captivating monsters. But what also needs noting is the way in which Burke's assessment actively contributes to Zarqawi's monstration by alluding to his supernatural power over "our" technologies, and the way he not only makes "human beings" beg for their lives (imputing something superhuman, inhuman, and subhuman by negative implication), but in doing so, makes "us" feel complicit. In this way, the subtle analysis of a respected journalist nonetheless can and does feed the monster and the monstration: without ever explicitly intending to be so, global media systems, and their active participants, including "us," are also part ouija board, part séance participant, and part apparition. The political implications of this are profound, but they are seldom recognized as such.

By the end of 2004, Zarqawi had become the new beast (or butcher) of Baghdad, combining, as Powell warned, "classic terrorist organisations and modern methods of murder" (as well as whatever other alliterative phrases stuck). According to media reports from this time, he was brutal, notorious, violent; his acts were grisly, his attacks massive, unsuspected, daring, and deadly; he created chaos, sowed destruction, and caused mayhem. Zarqawi was also "behind" any number of attacks, both in Iraq and abroad: he "lived his life instilling fear in the lives of others with surprise attacks;" his name was synonymous with a "reign of terror."[25]

By early 2005, Special Ops and the US military were reported as closing in on him. In February of that year, Zarqawi's "vehicle crashed through a roadblock and was chased by US soldiers in military vehicles and even an unmanned aerial vehicle. Ever elusive, Zarqawi jumped out of the car *after which he vanished*. In May 2005, it was reported that Zarqawi had sustained a serious injury from a battle at Al-Qa'im on the Syrian border, in which Iraqi and Coalition forces clashed with his supporters. Yet, after much speculation over his medical condition, Zarqawi released an audiotape in which he claimed that his injuries were light. *His network appeared impervious to Coalition assaults as well*."[26]

Zarqawi's "vanishing" reinforced "the nearly mythic invulnerability"[27] already ascribed to him repeatedly by journalists and government spokespeople by October 2004. Throughout 2005, TV media

Figure 3. Zarqawi 'mugshot'. *Source:* Google images.

reports tended to use the following Al Zarqawi "mugshot," attributing a sequence of diverse acts, typically associated with the worst atrocities of the insurgency, to his name and this image (Figure 3).

As Coalition forces became trapped in a binding spiral of deadly attacks in near impossible urban combat landscapes, Zarqawi became a spectral counterpresence whose very surreality—undead, unkillable, invisible, lurking, and seemingly perpetrating anything and everything, at will and at random—hunted and haunted the Coalition of the Willing. The more nightmarish Iraq became for the Coalition, the more invaluable Zarqawi became as the synecdoche for the epistemic murk[28] the Iraq war had enmired the United States and its allies in. Piece by piece, frame by frame, act by act, he had been made into a figure of beyond, a monster in all the senses I have explored. He was not too good to be true; he was, for the purposes of the conflict's intelligibility, too evil to be untrue. In a certain sense, he *was* the representative truth of all those invested: the living abyss of Iraq's chaos and destruction, the abandoned offspring of the vengeful hate, terror and horror of the Coalition of the Willing.

Zarqawi III: Bombing, Framing, and Burying Zarqawi

An hour before sunset, at 6:12 p.m. on June 7, 2006, Abu Musab al Zarqawi's hideout was hit by the first of two 500 lb bombs, launched from an airstrike on the safe house in which he (and others) were hiding. Zarqawi's whereabouts had apparently been betrayed by an associate to Jordanian intelligence, who turned over the information to the United States. The bombing killed Zarqawi's spiritual adviser, Abdul-Rahman, as well as Zarqawi's 16-year-old wife—but Zarqawi himself somehow managed to survive the blasts. The Guardian reported that "tests showed" he lived for an hour after the bombing; further, that a member of the Taskforce 145 team in the area who called in the attack

had even tried to resuscitate him. Several of the details in the report are extremely interesting in terms of what has been argued thus far, and bear quoting at length:

> The results of Zarqawi's autopsy were released partly in an attempt to counter what one US officer called 'propaganda and misinformation', including a claim that US troops had beaten the al-Qaida leader. It was also an attempt to clear up confusion caused by an initial report by the US military that Zarqawi was dead by the time soldiers arrived at the scene. Major General William Caldwell said US forces reached Zarqawi's safe house near Baquba 28 minutes after an F-16 plane dropped two 500 lb bombs on it, and found Zarqawi alive. A medic tried to treat him as he lapsed in and out of consciousness and brought up blood from his lungs. The medic then checked the pulse in his neck "which was barely palpable and quickly deteriorated; and which he determined, therefore, that Zarqawi's death was imminent," Gen Caldwell said. He added that DNA tests had confirmed that the man was indeed Zarqawi. A local witness told al-Jazeera that US soldiers had tried to revive Zarqawi. "They were pressing on his chest, wanting him to speak or to respond, and they brought a bottle of water but he didn't take it," he said. Another witness claimed US troops had struck Zarqawi, but General George Casey, the top American commander in Iraq, dismissed that as 'baloney.'[29]

These are strange scenes. The insistence on the baloney-countering "autopsy" is fascinating, given a seemingly unambiguous cause of death—but how had the US obtained Zarqawi's DNA beforehand? More broadly, why was it necessary for the US to insist they had not "mistreated" Zarqawi (after hitting him with two 500 lb bombs)? And why expend *any* effort attempting to resuscitate "public enemy number two," a man with a 25 million dollar bounty on his head and a person for whose death was both the express raison d'etre of Taskforce 145?

I would like to suggest two interpretations that should be treated as speculative counterweights to the obvious attraction of cynicism. The first of these is that, on some level, US forces truly believe in virtuous war,[30] in clean killing, as the basic, fundamental distinction between the combat operations of the United States and its enemies. This would account for the strident attempts to counter the "baloney" with a string of medical metaphors. The second interpretation indicates the possibility of a biopolitical logic at work, within which the power of the United States is manifested by showing the world as not only being capable of *causing* the death of Zarqawi—with the deadly but clean and surgical precision of the laser-guided ordnance of the Raytheon corporation—but also capable of *keeping him alive*, of treating him with medical dispassion, of knowingly being able to ascertain the moments when death was imminent, and of judging the death process, through expert-administered tests and data. Borger's report continues:

> Colonel Steve Jones, the chief US military surgeon in Iraq, said: "There was extensive blast injury to the lungs, with bruising and disruption of the lung tissue."

> "This wound was not immediately fatal," said Col Jones, who was present at the autopsy. "Death occurred as lung function deteriorated and the lungs became progressively unable to absorb oxygen into the bloodstream."[31]

Immediately following these events, Zarqawi was represented with the following date-and-time-stamped image (Figure 4, next page), which was reproduced in newspapers, in print, and online around the world, via print and broadcast media and the Internet.

The showing of Zarqawi's dead face must be recognized as an extraordinary step as soon as we consider the outrage that would be provoked by the publication of the similarly dead or killed face of a "fallen" Coalition soldier. Its exceptional status is reconfirmed by US forces' reluctance to publish the killshot from Osama bin Laden's assassination operation. The counterpublication of a similar image by any given terrorist organization would, imaginably, be given as proof of their "inhumanity"—indeed,

Figure 4. Zarqawi 'autopsy shot'. *Source:* Google images.

that was one of the stock reactions to the beheading videos.[32] There is something deeply disturbing about the cool dissemination of this image by the US military and the Coalition's willing media, as well as the absence of any memorable outcry, or even mild criticism. Our indifference to it, I suggest, implicates us in something abysmal, far more than the beheading videos. And this was something repeated in December of the same year when the "leaked" video of Saddam's hanging became a YouTube favourite.[33]

Once the "autopsy" had reassured audiences with "medical proof" about the surgical nature of Zarqawi's death, the US military called press conferences. These featured a further pair of enlarged, framed photographic prints (Figure 5, next page), one a still from an earlier video in which Zarqawi struggled to operate an M60, the second another time stamped picture of his dead face, this time ringed by a halo of blood and a background of what appears to be dirt and concrete.

The enlarged images in their frames cast Zarqawi, in death, as something to be hung on a living room wall; party trophy shot, part death mask, and part portrait. Shorn of context, they are macabre—what would possess someone to not only photograph a person whose killing they were associated with but to enlarge and frame that photograph, and quietly feature it in the background of a press conference in which the causes and conditions of his death were matter-of-factly reported? Beyond the need to "prove" the death of Zarqawi (who had melted into the shadows so many times before) what we have to consider is how all the prior work of monstration enabled this, to the point where such a display provokes responsibility, but no regret. Everybody already knew what Zarqawi was, and what, therefore, he deserved.

Twelve days after his killing, *Time* took the extraordinary step of placing Zarqawi on the cover, his face crossed out. The magazine had only previously run variations of this cover design twice: once to represent US victory over Hitler's Germany, the other over Imperial Japan. The implied comparison is astonishing, given the manifest differences between enemies of the United States, past and present, and America's oft-asserted moral superiority over "evil" regimes in both those historical cases (Figure 6, next page).

The Zarqawi-related reports in the same edition have the following titles (and note carefully here the extraordinary contrast with the medical metaphors employed during Zarqawi's 'autopsy'): "Apostle of Hate," "Funeral for Evil," and "How They Killed Him." The editorial describes his killing as "a dose of good news from Iraq," "a good problem to have," even something that

Figure 5. Zarqawi 'trophy shot'. *Source:* Google images.
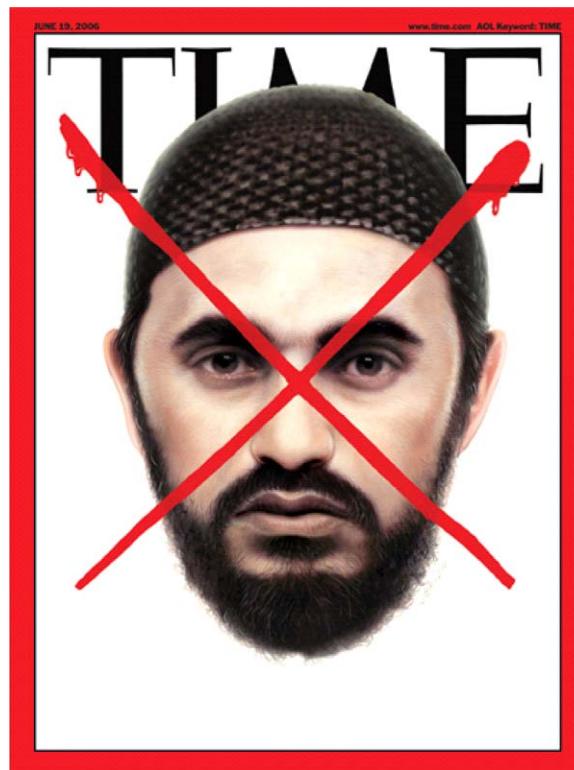
Figure 6. Zarqawi's Time Magazine cover portrait. *Source:* Google images.

provoked an uncontainable sense of elation at US command.[34] The article "How They Killed Him" describes Zarqawi's safe house as a "lair," and the Special Ops forces after him as "American hunters." The same article tells how Zarqawi was "a maddeningly elusive target - a master of disguise

who could pass as a woman in a burqa one day, an Iraqi policeman the next. He traveled in groups of women and children to lower suspicion and frequently moved with ease through checkpoints in Iraq."

The opening paragraph of "The Apostle of Hate," meanwhile, whose byline promises to explain "why his ideas will haunt the world long after he's gone," contains the following:

> Abu Mousab Al-Zarqawi didn't have to be in a room to silence it. Dozens of times in the past three years, I have sat with insurgent leaders, listening to their bombastic pronouncements and boastful tales of "victorious battles" against U.S. forces, complete with verbal sound effects of gunfire and explosions. On such occasions, there was only one sure way to quiet them down: ask about al-Zarqawi. Suddenly, they would begin talking in hushed tones, almost whispers—as if saying his name out loud might conjure him like a malevolent spirit.[35]

This final volley of media coverage, then, buried Zarqawi as a figure to be remembered as a vanquished monster. In doing so, they sought to encrypt him in the memory banks of the Coalition, to "fix" his meaning and location[36] in such a way that would seal the possibility of his return as a figure of strength or resistance. The monster had been overcome before bedtime; now we could sleep safe—so restoring the proper cycle and division of fact and fiction, day and night, conflict and nightmare. And yet, as I will now explore, these refixed sites of memory and figures of recall were not the only, nor the final, resting places of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Zarqawi IV: The Undeath and Afterlife of Zarqawi

Zarqawi's death was hardly his end, for his material demise was offset with his political inscription, 13,274 km away, in the most unlikely of places: Canberra, Australia. Just as Zarqawi was vanishing into the insurgent streets of Baghdad, the Commonwealth was preparing documents that would influence his role in the afterlife.

On May 2004, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was listed by the Australian Attorney General's office as a terrorist organization, the first such listing under newly introduced executive proscription powers. The legislation and its implications were extremely controversial and significant and have been the subject of a degree of contention and scrutiny above and beyond what it is possible to cover in this article.[37] Though it is vital to note that the amendments to the legislation involved significant substantive departures from pre 9/11 norms,[38] what is essential to understand in the present context is the way these changes awarded a power of naming and linking to the executive. After their implementation, the Attorney General or relevant minister was (and *is*) able to recognize what a terrorist is and does, what terrorism is, what a terrorist organization is, and can have those names and links *enforced* by a range of agents and authorities within the state apparatus. As then Attorney General Philip Ruddock explained in relation to these powers of naming and linking: "[t]he aspects that have to be looked at first are—is it a terrorist organisation? Then you establish whether or not before you proscribe that as a terrorist organisation that it has linkages with Australia." What constitutes a valid link? Linkages, as described by Ruddock, can take "a variety of forms. They can be raising money for organizations, they can be having people who have trained with them, they can be people who are overtly supporting them. There are a range of factors but *we look for linkages.*"[39] This phrase characterizes an important aspect specific to executive authority today: along with its primary, traditional role of "making decisions" and the now equally important "sending messages" (to terrorists, people smugglers, "violent" gangs, and so on), the ability to actively make links constitutes one of the executive's key levers. What is crucial to emphasize here is both the active work of making and how this work subtly, selectively deploys many of the elements from Zarqawi established so far in this article.

The listing of the PIJ was reviewed by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO),[40] Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS),[41] and Defense

Signals Directorate (DSD).[42] The Committee drew critical attention to the tenuousness of the link that Ruddock had looked for and discovered: between the activities of PIJ and Australia generally, and, more specifically, whether those activities could be said to constitute a threat to Australian interests. The Committee reported that "[i]t appears that the PIJ has no links to Australia. The Attorney-General is quoted as saying that the "PIJ has no known presence in Australia" and was proscribed "because of its overseas activities." This was confirmed by ASIO.[43]

In spite of the manifest absence of a substantial link or threat to Australian interests, the report went on to conclude that it did not object to the listing, but emphasized that "*the immediate and threatening aspects of a particular entity*, its transnational nature and *the perceived threats* to Australia or involvement of Australians should be given particular weight when considering a listing. This does not appear to have occurred in this listing".[44] Here – and returning to the key point about the *active* making of links, the Attorney-General went ahead and *made* links that didn't fit the criteria; the Review then recognized that to have been the case (and a cause for some concern), before re-affirming (and so institutionally embedding) the fabricated links by emphasizing the weight of this entity's threatening aspects. But what processes of making had already made these entities so threatening – so *plausibly* threatening – that, despite their manifest and admitted physical absence, they could nonetheless be perceived in a way that would ensure their settled listing? Regardless of how cynical we may be about the expediency of such events as clear opportunities to canny politicians – and this undoubtedly accounts for some of the machinations around this *topos* – it is too easy to forget how, by this stage, Zarqawi's attributable acts had already also severed the line between pre-emption and prophecy, between sober risk assessment and wild nightmares, between ontology and hauntology. In other words, the Attorney-General didn't have to *demonstrate*, because the *monstration* had already performed most of the work. The chain of links was already known. It was then a simple matter of making a simple association by adding, with each proscription, one further connection.

One year after the PIJ listing review, the Committee published its *Review of the listing of Tanzim Qa'idat al-jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the al-Zarqawi network) as a terrorist organization*[45] (henceforth TQJBR). The stated reasons for the listing of TQJBR as a proscribed organization drew from and built on all of the heterodox resources and logics mentioned thus far in this article; they also buttressed, resecured and double knotted many of the prior links, repeating, emphasizing, and reminding those in attendance of everything the Committee already knew, continuing and elaborating Zarqawi's monstration in the process. In its statement of reasons, the report returned repeatedly to "the link between ideology and violence" that had been emphasized by one submission. The Attorney General's statement, in turn, reported that TQJBR was linked to Al-Qaeda:

> The nature of the relationship between TQJBR and al-Qa'ida is significant. Former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in his February 2003 address to the UNSC, described Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the leader of TQJBR, as 'an associate and collaborate of Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda lieutenants' ... The question remains as to whether TQJBR and al-Qa-ida are partners, rivals, or autonomous entities? At the hearing on 2 May 2005, ASIO implied to the Committee that *they accepted that there was a link between the two organizations.*[46]

The Committee also considered whether TQJBR was a threat to Australia, which it upheld, in line with the remonstrations of the earlier Review of the PIJ listing to be "a primary consideration" when considering the proscription of an organization. In the case of TQJBR, the Attorney General's department stated that Australia is seen as a legitimate target by TQJBR, citing TQJBR responsibility for an attack on an Australian Defence Force (ADF) convoy in Baghdad in 2004 as material

evidence of this. However, in a notable shift, the department conceded that there was no suggestion that proscription would prevent future attacks:

> At the hearing, officers from ASIO were asked to explain how a listing would assist in the protection of Australian assets or personnel overseas. There was no direct answer to this question other than to say that the legislation was there for a deterrent effect to inhibit Australians from cooperating with any listed entities.[47]

In the Committee's conclusion, this "deterrent effect" reasoning, along with the preestablished, reemphasized link between ideology and violence, overwhelmed the earlier "primary considerations": hereon, it did not seem to really matter whether or not TQJBR was a threat to Australia—rendering moot the question of whether proscription would ameliorate such a threat. Now, the combination of TQJBR's ideological violence and the development of a neat political technology were interactively decisive:

> It is evident from the Attorney-General's statement of reasons that TQJBR has committed violent crimes in pursuit of their objectives. The group has kidnapped and murdered civilians and attacked Multi-National Forces and members of the Interim Iraqi Government. The Committee strongly condemns the violent acts of TQJBR. The proscription of TQJBR in Australia is potentially useful insofar as it prevents Australians from assisting the organization either financially or personally.[48]

At this point, all the names and links that we have seen thus far were translated into a political technology for the Commonwealth's executive, one with the expressed purpose of generating a useful "deterrent effect" through the "sending of messages," the *making* of examples. The committee talks about "violent crimes," "violent acts"—but what do these violent acts mean, what gives them force? My contention here, as throughout, is that none of this would have been possible without the prior work of monstration performed by the full range of sites, processes, moments, movements, agents, and figures discussed so far. And yet, by this stage, we can see how a formerly dangerous monster was being imaginatively demoted and transformed into a mere "potentially useful tool" – one for making networks by naming and proscribing them as such, networks with a range of political purposes.[49]

On February 2, 2007, the Attorney General sent a letter to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, informing it of the proposed relisting of TQJBR. The letter included a statement of reasons, which reiterated the claims introduced in the initial listing discussed above. This included the attack on the ADF convoy in 2004 mentioned earlier, which was used here to demonstrate, once again, that "Australia is seen as a target by TQJBR,"[50] in spite of the fact that the Review conceded once more that TQJBR did not pose a threat to Australian interests. The twist here was that the Committee now excluded the "threat to Australia" category from the list of reasons decisive in TQJBR's relisting. In its conclusion, the Committee concluded that it "strongly condemns violent acts in pursuit of political objectives. The proscription of TQJBR in Australia is potentially useful insofar as it prevents Australians from assisting the organisation either financially or personally."[51] This conclusion is unsurprising, and in line with the stated reasons given for the previous prescription. However, there are several details in the Attorney General's statement of reasons and the Committee's synthesis of their points that, on closer examination, are revealing.

First of all, at the time of the Review's publication, Al Zarqawi had been dead for almost a year. In the context of the report, however, Zarqawi's death is presented in the section intended to give evidence of TQJBR's engagement in terrorist acts. In the section entitled "engagement in terrorism," the first point is the following: "It was clear in the last review of this organisation that it had

engaged in terrorist acts of a particularly gruesome kind. On 7 June 2006, the leader of the network, Al-Zarqawi himself, was killed as a result of a Coalition air attack on his safe house."[52]

Earlier, in the section entitled "leadership and membership," the report states "TQJBR was established and continuously led by al-Zarqawi until his death on 7 June 2006. As of 13 June 2006 Abu Hamza al-Muhajir has led TQJBR."[53] Given that the initial proscription was of "the Al Zarqawi network, this is surely more than a mere detail, but it is not all. The second significant detail is that, in the 2007 report, TQJBR is no longer TQJBR, or no longer referred to as such. Notwithstanding that the acronym was only in common use by the Australian Commonwealth in any case, "[i]t is now commonly referred to as al-Qa'ida in Iraq."[54] According to the Review, this took place from January 2006, when TQJBR was subsumed within umbrella group, the Mujahideen Shura Council. "TQJBR is the dominant group under the Council but other members include Victorious Sect Army, Ansar al-Tawhid, al-Ghuraba, al-Jihad al-Islami and al-Awhal." On the same page, the Review states, "TQJBR no longer publicly claims responsibility for attacks it has conducted."[55]

Taken together, how can we understand these points? The al Zarqawi network (TQJBR) is no longer headed by al Zarqawi. But TQJBR is no longer TQJBR[56]—nor does TQJBR (or, perhaps now AQI) claim public responsibility for its attacks. Nor are any of these "attacks" considered a threat to Australian interests. Indeed, of AQI's broad objectives, *even by the admission of the Review*, only the expulsion of multinational forces from the country could be said to directly involve Australia in any way—and this, surely, is a strategic matter for an occupying force facing irregular combatants.

Beyond these details, one impression is striking, and that is the astonishing ability to these documents to cover and bury Zarqawi while redeploying those parts of him that are useful to the executive. Where the earlier report relied on a fixation on and deployment of the accumulated resonance of Zarqawi's monstration to make and secure the link between organization, ideology, and violence, by the 2007 relisting he is transformed into a defanged, declawed link in a durable chain of association. Drained of all the strengthening blood and color he drew from the Coalition of the Willing, convenient parts of his remains, and the cultural memories within which they are invested, now serve the Australian executive's ongoing need to maintain whatever links it proscribes in order to "send messages" to what it has the power to recognize as the appropriate recipient. It is a strange afterlife, but it guarantees his survival, in a certain way "proving" that al Zarqawi is the unkillable monster the Coalition made and maintained him to be. In November 2010, the Commonwealth successfully relisted AQI as a proscribed terrorist organization.

Conclusion: Decrypting Zarqawi

In this paper, I have argued that the movement of the figure of Abu Musab al Zarqawi through the agents, networks, and authorities of the Coalition of the Willing tells us an important story about monstration, a way of understanding one of the key political processes by which contemporary conflict is conducted, sustained, and, fundamentally, made meaningful as a story. As we have seen, Zarqawi's monstration was a drawn-out, repetitive process that involved a diverse, diffuse group of agents in acts of naming, linking, scripting, casting, coverage, bombing, framing, and burial, and that featured his unlikely, partial return as a political technology. Following the life, death and afterlife of monsters like Zarqawi – whose killing 'makes the world a better place' – tells us about the powers of naming and linking that characterize executive power in the age of globalized media systems, and the productive relation between diurnal practices of security work and the nocturnal phantasms of cultural memory carried by media. Including the weight of these phantasms within the analysis of terror and conflict means grappling with a daily transformation of day into night, one that reveals the inseparable relation between our daily reason and its nightly sleep. Zarqawi's monstration tells us, in the final analysis, that the War on Terror was driven by

nightmares, and navigates by ghosts; it also suggests that analogous processes of monstration will drive and sustain the current and future wars of this century.

Acknowledgment

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. Stephen Bates, "I feel 'responsibility but no regret', says Tony Blair in final statement," *The Guardian,* January 29, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jan/29/blair-iraq-inquiry-chilcot-911-terrorist-threat.
2. This article could equally have followed the trajectories of any number of other possible, prominent monsters of the Global War on Terror, such as Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. Both of these are extremely rich subjects for analysis, and will no doubt find their authors. The selection of Zarqawi can be accounted for by my undimmed enthusiasm for what was and is an extremely telling case, from which we can learn much about ourselves, our investments, and the political processes in which we are enmeshed. The timing seemed more urgent: in a lecture given on Zarqawi late in 2010, only a small minority of undergraduates remembered the name—a few more, but only a few, recognized his image. There is, thus, a need for the translation of Zarqawi back into someone we might be capable of remembering, in order to think differently about our political past, present, and future.
3. Georges Canguilhem, "Monstrosity and the Monstrous," *Diogenes* 10, no. 27 (1962): 27–42.
4. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College De France 1974–1975* (London: Picador, 2003), 56.
5. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2002), 150.
6. A monstration being a demonstration and/or the visibility or conveying of a sign or omen; here, I would like to add the related sense of entity that is made an example of, precisely for what it signifies.
7. The *heimlich*, *unheimlich* intimacy of our monstrous relations is also revealed by more innocent examples. In late 2009, upon the release of the Hollywood adaptation of *Where the Wild Things Are*, one of the world's most famous monster stories, Maurice Sendak was provoked to respond to the concerns of thousands of American mothers, who generated a storm in a media teacup by insisting that the new film was "too scary" for children to see over the holiday season. Sendak's explanation, after his initial response to concerned mothers (Go to hell!), is telling: (Sendak) based the monsters of *Where the Wild Things Are* on relatives who visited his family home as a child, speaking practically no English. "They grabbed you and twisted your face, and they thought that was an affectionate thing to do," he said. "And I knew that my mother's cooking was pretty terrible, and it also took forever, and there was every possibility that they would eat me, or my sister or my brother. We really had a wicked fantasy that they were capable of that. We couldn't taste any worse than what she was preparing. So that's who the Wild Things are. They're foreigners, lost in America, without a language. And children who are petrified of them, and don't understand that these gestures, these twistings of flesh, are meant to be affectionate."
8. Cf. Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
9. Cf. Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan the Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
10. "Harold E., Varmus-Nobel Lecture" Nobelprize.org, accessed May 18, 2011, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/1989/varmus-lecture.html.
11. Cf. Alison Young, *The Scene of Violence: Cinema, Crime, Affect* (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2009).

12. Of course, this primary division is to a large extent illusory "in fact." The increasing role of tabloid journalism and shrill TV partisanship evinced by the populist strategies of Rupert Murdoch's empire is fascinating in this regard, as it blurs whatever it smears by splashing across its lurid pages.

13. The final declaration of a monster typically only takes place post capture. To clarify this point, we need only imagine how ridiculous the headlines "US Declares War on Monsters" or "Marines Attack Monster" would sound, and then, in the same breath, consider how little fuss was made over Blair's retrospective declaration of Saddam's monstrosity.

14. Such as *Being Human*, though I include this as a hypothetical example.

15. Cf. Loretta Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).

16. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 8.

17. Full transcripts are available online, either from http://articles.cnn.com/2003-02-05/us/sprj.irq.powell.transcript_1_genuine-acceptance-iraq-one-last-chance-disarmament-obligations?_s=PM: US or http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/feb/05/iraq.usa.

18. I am certainly not suggesting this imputed "we" as involving "everyone," or even a majority of people anywhere (outside the United States), simply the Coalition of the Willing as I have outlined it earlier.

19. "Rewards for Justice: Seeking Information against International Terrorism, accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/index.cfm? page=Al_Zarqawi. How would the bounty have been collected? Was it, indeed, collected by any of the various US forces involved in his killing?

20. "George W. Bush, "Labor Day Remarks: Campaign Rally in Missouri," September 6, 2004, Poplar Bluff, Missouri, accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/campaign/speeches/bush_sept6.html.

21. Cf. http://www.flatearthnews.net/media-falsehoods-and-propaganda/zarqawi.

22. This is a phrase attributed to Australia's prime minister of the time, John Howard.

23. George Michael, "The Legend and Legacy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 338–57.

24. Jason Burke, "Theatre of Terror," *The Guardian,* November 21, 2004, accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2004/nov/21/features.review7.

25. Cf. CBS news, "Zarqawi's Reign of Terror," accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/? id=1694340n.

26. "Legend and Legacy," 344, (my emphases).

27. Don Van Natta Jr, "Heart of Darkness; Who is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *New York Times,* October 10, 2004, accessed May 18, 2011, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html? res=9D00E4D6123BF933A25753C1A9629C8B63.

28. Cf. Michael Taussig, "Culture of Terror—Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (2004): 467–97.

29. Julian Borger, "US Releases Zarqawi Autopsy in Attempt to Counter 'Baloney'," *The Guardian,* June 13, 2006,. accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jun/13/alqaida.iraq.

30. James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

31. Borger, "US Releases Zarqawi Autopsy in Attempt to Counter 'Baloney'."

32. We can equally imagine a typical Hollywood crime movie plot in which the serial killer e-mails in images of his (usually "his") victims, with clues to both taunt, inform, and throw the dogged investigators off the scent.

33. Although in the case of the Saddam video, the typical response, if memory serves, was that the commentariat would denounce it as outrageous and appropriate—*after* watching it.

34. James Carney and Mike Allen, "Funeral for Evil," *Time Magazine*, June 19, 2006, 167; 25, 28–32.

35. Aparisim Ghosh, "Apostle of Hate," *Time Magazine*, June 19, 2006, 167; 25, 36–37.

36. Allen Feldman, "Political Terror and the Technologies of Memory: Excuse, Sacrifice, Commodification, and Actuarial Moralities," *Radical History Review* 85 (2003).

37. Cf. Jenny Hocking, "Counter-Terrorism and the Criminalisation of Politics: Australia's New Security Powers of Detention, Proscription and Control," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 49, no. 3 (2003): 355–71; and Miriam Gani and Greg Urbas, "Alert or Alarmed? Recent Legislative Reforms directed at Terrorist Organisations and Persons Supporting or Assisting Terrorist Acts," *Newcastle Law Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 23–50.

38. Including: the assertion of nongeographical criminal jurisdiction; the institution of a status offence; guilt by association (even when that association is "reckless," and thus exists without full knowledge of the person charged); detention on *suspicion* of association; ministerial powers of proscription, including the power to freeze assets; and the establishment and maintenance of opaque communication between intelligence operatives and members of the executive with decisionist powers (Gani and Urbas, "Alert or Alarmed?" 2004). These laws were applied in the Mohammed Haneef case. "Mohammed Haneef Case," *Law Council of Australia*, accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/programs/criminal-law-human-rights/anti-terror/haneef.cfm.

39. "Ruddock Rejects Intelligence Criticism," *ABC Lateline,* broadcast April 21, 2004, accessed May 18, 2011, http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2004/s1091468.htm, emphasis mine.

40. Australian Security Intelligence Organisation: Australia's national security organization.

41. Australian Secret Intelligence Service: Australia's overseas intelligence gathering agency.

42. Defence Signals Directorate: Australia's signals intelligence and information security agency.

43. "Review of the listing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)," *Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD* (Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), 2.

44. "Review of the listing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)," 24.

45. "Review of the listing of Tanzim Qa'idat al-jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the al-Zarqawi network) as a terrorist organization," *Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD* (Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2005).

46. "Review of the listing of Tanzim Qa'idat al-jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn . . . ," 17.

47. Ibid., 19–20.

48. Ibid., 21.

49. To the extent monstration is successful, it is no longer necessary to name names; the above quote indicates how, after earlier linking has been successfully effected, a gestural intimation eventually becomes sufficient, not only to name new names, make new links and send new messages, but also to unload the combined weight of meaning and political force into these fresh names, links, and sites. The further crucial political point is the durability of these by now useful, redeployable links. Like many other executives of the Coalition of the Willing, the Australian Commonwealth retains the *ongoing* ability to name names and make links, by marshalling the entirety of this prior web of bad associations.

50. "Review of the re-listing of Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the al-Zarqawi network) as a terrorist organisation," *Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD* (Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2007), 12.

51. "Review of the relisting of Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn," 20.

52. Ibid., 15. This statement reads very strangely. Is the connection metonymic? Is it simply a matter of placement? The quoted sentences are the first statements in the section of the Report entitled "Engagement in terrorism," and are immediately followed with the following: "According to the statement of reasons, in the period under review, 2005 to 2007, TQJBR has been subsumed (January 2006) into a 'larger coalition of groups,' the Mujahideen Shura Council, of which TQJBR is the 'dominant group.' On 15 October 2006, the Council declared the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq. It is the Council that has claimed responsibility for terrorist activity in the period under review."

53. "Review of the re-listing . . . .," 13.

54. Ibid., 11.

55. Ibid., 12.

56. This is partly explained by the emergence of the Sunni awakening, which, through its opposition to the full range of foreign-born jihadi-dominated Islamist groups, effectively constituted "Al Qaeda in Iraq" as a de facto entity—a context not mentioned in the report.

Bio

Peter Chambers works on the borders of political and legal theory and international political sociology. His present research interests focus on transformations of political power considered through the active, unruly practices of making security work for contemporary forms of government.