

CNN, the Gulf War, and Journalistic Practice

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This article considers how journalists have turned stories about the Gulf War into a forum for discussing satellite-fed technology, real-time reportage, and other issues of concern to the professional community. In focusing on the Cable News Network (CNN) and Peter Arnett, reporters have turned the Gulf War into a critical incident that helps them consider consensual notions of professional practice.

The world of journalism is cluttered with practices that should generate questions about newsmen's ability to act as authoritative reporters of events of the "real world." From news gathering to news presentation, a journalist's authority often derives from the fact that the public cannot verify what he or she has done. This situates the establishment of journalistic authority within the hands of journalists, and their authority is informed by their own decisions about how, why, and in what way they turn ordinary events into news stories. Such decisions in turn become the topic of discussions among journalists.

This is even more the case with major events, like the Gulf War. While the war's central events were unraveled in the eye of the media, their telling was accompanied by extensive discourse among journalists and news organizations about who put those events into narrative form, and in what way. This discourse particularly centered on the Cable News Network (CNN), the value of satellite-fed communication, and the advantages and disadvantages of reporting a war in "real time." In discussing the Gulf War, journalists thereby turned war stories into a forum for discussing issues of concern to the professional community.

This article considers how this took place—how journalists entwined stories about CNN, satellite-fed technology, and "real-time" war reporting with Gulf War discourse. The article uses what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call a "strategically chosen example" to track down journalistic mediated and professional discourse about covering the Gulf War. Analysis is based on systematic examination of the public discourse by which reporters discussed their part in covering the Gulf War, as it appeared in the printed press, television news, profes-

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sional reviews, and trade journals.¹ In so doing, it addresses the emergence of the Gulf War as a critical incident for journalism professionals, which helped journalists redefine boundaries of appropriate practice.

Regardless of what they call them, journalists have long used critical incidents as a way to frame the hows and whys of journalistic practice. Critical incidents are what Levi-Strauss once called “hot moments,” phenomena or events through which a society or culture assesses its own significance (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 259). Gerbner coined the term “critical incident” in his discussion of decision-making processes in media organizations (Gerbner, 1973, p. 562). He allowed that critical incidents give organizational members a way to defuse challenges to recognized authority. When employed discursively, critical incidents refer to those moments by which people air, challenge, and negotiate their own boundaries of practice. For journalists, discourse about critical incidents suggests a way of attending to events that are instrumental for the continued well-being of the journalistic community.

A number of events in journalism history can be seen as having functioned as critical incidents. Watergate—the scandal that journalists uncovered—displayed the appropriate boundaries of investigative journalism (Schudson, 1978, in press; Woodward & Bernstein, 1976). The Kennedy assassination allowed the journalistic community to negotiate its response to the ascent of television news (Zelizer, 1990, in press). The Vietnam War helped journalists rethink the hows and whys of televisual reporting and journalistic responsibility during wartime (Arlen, 1969; Braestrup, 1977). Critical incidents of different kinds illuminate different rules and conventions about journalistic practice and authority.

At the heart of critical incidents is discourse about more general topics at issue for journalism professionals. The Kennedy assassination, for example, emerged at a time when the professionalization of journalists was uppermost and the legitimization of television news questionable. Journalists used assassination stories to address both agendas (Zelizer, in press). Using discourse in this way helps journalists attend to different notions about journalistic practice by telling and retelling the stories of major public events.

Critical incidents are generally shaped by discourse about two features: technology and archetypal figures. Technology, or the devices that shape an incident into news, offers a stage for journalism professionals to experiment with new ways of achieving work-related goals. During the Vietnam War, journalists were given the opportunity to append filmed pictures to words in reporting the war on television, even if a certain time lag was involved (Braestrup, 1977). At the time of the Kennedy assassination, live television gave the American public its first live televisual experience of a major public event. The shooting of Kennedy’s presumed assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, on television prompted reporters to consider the advantages—and disadvantages—of live coverage (Zelizer,

¹ Discussions of Gulf War coverage appeared between January and August 1991 and were located via the *Current Guide to Periodical Literature*. The *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and select television programs were also scanned during the same time period, as was the trade press (*Columbia Journalism Review*, *Washington Journalism Review*, *The Quill*, and *Electronic Media*) and newsletters of professional organizations (*ASNE Bulletin* and the Associated Press’ *AP Log*).

in press). Changes in technology thereby form the backdrop against which a critical incident is acted out, and made meaningful for those involved in its relay.

Archetypal figures, or the individuals who successfully use the technology of news reporting, are an instrumental part of a critical incident's development. They provide the faces behind the technological devices. The Kennedy assassination produced the Walter Cronkites and Dan Rathers, reporters who covered the story in what came to be referenced as exemplary television journalism (Zelizer, in press). Watergate generated the Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein (Woodward & Bernstein, 1976), both of whom were seen as exemplary investigative journalists.

Within this context, the Gulf War can be seen as a potentially critical incident for journalism professionals. As *Time* magazine opined: "Like the Kennedy assassination or the space-shuttle disaster, the outbreak of war in the Gulf was one of those historic events destined to be remembered forever in the terms by which television defined it" (Zoglin, 1991a, p. 69). Called by one trade journal "the biggest news story in decades" (Boot, 1991, p. 23), it problematized for journalists the hows and whys of the newest dimension of news-gathering technology—the satellite-fed television news report. At the same time, it offered a forum for negotiating the response of the journalistic community to that same technology, as it was already being successfully employed by CNN.

Live from the Gulf

From the onset, the Gulf War offered a forum for journalists to discuss concerns about the profession. For most journalists, covering the Gulf War exemplified the ultimate dilemma of wartime reporting, which, in *Time's* view, involved "how to communicate events fairly and accurately, without revealing confidential military information" (Zoglin, 1991c, p. 44). The growing availability of live satellite-fed television communication from within enemy territory made wartime reporting particularly visible to the public, in all its negative and positive aspects. It "opened up the news-gathering process to millions of people" (Osborne, 1991, p. 2), and showed them how "disorganized, sloppy and unappetizing the process can be" (Greenfield, 1991, p. 7).

It also made the war a "real-time" story. As U.S. viewers watched air raid alerts of SCUD attacks in real time, so did the Iraqis. Reporting real-time war constituted an unprecedented professional challenge for many journalists, who needed to act fast, "professionally," in unknown territory—and all in the eye of the camera. This generated the feeling that "for much of American journalism, especially broadcasting, the implications of the gulf war will be as far reaching as they are for the Middle East" (Katz, 1991, p. 29).

Yet once the war began, news organizations moved to accommodate unusually large audiences. Newsstand sales of *Newsweek* doubled (Diamond, 1991b), and dailies like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Boston Globe* sold up to 20,000 more copies per day (Zoglin, 1991b, p. 78). Newspapers printed second

editions, supplements, and wraparound sections ("The Persian Gulf Explodes," 1991). Television offered news coverage that clarified the war effort (i.e., "Meet the Press," 1991). Special issues of the trade press and proceedings of professional forums were devoted to war coverage.

Journalists' fundamental unfamiliarity with the reporting of modern wartime technology, however, gave coverage the aura of a Nintendo game. As media critic Peter Braestrup saw it:

A new generation of journalists is learning about war and they're learning about the military . . . They're ahistorical; they can't remember any precedents for anything. They keep discovering the world anew. They either concentrate on high-tech stories or on what an ABC producer described as "boo-boo journalism," that is, asking "How do you feel?" not "What do you know?" . . . They're yuppies in the desert (quoted in Valeriani, 1991, p. 26).

Time lamented the scarcity of "reliable, objective information about the war's progress" (Zoglin, 1991c, p. 44). Journalists were faulted for surrendering to governmental attempts at censorship (Boot, 1991), providing what Hodding Carter called "essentially phony coverage" (quoted in Valeriani, 1991, p. 28), toeing the government line (Massing, 1991; Schanberg, 1991). *U.S. News & World Report* claimed that all the press corps had to show for its coverage was "a big black eye" (Gergen, 1991, p. 57). Television addiction, said the editor, had turned into a "sour distaste for journalists." A critic for *The Progressive* went further in commenting that journalists were "on call 24 hours a day to report that they know nothing" (Landau, 1991, p. 26).

Perhaps as a means of compensating for insufficient reportage, reporters entwined the war story with the story of those doing the reporting. Television networks began to offer programs that concentrated on the media and the Gulf (i.e., *The Press Goes to War*, 1991; *The Media and the Military*, 1991). *TV Guide* tracked journalistic celebrities who became famous for their war coverage (Lieberman, Stein, & Collins, 1991) and relayed reporters' experiences at war, as if journalists, not soldiers, were the privileged tellers of tales from the front (Stein, 1991). As one critic wryly observed, "the United States has nearly 500,000 troops in the Gulf Region, and the only people you see in jeopardy are reporters . . . the process of reporting had become the story" (Rosenberg, 1991, pp. 17-18).

In the spring of 1991, *Newsweek* published a special commemorative war issue, which hailed reporters' cooperation with each other and their ability to overcome professional challenges like desert heat or censorship restrictions ("The Story Behind the Story," 1991, p. 3). The more innovative the activity, the more attention it received: One journalist shaved his head to spare himself the effort of grooming while reporting the war; another lost 15 pounds during his seven weeks in the region. *Newsweek's* reporting was lauded (by the magazine's own staff) as "prescient," "heroic," and "tremendous." It brought journalists "as close to writing history as journalism goes" ("The Story Behind the Story," 1991, p. 3). Because it introduced a story about Americans at war, this

article placed journalists at the forefront not only of efforts to tell the story but of the war effort itself.

Television journalism provided a particularly fertile forum for reporters' war discourse. Television became the "proscenium of the theater of war," said veteran newscaster Fred Friendly (quoted in *The Media and the Military*, 1991), in that many activities took place before its cameras. The war's onset seemed to have been timed to coincide with the networks' evening news programs, and night after night Americans were treated to action that heated up as prime time neared. Television networks broke into scheduled programs with live shots of reporters under SCUD attack. Even radio borrowed or purchased television audio in order to keep up with the story (Collins, 1991, p. 29). From gas-masked reporters to teary Iraqis outside a bombed shelter to scenes of Kuwaitis hanging up American flags made of old pajamas, the war for most Americans "ended as it had begun—on television" (Diamond, 1991a, p. 26).

The war's emplotment thus favored the television journalist. One reporter offered the view that the "dearth of uncensored, firsthand information about the war [forced] the press—especially television—to focus on the few parts of the story reporters can witness" (Zoglin, 1991c, p. 45). This made the eyewitness accounts of television reporters one of the few authoritative relays of the war coverage. As one press reporter recalled, "a friend took a picture of me the other day taking notes in front of a television set. That's what being a war correspondent has come to" (quoted in Zoglin, 1991b, p. 78).

An emphasis on television news sometimes turned non-newsworthy events into news, largely because television technology was there to report them. "To have technology is to use it," said David Halberstam, as he lamented the widening gap between the immediacy offered by satellite-fed technology and the instantaneous journalism it created, and the time needed to make reliable news judgments (Halberstam, 1991, p. 1). One bizarre recasting of events "came not when General Powell unveiled his diagrams of damaged Iraqi targets, but when CNN's Charles Jaco scrambled for his gas mask on the air in Saudi Arabia" (Zoglin, 1991c, p. 45). Called the "biggest gaffe" of the war by one account, it nonetheless was reported by nearly every news organization. The incident not only displayed the emotional toll of reporting war in real time, accompanied by a technology that superseded one's ability to gain composure, but it called on journalists to consider establishing new boundaries of appropriate behavior.

Network news organizations could not adopt the setup required of reporting the war in real time for long. The story called for reporters to be constantly on call, cramming "three years' worth of stories into three weeks" (Diamond, 1991b, p. 33). The breaking story, one reporter said, was "... old by dinner-time. Satellite-linked stations and CNN, serving 58.9 million homes, can and do give the viewers the day's hot news well before the network newscasts crank up" (Sharbutt, 1991, p. 5D). By contrast, CNN's "ubiquity, mobility and hustle seemed to leave [its] network competitors paralyzed" (Katz, 1991, p. 29). The cost of covering breaking news had generated a situation whereby the "networks [couldn't] afford to be in the breaking news business anymore" (Katz,

1991, p. 29). As the cost of coverage rose, they were unable to continue covering the story, no longer competent to run it in its most developed technological form. *Newsweek* went so far as to claim that the night the war began was “the night the networks died” (Alter, 1991, p. 41).

From the beginning, then, journalists linked issues of professionalism with discourse about war coverage. Stories of the Gulf War raised questions about the preferred form of journalistic practice, that addressed not only long-standing concerns about censorship, editorial integrity and economic viability but a specific issue related to the Gulf War—how to establish authority for reportage in real time.

The Ascendancy of CNN

Discussions of the Gulf War focused on CNN for its successful usage of the newest news-gathering technology, the satellite-fed communication. CNN not only distributed news by satellite but brought portable satellite uplinks, called “flyaway dishes,” to the front line. This enabled journalists to collect news by satellite, introducing faster news transmission and generating a continuous stream of news copy from diverse locations. Because CNN had successfully employed this technology, the story of Gulf War coverage became entwined with the story of CNN’s technological mastery and its emergence as a viable news organization.

Network news was vividly contrasted with cable news during the initial shelling of Baghdad, when ABC, NBC, and CNN all succeeded in transmitting reports for their correspondents. Within minutes, only CNN was left with an operable line, and its three reporters provided what *Time* called “an exceptional, and perhaps unprecedented, live account of the start of war from inside an enemy capital” (Zoglin, 1991a, p. 69). Journalists and news organizations uneasily watched what CNN would do next:

The CNN team had what every other American news organization—the old-line networks, the newspapers, and the wire services—wishes it had: implicit recognition on the part of Iraqi authorities that it is the preeminent news-gathering force in the world, a continuing and officially sanctioned presence in the Iraqi capital, and the technology that allows its reporters to get their stories out (Diamond, 1991b, p. 30).

CNN possessed the ability to present, transmit, and distribute news 24 hours a day, making it the sole news organization capable of “keeping up” with satellite-fed communication.

As the war progressed, other media began to notice CNN’s coverage. Local stations signed on to carry CNN affiliates and bypass the other traditional networks (Mott, 1991). On one night, over 200 news directors at local affiliates abandoned their own network’s feed to acquire CNN material (Cooper, 1991). NBC anchor Tom Brokaw interviewed CNN’s Bernard Shaw from Shaw’s hotel room in Baghdad. CNN became “the unpaid news service for papers” (Bernard

Gwertzman, quoted in Colin, 1991, p. 31), which adapted traditional formats to include more graphics and visual layouts (Colin, 1991; Diamond, 1991a). Audiences also began to pay attention and CNN's ratings increased five-fold (Cooper, 1991; Kamen, 1991; Gannett Foundation, 1991).

CNN's triumph was seen by many reporters as an about-face on the part of what had been considered a second-rate news organization. In one view, CNN went from being the "Chicken Noodle Network" to having public credibility (Diamond, 1991b, p. 35). Often this was relayed through war terminology: *U.S. News & World Report* observed that "January 16 will be remembered as the night [producer Bob] Furnad and his CNN colleagues carpet-bombed the competition" (Cooper, 1991, p. 44). Headlines like "CNN Wins" or "CNN Hits Its Target" were strewn across the print media, as was mention of the "collateral damage" inflicted on CBS, NBC, and ABC (Katz, 1991). War terminology suggests the extent to which CNN was originally seen as part of the opposition, a second-rate news organization, and helps explain why journalists needed to link CNN's legitimation with an event like the Gulf War. In a sense, the magnitude of events that underscored CNN's triumph softened the blow of being positioned as members of the losing side.

Thus CNN was largely hailed across media in statements that linked its ascendancy with the war. *Time* called CNN its "undisputed star," which "affirmed its credibility and worldwide clout with new authority" (Zoglin, 1991a, p. 69). *U.S. News & World Report* called CNN a network that "shows how to cover a war" (Cooper, 1991, p. 44). And *Newsweek*, applauding a "new television order," commented already in January that CNN was "changing the news business forever" (Alter, 1991, p. 41). The Gulf War offered the kind of news story that portrayed CNN's technological advantages in their best light (Diamond, 1991b, p. 35). Its coverage thus somewhat changed expectations of wartime reporting.

In the eyes of CNN insiders, however, war coverage adapted itself to the form of reportage that CNN did best. As one CNN executive said, "we handled the big story hour after hour, taking incoming materials from satellites, but that's what we do all the time" (John Baker, quoted in Diamond, 1991b, p. 34). Wartime coverage played into "CNN's traditional strengths: its unquenchable lust for the breaking story, its willingness to feed a story in contradictory fragments to an audience hooked on drama and the very ambiguities of life" (Polman, 1991, p. 27). On these grounds, CNN executives claimed to offer "a new kind of journalism," which presented "the unfolding story . . . live" (Ed Turner, quoted in Polman, 1991, p. 26).

Shortly after the war began, CNN's publicity department distributed a pamphlet entitled "War in the Gulf" (*War in the Gulf*, 1991). The pamphlet was telling for how it incorporated the Gulf War into CNN's publicity effort. Alongside a map of the Gulf region, its front cover hailed CNN as "the world's news leader." Inside, it recorded the sentiments of CNN's main players—Peter Arnett, Bernard Shaw, and John Holliman—as well as a daily accounting of the war's main events. Shaw conveyed how he, Arnett, and Holliman had "cheated death" on the first day of the war. "The world benefitted," he said, "CNN was

there. History was served" (*ibid.*, p. 1). The pamphlet also recounted the praise of key public officials and media organizations throughout its 23 pages of text and pictures: Dick Cheney lauded CNN for the "best reporting" (*ibid.*, p. 11), while foreign newspapers praised it for being more objective than other networks (*ibid.*, p. 13). The pamphlet concluded with the following statement: "No one will ever doubt . . . that CNN is the most important network in the world. This is the most important journalism story of the decade" (*ibid.*, p. 23).

CNN's so-called "overnight success"—which *The Quill* called a "quantum leap into the broadcasting big leagues in only a matter of hours" (Mott, 1991, p. 15)—did not take place in one night. It had actually been in the making for nearly 10 years. Years earlier, CNN's coverage of events like the Challenger shuttle disaster or the shooting of Ronald Reagan had already hinted at the advantages to be had in continuous live coverage, and recognition of those parameters prompted CNN executives to negotiate for the installation of an overseas telephone link in Iraq in case of emergency power failure (Mott, 1991). Even before the war there were hints of public legitimacy, such as a *Washington Journalism Review* readers' poll conducted in October that gave CNN the title of Best Network for News ("Best in the Business," 1991).

So why was CNN's ascendancy linked with the Gulf War? Such a linkage was necessary for the negotiation and successful recognition of altered parameters of journalistic professionalism. By narratively reworking the tale of CNN's legitimation via Gulf War discourse, journalists were able to couch it in terms that made its ascendancy more understandable and less threatening to existing boundaries of journalistic practice. It also gave CNN itself a marker through which it could claim its own legitimation. "New King of the Hill" was how *The Quill* pronounced CNN's newfound status (Mott, 1991), and it was a cry echoed by mediated and professional forums alike, however true a recounting it was. Journalists' discussions came to underscore the central role of CNN in mastering the technology that gave the Gulf War story its form.

The Peter Arnett Phenomenon

Left unresolved in discussions of CNN's ascendancy, however, were concerns about the reporter. One professional forum offered the view that reporters were "hardly needed" in much of CNN's coverage "other than as a relay point along the transmission line" (Haarsager, 1991, p. 3). Journalists questioned whether they had been displaced by satellite-fed communications, whether the reporter had become "less important than the satellite dish that he's standing next to" (Yaari, 1991). While CNN coverage was described by one trade journal as "technologically ingenious and dramatic" (Katz, 1991, p. 29), these were hardly adjectives favored by hard-boiled reporters. The idea that a reporter was created from one night of saturation footage did not bode well for definitions of professional activity.

Questions remained about the authority of the reporter vis-à-vis that of the portable satellite uplink, creating a need for stories that might help journalists

deal with their own mastery over the satellite-fed news item. Thus, journalists used the archetypal figure as a way of negotiating their mastery of the satellite-fed story, and they positioned Peter Arnett as the archetypal figure of Gulf War discourse. Arnett was seen as the reporter who met newly-defined professional challenges despite great personal risk and hardship. By staying behind enemy lines to report the story, he exemplified what was needed of a reporter in an age of satellite-fed communication. Within these parameters, an image of him was constructed that addressed questions among journalists about their authority within such an age.

The media labelled Arnett the “last American correspondent left in Baghdad” (Zoglin, 1991c, p. 45). They likened his dispatches to the legendary reportage of Edward R. Murrow during World War II. Newspaper columns outlined his performance in Baghdad (i.e., Heller, 1991). Reporters like David Halberstam, Marvin Kalb, and Malcolm Browne went on national media to remind viewers of Arnett’s reportorial competence and experience, which had won him a Pulitzer Prize for his Vietnam reportage (Browne, 1991; Granger, 1991; *The Media and the Military*, 1991). He had, said Halberstam, “an almost unique ability to operate in an environment that most reporters would have found unendurable” (quoted in Halonen, 1991, p. 6). CNN executives praised Arnett as a “seasoned combat correspondent, who has been tested by time and in so practicing his craft received the highest honors journalism can bestow” (Ed Turner, quoted in Halberstam, 1991, p. 31).

While public figures leveled criticism at the reporter for relaying Iraqi-censored reports, for not being overtly loyal to America, for insisting on staying behind enemy lines, journalists spoke almost to a person in his defense. When Arnett reported that the allies had bombed a plant producing infant formula, and not biological weapons as the U.S. insisted, and public fears intensified that his dispatches were being used for propaganda purposes, journalists spoke out in his behalf. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called him an “endangered species” (Heller, 1991, p. D1). At one point lawmakers pressed for control over his broadcasts (Halberstam, 1991, p. 1), and the *Washington Journalism Review* called the attempts “Malice in Wonderland” (Monroe, 1991, p. 6). Interestingly, these comments addressed the appropriateness of a reporter’s actions within the expanded boundaries of coverage offered by satellite-fed communiqués. In other words, discourse about Arnett explored whether adjusting the boundaries of appropriate coverage was necessary to suit the newest news-gathering technology.

Nearly all of the trade press—including *Washington Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Electronic Media*—ran articles praising Arnett’s performance. The *New York Times Magazine* traced his personal history under the title “If There’s a War, He’s There” (Prochnan, 1991, p. 30). One editorial called Arnett the “anti-hero hero of Baghdad” (Monroe, 1991, p. 6). The logistics of Arnett securing his interview with Saddam Hussein were tracked by *Electronic Media*, whose front-page headline proclaimed that “CNN’s Secret Journey Ends in Exclusive Hussein Broadcast” (Shaw, 1991, p. 1). The *Washington Journalism Review* defended Arnett with the phrase,

“observe the legend taking shape—the legend of Peter Arnett, go-to-hell war correspondent” (Monroe, 1991, p. 6). He was:

. . . the hero that journalists deserve, sent by the Lord to comfort us in our time of affliction and gross unpopularity . . . [he was] the perfect symbol of the beleaguered press in the Scudded world of February 1991. He lives and breathes the story (Monroe, 1991, p. 6).

As American forces began their pullout from the region, the *Columbia Journalism Review* ran a special article about war coverage that was simply titled “Arnett.” In part, it went as follows: “By turns defiant and defensive, [Arnett] upheld his role even as he acknowledged that the sort of journalism he had practiced, or been permitted to practice, had been severely circumscribed” (Goodman, 1991, p. 29). Such remarks underscored that reporting a war in real time called for a change in reportorial practice. In many reporters’ eyes, Arnett had become “the first war correspondent of the global village” (Halonen, 1991, p. 7).

The controversy surrounding Arnett’s coverage did not go unnoticed by the reporter himself. In a speech to the National Press Club shortly after he returned to the U.S., he claimed that the same public figures who criticized him for being too soft on Saddam Hussein had upbraided him before the war began for being too critical (Rosenstiel, 1991). He also claimed that his ability to conduct unrehearsed question-and-answer sessions with his CNN anchors was what “saved [his] reputation”; those sessions showed that he was not simply “reading material that I was forced to write” (Rosenstiel, 1991, p. 12A). The response of the journalistic community was overwhelmingly supportive. He was called upon to address other professional forums on the same issue, including the Knight Fellows at Stanford and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Collins, 1991). He also signed a contract to write his memoirs.

For an understanding of appropriate boundaries of journalistic practice, Arnett’s activities were instrumental in illustrating the need for a change. His response confirmed his authority as a reporter through the spontaneous and unplanned nature of reporting in real time. Casting journalistic practice in this way upheld the need for changing the boundaries of reportage in an age of satellite-fed communication. His remarks thereby not only underscored his own stature and that of CNN, but also that of the technology of satellite-fed communication that made his reportage possible. It is significant that he was a reporter who had previously proved himself in the print media, and his ascendancy as CNN’s star illustrates a peculiar, but workable, wedding of the old and new in American journalism. By being filmed sitting next to the satellite, he also signified the connection between the archetypal figure and the new preferred technology of news gathering.

It is worthwhile to contrast Arnett with another journalistic personality who was central to stories about the Gulf War: CBS’s Bob Simon. Simon was captured by the Iraqis when he abandoned pool arrangements and went on his own in search of a story. He spent weeks in captivity. Simon emerged as the mirror image of Arnett, the reporter who defied military restrictions to investi-

gate the scene and was then taken captive for his efforts. Simon was portrayed as having walked away from the technology of transmission (and losing the story), while Arnett was seen as having prevailed for remaining alongside that same technology (and winning the story). In a semiotic sense, this signified the importance of remaining alongside the satellite, regardless of what one saw, did, or heard.

In this way, discourse about Arnett as the archetypal reporter underscores the journalist's mastery of satellite-fed communication. Such a pattern is found in other critical incidents. Discourse about Woodward and Bernstein constitutes a personalized way of telling the story of Watergate (Woodward & Bernstein, 1976), and stories about Edward R. Murrow mark discourse about World War II (Monroe, 1991). Stories about Arnett thus humanize Gulf War discourse, lending a human element to tales that hail the advent of satellite-fed technology.

Has Journalism Changed?

In response to the Gulf War, the journalistic community has adapted to altered boundaries of journalistic practice in two ways: imitation and surrender. Discourse about CNN and Peter Arnett has made clear to members of the journalistic community that altered boundaries of appropriate practice are inevitable. It has called on them to consider new ways of adapting. Certain journalists and news organizations have chosen to imitate the news as it is produced by satellite-fed technology. They in effect have "redefined themselves":

During the opening days of the gulf war, viewers were never in need of greater cool, clear, informed reporting and analysis. . . . Yet for years now the networks have been busily tossing onto the streets the very researchers, producers, commentators and staff that could have helped carry out such a role (Katz, 1991, p. 29).

For the first days of the war, the networks expanded their evening broadcasts to one hour, providing their version of what one journalist called "saturation coverage": "expanding their evening newscasts, preempting prime-time entertainment lineups and rushing stories onto the air as soon as possible" (Lieberman, 1991, p. 14). Newspapers used eye-catching graphics, sidebars, boxes, maps and special pull-out sections—a response to the increasing centrality of the visual element in news (Colin, 1991). Even the *AP Log*, the in-house organ of the Associated Press, appended its own full page of graphics to its monthly newsletter ("The Persian Gulf Explodes," 1991).

Such practices persist today in expanded forms. Newspapers continue to favor the more visual packaging and informative graphics that many adopted during the war. On the international front, Sky News in Britain, the BBC's World Service Television, and the European Broadcasting Union's Euronews Channel offer versions of television news along lines suggested by CNN (Goodwin, 1991). Veteran CBS producer Don Hewitt called for a general tele-

vision news service, much like a visual wire service, that would supply the networks with the basic visual and factual frame of each news story (Alter, 1991). A recent plane crash over a suburban Philadelphia school generated six hours of live television broadcasting, which, as one local journalist said, "we might not have necessarily done without the lessons learned from CNN" (Guttman, 1991). Imitation suggests that CNN's rendition of the news has come to be seen as a viable, and worthwhile, form of transmission.

Other news organizations have elected to surrender to the demands suggested by CNN coverage. While CNN recently said it would spend over \$2 million to open new bureaus in Amman, Rio de Janeiro, and New Delhi (Sharbutt, 1991), network news organizations are closing bureaus. One NBC executive admitted that his network is no longer able to cover breaking news: "We're not going back to covering everything that breaks. . . . We're not running after bus crashes. We're relying on our affiliates and our owned stations to cover that kind of story" (Sharbutt, 1991, p. 5D). Interestingly, this gives CNN exclusivity on breaking news, as do attempts to explain shutdowns and other moves of adaptation as a recasting of journalistic practice.

Since the war ended, journalists' discussions of war coverage have taken on an increasingly critical stance. The Associated Press convened a special panel discussion on the Gulf War at its annual meeting, where it featured Peter Arnett as one of its speakers ("AP Annual Meeting," 1991). The American Society of Newspaper Editors' (ASNE) president used its monthly newsletter to ponder the effect of judging war correspondents "on the basis of how they behave on television" (Osborne, 1991, p. 2). The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication published two divisional newsletters that separately pondered journalists' authority alongside ever-present television cameras and CNN's evolution as a "new genre of news" (Atwood, 1991; Haarsager, 1991). All of this suggests that journalists have begun to use discussions about the Gulf War as a critical marker of appropriate journalistic practice, much like stories about the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, and Vietnam were used in earlier decades.

Two lines of thought continue to punctuate Gulf War discourse. One line still debates long-standing journalistic concerns about the appropriate boundaries of censorship, viability of pool arrangements, and degree of appropriate opposition to governmental curbs ("AP Annual Meeting," 1991; Hentoff, 1991; Lewis, 1991; McMasters, 1991; Nathan, 1991). Such discourse might have been appended to a number of conflicts in which the United States has been involved, including Grenada, Vietnam, or Panama.

But a second line of thought is specific to the Gulf War. It addresses the potentially dangerous liaison that has formed between CNN and the Gulf War, by which the war and CNN are seen to legitimate each other (Diamond, 1991a; Malik, 1991). Characterizations of the war—"the television war" (*Meet the Press*, 1991), the "real-time war" (Kinsley, 1991, p. 80), "war in video verité" (Osborne, 1991, p. 43), or the "CNN war" (Capuzzo & Shister, 1991, p. 14A)—are conflated with labels about CNN—"news without end" (Polman, 1991, p. 26), a "new kind of journalism" (quoted in Polman, 1991, p. 26), or "instanta-

neous journalism" (Kamen, 1991, p. 27)—in discussions about the contemporary practices of American journalists.

CNN's role in the war has generated suggestions that its mode of news gathering signals an end to recognized journalistic practice and the beginning of a new era of journalism. While CNN insiders would certainly favor such a view, this article suggests that what is different about CNN's mode of news gathering is simply a matter of degree: CNN does not offer "new" journalism, just faster, more continuous, less polished, and less edited journalism. Journalists continue to engage in generally the same activities of news gathering, although they may emphasize and reveal different aspects of the process for public viewing.

This discussion also suggests that viewing CNN's mode of news gathering as new journalism is historically myopic. Response to CNN's modes of news gathering parallels response to the ascent of television news 30 years ago (Zelizer, 1990, in press) and to expanded boundaries of investigative journalism a decade later (Schudson, in press). This suggests a need to attend more closely to the role of technology in generating journalistic authority. While technology provides a logical extension of the appropriate practices of journalism, reporters are able to negotiate their response to it through their discussions about critical incidents, yet maintain their professional identities. This means that rather than regard the Gulf War as an end to recognized forms of journalism, we need to accept the role of the Gulf War in providing a stage for journalists to reshape their professional practices in accordance with new preferred forms of technology. The Gulf War extends, rather than deadens, journalism as we know it.

It is within such a context that the Gulf War constitutes the beginnings of a critical incident for American journalists. Discussing the Gulf War offers reporters a stage on which to evaluate, negotiate, and ultimately reconsider ideas about professional practice and appropriate boundaries of journalistic authority. The American journalistic community is thereby using the Gulf War to choreograph tales of its own adaptation to satellite-fed communication. Only time will tell the extent to which that adaptation is beneficial, or dangerous—for CNN, for network television news, and for the journalistic community.

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