Introduction

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The tragic events of September 11, 2001 seemed, to many commentators, a turning point in American culture without precedent since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Not only was latter incident frequently invoked in political and editorial discourse, but it was also pointedly and repeatedly used to frame the nation's response, from its sense of shock to an act of terrorist aggression, to its interment of enemy suspects on the basis of ethnicity, to its entry into war. From this perspective, 9/11 marks a transformation from what in retrospect seems like an innocent age, to an era marked by fear, isolation, and demagoguery. From a prosperous land with little more to preoccupy it than the sexual foibles of its president, the United States found itself transformed into a debt-ridden nation in a state of war both internally, over domestic values, and externally, with an elusive and invisible enemy. From an open country enjoying good relations with its allies and meriting respect thanks to its humanitarian and environmental efforts, the US embarked on a self-styled "crusade" grounded in moral righteousness and military might, in the process alienating many of its former friends. The starkness of the situation found expression in President Bush's battle cry of "with us or with the terrorists," a polarizing discourse that sustained (and continues to sustain) pointed incursions into the nation's founding values as evidenced by the terms of the "Patriot" Act and the treatment of foreign nationals in Guantanamo Bay. In the struggle to balance the openness and liberties so central to America's identity against the need for security and defense provoked by a faceless and transnational enemy, many conflicting opinions were voiced.

Somehow, despite the fact that nearly a third of the September 11 victims were "foreigners," or that the goal of the terrorist attack was the *World* Trade Center, or that the community of nations demonstrated an unparalleled level of sympathy and support, the attacks were framed as an assault upon *American* values and ideology. The US's recently elected political leadership was quick to narrow the meanings of the attack, re-defining the historical role of the Bush presidency. Rather than engaging in reflection, debate, or nuanced analysis, large sectors of the American media appeared to address these developments through a growing dependence on national symbols, invoking the icons of flag and president, and the endlessly reiter-

ated images of the collapse of the twin towers. Understood as symbols of national unity by some, God-given righteousness by others, and imperialistic oppression by yet others, the use of such polysemic images both benefited – and suffered – from an inherent ambivalence. The media coverage of September 11 and its aftermath, including the wars on "terror" both at home and in the territories of Afghanistan and Iraq, seemed to mark a shift from the discourse of reason to the discourse of branding, the realm of floating signification with all of its evocative yet elusive meanings. Although the potentially reflexive question "why do they hate us" was frequently posed, it was rarely answered with anything other than a re-assertion of nation and might. Meanwhile, many Europeans and particularly the European media struggled to make sense not only of the change in America's emotional tenor, but of the apparent change in its dominant communication strategies.

One might be tempted to challenge this reading of September 11 and its impact on the media. After all, the contentious 2004 presidential election successfully framed the nation's turn in effusive if not apocalyptic terms. Inscribed within the larger narrative of the Christian Eschaton and the notion of a transcendent moral order, desires for nuance and the discourse of reason found themselves recast as the effete trappings of a decadent and marginalized cosmopolitanism. Moral certainty armed with decisive action, according to the majority of voters, was a sign of the times. And this new order resounded in the domain of talk radio, cable television news, the blogsphere, and the printed press. One can agree or disagree, endorse or criticize these developments, and in the process fall into predictable categories and generate predictable responses.[1] But there are other reasons to challenge this reading of 9/11 and its impact, reasons that go back to a series of transformations within the culture generally and the media in particular that preceded the national tragedy. These longer-term transformations and their dramatic embodiment in post-9/11 rhetoric – rather than an ideological critique of post-9/11 American culture – set the stage for this collection of essays on media culture. While the majority of essays reach beyond the specific events of September, the highly-charged aftermath set the tone for reflections on culture and media, particularly in a setting where North American and German specialists were given an opportunity to reflect upon the state of media.

If 9/11 seems a catalyst and a condition for the representational trends, media practices, and political sentiments that underlie the contributions to this book, it is all the more important to consider the deeper context that gave the tragedy its

[1] Pundits, for example, have noted correlation between the Democratic-voting "blue" states and the pre-Civil War "free states" vs the Republican "red" states and the slave-owing states or slave-accepting territories; others have considered the relationship of the "blue" and "red" states to the hierarchy of average IQs of state inhabitants, finding a strict correlation to voting patterns. A more nuanced view might notice the quite strong correlation between city (Democratic) and country (Republican).

transformative power. The meta-narrative of good versus evil that has long been a part of Western culture has been getting plenty of exposure thanks to the joint efforts of the politically-engaged fundamentalist clergy and religiously-inclined opportunistic politicians. But a more recent and structurally resonant precedent prepared the way for the dynamic of fear of an unseen enemy and the merits of moral righteousness as a best defense: the Cold War. In a certain sense, one can see the current struggle over terrorism as drawing its discursive power from the well-rehearsed logics of "us versus them," of order versus barbaric ruthlessness, of the deep seated fear of an ideological other who may well be in our midst. The quiet end of the Cold War in 1989 brought a collective sigh of relief to a world long traumatized by fears of nuclear holocaust. But old habits die hard, and our cultural reflexes remain very much intact as demonstrated by our well-conditioned responses to the latest unseen enemy. With just over a decade of relief from the master narrative of anxiety, the events of 9/11 drew more than a small portion of their intensity – and their logics of response – from these deeply rooted structures. Seen from this perspective, the response to the events of September 11th mark not so much a turning point as a continuation of a deeply defined cultural logic.[2] True, the ideological contours of the enemy have changed, but the general contours of *otherness* (faceless, secretive, fanatical, prone to deploy terror, lodged in 'sleeper-cells', radically anti- materialist, "Eastern") remain surprisingly intact.

But there are more medium-specific reasons to challenge the theory that 9/11 stands as a moment of cultural rupture; reasons, moreover, to complicate our understanding of how those events were positioned, represented, and brokered between the US and its neighbors. The last two decades have witnessed a dramatic acceleration in a long-term process of convergence in the media world. Digitalization has of course facilitated the 'flow' of bits and bytes among media forms, rendering content to some extent independent of technological platform. And, it introduced new forms of media practice, from the internet to far more accessible means to produce and circulate image, sound and text. However, nearly at the same moment – but for very different reasons – Reagan-era deregulation, followed by European deregulation, encouraged the steady concentration of media industries, with large-scale trans-media mergers such as the fusion of Time, Warner Bros., CNN, and AOL. Increased deployment of cost efficient technologies such as cable and satellite, and of course digitalization, facilitated new distribution possibilities. Coupled with the processes of trans-national expansion, through which global media hardware and content producers increasingly concentrated ownership and mar-

[2] The Y2K or the millennium-inspired panic regarding global computer breakdowns, and with it systemic chaos in the developed world, resulted in a number of survival tips that in retrospect seemed to anticipate the US Office of Homeland Security's advice for surviving a terror attack.

ket share (the Sony and Bertlesmann empires, for example), the stage was set for an effective restructuring of the media's role in the public sphere. Meanwhile, the public, too, was growing increasingly savvy in its dealings with media. To the extent that Walter Benjamin's argument in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* was accurate, more exposure to media texts led to more experienced, and perhaps even nuanced, modes of engagement. But whether or not true, the ideological edges of society challenged the dominance of mainstream media, as meanwhile newly-enabled communities of participants used the internet to discuss alternate viewpoints, circulate both rumor and suppressed fact, and generally create new frameworks for understanding the world around them.

The essays gathered together in this collection reflect in various ways upon this somewhat unusual constellation of events. Sited in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the authors discuss media culture at a moment of change – change in the larger belief structures and points of orientation that give societies their meaning and direction, and change in the materialities of media and their expressive and communicative capacities. The transformation of larger belief structures seems directly linked to 9/11, but in fact can be traced back to a series of recent discursive shifts that turn on privileging belief over reason (evident from branding to fundamentalism) and coincide with the thinly veiled economic agendas of both neo-liberals and neo-conservatives in North America and much of Europe. The transformation of media is most apparent, of course, with the prominence of new digital technologies. But, as just suggested, the transformation has a deeper history, one rooted in the ever-more convergent media environment and the reconfigurations of media production, ownership, and participation that emerged from 1980's deregulation combined with satellite and cable technologies. The coincidence of these profound changes in both the *ideoscape* and *mediascape*, to invoke Appadurai's terminology, marks it as something of a rare moment. We've seen such confluences before, as early as the end of the 15th Century with the coincident appearance of the printing press and the renaissance, and as recently as the 1920s and 1930s, with the emergence of broadcast media and mass political movements. In our present, as much as in these previous iterations, the issue of causality is difficult to ascribe particularly since media seem simultaneously to be grounded in, to reflect and to stimulate broader changes in the surrounding society. But it is precisely this complexity that makes the conjunction so productive.

A double cultural divide

One and a half years after the fateful morning in September 2001, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, speaking before a gathering of foreign journalists in Washington on the topic of opposition to the Bush administration's Iraq policy, drew a line in the sand. On one side, the forces of freedom engaged in a life and death struggle against terror; on the other, "Old Europe," dithering with its traditions of reasoned response and its commitment to shared responsibility. Rumsfeld's polarizing rhetoric did little to convince skeptics who were concerned with an increasingly bellicose America and thinly supported arguments for war, but in the context of this book, the incident provides a useful reminder of the deep differences that, even in calmer times, distinguish the United States from its allies to the north and across the Atlantic. These differences, already suggested by the likes of Alexis de Tocqueville in the mid-19th century, are woven into the cultural fabric. Not surprisingly, they also encompass most aspects of media.

These differences are crucial in a book comprised of essays by authors from both sides of the divide. This is not to suggest the workings of the broad deterministic shadow of nation or a hermeneutic key based upon the author's passport. Rather, it is to suggest that specific constellations of media exposures and assumptions underlie the essays, giving the collection as a whole the added advantage of something like a stereo-optic gaze, and with it, depth perception. This difference might be seen in many ways. Consider, for example, the very different broadcasting traditions: the US with its market based conception, and Europe with a deeply rooted sense of non-commercial collectives, whether located in the public or the state. Although today, most European nations support hybrid systems, license fees and significant non-commercial broadcasting operations remain the norm, even if increasingly contested. Or consider the more complicated – and equally dynamic – case of journalism on both sides of the divide. Within the US, journalism schools and the press have both tended to strive for a sense of objectivity and impartiality, clearly distinguishing reportorial from editorial functions. Over the years, the Federal Communications Commission has mandated strategies to guarantee equal time to both sides of a political argument, and until Fox News' recent and explicit invocation of partisanship (under the telling rubric of "fair and balanced"), none of the networks has chosen to identify itself with a particular partisan position. The mainstream printed press as well has tended to be local or national, morning or evening, vaguely 'intellectual' (more words than images; and more polysyllabic words) or 'working class' (more images than words; a lower syllable count) – anything, that is, but more Democratic or Republican, more left or right. There are exceptions of course, but nothing like the array of explicitly partisan positions that the press in many European countries exhibits. American's principle ally in the war, Great Britain, offers a clear example: on the opening day of the attack against Iraq, two prominent tabloid papers provided competing headlines. The right-wing *Sun*'s front page echoed the Bush administration's rhetoric, proclaiming "Shock and Awe;" the left-wing *Mirror* countered "Shocking and Awful," offering a contrast in mainstream media views that would have been impossible to find in the US

market. Distinct from the American press's concern with "objectivity," the press tradition of many European nations, Germany among them, can be characterized by a concern with "accuracy" while acknowledging that point of view is inevitable. And if point of view is inevitable, then it is best kept in the open where it can be seen and assessed.

The difference in the construction of particularly news media between the US and Europe has many explanations, including the structure of the body politic (two party system vs multi party system) and its ensuing political logics (American centrism vs European parliamentary alliance). But the curious thing about the American construction of journalism is that parts of it are fast emerging as partisan, while – as emblematized by Fox – holding fast to a rhetoric of objectivity and balance. Consider the fate of United Press International, once one of the West's great press services, now owned by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (who in 2004 was crowned "humanity's saviour, messiah, returning Lord and true parent" in the US Senate Building[3]). Or consider Clear Channel, a multi-media empire that dominates outdoor advertising and radio (owner of 1,200 stations; 247 of them in America's top 250 markets), which effectively banned the Dixie Chicks from airplay because of their anti-war comments.[4] Or consider Fox television news, which has steadfastly refused to air any images of the Abu Gharib prison abuses in the interests of "fair and balanced" reporting. The curious thing is that despite the sharply growing partisan nature of a portion of the American press, those who have most explicitly departed from the objective tradition have tended to garb themselves in it, all the while loudly complaining about the "liberal bias" of those who remain neutral.[5]

The largely unacknowledged shift of elements within the American press towards partisan engagement notwithstanding, the cultural divide marked by the Atlantic (and the United States' border to the north) and manifest in the conceptualization of the media, may also be found in the analytic strategies used to understand the media. Just as the media are differently conceived and have different institutional traditions on each side of the Atlantic, so too do the frameworks for media study differ. The essays in this collection certainly bear witness to differing notions of analysis, implication, and the scholar's or critic's task; yet in this case, the grounds for difference may not be completely self evident. For example, one might

3 Julian Borger, "Moonie Leader 'Crowned' in Senate," *The Guardian* (UK) June 24, 2004.

4 While Clear Channel claimed it did not order any of its stations to stop playing the Dixie Chicks, most of its stations did, declaring themselves nearly simultaneously "Chicks free". America's second largest radio station-owner, Cumulus Media, directly ordered all its country stations to stop playing the band's songs.

5 The interested reader may want to refer to Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allen, eds., *Journalism After September 11* (New York: Routledge, 2002) for a fuller assessment of American journalism in the shadow of the attack.

point to the importance of Austrian and German social scientists in shaping the effects-oriented communication theories that would dominate the 1930s and 1940s on the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin and Madison Avenue in Manhattan (the later through the work of Paul Lazarsfeld and Princeton University's Office of Radio Research). Or one might consider the importance of their ideological counterparts, as found in the work of the Frankfurt School and carried to the US by Horkheimer, Adorno, and company. To the extent that socially and culturally centered disciplines have trans-cultural components, the Germanic tradition has been a constant, and remains firmly positioned within western mass communication and media studies curricula. But the meaning and impact of that presence differ widely from culture to culture, and hinge upon a number of variables. Where is the study of media institutionally located? In the social sciences or humanities (where that distinction is relevant)? In departments of philology, literature, sociology, film-radio-television, or endless other possibilities? And what objects and analytic perspectives are bundled together? Print and broadcasting under the rubric of journalism? Cinema and television under the arts? The point is that there is no overarching orthodoxy, although there are broad institutional structures that facilitate stability or change. The public nature of the university and the traditional structure of the professoriate in many European nations, Germany included, privileges stability and clear intellectual lineages. In the US by contrast, the competitive mix of private and public institutions and the more fluid system of professorial appointments tend to encourage change. The proliferation of media studies and mass communications programs in the US after 1960 attests to this, as does the tendency towards hybridization as the study of media borrowed methods and key texts from a variety of disciplines, in the process constantly reinventing itself. Drawing on intellectual currents from France and Britain, the quick succession of structuralist, post-structuralist and culturalist turns generated considerable "ferment in the field" in American studies of the media. Disciplinary realignments, including the rise of television studies within the paradigmatic frame established by film studies, or the emergence of such areas as visual studies and popular cultural studies, all contributed to the breakdown of orthodoxy and the recombination of traditions. The German media studies tradition, while embarking on important large-scale research initiatives and evidencing its share of international stars, nevertheless continued systematically to mine the veins already mapped out a generation earlier.

The different conceptualizations of media and their relationship to public and nation that characterize the United States and Germany are evident throughout this book. And in the post-9/11 era of fast changing social assumptions and media practices, the strength of this collection can be found in its views of different media practices (from film to print, from entertainment to journalism), written from the perspective of different cultural spaces (from America, Canada, and "Old" Europe), and from the different traditions of media study just alluded to. There is

one additional twist: authors have been drawn from the very different worlds of academic media studies, from professional media criticism, and from the world of media production. This spectrum of entry points offers rich and complimentary insights ranging from how media are produced and perceived from the front lines, to how meanings are produced and publics mobilized, to the issues of implication and signification. Together, these diverse, divided views combine to complicate any easy assumptions that one might bring to the topic. Moreover – and this is the hermeneutic key to the volume – the value of any individual article depends heavily on the perspective afforded by the whole. The parts offer many far-flung insights, but as a composite, as a whole, they offer a rare glimpse into the practices of media at a moment of social and cultural transformation.

The articles in this collection

We have clustered the essays in this collection around several themes, in the process inevitably highlighting certain lines of argument and suppressing others. Given the multi-layered issues just discussed and the complexity of most of the essays, there is as much to be gained as lost in the attempt to impose an orderly structure on the texts. So the reader is warned! Consider the clusters as but one organizing logic, one way of "opening up" the essays; by all means stay attentive to resonances and counter readings, and stay open to the meanings that accrue, palimpsest-like, as the essays layer upon one another.

The relationship between *media and social form* dominates the first part of the collection.

The opening cluster of essays approaches this relationship by considering media on the fault lines of public culture. The tectonics of public culture are obviously complicated, but among the fault lines, two seem to have been particularly active in recent years. The media play a crucial role, both as object and opinion shaper, in helping to structure cultural hierarchies and in particular, in distinguishing between elite and popular cultures. Much of the debate over such issues as "tabloidization" whereby the news is rendered into entertainment, or the increasing percentage of media space devoted to spectacle and entertainment, as distinct from either "serious" content or traditional cultural forms, or even media's supposed effects in terms of structuring the value systems of its users, all reflect the uneasy relationship between different cultural norms. The polarities marked out by these different norms map onto one of the fault lines that will be considered. A related fault line can be found in the conceptual divide separating the public sphere and the market place. As previously mentioned, in the domain of broadcasting and even cinema, this dividing line seems draw down the middle of the Atlantic, with most European nations, despite growing pressures for commercialization, endorsing a notion of the

public sphere in terms of both media policies and subsidies. By contrast, the US, despite residual institutional forms representing the public sphere (from the regulatory concerns of the FCC to the broadcast operations of PBS and NPR), seems far more concerned with deepening and exporting media as a commodity free from any social obligations other than to seek the highest profit for its stockholders.

The first section addresses issues arising at the juncture of *media and public culture*. Patricia Aufderheide challenges America's longstanding tradition of trusting the marketplace to provide public discourse. She argues that this has led to a situation in which public media are both exceptional and marginalized, and in which commercial media, particularly since 1980s-era deregulation, are increasingly driven by audience ratings and the bottom line. The result, Aufderheide argues, is evident on the level of content, both editorial and entertainment. Pointing to the boycott of content that was perceived as potentially alienating to audiences (e.g., opposition to the war against Iraq), she argues that policy interventions are necessary to strengthen public broadcasting and ensure an open public sphere outside the influence of commercial or partisan interests. Oliver Bange shifts his attention from the role of the marketplace to the role of journalists in de-politicizing public discourse. Recent trends in journalistic practice, he finds, enhance the fragmentation of society and a growing disenchantment with politics. Bange's analysis includes both the US and Germany, and he points to the growth of hybrid forms such as "infotainment" and "politainment" which accentuate personalization, sensationalism, scandals, negativism, and tabloidization. Relying on data from *MedienTenor*, an organization that provides content analysis of a wide range of TV news, newspapers and magazines, Bange argues both that public opinion roughly correlates with key media trends, and that the "boulevardisation" of politics endangers public discourses and leads to a decrease in political involvement. In his chapter, Carlos Widmann focuses on the case of the *New York Times*, (once) a quality newspaper with worldwide influence. Its influence particularly on foreign journalists, Widmann (himself a journalist) argues, was due to its high journalistic standards and its concern with traditional (often European) 'high' culture. Yet, the *Times* are changing. Widmann laments what he describes as shifts in the *Times*' self-identity, its struggle with increased competition, its weakened editorial standards, and the steady decline in its cultural standards. In sharp contrast, Andreas Dörner works from the assumption that media not only impart norms and help to keep the cultural memory alive, but that they also make political culture observable. Commercial popular culture can thus make an important contribution to a vivid democracy – for example when models of altruistic interaction are shown in fictional entertainment. Dörner refers to the findings of two studies on the relationship between political and media culture in Germany and the USA, citing for example, the "americanization" of German political and media culture evident in election campaigns. But the media are always embedded in deeper structures, and

Dörner complicates his analysis by considering the role of different historical experiences and *Zivilreligionen* in political and media culture. The first cluster closes with Uwe Hasebrink's reflections on television, globalization, and the European audience. Hasebrink analyzes the audience's relationship to local and globalized television productions, noting the popularity of many American programs to local audiences around the world (thanks to their appeal as a televisual vernacular that accommodates many different readings). The chapter offers three models for a European response – a pan-European public sphere; a segmented thematic sphere; and the Europeanization of national public spheres – assessing their potentials and limits. Barriers such as the current state of broadcast technologies or Europe's many languages, media alternatives such as the Internet, and the success stories evident in increased European program content and the process of "glocalization", all underscore the complicated processes facing a yet-to-be-realized pan-European audience and an European public sphere.

The three essays constituting the *networked media* cluster share a concern with the development of 'connected' media forms such as the Internet and peer-to-peer networks, reflecting upon their implications for the political order. New media forms such as the Internet offer a significant alternative to centralized media such as the press, mainstream film, or broadcast media. They help to articulate linkages among certain groupings, creating new publics, complicating identities and loyalties, and enabling the flow of information absent from the dominant media. William Uricchio's essay considers several recent Internet-based cultural developments that might be framed as transgressive from the perspective of the traditional state, but that seem to enable new forms of cultural citizenship. Set against the alliance of the state and trans-national corporate media convergence, such transgressions occupy a critical space in the formation of political and cultural identities. Mark Poster explores networked digital information in what he calls "humachines" or the intertwining of humans and machines, a condition that he sees as an evolving, unavoidable, and central aspect of globalization. Locating his intervention against the backdrop of Hardt and Negri's influential *Empire*, with its theorization of the political and economic dimension of globalization, Poster addresses an absence in their argument by providing a much needed analysis of media as a technology of power and as a network that can create a (critical) public sphere. Dagmar Eberle's essay offers a counterpoint to Poster's postmodern framing of the Internet, situating its emancipatory and oppressive potentials as historical stages in the medium's development. Drawing upon examples from media history, she shows that the emergence of new communication technologies has always been accompanied by (normative) positive expectations, and moreover argues that there is a clear developmental pattern as new media take form between top-down (political, commercial) and bottom-up pressures.

The *formal conventions* that have grown up around media constitute the shared concern of the final cluster of the first part of the book. These formal conventions provide a way to understand the cultural role and function of contemporary media, linking them to deeper historical patterns of expression. And they provide an important repertoire of structuring elements that both producers and audiences draw upon as they construct and interpret meanings. Myths, icons, and what Horst Tonn calls "visiotypes" provide the means to cultural continuity in these three chapters. Joan Kristin Bleicher draws a comparison between Greek mythology and television in order to show that both are culturally central narration systems used for presenting, structuring and explaining the world. By helping to construct a collective memory, different worldviews and dominant value systems, television – like Greek mythology before it – helps to maintain the society's cultural nucleus. But beyond this deep resonance in function, television reveals a fabric of difference, and Bleicher explores such issues as its continuously changing points of view, its complex interrelation of repetition and innovation, and the flow of meanings evident in programming. In his chapter, Jürgen Link offers an intriguing way of analyzing the crisis of the welfare system in post-reunification Germany as a crisis of "denormalization". To do this, he relies upon the concept of normalism, that is, middle range narratives and collective symbolism. Statistically grounded, middle range narratives are (media) discourses, patterns of classifications and long-duration frames that integrate historical events (for example the "Cold War Narrative") – structures that operate quite differently from the long range narratives discussed by Bleicher. Link carries out a qualitative analysis of three German publications (*Zeit*, *Der Spiegel*, *Bild*) to determine whether the Cold War narrative has been replaced, and to track the emergence of a new middle-range narrative. In the final essay of this cluster, Horst Tonn reaches back into film history to locate and understand certain recurrent patterns in the representation of war. 'Visiotypes' such as flag waving, marching troops, farewells, sentimental reunions, recur throughout his case studies – *Love and War* (1899), *The Battle* (1911) and *Hearts of the World* (1918). Tonn shows how early film quickly developed visual and narrative patterns which remained remarkably stable throughout the period (and are familiar to us even today), pointing out for example that the legitimacy of war is established through a pattern of purpose (protection of innocents) and gratification (glorious return, romance). The experience of war remains largely within the familiar cast of heroic individuals, man-to-man combat and a suffering – yet grateful – home front. Together, these three chapters conclude the project of the first part of the book, contributing to its general concern with the relationship between media and social form.

The second part of the book is concerned with what might best be termed *media specificities*, that is, institutional practices and structures of critical reception. Here, the level of granularity becomes much finer as the essays explore production

practices, notions of professionalism, the conscious and sometimes not so conscious structuring agencies evident in particular textual forms. This last point is particularly important since not only do different platforms 'mediate' in different ways (the abstraction of the printed word vs the directness of the televisual image), but their shifting dominance in the media landscape serves to 're-mediate' or re-position once central media forms. This dynamic landscape requires constant evolutionary adaptation of the media within it, something that we can see as radio embraces the blogsphere, or television graphics emulate the computer screen. But technologies are not determining; rather, they are enabling. Despite the introduction of new technologies into the mediascape and despite the fast pace of media change, deeper structuring elements account for the continuity and change evident in our textual encounters. Thus, the roles played by ideology, by history, and even by professional practices – roles that are deeply intertwined – help to account for the material practices of media makers, their organizations and their audiences. The second half of the book reflects, then, upon a complex dynamic formed by media specificities and deeper belief structures, and the chapters tease out their analysis of this dynamic by focusing on particularities, whether textual or of professional practice.

The first cluster, *institutional practices and structures of critical reception*, begins with an important essay by Joshua Meyrowitz that explores the larger patterns of homogenization and fragmentation evident in the shift from broadcast to narrowcast media. Particularly in light of what we now know to be the 'complete intelligence breakdown' that led to the war against Iraq, Meyrowitz – as did Aufderheide – offers a devastating critique of mainstream American journalism. He points to the systematic circulation in mainstream media of official rumours and demonstrated falsehoods put forward by various US agencies, and the equally systematic suppression of contradictory – but accurate – reports. In the age of the Internet, these latter reports, marginalized in the press and broadcast media, took on a life of their own, helping to redefine communities of affiliation in ways that greatly complicate traditional demographic assumptions. Tom Heneghan's chapter offers a complimentary view written from the perspective of the journalistic profession. As a way of exploring the implications of the enormous flow of information from the war against Iraq, Heneghan sets live television coverage within the broader technological frame of the satellite telephone and the Internet's impact on the foreign correspondent. In so doing, he asks the question, to what extent do new transmission and broadcast technologies lead to better information? The high speed and massive flow of information emblematized by the live television coverage of the war certainly had the effect of making the war highly visible, but it did not make it understandable – something that only critical context, additional information, and competing points of view can achieve. The challenge facing today's journalists, says Heneghan, is finding a way to give shape and context to that extraordinary flow. Karin Ikas agrees that virtual proximity and an abundance of information do not necessarily lead to a deeper understanding of war. In her chapter, she explores how various media influence the personal, the political, and the construction of identity. In a manner that recalls Tonn's "visiotypes", Ikas argues that the repetitive patterns evident in war reporting encourage readers to transcend the real-world focus of news, transforming it into signs and fiction. Culture – and especially literature – offers a means for contextualizing and understanding the news, analyzing and deepening it by connecting past and present, as well as by bringing different cultural perspectives to bear. The intertextual frame provided by the broader cultural landscape offers a crucial way to counteract the near ritualistic performance of the news, and to restore meaning and consequence to the reports we witness. Donna Coates, writing from a Canadian perspective, continues in an intertextual vein, exploring a space where the repetitive patterns used to inscribe heroism are quite unlike those in America or indeed, in many European nations. Canadian heroes, she argues, tend to be marked by humility, modesty, and collaboration, with the result that it is difficult to establish national heroes. She traces the historical evolution of First World War combat pilot Billy Bishop, Canada's first national hero, exploring the changing contours of heroism. Coates examines how the myth surrounding Bishop crumbled in various media forms from the 1970s onwards, and relates this to the reports of the "Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia 1995" which cast doubts on the image of respectability of the Canadian military. The struggle between red-blooded, 'south of the border' notions of heroism and the more consensual and collaborative tradition played itself out in a series of fierce debates that drew upon history and had policy implications for the nation's present.

The final cluster, *the media ensemble and the aesthetics of war*, draws together many of the issues discussed in the book, exploring post 9/11 representation of war within a media constellation dominated by film and television. In a rich and multi-faceted essay, Patricia Mellencamp points to the increasing visibility of heroism evident in war movies, television documentaries and entertainment since the 1990s. Relying on a close analysis of media texts and theoretically informed by Freud's notion of anxiety, Mellencamp traces a process by which television is both 'shock' (creating anxiety) and 'therapy' (discharging our tensions), spiralling upon itself as the viewer moves back and forth between the two modes of engagement. Her analysis of the film *Black Hawk Down* (which deals with the US military engagement in Somalia) adds a further twist, demonstrating different organizational logics of warfare and the different cultural valuations of human life. The result is a richly textured exploration of media, anxiety, and death in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center. Barbara Tischleder continues with the theme of post 9/11 media aesthetics, exploring the different meanings of the visual, acoustical, and narrative dimensions of media coverage of disaster. These differences, she argues,

can result in something as traumatic as the 9/11coverage being rendered almost fictionalized through constant repetition and reliance on aestheticized imagery. Using the example of the film *Independence Day*, Tischleder shows how dissonance among its formal elements (terrifying images, a moralistic narrative) complicates the impact and meaning of each, and with them the implications of the film as a whole. Tischleder is attentive to the distinctions between film and television particularly as they regard perceptual requirements. Moreover, she draws upon the shock/therapy analysis put forward by Mellencamp, complicating it by attending to differences among the media's representational elements. Together, Mellencamp and Tischleder offer careful readings of particular texts and constellations of media, looking at their intersection for insights into 'media specificities', institutional practices, and structures of critical reception.

Together, the combined chapters in this book offer the reader a rich and multilayered set of trans-Atlantic reflections on media at a moment of cultural change. As argued at the outset, the coincident changes in both the *ideoscape* and *mediascape* give this transformation its historical importance. Although emblematized by the sharply drawn events of 9/11 and the war against Iraq – factors that have provided many of the authors with their vocabulary and examples – in fact these changes are larger and more profound. In this sense, the collection stands as a rather rare materialization of a *Zeitgeist* produced by reflective critics and practitioners.