



# laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

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## Iconic Extrajudicial Execution of Jesus through Osama by US?

### Whither a cyclopean global Pax Americana lacking depth perception?

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## Introduction

Extensive media coverage is to be expected following the execution of "Osama bin Laden" -- supplemented by socio-political analysis of every kind. As a media phenomenon, the following exploration focuses on the remarkable similarity between depictions of Osama bin Laden and those of the historical Jesus, as displayed in many churches and especially in Christian Sunday school iconography. Why are those depictions so similar to Western eyes?

As widely remarked, in a highly politicized and media-oriented global civilization, there is much focus on the symbolism of the face. For a politician the face is frequently the key to the recognition-factor essential for successful election. The face, and its public exposure, has become an obligatory key to identity for security purposes (*Challenges to Facist Identity and Facial Identification*, 2009). The worldwide movement to dark glasses as a fashion accessory is now matched by legislative measures to prohibit covering other areas of the face (*Burkha as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?* 2009).

The importance of the face for collective identity was recognized in classical Greece with respect to [Helen of Troy](#) -- "a face to launch a thousand ships". That of Osama might be said to have "launched a thousand missiles". In what sense did his face "work" to elicit that response?

There has been little serious comment on the irony of the similarity between the depictions of Osama and Jesus and what this may imply at the most fundamental levels of the human psyche. The question was only raised on *Yahoo Answers* following the execution of "Osama" -- evoking a variety of responses (*Why does Osama bin Laden resemble Jesus?*). The resemblance has been jokingly raised by bloggers (cf *Top 10 Similarities Between Osama bin Laden and Jesus*).

**The concern here is however with the sub-conscious impact of the conflation of these images -- especially when one is framed as an appropriate focus for hate and the other as the most appropriate focus for love.** Curiously Osama has been the "most wanted" for over a decade, whereas Jesus has long been upheld as the "most wanted" -- for those anticipating his (promised) return.

It has been decided that that of Osama, in its disfigured condition following his execution, should not be displayed -- for fear it might provide a focus for anti-American sentiment elsewhere. Is the probability rather that this would provoke challenging comparisons amongst American Christians with that of the iconic Jesus -- displayed in agony on the cross with a crown of thorns -- an image to to which Christians have been exposed since Sunday school? The crucifixion image is perversely echoed by one of a prisoner being tortured in [Abu Ghraib](#) -- reproduced as a [cover-photo](#) of *The Economist* (8-14 May 2004).

The question is to what highly problematic confusion does this sub-conscious conflation of iconic images and their associations give rise? **Is there a sense in which it is "Jesus" who has been executed through "Osama"** -- and perhaps deliberately sacrificed to enable and ensure a *Pax Americana*? The question is all the more intriguing in that the much-hailed "clash of civilizations" fails to address the possibility that a complex icon of such profound psycho-spiritual significance may be variously understood -- thereby engendering that "clash".

Is what is deprecated as a "clash" better recognized as a failure to bring contrasting "visions" into some form of stereoscopic focus -- using both what is effectively the "Jesus-eye" and the "Osama-eye"? Is the clash a problem of [parallax](#), projection and perception? **Does removal of one "eye" then ensure a cyclopean global civilization completely lacking in depth perception?** And what of any subconscious effort to remove both?

In a context so dependent on global media, such questions raise the possibility of the need for more powerful stories to integrate elements variously presented as fact and experienced as fiction.

## Method of exploration

The theme, if its potential significance is to be clarified, calls for insights from a range of disciplines -- as well as from the wise and people of faith. These disciplines might fruitfully include:

- public relations, in the light of profound insights into the role of image in framing worldviews and eliciting responses
- news management, especially in the light of its role in relation to propaganda
- psychoanalysis, in the light of the role of symbols and how they engage the conscious and subconscious
- politics, in the light of the role of symbols in framing and focusing political agendas
- religion, in the light of the role of icons in eliciting and sustaining belief
- aesthetics, in the light of the manner in which depiction can enable identification and elicit sympathy
- media, in the light of the role played by recognizable imagery in sustaining attention
- drama, given the role played by images in providing coherence to the story centred on iconic figures, especially with respect to martyrdom
- mythology, in the light of the profound role played by myth in relation to cultural memory
- face negotiation theory, with respect to the facialization of identity -- a concern readily confused with fascism

In anticipation of more qualified insights into these dimensions, the following can only constitute a brief and tentative exploration of possibilities. These must necessarily take the form of questions to elicit further reflection.

A key to fruitful insights is determining the nature of any parallelism in the iconic settings of Osama and of Jesus. It is to be expected that superficially any parallelism would be immediately rejected as repugnant and tasteless, even blasphemous. The question is whether there is a more fundamental framework in which such parallelism has fruitful meaning of relevance to the future through the "depth perception" enabled by the contrasting visions.

The question might be considered as having been raised through the highly controversial picture *Bearded Orientals, Making the Empire Cross* by the Australian artist Priscilla Joyce Bracks -- widely critiqued and held to be gratuitously offensive by the highest authorities in her land. It depicts Osama morphing into Jesus (Elizabeth Fortescue, *Artist defends Osama-as-Jesus, The Advertiser*, 29 August 2007; *Is Osama bin Christ art or is it sacrilege? news.com.au*, 30 August, 2007; Brendan Trembath, *Jesus-Osama piece not meant to offend: artist, ABC News*, 30 August 2007). As a [lenticular image](#), the viewer can flip back and forth between portraits of Jesus and Osama by shifting slightly "from side to side". The socio-political metaphor is clear.

Especially relevant to any viable method is its dissociation from knee-jerk responses cultivated in various media. These might be caricatured as: Osama bad, Obama good -- if you don't agree, you must be a terrorist sympathizer. Such a framing follows from the binary logic promoted as a central feature of US foreign policy: "*you're either with us, or against us*" -- perhaps more appropriately written as "*you're either with US, or against US*". Such logic would be inappropriate to due process in any court of law.

Media attention is currently focused on [Ground Zero](#) commemoration ceremonies following the acclaimed death of "Osama" and the death of 2752 people on 9/11 -- for which he is held responsible. It is however appropriate to recall **the virtual absence of media or public attention to the deaths of some 5,000,000 people since that time**, and immediately prior to it (Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: the collapse of the Congo and the Great War in Africa*, 2011). This account was reviewed by *The Economist* under the title *Chronicle of Death Ignored: five million people have died in Congo in a war that no one really understands* (28 April 2011). The question is who claims to represent the neglected dead and dying as Osama claims to have done to some degree -- however his methods may be deplored?

## Analytical themes

**Imperial political context:** Much was made at the time of George W. Bush of his admiration, and those of the neocons, for Imperial Rome as the epitome of imposition of law and order through the *Pax Romana* -- hopefully to be emulated and surpassed by the *Pax Americana*. Osama emerged to challenge that vision. It is of course the case that Imperial Rome provided the context for the challenge by the historical Jesus. The world view of the Roman Imperium was synonymous with being "right" -- and unquestionably so, as with the US Imperium. Jesus embodied a demonstration of how the Roman Imperium was "not-right" (for some). Has Osama performed an analogous function in relation to the US Imperium -- if only for some?

**Security context:** Did Jesus constitute a well-identified "security problem" for Imperial Rome or its satraps? Is this documented? Is that security problem in any way comparable with that associated with Osama by the counter-terrorist authorities of various countries? Is it

appropriate to note that Jesus was also killed in a barbaric fashion for what could be framed as terrorism against the state, embodied by Caesar -- upheld as more sacred than a religion, perhaps to be equated with the capitalism/democracy of today. Strategically it is relevant to consider that the singular focus on terrorism offers a much-desired, if illusory, simplification for governance, as previously argued (*Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002).

**Love vs Violence:** Jesus is typically framed as the embodiment of love -- even a radical exemplar of non-violence. But is the iconic incident of his [cleansing of the temple](#) of money-changers to be seen as his "9/11 moment" -- scaled down to that historical context -- and for which he was arrested? This opposition to violence has not of course prevented Christians from frequently acting violently in his name. Such violence, when acknowledged, may well be framed as being out of a deeper love for those who suffer thereby -- notably a concern for their eternal souls.

Osama is however epitomized, by 9/11 and other acts, as the evil embodiment of violence (even though the "Christian" response to his initiatives has resulted in a number of deaths several orders of magnitude greater, as noted below). The rationale for his acting in this way -- necessarily framed as irrational, misguided and evil -- has typically been obscured in the focus on the horrendous nature of the acts. What is construed as Osama's hate by the West is seen as compassion by those Muslims who feel oppressed in many ways. It has been asserted that any "moral equivalence" is a myth ([Jeane Kirkpatrick](#), *The Myth of Moral Equivalence*, 1986). On the other hand, might it be that Jesus is the "loving face of violence", whereas Osama is usefully understood as the "violent face of caritas" (if not love), both variously embodying the method of [tough love](#).

**Addressing social inequalities and corruption:** In their discourse, both Jesus and Osama express deep concern for these issues. It is the iconic tale of the violent expulsion of the money-changers, in his effort at "cleansing the temple", that allegedly catalyzed the response of authorities -- leading to his execution. Is this in any way to be compared to Osama's alleged 9/11 actions with respect to cleansing the "temple of finance" -- the primary justification for his execution? How would the iconic Jesus act now, faced with the entrenched social inequalities of the world and the problematic, self-serving role of the financial community -- as yet "uncleansed" following the financial crisis of 2009-2010?

**Active opponents as terrorists:** Are the consequences of the social inequalities of the world to be appropriately described as horrendous -- morally comparable to the violent actions of some endeavouring to remedy them? Would Jesus be described as a "terrorist" by the authorities of today -- as with Nelson Mandela? Or George Washington? ([Joanne Mariner](#), *Was George Washington a Terrorist?: Patriots, Refugees and Terrorists*, *Counterpunch*, 27 March 2008; [George Washington Was A Terrorist](#), *The Daily Campus*, 18 January 2010; *Was George Washington a terrorist? New Holocaust*, 27 January 2009; Todd Alan Kreamer, *Sons of Liberty: Patriots or Terrorists? How a secret society of rebel Americans made its mark on early America*, *Early America Review*, Fall 96; Patrick J. Tyson, *George Washington was a Terrorist !*, 2007). Is Osama as much a challenge to the future emergence of a *Pax Americana* as was George Washington to the future emergence of the *Pax Britannica*?

How is a terrorist to be distinguished from the iconic archetypal role of the "holy warrior" -- with which both Islamic "jihadists" and Christian "crusaders" identify?

**Mirroring:** Various schools of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy recognize a form of distorted mirroring in the encounter of the proponents of any agenda with their experience of those who oppose them -- whether in individual or collective terms ([Mirroring Global Moral Equivalence](#), 2010). This is partly acknowledged by opposing leaders when their (archetypal) encounter is declared to have become "personal". This mirroring may also be framed in terms of "encountering the shadow" ([Attacking the Shadow through Iraq](#), 2002). Being barely aware of the mirror, this encounter then imbues the observer with "positive", Jesus-like qualities when looking into the mirror offered by the "other" and seeing the evident horror depicted there ([Looking in the Mirror -- at Josef Fritzl ?](#) 2010).

**Depiction:** The surprising degree of depicted similarity between Osama and contemporary western portrayals of Jesus, in both religious iconography and Hollywood movies, was noted in an earlier discussion ([Ways of Thinking, Perception and Analysis](#), 2004). It raises the question as to whether greater similarity could have ever been achieved for dramatic effect -- even with all the cosmetic skills of media productions (and pre-selection by their casting directors). The ultimate irony is whether Osama could have successfully been cast as Jesus in a movie? Many variants of these depictions could well be considered mirror images.

Technically it is interesting to measure the degree of similarity/dissimilarity of the iconic images of both, as might be required for any [computer image morphing](#) process -- beyond the lenticular approach mentioned above. It is of further interest to determine how similar/different the variants could be for it to be challenging for some percentage of the population to identify whether it is Osama or Jesus. How reactions changed where identification was inconclusive would also be of interest. A [Face Negotiation Theory](#) was first postulated by [Stella Ting-Toomey](#) in 1985 to explain how different cultures manage conflict and communicate (Stella Ting-Toomey, *Face Negotiation Theory*, 1998; *The Matrix of Face: an updated face-negotiation theory*, 2005).

**Is there a poorly understood social process through which such complementary archetypal figures are evoked by the collective unconscious as a feature of the necessities of the evolving human drama?** Did the face of Osama "work" to the end?

**Demonisation:** Osama has provided an ideal framework onto which Westerners, especially Christians, can project every form of negative quality. Some have noted the fundamental need of some modern societies, notably the USA, for archetypal, evil enemies -- even as a sustaining feature of their national identity (see [References](#)). As the "most wanted man", he has also proven to be an ideal demonic figure for religious and political propaganda. His image has been readily framed as "sinister". Of course the image of the president of the USA is regularly framed as "satanic" in the Islamic world.

Jesus has been similarly used by Christianity as an exemplar of every positive quality worthy of exemplification under every circumstance. His image has been readily framed as the embodiment of "love" -- hence its intimate association with spirituality and sanctification.

**Catharsis:** Is there any comparison to be made between the widely publicized celebration at the execution of Osama with that in which citizens of historical Rome might have indulged following news of the execution of Jesus? Is there any historical record of such celebrations -- a [Roman triumph](#)? Did the citizens of Rome have need of the kind of catharsis considered justified by their modern equivalents? Relevant to such consideration is the question of Kim Voynar (["Celebrating Osama Bin Laden's Death: What Would Jesus Do?"](#) *Movie City News*, 2 May 2011)

**Feminine support:** The role, and devotion, of the women in the life of Jesus has been the subject of endless commentary. Would they have died for him? In the first public announcement by the US Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, John Brennan (["White House Press Briefing"](#), 2 May 2011, "transcript subject to modification") variously remarked on the role of one of Osama's "women" who initially shielded him from fire (and was shot). Brennan initially declared that ("being the kind of person Osama was") he had deliberately used the woman as a shield -- minutes later correcting himself, with some fast footwork, to indicate that he was not certain whether the woman had placed herself in the line of fire to protect Osama. That woman will undoubtedly acquire iconic status in the mythology of Osama's martyrdom -- irrespective of whatever definitive interpretation is offered by the White House. [Obama runs the risk of having lost a percentage of female votes through the first interpretation and the assertive manner of its presentation.]

**Media hype:** There has of course been much controversial commentary over the past decade on the number of deaths allegedly incited by Osama, as compared with the many resulting from the actions of those endeavouring to curtail his cause. [Gideon Rachman](#) argues that the numbers make it clear that the threat of terrorism has been seriously hyped (["Declare victory and end the 'global war on terror'"](#), *Financial Times*, 3 May 2011):

In a book published a couple of years ago [John Mueller](#), a US academic, pointed out that the number of Americans killed by terrorists since 1960 is "about the same as the number killed over the same period by accident-causing deer" [*Overblown: how politicians and the terrorism industry inflate national security threats, and why we believe them*, 2006]. In a report for the Rand Corporation, [Brian Jenkins](#) made a similar point: "The average American has about a one in 9,000 chance of dying in an automobile accident and about a one in 18,000 chance of being murdered." However, in the five years after 9/11, and including the people killed there, "an average American had only a one in 500,000 chance of being killed in a terrorist attack".

He continues:

Yet incredible resources have been poured into the "war on terror". In a report on ["Top Secret America"](#) published last year, the *Washington Post* pointed out that: "In Washington and the surrounding area, 33 building complexes for top-secret intelligence work are under construction or have been built since September 2001. Together they occupy the equivalent of almost three Pentagons." And that is just the organisations created since 9/11. The CIA and the National Security Agency were hardly modest or under-resourced organisations before the "war on terror". By 2010, the US intelligence budget was \$75 billion a year -- a more than twentyfold increase since 9/11

Estimates of the numbers of deaths enabled by Osama and those enabled by the intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan remain highly contested and controversial (["Casualties of the Iraq War, Civilian casualties caused by ISAF and US Forces in the War in Afghanistan \(2001\)"](#) *present*)

## Eliminating the personal focus of an ideal

It is widely assumed that eliminating the primary leader of an organization, if not the leadership, ensures its demise. This has been the strategy closely associated with General Petraeus in both Iraq and Afghanistan -- presumably to be further promoted with his recent accession to the directorship of the CIA (Ray McGovern, ["Petraeus Will Expand Pro-War Agenda as New CIA Director"](#), *Democracy Now*, 28 April 2011).

Commentary focuses on the question of whether al-Qaida will now lose its coherence and capacity to inspire terrorist attacks (Jason Burke, ["Without 'the sheikh' al-Qaida's hardcore is likely to fracture"](#), *The Guardian*, 3 May 2011). What credibility does such commentary and analysis have when applied to the execution of the historical Jesus? As previously noted by Jason Burke (["Al-Qaida is now an idea not an organisation"](#), *The Guardian*, 5 August 2005):

... we need to face up to the simple truth that Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri et al do not need to organise attacks directly. They merely need to wait for the message they have spread around the world to inspire others. Al-Qaida is now an idea, not an organisation.

As argued by Sebastian L. v. Gorka (["The Death of Osama bin Laden: What Does It Mean?"](#) *Hudson New York*, 3 May 2011):

Therefore, although al Qaeda is organizationally weakened, it can ideologically survive its founder's death. In fact, the strain of violent fanatical Islam upon which al Qaeda was built was not founded by bin Laden, or anyone of his generation, but predates even the Muslim Brotherhood's creation in the 1920s. In the weeks that follow, the question will be: How will the subscribers to al Qaeda around the world react to the news of the death of its self-appointed and charismatic leader, bin Laden? Fortunately, even if a handful of bin Laden's ideological followers initiate cells themselves, in what author and former CIA operative Marc Sageman has called "Leaderless Jihad," they will most likely lack the knowledge and training to do serious harm to the security of the nation. In the meantime, Osama bin Laden will never kill again.

Curiously, with respect to that concluding sentence, it remains unproven whether Osama has actually "killed" anyone (following his former combat role) -- anymore than Jesus. Arguably Jesus does continue to "kill" however -- and may even have "killed" Osama (with the blessing of military chaplains of Christian persuasion). Osama is of course widely accused of being a "mass murderer" through what he enabled, even against the Russians, with American approval. However enabling death is what military commanders of every religious persuasion continue to do -- as with Obama and Bush.

Controversy rages over whether the death of Osama now enables troops to be rapidly withdrawn (*Killing sparks calls for early withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan*, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011). The latter reported a Kabul source to the effect:

They have killed the person of Bin Laden but not the reason why he exists and what he is for. They have destroyed his body, not his cause. In fact, they have created another martyr without addressing the fundamental reason why Osama and the movement behind him exists. America is still occupying two Muslim countries and bombarding another.

A characteristic of many current "organizations", including those which are the focus of counter-terrorism, is that they are no longer as significant for the coherence and development of ideas and agendas as was the case in the past. It is in fact questionable the extent to which some may be held to "exist", as argued in comparing the Tea Party movement with Al-Qaida (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement*, 2010). Ironically, the historical development of Christianity reinforces that point. [This document is written in a country which has exceeded the record of Iraq for functioning without a government, namely for over a year. What "exists"?]

Conventional understanding of organizations may well obscure the subtle dynamic coherence which effectively sustains them, as previously argued (*Dynamically Gated Conceptual Communities: emergent patterns of isolation within knowledge society*, 2004). Those eliminated, whatever their role in eliciting and sustaining an idea, might well themselves prefer to be recognized as non-essential figureheads rather than essential to their cause. As argued with respect to Osama by Joshua Holland (*Did Osama Bin Laden Win the 'War on Terror'? Perhaps we should stop cheering for our "success*, *AlterNet*, 4 May 2011):

Had he a choice in the matter, I have no doubt that he would have wanted nothing more than to die in a hail of gunfire by foreign troops in a predominantly Muslim country, a martyr to his cause, rather than rot away in a military prison, aging poorly and providing living proof that the world's most prominent terrorist "" a figure who had been elevated to an existential threat "" was ultimately impotent in the face of the world's greatest super-power.

Again, as with Jesus: *The body has been disposed of, but the face will live on*, according to Mark Lawson (*The Everywhere and Nowhere Man*, *The Guardian*, 3 May 2011). The point has been well-made by the image of the iconic [Che Guevara](#) which has continued to circulate since his death in 1967.

## Just war, just terrorism and just deserts?

As a demonic figure for the West, the acts inspired by Osama are necessarily to be understood as acts of terrorism -- supposedly the epitome of the much-deprecated jihadist agenda. Curiously there is very little sense -- at least in the Christian world -- that Christians cause "terror" or "terrorize" those who oppose them. Jesus seemingly could not be understood to elicit such existential fear -- he could not be appropriately depicted with a Kalashnikov.

And yet there is indeed a sense that Christians are empowered (with Kalashnikov, if necessary) to oppose their enemies -- understood as the enemies of the God of Jesus. The [Church Militant](#) (*Ecclesia Militans*), and the "[crusaders](#)" past and present, would presumably pride themselves on their ability to strike fear and terror in the heart of their enemies. Christians would be ambivalent in deprecating that approach. George Bush was however happy to frame the strategy of the Coalition of the Willing as a crusade (James Carroll, *The Bush Crusade*, *AlterNet*, 4 September 2004; Alan Woods, *George W. Bush and the Crusades*, *In Defence of Marxism*, 8 May 2003).

That these enemies should be brought to fear the God of Christianity is then acceptably consistent with the concept of a [just war](#). It is less clear whether this notion is to be extended to include "just terrorism", as may be experienced by the terrorized (*Varieties of Terrorism: extended to the experience of the terrorized*, 2004). The matter is discussed by Ian Lance Taylor (*Just Terrorism?* plus comments, 28 September 2007) who concludes:

There is no justification for terrorism. Of course it also follows that attacks on soldiers are morally acceptable, and it follows further that we should not use the name "terrorism" to describe such attacks. For a time the U.S. press fell into the trap of describing bombs aimed at U.S. soldiers as terrorist attacks. More recently they have been referring to those bombs correctly as armed resistance to an invasion. Similarly the attack on the U.S. Marines in 1983 in Lebanon is sometimes incorrectly referred to as terrorism; that, too, was armed resistance, not terrorism.

Have Christians, in the name of Jesus, engaged in "just terrorism" -- causing terror to others? The case of George Washington is noted above. Are Christians currently empowered to do so by theologians? **Is there a sense that there is a "bad terrorism" (as practiced by others) and a "good terrorism" by which "bad others" are made to experience their just deserts?** The question is especially pertinent in relation to the various Nobel Peace Laureates who have formally been declared terrorists within their countries in the past. The question remains pertinent in the case of peace laureates, most notably [Henry Kissinger](#), who continue to be obliged to avoid travelling through countries where they are liable to be indicted for crimes against humanity ([Christopher Hitchens](#), *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, 2002).

## Terrorism and terminological game-playing

It is curious the degree to which people, groups and countries can "terrify", or cause "terror", without now being framed as "terrorists". A hierarchical superior may well "terrify" systematically without being formally reframed as a "terrorist". Are they to be termed "terrorifiers" -- avoiding the provisions of the anti-terrorism legislation and the attention of counter-terrorism agencies? Is it in this sense that gangs and muggers in the USA are to be understood as terrorists of such "low grade" that they operate under the radar of anti-terrorism measures and counter-terrorism intelligence? They are nevertheless held to justify the acclaimed prudence of bearing firearms. The argument presumably implies that there are no known "terrorists" at large in the USA -- however many armed "terrorifiers" there may be. Is "terrorism" then to be understood as un-American, even though being terrified is a celebrated form of entertainment there? The *Most Terrifying Places in America* are not then to be understood as terrorist hotspots.

More controversial are the documented behaviours of soldiers returning from action in Iraq and Afghanistan -- terrifying their relatives and their neighbourhoods, but presumably in no way to be framed as terrorists. Returning US combat veterans are committing murder in alarming numbers (*Returning Soldiers and the Aftermath of War on Society*, *SCCI Iraq.com*, 3 June 2010; Mark Benjamin and Michael de Yoanna, *Death in the USA: the Army's fatal neglect*, *Salon*, 9 February 2009). There is a terrible irony to the fact that, knowing unconsciously the terror they have caused elsewhere (including to "collateral innocents"), they have effectively acquired a training as "terrorists" which they apply on return to their home neighbourhoods. Also significant is the extent to which these skills are turned upon themselves as self-harm in the form of suicide.

Such terminological gerrymandering of course conveniently excludes those who cause real existential terror to individuals through non-physical actions -- as could be argued with respect to those exacerbating the financial crisis, joblessness and homelessness, through their risk-taking (*Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism: subject to anti-terrorism legislation?* 2009). How is such extremism to be distinguished from terrorism (*Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005).

The difficulty, as the cited papers indicate, is that **terrorism is what "others-from-elsewhere" are framed as engaging in**. As a caricature, what "US" does is by definition OK, and can never be understood as terrorism; it is only "THEM", the dangerously misguided, that frame it otherwise (*Us and Them: relating to challenging others*, 2009). "THEM" might be appropriately understood as an acronym for *Those Handicapped by Economic Misery*.

The currently surrealistic global situation implies that the weapons widely supplied by US (and by other permanent members of the UN Security Council) are necessarily to be understood as "weapons of peace" (if not love). It is only those who use those arms to challenge the dominant worldview (and the suffering associated with it) who are to be labelled as terrorists in seeking to advance their cause. In contrast to the members of the UN Security Council, their cause can never be framed as a "just war" -- even if its leaders are subsequently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

As noted below, the terminological gerrymandering extends to other domains, as with the assertion by various governments that they do not make use of "torture". Nor do they engage in "espionage", notably against the United Nations. Nor are they complicit in various forms of "corruption" or in the destabilization of other countries. Nor do they lie about these and other matters -- irrespective of the notorious formal statement in support of intervention in Iraq, made by [Colin Powell](#) (5 February 2003) on behalf of the USA, to the UN Security Council.

It is in this context that Osama is to be distinguished as a force for evil in contrast to the values upheld and pursued in support of the Christian agenda embodied by Jesus -- the [Great Commission](#). However, for those faced with natural disasters, the question remains of how to distinguish the associated terror from "terrorism" (*Acts of God vs Acts of al-Qaida: Hurricane Katrina as a message to Bible Belt America?* 2005; *Is God a Terrorist? Definitional game-playing by the Coalition of the Willing*, 2004). Or is their sense of extreme "terror" to be denied -- perhaps minimized as "fear" or "anxiety"?

Ironically the US is home to the independent [Westboro Baptist Church](#), noteworthy for picketlines at funerals of US soldiers with signs such as *God: America's Terrorist* -- in the light of an interpretation of the Bible to the effect that *God Has Become America's Terrorist, Killing Americans in Strange Lands*. [see [BBC documentary](#)].

## Evidence and proof

**Revising the evidence:** At the time of writing the US is faced with a media whirlwind regarding the nature of the evidence capable of proving that Osama bin Laden is dead. Some had already declared him to have been long dead ([David Ray Griffin](#), *Osama bin Laden: dead or alive?* 2009; [Paul Craig Roberts](#), *Osama bin Laden's™s Second Death*, *Global Research*, 2 May 2011). Others question the validity of the photos so far made available (*Spanish press: bin Laden dead photo a fake*, *El Publico - 911blogger*, 2 May 2011). Others question the DNA evidence ([Michael C. Ruppert](#), *Osama and the Ghosts of September 11: 'Proof that Obama is Lying'*, *Global Research*, 7 May 2011).

As reported by [Mark Mardell](#), via the BBC, embarrassing corrections have already had to be made to the initial briefing, notably with respect to the role of the woman (*The White House backtracks on Bin Laden*, 4 May 2011):

The White House has had to correct its facts about the killing of Bin Laden, and for some that has diminished the glow of success that has surrounded all those involved in the operation. Bin Laden wasn't armed when he was shot. It raises suspicions that this was indeed a deliberate shoot-to-kill operation. Here are the inaccuracies in the first version. The woman killed was not his wife. No woman was used as a human shield. And he was not armed.

Further clarification on these corrections is offered by Robert Booth (*The killing of Osama bin Laden: how the White House changed its story*, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011 -- also distributed as *From a firefight to fog of war: how the US changed its tune over the raid*). As noted by Alex Newman (*Media Scrambles as Bin Laden Story Crumbles*, *Global Research*, 6 May 2011)

While the establishment media was busy parroting President Obama's announcement of Osama bin Laden's supposed assassination, reporting the unsubstantiated claims as if they were unquestionable facts, much of the so-called "alternative" press was far more cautious and accurate, it turns out. But more importantly, with the new official storyline indicating that bin Laden was in fact unarmed, bigger and much more important questions are beginning to emerge. In terms of coverage, it turns out that the skeptical approach proved far superior in terms of getting it right. Countless mainstream sources were so confident in Obama's word that they reported many of the claims as fact without even attributing them to the President. But the official White House narrative has been changed so many times in recent days that now it's almost unrecognizable. There wasn't even a fire fight; yet this was one of the crucial elements of the original story that justified the assassination of a person the government painted as the most valuable source of information on the planet -- the leader of al-Qaeda. And in reporting the statements as fact, the establishment press has officially been left with egg all over its face again.

**Unsubstantiated evidence:** The problem for the USA is that it is unable to prove to the satisfaction of others that it was in fact Osama bin Laden with any certainty. Indeed John Brennan declared in the White House briefing (2 May 2011) that: *Now, we can say with 99.9 percent confidence that this was bin Laden*. In a White House briefing on 4 May, it was stated that photos prior to the operation gave a 95 percent certainty. The body of evidence in supporting the conclusion is potentially subject to every kind of tampering, to reinforce the case the USA wants to make. **Where is that evidence presented for all to see** -- especially in the absence of a body?

The issue became apparent with respect to Saddam Hussein (*Politicization of Evidence in the Plastic Turkey Era: al-Qaida, Saddam, Assassination and the Hijab*, 2003; *Spin and Counter-spin: governance through terrorism*, 2002).

The confirmation of a terrorist as essentially "evil" -- justifying completely any "demonisation" in the public eye -- can be usefully contrasted in evidential terms with that of the lengthy multi-stage process undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church in establishing appropriate evidence for the beatification and canonisation of an individual. This is particularly clear with respect to the casual use of evidence by which "demonisation" is rapidly justified -- in contrast to the careful sifting of evidence in the case of canonisation. Especially relevant is the role of the Promoter of the Faith, known as the **Devil's advocate** -- a canon lawyer appointed to argue against the canonisation of the individual. This brought to the evaluation of the evidence a skeptical view, seeking holes in the evidence, to argue that any "miracles" attributed to the candidate were fraudulent, etc.

Curiously no such role is formally ensured in the case of "demonisation" -- when some form of "Angelic advocate" would usefully ensure appropriate treatment of the evidence, to argue that indications of any "evil" were misrepresented, etc. Some lawyers may endeavour to take on this role, if the person is brought to trial -- a predictably controversial example is **Jacques Vergès** (*L'Avocat de la terreur*, 2007). Strangely forms of this role may emerge subsequently, as with sifting of evidence with respect to any Nobel Peace Prize nominee -- especially one previously demonised as a terrorist.

**Misrepresentation of strategy:** Official spokespersons for the US naively continue to assume that government assertions are unquestionable as "fact" -- appropriate as evidence before a court of law. However, as a government, **the USA has systematically eroded its credibility as a witness before any court of law**. Examples include:

- the misleading affirmation ("lies") by **Colin Powell** (5 February 2003), on behalf of the USA to the UN Security Council, regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction (as noted above) -- now to be blamed on the lies of **Curveball** the informant, rather than lack of due diligence (Michael White, *Curveball's confession: another dent in the Iraq conspiracy theory*, *The Guardian*, 16 February 2011; Ed Pilkington, *Colin Powell demands answers over Curveball's WMD lies*, *The Guardian*, 16 February 2011). Unfortunately for Powell, he assured the UN that his source was totally reliable.
- the affirmation by **Hillary Clinton** that the US did not engage in espionage on the UN leadership, despite having issued a directive to that effect (*Alleged Breach of UN Treaty Obligations by US: press coverage and commentary following WikiLeaks cable dissemination*, 2010).
- the affirmation that the US did not engage in torture, despite a variety of directives to that effect and subsequent reframing (Jason Burke and Paul Harris, *Osama bin Laden death 'justifies' torture of suspects, former Bush aides claim*, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011)

It can only be speculated, as conspiracy theorists are wont to do, on how many other matters governments now consider it appropriate to lie, or on which due diligence has been inadequate (*Abuse of Faith in Governance: Mystery of the Unasked Question*, 2009). Of particular interest is how the discussion regarding such "lying" is framed so that it can be upheld as "not-lying", perhaps as a necessity to avoid public panic or for reasons of "national security" and "to save American lives" -- all arguments upheld as being beyond any reasonable challenge in a court of law.

More intriguing is the cost/benefit analysis of tampering with the evidence and lying. **For any "fact" presented, the key question is the cost of its possible fabrication and whether the cost of faking it (if that were required) might have been considered worthwhile**. How much does it cost to elicit any desired "fact" -- suitably authenticated by experts of the highest repute? Video recordings, announcements on jihadist websites, digital media, verbal confirmations by those present, all need to be assessed in this light -- as would be required at any court of law, which would enable the views of independent experts.

**Hearsay and factoids:** It is in this context that the declaration by Obama that *"There is no doubt that bin Laden is dead"* (CBS, 4 May 2011) merits the critical examination typical of a court of law -- in the light of previous American claims noted above (*US spurs doubts*

*hiding bin Laden data*, *Press TV*, 4 May 2011). As noted in this respect by [Zoe Williams](#) (*Never forget, they lie: why we love conspiracy theories*, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2011 -- also distributed as *Now Princess Di and Osama bin Laden have so much in common*):

Nicholas Tomalin's remark to Max Hastings before the latter went to Vietnam is the one that sticks in my mind, but it could have come from any journalist, observing official statements about any conflict: "*They lie. Never forget they lie, they lie, they lie*". Ask not how plausible their press release is: ask what proportion of press releases from the past has turned out to be true.

Whatever the efforts of propaganda and public relations, failure to supply appropriate evidence allows what is submitted, notably through "authoritative" assertions, to be dismissed as mere [hearsay](#) -- effectively an insult to those expected to accept it without question. Much that is presented in the media regarding Osama, whilst indeed possibly factual, is not explicitly related to the kind of evidence that would be accepted in a court of law. Rather than "facts", these are an example of "[factoids](#)".

There is a huge and appropriate irony to the fact that supposed resolution to the "[birther](#)" issue, finally "proving" that Obama was born in the USA (through release of the "long" birth certificate), was made in the very period in which the execution of "Osama" was planned -- now giving rise to burgeoning "deather" issues, despite the assertions of Obama (*Goodbye 'birthers,' hello 'deathers'*, *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May 2011).

## Justice -- in a context of flagrant injustice?

Injustice is readily perceived in relation to [economic inequality](#), [social inequality](#) and [international inequality](#) -- and their tendency to increase rather than decrease over time. The implications are eloquently summarized by [Tony Judt](#) (*Ill Fares the Land: a treatise on our present discontents*, 2010). His title derives from [Oliver Goldsmith](#) (*The Deserted Village*, 1770):

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay

It is in this context that naive assumptions are made regarding the justice to which it is widely and unthinkingly claimed that the underprivileged have access. With regard to avenging the death of some **3,000 people** on the occasion of 9/11, the US National Priorities Project estimates that as of 1 June 2010 the [cost of war](#) in Iraq and Afghanistan had exceeded 1 trillion dollars (Iraq War, 725 billion dollars; Afghanistan War, 275 billion dollars). Figures are not available for the cost of war in the Congo in which some **5,000,000 people** have died, and without counting those wounded and raped. It may be readily assumed that a high proportion of the weapons used were profitably provided by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Will it only be the future that will make any effort to determine how many people died prior to 9/11 as the direct or indirect result of "financial" policies epitomized by the twin towers?

Would the evidence for all the accusations against Osama stand up in any court of law -- any more than the evidence against most of those held in Guantanamo Bay without trial for many years? Where are those charges detailed? Why does their questionable nature need to be made evident via WikiLeaks? How is the problematic status of this evidence to be compared with the case of John Thompson who spent 18 years in a US prison for robbery and murder -- 14 on death row -- only to be released after evidence concealed by prosecutors surfaced just weeks before the execution date (*The Prosecution Rests, but I Can't*<sup>TM</sup>, *The New York Times*, 9 April 2011; *Comick v. Thompson*, 2011).

Was this the reason that an unarmed "Osama bin Laden" -- using a woman as a "shield" -- needed to be executed extrajudicially? As is now being argued, this only contributes to the mystification of the person -- but perhaps better than a court case in which the complicity of the USA in a multiplicity of nefarious acts might be implied. As noted by Declan Walsh (*Osama bin Laden's last hours come into focus as White House revises its story*, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011):

President Barack Obama insists the Navy Seals would have detained him if they could, but it is hard to imagine US officials would have relished either a trial or the spectacle of the al-Qaida leader being held in Guantanamo Bay.

If, as declared by Barack Obama with respect to the execution of Osama, *Justice has now been done*, then what kind of "justice" is that? How does this relate to the classic quote: *Not only must Justice be done; it must also be seen to be done*? Has it indeed been seen to be done? The justice of Imperial Rome? The justice of a Nobel Peace Laureate? Is this Obama's *Mission Accomplished* moment?

A related point has been made with respect to Bradley Manning (*Obama Declares Manning Guilty Before Trial, Veterans for Peace*, 25 April 2011). How does such justice relate to the much criticized process of [extrajudicial execution](#)? As noted by Gary Younge (*Osama bin Laden's death: The US patriot reflex*, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011):

But to suggest that "justice has been done", as President Obama did on Sunday night, seems perverse. This was not justice, it was an extra-judicial execution. If you shoot a man twice in the head you do not find him guilty. You find him dead. This was revenge. And it was served very cold indeed.

Given the widespread use of the media over years to present an image of Osama as a "mass murderer" (as noted above), where is the evidence justifying his immediate execution clearly presented for all to see? **Is this trial by media in the tradition of pre-civil rights lynch-mob justice?** In normal court cases the role of the media is carefully called into question in relation to the fairness of the judicial process and the presentation of "facts".

How is the role of an individual in ordering attacks to be appropriately distinguished from that of those responsible for ordering attacks in

which hundreds of thousands are killed -- as with the intervention in Iraq? This was named as "illegal" by the Secretary-General of the United Nations? (*Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan, The Guardian*, 10 September 2004).

Who might be judged a "mass murderer" with regard to the death of 500,00 children in Iraq as a result of US economic sanctions? When questioned on those deaths on national television in 1996, Madeleine Albright, then the US Secretary of State, replied that it was "a very hard choice", but that, all things considered, *"we think the price is worth it"* (*CBS 60 minutes*).

Given the role of General Petraeus in promoting [targetted assassination](#), and his accession to the directorship of the CIA, is this to be the path of the future with respect to opposition to US policy? Just "take them out", as recommended by a former US presidential candidate with respect to Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela?

*Tell them Osama's dead without proof of a body  
and they celebrate.  
Tell them Jesus died and rose without proof of a body  
and they speculate.*  
Tweet by PastorYPJ Indiana

## Conspiracy theories

As noted by *BBC News* (4 May 2011), conspiracy theories began to circulate within minutes of the death being announced. Blogs, forum and web pages -- including a Facebook group entitled "Osama Bin Laden not dead" -- are rife with suggestions that the US government faked the raid. As noted above, some already consider him long dead. A report by Paul Joseph Watson (*Top Government Insider: Bin Laden Died In 2001, 9/11 A False Flag, Infowars.com*, 4 May 2011) indicated:

Top US government insider Dr. [Steve R. Pieczenik](#), a man who held numerous different influential positions under three different Presidents and still works with the Defense Department, shockingly told [The Alex Jones Show](#) yesterday that Osama Bin Laden died in 2001 and that he was prepared to testify in front of a grand jury how a top general told him directly that 9/11 was a false flag inside job.

In rejecting the call for the presentation of photographic evidence of the body of the dead "Osama", a US spokesperson argued that conspiracy theorists would always deny and twist any evidence and that it was preferable to tolerate such theories rather than risk the lives of one American soldier at the hands of any radical inflamed by the sight of those photographs. Of course, as noted above, official evidence may also be based on denial and twisting of the truth.

Much is made of the propensity of the US for [covert operations](#) and [false flag](#) operations -- whether systematically denied or packaged as a vital necessity of "national security" to "protect American lives". In what sense is the action of 1 May 2011 an effort designed precisely to achieve the political impact celebrated in myriad subsequent headlines, as indicated by the following sample: *US gets its man; Cheers and tears: US celebrates after a decade of torment; President takes plaudits -- even from political foes; Little room for reflection as US parties over the death of a big bad bogeyman; Karzai claims vindication over Nato criticism.*

It is ironic to note that the "discovery" of Osama bin Laden is consistent with a false flag operation, previously outlined speculatively with respect to Iraq (*Spinning a Rapid Exit Strategy from Iraq*, 2007):

**Find "Osama bin Laden":** It is important to recognize that credible evidence for the existence of Osama bin Laden, and his role as leader of al-Qaida, has not been subject to any confirmation by any independent authority of any credibility. Tapes appear, but it would cost very little to fake such representations of "Osama bin Laden" and feed them to appropriate sources sympathetic to anti-Coalition media....

Given the quality of evidence, and the lack of response to a \$50 million reward for the world's "most wanted" man, it is reasonable to conclude that "Osama bin Laden" is in some respects a CIA operative -- if not a fabricated entity -- with message tapes fabricated as it is deemed necessary to maintain the credibility of the fiction. This in no way questions the fatal reality of destructive incidents that may be understood to be reinforced by such messages, but the evidence for the ultimate responsibility for such devices remains unclarified. However it is totally unnecessary to focus on the reality of the existence of Osama bin Laden in spinning an exit strategy.

*More credible is the possibility of simply discovering an "Osama bin Laden" -- dead or alive. Such a person could be easily fabricated by any actor, reasonably costumed, and "discovered" in reasonably credible circumstances. Consideration can be given to whether an actual living body needs to be found or whether to fabricate a story in which his location is determined and he is killed in a final battle -- suitably dramatized for the media. Evidence to the contrary can be credibly destroyed by collapsing a cave on the body's remains. Evidence relating to DNA confirmation (etc.) can simply be fabricated and appropriately publicized. Eminent "independent experts" can be appropriately rewarded, or guided in their decisions by appropriate threats -- or simply assassinated as a legitimate threat to "national security" if they are unwilling to confirm the story. This can be done through proxies. Any tapes purporting to come from the real Osama bin Laden can be simply discredited as fakes by the same process.*

To what extent does the "treasure trove" of "evidence", said to have been retrieved from the Abbottabad hideout, also conform to this pattern?

## Towards a psychoanalysis of collective self-harm?

The above argument raises the question as to whether the US -- acting on behalf of all of "us" -- has entangled itself in a complex of psycho-social processes including:

- conflating the threatening Osama-of-today with the nightmare possibility of a wrathful Jesus-as-he-might-act-today (when he returns)
- executing the Osama-Jesus to eliminate the threat to business-as-usual and to *Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness* (of the haves)
- embodying, through processes of [self-harm](#), this defensive destruction of an icon so central to the psyche and worldview of believers
- setting aside convention and due process to enable unquestionable extrajudicial action
- affirming the rightness of conventionally-preferred strategic actions as an exemplification of self-righteousness
- avoiding significant collective change in response to more fundamental collective challenges artfully denied

These dysfunctional processes can best be collectively comprehended and explored through myth-making. The possibility could be developed by reference to tales involving reflecting magical mirrors and depiction, notably:

- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde. Potentially echoing the hedonistic preoccupation with "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", a magical portrait is painted to age instead of the person depicted (and reflect the effects on his soul of every sinful act) -- in exchange for the sale of the latter's soul. This enables the person to indulge in every debauchery whilst appearing to remain eternally young. The US use of public relations magic and image management may be seen in these terms.
- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* In which features a magical mirror to which the Queen characteristically asks the question: *Mirror, mirror on the wall / Who in the land is fairest of all?* This is a characteristic concern of the USA in its determination to remain the world's sole superpower.
- [Narcissus of Greek mythology](#) Who wastes away while gazing, self-admiringly, at his reflection in water. Perhaps an appropriate allusion to the manner in which empires tend to fail, including that of the Roman Imperium ([Jared Diamond, \*Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed\*, 2005](#)).

For many impelled to [self-harm](#), the motivation relates to anxiety over self-image, notably associated with low self-esteem or secret shame. The high esteem in which the US publicly holds itself may indeed conceal deep anxieties engendering self-harm. The degree to which Jesus is implanted as a sustaining central icon of this esteem -- for a people specially chosen and blessed by God -- suggests reasons why executing Osama might serve as a relief from misconstrued identification and enthrallment. It could be understood as a desperate effort to break an illusory mirror and see beyond ([Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns](#), 2008).

There is an extensive literature on individual self-harm, typically in its more **tangible** physical form. The question of psychological and spiritual self-harm is both more subtle and more controversial. Of particular relevance to understanding terrorism is of course the self-harm inherent in [suicide bombing](#), as notably reviewed by James Jones (*Blood that Cries Out from the Earth: the psychology of religious terrorism*, 2008; *Why Does Religion Turn Violent? a psychoanalytic exploration of religious terrorism*, *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 2006). He describes it as a form of sacrificial behavior undertaken in the name of a religious ideology and community, and therefore upheld as sacred by that community -- individuals who voluntarily become sacrificial victims and are thereby elevated to the highest level of martyrdom.

There is a certain literature on collective self-harm, again typically emphasizing tangible physical forms. **The question raised by the above argument is the nature of the collective intangible forms of self-harm.** Web search terms which identify some insights include: national death wish, collective death wish, civilizational death wish, global death wish, global self harm, omnicide. The results typically focus on tangible forms. The aspect which merits further examination follows from the study by [Jared Diamond \(\*Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed\*, 2005\)](#). Is there a subconscious form of collective self-harm potentially characteristic of the society described by [John Ralston Saul \(\*The Unconscious Civilization\*, 1995\)](#). How does this relate to the articulations by [Johan Galtung](#) of [structural violence](#) and [cultural violence](#)?

Markus Beckmann and Ingo Pies ([Sustainability by Corporate Citizenship: the moral dimension of sustainability](#), Wittenberg-Center for Global Ethics, 2004) argue that:

Corruption, child labor, environmental degradation and human rights abuses are but a few examples of such unsustainable development that arises at the weak points of a global institutional order that fails to guarantee the rule of law, property rights or contracts.... Again, these incidents illustrate the effects of the "invisible fist" where "" in contrast to the benign "invisible hand" "" rational individual action leads to social outcomes that result in collective self-harm.

One blogger usefully presents the tendency to collective self-harm as a death wish ([Death Wish: America's flirtation with national suicide](#), *God Bless America*, 25 October 2008)

It may be considered overly dramatic to say that the United States of America has a collective death wish but it certainly seems that way sometimes... No, I don't™ believe our nation has entered its death throes stage but there are many indicators that those throes are not very far down our historical road. All great empires eventually reach a point at which they are no longer sustainable as an empire and that unsustainability inevitably results in either a precipitous decline of mere years, as with the Thousand Year Reich, or a gradual decline of centuries, as in the case of the Roman Empire.

The possibility is presented with greater subtlety in relation to [understanding omnicide](#) by [Christopher Williams](#):

Williams asks, why are human beings set on self-harm and even destruction? What is the "species mental disability" that causes this behaviour, and what can be done about it? He sees a possibility that information and education about the acute terminal decline "of humanity, possible omnicide and extinction - caused by factors such as "environmental change, new technologies, and war - may create "iatrogenic meaninglessness", which could itself become a threat to "human survival and wellbeing." "*The dilemma for education is that we are 'dammed if we do and damned if 'we 'don't' teach about the scale and consequences of global self-harm. The ultimate purpose of education is not just to learn, it is to increase well-being through learning.*"

Is enough known about the subtleties of collective self-harm to exclude the possibility that it is a characteristic of some faith-based societies?

Whereas the actions of the **individual** suicide bomber are conditioned by the particular mindset indicated by James Jones, might features of that thinking manifest in a complementary **collective** form within some faith-based societies -- including some of Christian persuasion? Ironically one striking example of **mass suicide** is offered by the "apostolic" community created by [Jim Jones](#) which terminated with the death of some 900 people at [Jonestown](#) in 1978. **The collective psychodynamics associated with end times beliefs -- entangled with denial regarding strategic choices on constrained global resources -- may be understood as a form of collective self-harm, effectively inflicted on civilization as a whole**, if only through neglect (cf *Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon -- a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004; *Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth*, 2007).

Whether understood as a collective death wish, omnicide, or otherwise, this "systemic neglect" is consistent with the concerns of Jared Diamond regarding civilizational choice. Aided and abetted by the major religions served by this, global civilization would seem to be choosing to fail -- as a process of the collective unconsciousness highlighted by John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995).

The current focus is on the deprecation of terrorism as channelled through the individual in some societies. The question is whether a systemic equivalent is present in a complementary form in other belief systems -- as implied by the concern of Johan Galtung with structural and cultural violence. Can terrorism manifest otherwise and virtually undetectably in subtle forms of incipient collective self-harm? This would be consistent with the accumulation of pressures on global society -- presaging a crisis of crises rendering current forms of terrorism insignificant.

Rather than deploring religion as an incitement to immediate terror or its insidious postponement, it is appropriate to acknowledge the effort of religions to address existential issues typically handled crudely, if at all, by other collective initiatives -- however "scientific" or "strategic". It remains to be clarified whether a form of terror is intimately associated with these existential dimensions such as to transcend conventional distinctions between individual and collective. The convenience of treating terrorism as an external dysfunctionality, characteristic of some, may inhibit recognition of its inherent nature, however religions endeavour to reframe this (*Thinking in Terror: refocusing the interreligious challenge from "Thinking after Terror"*, 2005). How then to engage with an existential terror so central to the human way of being?

It is in this context that executing "Osama" as a simulacrum of Jesus might be a strange unconscious collective effort at a form of **decide** (of which the original crucifixion is the exemplar) -- to remove the psychological keystone through which an outmoded engagement with reality is sustained.

## Myth-making drama

Following the execution, a remarkably insightful description of the need for stories to encompass the experienced historical reality is offered by award-winning documentary maker [Adam Curtis](#) (*For 10 years, Osama bin Laden filled a gap left by the Soviet Union. Who will be the baddie now?* *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011 -- titled in the printed version as *Another goodies vs. baddies story has ended; where will we find the next?*). He argues:

The horrific thing about Osama bin Laden was that he helped to kill thousands of innocent people throughout the world. But he was also in a strange way a godsend to the west. He simplified the world. When communism collapsed in 1989, the big story that had been hardwired into citizens of western countries "" that of the global battle against a distant dark and evil force "" came to an abrupt end. Understanding the world became much more complicated until... Bin Laden emerged as the mastermind behind the bombings of embassies in east Africa....

Neoconservative politicians... took the few known facts about Bin Laden and Zawahiri and fitted them to the template they knew so well: an evil enemy with sleeper cells and "tentacles" throughout the world, whose sole aim was the destruction of western civilisation. Al-Qaida became the new Soviet Union, and in the process Bin Laden became a demonic, terrifyingly powerful figure brooding in a cave while he controlled and directed the al-Qaida network throughout the world. In this way, a serious but manageable terrorist threat became grossly exaggerated....

All three "" the neoconservatives, the "terror journalists", and Bin Laden himself "" effectively worked together to create a dramatically simple story of looming apocalypse. It wasn't in any way a conspiracy. Each of them had stumbled in their different ways on a simplified fantasy that fitted with their own needs. The power of this simple story propelled history forward.

He concludes:

One of the main functions of politicians "" and journalists "" is to simplify the world for us. But there comes a point when "" however much they try "" the bits of reality, the fragments of events, won't fit into the old frame.

The death of Bin Laden may be that point for the simplified story of [goodies versus baddies](#). It was a story born in the US and Britain at the end of the second world war "" the "good war". It then went deep into the western imagination during the cold war, was reawakened and has been held together over the last 10 years by the odd alliance of American and European politicians, journalists, "terror experts" and revolutionary Islamists all seeking to shore up their authority in a disillusioned age.

It is within that context that ideas are already being put forward for movies to dramatize the extrajudicial execution of "Osama". Obituaries already frame Osama in mythical terms (*Afterlife of myth for a merchant prince*, *Financial Times*, 3 May 2011).

The Christian story of Jesus is promoted as one of the greatest ever told. How much is fact and how much is fiction is another matter. There is now every possibility for a multiplicity of stories to be crafted around Osama -- as was arguably the case with respect to the execution of Jesus (and given the mystery of how the *New Testament* subsequently emerged). Conspiracy theorists might however speculate that the "Osama" story was designed by powerful interest groups to have an extremely profound counter-impact on Western consciousness -- the psychic counterpart to 9/11 as a kind of "memetic bomb" (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare*, 2001).

Is there not a terrible irony in the fact that Osama has a life story and lifestyle that may in future be portrayed as having some parallels with the youth of the Buddha? What psychic confusions will his resemblance to Jesus create in western society -- Jesus returning with a Kalashnikov -- especially in the USA where citizens have a constitutional right to bear arms? For some this right may even be essential to the viability of the American understanding of democracy (*Arming Civil Society Worldwide: Getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire*, 2003). For those elaborating such a drama, what is the plot and its intended impact? At what level of the psyche?

#### Inflation of a Demonic Other by US



Image by Peter Till (peter@tillmann.co.uk) reproduced with permission (used by Adam Curtis in the article cited above)

## Possible themes for mythical drama

These might include, in no particular order:

- **Coincidental divine intervention**, exemplified by two cases in which the American presidency was explicitly associated with extrajudicial execution:
  - [Hurricane Katrina](#) (2005): This immediately followed the call by American presidential candidate [Pat Roberston](#) for [Hugo Chavez](#) to be taken out by American agents, as separately discussed (*Acts of God vs Acts of al-Qaida: Hurricane Katrina as a message to Bible Belt America?* 2005). At least 1,836 people died in the actual hurricane and in the subsequent floods, making it the deadliest U.S. hurricane since 1928; total property damage has been estimated at \$81 billion.
  - [Multi-state tornado](#) (2011): This occurred during the final planning stages immediately preceding the decision to execute Osama on 1 May 2011. The tornado affected the Southern, Midwestern, and Eastern United States, leaving catastrophic destruction in its wake and classified by some as the second-deadliest tornado outbreak in US history. By 3 May 2011, 354 people had been killed as a result.
- **Symbolic complementarity of names**: Osama was rated the "most wanted man" on Earth, even the "most dangerous"; Obama is recognized as the "most powerful man" on Earth. Their relationship can be variously construed as having archetypal dimensions. Given the context, the relationship between the two names is statistically improbable -- meriting the identification of comparable equivalencies of that status. More could presumably be made of any relationship between the etymology or meaning of the names of Osama and Jesus.
- **Ambivalence regarding due judicial process**: The parallels between the processes of *Pax Romana* and *Pax Americana* merit exploration. Under the *Pax Romana* efforts were made to avoid a "show trial" in the case of Jesus -- with the result that the trial is now embodied in a story for all time. Under *Pax Americana* similar avoidance is evident -- with the probable consequence of the extrajudicial process being embodied in a story for all time. How will the absence of a trial amplify the mystification of Osama?

- **Pontius Pilate/Caesar:** Much can be made of this archetype with respect to the role of Obama ("Potus") -- especially in the light of the parable of the *The Grand Inquisitor* in [Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel \*The Brothers Karamazov\* \(1880\)](#). Will Barack Obama be compared with an archetypal Pontius Pilate/Caesar figure? Is Obama's "gutsy" decision to take out Osama to be compared with that of Pontius Pilate -- each representative of the imperium of their times? But what to make of Obama and others watching what amounts to the Osama "snuff movie" -- a theme taken up variously on the web ([Obama and Hillary Enjoy Live Osama Snuff Movie](#))? Given the technical facility of doing so, is this merely an example of how "Pontius Pilate" and his advisors can indulge in overseeing torture and the lives of those incarcerated?
- **Peaceful/Wrathful dynamics:** Buddhism has best articulated the complementary functions of peaceful and wrathful deities. Myth-making can exploit the embodiment of these divine attributes in the Osama-Jesus role -- drawing on the *Book of Revelations*. This could be combined with exploitation of the holy warrior theme.
- **Descent into Hell:** The Jesus tale has long highlighted the [descent of Jesus into Hell](#). Following the execution of Osama, a much-remarked headline was that of the *New York Daily News* (Ed Pilkington, [New York Daily News put it most bluntly: 'Rot in hell!' The Guardian](#), 2 May 2011). What can be woven into a myth as being traditionally learnt from such a "descent" ([Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension](#), 2005; [Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld](#), 2010)
- **Rising again from the dead:** Obama has made the widely-noted strong assertion: *You will not see bin Laden walking on this Earth again* (Jay Carney, White House briefing, 4 May 2005). This of course was the assumption made with respect to Jesus. Any myth could play variously with such an assumption. Was it Osama who was executed? Would Christians find meaning in any assertion that Jesus is now "walking on this Earth" or will be seen "walking on this Earth again"? The assumption is simplistic since immediately following the execution there was much media footage of Osama walking the hills of Afghanistan. More intriguing are the ways in which planned movies will continue to depict an Osama figure "walking the Earth". Many Christian communities offer periodic celebratory rituals in which Jesus does indeed "walk the Earth". The most striking is that of the [Passion Play at Oberammergau](#). Will Muslim communities offer the equivalent for Osama?
- **Reanimation of Osama:** It will be a relatively simple matter for variously interested groups to generate movies depicting "Osama" walking the Earth. Claims will be variously made for their authenticity. Unfortunately the US will be completely unable to prove them to be fabrications -- however vigorously this is asserted -- especially when its own evidence for the "execution" of "Osama" is flawed and subject to every kind of manipulation. The cost of any such reanimation for worldwide media circulation would be as trivial as may have been the production of "authentic videos of Osama" circulated in years past (possibly long after his real death).
- **Back-story conspiracy themes:** These might include:
  - a long-dead Osama whose continued "existence" was considered essential to the strategy of the US, al-Qaida, or Pakistan - possibly variously colluding to that end
  - the role of the US in installing "Osama" in a villa in [Abbottabad](#) until it was convenient to "find" him -- after years of assiduous intelligence work of the greatest imaginable diligence. Or perhaps the US funded Pakistan for that purpose.
  - questionable comparisons regarding the controversial burial process with that of an earlier iconic figure, problematic to the US cause, namely Che Guevara -- as described by Jon Lee Anderson ([Burial Lessons: from Che to Bin Laden](#), *The New Yorker*, 3 May 2011).
  - comparison with the conspiracy theories surrounding other iconic "assassinations", such as that of J. F. Kennedy or Princess Diana. The commentary on the documentary regarding the latter is especially striking in terms of potential miscarriage of justice and misreporting by the media (Keith Allen, [Unlawful Killing "" the film the British won't get to see](#), *The Guardian*, 7 May 2011).
- **Feminine roles:** The defamatory assertions regarding the women in the residence of "Osama" -- reluctantly corrected by acknowledgement of the courage of one of them (unarmed, attacking a fully-armed SEAL) offers every scope for embodiment in myth.
- **Daughter's view of the execution:** The case of the 12-year old daughter is reminiscent of so many authenticated stories of the experiences of those alive today -- and notably living in the USA -- being forced to witness the execution of their parents by the Nazi or Soviet regimes (Jason Burke, [Osama bin Laden's daughter witnessed his death](#), *The Guardian*, 4 May 2011). The traumatic experience, and the motivation to which it gives rise, can be used to develop a rich thread of myth.
- **Fabrication of data:** Much is currently made of the "treasure trove" of information found on electronic media in the residence of "Osama". With what ease could this be fabricated and to what end? However there is also the possibility of subsequent "discovery" of more disks (perhaps by the Pakistan ISI, following a "thorough search"). After all an only idiot, which Osama was not, would leave disks on full display. These authentic disks -- securely "hidden" in the building -- might include exchanges with Osama's former CIA handlers, with Dick Cheney, or with Tony Blair ! To reframe their embarrassment. what could the Pakistan ISI fruitfully claim -- whilst avoiding any need to release their discoveries to wider inspection, following the precedent offered by the US?

- **Centurion SEALS:** Much could be made of the [SEALS](#), as the [centurions](#) of *Pax Americana*, responsible for the execution of "Osama". Given the considerable mystique attached to the use by a centurion of what became the "[Spear of Destiny](#)" on the occasion of the crucifixion of Jesus, could some equivalent be embodied into the myth? The centurion in question is reputed to have subsequently converted to Christianity and is now venerated as [Saint Longinus](#) -- offering the possibility of such a "conversion" by the SEAL who ensured the death of "Osama" ! Ironically one of the SEALS is even alleged to have laid down by the side of the dead "Osama" to confirm how "long" he was -- in the absence of a tape measure.

## Two-eyed truth as anathema -- in a cyclopean civilization

It is readily assumed that truth is singular, unambiguous and uncomplex. This is most notably challenged by the nature of light, a favoured metaphor of truth. Light is best understood as variously characterized by particles (photons) and waves -- whose relationship is clarified in physics by the [Uncertainty Principle](#) and the [wave-particle duality](#).

The challenge of relevance to this argument is well-illustrated by the lack of [depth perception](#) characteristic of vision through a single eye -- cyclopean vision as contrasted with [stereoscopic vision](#). The latter requires binocular cues (from both eyes) include stereopsis, yielding depth from binocular vision through exploitation of [parallax](#). The strategic effort of the *Pax Americana* to eliminate alternatives -- and especially by taking out their figureheads like [Salvador Allende](#) or Osama -- reduces the US to a cyclopean condition, namely world leadership totally lacking in depth perception.

The case for "[polyocular vision](#)" has long been made by [Magoroh Maruyama](#) (*Polyocular Vision or Subunderstanding, Organization Studies*, 2004). Like surveyors, astronomers recognize how essential it is to have a [very long baseline](#) for accurate observation. There is no question that this cross-linking process is a feature of good intelligence work in relation to [tangibles](#) -- as claimed with respect to tracking down "Osama". However it is eminently clear that the process is lacking in the case of [intangibles](#) -- in a way reminiscent of the "[failure of imagination](#)" of which the US Senate Intelligence report accused the intelligence community regarding 9/11 (*Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale*, 2002).

How naive is the US assumption of comprehensive global oversight under such circumstances -- especially when the "vision" metaphor is so strategically ubiquitous? Is it to be assumed that such coherent oversight it to be derived from global intelligence-gathering systems such as [ECHELON](#), perhaps to be appropriately understood as "cyclopean" -- as the argument for a complementary system suggests (*From ECHELON to NOLEHCE: enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain*, 2007).

The point is remarkably exemplified by the judgement made by [John Brennan](#) as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (*White House Press Briefing*, 2 May 2011) concerning Osama. As noted above, he asserted to the media of the world that Osama was the type of person who hid behind women -- a remark subsequently "redacted" [*Memo to US intelligence community: do not underestimate your enemy's women, however much you choose to frame them as oppressed; read [Elise Boulding](#), *The Underside of History: a view of women through time*, 1976]*

In self-righteously claiming monopoly of the appropriate worldview and its articulation, the US is in a tricky position for reasons such as the following, which merit careful reflection:

- **Cyclopean vision:**
  - in a cyclopean civilization (as at present), would any two-eyed person necessarily be seen as unfortunately (if not dangerously) disabled -- perhaps to be seen as in need of remedial help or corrective surgery -- especially if they made strange claims to "depth perception"?
  - how does the assumption relate to the insights of the classic tale by H. G. Wells: *In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King* (*The Country of the Blind and Other Stories*, 1911)?
  - are there other modalities with which it is fruitful to engage with reality, as separately argued (*Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006)
- **Needing an enemy as a second eye:**
  - if there was nevertheless a subconscious awareness of the need for a complementary perspective, would it manifest as the need for an enemy, possibly as "terrorist" like Osama (see numerous [References](#))?
  - does an "enemy" effectively function as an "extra eye" to offer a distorted form of depth perception -- better than none?
  - should what is framed as "terrorism" be understood as functioning as a second "eye" -- exemplified by Osama again?
  - does the desperate need for an enemy -- requiring 33 intelligence agencies in the USA -- enable and empower that society to sustain the existence of a "virtual" enemy, even if the reality of its manifestation has to be encouraged by false flag operations?
  - does the dimly sensed need for collective intelligence of a higher degree of integrative sophistication require a (new) public enemy as a focus for the intelligence activity in support of governance?
  - does the threat of such an enemy trigger a "healthy" invigoration of society -- fulfilling the traditional US wild west "wanted man" scenario?
- **Adversarial alternatives:**
  - is the need for an "enemy" potentially true of any alternative, even within adversarial democracy and judicial processes?
  - does any "alternative" automatically fit the model of undermining the pattern of law and order desired by some faction -- offering another form of second "eye"?
  - does the democratic process, and the adversarial relationship between parties, in fact embody to a degree the problematic experience of "alternative" perspectives -- it being noteworthy that, even in the USA, Democrats and Republicans are liable to demonise each other as betraying the values of American society in a process highly reminiscent of the attitude to foreign "others" such as al-Qaida?

Together these point to the **essential role of the "other"**, and the manner with which to engage with it. Efforts to frame this in terms of tolerance inhibit recognition of its more existentially challenging dimensions. In a sense both Osama and Jesus are about "otherness" -- breaking pattern and breaking frame. This is necessarily profoundly threatening as well as being emblematic of the process of change and regeneration (*Human Intercourse: Intercourse with Nature and Intercourse with the Other*, 2007).

Much has been made within the USA of the question by George Bush: "Why Do They Hate Us, When We're So Good?" (Peter Ford, *Why do they hate us?* *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 September 2001; David Wallechinsky, *Why Do They Hate Us?* 11 October 2001; Olivier Roy, *Why Do They Hate Us? Not Because of Iraq*, *The New York Times*, 22 July 2005; Jacob G. Hornberger, *Why Do They Hate Us? The Future of Freedom Foundation*, 9 August 2006; Mohsin Hamid, *Why Do They Hate Us?* *The Washington Post*, 22 July 2007; David Schimke, *Why Do "They" Hate Us?* *Utne Reader*, 30 March 2010). The question has been extended to include the West more generally (Robert Fisk, *Why do they hate the West so much, we will ask*, *The Independent*, 7 January 2009).

One response to the question -- in the light of aspirations to a cyclopean imperium -- is that the dynamics of such an imperium are only viable if it evokes a hatred to which the "good" can respond to justify and reinforce their self-perception. **It is not a question of "why do they hate us" rather it is a question of "why do we need to be hated"?**

The argument for the **"two-eyed" nature of truth** has notably been made from a Christian perspective by **John A. T. Robinson** (*Truth is Two-eyed*, 1979). Both theology and mythology have long recognized the larger truth emerging from deities of contrasting values -- as with the **peaceful deities** and **wrathful deities** of Buddhism. Such a larger truth is basic to the symbolism of Freemasonry through the two pillars **Boaz and Jachin** -- between which those seeking further insight are obliged to pass. What is there to be derived from cultural memory concerning the cognitive role of **twins in mythology** -- and their tendency to quarrel, articulated as a form of **sibling rivalry**? Also relevant is the Roman deity **Janus**.

Do current understandings of the necessarily contrasting Jesus-Osama perspectives potentially constitute together a requisite baseline for depth perception? If so, then through what unthinking perversity does society focus so obsessively on the *New Testament* recommendation:

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (*Matthew 18:9*)

Is this to be held as implying that any "bipartisan" arrangement -- involving a necessarily "offensive" alternative worldview -- would result in society being "cast into hell fire"? Does this effort to remove one eye endanger the other -- especially when the two are so similar? Rather than collective intelligence, is there then a possibility of collective blindness? *Eyeless in Gaza*?

These points highlight questions such as the following:

- does the dominant cyclopean mindset explain the **elusive, unsustainability of bipartisan approaches** in modern democracies?
- **is there a kind of "perversity" to diversity**, as it is conventionally understood within a psychocultural imperium?
- how might **single-frame modelling of the world** be reframed (*Transcending One-eyed Global Modelling Perspectives*, 2010)?
- how to derive **potentially relevant "neglected" insights from "other" cultures**, as suggested by Susantha Goonatillake (*Toward a Global Science: mining civilizational knowledge*, 1999) and reflected in the work of A. C. Graham (*Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986)?

## Self-reflexivity through elaboration of better stories

**"Eye am a strange loop"**: Curiously, when used as a metaphor for the most profound and insightful perception, the "eye" is singular -- as is the "I" of personal identity. In contrast with the above argument for truth requiring two eyes, cultures recognize the **"Eye of God"** or the **"Eye of Horus"** -- presumably a singularly integrated mode of seeing and knowing to which humanity can only aspire. For the intelligence community, this sense of an "all-seeing eye" is held to be implicit in various surveillance systems. The singular eye is also used with respect to individual disciplines imply comprehensive insight -- as with the "eye of science".

Use of the singular, as implied above, carries with it a degree of simplicity which in conventional understanding can only be simplistic. Hence the clash of civilizations and the dependence on adversarial politics. It is unclear, within this "view", how diversity is integrated into unity -- ironically upheld currently through the **motto of the European Union**.

**Topological symbols**: A more interesting case can be made for a more paradoxical basis to identity through the arguments of **Douglas Hofstadter** (*I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007; *Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies*, 1995). The subtler integrative understanding and identity might then be more appropriately framed as **"Eye Am a Strange Loop"**. Aspects of the nature of the paradoxical understanding have been separately explored (*¿ Defining the objective ∞ Refining the subjective ?! Explaining reality ∞ Embodying realization*, 2011). By implication both the "I" and the "eye" of the observer are more appropriately understood as embedded in a strange loop.

The embodiment of "two eyes", or "two I's", can then be usefully represented through the following image based on a **Möbius strip** -- developed for a discussion of the collective implications of the cognitive paradoxes (*Sustaining a Community of Strange Loops: comprehension and engagement through aesthetic ring transformation*, 2010). Arguably such a paradoxical form is the simplest to embody the complexity of the integrative relationship between two eyes -- offering depth perception. Its main characteristic is to be able to hold the inherent illusion that there are "two sides" to the strip. Of similar nature, but more complex, is the **Klein bottle** -- having no distinct "inside" or "outside", as separately discussed (*Intercourse with Globality through Enacting a Klein bottle Cognitive implication in a polysensorial "lens"*, 2009).



**Inhibited transcendence:** How significant to the inhibition of the emergence of any new framing of international two-party (archetypal) scenarios is the tendency to promote a simplistic unitary worldview. Such scenarios include:

- Palestine vs. Israel
- India vs. Pakistan
- North Korea vs. South Korea
- World Economic Forum vs. World Social Forum (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007)
- science vs. religion

In a civilization in which great intellect and wisdom is invested in the factual reality and justification for each such polarized position, the framing of the articulation of the "other" as a fantasy is relevant to the possibility of transcending what the future will undoubtedly consider a hypersimplistic dynamic between them. Going beyond the assertions in his recent book, [Stephen Hawking](#) (*The Grand Design*, 2010) has declared in an interview that a belief that heaven or an afterlife awaits us is a "fairy story" for people afraid of death (Ian Sample, *Stephen Hawking: 'There is no heaven; it's a fairy story'*, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2011). The belief in that "story" is of course central to the religious faith of many, including followers of Islam and Christianity -- a matter helpfully discussed in relation to science by Brad Hirschfeld (*Stephen Hawking's Sin In Denying Heaven*, *HuffPost Religion*, 16 May 2011).

Curiously those persuaded by Hawking's views see no trace of inconsistency between denial of some kind of transcendental "heaven" and their own heavy commitment to a fundamental reality currently promoted as to be understood in from 10 to 26 dimensions (if not more). They are not the least embarrassed by the "fact" that the psychosocial implications of this unproven "story" are far beyond the capacity of most -- probably including those who "believe" in it (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing: comprehension of psychosocial implication*, 2008). Hawking's qualification of a "fairy" story raises the question of the possible nature of higher dimensional "entities", notably with respect to their as separately discussed separately (*Emergent Language of the Birds?* 2010):

**Language of Angels vs. Language of Angles?** The *Language of the Birds* is also known as the [angelic language](#). There is much speculation about the nature of [angels](#) on whose guidance many devoutly believe humanity is dependent -- probably to a greater degree than is attributed to politicians. "Angels" are of course deprecated as pure superstition by science. The study by [Matthew Fox](#) and [Rupert Sheldrake](#) is not very helpful in this respect -- and with but a passing reference to birdsong (*The Physics of Angels: exploring the realm where science and spirit meet*, 1996). Several alternative perspectives could however be fruitfully considered....

"Angels" might then be better understood as the fundamental nodal clusterings of memetic relationships in an appropriately dimensioned topological space -- thereby holding their "angular" relationship to one another. More cognitively problematic is the extent to which any "experience" of "angels" is liable to involve a challenging degree of self-reflexive mirroring... A related possibility is to consider that any multidimensional "movement" -- any detected (elegant) pattern of movement of memes -- might be equally difficult to distinguish from "angelic" forms.

The current incompetence in reframing the dynamic between any two "poles" is endemic. Ironically the dynamic is fundamental to parliamentary debate and judicial processes. In each such case one "side" claims an appropriate grasp of factual reality whilst deprecating the other as indulging in a "fantastic story" -- but the variant preferred may depend on the coherence of the "story", irrespective of its factual basis. Strategic disasters and miscarriages of justice result as a consequence -- despite the promise of "heaven" by politicians in quest of a mandate. Minimally, a more fruitful approach is to recognize that each offers a distinct form of coherence which is preferred by some. As in politics, Hawking's assertion (on behalf of the "quants") will be barely meaningful to those (the "quals") believing otherwise. In the case of US vs. Taliban (Osama), the former relies on the "quantitative" (exemplified by military hardware), whereas the latter rely on the "qualitative" (exemplified by their belief that in dying for a cause they go to paradise). The "battle for hearts and minds" does not encompass this higher dimensionality -- where poetry offers a possibility (as noted below).

Curiously both quants and quals relate the coherence of their preferred reality to an understanding of beauty and perfection -- aspirations to the mathematical elegance of a Theory of Everything for the former, and the oft described perfections of paradise for the latter. More curious is however the irrelevance of the qualitative criterion of beauty to mathematical formalism, and the questionable factual basis of heaven as understood by the quals.

**Reframing facts through stories:** Focusing on environmental issues, contrasting perspectives are framed as dilemmas by [George Monbiot](#) (*Our Crushing Dilemmas*, 5 May 2011). He quotes [Paul Kingsnorth](#) (*The Quants and the Poets*, The Dark Mountain Project, 30 April 2011) as a means of exploring this problem. Kingsnorth's essay shows the way in which "*the green movement has torpedoed itself with numbers*". The case could be argued more generally with respect to the above dilemmas, namely that the emergence of a healthy global civilization is inhibited by the quant-style understanding of facts and a marked proclivity for their manipulation. Numbers are merely one form of fact. Kingsnorth argues, as cited by Monbiot:

What is missing here is stories, and an understanding of the importance of stories in getting to the bottom of what is really going on. Because at root, this whole squabble between worldviews is not about numbers at all "" it is about narratives." How to reassert the importance of stories, then, is perhaps a key question now. Green poets might perhaps start by observing that

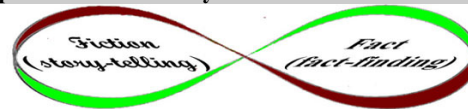
worlds are not "saved" by the same stories that are killing them. They might want to observe that saving worlds is an impossible business in the first place, and that attempting to do so is likely to lead to some very dark places. Or they might try and explore what it is about how we see ourselves which reduces us to this, time and time again "" arguing about machines rather than wondering what those machines give us and what they take away.

This is consistent with the argument for better stories made above by Adam Curtis in relation to the execution of Osama.

**Aesthetic appreciation of stories:** It is curious that world society has become so tortured by a need for facts -- even though they are variously called into question, as has been so evident in the case of climate change (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt*, 2010). More curious is that these are presented as facts through the media -- constantly under pressure to identify and elaborate better "stories". In this sense the **White House Press Secretary** is far more appropriately understood as the **White House Storyteller** -- in the "battle for hearts and minds". As with any traditional storyteller in the Arab world, it is the credibility of the story which counts with the audience seated at his feet -- who may interact with him to explore the more intriguing details for those to whom they will in turn present a variant of the story.

It is stories that sell, not facts. Getting the story "right" may then be more a matter of aesthetic considerations and dramatic presentation -- frequent revision is then to be understood as merely part of the aesthetic process. The distinction between "fact" and "fiction" in a story capable of attracting and holding attention then becomes more mysterious -- perhaps most appropriately to be intertwined as in the Möbius strip used above. Challenges to one or other are then implied by the paradoxical integrative form of the media on which they are inscribed. The form is appropriately reminiscent of how a good storyteller "spins a tale" -- melding the "quant" and "poetic" dimensions.

#### Representation of the dynamic between fact and fiction



Framing the global knowledge society in terms of a multiplicity of stories is then more powerful in terms of communication and its credibility -- and of the capacity of the stories to "travel", like jokes. The capacity to switch between TV channels, or to surf the web, may be seen as the quest for more engaging stories -- however skillfully their tales may be spun. Is it a matter of "news stories" or "new stories"? Any solemnly asserted distinction between "fact" and "fiction" is then to be appreciated as a feature of a given story -- their relationship being also governed by the uncertainty principle, and the special "twist" essential to a good story (*Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness*, 2004). This framing is relevant to any strategic appreciation of the essential "slipperiness" of soap operas like *Climategate* and *Cablegate*, and the moulding of the relevance of any scientific consensus.

If the Möbius strip above is understood as representing a dynamic between "fact" and "fiction", is this the key to the process by which psychosocial energy is engendered, as separately discussed (*Massive Elicitation of Psychosocial Energy: Requisite technology for collective enlightenment*, 2011; *Psychosocial Energy from Polarization: within a cyclic pattern of Enantiodromia*, 2007)?

**Freedom to elaborate intriguing stories:** The official **White House Storyteller** is clearly selected and empowered to tell powerful stories. All are however free to tell their own -- perhaps using the elements provided through an official mode, adapting them in the light of other materials creatively obtained from elsewhere. There is therefore every scope for a **"Back House Storyteller"** -- in every community, as in the tradition of the village storyteller of every village in the Arab world. It is in this sense that so-called "conspiracy theories" may offer much more interestingly credible stories than those produced by the White House Storyteller. It is in this framework that the quest for premature closure through "facts" may be understood as a form of "fretting" that is less than useful -- as highlighted by the classic plea of the poet **John Keats** for **negative capability**:

I had not a dispute but a disquisition... on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously -- I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason -- Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the penitentialium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

**Transforming global civilization through aesthetics:** The case for an aesthetic dimension, to enable a more integrative understanding, has been argued separately (*Enacting Transformative Integral Thinking through Playful Elegance*, 2010; *Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490*, 1990). In the light of the case made by Kingsnorth and Curtis, as cited above, what is the nature of the more intriguing stories which enable a transformation of society -- and through what media might they be presented? Are they necessarily experienced as "gratuitously offensive", as with the Osama-Jesus example noted above?

The relevance of myth-making, as noted above, has been separately discussed (*Relevance of Mythopoeic Insights to Global Challenges*, 2009). Cases can also be made for the use of:

- **epic and improvisational poetry:** understood as interrelating all the relevant thematic material, as with the Kalevala (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993). This is potentially of relevance to current areas of conflict (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran*, 2009; *Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling*, 2009)

- **music and song:** many possibilities of use of these media remain to be explored (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Structuring Mnemonic Encoding of Development Plans and Ethical Charters using Musical Leitmotifs*, 2001)
- **drama:** what might be the role of a dramaturge, as previously suggested (*Gorbachev as Dramaturge: lessons on social transformation for international organizations*, 1992).

As a drama, references are currently made to stories about the "Osama execution" as a "soap opera". A similar framing is offered by the US response to [Julian Assange](#) -- fruitfully to be understood as a psychodrama (*WikiLeaks and the First Global Condom War: political awakening through asymmetric psychodrama: US versus Assange*, 2010). Reference is made there to "condom" as a suitable abbreviation of "**confidence domination**", which -- rather than the information domination currently framed as a strategic objective -- places the emphasis on the credibility characteristic of integrative stories. **The current White House storytelling of the moment, in relation to the execution of "Osama", might then be framed as an exercise in confidence domination.**

**Reframing the observer:** The media coverage of the execution of "Osama" raises questions about the attitude with which such information should be received -- especially since the presentation is crafted to have an effect, as was the crucifixion of Jesus. For some it evokes celebratory triumphalism -- "Mission Accomplished". They have long forgotten the 5,000,000 deaths in the Congo. Within what mindset can such "facts" be reconciled?

Supposedly, as "fact", the execution implies an interplay between "observer" and "objectivity" -- with the prefix "ob" implying "towards, against, or, in the way of". The "objective" of the US is claimed to have been achieved. However many "observers" now "object" -- perhaps to being confirmed as "servants of the ob", effectively "sub-servient"? What is the nature of the "sub-jective" impact that is sought -- in the "battle for hearts and minds"? Again, how are objecting and subjecting to be reconciled (*Defining the objective ∞ Refining the subjective ?! Explaining reality ∞ Embodying realization*, 2011). What is the psychodynamic role of "**Doubling Thomas**"? How best to transcend the implied dilemmas and what effect do they have -- "objectively" or "subjectively"?

The situation may also be framed more dynamically. How are we effectively engaged in a higher order of game-playing by which we are variously entranced and enthralled? Who is messing with our minds? By whom is the game organized -- who is the **Dungeon Master**? How to imagine the possible objective of the game (*Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007)? Or is the game a characteristic of the more widely comprehensible framing -- that of the theme song *We Are The World* (1986)? Is the dynamic the game we are evoking -- and hence the physical similarities between the iconic Osama and Jesus? In the entanglement of objectivity and subjectivity are we now embodying paradoxically what some might claim to be purely "external" (*Existential Embodiment of Externalities*, 2009)?

**Feel free to spin your own tale:** It is perhaps appropriate to recognize that the web is increasingly about "stories" variously "decorated" with "facts". As noted by [Robert McCrum](#) (*The web allows stories to be spun in new ways, The Observer*, 8 May 2011). He argues that the use of multimedia is beginning to take storytelling in radical new directions, citing Frank Rose (*The Art of Immersion: how the digital generation is remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the way we tell stories*, 2011) with respect to the web as:

... the first medium that can act like all media. It can be text, or audio, or video, or all of the above. It is nonlinear, thanks to its adoption of the revolutionary convention of hyperlinking.

As a consequence, according to Rose:

... a new type of narrative is emerging "" one that's told through many media at once in a way that's nonlinear, that's participatory and often game-like, and that's designed above all to be immersive. This is '**deep media**'.

McCrums reinforces this argument by reference to the Canadian writer [Kate Pullinger](#), who is fascinated by the opportunities of deep media. Pullinger considers that "*the new technology has the potential to inject a new dimension to storytelling*". How might story themes then be interwoven in new ways, as separately discussed (*Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways*, 2010). The question is the nature of any new kind of subjective engagement with such new kinds of stories. More problematic is the strong possibility that efforts will be made to ensure that only approved stories circulate -- following the long-established efforts of the different religions, and the current efforts of science -- "other" stories being framed as "evil" or the epitome of ignorance.

Does this chaotic situation anticipate a condition of zero collective credibility (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009)? It is in this emerging context that a distinction might be made, with respect to the Osama-Jesus stories, between:

- fact, if it can be "defined", found and "authenticated" (whatever that can be held to mean)
- stories spun by the official White House Storyteller
- stories spun by "conspiracy theorists"
- stories spun by al-Qaida and sympathizers
- homespun stories -- which one is free, creatively to elaborate for whomever
- a tale such as that of this document: "my story", exploring what Jesus might have said -- "if you kill the other, then you kill me".

**"We've Lost Something of Our Soul"**  
 Michael Moore to Piers Morgan on Bin Laden  
 (CNN, 5 May 2011)

"I hear a lot of people often say, what would Jesus do?" he said. "I don't think Jesus would go

down to Ground Zero like a lot of people did...and have a party. " Morgan asked him why he took issue with the way bin Laden died. Moore said that the killing deviated from the notion that everyone has a right to a trial:

We've lost something of our soul here in this country...something that separates us from other parts, other countries where we say everybody has their day in court no matter how bad of a person, no matter what piece of scum they are, they have a right to a trial...after World War II, we just didn't go in and put a bullet to the head of all the top Nazis. We put them on trial. (as reported in *The Huffington Post*, 10 May 2011, with video)

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