

TOWARD A THEORY OF NARRATIVE RHETORIC

by

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As children we dream, play, and pretend – innocently aware of the future, hopeful and optimistic that we can be anything we want to be. Regardless of what we become or what we do when we grow up, one constant that binds us all together is the power of story. From childhood to adulthood we cherish the telling of stories: we read them, watch them, create them, and live them. Indeed, all the memories of our lives are organized into stories and this dissertation is as much a celebration of stories as it is an academic application of a particular narrative theory and writing this dissertation has perhaps taught me more about myself (my story) than about the theories and sources I explored.

Working on this dissertation over the course of many years and seeing it grow into its present form I have come to realize that it was always leading me down the path it took even if I didn't know it; it was always telling its story. Of course, I could not have traversed this terrain without the love and support of my family and the help and guidance of my teachers. But there is no one who has been more supportive or more helpful (in numerous and immeasurable ways) than my wife, Suzanne – this is for you “babe.”

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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A THEORY OF NARRATIVE RHETORIC

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This dissertation suggests that the question of whether or not America should employ torture as a means of fighting a post-9/11 War on Terror was not so much debated as it was asserted (in the affirmative) by the presidential administration of George W. Bush and the news media contemporary to his administration. Building on an observation by media researcher Sasha Torres, who recognized a representation of thinking on television that served to counter the Bush Administration and the media, this dissertation investigates how television functioned as an alternate forum for a debate on torture by examining the narratives of three serialized television programs which largely aired during the years contemporary to the Bush Administration: FOX's 24; ABC's Lost; and the SyFy Channel's reimagined Battlestar Galactica. Building on various theories from the fields of rhetoric, narratology, and critical theory, this dissertation proposes a theory of narrative rhetoric (TNR) designed to trace a narrative's progression and function; TNR is then utilized to analyze the three television programs to demonstrate how each program effectively advanced and maintained an anti-torture stance.

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CHAPTER 1
DEBATING POST-9/11 TORTURE

1.1 Introduction

In an examination of the “intellectual culture” of George W. Bush’s presidential administration, media researcher Sasha Torres observes five “troubling elements” or patterns of behavior seen during the course of Bush’s tenure. As Torres claims:

First, ignorance: Bush himself doesn’t know much about key policy areas and shows little interest in learning more; more troubling, this know-nothing attitude seems to pervade the West Wing. This element is closely related to, and sustained by, the second: a breathtaking intellectual laziness, both on the part of the President and those around him. Also closely related is the third element: Bush’s low tolerance for detail, complexity, or nuance. Bush’s detail-intolerance is reflected in the fourth element: his administration’s remarkable contempt for empirical evidence, and its well-documented willingness to manufacture evidence to support ill-conceived political or ideological positions. Not surprisingly, fifth, the Bush White House has consistently displayed a concomitant suspicion of experts and expertise. This element is related as well to Bush’s discomfort with debate and disagreement, a discomfort that is reflected in the small circle of advisors to whom he grants access, and supported by his administration’s apparent lack of interest in engaging its opponents (276).

Torres expands on Bush’s discomfort for debate explaining that Bush’s group of advisors essentially functioned as buffers so that Bush could “maintain his surroundings as a fact-free, idea-free, debate-free, and thus contradiction-free zone” (284). Citing Ron Suskind, Torres notes that Bush’s “intolerance for debate” was disturbingly seen in cabinet meetings, which were apparently scripted and referred to not as cabinet meetings but as “cabinet meetings,” implying that the meetings were more theatrical and staged than they were substantive (284). Torres ultimately concludes that “reasoned argumentation based on evidence has been rejected in favor of policy decisions grounded in assertion, “faith,” “instinct,” and “guts”” (285). Yet, Torres critically and interestingly notes: “Against the backdrop of this historical moment [...] U.S. network television has become [...] unprecedentedly interested in thinking” (285).

Torres acknowledges that television history is replete with examples of programs that are “interested in *knowing*,” but suggests that “it is new for television to be so interested in thinking, and so favorably disposed to it” (285). Torres tests this hypothesis by examining three television programs (*House*, *Criminal Minds*, and *Numb3rs*) that she claims “pay as much narrative attention to the process of thinking as they do to the moments when the products of that process are revealed” (286). As Torres further explains:

Each of these shows is obsessed with rendering the process of cognition visible, an imperative I read as not only part and parcel of the medium’s desire to render *everything* visible, though it is that, but as also a pedagogical impulse, as a desire to say, over and over every week: in case we’ve forgotten, or become confused while watching too much Fox News, *this* is what thinking looks like (286).

Through her examination Torres finds that thinking is represented as a “collective endeavor”; is shown both diegetically (in the fictional world characters) and extradiegetically (to the real-world audience); and is “rigorously empiricist in that [the television programs] depict thinking as a process of interpreting and accounting for different kinds of evidence” (290). As Torres concludes:

These shows are significant for the ways in which they try to imagine – or even to reproduce – a national intellectual life in America at a moment in which intelligence, critical reflection, expertise, and the engagement with empirical evidence have been radically devalued in the interests of political expediency and the accumulation of raw power (293).

Torres’ conclusions regarding both Bush’s presidency and the representation of thinking on television raise at least three questions worth investigating further: (1) If debate was indeed suppressed during Bush’s administration, did the representation of thinking on television (and television itself) function as an alternate forum for debate? (2) If so, what does this “narrative rhetoric” or “dramatized argument” suggest with regard to the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory? (3) And what does viewing television as an alternate forum for debate suggest about America’s cultural identity in a post-9/11 world?

Perhaps no issue is more significant to America’s post-9/11 identity than the issue of torture, especially in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal.¹ Following Torres’ examination and the questions posed above, this dissertation will show that the question of whether or not America should torture so-

¹ The scandal was made public in January 2004 by an embarrassing array of explicit photographs showing American soldiers degrading, humiliating, and torturing middle-eastern “enemy combatants.”

called “enemy combatants” as it waged a retaliatory “War on Terror” was not so much debated as it was asserted, by the presidential administration of George W. Bush as well as by the news media. As this dissertation will also show, despite the attempt by the Bush Administration and the news media to discourage debate on torture in the public sphere, the specific medium of narrative television² nevertheless provided an alternative rhetorical forum, a forum that can be seen as an Aristotelian “available means,” one that illustrates and informs a possible theory of narrative rhetoric.³

Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will: (1) establish the background necessary to support the argument regarding the attempt by the Bush Administration and the news media to suppress a public debate on torture; (2) outline the relationship between television and rhetoric; and (3) explain how narrative television served as a forum for public debate. Building on the theories of Walter Fisher, James Phelan, Michael Kearns, Mark Currie, as well as on various theoretical perspectives from the fields of rhetoric, narratology, and critical theory, Chapter 2 will: (1) outline a theory of narrative rhetoric that defines narrative as *dramatized argument* and that seeks to investigate how an argument is dramatized by examining a narrative’s progression and a narrative’s function; and (2) explain how the theory of narrative rhetoric will be applied to an analysis of three post-9/11 television programs: FOX’s *24* (2001 – 2010), ABC’s *Lost* (2004 – 2010) and the SyFy Channel’s reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*, 2003 – 2010). Chapter 3 will apply the theory of narrative rhetoric to the television show *24* and advance the following arguments: (1) that *24* employs the ticking bomb scenario to dramatize the debate on torture on a professional level and a personal level; (2) that the professional level can be seen to progress through various stages in which torture begins as a little used technique to a ritualized act to sanctioned protocol to being considered forbidden and counterproductive; (3) that the personal level can be seen as depicting a

² Especially serialized television programs.

³ It should be noted that this dissertation focuses on the frame of time contemporary to the Administration of George W. Bush (2001 – 2008). As such, while the technological innovations of *Facebook* and *Twitter* emerged during this period of time, they were not yet fully realized in terms of their potential impact on society. In other words, while so-called “social media” provides an excellent example of Aristotelian “available means,” such an example belongs more to the era that followed the Bush era. Therefore, this dissertation will not examine social media or the Internet culture it generates. Rather, this dissertation focuses on the specific (and hopefully not too quaint) realm of serialized narrative television, as this medium directly relates to the overall arguments advanced throughout this dissertation.

loss of morality in those who choose to torture; (4) that *24*'s meta-narrative ultimately suggests that torture is wrong; and (5) that the eight seasons that comprise *24*'s serialized meta-narrative function as follows: Seasons 1 and 2 function as a two-part introduction; Seasons 3, 4, 5, and 6 function as a four-part development (with season 6 also functioning as a transition); and Seasons 7 and 8 function as a two-part conclusion. Chapter 4 will apply the theory of narrative rhetoric to the television show *Lost* to put forth the following arguments: (1) that torture is justified through the concept of revenge; (2) that torture is both physical and psychological, with emphasis placed on the latter; (3) that those who torture become more affected and afflicted by torture than those who are tortured, effectively losing not just their morality but a piece of their soul; (4) that torture is dramatized through a state-of-nature scenario, emotional investment, and through the use of flash-backs, flash-forwards, and flash-sideways to examine the past, present, and possible future actions of a given character and the effects those actions have produced, are producing, or will produce; (5) that torture is ultimately shown to be wrong because the personal and collective price it requires is too costly to pay; and (6) that the six seasons that comprise *Lost*'s serialized meta-narrative function as follows: Season 1 functions as an exposition; Season 2, Season 3, and Season 4 function as a three-part development; and Season 5 and Season 6 function as a two-part conclusion. Chapter 5 will apply the theory of narrative rhetoric to the television show *BSG* and advance the following arguments: (1) that torture, which is both physical and psychological, is justified through the concept of revenge; (2) that those who torture become more dehumanized than those who are tortured, (3) that torture is dramatized through a state-of-survival scenario and an accompanying theme of dehumanization; (5) that torture is ultimately shown to be wrong because it dehumanizes those who torture, requiring atonement in order to regain humanness; and (6) that the four seasons that comprise *BSG*'s serialized meta-narrative function as follows: the Miniseries and Season 1 function as the narrative's exposition; Season 2.0, Season 2.5, Season 3, *Razor*, and *The Plan* function as the narrative's development; and Season 4.0, and Season 4.5 function as the narrative's conclusion. Chapter 6 will summarize the findings of each narrative examination in relation to the position of the Bush Administration to suggest: (1) that the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each employed a primary "scenario" that served to govern the dramatization of torture; (2) that the meta-

narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each employed “themes” to support a pro-torture stance and an anti-torture stance; and (3) that the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each maintained the conclusion that torture is wrong. From this, Chapter 6 will also delineate the strengths and limitations of the theory of narrative rhetoric and identify areas for future research.

1.2 Suppressing Debate

On the most fundamental level, the question of torture rests on three points: (1) whether or not torturous treatment of a human being is acceptable; (2) whether or not a situation exists in which the use of torture is the only possible course of action; and, perhaps most importantly, (3) what exactly constitutes torture. The first point contemplates the act of torture itself, irrespective of context or circumstance, by asking: “Should torture be allowed?” While the second point, considering only context and ignoring whether the act of torture is acceptable, asks: “Is there a situation in which torture is necessary?” The third point speaks to the difficulty in defining torture. Let us keep these points in mind as we examine how the Bush Administration worked to suppress debate on the issue of torture while simultaneously crafting a pro-torture message, one that began to take shape on the day of the 9/11 attacks.

President Bush delivered three speeches on September 11, 2001 in response to the terrorists attacks in which he began to frame the attacks as an act of war in the traditional dichotomy of “good vs. evil” or “us vs. them,” effectively laying a rhetorical foundation to make a case not just for war, but ultimately a case for an “any means necessary” approach to fighting a war against terrorism. To aid this rhetorical effort, the Office of Strategic Influence was created by the department of defense on October 30, 2001⁴ as a center from which to launch a rhetorical war on terror and craft propaganda campaigns and psychological operations in targeted countries. It seems undoubtedly clear that the Bush Administration was well aware of the power of language, rendering Bush’s use of rhetoric even more pointed, for it is

⁴ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the official closure of the OSI on February 26, 2002. However, on November 18, 2002 Secretary Rumsfeld stated in a press briefing that the office was closed in name only, implying that it continued to function.

reasonable to assume that any speeches made by President Bush in relation to 9/11 and the War on Terror would be constructed with great consideration of rhetorical impact, not just for enemies that might be listening but also for the American public. As various scholars observe, the Bush Administration was so concerned about the rhetorical certitude of the messages they put out that any dissenting opinions or arguments were fiercely dealt with and characterized with the same “us vs. them” mentality, putting the voices of opposition in the same category as the terrorists.⁵

Nancy Chang contends that the Bush Administration was engaged “in a campaign to restrict access to government information that has blocked the press, the public, and even Congress in their efforts to hold the executive branch accountable for its actions,” and those who opposed the policies of the Bush Administration were labeled as unpatriotic (15). For Frank Rich, such a campaign against dissent stemmed from a combination of arrogance and certitude. Describing Bush as a narcissistic “entitled boomer,” Rich argues that Bush “assumed things to be so (and his intentions pure) because he said they were [...] How dare anyone question him” (13). Rich, however, also notes that the press was also somewhat responsible for broadcasting a patriotic message and image, one that also challenged (at least visually) any dissent. As Rich observes:

TV news stars also started marketing their patriotism: they kept sprouting more and more elaborate lapel effusions, some of them large enough to dwarf that of the country’s commander in chief [...] NBC was particularly obsessive in its flag-waving. It outfitted its promotional peacock logo in stars and stripes and then affixed it with abandon to virtually every frame of its prime-time schedule, assuring that even a doomed sitcom starring the celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse would be patriotically correct during its brief unhappy life (27).

Likewise, as L. Brent Bozell III notes, “Seemingly the entire on-air staff at Fox proudly wore American flags on their lapels; Tim Russert donned red, white, and blue ribbons on Meet the Press; CNN ran graphics of a waving American flag in its broadcasts continuously” (220). For Robert W. McChesney:

What is most striking in the US news coverage following the September 11 attacks is how that very debate over whether to go to war, or how best to respond, did not even exist. It was presumed, almost from the moment the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed, that the United States was at war, world war (93).

⁵ As Bush stated in his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001: “You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists.”

McChesney equates this lack of debate as a lack of responsibility, in which otherwise credible journalists did not ask the most relevant and important questions, especially as regards the military-industrial complex.

As McChesney elaborates:

Most conspicuous was the complete absence of comment on one of the most striking features of the war campaign, something that any credible journalist would be quick to observe were the events taking place in Russia or China or Pakistan: there are very powerful interests in the United States who greatly benefit politically and economically by the establishment of an unchecked war on terrorism (93)

From this brief examination, it is clear that the Bush Administration and the national media worked seemingly in concert⁶ to discourage debate. At the risk of belaboring the point, let us consider a few more pointed examples to illustrate how this discouragement related specifically to the issue of torture, especially with regard to the advocacy of a pro-torture stance.

Consider the following passage from an interview Vice President Dick Cheney gave on *Meet The Press* on September 16, 2001:

We also have to work with, though, sort of *the dark side*, if you will. We've got to spend time *in the shadows* in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, *without any discussion*, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in, and so it's going to be vital for us to use *any means at our disposal*, basically, to achieve our objective. (Emphasis added)

While Cheney clearly illustrates, through the use of dark imagery, that the methods America must employ require a willingness to become like our enemy, Cheney also establishes, through the use of words that suggest silence and secrecy, that such a decision must be adopted without any deliberation. This view espoused by Vice President Cheney is echoed eight years later in an interview Cheney gave with Fox News Sunday Host Chris Wallace on August 30, 2009. As Cheney states:

My sort of overwhelming view is that the enhanced interrogation techniques were *absolutely essential* in saving thousands of American lives and preventing further attacks against the United States [...] I think they were directly responsible for the fact that for eight years, we had no further mass casualty attacks against the United States. [...] *It was good policy*. It was properly carried out. It worked very, very well. (Emphasis added)

⁶ To continue the metaphor: they may not have been playing off of the same sheet music, but it was definitely the same song.

In this example, Cheney did not simply reiterate the logic initially employed to convince a nation that torture was a tactic necessary to fight the War on Terror, Cheney concludes that torture was successful and his only basis for this assertion is the fact that a second 9/11-type of event did not occur. Despite the obvious logical fallacy of Cheney's reasoning (and, by extension, the reasoning of the Bush Administration) the Bush Administration's main argument for torture nevertheless rested on the belief that the torturous questioning of individuals would provide information that would bring justice to those responsible for 9/11 and keep us safe from future attacks. As President George W. Bush stated in a speech delivered on September 6, 2006, "In this new war, the most important source of information on where the terrorists are hiding and they are planning is the terrorists themselves."⁷ Bush went on to describe the knowledge possessed by captured terrorists as "unique," adding, "this is intelligence that cannot be found any other place, and our security depends on getting this kind of information."⁸ Bush credited the fact that another attack on America had not occurred since 9/11 "because our government has changed its policies and given our military, intelligence, and law enforcement personnel the tools they need to fight this enemy and protect our people and preserve our freedoms."⁹

The "tools" Bush refers to came to be euphemistically labeled as "enhanced interrogation techniques," techniques that were used in black site prisons outside the United States as well as in prisons within the United States and in military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.¹⁰ The changes in the policies of America's government, which eventually led to these techniques being implemented, began six weeks after 9/11 with President Bush's signing of the Patriot Act into law. In a stroke of irony, the very American freedoms Bush claimed came under attack by terrorists on 9/11 were now being threatened by America's own government and law enforcement agencies. In addition to the *Patriot Act*, which defined "domestic terrorism," and the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act*, which created a Director

⁷ According to Federal News Service: www.fednews.com

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Otterman's *American Torture* and McCoy's *A Question of Torture*.

of National Intelligence as well as the National Counterterrorism Center,¹¹ the Bush Administration changed policy regarding torture (and consequently seemed to break the provisions of several constitutional amendments) by redefining torture and by outlining “enhanced” procedures in various classified Justice Department memorandums.¹²

Again, this change occurred not through reasoned debate but rather by a determined effort to circumvent deliberation and assert what might be best described as a patriotic interpretation of the international and domestic laws originally designed to prevent torture. Let us briefly consider these memorandums, which came to be known as the “torture memos” to understand how the Bush Administration effectively rewrote law. It should be noted at the outset that the so-called torture memos are a unique subject in America’s history, a subject that no doubt warrants careful and honest scrutiny with regard to post-9/11 history. Yet, given that many books and articles have been written about the torture memos and post-9/11 America’s grappling with the subject of torture, it is not practical to adequately dissect and discuss the nuances of these memos and the climate they were generated in over the course of a few pages of one dissertation. Accordingly, the purpose is not to conduct an in-depth examination of each memo, but rather to gain a synoptic view of the memos in the hopes of understanding the position of the Bush Administration regarding the subject of torture and the justification for its use.

1.3 Rationalizing Torture

As Philippe Sands recounts, congressional hearings held in the summer of 2008 essentially found that there was a deliberate effort on the part of attorneys working with and for the Bush Administration to “get around” laws prohibiting torture. As Sands explains: “Laws didn’t apply, or they created no rights for detainees. Established definitions of torture were ditched. Objections from lawyers with knowledge – in the

¹¹ The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 was a congressional response to President Bush’s Executive Order 13354 which created the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (and which was announced in Bush’s 2003 State of the Union address). The Act renamed the TTIC and codified its mandates.

¹² The Memos released by the Obama Administration can be found at: www.aclu.org/safefree/general/olc_memos.html

military or State Department – were cast aside” (Cole, ix). Sands points to a 2002 memo written by Jim Haynes, General Counsel for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, which provided “blanket authorization for the use of stress positions, sleep deprivation, dogs, and nudity,” adding that this memo “left open the use of waterboarding” (Cole, viii). This “Rumsfeld memo” along with six other memos¹³ essentially constitutes what came to be known as the “torture memos.”

For David Cole, the interrogation techniques used by the CIA against al Qaeda suspects and authorized by the torture memos essentially created two competing narrative arguments: the first suggests that the techniques “were patently illegal” and the second suggests that “government officials sought only to approach, not cross, the line of illegality” (2). In support of the first argument Cole offers:

No good-faith legal argument could possibly give a green light to stripping a suspect naked, slamming him repeatedly into a wall, dousing him with cold water, slapping his face, depriving him of any sleep for eleven days straight, forcing him into stress positions and small dark boxes for hours at a time, and waterboarding him repeatedly – 183 times in the case of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and 83 times in the case of Abu Aubaydah, two al Qaeda detainees (2)

In support of the second argument, Cole cites Dennis Blair and Michael Mukasey, who “point to the overwhelming panic and fear that pervaded the United States in the wake of the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001” and who note “the ambiguity of the laws governing torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment” (2).

Indeed, as Sands notes, the context of post-9/11 America heavily influenced the arguments put forth in favor of using torture to fight the war on terror. For example, regarding Jim Haynes, Sands explains that Haynes had been brought in “to support the [Bush] Administration’s narrative, emphasizing the vital need to get information necessary to protect the American people in a way that was lawful” (19). But as Sands notes, the definition and interpretation of “lawful” depended on the context in which was applied and since, for Haynes (and the Bush Administration in general) the scale of the deaths that resulted from 9/11 was akin to warfare, “other options were needed, including aggressive interrogation,” which was also referred to as “strategic intelligence gathering” (20). As Sands concludes, the result of this reasoning and

¹³ These six are as follows: August 1, 2002, Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales; August 1, 2002, Memorandum for John Rizzo; December 30, 2004, Memorandum for James B. Comey; May 10, 2005, Memorandum for John Rizzo; May 10, 2005, Second Memorandum for John Rizzo; May 30, 2005, Memorandum for John Rizzo.

the document trail left by the torture memos exposed several questions regarding the United States' policy and practice of torture. For Sands, "the lawyers had too big a role in the story," a story in which "the Geneva Conventions were not being applied to any detainees at Guantanamo and the U.S. military's long-established constraints on cruelty and torture, dating back to President Lincoln in 1863, were being circumvented" (22 – 23) and as both Sands and Cole observe, these constraints were being circumvented with creative language, such as with the phrase *enhanced interrogation*, with the logic of viewing torture as necessary (to prevent terrorism), and as a technique of self-defense. Accordingly, while attorneys were crafting language to redefine and re-label torture not just to circumvent the law but also to advance the Bush Administration's arguments regarding the necessity of the moment, the media was also revising what it reported as torture, possibly to bolster the Government's position.

In 2010, a Harvard University study that examined the four most circulated newspapers in America¹⁴ found that during the years 2002 to 2008 the New York Times implied that the technique of waterboarding was torture in only two of one hundred and forty three articles (1.4%) on the subject. In contrast, prior to 9/11 (going back to the 1930s) the New York Times characterized waterboarding as torture in forty-four of fifty-four articles (81.5%). Post-9/11 numbers for the other three newspapers examined include: 4.8% for the Los Angeles Times; 1.6% for the Wall Street Journal; and 0% for USA Today. Additionally, the study found that the Los Angeles Times characterized waterboarding as torture 91.3% of the time when it involved another country doing the waterboarding, but only 11.4% of the time when it involved the United States – for the New York Times, these numbers are 85.8% for other countries and 7.7% for the United States. Indeed, as the previous discussion on the media found, America's news establishment functioned almost in tandem with the Bush Administration rather than as an independent "fourth estate," helping to promote torture (regardless of whatever euphemism was used to describe it) as a legitimate and necessary tool in fighting the war on terror.

It is interesting to note, however, that despite this support from the media, the Bush Administration nevertheless crafted the torture memos in secret, with what both Cole and Sands note was a

¹⁴ The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, and USA Today.

specific intention to justify the use of torture, not just to make it legitimate, but also to protect from prosecution (and judgment) those who took part in its use. As Cole writes:

When considered as a whole, the memos read not as an objective assessment of what the law permits or precludes, but as a strained effort to rationalize a predetermined – and illegal – result. Rather than demand that the CIA conform its conduct to the law, the lawyers [working in the Office of Legal Counsel for the Bush Administration] contorted the law to conform it to the CIA’s desires (4).

From this brief but pointed examination on the arguments advanced in favor of torture it is clear that the Bush Administration regarded the 9/11 Event as an extraordinary circumstance and regarded torture as being a necessary tool for those charged with fighting the *War on Terror*. It is also clear that the Bush Administration sought to silence dissent and implement policy changes secretly without debate. The redefinition of torture as “enhanced interrogation” and the crafting of memorandum to support and legitimize this redefinition helped the Bush Administration circumvent any domestic and international prohibitions of torture, allowing what Dershowitz referred to as a “persuasive and unregulated use of torture” to be established.

Returning to the three fundamental points concerning the nature of the argument on torture, it is also clear that the Bush Administration and the national media considered torture to be acceptable, regarded the post-9/11 climate as a situation in which torture was the only possible course of action, and defined torture not just to legitimize it, but to make it a patriotic duty and a moral necessity. Now that the background has been established to understand how the Bush Administration and the media worked to suppress public debate on torture, let us now examine the relationship between television and rhetoric to understand how television functioned as an alternate forum for debate during the Bush era.

1.4 Television and Rhetoric

Writing in 2005, Andrew Norris and Zygmunt Bauman observe that television functioned as the dominant form of media in the United States to the point that it had become “the main forum for public debate” (Rockmore, 23). Torres’ claim, noted at the beginning of this chapter – that television had become

“unprecedentedly interested in thinking” during the years of the Bush Administration (285) – develops Norris’ and Bauman’s observation. Yet, as Brian L. Ott contends in his 2007 book *“The Small Screen,”* the cerebral and cultural functions of television began much earlier. For Ott, television began to significantly impact American culture in the 1950s and this impact, in Ott’s view, can be seen as being either part of a social change measured economically (as a move from agrarianism to industrialism to informationalism) or as part of a change in communication technology (from oral to print to digital). Regardless of the perspective, Ott argues that the impact of television represents “a fundamental restructuring of how individuals make sense of themselves and of their world” (3). For Ott, viewers choose to watch certain programs “because those programs teach them to process the world in a way that is useful and meaningful to them” (xi). Ott’s insight offers not just a reason why viewers choose to watch television, but also an explanation of television’s power beyond mere entertainment.

Indeed, various academic studies during the last two decades of the twentieth-century view television as a forum for cultural debate where discourse can be philosophical and even therapeutic, as viewers learn how to cope with life situations not just from overtly educational programming, but, more significantly, from fictional narrative programs. For example, Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsh, who in their essay titled *“Television as a Cultural Forum”* view television as a national medium, focus their study “on the collective, cultural view of the social construction and negotiation of reality” (563), and they argue that television does not present firm ideological conclusions, but instead presents issues for consideration.

As they write:

in popular culture generally, and in television specifically, the raising of questions is as important as the answering of them [...] the conflicts we see in television drama, embedded in familiar and nonthreatening frames, are conflicts ongoing in American social experience and cultural history. In a few cases we might see strong perspectives that argue for the absolute correctness of one point of view or another. But for the most part the rhetoric of television drama is a rhetoric of discussion (565-566).

Similarly, Mimi White examines various television programs from the perspective that “confessional and therapeutic discourse centrally figure as narrative and narrational strategies in television in the United States” (8). White, who understands communication “as the injunction to participate in confessional discourse within the highly mediated channels of contemporary technology” (11), argues that

communication “has become a dominant paradigm of social, interpersonal, and commodity relations” (11). White’s concern is for identifying therapeutic and confessional discourses and for investigating how such discourses figure in familial and consumer culture. For White, “confession and therapy are engaged toward finding one’s ‘proper place’ as an individual and as a social subject, even as they are mediated through the apparatus of television” (11).

Bruce E. Gronbeck, a contributor to Richard Harvey Brown’s book titled “*Postmodern Representations*,” observes this mediation from a political perspective. Gronbeck, in his essay titled “*Rhetoric, Ethics, and Telespectacles in the Post-Everything Age*,” cites television as being among a group of electronic media¹⁵ that has contributed to a disruption¹⁶ in the classic models of democratic thought. The result of this disruption is a “teledemocracy,” one that participates in the democratic process (such as debating social issues and voting) at a distance and one that Gronbeck defends. As he contends: “public moral judgments have always been constructed rhetorically, argued into existence in times of theoretical and circumstantial crisis [...] Periodically, America has had to reconstitute its political community in light of circumstantial or structural alterations in its political system” (224-225). While Gronbeck is mainly concerned with aspects of political morality in a world of telespectacle¹⁷ and his goal is to seek a rhetorical ethics for a teledemocracy, his conclusion has broader application. As Gronbeck states: “The telespectacle, for better or worse, is the center of public politics, of the public sphere. [...] we must recognize that the conversation of the culture is centered [...] in the television experience” and he warns, “To ignore the conversation – to fail to arm students with the means of verbally and visually decoding it – is folly” (235).

For Bryan Garsten, who investigates what he calls a “politics of persuasion” in his book *Saving Persuasion*, being armed with tools to participate in the democratic process is not necessarily a matter of education, it is more a matter of disinterest and distrust on behalf of the general public, as well as a stifling of the possibility for persuasion and judgment by those in positions of power. As Garsten suggests,

¹⁵ A group that includes radio, film, and computers.

¹⁶ For Gronbeck, democratic thought has been disrupted by the advent of new technology and the fragmentation of society.

¹⁷ A characterization based on Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, which argues that society is a construct of mass-mediated spectacle.

“Relatively few people are interested in listening to arguments, much less having their minds changed,” adding that in the modern political landscape “public debate often devolves into groups of like-minded individuals talking to one another, leaving other citizens increasingly alienated” (4). Garsten describes the power to persuade as political power and suggests that, in a democratic society, this power is wielded by those who control the agenda and determine who can speak. As he suggests, “various features of modern politics – such as the prominence of bureaucracies with their rule-governed decision-procedures, the dominance of mass media with its emphasis on visual images, the weakening of parties relative to special-interest groups, and the slow but inexorable drift toward more plebiscitary forms of democratic decision-making – conspire to close off spaces in which persuasion [and judgment] might occur” (4).

In seeking a solution that calls for mutual respect for and understanding of opposing viewpoints, Garsten makes two observations worth noting. The first is his understanding of persuasion, which he explains thusly: “To truly persuade people is to induce them to change their own beliefs and desires in light of what has been said” (7). Garsten distinguishes this understanding from perspectives that treat persuasion as manipulation, pandering, or coercion, which he maintains might be a type of influence (in a loose sense) but not persuasion (in a strict sense). The second observation Garsten makes regards the outcome of persuasion. As he surmises: “in a politics of persuasion victories are always provisional, and they depend on the judgments of others” (211). For Garsten, the goal of persuasion should not be to settle a dispute once and for all with the agreement of a resolution, but rather to treat persuasion as an “ongoing practice of controversy” in which opposing sides take turns holding power – this is because the former closes the possibility for persuasion and judgment, while the latter leaves them open.

So, if the ability to persuade and make decisions is indeed being restrained and threatened by those who hold political power (the Bush Administration and the news media) and if the television experience is indeed the center of public politics as Gronbeck maintains, or is a dominant paradigm of communication as White suggests, or is a national medium for discussion as Newcomb and Hirsch posit, or is the main forum for public debate as Norris and Bauman put forward, or is a medium that has become unprecedentedly interested in thinking as Torres hypothesizes, then television certainly occupies a significant rhetorical

position in our society and those in charge of television programming (not to mention the creators, producers, and writers of a given show) hold a significant amount of rhetorical power over the viewing public. Television, then, is not the “vast wasteland” that Federal Communications Chairman Newton N. Minow experienced in 1961. Rather, television has become a vast rhetorical land where the available means to persuade exists on hundreds of channels and in thousands of programming hours.

As Michael G. Moran and Michelle Ballif note¹⁸ in their introduction to “*Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*,” rhetoric became a key concept in nearly every social science field by the middle of the twentieth-century, from philosophy and linguistics to literary and argumentation studies to cultural and anthropological studies to the hard sciences. For example, under the title “*The Responsibilities of Rhetoric*,” The Rhetoric Society of America’s 2008 conference asked: (1) “How do new media affect civic participation and the conduct of argument half a century after *The New Rhetoric*, *The Uses of Argument*, and *The Rhetoric of Motives*?” (2) In a nation suspicious of difference, concerned with security and newly armed with snooping technologies, can rhetorical pedagogies nevertheless protect civil liberties, sustain civic cooperation, and promote understanding and identification?” If we consider the importance of the television experience discussed thus far – representing how people make sense of their world; socially constructing and negotiating reality; television narrative as a rhetoric of discussion; and participating in democracy at a distance through a *teledemocracy* and *telespectacle* – then it becomes apparent that possible answers to the RSA’s questions regarding civic participation and civic cooperation, and our concerns regarding the rhetorical landscape of the early twenty-first century, may reside in an understanding of the television experience and in an understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and television.

It should be obvious even to the casual viewer of television that the viewing experience is saturated with overt uses of rhetoric. Consider, for example, the cable news stations CNN, MSNBC, and FOX NEWS. An examination of the hourly news reporting and daily pundit-led political shows that take place on these stations (from John King and Piers Morgan on CNN to Chris Mathews and Rachel Maddow

¹⁸ See also Corbett 1965, Kennedy 1999, Murphy 2003, Bizzell and Herzberg 1990, and Conley 1990

on MSNBC to Sean Hannity and Bill O’Rielly on FOX NEWS)¹⁹ would no doubt produce an abundance of evidence to support the use of rhetoric on television. However, this would not be surprising, as rhetoric is expected to be present in – indeed it is integral to – the format of these stations, especially in the pundit-led programs. What I wish to investigate, however, is the presence of rhetoric in narrative television. Following the observation made by Torres in the introduction to this chapter, it is my contention that traditional scripted programs contain a greater potential to persuade viewers than the aforementioned news programs. While viewers expect to engage in the debate of current topics on CNN, MSNBC, and FOX NEWS viewers do not necessarily expect a rhetorical encounter while watching primetime narrative television in the comfort of their living room. Yet, this is the true “available means” moment, if you will, where millions of viewers are tuned in by choice, ready to engage in a fictional story-world, and it is a unique moment in the sense that the arguments put forth through narrative television programs, I contend, have the greatest potential to be maintained on the viewer.

While books, plays, and movies may contain a rhetorical element designed to persuade, they require repeated engagement in order for any argument to be maintained for an extended period of time. However, given that a typical television series may have anywhere from thirteen to twenty-six episodes, arguments depicted in narrative television series have the potential to be sustained over a significant period of time, especially in a serialized format where every episode must be viewed in order to understand the overall structure and direction of the narrative. As Jason Mittell observes: “Most films and novels are self-contained, creating a storyworld that is unique to that particular book or film. [...] Most narrative television offers ongoing storyworlds, presenting specific opportunities and limitations for creating compelling narratives” (163). In explaining the opportunities and limitations for narrative television, Mittell distinguishes between episodic (stand-alone stories with plot resolutions) and serial structures (continuous stories with multiple, intersecting plotlines that may not resolve) for narrative programs, noting temporal

¹⁹ And certainly Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert on Comedy Central.

characteristics produced by various factors such as having to take commercial breaks.²⁰ For Mittell, however, the conventional format of television still provides a unique and perhaps better opportunity for storytelling (at least in terms of sustainment) than the formats of books or film.

Of course, one could certainly choose to not watch a program or to change the channel, but for viewers who become loyal to a show the potential to maintain influence is undoubtedly high – the more a viewer “gets hooked” the more they will be willing to adopt a show’s outlook and philosophy. For example, the 1952 television show *Adventures of Superman*²¹, starring actor George Reeves as Superman, is a classic example of this effect, as viewers, especially children, watched the Man of Steel fight for “truth, justice, and *the American Way*” (emphasis added). As New York Times Opinion Reporter Erik Lundegaard observes, the phrase “the American Way” did not appear in the comics first published in 1938, nor did it appear in the radio program until 1942, during a period when the Second World War was going bad for America – but the phrase was gone by 1944 when the tide turned. As Lundegaard notes, “it took the paranoia and patriotism of the Cold War era to bring back *the American Way*.”²² The television show *24*, starring actor Kiefer Sutherland as a Counter-terrorism agent of the United States government, presents a recent example of this rhetorical effect, this time with America engaged in a fight against terrorism.

As Newsweek’s Dahlia Lithwick reports, United States military officials, including the Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, cited the use of torture on *24* as being reflective of “real life” and as justification for incorporating the use of torture in the so-called enhanced interrogation of suspected terrorists. Lithwick, who refers to the character of Jack Bauer as “the most influential legal thinker in the development of modern American interrogation policy,” claims that “high-ranking lawyers in the Bush Administration erected an entire torture policy around the fictional edifice of Jack Bauer” because Kiefer Sutherland’s character is viewed as a hero.²³ Jack Bauer and Superman both engage in heroic actions promoting an “American Way” relevant to their respective eras, but these two examples offer only a

²⁰ As any viewer of television learns through the simple act of watching, programs are segmented to accommodate commercial breaks and because of these breaks the actual running times of television programs are approximately 22 minutes for half-hour shows and 45 minutes for one-hour shows.

²¹ Which was filmed serially, with actors wearing the same clothes throughout an entire season.

²² New York Times, June 30, 2006.

²³ Newsweek, August 4, 2008.

glimpse of the rhetorical potential television shows possess. Taking this illustration – as well as the examples previously examined – it seems clear that television can indeed function beyond being a vessel of mere entertainment to provide an alternate space for the dissemination of messages and for the deliberation of issues.

As we have seen, the Bush Administration endeavored to stifle debate in the aftermath of 9/11, especially as regards the issue of torture, advancing the use of torture as a legitimate and necessary (if not heroic) tool in fighting a war on terrorism. Since there was an absence of debate in the news media and in the Bush Administration regarding the issue of torture, let us now examine how these questions were debated in narrative television. Where Torres demonstrated “this is what thinking looks like” (286) perhaps we can demonstrate “this is what debate looks like” by analyzing the narratives of *24* (which aired from November 2001 to May 2010), *Lost* (which aired from September 2004 to May 2010), and *BSG* (which aired from December 2003 to March 2009). Each of these shows dealt with the issue of torture to some degree and while each show received varying degrees of acclaim and popularity, what is paramount is that the narratives of each show presented storylines relevant to our real, post-9/11 world, providing a means to discuss issues such as torture in a dramatized way.

Certainly, given the many variables associated with producing and viewing a television program, it could be argued that the positions for and against torture are not entirely clear let alone intentional, that viewers will likely respond to a narrative in many different ways, and that any analysis as to the effect/affect of a narrative argument will ultimately be inconclusive, if not impossible to ascertain – especially in the absence of any meaningful audience analysis.²⁴ What these examinations will hopefully demonstrate, however, is that the narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *Battlestar Galactica* provided actual debate on the issue of torture, allowing viewers to more fully contemplate the pros and cons of torture, as well as the

²⁴ Given that this dissertation began in the midst of the era it seeks to examine, it is impossible to provide an original analysis of audience reactions to each program. Accordingly, since this dissertation proceeds from the theoretical perspective that contextualizes the presence of debate on television as an “available means” (in response to the stifling of debate by the Bush Administration and the news media), performing an audience study after-the-fact, if you will, would be pointless and irrelevant. Nevertheless, attempts will be made to provide meaningful audience reception (gathered from contemporary sources) where it is appropriate.

social, moral, ethical, logical, and philosophical issues related to the questions of whether or not torture is acceptable and whether or not torture is necessary.

It should also be noted that each of these shows developed their respective narratives not just by airing standard episodes over the course of a television season but also by airing various scenes through other media, such as Webisodes and Podcasts on the Internet, Mobisodes and extended scenes sent via text messages to cell phones, deleted scenes and extra scenes on DVDs, as well as books, games, and various commercials and original Web sites designed to enhance a show's mythology. However, since the majority of these supplements were not available to the standard viewing audience (in the case of *Lost*'s Mobisodes, for example, thirteen one to four minute clips collectively titled *Lost: Missing Pieces* were only sent to Verizon Wireless users²⁵) this dissertation will focus on the narratives generated by the standard episodes and television movies, as these provide the most coherent and sustained treatment of each show's narrative universe.

For *24*, this includes one hundred and ninety-four episodes aired over eight seasons, as well as the TV movie titled *Redemption*. For *Lost*, this includes one hundred and twenty-one episodes aired over six seasons. For *Battlestar Galactica* this includes seventy-five episodes aired in four seasons, including a TV movie titled *Razor* (which comprises episodes fifty-four and fifty-five in the overall series and which was intended to function as the first two episodes of the fourth season) and the initial miniseries.²⁶ Before this analysis can take place, however, it is necessary to first outline the theory of narrative rhetoric (and its accompanying methodology) that will be applied to each television program; situate this theory historically; and differentiate this theory from other types of critical theories and methods of rhetorical analysis. This will be done in the next chapter.

²⁵ *Lost* producers also created several Web sites related to the show's mythological universe that no longer exist.

²⁶ *BSG* aired a television movie titled "The Plan" after the series concluded. However, this postscript, if you will, does not depict any scenes of torture and it largely consists of previous material seen during the first two seasons of *BSG*, offering no significant contribution to the debate on torture. As such, "The Plan" will not be examined.

CHAPTER 2

DRAMATIZED ARGUMENT

2.1 Introduction

As the first chapter explained, this dissertation endeavors to articulate and apply a possible theory of narrative rhetoric (TNR) to understand the following: (1) how the specific medium of serialized narrative television (as seen in three specific television programs – *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG*) functioned as an alternative forum for debate in a post-9/11 society in which the discussion of torture was actively discouraged by the presidential administration of George W. Bush and the news media; and (2) how this method of alternate debate informs and is informed by the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory. Where the previous chapter explained the post-9/11 background, establishing the observation that the Bush Administration and the news media worked to suppress debate on torture and the observation that the medium of television functions as a cultural forum, this chapter will work to outline TNR and an accompanying methodology that will be used to analyze the three television programs in the subsequent chapters. This delineation of TNR, which will be followed by an explanation of how TNR will be applied in the analyses of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG*, will involve discussing various perspectives from the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory with the goal of theoretically and historically situating TNR, differentiating TNR from other perspectives, and explaining TNR's significance.

Given the breadth and scope of each of these disciplines, the focus of this dissertation, and the practical limitations of this chapter, the discussion that follows will necessarily leave out many theories and theorists. Accordingly, while each of these disciplines contain competing ideologies, overlapping

approaches, interrelated methodologies²⁷, and explicate an array of nuanced (and oftentimes oppositional) terminology, making a clear and objective understanding of each field difficult to articulate, the discussion that follows will not attempt to resolve any disagreements or offer a comprehensive catalogue of the plethora of terms and concepts seen in each field. Rather, an attempt will be made to navigate the diverse terrain by focusing on the theoretical coordinates necessary to map out a theory of narrative rhetoric. As Lois Tyson knowingly observes: “It seems unavoidable, and part of the paradox of seeing and learning, that in order to understand some things clearly we must restrict our focus in a way that highlights certain elements and ignores others, just as the close-up camera crystallizes whatever it frames and renders the rest a blurred background” (3). Let us begin this crystallization (and blurring) by describing the range of territory that will be traversed.

In the most simplistic terms: narratology²⁸ is the study of stories, rhetoric²⁹ is the study of discourse, and critical theory³⁰ is the study of society and culture. In terms of general methodological and theoretical perspectives: narratology includes classical/structuralist, postclassical, poststructuralist, contextualist, pragmatics, linguistics, cognitivist, and many other branches; rhetoric (which is oftentimes chronicled linearly either by centuries or through standard historical periods such as ancient, medieval, renaissance, romantic, modern, and postmodern) includes classical/ancient, technical, sophistic, philosophical, neoclassical, literary, new rhetoric, and many other offshoots; and critical theory includes authorial intention, reader-response, psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, new criticism, structuralist, deconstructive, new historical, cultural, queer, postcolonial, and many other combinations and derivations. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the nexus where narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory meet is *narrative*, a term that is understood somewhat differently (and with a certain degree of disagreement) in each discipline, as will be demonstrated in the following section. Accordingly, in terms of

²⁷ Which also build on other fields, such as linguistics, communication and media studies, philosophy, and psychology.

²⁸ Established in name by Tzvetan Todorov in his 1969 book *Grammaire du “Décaméron”*.

²⁹ Established in name in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias* (written ca. 380 BC) and initially codified in Aristotle’s extensive treatise *On Rhetoric* (written ca. 350 BC).

³⁰ Also referred to as literary theory; established in name by the so-called Frankfurt School in Max Horkheimer’s 1937 essay “Traditional and Critical Theory.”

analytical methodology, the field of critical theory offers an array of tools that can also be seen as bridging the fields of narratology and rhetoric. Therefore, the remainder of the chapter will work to first understand narrative, then to understand critical methods of analyzing narrative. From these two discussions, we will be able to outline TNR. Once this is done, we will compare TNR to other critical theories to understand its difference and perhaps advantages in relation to other methods.

2.2 Narrative, Narratology, and Narrative Theory

We can begin by distinguishing between different forms of the word *narrative* to suggest, in the most simplistic and general sense, that *narrative* is a story, *narration* is the telling of a story, and *narrativity* is the ability of a story to be told. Of course, these terms are not as simplistic and generally accepted as these definitions suggest. For example, as H. Porter Abbot observes, discussions of *narrativity* have grown increasingly conflicting and diverse, generating other terms such as *narrativeness*, *narrativehood*, *narratibility*, *tellability*, *eventfulness*, and *emplotment* (“Narrativity”). Accordingly, we can differentiate between *fictional narratives* (tales, yarns, myths, legends, fables, parables, etc.), *non-fictional narratives* (accounts, anecdotes, chronicles, histories, biographies, documentaries, etc.), and between other related terminology such as story, discourse, mimesis, diegesis, analepsis, prolepsis, fabula, focalization, frame, narrator, poetics, fictionality, and various other related conceptual labels these terms generate³¹. As Gerald Prince notes, this problem of definition may stem from the difficulty inherent in defining the field of narratology. As Prince explains:

The definition of the discipline (or perhaps “undiscipline”) varies widely depending on whether one believes in “getting it all in” or getting it all out, “only connecting” or always disconnecting, always historicizing or only abstracting, theory or science, expansiveness or restraint. No real consensus has obtained and, in recent years, there has been an increasingly frequent recourse to modified and “hyphenated” expressions (structuralist narratology, postclassical narratology, postmodern narratology, socionarratology, psychonarratology) or to the adoption of a plural (as in “narratologies”). There are not formalist modulations of narratology but also dialogical and phenomenological ones; there are Aristotelian approaches to it as well as topological and deconstructive ones; there are cognitivist and constructivist variations on it, historical, sociological, ideological, and anthropological views, feminist takes, queer speculations, and corporeal explorations (372).

³¹ Such as the following variations of diegetic: extradiegetic, intradiegetic, homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, homo/extradiegetic, homo/intradiegetic, hetero/extradiegetic, and hetero/intradiegetic.

In other words, we could ask: if scholars cannot agree on a definition of the discipline, then how can they agree on a definition of what the discipline purportedly studies?

As Marie-Laure Ryan observes, in her *Cambridge Companion to Narrative* chapter titled “Toward a theory of narrative,” modern conceptions of *narrative* are numerous, existing in diverse fields (from literature to politics to medicine to cognitive science) and resulting from the so-called “narrative turn” in humanities³². As Ryan surmises: “few words have enjoyed so much use and suffered so much as abuse as *narrative* and its partial synonym, *story*” (22). Ryan examines what she calls “previous definitions of narrative” – which variously view narrative in terms of events, actions, and temporal space – to initially conclude that a definition of narrative should account for problem solving, conflict, interpersonal relations, human experience, and the temporality of existence (24). From this, Ryan outlines what she sees as three “potential domains for a definition” of narrative: discourse, story, and use – which Ryan suggests correspond “to the three components of semiotic theory: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics” (24).

Ryan’s analysis finds discord among theorists with regard to the “basic units of narrative,” “a class of related entities,” and a “lack of agreement [that results from] the unsystematic nature” of various typologies (24-26). This leads Ryan to observe that a definition of narrative should regard narrative “as the outcome of many different mental processes that operate both inside and outside stories,” and she outlines a comprehensive set of “cognitive operations”³³ that she suggests produce “the type of mental representation that we regard as a story” (28). For example, Ryan suggests that from the perspective of a spatial dimension “narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents,” whereas for the temporal dimension “[the narrative] world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations [and] the

³² The so-called “narrative turn” (in humanities, social sciences, and philosophy) began with the French Structuralists (Todorov, Barthes, Bremond, Genette, and Greimas) who, modeling on Saussure’s structural linguistics, conceived of narratology as a science. The influence of this initial foray spawned decades of interest in the study of narrative.

³³ These operations outline eight variable conditions, accounting for spatial, temporal, mental, formal and pragmatic dimensions, and eight “toolkit” conditions “for do-it-yourself definitions” (30). Ryan suggests (a) that “definition [of narrative] becomes an open series of concentric circles which spell increasingly narrow conditions and which presuppose previously stated items, as we move from the outer to the inner circles, and from the marginal cases to the prototypes” (28); and (b) that the sixteen conditions “not only [provide] criteria for determining a text’s degree of narrativity [they also suggest] a basis for semantic typology of narrative texts” (30).

transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events” (29). Accordingly, Ryan suggests that the eight conditions she delineates in the spatial, temporal, mental, and formal/pragmatic realms serve to eliminate various types of representations from “forming the focus of interest” with regard to the story. For example, Ryan suggests that “representations of abstract entities [...] static descriptions [...] enumerations of repetitive events and changes caused by natural evolution [...] and one-of-a-kind scenarios involving only natural forces and non-intelligent participants” are essentially prevented from becoming the sole support of narrative (29). Despite this extensive and detailed theoretical explication, Ryan seems to reject the very idea of defining narrative, suggesting that “asking people to decide whether or not a text is a story is one of those artificial situations in which results are produced by the act of investigation” (31).

Mieke Bal describes this act of investigation more succinctly than Prince (but just as insightfully) as an “ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events, cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story,’” (3). Bal similarly acknowledges a difficulty in clearly defining narrative; not just because the field of study is vast, but because, as Ryan noticed, the subject itself is difficult to pinpoint. As Bal writes:

Although everyone has a general idea of what narrative texts are, it is certainly not always easy to decide whether or not a given text should be considered narrative, partly or wholly. This is not a problem at all; delimitation is not the point of a theory geared towards facilitating analysis. Instead, if characteristics can be defined, if only tentatively, these characteristics can serve as the point of departure for the next phase: a description of the way in which each narrative is constructed. Once this is accomplished we have a description of a *narrative system* (3).

Bal’s goal, then, is to approach the study of narrative through the logic of using “intellectual tools” (based on the defined characteristics) to examine the infinite variations of narrative that exist within the narrative system. These tools are organized into the following categories of text, story, and fabula, which Bal utilizes to build a framework for narrative analysis. As Bal explains:

A *text* is a finite, structured whole composed of signs [...] a *narrative text* is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee (‘tells’ the reader) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or combination thereof. A *story* is the content of that text, and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and ‘coloring’ of a fibula; the fabula is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (5).

For Bal, the *text category* includes the elements of words, signs, narrators, and levels of narration; the *story category* includes sequential ordering, rhythm, frequency, characters, space, focalization, and visual stories;

and the *fabula category* includes events, actors, time, and location. In sum, these various modern conceptions of narrative can be seen as alternately viewing narrative as encompassing the whole of communication, as being the essential means of communication, as representing thought and/or reality, and as representing or reinforcing ideology, making the term *narrative* (or *narratology*) no easier to define. However, since the goal of this chapter (and this dissertation) is not to offer *the* textbook definition of narrative, but rather to understand narrative as a form of argument, let us now consider how Aristotle, Quintilian, Burke, and Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca view narrative as it relates to rhetoric.

As various scholars note³⁴, for most ancient rhetoricians narrative (*diegesis* in Greek; *narratio* in Latin) refers to the part of an oration that simply states the facts. For the sophists, an argument has four parts (introduction, narration, proof, conclusion) for Cicero, an argument as six parts (exordium, narrative, partition, confirmation, refutation, peroration) and in both of these organizations narrative serves the purpose of accounting for the facts of the situation. On the other hand, close readings of Aristotle and Quintilian suggest that narrative could be seen as having a more important function of actually demonstrating the argument. For example, let us consider the following passage from Aristotle's treatise *On Rhetoric*:

The argument is composed partly from what is nonartistic, since the speaker is in no way the cause of the [narrated] actions, and partly from art, which is a matter of *showing* either that the action took place, if it seems unbelievable, or that it was of a certain kind or important or all these things. For this reason, sometimes everything should not be narrated continuously, because this kind of *demonstration* is hard to remember. From some actions a man is shown to be brave, from others wise or just. A speech so arranged is simpler; the other approach is intricate and not plain (269, emphasis added).

As George A. Kennedy explains, the "other approach" that Aristotle mentions refers to "grouping the narrative of the subject's life into a single section, which the audience is expected to remember later as moral qualities are discussed" (269). On the surface, it seems as if Aristotle wants to place a focus on clarity and simplicity, suggesting that the telling of a continuous narrative would be difficult both for the orator and the audience to remember, that it is simply a better technique to recount events in easily digestible units. Aristotle's advice is simply practical; the narration is only important insofar as it is able to

³⁴ See Murphy (2003), Katula (2003), Ochs (2003), Hill (2003), Kennedy (1999), and Conley (1990).

memorably recount the argument. However, as I read this passage, it seems to open the door for narrative to function as an argument and in terms of the serialized narratives this dissertation will examine, it also helps establish the idea that a narrated argument works best in pieces.

As Aristotle states, the artistic aspect of narrative is found in the showing and demonstration of an argument. This seems to recognize the significance of illustrating an argument in terms of story, if you will, rather than simply recounting a list of sequential events. Put simply: showing is better than telling. Or, showing while telling is better than just telling; the distinction being that the telling is the argument and the showing is the illustration and demonstration of the argument, or, if you will, the dramatization of the argument. What is important to note is that, in terms of persuasion and effectiveness of rhetoric, an argument is better when it is dramatized. Furthermore, it also seems to be of some importance for Aristotle that the argument be memorable. While this might be practical, the practicality can be seen to refer not just to keeping the facts straight but also to making the argument more persuasive, not just through drama but through repeated drama. In other words, by breaking down the narrative into small units that correspond to the proofs, the argument becomes multilayered and sustained. Or, to put it another way, the argument becomes serialized, and, I would argue, even more effective than a single narrative. Let us now consider Quintilian's conception of narrative to further illustrate this point.

As John D. O'Banion observes, for Quintilian, the *narratio* is more than a just an accounting of something, it is the illustration of the argument, the very opportunity for the speaker to persuade his audience. As Quintilian states in Book IV, Chapter 2 of his *Institutio Oratoria*: "A powerful effect may be created if to the actual facts of the case we add a plausible picture of what occurred, such as will make our audience feel as if they were actual eyewitnesses of the scene" (Thayer 4.2.123). Despite the obvious appeal to emotion, it is interesting to note that Quintilian essentially suggests that the argument be dramatized, put into story through the creation of a "plausible picture." Quintilian amplifies this, adding that:

It is therefore specially important in this part of our speech to avoid anything suggestive of artful design, for the judge is never more on his guard than at this stage. Nothing must seem fictitious, [nor] betray anxiety; everything must seem to spring from the case itself rather than the art of the orator. But our modern orators cannot endure this and imagine that their art is wasted unless it

obtrudes itself, whereas as a matter of fact the moment it is detected it ceases to be art. We are the slaves of applause and think it the goal of all our effort. And so we betray the judges what we wish to display to the bystanders (Thayer 4.2.126-127).

What Quintilian seems to be saying is that the drama does not need to be embellished; rather it needs to be a true representation of the events. Nevertheless, the point is that Quintilian recognizes that in narration (in the dramatization of the argument) lies the power to persuade. O'Banion explains this by distinguishing between Quintilian's usages of two terms: *expositio* and *narrare*.

As O'Banion states, "*expositio* was the case summarized, reduced to its parts and its implications; *narratio* was the case enacted, embodied, the parts brought to life," adding that "*narratio* was the case in narrative form, its meaning implied; *expositio* was the meaning, the narrative deemphasized" (350). In other words, for Quintilian, it is the narration that has the power to move an audience and this power does not just embody the argument, it embodies the classical concepts of *logos*, through the "plausible picture" established by the narration; *pathos*, through the stirring of emotions by the narration; and *ethos*, through the authority of the speaker and through the evidence of wisdom³⁵ in the narration, which, as O'Banion suggests, is "the product of a dialectical mind capable of both narration and logic" (350). So, for Quintilian and Aristotle, what is paramount is that narrative can be seen to function as an argument. Through a dramatic and, for Aristotle, repeated, presentation, narrative could be thought of as *dramatized argument*. Let us now consider Burke and Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca to understand how their perspectives help inform this understanding of narrative.

Burke did not define the term narration; however, he does offer definitions of dramatism, rhetoric, and identity that can be seen as informing a conception of narrative. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke outlines his so-called *dramatistic pentad* – act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose – to describe a "dramatic" philosophy that considers human communication as a form of action. As Burke states: "We sought to formulate the basic stratagems which people employ, in endless variations, and consciously or unconsciously, for the outwitting or cajoling of one another" (xvii). This statement precedes Burke's definition of rhetoric which he offers in his subsequent book, *A Rhetoric of Motives* as follows: "The use of

³⁵ On the part of the narrator.

words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents” (41) and “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (43). Both of these definitions along with the statement from *Grammar* suggest that Burke is concerned with understanding why and how people persuade one another. However, it is interesting to note that Burke, in attempting to persuade or at least illustrate his point to his readers, offers the following explanation of both his *pentad* and his conception of motives in *Grammar*:

Imagine that one were to manipulate the terms, for the imputing of motives, in such a case as this: The hero (agent) with the help of a friend (co-agent) outwits the villain (counter-agent) by using a file (agency) that enables him to break his bonds (act) in order to escape (purpose) from the room where he has been confined (scene) (xx).

Burke goes on to analyze this scenario in terms of motivation, which could be located in any aspect of the pentad. What is paramount, however, is that Burke employed a narrative to make his argument; he shows while he tells and the result is a clearer communication and understanding of his theory, as one can easily see how each aspect of the pentad can work in terms of motivation toward a unifying message, which, in the case of Burke’s example, is a message of freedom. From this, we could suggest an interpretation (or reformulation) of Burke’s aforementioned definitions to read: *the dramatization of words by human agents to outwit or cajole one another, form attitudes, induce actions, or induce cooperation*. To examine this further, consider the following passage from Burke’s *Rhetoric* concerning his conception of identification:

As for the relation between “identification” and “persuasion”: we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of *stylistic identifications*; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker’s interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So, there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification (“consubstantiality”) and communication (the nature of rhetoric as “addressed”). But, in given instances, one or another of these elements may serve best for extending a line of analysis in some particular direction (46, emphasis added).

Certainly, the idea of tailoring a message to a particular audience can be traced back to Cicero, in designing speech to persuade; Aristotle, as part of the process of finding the available means to persuade; and even the teachings of the Sophists and their conception of rhetoric, which John Poulakos defines as “the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible” (36). However, we could understand identification as another means of dramatizing argument

and rephrase this definition to read: *a speaker persuades an audience by the use of dramatized words*. The speaker and audience are consubstantial, in other words, because they identify with one another but also because they equally participate in the act (the drama) of persuasion or, in the dramatized argument.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca mirror Burke's understanding of the audience's role in the narrative (rhetorical) act, founding their influential treatise, *The New Rhetoric*, on the premise that "since argumentation aims at securing the adherence of those to whom it is addressed, it is, in its entirety, relative to the audience to be influenced" (19). As Thomas M. Conley explains, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca define argumentation as "the discursive means by which an audience is led to adhere to a given thesis, or by which its adherence is reinforced" (297). While the similarity to Burke is obvious, what is paramount is that, as I read Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the "discursive means" employed by the speaker could be narrative. For example, let us consider a discussion from Chapter 2 of *The New Rhetoric* regarding "The Choice of Data and Their Adaptation for Argumentative Purposes."

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca begin by observing that a specific set of data that is "liable to have an effect" is generated by each audience and it is the speaker's task to decide which data to utilize for persuasion, adding that traditional rhetoric offers no advice on this choice and suggesting that the elements that are chosen become endowed with *presence*, which they claim "acts directly on our sensibility" (115 – 116). As they explain:

The thing that is present to the consciousness assumes thus an importance that the theory and practice of argumentation must take into consideration. [...] Accordingly, one of the preoccupations of a speaker is to make present, by verbal magic alone, what is actually absent but what he considers important to his argument or, by making them more present, to enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious (117).

This view clearly resembles Quintilian's observation that a speaker needs to make an audience "feel as if they were actual eyewitnesses of the scene" (Thayer 4.2.123). Similarly, as with Burke's illustration of dramatism, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca illustrate their concept of presence and their advice regarding the selection of data by citing a "lovely Chinese story": "A king sees an ox on its way to sacrifice. He is moved to pity for it and orders that a sheep be used in its place. He confesses he did so because he could *see* the ox, but not the sheep" (116, emphasis added). As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca conclude:

“presence, at first a psychological phenomenon, becomes an essential element in argumentation” (117) and, I would add, the means by which *presence* is made known is *narrative*.

Taken together, Aristotle’s and Quintilian’s observations on showing while telling, Aristotle’s observations regarding how narrative should be presented, Burke’s observations on *dramatism* and *identification*, and Perelman’s and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s observation on *presence* all serve to inform one another, suggesting, for the purposes of this dissertation, that narrative is perhaps the most important tool of rhetoric, the most effective means of argument, and the most significant cause of persuasion. In light of the discussion thus far, we can suggest that narrative be defined as *dramatized argument*, a definition that effectively summarizes and synthesizes the preceding theoretical discussions.

Accordingly, this definition allows us to explore the theories of four contemporary scholars – Walter Fisher and his theory of the *narrative paradigm*; James Phelan and his *rhetorical theory of narrative*; Michael Kearns and his theory of *rhetorical narratology*; and Mark Currie and his *postmodern narrative theory*. While not all of these scholars are as well-known or as influential as others that have been discussed thus far³⁶, the collective work of Fisher, Phelan, Kearns, and Currie nevertheless attempts to bridge the fields of narrative and rhetoric through different approaches that echo and develop the work that has been previously discussed. As such, the methods and philosophies outlined by these theorists ultimately serve to inform, delineate, and situate the theory of narrative rhetoric this dissertation seeks to propose.

2.3 Narrative Rhetoric

It is interesting to note that in *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz and originally published in 2005) no mention of Walter Fisher or his *narrative paradigm* is made. The same can be said of Mieke Bal’s *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (originally published in 1985, with a second edition in 1997 and a third edition in 2009) and

³⁶ As will be briefly discussed in the following section, James Phelan is clearly the most well known and influential of these four scholars, as he has been extensively published as an author and as an editor of various books and articles in the field of narratology.

Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling (edited by Marie-Laure Ryan and published in 2004), as well as *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (edited by David Herman and first published in 2007). While these four books do not comprise the canon of narrative theory³⁷, they do contain and reflect some of the most recent scholarship on narrative theory performed by many of the leading scholars in the field. This observation is not meant to disparage the authors, editors, and contributors of these books, nor is it meant to elevate Walter Fisher to some sort of cult status. Rather, it is simply curious that Fisher's *narrative paradigm*³⁸ has not been widely received, given that its philosophy presents a conception of narrative that could be seen as being part of the foundation from which many theories of narrative (and perhaps the very discipline of narratology/narratologies) are built – a point which will hopefully be demonstrated below. Therefore, let us examine Walter Fisher's *narrative paradigm* in detail.

Walter Fisher's *narrative paradigm* views people as *homo narrans*, as storytellers who apprehend the world through stories and who communicate through stories. For Fisher, all communication is narrative and all narrative is communication. Rejecting a traditional *rational paradigm* that views people as rational beings who exist and negotiate life through rational means, Fisher suggests a paradigm based on the supposition that people are narrative beings who exist and negotiate life through stories. Fisher's paradigm, then, is one of *narrative rationality* (or rhetorical logic) that is based on people being able to inherently interpret and construct the probability (or coherence) and *fidelity of stories* for the purposes of communication by making decisions based on what Fisher calls "good reasons." These decisions are not necessarily made from a standpoint of logic but from a standpoint of experience and familiarity – drawn from one's own life and from one's knowledge of history, culture, and the characters or character types involved in the story – and from one's ability to translate life experience into story. As Fisher explains:

Probability, whether a story "hangs together," is assessed in three ways: by its *argumentative* or *structural coherence*; by its *material coherence*, that is by comparing and contrasting stories told in other discourses (a story may be internally consistent, but important facts may be omitted, counterarguments ignored, and relevant issues overlooked); and by *characterological coherence*. [...] Fidelity, the truthfulness of a story, is assessed by applying what I call "the logic of good reasons" [...] a logic formed by combining the means of analyzing and evaluating arguments

³⁷ Though it could be argued that they at least represent an "abstract" of the canon.

³⁸ Originally introduced by Fisher in various articles published in 1984 and 1985 and codified in his book *Human Communication As Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* in 1987.

offered by such writers as Toulmin, Perelman, and Ehninger and Brockriede with critical questions that can locate and weigh values. These are questions about *fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and transcendental issues*. (47-48)

For Fisher, a story's characters reflect a community's (and/or reader's) values and the believability and reliability of a story's characters as both narrators and actors figures prominently into Fisher's rhetorical logic. As such, the coherence to or contradiction of a given character's "actional tendencies" (what the character would or would not do in a given situation) is paramount for the audience to be able to engage in a story's predictability and message – this is not unlike Burke's understanding of identification and consubstantiality or Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory³⁹. As Fisher reasons:

Without this kind of predictability, there is no trust, no community, no rational human order. Applying this consideration of coherence is an inquiry into motivation. Its importance in deciding whether to accept a message cannot be overestimated. Determining a character's motives is prerequisite to trust, and trust is the foundation of belief (47).

Obvious criticism to Fisher's paradigm recognizes a problem of subjectivity with regard to his rhetorical logic (trust and acceptance will differ from reader to reader) as well as a lack of objective standard from which to assess a narrative's probability or fidelity. It is also difficult to surrender an appeal to traditional rationality. Indeed, academic rigor is not typically based on "good reasons" formulated out of an inherent instinct. However, a close reading of Fisher indicates that he is aware of these criticisms. As he argues:

The difficulty has been that these tendencies place that which is not *formally* logical or which is not characterized by *expertise* within a somehow subhuman framework of behavior. I contend that we are not irrational in all of our nonformal, lay functions [...] all instances of human communication are imbued with logos and mythos, are constitutive of truth and knowledge, and are rational (20).

Fisher's understanding of narrative and his formulation of the *narrative paradigm* are simply meant to enhance and understanding of human communication – that is Fisher's ultimate goal. Let us now consider his method.

Fisher contends that dramatic and literary works argue through the mode of suggestion: "Through the revelations of characters and situations that represent different value orientations in conflict with each

³⁹ Rosenblatt, a reader-response theorist, suggests that readers essentially compose their own "poem" as they read a text and that this poem is made when readers process a text along a continuum of two modes: an efferent mode in which readers are motivated to understand the text and an aesthetic mode in which readers respond to the text through their own experiences. Thus, the experience of reading is a transaction between the reader and the text.

other and/or with the environment, the reader or auditor is induced to a felt-belief, a sense of the message that the work is advancing” (“Human Communication” 161). Fisher explains that beliefs are initially aesthetic and emotional responses based on an immediate reaction with a fictional world; they are not based “on deliberate thought or reasoned analysis” (“Human Communication” 161). However, Fisher suggests that “reasoned justification and critical interpretation” eventually stem from the initial emotional beliefs through the presence of “aesthetic proofs,” which Fisher contends are “representations of reality that fall somewhere between analogies and examples” (“Human Communication” 162). Interaction with these aesthetic proofs rests on the reader being able to identify with the “fictive world-representations,” which, as Fisher explains, allow readers to “experience the truthfulness of the work’s message, the way the message impinges on our understanding of ourselves or some part of the world” (“Human Communication” 162). Fisher acknowledges that since the narrative argument proceeds through suggestion, a degree of subjectivity and variability resides in the process of interpretation. Nevertheless, Fisher notes that any “legitimate” interpretation “must be based on aesthetic experiences that are at least recognizable to others,” echoing the justification generally employed by reader-response criticism (“Human Communication” 163). From this, Fisher explains a four-step method for analyzing argument in drama and literature. To paraphrase Fisher: (1) determine the message fostered by the work; (2) decide whether the message is justified; (3) note the outcomes of the narrative and determine whose values seem most powerful; and (4) decide the fidelity of the narrative’s message in relation to the real world (“Human Communication” 175). Again, while this method is largely subjective, as it depends upon an individual reader’s emotional responses to a given narrative, it nevertheless provides a reasonable, if perhaps incomplete, framework for analysis. While Fisher’s general observations reinforce and perhaps develop the observations made by Aristotle, Quintilian, Burke, Perleman, and Olbrechts-Tyteca, what is missing, I would argue, is a better roadmap for tracking the aesthetic proofs. Therefore, let us now consider James Phelan’s *Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*⁴⁰ to see how Phelan perhaps fills in the missing pieces. While Phelan’s theory is extensive, we will focus on one of the most relevant aspects: namely, narrative progression.

⁴⁰ As James Phelan recounts, his *Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* is the product of nearly four decades of

Phelan outlines twelve elements of narrative progression in *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*, which he suggests are “key components of our experience of a narrative” (15). While this suggests a degree of subjectivity, Phelan contends the twelve elements are nevertheless “governed by the overarching purpose(s) of that narrative” (15). Phelan groups his twelve elements into three categories – beginning, middle, and end – with each category containing four corresponding elements. As Phelan explains, the beginning of a narrative does not refer to the text’s beginning; rather it refers to the beginning of the narrative as experienced by the reader. For Phelan, the significance of the beginning regards not the initiation of action, but rather the initiation of influence. As Phelan states:

Elements of exposition matter because they influence our understanding of the narrative world, which in turn influences our understanding of the meaning and consequences of the action, including our initial generic identification of the narrative and the expectations that follow from that identification (16).

While this observation develops Fisher’s observations of coherence and fidelity and Burke’s observation of identification, it also (and perhaps more importantly) provides a foundation for conceiving of narrative as rhetoric, especially as regards the aspect of persuasion.

As regards the four elements comprising the beginning’s narrative progression, Phelan suggests that the first two (exposition and launch) focus on “aboutness” while the second two (initiation and entrance) focus on activity. As Phelan explains:

Exposition: everything, including the front matter, that provides information about the narrative, the characters, the setting, and events of the narrative.

Launch: the revelation of the first set of global instabilities or tensions in the narrative. This moment in the narrative marks the boundary between the beginning and the middle.

Initiation: the initial rhetorical transactions among implied author and narrator, on the one hand, and flesh-and-blood and authorial audience on the other.

Entrance: the flesh-and-blood reader’s multileveled – cognitive, emotive, ethical – movement from outside the text to a specific location in the authorial audience at the end of the launch (17 – 19).

What is significant about these four elements is not just how they provide insight with regard to how a reader engages a text, but how they help delineate the function of the narrative itself and especially the

work, developed through the writing of five books and various articles, a body of work that cannot be fully explained in this section.

functions of the traditional beginnings, middles, and ends. As regards the function of the beginning, it is important to note that Phelan introduces what he calls a configuration hypothesis during his explanation of entrance. For Phelan, the entrance involves interpretive, ethical, and aesthetic judgments on the part of readers and, as Phelan suggests, “these judgments influence what is arguably the most important element of the entrance: the authorial audience’s hypothesis, implicit or explicit, about the direction and purpose of the whole narrative” (19).

This *hypothesis of configuration* is developed as the narrative progresses through the middle, and through the next four elements of exposition, voyage, interaction, and intermediate configuration. As Phelan explains:

Exposition: again, information relevant to the narrative (e.g., chapter titles), setting, characters, and events.

Voyage: the development of the global instabilities and/or tensions.

Interaction: the ongoing communicative exchanges between implied author, narrator, and audience.

Intermediate configuration: the evolving responses of the authorial audience to the overall development of the narrative (19 – 20).

As is evident, this stage of the narrative marks a development of the initial four elements. For Phelan, the most important of these seem to be the interaction and intermediate configuration progressions. Phelan maintains that the exchanges that occur during the interaction progression “have significant effects on our developing responses” (20). Likewise, Phelan suggests that it is during the intermediate configuration progression that “our initial hypothesis about the configuration of the whole will become more fully developed, though that development may either largely confirm or substantially revise the hypothesis formed at the entrance” (20).

While the configuration hypothesis can be developed further in the final stage of the narrative’s overall progression, the elements of the ending stage (exposition/closure, arrival, farewell, and completion) focus more on closure. As Phelan explains:

Exposition/Closure: when this information about the narrative, characters, or action includes a signal that the narrative is coming to an end, regardless of the state of the instabilities and tensions, it becomes a device of closure.

Arrival: the resolution, in whole or in part, of the global instabilities and tensions.

Farewell: the concluding exchanges among implied author, narrator, and audiences. The farewell may or may not involve a direct address to the narratee, but the final exchanges always have the potential to affect the audience's response to the whole narrative.

Completion: the conclusion of the reader's evolving responses to the whole narrative (20 – 21).

As Phelan surmises, the twelve elements “provide a way to track textual and readerly dynamics, but they do not offer any specific predictions about the specific trajectory of any individual narrative progression or set any strong constraints on what any one beginning, middle, or ending will do” (21). What is most interesting to note is how Phelan's twelve elements chart narrative progression through multiple layers. While all twelve elements can progress in sequential order (indeed, Phelan numbers them 1 through 12) they can also progress on four other levels. Applying my own terminology, I would describe these four levels as: an expository plane (exposition-exposition-exposition/closure); a movement plane (launch-voyage-arrival); an active plane (initiation-interaction-farewell); and a configuration plane (entrance-intermediate configuration-completion). In other words, the progression of a narrative is fluid and multi-layered, occurring through the intersecting and intermingling of various aspects as the reader and the story engage one another. Indeed, Phelan's observation on narrative progression is perhaps the most comprehensive with regard to helping to understand how narrative functions as dramatized argument. From this, we can draw two important conclusion that will serve to inform TNR: the first is that Phelan's concept of narrative progression helps develop a method of analysis by expanding and focusing Fisher's method; the second regards Phelan's hypothesis of configuration, which offers insight into the aspect of showing versus telling, as well as on the rhetorical effect/affect of the text. Let us examine this further through Michael Kearns' theory of rhetorical narratology.

Kearns examines several theoretical concepts from various scholars in his attempt to construct and explicate his theory of rhetorical narratology. Let us consider the most salient – *relevance*, *display*, *narrative progression*, *coding*, and *focalization* – which, in light of the previous discussions, will appear somewhat familiar, the difference residing in Kearns' choice of terminology and nuance of understanding. Kearns explains *relevance* as a principle – “maximum cognitive effect with minimum effort” (22) – that holds true for *display texts*. Building on Mary Louise Pratt's conception of display texts, Kearns understands a display text as a text that reports and displays information, inviting contemplation,

evaluation, and response – emphasizing that a display text is purposeful and that an audience can choose to accept or reject a display text’s purpose, as well as the observation that a display text “includes not only a what but a how: how to take the text” (18). Likewise, Kearns’ understanding of *narrative progression*⁴¹ refers “not just to the *point* of the narrative but how the real-time experiencing of the narrative leads to that point” (59). For Kearns, who does not suggest a detailed charting of progression like Phelan, a narrative progression is simply understood as “a rhetorical, not a logical, necessity in a narrative,” that “involves readers in the “what next?” game: the main events are known, but the detailed path from one to another is not” (60). This progression is developed by Kearns’ understanding of *coding* and *focalization*.

The concept of *coding* (which Kearns recognizes has been characterized by other scholars⁴² as schema, script, Gestalt, and frame) refers “to the patterns by which people make sense of and organize their experiences, patterns that are usually applied without conscious thought but that can be brought to one’s attention by something unexpected” (65). For Kearns, codes are entirely subjective and unpredictable from the perspective of a reader and cannot be seen as being forced on a reader by a text. However, the use of focalization is, by nature, forced on the reader. The concept of focalization⁴³, for Kearns, refers to voices through which a narrative is transmitted.⁴⁴ As Kearns explains: “to *focalize* a narrative is to *limit* in some way the perspective available to the reader, but the non-focalized narrative conveys the impression that there are no limits on what the narrator is able to say” (109). With regard to non-focalized narratives, Kearns suggests that the term free focalization (which Kearns borrows from William Nelles) “better conveys the rhetorical effect of such [non-]focalization” (109) – an effect that Kearns takes to mean that there are no overt (marked) limitations on the narrator’s perspective. While distinctions regarding types of focalization are indeed paramount to the analysis of a literary narrative, what is paramount and most

⁴¹ This understanding borrows the concept of narrative trajectory from Michael Toolan and builds on Phelan’s understanding of progression, which includes the concepts of instability and tension.

⁴² Most notably Roland Barthes, Robert Scholes, and James Phelan.

⁴³ Which, it should be noted, is a key concept in narratology, one that perhaps merits extensive discussion, though given the limitations of space, one that is not practical to engage in.

⁴⁴ The concept of voices is paramount to Kearns’ work, especially as regards the focalization of voices. Building on work done by Seymour Chatman and Gerard Genette, Kearns outlines three main types of focalizations: nonfocalized, internally focalized, and externally focalized. Accordingly, Kearns also graphs locations where narrating can occur: homodiegetic and heterodiegetic along one axis; extradiegetic and intradiegetic along another.

relevant to our discussion of TNR is the fact that, like Phelan, Kearns recognizes that a narrative's progression is multi-layered. While Phelan's and Kearns' explanations are different – for Phelan there are twelve elements interacting along five different progressive planes; for Kearns the progression involves the interplay of relevance, display, coding, and focalization – their results nevertheless reinforce the concept of dramatized argument. From this, let us now consider Mark Currie's work regarding how “point of view” and “identity” relate to this conception.

Currie formulates his *postmodern narrative theory* through an exploration of social and cultural functions of narrative to find correlations between fictional and real-world narratives. One of his main arguments deals with the concept of *identity*, which contends that one's personal identity is not innate, it is either relational (created and explained by the differences one has in relation to others) or it is narrational (existing only as narrative). As Currie explains:

By this I mean two things: that the only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterize us and organize them according to the formal principles of narrative – to externalize ourselves as if talking to someone else, and for the purposes of self-representation; but also that we learn how to self-narrate from the outside, from other stories, and particularly through the process of identification with other characters. This gives narration at large the potential to teach us how to conceive of ourselves, what to make of our inner life and how to organize it (17).

Expanding on Burke's conception of identity, Currie observes that people often make reference to fictional characters as if the fictional characters were real people. Building on Wayne Booth's seminal work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Currie seeks to understand the concept of intimacy that develops between readers and fictional characters by asking: “How can techniques in narrative point of view control a reader's sympathy for characters?” Currie begins with two propositions which he claims “apply to narrative and life” (19). The first suggests that we are more likely to sympathize with people when we have a lot of information about their inner lives, motivations, fears, etc.; the second posits that we sympathize with people when we see other people who do not share our access to their inner lives judging them harshly or incorrectly.

Currie also recognizes that in addition to information, sympathy is generated by the “careful control of the flow of information, of where it comes from and how it is presented, which controls a reader's judgment” (20). For Currie, the concept of *distance* plays an integral part in this persuasive nature

of fictional narratives. Citing Booth, Currie understands distance as the space⁴⁵ that exists between the narrating voice and the reader in terms of narrative commentary – whether or not the narrating voice renders judgment on the narrative action or remains a neutral observer, or whether a reader (especially a critic) renders judgment or remains a neutral observer. From this, Currie discusses the notion of *positionality*. As Currie observes:

The mobility of the narrator between distance and closeness effectively determines the position from which the reader views fictional events, creating sympathetic bonds between reader and particular characters by making that position one of intimacy and mental access (27-28).

Taking all of this into account, Currie suggests an ideological function of narrative, “one that repeats and confirms the possibilities of identification that have already constituted our subjectivities” (32). For Currie, narrative does not just reflect life it manufactures it, at least in the sense that narrative (through point of view, identification, sympathy, distance, and positioning) creates individual identity or an ideological subject. Consequently, this supports Currie’s overall theoretical goal (the main purpose of his postmodern narrative theory) of showing how fictional narratives and non-fictional narratives are intricately linked, if not inseparable.

To summarize the rhetorical/narratological landscape thus far we can draw the following conclusions: (1) narrative as dramatized argument is not just a form of human communication and message transmission, it is also perhaps a means by which individual (and collective) identity is constructed and a force by which reality is shaped; and (2) the impact of narrative occurs through the working of various concepts (alone and in combination) such as identification, fidelity, coherence, probability, reliability, exposition, launch, initiation, entrance, configuration, voyage, interaction, closure, arrival, farewell, completion, display, relevance, voice, coding, focalization, distance, sympathy, and positionality. In light of the discussion on narrative contained in the first half of this chapter, narrative as dramatized argument allows us to clearly describe the *what*, if you will, of TNR. In light of the discussion on rhetoric and narrative contained in the second half of this chapter, we can now offer a summation of the *how* of TNR.

⁴⁵ A space that contains degrees of distance and closeness.

2.4 The Theory of Narrative Rhetoric

Fisher, Phelan, and Kearns each observe the necessity to trace a narrative's message/argument. Fisher does this by following aesthetic proofs; Phelan does this by tracking the continuously changing configuration that exists in the interaction between the narrative and the reader; and Kearns does this by noting the coded and focalized patterns. While Fisher does not use the term "narrative progression" his approach is essentially the same (in terms of approach) as Phelan and Kearns. Currie, on the other hand, does not outline a method of tracking a narrative's progression. However, Currie's observations regarding identity reinforce, if not amplify, the observation by Fisher, Phelan, and Kearns. Accordingly, given Currie's discussion on distance and positionality, we could suggest that Currie might support a method of tracking narrative progression, one that examines the progression from the standpoint of space and interaction. Indeed, it seems clear that any analytical method derived from these perspectives would need to account for a narrative's message and a narrative's progression. However, in terms of application I would suggest that such a method would be impractical if it endeavored to directly account for the aspects of intention and response. As this chapter has demonstrated, the audience plays a critical role in the process of persuasion. However, as various discussions have noted, persuasion depends largely on choice – for the author, through the decisions made regarding the presentation of information; and for the reader, through the decisions made regarding how the presentation of information is received. In other words, there are too many variables to account for in one theory. At best, through an analysis of a narrative's message and a narrative's progression we can suggest a possible intention and outline a range of acceptable responses, but these could not be definitive. Therefore, an analytical method would necessarily focus, to paraphrase the new critics, on the narrative itself, on its coherence, configuration, and coding. This allows a reasonable message to be determined and, by extension, probable conclusions to be drawn regarding the intended purpose of the message as well as the effect/affect of the message. So, based on the given premise that a narrative's *why* is *dramatized argument*, we can offer the following analytical method for understanding the *how*: *determine narrative message through narrative progression and narrative function.*

This approach essentially combines Fisher’s four steps and Phelan’s twelve elements into one task. However, the task is not as simple as it seems. Proceeding from the philosophy that every narrative is unique, the method of TNR builds in a range of flexibility for analysis by allowing an array of techniques to be utilized in order to analyze narrative progression and narrative function in terms of introduction, development, and resolution. In other words, the tools one would employ will depend on what tools seem the most relevant to the narrative at hand. These could include Fisher’s concerns regarding justification, values, coherence, and fidelity; Phelan’s concerns regarding exposition, launch, initiation, entrance, voyage, interaction, configuration, closure, arrival, farewell, completion; Kearns concerns regarding display, relevance, function, coding, and focalization; or Currie’s concerns regarding identity, relational and narrational existence, sympathy, distance, space, and positionality; as well as any other concern such as the various approaches discussed in the first half of this chapter. This is not meant to straddle any fence. Rather, it is meant to provide a realistic (and perhaps universal⁴⁶) technique for analyzing narrative as argument, one that is flexible enough to be applied to just about any narrative, from Aesop’s *Fables* to Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* to Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy to the seven novels of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series to the twenty seasons of *Law and Order*. What matters most is that the progression and function – from introduction to development to resolution – are charted and that from this mapping an argument is discerned. Now that the method of TNR has been explained, let us briefly discuss the actual theory.

The theory of narrative rhetoric this dissertation proposes is based on the following premises: (1) that narrative is defined as dramatized argument; (2) that a narrative’s argument(s) or its message(s) can be analyzed through an examination of narrative progression and narrative function; and (3) that narrative progression and narrative function can be analyzed through an array of techniques from the fields of rhetoric, narratology, and critical theory designed to track the introduction, development, and resolution of an argument. As Fisher states, “It is not original to say that literary and dramatic works “argue”” (“Human Communication” 177). Accordingly, this dissertation does not pretend to introduce the theory of narrative

⁴⁶ Or at least broadly applicable.

rhetoric as something new. Rather, the theory of narrative rhetoric is offered as a practical and hopefully useful method of analyzing how literary and dramatic works argue, especially in specific contexts. Indeed, the combined efforts of Fisher, Phelan, Kearns, and Currie (which span four decades of scholarship focused on narrative and rhetoric) demonstrate that treating narrative as rhetoric may not be new, but for the fields of rhetoric and narrative, it is still an emerging endeavor. Hopefully, the theory of narrative rhetoric offered in this dissertation will contribute to the discussion and development of whatever label we choose to give this budding field: rhetorical narratology, rhetorical theory of narrative, postmodern narrative theory, the narrative paradigm, or narrative rhetoric. To understand TNR's contribution more fully, let us briefly demonstrate its methodology through a comparison to other critical theories, as illustrated in Appendix A. This will serve to distinguish TNR, highlighting TNR's significance and usefulness with regard to the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory.

As Appendix A shows, TNR's text-centered focus on examining how argument is dramatized resembles other text-centered critical approaches, not just because the text is privileged over the author and the reader but, more importantly, because these approaches attempt to analyze the components and/or patterns seen in a text in order to draw meaningful conclusions about the text. For example, cultural criticism looks for culturally influenced (and culturally influential) clues, deconstruction examines textual contradictions, feminist criticism illuminates patriarchal evidence, lesbian-gay-queer criticism reveals non-heterosexual themes, Marxist criticism uncovers socioeconomic ideologies, new criticism pieces together a unified theme, psychoanalysis brings to bare human motivation, and structuralism unveils hidden systems. With regard to author-centered and reader-centered approaches, TNR also serves to inform how patterns operate in an author's intention or a reader's response. In other words, the difference in the conclusions reached through TNR resides in TNR's ability to inform other critical theories. TNR can operate as a stand-alone theory employed to investigate narrative from the perspective of argument. However, TNR can also serve as a complement or companion theory to other critical theories. Through TNR – through an analysis of dramatized argument – the answers to the questions posed by authorial, cultural, deconstructive, feminist, lesbian-gay-queer, Marxist, new critical, new historical, psychoanalytic, reader-response, and

structuralist theories become more meaningful, as TNR helps reveal the *how* in each theoretical perspective. In other words, this dissertation philosophically and theoretically suggests that a narrative is designed to communicate, performs cultural work, contains contradictions, represents patriarchal norms, represents non-heterosexual themes, embodies socioeconomic ideologies, contains organic unity, participates in the interpretation of history, represents human desire, transacts with readers, and operates through an underlying system through TNR – through the dramatized pattern(s) contained in and revealed by a narrative’s progression and function. Let us now briefly explain how TNR will be applied to the television programs of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG*.

As was discussed above, the method of TNR treats narrative as dramatized argument and suggests that this argument be analyzed by determining a narrative message by examining a narrative’s progression and function by tracking an argument’s introduction, development, and resolution of the argument. Therefore, given the goals of this dissertation and given the serialized nature of each program, the examination of each program will analyze each program as a meta-narrative, treating each season as part of a whole, a part that performs one of three functions with regard to the meta-narrative’s progression: *exposition*, in which the foundation for the debate on torture is laid through the introduction of characters and themes; *development*, in which the debate on torture is developed; and *conclusion*, in which the debate on torture is summarized. These examinations, then, will delineate how each side of the torture debate was dramatized from season to season within the framework of exposition, development, and conclusion through the following three hypothesis: (1) that *24* dramatizes the debate on torture largely through a ticking bomb scenario seen on two levels (one professional and one personal), as well as through the themes of revenge, judgment, and atonement; (2) that *Lost* dramatizes the debate on torture mainly through a state-of nature scenario as well as through the themes of revenge, judgment, and atonement; and (3) that *BSG* dramatizes the debate on torture generally through a state-of-survival scenario and the related themes of revenge, dehumanization, judgment and atonement.

Once these examinations are completed, the final chapter will synthesize the conclusions of each program into a larger meta-narrative and delineate the significance of the conclusions in relation to the

initial three questions posed in the first chapter to suggest (1) that *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* did indeed provide an alternative forum for a debate on torture; (2) that viewing programs such as *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* as a forum for debate suggests that narrative (in general) and television (specifically) function as available means for human communication, providing meaningful insight (given the specific aim of this dissertation) to America's post-9/11 cultural identity; and (3) that the theory of narrative rhetoric can be seen as informing not just the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory, but also as offering a possible general (or universal) theory from which to analyze all narrative as dramatized argument. Let us now apply TNR to the serialized television programs of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* to see how each program's narrative progression and narrative function reveals a debate on the issue of torture.

CHAPTER 3
THE NARRATIVE OF TORTURE ON 24

3.1 Introduction

The television show *24* presents a fictional world in which the United States is periodically under the threat of terrorist attacks, attacks which are combated by the CIA-like Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU)⁴⁷ and its most dedicated agent Jack Bauer. Originally airing on November 6, 2001 – eight weeks after 9/11 – *24* dramatized the issue of torture in all eight of its seasons, especially through the actions of the character of Jack Bauer (played by actor Kiefer Sutherland), who, in the course of preventing attacks on the United States, has done the following: shot a man’s wife in her leg to get the man to divulge information; made a terrorist watch a live video feed of his son being shot and then told the terrorist that his wife and other children would be next if he didn’t disclose information; performed an enhanced interrogation on his girlfriend, her brother, and her ex-husband; performed an enhanced interrogation on his own brother; captured the daughter of a terrorist and then forced the terrorist to watch her being led into a building contaminated with a deadly biological virus to get the terrorist to reveal crucial information; shot a man and cut off his head in order to gain the trust of a suspected terrorist cell; refused to give a female terrorist pain killers for a bullet wound and instead pushed the bullet into her bone to force her to give him information; eviscerated a suspect (while conscious) who had swallowed evidence in order to retrieve the evidence; and killed more than two hundred others⁴⁸ – both intentionally and inadvertently through collateral damage – all in the line of duty as a (sometimes rogue) CTU agent.

⁴⁷ Which, in season 5, is shown to be under the control of The Department of Homeland Security.

⁴⁸ The number of characters intentionally killed by Jack Bauer varies from season to season, with only 10 people in Season 1 and 44 people in Season 4.

The aforementioned examples are but a sampling of the many actions Jack Bauer has performed out of a perceived necessity to keep America safe from a terrorist threat. On the other hand, Jack Bauer has also endured some extraordinary physical, psychological, and emotional trauma in his efforts to prevent a terrorist attack on American soil. In eight seasons, Jack endured the following: he was beaten and tortured (repeatedly by various villains, including two years spent in a Chinese prison); he was killed as a result of being electrocuted (he was later revived); he became a drug addict as part of an undercover operation; his wife was murdered; he was often estranged from his daughter; his father and brother were shown to be domestic terrorists; his girlfriend was tortured (also by the Chinese); another girlfriend was killed; several of his fellow agents were tortured or killed; he was exposed to a deadly biological weapon; and he offered his life several times as a sacrifice to the country (by volunteering to fly a plane loaded with a nuclear bomb; by agreeing to be shot by a terrorist in exchange for her giving crucial information on the location of a bomb; by agreeing to be handed over to a terrorist who wanted to kill Jack in revenge for Jack having killed the terrorist's brother in a previous season; and by refusing experimental treatment after having been exposed to a deadly gas). Indeed, the events that Jack Bauer has experienced⁴⁹ coupled with the visceral and real-time⁵⁰ nature of the show, a nature heightened by the presence of a ticking clock seen throughout each episode in various scenes and shown in and out of commercial breaks, makes the dilemmas Jack is faced with, as Slavoj Žižek observes, seem more urgent, thereby making Jack's decisions seem necessary.⁵¹

As Žižek writes:

Such a sense of urgency has an ethical dimension. The pressure of events is so overbearing, the stakes so high, that they necessitate a kind of suspension of ordinary moral concerns; displaying such concerns when the lives of millions are at stake means playing into the hands of the enemy. The CTU agents, as well as their terrorist opponents, live and act in a shadowy space not covered by the law, doing things that "simply have to be done" to save our societies from the threat of

⁴⁹ It is enough that Jack feels he has to resort to extreme measures to accomplish his goals - actions which would test even the most hardened souls. But he also has had to endure some extraordinary personal traumas, including having to carry the weight of killing as many as 44 people in a single day, as well as having to kill his boss and having to kill a colleague and friend.

⁵⁰ The element of time is significant to the show's structure, as each episode takes place during the course of one hour and each season, therefore, takes place in one 24-hour period. Moreover, each season begins *in medias res*, presents characters in different locations simultaneously through split-screen scenes, and ends with many things left unresolved.

⁵¹ Žižek, Slavoj. "The Depraved Heroes of 24 are the Himmlers of Hollywood." Guardian Unlimited, January 10, 2006.

terrorism. This includes not only torturing terrorists when they are caught, but even torturing members of CTU or their closest relatives if they are suspected of terrorist links (2006).

What is paramount is that the character of Jack Bauer is depicted as the hero of the show, giving his actions more ethical and moral weight during the course of *24*'s meta-narrative, especially when contrasted with the actions of the show's various villains, which in the world of *24* includes both foreign and domestic operatives.⁵² That Jack Bauer knows his actions are oftentimes questionable and that he still willingly (even defiantly) chooses to engage in them despite whatever negative consequences may occur adds to his hero status.

Jack frequently disobeys orders from his CTU superiors (including orders from the various Presidents depicted in the show) relying more on his instincts, experience, and unrelenting devotion to duty to guide him, regardless of what consequences may ensue to himself or others. From one perspective, the character of Jack Bauer can be seen as a man of cold, singular purpose: do whatever is necessary to achieve the objective. Yet, on a deeper level, while Jack is certainly willing and able to do whatever it takes, he is not without feeling or compassion⁵³ and this is perhaps what makes his character compelling and persuasive, especially as regards the issue of torture. As Donal P. O'Mathuna observes, "[Jack's] moral compass is nearly always right - or so we like to think. If Jack sometimes resorts to torture, maybe there are good reasons for it" (Weed, 92) As O'Mathuna also states: "Torture in *24* both reflects the way the world has become, but also makes it easier to accept torture in practice" (Weed, 93).

As this brief introduction has shown, torture is not just an integral and significant part of *24*'s narrative it is also what drives *24*'s meta-narrative and this is done through a complex depiction of torture on two planes: a professional plane, in which torture evolves from a seldom used interrogation technique to a ritualized act to sanctioned protocol to being prohibited; and a personal plane, in which those who engage in torture are shown to de-evolve and face retribution, losing their morality (and perhaps even their soul)

⁵² Several government personnel, even some that work at CTU and the White House, are shown to be actively engaged in terrorist activities, most notably, the President of the United States in Season 5.

⁵³ There are several instances where Jack breaks down emotionally: in the final moments of Season 1 where he finds his wife dead; in the final moments of Season 3 where he cries in his car; in the final moments of Season 5 when he has been beaten by Chinese operatives and requests to be killed; in Season 6 when he cries after seeing a nuclear bomb explode on American soil; and in Season 8 when his girlfriend is killed.

and essentially becoming more monstrous than the terrorists they seek to combat. Generally, in terms of debating the issue of torture, the professional plane advances pro-torture arguments and the personal plane advances anti-torture arguments. However, both planes can be seen arguing both sides of the debate and as *24*'s meta-narrative progresses, the professional plane eventually adopts an anti-torture stance, while the personal plane (at least for Jack Bauer) adopts a pro-torture stance.

Accordingly, the vehicle generally used to establish a platform for a debate on torture is the so-called "ticking bomb" scenario, which presents a situation such that the element of time (coupled with an impending danger) effectively narrows the possibility and probability of viable non-torture solutions. Torture is then deemed "the only choice" (and at times the necessary choice and patriotic choice) available to gain information vital to preventing the bomb from going off. Moreover, ticking bomb scenarios are presented in multiple layers not just in each season (as large scale threats, such as a nuclear bomb) but also in each episode (as smaller scale threats, such as a single building or single person being targeted). However, *24*'s narrative sometimes presents a second option not generally seen in the hypothetical philosophical scenario, an option that provides an alternative to torture and one that is also sometimes deemed necessary in order to prevent an attack from happening: an immunity deal. While this option does not illustrate torture, it does serve to demonstrate an alternative to torture in terms of the debate. For example, as *24*'s meta-narrative progresses, suspects, even confirmed terrorists, are given deals that grant them immunity from prosecution (and torture) in exchange for information. When employed, however, this option actually works to support the pro-torture stance, as *24*'s narrative seems to rhetorically ask: "Do we torture a suspect or do we grant them immunity?" The implied answer suggests the former, as the latter does not seem fair or just. What is paramount, however, is that both options stem from the ticking bomb scenario and, when dramatized, both options work to justify the use of torture.

Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will examine *24*'s meta-narrative through TNR to advance the following arguments: (1) that *24* employs the ticking bomb scenario and the accompanying themes of revenge, judgment, and atonement to dramatize the debate on torture on a professional level and a personal level; (2) that the professional level can be seen to progress through various stages in which torture begins

as a little used technique to a ritualized act to sanctioned protocol to being considered forbidden and counterproductive; (3) that the personal level can be seen as depicting a loss of morality in those who choose to torture; and (4) that *24*'s meta-narrative ultimately suggests that torture is wrong because the price it requires is too high to pay. With regard to narrative function, this chapter suggests that the serialized format of *24*'s narrative progression functions as follows: Seasons 1 and 2 function as a two-part introduction; Seasons 3, 4, 5, and 6 function as a four-part development (with Season 6 also functioning as a transition to the concluding stage); and Seasons 7 and 8 function as a two-part conclusion.

Given the nature of *24* and the nature of torture, there are many scenes depicted throughout the narrative that can be defined in one way or another as torture. However, an examination of every single scene by every single character from eight seasons comprising one hundred and ninety-two episodes and a two-hour television movie would be needlessly excessive.⁵⁴ Therefore, examples will be cited with regard to their relevance to the arguments this chapter seeks to advance. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will be organized as follows: each season will be examined according to its function within the meta-narrative, describing the overall scenario that governs the season's narrative and tracing the debate on torture through the professional and personal planes. The chapter will conclude with a summary of *24*'s meta-narrative and the overall debate on the issue of torture.

3.2 Exposition One: Counterterrorism

Hypothesis 1: The first season functions as the initial exposition with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative, laying a foundation for a debate on torture. Although the debate is not yet fully formed, Season 1 effectively establishes the vehicles from which the debate will proceed in subsequent seasons: the professional and personal planes, the ticking bomb scenario, and the theme that those who torture must eventually pay some sort of retribution.

⁵⁴ As Martin Miller reported in the February 14, 2007 Los Angeles Times, there were 624 torture scenes on television from 2002 to 2005, with *24* having 67 scenes during its first five seasons, "making it No. 1 in torture depictions."

Season one begins with a relatively serene domestic scene: Jack, his wife Teri, and their daughter Kim are at home preparing to go to bed. Jack, being the head of CTU simply gets a phone call and calmly drives to work. In fact, it takes a while until the action in the narrative picks up and torture does not enter into the narrative until the eleventh episode. Perhaps this is because the majority of *24*'s first season was filmed in the spring and summer of 2001, prior to 9/11, with production concluding in early May of 2002. As such, it is fair to say that the first season of *24* was not initially (or directly) influenced by the events of 9/11, especially when we consider the overall plot and narrative structure. On the night of a California presidential primary⁵⁵, Senator and presidential candidate David Palmer is targeted for assassination by a Serbian family known as the Drazens who are seeking revenge for the murder of their father, Victor Drazen. Victor was allegedly killed during a covert mission called Operation Nightfall; a mission authorized several years earlier by Senator Palmer's secret congressional committee and carried out by Jack Bauer's covert "Unit Two."⁵⁶ The Drazens kidnap Bauer's wife and daughter in order to coerce Bauer to kill Senator Palmer. Eventually Jack is able to avert the assassination and save his family. However, in the course of doing this he operates as a rogue agent; uncovers multiple layers of "bad guys," including a "mole" within CTU; break several laws; and commits various crimes, including murder and of course, torture. The kidnapping of Jack's wife and daughter serve to establish the ticking bomb scenario, as Jack works to find them before he is forced to kill Senator Palmer. However, as previously mentioned, Jack does not engage in torture until the eleventh episode, titled "10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m." Given that this season was produced pre-9/11 this makes sense; torture had not yet entered in to America's psyche – at least not to degree reached in the immediate post-9/11 climate. Nevertheless, the episode is worth examining, not just for its value as the first episode of torture, but also for its establishment of how and why torture is utilized as well as for its establishment (and intersection) of the professional and personal planes and development of the ticking bomb scenario.

⁵⁵ No years are ever given for *24*'s seasons, making the narrative non-time specific and thus, in turn, more realistic, as each season appears contemporary. The first season's "day" is set in March and given that it is a *presidential* primary, it is likely the year 2000.

⁵⁶ Which is similar to a Navy Seal Team, like Seal Team Six.

At the end of the tenth episode Jack kidnaps a man named Ted Cofell, whom Jack believes has information about Jack's wife and daughter, who at this point in the season's narrative are still being held captive. Jack drives Cofell to a secluded location to interrogate him. As the scene progresses Jack pulls a gun on Cofell and threatens to shoot him but Jack does not pull the trigger. Instead, he calls a woman named Nina Myers, a fellow CTU agent who is covertly helping Jack find his wife and daughter because Jack has had to "go rogue." It is interesting to note that Jack calls Nina to ask her to put together a psychological profile on Cofell so that Jack can conduct the interrogation efficiently and effectively. In subsequent seasons, Jack would not waste time calling for a psychological profile, he would simply improvise an interrogation using whatever is at his disposal to torture the suspect. But given that this is the first season, Jack (being the "good guy") is shown as a somewhat responsible agent (despite his having to work on his own). As the scene progresses, the torture is more psychological than physical. However, Cofell suffers a heart attack as a result of the stress and dies. Nevertheless, the interrogation is successful insofar as Jack is able to get Cofell to reveal that he is a Serbian "bad guy." As the scene continues, an associate of Cofell's named Kevin Carroll arrives and Jack proceeds to interrogate him. Jack convinces Carroll to divulge information not through torture but through the threat of torture.

On the professional level, Jack's choice to torture is tactical, it is a means to achieving his objective and his request for a psychological profile suggests that he wants to conduct the torture purposefully and efficiently. It also establishes that torture is essentially an act between the torturer and the victim, one that, ironically, requires knowledge in order to retrieve knowledge and one that is oftentimes more psychological than physical. On the personal level, Jack is certainly motivated by his need to find his wife and daughter; that is the ticking bomb scenario. Yet, Jack is remarkably self-restrained, operating more like an actor in play (who knows the violence is staged) than a husband and father bent on revenge. In other words, Jack seems able to compartmentalize his feelings and his objective, at least to the extent that he is not yet willing to resort to extreme violence. Toward the end of the season, however, the personal level becomes more condemnatory for Jack when he is captured by the Drazens and subjected to a physical beating and attempted killing in episode 21, titled "8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m." While Jack's punishment, if you

will, is not a direct result of his employment of torture in the tenth episode, it is a result of Jack's overall actions (that began, for the Drazens, when Jack was part of Unit Two). This serves to establish the idea that those who torture must eventually pay a price, whether it be moral, spiritual, or physical. Indeed, with the killing of Jack's wife in the final moments of the season (which, as depicted, is not only random but completely senseless, as it serves only to facilitate the escape of Nina Myers, who, at the least minute, was discovered to be a mole working for the Drazens) the price Jack must pay is deeply personal and horrifyingly steep. Although, as subsequent seasons depict, the death of Jack's wife does not just resonate throughout Jack's narrative, it seems to facilitate his eventual moral and spiritual downfall, echoing⁵⁷ a similar downfall seen in post-9/11 America (with regard to those who adopted the pro-torture stance out of a need for revenge) and solidifying the intersection of the professional and personal planes that will develop throughout 24's meta-narrative.

3.3 Exposition Two: This is what it is going to take

Hypothesis 2: The second season functions as the continuation of the exposition with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. The use of torture as a ritual is more formally introduced, the theme of retribution is also more thoroughly explored, and the theme of criminals (or suspects) having "immunity" gets formally introduced.

The second season, filmed post-9/11 and set eighteen months after the events of the first season, offers a stark contrast to the first season, beginning with a torture scene that takes place in Seoul, South Korea: a Korean man strapped to a table is being interrogated by a Korean female; between questions the man is given electric shocks by other men in the room which result in screams from the victim and grimaces from the captors. Eventually the prisoner whispers something in Korean to the female, another man then runs into an adjacent room to tell members of the American military (who were observing and

⁵⁷ Or perhaps anticipating.

presumably responsible for the torture taking place⁵⁸) that something will happen “today” (a nuclear bomb will be detonated in Los Angeles). Less than an hour after this opening scene, Jack Bauer – who was summoned to CTU⁵⁹ to help prevent the bomb from being detonated in Los Angeles – questions a suspect named Marshall Torres who has a connection to CTU’s only lead: a man named Joseph Wald, whom Jack Bauer knows from a previous undercover assignment. Jack briefly questions Torres, listing Torres’s crimes: “Eight counts kidnapping a minor, two counts child pornography, first degree murder.” Jack then decides (without much hesitation or contemplation) to draw his gun and shoot Torres in the chest, killing Torres. Jack’s boss, George Mason, protests to which Jack responds: “You want to find this bomb? This is what it’s going to take!” Mason questions Jack again but Jack persists: “That’s the problem with people like you George, you want results but you never want to get your hands dirty, I’d start rolling up your sleeves, I’m going to need a hacksaw.” Jack decapitates Torres and uses Torres’ severed head as a means to infiltrate Joseph Wald’s gang. Although the decapitation is never shown, the brutality of the scene echoes the cruelty of the opening torture scene, reestablishing the professional plane as one in which Jack acts out of brutal necessity and efficiency – the argument being that extreme measures must be taken in order to protect America and keep its citizens safe, especially in light of a ticking bomb scenario.

Later in the season, Nina Myers is captured and taken to CTU; evidence and intelligence suggested that Nina was in possession of knowledge related to the location of the nuclear bomb but she refuses to cooperate until a pardon is signed by the president. Once the pardon is signed Jack speaks with her in two separate encounters in a holding cell during the sixth episode titled “1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.”; she is sitting at a table, handcuffed to a chair. In the first encounter, Jack throws to the floor the table that was in front of her, picks her up by the neck, slams her against a wall, and proceeds to choke her. Jack is stopped by other agents. What is paramount here is that Jack’s boss, George (who just a few hours earlier in the narrative witnessed Jack killing Marshall Torres) thinks that Jack might be going too far again. However, Jack is able to convince George that the torture is necessary, not because Nina has important

⁵⁸ It is never clearly stated, but the scene seems to depict a so-called “rendition” by the American military, in which a suspect is taken to another country to be “interrogated” so that the torture would not take place on American soil.

⁵⁹ Jack had resigned from CTU after his wife’s death at the end of the first season.

information, but because, as Jack effectively argues to George, Nina *needs to believe* that Jack has power over her, regardless of the presidential pardon or other authorities. To Jack, torturing is a performance, a ritual that must take place in order for Nina (or any suspect/villain) to cooperate. This develops the psychology of torture suggested in the first season with Jack's interrogation of Cofell. Since Jack has a past relationship with Nina⁶⁰ he does not need a psychological profile; he knows how to manipulate her. So when Jack questions Nina a second time, he enters the room and shoots two holes in the wall behind Nina's head; he then proceeds to question her. She divulges some information and Jack responds by approaching her and putting a gun to her head. He cocks the gun and after a few moments he withdraws and leaves the room, looking back at her with a menacing stare, completing his ritualistic act and reinforcing to Nina that he has power over her. The power is temporary, however, as events that transpire during the next three episodes allow Nina to capture Jack and in episode nine, titled "4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.," Nina is granted a presidential pardon for the murder of Jack Bauer. Of course, while Jack is saved at the last second in the following episode, the sanctioning of his murder by President Palmer reinforces the theme of retribution. No matter how valuable Jack Bauer may be, in the end, the narrative suggests, he is just as expendable as any of the plethora of ancillary characters who routinely get killed during the course of a season. However, for Jack, his suffering is a consequence of his actions, which renders the suffering as a form of judgment on his soul. Accordingly, for the second season's narrative progression, the situation with Nina is just the first of three times Jack nearly loses his life.

For the narrative progression regarding torture, the torture-related scenes examined thus far (anonymous Korean Man, Marshall Torres, and Nina Myers) occur during the first six hours of the second season and the characters in these scenes are essentially villains. In contrast to these scenes, three civilian (and to a large extent innocent) characters are also interrogated during the same timeframe: Reza Naiyeer and Bob Warner, both by CTU agents; and Kate Warner, by the villain Syed Ali. The interrogations of Reza Naiyeer and Bob Warner by CTU agent Tony Almeida and CTU director George Mason are relatively tame. While Almeida and Mason adopt combative personas (speaking in a sometimes loud, gruff

⁶⁰ Nina didn't just kill Jack's wife, Jack and Nina had had an affair before the events of the first season took place.

voice, using menacing stares and facial expressions, and standing with an intimidating posture) neither actually resorts to physical violence. However, it is worth noting that Almeida discusses interrogation methods with Mason prior to questioning Naiyeer. Consider the following brief exchange from the 3:00 p.m. episode:

Almeida: “How hard do you want me to push them?”

Mason: “As hard as you have to, stick bamboo shoots under their fingers, get what they got, time’s running out.”

What is paramount is that Mason (who seems to be adopting Jack’s attitude toward torture) and Almeida are willing to disregard the legal rights of civilians using the logic of necessity. While they ultimately choose to rely on intimidation and psychology to gather information, that they are willing to cross the line, especially against civilians, reinforces the professional level’s pro-torture position of having to do whatever is necessary for the greater good, even violate the rights of civilians, because time is “running out.” From the professional level’s anti-torture perspective, however, the violation of Reza’s and Bob’s rights ultimately does not work and only serves to waste time, as Reza and Bob are found to be innocent when, in the tenth episode, it is shown that Reza’s fiancé, Marie (who is Bob’s daughter and Kate’s sister), is the terrorist CTU was trying to find.⁶¹ Of course, Reza and Bob would not have been questioned were it not for Kate’s suspicions of Reza, who is of middle-eastern descent and was raised in London. On the surface, Kate’s suspicions (and those of CTU) obviously speak to the issues of racial profiling and anti-Muslim sentiment that, especially in the time contemporary to the airing of the second season, were reaching their peak in the United States. However, for the progression of 24’s meta-narrative, Kate’s interrogation by Syed Ali serves the personal level, as it reinforces the idea of judgment. While Kate’s past is decidedly different from Jack’s, Kate is not unlike the many American’s whose fear and ignorance led them to respond negatively in the post-9/11 climate. Kate does not necessarily deserve to be tortured simply for suspecting Reza of being a terrorist – and the narrative does not necessarily suggest that she does. Indeed,

⁶¹ CTU had spent the previous five episodes questioning Reza and Bob. Reza eventually agrees to allow CTU access to his company office and computer, but Marie intervenes and kills Reza and the CTU agents before escaping.

the torture scene could be seen as reinforcing her (and the public's) fears. Rather, Kate must simply pay some sort of price for her ignorance and to a certain extent, her arrogance.

In the same episode (episode nine) in which Nina almost killed Jack, Kate and a private investigator she had been working with are abducted by a man named Syed Ali (the initial villain of the season). Wanting to learn what knowledge Kate might possess regarding the nuclear bomb, Ali tortures the private investigator in front of Kate. The investigator (who is hanging naked with his hands bound to a bathroom ceiling) is beaten, a circular saw is used on his torso, and he is finally shot. Since Kate is innocent in the sense that she truly does not know any information, she cannot answer Ali's questions and while Ali apparently believes that she knows nothing, he leaves her in the hands of an accomplice who cuts her ear and nearly shoots her (Jack arrives just in time to save her). For the most part, Kate is physically unharmed yet her penance continues in the next episode when she agrees to go undercover into a mosque in an attempt to identify Syed Ali. Her mission is successful and it Jack is able to capture and interrogate Syed Ali.

In a scene that serves as a narrative climax for the first half of the season, Jack beats Ali, who is bound to a chair, as Ali is questioned about the location of the nuclear bomb. Ali is obstinate and Jack decides to stage the execution of Ali's oldest son by having Ali watch (via a satellite television monitor that Jack arranges through the military) as U.S. soldiers hold Ali's family (his wife and two pre-adolescent sons) at gunpoint. Against the express order of President Palmer, Jack orders the soldiers to execute the oldest boy. A soldier then kicks the chair in which the boy is bound, the chair falls back and most of the boy's body is out of view. The soldier then shoots the boy. Ali believes that his son has just been killed and after Jack assures Ali that his other son and wife will also be killed, Ali gives up the location of the bomb. Kate, who had aided Jack in finding Ali and who had been nearby when Jack tortured Ali, tells Jack that he is worse than the terrorists, but Jack reveals to Kate that the murder of Ali's son was staged. Like his interrogation of Nina, Jack again uses torture as a ritual – Jack had to convince Ali (by whatever means necessary) that Jack had absolute power. It is worth noting that since viewers do not know that the murder is being staged, the visual effect of seeing a boy executed is disturbing and for a moment Ali becomes a

somewhat sympathetic character, as no parent should be forced to watch their child die. This scene also reinforces the theme of necessity, as Jack's willingness to sacrifice an innocent boy (even if the sacrifice is staged) is necessary for the greater good, thus serving to develop both the professional and personal planes regarding Jack and the use of torture, a development that continues in the remainder of the season.

While President Palmer was not willing to sanction the murder of Ali's son, the President's hands do get dirty when he decides to detain the character of Roger Stanton, the head of the National Security Agency. Palmer suspects Stanton of playing some role in the nuclear threat but Palmer does not have concrete evidence. Consider the conversation President Palmer has with Chief of Staff Mike Novick during the eleventh episode (6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.):

David: "My own people working against me?"

Mike: "Stanton won't be easy to break, not in the time we have. You may have to be willing to expand the limits of how far you were willing to go in the past."

David: "What are you saying, Mike?"

Mike: "That you do whatever it takes to find out what Stanton knows about this bomb."

President Palmer decides to recruit a secret service agent, Ted Simmons, to perform an enhanced interrogation of Roger Stanton. In these scenes, Stanton is bound to a chair, his bare feet are placed in a bucket of water, and he is electrocuted with a defibrillator. After several hours, Stanton finally confesses the location of the bomb, confirming the same information Jack received from Ali. On the professional level, then, torture (both physical and psychological) worked, as information was gathered in time to find the literal "ticking bomb." However, on the personal level, the theme of judgment continues, as both Jack and President Palmer must eventually pay for their use of torture. For Jack, the payment is almost immediate.

The bomb was being kept at a small airfield where it would be flown by a terrorist in a small plane on a suicide flight to the heart of downtown Los Angeles. When Jack (and CTU and Kate, who was tagging along) arrives at the airfield he encounters Marie and shoots her in the arm to prevent her from killing Kate. Jack then binds Marie to a chair and proceeds to interrogate her – he wants to know the precise location of the nuclear bomb. Jack's first instinct is to give Marie more pain by pressing on her bullet wound (and since the bullet is near her bone, the pain is somewhat excruciating, causing her to scream loudly).

Eventually, Kate intervenes and in a rare moment of sympathy Jack lets Kate talk to Marie and allows Marie to have pain medication. Jack's actions, however, are not without motive. Jack gives Marie a small dose of pain medication and as the medication subsides and the pain returns, Jack uses the medication as a reward for Marie's information; Marie remains steadfast in her mission but Jack is able to deduce the bomb's location by what Marie is not telling him. When the bomb is found it is determined that it cannot be disarmed and must be detonated. President Palmer decides to let it detonate in a desert location (instead of in the ocean) and Jack volunteers to pilot a plane in a suicide mission. This presents the second instance where Jack's life is seemingly over. Jack volunteering for the mission echoes his own willingness to die at Nina's hands earlier in the day and it reflects Kate's willingness to put herself in harm's way not just for the greater good but also as a means of redemption, reinforcing the personal level theme of judgment. Of course, Jack is able to escape being killed – thanks to George Mason, who piloted the plane at the last minute – only to be captured later by domestic terrorists who had been working with Ali.

In a scene that combines visual elements from Kate's torture scene Jack is stripped naked, his hands are bound above his head so that he is hanging from a ceiling, and he is electrocuted with a Taser. Jack eventually goes into cardiac arrest and dies but the terrorists manage to revive Jack and then proceed to continue their torture. However, Jack manages to escape with the aid of a civilian doctor who had been forced to assist the terrorists. The torture that Jack endured (including his death) gives Jack a heart condition that follows him through the remainder of the season and it is unclear in the final episode whether Jack lives or dies, as he passes out clutching his chest. What is paramount, however, is that Jack endures torture and threats to his life throughout the season, suggesting, for the personal level, that his actions are continuously being judged. That his actions are well-intended (he is trying to save the country from nuclear attack) does not matter as much as the moral implications his actions produce, implications which in turn require that a debt be paid.

It is also interesting to note that Jack's almost stubborn dedication to his purpose and his willingness to hurt and sacrifice anyone, including himself, reflect the actions of the terrorists, further developing both the professional and personal planes. In other words, professionally, Jack (and by

extension CTU and the government) must operate like a terrorist in order to combat the terrorists and on the personal level, Jack must operate like a terrorist wearing a suicide vest, willing to sacrifice his own life not just for the greater good, but for the sake of the mission. For Jack, however, it is as if he knows that he owes a debt, making his “punishment” a matter of choice.

The contrast for the narrative’s progression, however, is that the terrorists are depicted as evil villains bent on killing millions of American citizens while Jack is depicted as a patriotic hero. Accordingly, the reasons the terrorists cite do not seem to justify such extreme and violent action. Syed Ali has no agenda except to claim that he is doing “God’s will.” Marie Warner is depicted as a brainwashed disciple of Ali who obstinately clings to the doctrine she’s been told, not out of true belief to any ideology but rather as a spoiled child defying her father. And the domestic terrorists who appear in the second half of the season are depicted as men concerned only with making money off of the oil industry in the Middle East. None of these explanations seem compelling enough to convince any reasonable person that terrorist activities are warranted. On other hand, the actions of Jack Bauer – which are taken in defense of the country, almost always yield fruitful results, and seem entirely justified – are just as morally questionable.

Taken together, the first two seasons of *24* can be viewed as the exposition of *24*’s narrative whole, as they work jointly to establish the debate on torture professionally and personally through the ticking bomb scenario. While the first season barely contained any scenes of torture, the second season begins with a torture scene and markedly increases the use of torture through more physically violent and more psychologically disturbing scenes. On the professional plane, torture is ritualized and performed, utilized as a necessary psychological tool to gather information, proving successful, especially when used on terrorists. On the other hand, torture – especially when justified through phrases such as “we don’t have a choice” or “we’re running out of time” – is sometimes misapplied, as in the case of Reza and Bob, suggesting that its use is at least questionable in terms of effectiveness. Personally, those who torture (whether villains or heroes) suffer great personal loss. Let us now examine how these arguments are expanded through the development seen in next four seasons.

3.4 Development One: No limits

Hypothesis 3: Season 3 functions as the first development with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. On the professional level, the necessary and ritualized nature seen in the second season develops into a sanctioned protocol, with CTU employing "official" interrogators and with Jack Bauer (who for the first time is depicted working with a partner) regularly employing torture in the field as a matter of procedure. On the personal level, the theme of judgment established in the first two seasons is elevated in physical, emotional, and psychological ways.

Set three years after the events of the second season, the third season of *24* revolves around a bioterrorism plot in which terrorists release a weaponized virus called the Cordilla virus (which is similar to the real-world Hantavirus) into the ventilation system of a Los Angeles hotel and threaten to release the virus in eleven more locations throughout the United States. The plot is masterminded by a man named Stephen Saunders, a presumed-dead British agent who worked with Jack Bauer on the Operation Nightfall referenced in the first season. Like the Drazens, Saunders is seeking revenge, not just on Jack Bauer, but on America⁶² and like the Drazens (and in contrast to Syed Ali from the second season) Saunders is a non-middle eastern terrorist. Accordingly, the character of Nina Myers (also non-middle eastern) returns as one of Saunders' many accomplices.

What is paramount for the depiction of torture in the third season is that Jack is working with a partner named Chase Edmonds, a younger CTU agent who, like Jack, is not squeamish about resorting to extreme measures to get the job done. In fact, Jack and Chase work in tandem when they interrogate suspects, suggesting that their methods are not only sanctioned protocol, they are employed almost as an art form, one that is well-rehearsed and effective,⁶³ developing the ritualistic use of torture seen in the first two seasons. As Jack Bauer states to his boss Ryan Chappelle, "this office demands results, and that's what I

⁶² Saunders survived Operation Nightfall only to be captured and tortured by Bosnian secret police for two years; the U.S. Government, whom Saunders was technically working for, refused to negotiate his release. Saunders was eventually released, but with the world thinking him dead, he re-built his life as a terrorist.

⁶³ Jack and Chase don't play the stereotypical "good cop, bad cop" routine. Rather, theirs is more like "bad cop, worse cop."

provide, results.” This sanctioning is reinforced by the fact that Jack is now CTU’s Director of Field Operations⁶⁴ (in which he oversees a team of well-equipped field agents) as well as with the introduction of two characters named Agent Johnson and Agent Richards, CTU agents whose only job is to “medically interrogate” suspects by forcibly administering various drugs.⁶⁵ For O’Mathuna, the fact that *24*’s narrative depicts professionally trained interrogators suggests that torture has become an accepted part of society (99 – 100). It is certainly accepted enough at CTU by the third season that Jack’s position and title affords him broad tactical authority over how missions are carried out, an authority that is distinct from that of Tony Almeida, who is now Director of CTU Los Angeles. It is as if the process of apprehending suspects is so specialized and essential that a dedicated team, which functions as its own mostly autonomous department, is warranted. This dramatic change from the first two seasons clearly develops both the professional and personal planes for the issue of torture. On the professional level, torture has become accepted protocol and being a torturer has become an official job. On the personal level, we learn that in the time that has transpired since the second season, Jack was on an undercover assignment in which he had to develop a heroin addiction. This addiction and the actions Jack performs throughout the season take a toll on Jack, on his partner Chase, and on Jack’s daughter Kim⁶⁶.

In the second episode of the season, titled “2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.,” Jack and Chase track down a suspect named Zach Parker, whom they believe has information about the Cordilla virus. Tony had requested that Jack and Chase be wired so that any information they retrieve could be immediately processed by CTU, who would be listening. But Jack and Chase refuse, claiming that they don’t have time to get wired up. This allows Jack and Chase, who enter the suspect’s building and tell the L.A.P.D. only to cover the exits, complete freedom to do whatever they deem necessary to capture Zach and obtain information. Jack and Chase are able to capture Zach (Jack shot Zach as he was trying to escape) and they question him as a team. When Zach refuses to answer Jack’s questions, Jack simply says “Chase” and

⁶⁴ In the first season, Jack was the Director of CTU Los Angeles. In the second season, he was an unofficial agent brought in to CTU to help with the nuclear threat.

⁶⁵ Johnson and Richards also appear in the fourth season. Their role is taken over by a man named Agent Burke in the fifth and sixth seasons.

⁶⁶ Who now works for CTU as a computer analyst and is romantically involved with Chase.

Chase steps on Zach's bullet wound, causing Zach to scream and divulge the information Jack wanted, giving up the name of a teen named Kyle Singer, who is in possession of the virus. Jack then tries to find Kyle, while Chase takes Zack to CTU to interrogate him in a "white room." Chase is never shown interrogating Zack, it is simply mentioned in the course of the narrative that the interrogation took place. However, two episodes later⁶⁷, Chase takes it upon himself to interrogate a man named Ramon Salazar, a prisoner that Chase and Jack had put away and who is connected to the virus threat.⁶⁸ Prior to the interrogation, Chase convinces the prison Warden not only to allow the interrogation but to turn off the security cameras so that no evidence of physical torture can be seen. As Chase promises the warden: "There won't be any marks, I promise." The warden gives Chase thirty minutes. Chase enters Ramon's cell and immediately begins to beat Ramon, asking questions between hits – but seemingly not really caring if Ramon answers them.

While this scene does not depict a traditional, if you will, torture scene, it does serve to highlight the sanctioned mistreatment of terrorist suspects, as Warden Mitchell complied with Chase's request without much of an argument; torture has developed professionally from a necessary tool into a finely honed craft and into a sanctioned technique. Accordingly, those who torture have developed from conflicted souls to almost robotic, soul-less torture-soldiers who seemingly feel no guilt. The fact that Chase went to the prison specifically to beat Ramon also suggests that such treatment of prisoners is simply part of the job and it objectifies Ramon, as his basic human rights are not just dismissed, it is as if they don't even exist. Back at CTU, an agent named Gael Ortega is discovered to be a "mole" working with the Salazars; he is then interrogated at CTU in the seventh episode, titled "7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.", by Ryan Chappelle and Agent Johnson. Throughout the interrogation, Agent Johnson injects Gael with various syringes, causing Gael to scream in agony as the chemicals being given to him produce extreme pain.

⁶⁷ Episode four, titled "4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m."

⁶⁸ At this point in the narrative, it is believed that Ramon's brother, Hector, is responsible for the virus threat, as he has demanded that the President of the United States release Ramon from prison or else the virus will be released in the United States. Prior to the season, Jack had infiltrated the Salazar's drug cartel in Mexico by becoming a heroin addict and going undercover.

During this same episode, Chase, who is working under the assumption that Jack has switched sides (because Jack helped Ramon escape by staging a prison riot) and wants to find Jack and Ramon on his own, tracks down an off-the-book associate of his and Jack's named Simon Cullens, who has information on the Salazars. At gunpoint (and in front of Cullens' wife and kids) Chase demands that Cullens help him locate Ramon's brother, Hector Salazar; Cullens is an accountant with access to the Salazar's money. Cullens traces an account to Las Nieves, Mexico and Chase takes Cullens' private jet to attempt to rescue Jack from the Salazars. Chase believes that Jack is in trouble and possibly being coerced by the Salazars; however, it is revealed that Jack, Tony, and Gael were all working together in an elaborate sting operation, using the Salazar's as a means to an end: the capture of the Cordilla virus stockpile from a Ukrainian supplier to remove it from the market. This is revealed by Tony to CTU personnel and to the President in the eighth episode (allowing Gael to be freed⁶⁹) but since Chase is unreachable in the field, Chase continues to Las Nieves alone to try to rescue Jack. Once in Las Nieves, Chase gets captured by the Salazars and is tortured during the ninth and tenth episodes – since Jack has effectively gone undercover again with the Salazars, Jack is not immediately able to help Chase and Chase is forced to endure an extreme interrogation at the hands of the Salazar's men. What is paramount here is that Chase's actions develop the idea of doing whatever is necessary to get the job done. Though, as was established in the first two seasons, there will be consequences.

In the eighth episode, titled "8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.", Chase is taken to a barn on the Salazar's ranch in Las Nieves; he is tied with his hands above his head. Initially it is shown that two men take turns beating Chase, one of them with a shovel; however, most of the scene is heard in the background as Jack, who is with Ramon and Hector, listens to Chase scream in agony. In subsequent scenes Chase is shown being repeatedly beaten, he is then cut down and dragged to a wall where a gun is placed on the palm of his left hand and shot; Hector instructs his men to "keep at it [and] if he doesn't crack soon, use gasoline."

⁶⁹ In fact, only minutes after being tortured, Gael is back to work at CTU, as if nothing happened to him; he doesn't appear affected at all, physically or mentally, and he remains dedicated to fulfilling the mission of CTU, eventually giving his life when he becomes infected by the Cordilla virus as he tries to dismantle a dispersal canister in the fifteenth episode, titled "3:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m."

Eventually, Chase is able to escape with the help of a woman named Claudia⁷⁰ and he contacts CTU. As with the previous interrogations scenes, what is paramount is that torture takes place as a part of doing business, it is shown to be routine, expected, and ritualized, as all involved in the torture seem to be acting out their understood roles. While Chase seems to endure the situation as if it were a rite of passage, his torture serves to reinforce the personal level of judgment.

In the fourteenth episode, titled “2:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m.”, Nina has been captured by Jack and Chase and she is taken to CTU for interrogation. Tony initially questions Nina, but when is uncooperative Tony calls in Agent Richards, who, as with Gael’s interrogation conducted by Agent Johnson, injects pain-inducing drugs into Nina’s neck. Like Chase, Nina seems to be able to endure the pain but Nina decides to end the interrogation herself by thrusting her body backwards in her chair, impaling the back of her neck on one of Richard’s needles; Richards was standing behind her, about to inject her again. Nina is then taken to CTU’s medical facility where she manages to kill and/or wound a room full of CTU doctors and agents as she tries to escape. She is eventually found by Jack who shoots her once, causing her to fall to the ground. Jack then asks her if she has any useful information, Nina replies “yes” but then Jack responds with “no, you don’t.” Jack then shoots her three times. Nina’s torture, though short, only serves to reinforce the use of sanctioned torture. On the other hand, Jack’s murder of Nina, while not torture, develops the personal level, which for Nina requires that she finally give her life, and for Jack, requires that he kill her in cold blood, representing a complete loss of morality. That Jack and Chase are able to remain working, given what they have endured at this point in the third season’s narrative, suggests that they have indeed become soul-less soldiers.

For example, during the episode that follows Nina’s killing (episode fifteen, titled 3:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m.) Jack and Chase question Michael Amador in a parlor in Chinatown, where they had tracked him. After Amador is initially captured, Jack tells Chase “Take him into one of the other rooms, we’ve got some work to do. I don’t want to be disturbed by the SWAT guys.” Amador refuses to talk, telling Jack, “You

⁷⁰ Claudia is Hector’s girlfriend who had had an affair with Jack when Jack was undercover. Claudia helps Chase because she wants to leave the Salazars; however, she is killed in a gunfight when Chase escapes in the tenth episode, titled “10:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.”

can do what you want to me, I'm not going to talk." Eventually, Jack, frustrated at Amador's obstinacy, grabs Amador from behind, holding him down in a chair while Chase takes Amador's left hand, slams it on a table and proceeds to slice his palm with a knife, asking "Where's the virus?" Amador screams and then passes out from the pain. Jack's phone then rings and as he answers it he tells Chase, "When he comes to, you do it again." It is never shown whether Chase repeated his torture of Amador, however, it seems understood that it took place, reiterating that torture is simply part of the job, a routine practice that has become almost an art form for Jack and Chase, like experienced jazz musicians improvising off each other with creativity and passion and with an eerie telepathy. In terms of the narrative's progression, this also demonstrates how those in authority operate with broad legal discretion. Consider the final two interrogation scenes that take place in the remaining episodes of season three.

In the seventeenth episode, titled "5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.", Jack and Chase have tracked down a woman named Diana White, an associate of Stephen Saunders, the man ultimately responsible for the day's events; White was located with information shared by the Los Angeles office of MI-6, who had information on Saunders, given that Saunders was a former MI-6 agent. Once White is subdued – she had put up a struggle, shooting at Jack until Chase grabbed her – Jack tells her that he is taking her to be questioned. White refuses to go anywhere without a lawyer, to which Jack replies: "You're not under arrest. I'm taking you in to MI-6, where you'll be interrogated by an agent of a foreign government. Your constitutional rights no longer apply." The interrogation never takes place, however, because Saunders sent a team to attack the MI-6 office; an assault helicopter shoots the floor of a building containing MI-6's offices, killing several British agents and Diana White. However, Jack and Chase are able to obtain some information on MI-6's computer servers and they eventually track down Saunders' daughter, Jane, a student at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California. Jane is captured and Jack interrogates her.

Like Diana White, Jane does not want to talk and wants a lawyer, telling Jack that his questioning of her is illegal to which Jack replies: "There's no lawyer. There's just you and me." Yet, Jack does not torture Jane; he simply performs his ritual, questioning her intensely to scare her into giving up the location of her father. She eventually cooperates when Jack shows her photos of her father with known terrorists

and video of people dying from the virus that had been released earlier in the day. What is paramount, however, is that, in both situations, Jack – and by extension law enforcement in general – is willing to disregard basic constitutional rights because of the gravity of the situation, the imperative of time, and the perceived necessity of having to do whatever it takes to stop terrorism. Again, this official use of torture suggests, for the professional level, that the right to torture is more important than the right to not be tortured. While it may be a ritual, its application and its consequences, whether physical or psychological, are nonetheless real, affecting both the professional and personal planes. As regards the debate on torture, then, the third season's pro-torture stance suggests that torture is not only necessary it is required to the point of being routine, practiced with little objection. On the personal level, the anti-torture stance suggests that the cost of torture requires those who torture to operate robotically with little compassion or feeling, though not without judgment. For Chase, this includes having to lose a hand in the final episode of the season; for Jack, this includes having to cut Chase's hand in order to save a school full of children from being the target of one of the deadly virus canisters and it is worth noting that the season's final image is of Jack sitting in his SUV crying, his emotions over the day's events finally overwhelming him.

3.5 Development Two: There will be consequences

Hypothesis 4: Season 4 functions as the second development with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. On the personal level, the narrative's progression is advanced through a depiction of torture that is psychologically more disturbing, as the acts of torture have become completely sterilized and scientific and are sometimes performed on innocent people. Likewise, interrogations performed on those who are guilty are sometimes depicted in such a way as to portray the guilty as sympathetic. On the professional level, while torture remains part of CTU's protocol, the fourth season more directly engages an anti-torture argument through the depiction of accountability and ineffectiveness, as if those who torture seem aware of the possible reciprocity (at least in terms of moral judgment) that may occur. This development lays the groundwork (hinted at in previous seasons) for the questioning of torture in future

seasons by illustrating how torture is not always effective, how innocent people are victimized by an aggressively applied torture policy, and how the law seems to protect the guilty more than the innocent.

The fourth season, set eighteen months after the events of the third season, begins at 7:00 a.m. with a commuter train being attacked in the Santa Clara valley as it traveled to Los Angeles. Jack, who arrives at CTU on behalf of the Department of Defense⁷¹ to discuss CTU's budget essentially gets caught up in helping CTU track one of the suspected terrorists, a man named Jann Bolek, whom Jack knows as Tomas Sherek – Jack had tracked Sherek's terrorist activities in the 1990s. Jack watches as Ronnie Lobell, CTU's new head of field operations, questions Sherek. However, Jack is frustrated that the interrogation is not yielding results quickly enough and he decides to take matters into his own hands. When Ronnie leaves the interrogation room, Jack disarms a CTU guard and disables the security system on the door so Ronnie cannot re-enter the room. Jack then shoots Sherek in his left leg and threatens to shoot his right leg unless he talks; Sherek tells Jack that the primary objective was not the commuter train but the Secretary of Defense. As with previous seasons, Jack's use of excessive force yields a positive result. Yet, CTU is unable to reach Secretary Heller in time and Secretary Heller and his daughter Audrey are both abducted at the end of the episode by several middle-eastern terrorists. Had CTU pushed Sherek more aggressively earlier in the interrogation, the narrative suggests, the abduction might not have happened.

In the next episode, titled 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., Secretary Heller's son, Richard, is brought in to CTU for questioning since Secretary Heller and Audrey were abducted at Richard's house, yet Richard was not taken. CTU agent Curtis Manning places Richard Heller in an interrogation room and connects Richard to a polygraph machine. Richard does not pass the polygraph and in the third episode, CTU Director Erin Driscoll, asks Curtis to "see if you can find anything out another way." Curtis protests, saying that Richard Heller may be innocent, to which Driscoll replies: "then this is how we'll find out." Curtis begins the interrogation of Richard, which takes place in the episode titled "9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.", by initially trying to intimidate Richard and convince Richard that painful drugs will be used. Before the drugs are

⁷¹ Jack does not begin the fourth season working for CTU. Jack was fired after the events of the third season by CTU Director Erin Driscoll and he is shown working for Secretary of Defense James Heller, as well as being romantically involved with Secretary Heller's daughter, Audrey Raines, who also works for her father at the Department of Defense.

administered by Agent Johnson, Richard screams for help and Curtis halts the interrogation and protests again to Director Driscoll that the interrogation of Richard is “an inappropriate use of force.” When Driscoll “orders” Curtis to interrogate Richard, Curtis demands the order be put in writing and suggests that they try noninvasive sensory disorientation before resorting to pharmaceuticals. Driscoll agrees.

What is paramount is that while Curtis is a capable CTU agent, he nevertheless appears squeamish about torturing Richard Heller, asking Driscoll for written approval, not just for accountability, but also for responsibility. That Driscoll approves of the “non-invasive” techniques reinforces her similar needs regarding accountability and responsibility. For the professional level, this suggests that perhaps non-violent techniques are just as viable. However, in Richard Heller’s case, the sensory deprivation proves unsuccessful and Richard is released from CTU during the seventh episode, titled 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., after enduring nearly four hours of non-invasive sensory deprivation and after Secretary Heller (who was rescued along with Audrey by Jack in the sixth episode) decides to have his son released – though it should be noted that Secretary Heller, after learning of Richard’s interrogation during the sixth episode, sanctions the interrogation telling Curtis to “do whatever you feel is necessary to get the information out of my son.” It should also be noted that Richard is consistently shown protesting his interrogation, cowering, crying, and claiming that his rights are being violated. Moreover, Richard’s interrogation (like Reza and Bob’s interrogation from the second season) is essentially futile; CTU gained nothing fruitful and wasted nearly four hours of valuable time for the sake of not physically harming Richard. In terms of the narrative’s progression, then, the use of torture is portrayed, with regard to the professional plane, as being questionable. Similarly, for the personal plane, the use of torture begins to be scrutinized.

During the eight episode, titled “2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., CTU Director Driscoll decides not to waste time with Sarah Gavin, a CTU analyst who appears to be a “mole” working with the terrorists. Driscoll has Agent Richards immediately work on Sarah by electrocuting her and by injecting her with pain inducing drugs. However, the real mole is found at the end of the next episode, a woman named Marianne Taylor, who does not get tortured. Instead, Marianne decides to cooperate with CTU and help CTU recover information on the terrorists. The contrast here is that Sarah (whom viewers know is innocent) is tortured

for nearly two hours with the rationale that her torture, given the evidence CTU had at the time, was necessary while Marianne (whom viewers know is guilty) is able to escape torture by cutting a deal. For viewers, then, the narrative depicts another innocent person being tortured, making an argument against using torture because of the possibility of error. In the same manner, the next villain to be captured in the course of the narrative, Dina Araz, also manages to escape torture, reinforcing the idea that those who are guilty are valuable (because of the knowledge they possess) and are therefore able to better negotiate deals to avoid torture.

As the narrative progresses, Jack questions a man named Paul Raines (who happens to be Audrey Raines' estranged husband) during the eleventh episode, titled "5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m." Paul, a successful businessman who owns several companies, is named as the owner of the building the terrorists used to plan the events taking place during the course of the day. However, Paul refuses to talk to Jack (because of the relationship that Jack has with Audrey) so Jack decides to force Paul to talk – as with every interrogation that has taken place thus far in the narrative, Paul is the only lead and only connection to the terrorist at this time. Jack finds Paul in his hotel room; Jack then ties Paul to a chair and electrocutes him with a cord from one of the lamps in the room. The interrogation works, as Paul eventually gives Jack information about a man named Habib Marwan (whom Dina knows) that proves useful. Tony then questions Dina, who was taken to CTU, about Marwan. She initially denies any knowledge, so Tony decides to use physical force. He holds her against a wall and threatens her son, prompting her to confirm the identity of Marwan. While both of these interrogations yielded what to this point in the narrative is the most important information with regard to the terrorists, the use of torture actually portrays Paul and Dina as sympathetic victims. Paul is simply a jilted husband and Dina is simply a mother trying to protect her child and through the character of Audrey Raines, the narrative pointedly questions the use of torture. Consider the conversation Audrey has with her father, during the thirteenth episode, titled "7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.":

Audrey: A couple of hours ago, when we thought that Paul was somehow involved with the attacks, Jack questioned him, and Paul has his pride, so he resisted, but ...
Secretary Heller: Jack was pretty rough.
Audrey: Very.
Secretary Heller: That's his job. He had to make sure. You have to believe that Jack had no choice.

Audrey: I know. I guess it was just a shock to see it. Somehow, he seemed like a different person.
Secretary Heller: We need people like that, Audrey.

Indeed, this develops both the professional and personal planes, as Jack's tactics are deemed necessary but not without consequence. Jack-as-torturer becomes a form of self-sacrifice, one made for the good of the country, as he willingly gives up part of his life (in this case his relationship with Audrey) and his soul every time he tortures to save the people he loves and humanity in general. The irony is that by being a torturer the people Jack cares about are driven away or taken away, making Jack both heroic and tragic and reinforcing the theme established in previous seasons that the torturer suffers as much if not more than the one being tortured.

Torture re-enters the fourth season's narrative again in the eighteenth episode, titled "12:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m.", when a man named Joe Prado, who is connected to Marwan, is arrested by Curtis and taken to CTU for interrogation. However, Marwan (who learns of Prado's capture) calls Amnesty Global⁷² to request a lawyer for Prado because, as Marwan tells a representative over the phone, "an innocent man is about to be tortured at CTU," developing the objection to torture established earlier in the season by Curtis and Audrey, portraying these arguments as a matter of legal rights. First, CTU Director Michelle Dessler tells CTU Analyst Edgar Stiles, who lost his mother earlier in the day as a result of one of the nuclear plant that began to meltdown, "I want this man broken in minutes, not hours." As Curtis returns to CTU with Prado, Edgar then remarks to CTU Analyst Chloe O'Brian, "That's the bastard Curtis found at the marina, the one who's helping the terrorists [...] I'd like to get him in a room for a few minutes, he'd talk to me in about two seconds." Michelle then tells Curtis, just as Curtis is about to begin Prado's interrogation: "Remember, he's an ex-marine, he won't break easily." To which Curtis replies, "I just need to establish that, even though we're in a government building, I'm willing to go as far as it takes." Where Curtis hesitated earlier in the day with Richard Heller, Curtis does not have a problem using force on Joe Prado and he decides to begin the interrogation with Agent Richards. However, before Curtis and Richards can begin, CTU Director Bill Buchanan orders Curtis to stop because Prado's attorney has arrived. This

⁷² A fictional representation of Amnesty International.

happens as Jack is returning to CTU⁷³ and Jack argues with Bill saying: “We need to interrogate this prisoner. I don’t care what kind of court order they’re waving at you.” To which Bill responds: “I agree. But he’s got his attorney with him and a U.S. marshal protecting his rights.” Jack then decides to speak with the attorney, David Weiss. Consider this scene:

Jack: You and I both know that your client isn’t clean and that he conspired to steal a U.S. nuclear warhead.

Weiss: All my client wants is due process.

Jack: Mr. Weiss, these people are not gonna stop attacking us today until millions and millions of Americans are dead. Now, I don’t wanna bypass the Constitution but these are extraordinary circumstances.

Weiss: The Constitution was born out of extraordinary circumstances, Mr. Bauer. This plays out by the book, not in a back room with a rubber hose.

Jack: I hope you can live with that.

Jack and Bill then discuss the situation with the newly sworn in president, Charles Logan. Logan, who is portrayed as timid and indecisive, does not want his first presidential action to be the sanctioning of torture.

Consider an excerpt from their conversation:

Jack: If we want to procure any information from this suspect we’re going to have to do it behind closed doors.

Logan: You’re talking about torturing this man?

Jack: I’m talking about doing what is necessary to stop this warhead from being used against us.

Logan is also not sure if Prado is truly guilty, so Logan decides that he must first consult the Justice Department and the Attorney General, which will take time. Jack, taking matters into his own hands, then convinces Bill to release Prado and in CTU’s parking lot Jack attacks the U.S. Marshall assigned to Prado and handcuffs Prado to the car, breaking several of Prado’s fingers and holding a knife to Prado’s neck. Prado talks and gives up Marwan’s location at a club in downtown Los Angeles. While this episode presents various sides to the argument, all of which seem logical and valid, Jack is ultimately proven right, as Prado was not only guilty, he knew Marwan’s location and CTU was able to find Marwan at that location. However, in the subsequent episode, 1:00 a.m. – 2:00 a.m., President Logan, furious that Jack took matters into his own hands, orders the secret service to arrest Jack in the middle of the operation to apprehend Marwan; they do, which allows Marwan to escape.

⁷³ He had been out in the field.

As the narrative plays out Logan looks incompetent and ineffectual and Jack looks confident and proficient, as every CTU agent is shown agreeing with Jack. That Jack gets arrested speaks to the argument that his actions, regardless of their positive outcome, are still essentially illegal, reinforcing the narrative's message regarding judgment. Consider a scene that takes place during twenty-first episode, in which Audrey confronts Jack about his actions:

Audrey: Jack, what are you doing? You have broken every major protocol set by CTU and the DOD for what? Is any of this working?

Jack: You're still alive. Your father's still alive. And we managed to stop all but one of the power plants from melting down. Yeah, it's working. And we have to fight to keep it working.

No other scenes of torture take place in the fourth season's narrative. However, at the end of the day, Jack, who had to abduct a suspect from the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles⁷⁴, is going to be handed over to the Chinese government by President Logan – who indirectly approves the secret service to kill Jack before being surrendered to the Chinese – but Jack, who was warned by former president David Palmer, fakes his own death and is able to escape.

While Jack's actions are shown to be correct and productive, they are not without consequences. In this case, he has to give up his life and his very identity – a sacrifice that may not balance the millions of lives he was able to save, but one that also pales in comparison to the many lives he did kill and the many crimes he did commit. Again, we see Jack having to endure perhaps more pain and suffering than those he has tortured; yet, as the narrative suggests, not even heroes can be above the law – though, for Jack, an exception can be made that allows him to retain his life, if not his identity. But while Jack may remain alive, his life is devoid of everything that matters to him. Yet, this was ultimately Jack's choice. Consider a scene that takes place between Tony Almeida and Audrey Raines during the thirteenth episode:

Tony: Well you've gotten to see him in both worlds. You think he'll go back to wearing a suit?

Audrey: After the hell Jack's been through today, you think he'd want to come back to this?

Tony: Some people are more comfortable in hell.

Indeed, Jack is always willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish his mission and this includes not just killing and torturing anyone out of a perceived necessity, but also sacrificing himself whenever it becomes necessary and sacrificing the very life and freedoms he tries too hard to protect, even for those he loves.

⁷⁴ During the 2:00 a.m. – 3:00 a.m. episode.

Therefore, as concerns the narrative's progression and the function of Season 4, we see both levels develop by becoming more complexly intertwined. Acts of torture, performed as professional protocol, produce consequences on both levels: while torture works at the hands of Jack Bauer, it is also sometimes ineffective and misapplied and those who torture either begin to question the tactic and desire official justification for it. Yet, on the personal level, those who torture, especially Jack, shoulder a heavy burden and pay a steep price. Let us examine how the fifth season further develops these progressions.

3.6 Development Three: How far are you willing to go?

Hypothesis 5: Season 5 functions as the third development with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. On the professional level, the arguments of necessity, duty, and correctness of action are reinforced on the pro-torture side, as are the anti-torture arguments concerning legality and rights of the accused (including making a deal in exchange for cooperation). Accordingly, scientific torture (referred to as "medical interrogation") remains part of CTU's protocol. On the personal level, those who torture continue to suffer consequences (even death), while those who are tortured continue to be presented as sympathetic.

The fifth season's narrative of 24 picks up eighteen months after the events of the fourth season, and within the first twenty minutes of the first episode (7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.) the four people who know that Jack Bauer is still alive come under attack. President Palmer is assassinated, Michelle Dessler is killed, Tony Almeida is critically wounded, and Chloe O'Brian is being hunted. Jack, who has been living in Southern California under an alias, helps Chloe survive and in the process finds and kills President Palmer's assassin⁷⁵. By doing so, however, Jack is brought back to his former life at CTU, as these initial events of the day are simply a prelude to a much larger attack and conspiracy: the sale of military grade nerve gas by President Charles Logan to a group of Russian terrorists in a complicated attempt to secure America's oil interests in Central Asia. While there are many deaths and violent scenes – most notably the

⁷⁵ The actual sniper who shot and killed President Palmer.

execution of innocent civilians on live television by terrorists who seize control of Ontario Airport – the first interrogation does not take place until the fifth episode, titled “11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.”

Chloe discovers that a CTU analyst named Spenser Wolff had been engaged in covert activity at CTU and was likely a mole, as Spenser helped an assassin gain access to CTU; the assassin was able to kill a CTU physician and tried to kill Jack Bauer. No torture takes place during Spenser’s interrogation; however, the scene raises the issue of legal rights, as Spenser asks for a lawyer to which CTU Director Bill Buchanan replies: “Forget about a lawyer! We’re in the middle of a crisis. There are lives on the line. You’re going to tell us what you’ve been doing here and you’re going to tell us now.” Eventually, Spenser reveals that he had been working for several months under the orders of White House Chief of Staff Walt Cummings. This scene raises two points relevant to the torture arguments. The first is that the severity and context of the situation negates legal rights guaranteed by the Constitution and as with similar scenes in previous seasons, legal representation is bypassed. The second point is that Spenser was essentially shown to be innocent and patriotic, as he believed that his actions were lawful because his orders came from the White House. For Spenser, his actions were just and were taken in service of the country. For CTU, they were clearly related to the growing terrorist threat. This second point is further developed in the next episode (12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.) when Walt Cummings confesses to President Logan⁷⁶ that he was acting in the best interest of the country.

In the season’s first torture scene, Jack Bauer (with the help of Secret Service Agent Aaron Pierce⁷⁷) infiltrates Charles Logan’s presidential retreat in Hidden Valley, California and interrogates Walt Cummings in front of President Logan and Agent Pierce. In the course of the scene Jack explains to President Logan that Walt Cummings is complicit in the day’s terrorist events and Jack proceeds to interrogate Cummings regarding the location of the nerve gas. Jack physically beats Cummings and when

⁷⁶ At this point in the narrative, President Logan is essentially innocent with regard to the terrorist activity, while Walt Cummings is revealed to have helped the terrorist obtain the military-grade nerve gas.

⁷⁷ Agent Pierce originally appeared in the first season when he was assigned to then Senator David Palmer’s security detail. Agent Pierce then became President Palmer’s personal guard, working for Logan’s administration in the White House. Like Jack, Aaron is unwaveringly patriotic, loyal, and incorruptible.

Cummings claims he does not know the location of the nerve gas Jack pulls out a knife and holds it to Cummings' eye. Consider the following dialogue:

Jack: I'm done talkin' with you. You understand me? Now, you've read my file. First thing I'm gonna do, I'm gonna take out your right eye, then your left, and then I'm gonna cut you. I'm gonna keep cutting you until I get the information that I need. Do you understand me? So, for the last time, where is the nerve gas?

Cummings: I don't know. [Jack grabs Cummings in a head lock and places the knife under Cummings' right eye.] Stop! Stop! I'll tell you! I'll tell you! It's on a freighter leaving the Port of Long Beach at 2:30.

Jack releases Cummings who falls to the floor. Both Jack and Agent Pierce surrender their weapons to the president; however, Logan asks Agent Pierce to resume his duties and Logan reinstates Jack to CTU to help recover the nerve gas.⁷⁸

Again, what is paramount is that everyone involved in the scene is acting on a pure belief of duty. For Cummings, who expected that the Russian terrorists would use the nerve gas on their own country and that their actions would eventually pave the way for the United States to obtain oil, his actions would ultimately benefit the economic security of the country. Likewise, for Jack, torturing Cummings to obtain information is necessary to help retrieve the nerve gas. What is interesting that is that, rather than wait for Logan (or anyone else) to arrest him (as happened in the previous season), Jack is willing to surrender himself, since his actions were technically outside legal bounds – and his deal with Logan suggests that Jack is certainly willing to give up his life again. But as regards the argument for torture, Jack's actions nevertheless prove successful and once again Jack is shown to be right. Accordingly, the argument of necessity is reinforced, since Jack had no other way of obtaining the information, given the details of the scenario.

In the next episode, titled “1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.”, Jack interrogates a man named Jacob Rossler, a software programmer who engages in illegal activities⁷⁹ and who is hired by the terrorists to reprogram the trigger devices on the canisters of nerve gas. During the scene, Rossler is shot in the leg when CTU

⁷⁸ With the agreement that Jack (who is supposed to be dead and who is wanted by the Chinese government) would “disappear” when the events of the day are over.

⁷⁹ Most notably sex trafficking.

agents storm Rossler's dwelling. In the course of the interrogation Jack questions Rossler who displays a defiant attitude and tells Jack to "Go to hell." Consider the dialogue that follows:

Jack: That is exactly where I'm going to send you unless you start to cooperate. You like hurting girls? Curtis. [Curtis steps on Rossler's leg; Rossler screams in pain.] By the time I'm finished with you, you're gonna wish you felt this good again. Where is Erwich?

Rossler: I want full immunity, unfreezing of all my assets, and transport to a foreign country of my choosing.

Jack: No.

Rossler: And Inessa.⁸⁰ She comes with me. That's the deal.

Jack: Maybe I'm not making myself clear. We're not making a deal! Curtis!

Curtis steps on Rossler's leg again. However, CTU Director Lynn McGill intervenes and orders Jack to accept the deal. Jack reluctantly agrees and after the Attorney General approves the deal Rossler gives Jack information that proves useful.

What is significant is that, as with previous seasons, we see a clearly guilty criminal hold all the cards and be able to dictate a deal with law enforcement and a presidential administration. Besides the fact that the criminal (in this case, Rossler) actually possesses crucial information, the logic of cutting a deal, as the narrative reinforces, relies on the utilitarian reasoning of letting one guilty person go free so that thousands of innocent people will live. Whether it be a pardon or immunity or extradition, the argument suggests that making such a deal – as opposed to resorting to torture, pursuing another lead, or just letting the clock run out – is the right thing to do. As regards torture, these "deal" scenes serve to build up tension in the narrative's progression. Yet, they also work as a means of both countering the torture option (by providing a viable alternative, one that also happens to play on the psychology of the villain) and reinforcing the argument for torture (because the thought of cutting a deal with a villain seems ethically wrong). In Rossler's case, Jack working with Curtis (as he did with Chase in the third season) is able to inflict some form of payback for Rossler's crime, especially as regards Inessa. Lynn's decision only serves to heighten the tension, but it soon released when Inessa gets a hold of a gun and kills Rossler before Jack can disarm her. While his death relieves CTU and the White House from having to abide by an immunity

⁸⁰ Inessa Kovalevsky is a 15 year-old girl kidnapped from Kiev and put into sex trafficking. Rossler, a man who is at least 50 years old, considers Inessa to be his property.

agreement that would have kept Rossler in business and Inessa in slavery, that fact that the deal was made in the first place still resonates in the narrative, as a necessary evil in the overall fight against terror.

A few hours later, in the eleventh episode, titled “5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.”, the narrative finds Jack at the house of Christopher Henderson, a former CTU agent (who recruited and trained Jack) who now works as a defense contractor. Henderson’s character is a combination of Walt Cummings and Jacob Rossler in that Henderson believes he is acting for the good of the country, but his hands are more than dirty. Jack questions both Henderson and his wife Miriam about Henderson’s actions; Jack wants information on the terrorists, but Henderson refuses to divulge anything. Frustrated by Henderson’s stubbornness, Jack shoots Miriam in the leg, but Henderson remains adamant. So Jack decides to take Henderson to CTU for “medical interrogation” and in the twelfth episode (6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) Jack, working with Agent Burke, questions Henderson while Burke injects Henderson with various drugs. As Jack tells Audrey prior to beginning the interrogation: “Whatever he’s not telling us is important. He knows what’s coming and he’s willing to tolerate an inhuman amount of pain.” Jack pleads with Henderson to talk but Henderson refuses and Agent Burke injects Henderson with drugs. As the scene plays out, Henderson is able to resist the drugs and the interrogation proves futile.

For the arguments on torture, Henderson’s interrogation mirrors previous interrogations where an interrogation specialist is called in, suggesting that the technique is not just specialized, it is also reliable – otherwise, why employ someone like Agent Burke, whose only job is to torture? For Jack’s narrative, however, Henderson’s interrogation is the third time during the fifth season that Jack aggressively questions a suspect, yet in all three interrogations Jack works with a partner (Agent Pierce, Agent Manning, and Agent Burke), reinforcing the narrative’s progression established in the third season regarding interrogations as a matter of protocol. The next interrogation, however, proves difficult for Jack and for viewers, providing one the best examples where the professional and personal planes intersect.

In the fifteenth episode, titled “9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.”, information gathered from a suspect named Collette Stenger – who, like Rossler, negotiated an immunity deal in exchange for information – names Audrey Raines as a suspect, claiming that Audrey sold her information from the Department of

Defense. Karen Hayes, Head of the Department of Homeland Security's West coast operations, decides to use Agent Burke to interrogate Audrey; both Bill and Jack protest. Consider the exchange between Karen and Bill:

Bill: Burke's interrogation methods should only be used as a last resort.

Karen: This situation warrants a more aggressive approach.

Bill: Then do the same thing to Collette Stenger!

Karen: Stenger is protected by an immunity agreement. We can't touch her unless the information she's provided turns out to be false then we can nullify the agreement.

Bill: So we can torture our own people but we can't touch a criminal?

Jack is able to convince Karen to allow him to question Audrey first; Karen agrees. Jack questions Audrey aggressively (but he doesn't torture her) and he deduces that she is being set up by Collette Stenger to throw CTU off track. Karen, however, is not convinced and she orders Agent Burke to administer an interrogation similar to Henderson's. In the meantime Jack finds information that Collette Stenger lied to CTU, nullifying her immunity agreement and allowing him to question her. Jack holds a gun to Stenger's head and assures her that he will kill her if she doesn't tell him the truth; she confirms Jack's theory and she gives Jack the location of the nerve gas. Audrey's interrogation is then stopped. Given Audrey's narrative history on the show, she is exceedingly sympathetic to viewers and her interrogation is off-putting, reinforcing the argument that innocent people are often tortured out of a perceived necessity and paranoia and not out on the basis of credible and actionable intelligence.

As the narrative progresses, Jack and CTU eventually learn that President Charles Logan has been responsible for all the day's events and in the twenty-third episode Jack, working with Agent Pierce, the first lady, and Mike Novick, abducts President Logan and questions him. Novick asks Jack "if Logan doesn't confess, how far are you willing to go?" to which Jack responds, "as far as I have to." In the final episode of the season, titled "6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.", Jack hijack's Logan's helicopter and flies Logan to an abandoned warehouse, where Jack sets up a video feed to broadcast Logan's interrogation. Jack does not torture or physically harm Logan. Rather, Jack calmly tries to get Logan to confess. Logan, however, denies the claims Jack makes and in doing so Logan articulates what for the 24 narrative is the first explicit argument against the effectiveness of torture. Consider the following statements made by Logan:

Logan: I suppose if you hurt me enough, Jack, I'll say whatever you want, but that won't make it the truth. [...] A man will say anything under torture. This won't mean a thing. [...] You'll make me a martyr. I'll go down in history with Lincoln and Kennedy, but you'll go down with John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald. Is that what you want?

Logan's argument against torture and Jack's actions also marks the first time in 24's narrative that Jack is equated with terrorists (so-called lone-gunmen) like Booth and Oswald and in the final scene of the season Jack finally seems to pay the ultimate price when he is captured by the Chinese. He is shown being dragged into a room after being severely beaten to the point that his face is almost unrecognizable. The beating is not shown, just the results. Yet, the brief dialogue and final shot indicate that this is just the beginning of Jack's torture. Jack, speaking to Cheng Zhi (the director of security at the Chinese Consulate from the fourth season), asks to be killed, to which Cheng replies: "Kill you? You're far too valuable to kill, Mr. Bauer." The final scene shows that Jack is on a large freighter on the Pacific Ocean, bound for China.

Again, it seems as if Jack, who as a hero/villain has committed many crimes of his own in the course of his duty, must continue to pay in some way for his actions. As with the argument Logan makes against the use of torture, Jack's suffering suggests not just that no one is innocent and that even the "good guys" owe a debt, but that the character of Jack Bauer and all that he represents might be questionable. He may be "too valuable to kill," but he's not too valuable to torture. Therefore, as regards the meta-narrative's progression, the fifth season presents the most compelling arguments for and against torture by effectively blending both the personal and professional planes and presenting an evolution of the bad guys and the de-evolution of the good guys. Where the villains are able to utilize the legal system to make deals and gain immunity, the good guys suffer severe physical, emotional, and psychological consequences, thus providing the best demonstration at this point in the progression of 24's meta-narrative against the use of torture.

3.7 Development Four: Our only option

Hypothesis 6: While Season 6 functions as the final stage of development with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative, it also functions as a transition to the conclusion stage seen in Seasons

7 and 8. In terms of the development function, Season 6 reinforces the professional and personal arguments regarding the necessity of torture and the psychological effects of torture established in the first two seasons and developed in Seasons 3, 4, and 5. In terms of the transition function, Season 6 begins to lay the groundwork for a clear argument against torture. This is done by a complete blending of the personal and professional planes, a complete blending of good and bad, and by a presentation of some of 24's most disturbing scenes of torture.

The sixth season of *24* begins at 6:00 a.m. with a morning-commute scene in Los Angeles that shows various people watching the news on a television at a bus station. Reporters are saying that more than nine hundred people have been killed in a series of terrorist bombings that have hit ten cities in eleven weeks, the latest being San Antonio, Texas that occurred the night before. Moments later, a bus explodes killing twenty-three people. All of this terrorist activity began shortly after Wayne Palmer, David Palmer's brother, was sworn in as President of the United States three months ago. In *24*'s overall narrative timeline, the events of season six happen twenty months after season five. During this time, Jack Bauer has been in Chinese custody and as the narrative in the first episode explains, Jack has been tortured every day and was never broken⁸¹; he didn't speak a word in nearly two years. It is never shown exactly what Jack endured at the hands of the Chinese, however, when Jack is first seen, he is shown having long hair and a beard, looking extremely frail, haggard, and withdrawn and his body is severely scarred, most notably his right hand and forearm (as well as various spots on his torso) look as if they have been burned with acid and his back looks as if he was repeatedly whipped.

As the narrative explains, CTU and National Security Advisor Karen Hayes believe that a man named Hamri Al-Assad is behind the attacks and that if he is caught or killed the attacks will stop. Another man named Abu Fayed has contacted President Palmer and agreed to turn over Assad in exchange for

⁸¹ This is reaffirmed in the course of the season; however, in a prequel scene to the sixth season that the Chinese staged a faux-escape, causing Jack to flinch, which the Chinese took as a sign that he gave them information regarding a suspected informant. There is also a Webisode scene included on the seventh season DVD in which Jack is taken to CTU for a debriefing under the suspicion that he may have given the Chinese information. However, this is never discussed during the course of the season.

twenty-five million dollars and Jack Bauer.⁸² President Palmer agreed to this and negotiated Jack's release from a Chinese Prison two days prior to season six. Moments after Jack arrives in Los Angeles, Bill Buchanan and Curtis Manning take Jack into custody and ask him to sacrifice himself for the good of the country; he agrees.

With regard to the progression of the meta-narrative, this first episode concludes the development of the progression begun in Season 3 by providing the most blended presentation of the professional and personal planes. With Jack being sacrificed to the terrorist as part of deal, the development culminates its fullest demonstration of reciprocity: Jack must finally give his life. Accordingly, the "deal" Jack must agree to presents the final appeal of the argument regarding the legality of torture. In other words, at this point in 24's meta-narrative we see a full blending of roles (the good guys and the bad guys are no different from one another) with the same logic Jack had employed in the previous seasons being used against him. As Tom Lennox, the White House Chief of Staff, tells President Palmer: "It isn't right, it isn't wrong. It's simply our only option." As the season's narrative progresses, we see the blending of professional and personal and good and bad continue to develop.

Almost as soon as Jack is given to Fayed in the first episode, titled "6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.", Jack is taken to a room, bound to a chair, and is hooked up to a heart monitor. On a nearby table are several tools that Fayed prepares to use as he talks to Jack. Consider the details of the dialogue:

Fayed: I won't let you die until I'm ready. The Chinese didn't leave much for me to work with. But before you die, you're going to feel what my brother felt. I saw his body. I know how he died. I know what you did to him. You don't need me to tell you the nerves are bundled here. [Fayed pushes a knife into Jack's right shoulder, while an accomplice holds Jack's head – as the blade is shown piercing Jack's flesh, it looks as if Jack sustained several scars from the Chinese in the same area. Fayed then pours acid on the wound to cauterize it and Jack screams.]

Jack: You need to give CTU Assad's location. That was the deal.

Fayed: Assad has lost faith in our fight. He thinks our tactics are failing. He's begun talking about compromise, about laying down our arms and negotiating. But there's no compromise, no negotiation. Assad is a traitor. And soon he will be dead. That's right Jack, CTU is about to kill the wrong man. Assad isn't behind these attacks. He's come here to stop them. He's come here to stop me. [Fayed stabs Jack in the back with a long thin blade, causing Jack to gasp for air.] You will die for nothing.

⁸² In a back-story, Jack apparently tortured and killed Fayed's brother; Fayed wants revenge.

Fayed leaves the room to give CTU Assad's location (and CTU and the military begin to scramble fighter planes to bomb Assad) and then returns to continue torturing Jack. Fayed kneels down next to Jack, holding a pair of pliers to cut off one of Jack's fingers, telling Jack: "Do you remember doing this to my brother?" However, before Fayed begins he is interrupted by one of his men saying that Fayed has an important phone call. Fayed leaves the room and only one man guards Jack. When the guard isn't looking, Jack removes (with his teeth) the heart monitor wrapped on his arm, which causes the machine to appear as if Jack has flatlined. The guard kneels next to Jack to put it back on and Jack, again using his teeth, bites down on the man's neck, killing him.⁸³ Jack then gets the guard's keys and unlocks his handcuffs and escapes.

In the second episode, titled "7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.", Jack is able to find Assad and save him before his house is attacked in the air strike ordered by President Palmer. Jack and Assad hide in a nearby vacant house and interrogate one of Assad's men, Omar, who betrayed Assad and was working with Fayed. Jack suggests going to CTU to use their resources, but Assad disagrees saying: "They will lock me in a room and question me for days! Fayed worked under me for years. I know how he thinks. And I will find him, but I will do it on my terms." Jack, acting on impulse, then grabs Omar by the neck and asks him: "Where is Fayed?" However, Jack is unable to continue questioning Omar and Assad takes over and gets Omar to talk. Afterwards Jack tells Assad "I don't know how to do this anymore," to which Assad replies "You'll remember." It takes a few hours for Jack to remember but as the narrative progresses Jack is forced to kill Agent Curtis Manning in order to save Assad. Jack then watches a mushroom cloud rise over the city of Valencia, California as a so-called "suitcase nuke" is detonated, killing nearly thirteen-thousand people.

All of the events that Jack has endured over the first four hours weigh on Jack's psyche and during the fifth episode of the season, titled "10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.", evidence leads Jack to question his brother, Gray,⁸⁴ about their father, Phillip, and the family's company BXJ Technologies, making Jack even more emotionally compromised. Initially, Jack simply asks Gray some questions, but Gray is hiding

⁸³ It is a particularly vicious scene, with Jack looking and acting like a wild animal and spitting out a chunk of flesh from the man's neck when the man falls to the ground.

⁸⁴ Gray is a nickname that Jack uses for his brother, whose name is actually Graeme. It is never made explicit, but it seems as if Jack is the older brother.

something and tries to avoid giving Jack any real answers. So Jack hits Gray and ties him to a chair with a lamp chord. Jack then holds his hand over Gray's throat and begins to question him. With Gray's wife and son in another room, Jack proceeds to torture his brother first by choking him, then by placing a plastic bag over his head; this takes place over the course of two episodes. Eventually, Gray divulges some information and he and Jack visit the office building of an associate of Gray's named Darren McCarthy. McCarthy is not there but some of Gray's men, who were already at the building with Phillip, take Jack and Phillip captive. Gray orders his men to kill Jack and Phillip and Gray returns home.

In the next episode, titled "12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.", Jack facilitates an escape and calls CTU to surround Gray's house. CTU agents storm the house and take Gray's wife and son to CTU; Jack remains at the house with a platoon of agents to interrogate Gray again, only this time Jack decides to use Agent Burke. Gray is strapped to a chair and Agent Burke connects Gray to lie-detection monitoring equipment. Jack proceeds to question Gray but when Gray remains obstinate Jack instructs Agent Burke to load a syringe. As Jack tells Gray: "It's hyoscine-pentothal. It's a neuro inflammatory designed to induce pain. All you have to do to stop me from using it is tell me how to find McCarthy." Agent Burke administers the syringe and Gray begins to scream and shake; Jack looks scared and conflicted, he walks over to Gray and embraces him, holding his head while he shakes. In a strange juxtaposition Jack keeps compassionately cradling Gray while simultaneously inflicting pain as they talk and as the scene plays out Jack makes Gray suffer an extreme amount of pain to the point that Agent Burke decides to intervene.

In terms of the narrative's progression, the character of Jack is seen returning to his old self, a man extremely dedicated to the mission, willing to do whatever it takes, even if it means having to give his own life or torture his own brother. This serves to further illustrate the de-evolution of Jack and, by extension, the government and the country, as all entities continue to exist in a world where torture is not the only option because there are no other options, it is the only option because they don't know anything else. Indeed, as the season continues, so too does the blending, as the tactics of both the "good guys" and the "bad guys" truly begin to resemble one another. Consider the next torture scene that takes place in the episode titled, "1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m."

Fayed, still at large, forces CTU analyst Morris O'Brian (whom Fayed abducted) to arm the suitcase nukes. Initially, Morris refuses to help Fayed so Fayed's men beat Morris with a baseball bat. Visually, the viewer only sees the bat being swung; however, thuds are heard and Morris screams loudly. Later, Fayed's men are drowning Morris in a bathtub and Morris finally speaks, asking Fayed to stop, but Fayed says he will only stop if Morris agrees to help. In the meantime, Jack and CTU have tracked Morris to Fayed's location, an apartment building that is heavily occupied. Jack decides to have the fire alarm triggered to clear the building and then Jack deduces which room Fayed is in. However, Fayed realizes that it is a trap and he decides to personally torture Morris one more time to convince him to reconfigure the bombs. Fayed gets a drill (with a rather large bit) and while Morris is held up against a wall, Fayed drills into the back of Morris' left shoulder, saying "Your time is up." Morris then falls to the floor. Consider the scene:

Fayed: I will use this all over your body until you die of shock or blood loss. Then I will just find someone else to do what I need. Do you understand?

Morris: Yes.

A girl who had helped abduct and deliver Morris to Fayed decides that she has seen enough and asks Fayed if she can leave. He shoots her and she falls dead next to Morris on the floor; her face looking at his. Fayed then starts the drill again prompting Morris to cry: "Stop! Stop! I'll do it." Morris reprograms the device before Jack and CTU agents storm the room and Fayed is able to escape with the capability to arm the remaining suitcase bombs.

The next torture scene occurs in the twelfth episode, titled "5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.", in which Jack has covertly made his way into the Russian consulate in Los Angeles to interrogate the Russian consul Anatoly Markov, whom Jack believes is working with a former Russian general named Vladimir Gredenکو, a man linked to Fayed. Jack barricades himself in Markov's office, punches Markov several times and eventually uses a cigar cutter to cut one of Markov's fingers. Jack then gives Markov two choices:

Jack: You can either give me the information that I want, and I'll go pick up Gredenکو. Or I can kill you, and I'll make sure Gredenکو finds out. And he'll panic because he'll think you gave him up before you died. He'll be forced to use his exit route. Either way, he stops what he's doing in

this country now! The choice is yours. How do I find Gredenکو? (Jack holds a gun to Markov's head)

Markov: Mojave Desert, Shadow Valley.

While Jack is able to get Markov to talk, Markov's men eventually storm the room and capture Jack and the information Jack obtained is able to be relayed to CTU for a couple of hours.

In the fourteenth episode, titled "7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.", information on CTU Chief of Staff Nadia Yassir's computer suggests that she might be a mole working with the terrorists. She emphatically denies this, but CTU Agent Mike Doyle, the head of Field Operations who replaced Agent Curtis Manning, nevertheless questions her according to procedure. However, Nadia refuses to talk, making her at least seem as if she is hiding something. Consider the scene:

Doyle: I'm asking you once again. Cooperate. Help me put an end to this. (Doyle grabs her neck) I'm warning you. I will do what's necessary to get the answers I need. Do you understand?

Nadia: I understand everything. I read your file. I know what you did in Denver. You enjoy hurting people. You get off on it.

Doyle: We're not here to talk about me. We're here to talk about what you know.

Nadia: I don't know anything. (Doyle grabs her hair and pulls her head back).

While Doyle is physical with Nadia, he does not technically engage in any torturous activity. But what is paramount is that his treatment of Nadia reinforces the methods seen in previous seasons regarding torture as a matter of protocol. However, Nadia's suggestion regarding Doyle's possible personal enjoyment reinforces the blending of the professional and personal planes, as well as the blending of the bad guys and good guys – it is certainly difficult to distinguish between Fayed's methods and Jack's (and Doyle's) methods. Indeed, while Jack has interrogated several women on the show (including Audrey in the fifth season) and he has not let gender prohibit him from being forceful. Accordingly, while Jack's narrative suggests that he tortures only out of necessity, he has been shown (like Doyle) to almost enjoy inflicting pain, despite the pain it in turn gives him. Returning to the scene with Nadia, she is eventually shown to be innocent and Doyle and Nadia eventually are able to develop a mutual respect for each other, with Nadia almost excusing Doyle's behavior as simply being part of his job.

In the next episode, Jack finds the Russian general Gredenکو and, as with similar scenes from previous seasons, Gredenکو pleas for a deal. Consider the following scene from the fifteenth episode, titled "8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.", in which Jack questions Gredenکو:

Jack: You know who I am?
Gredenکو: I know all about you, Agent Bauer.
Jack: Then you know what I'm going to do to you unless you tell me where the bombs are. And when I'm finished, I'm gonna put you on the fastest plane we've got back to Russia. I don't think President Suvarov is gonna be too happy to see you.
Gredenکو: Fayed has the bombs.
Jack: Where is he?
Gredenکو: I don't know, but I can help you find him.
Jack: I'm listening.
Gredenکو: I came here to get security specs for the Edgemont nuclear power plant.
Jack: That's your next target?
Gredenکو: Yes. Fayed's waiting for my call.
Jack: Make the call.
Gredenکو: No. First, my terms. Amnesty from your government and a guarantee I won't be returned to Russia. (Jack just stares at him) What? I'm offering you Fayed. What's the problem? (Jack keeps staring at him) I'm not martyr. I'm soldier. And realist. (Jack keeps staring) If I don't call him soon, Fayed will get suspicious. (Jack just keeps staring).

In the next episode it is shown that Jack agrees to Gredenکو's deal but Jack has no intention of honoring it, because Jack does not trust Gredenکو since Gredenکو "rolled over too easily." No torture is shown in this scene with Gredenکو as none takes place, yet the scene develops the narrative's progression regarding certain villains being able to negotiate freedom in exchange for information. Yet, as with Rossler in the fifth season, Gredenکو does not survive long enough to enjoy his deal, as he is killed while trying to help Fayed escape.

In the final interrogation scene of the season, which takes place during the seventeenth episode (titled "10:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m."), Jack and Doyle are shown physically questioning Fayed. The scene beings with Jack punching Fayed to the point that Jack has to nurse his own hand. Consider the dialogue:

Jack: This country is planning a full retaliatory strike against your people. I can stop it, but tell me where the bombs are. Where are the bombs? (Fayed just looks at Jack) Fayed, this is over. You lost. Save your people. Just tell me where the bombs are.
Fayed: Are you enjoying yourself, Bauer, as much as you enjoyed butchering my little brother?
Jack: Your brother was responsible for the death of dozens of innocent lives. Now you're responsible for thousands. Trust me; I haven't begun to enjoy myself.
Fayed: Go ahead. You'll get nothing from me and you know it.
Jack: We'll see.

Jack continues to physically beat Fayed, who is strapped to a chair. After a while Jack speaks with Doyle, confessing that the interrogation is not working, to which Doyle responds: "Let me have a go with him." Jack refuses, suggesting that it Fayed wants to be martyred, but Doyle proceeds to question Fayed, trying to play on Fayed's vanity. However, Fayed is defiant, claiming that he is doing "the will of God." This

prompts Doyle to draw his gun, but Jack stops Doyle telling him that they are taking Fayed back to CTU for interrogation with “a pharmaceutical package,” then Jack looks at Fayed and says “now we’re gonna have some fun.”

In terms of the narrative’s progression, Jack and Doyle are actually acting out the ritualism of torture established in the second season, as they want Fayed to believe that they will hurt him. Yet, what is paramount is that the ritual does not work on Fayed, which Jack acknowledges. For the professional plane, then, this suggests that torture – if it works at all – will only work on those who are essentially weak or conflicted. But those, like Fayed (and Jack), who are strong and sure of their purpose will not break no matter what kind of torture is inflicted. This is significant in the sense that while comments against torture have been made periodically by various characters in the course of *24*’s narrative up to this point it is not until this scene with Fayed that Jack admits an interrogation is not working. Jack has recognized that other people captured will likely not respond to torture, but Jack begins the interrogation of Fayed by beating Fayed. So Jack either enjoys it, as Fayed thinks, or Jack (despite his years of field experience) believes that he can beat it out of Fayed. In either case, that Jack eventually realizes that Fayed will not respond reinforces the argument on the professional plane that torture does not always work. If this is true, then it makes the personal plane somewhat problematic, for if torture does not work, then all the people like Jack have had to endure has essentially been for nothing. Perhaps this is what motivates Jack to eventually (and gruesomely) kill Fayed instead of torturing him.

As the narrative played out, Jack and Doyle staged a rescue of Fayed using Middle-Eastern looking CTU agents. Fayed, who was suspicious of the rescue manages to kill the CTU agents and escapes, but Jack was able to follow Fayed to the location where the remaining bombs were being held. Jack then singlehandedly kills all of Fayed’s men (in a shoot-out) and then engages Fayed in a long fight scene in which Jack eventually wraps Fayed’s neck in an industrial chain hanging from a warehouse ceiling, which snaps Fayed’s neck as Jack pushes a button that raises the chain, with Jack saying to Fayed: “Say hello to your brother.” At this point in the narrative of the sixth season the main crisis has been averted, the nuclear bombs are secured and Fayed and his network have been killed or captured. The season is not over,

however, and the final seven episodes have Jack hunt down his father⁸⁵, who is the person ultimately responsible for the day's events and rescue Audrey, who had been captured and tortured by Cheng when she tried to look for Jack. While these final episodes of the season do not contain any interrogation or torture scenes, it is through the character of Audrey that torture is referenced.

Jack finds Audrey in the nineteenth episode, titled "12:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m.", and she is shown to be traumatized, as she does not seem to recognize anyone or her surroundings and she can only mutter the same phrase, "Help me, Jack. Please don't let them do this to me." She is taken to CTU where a doctor, Dr. Bradley, finds more than one hundred injection scars on her body, indicating that she had been drugged by Cheng. Bradley, who claims that Audrey is essentially in a catatonic state, argues with Nadia (who at this point in the narrative is now in charge of CTU) over how to treat Audrey. Cheng escaped and Audrey is essentially the only lead to Cheng. CTU Division offices sent Bradley to extract information from Audrey by giving her more drugs, which, Bradley admits, could kill her. However, since she is the only lead and since time is running out, Bradley has no other choice. Doyle, who with Nadia argues against this, eventually releases Jack (who had been placed in holding⁸⁶) and Jack rescues Audrey. Jack is also able to get Audrey to say something other than "Help me, Jack" – she says the name "Bloomfield" and this turns out to be the place where Cheng held her and where he planned his operations.

Again, while no torture or real interrogation takes place, Audrey's narrative serves as a vivid depiction of the effects of torture, one that stands in stark contrast to Jack. Both Jack and Audrey were tortured by Cheng (seemingly out of enjoyment on Cheng's part, as Jack and Audrey did not really have any value to Cheng) but where Jack was able to resume his life as a CTU agent, including being able to think critically and torture when necessary (and prove himself right time after time) Audrey was completely destroyed, unable to re-enter her life and seemingly existing in an out-of-body state, as if she has been forever separated from humanity. Therefore, in terms of the narrative's progression, the sixth season

⁸⁵ In fact, Jack's father, Phillip, is eventually killed in the final episode when F-18s destroy an oil-platform that Phillip was on – Phillip had planned on escaping to China with his grandson, Josh.

⁸⁶ Jack rescued Audrey with the authorization of President Palmer; however, Palmer suffered a brain hemorrhage and Vice-President Noah Daniels orders CTU to stop Jack. Jack then goes rogue in his efforts to save Audrey.

Therefore, in terms of the narrative's progression, the sixth season functions as the final stage of development with regard to the pro-torture arguments on the professional and personal planes: that torture is necessary both as a means of interrogation, as a means of revenge, and as a means of ritual; that those who torture do so willingly regardless of the personal risks involved; that a blending occurs between the professional and personal planes and between the good guys and bad guys; and that Jack Bauer embodies all aspects of the debate on torture. The sixth season also serves to establish the themes that will be concluded in the final two seasons: that the blending of the professional and personal planes and the blending of the good guys and the bad guys – which represents a complete loss of morality, ethics, legality, and spirituality – ultimately suggests that torture is wrong.

3.8 Conclusion One: Redemption

Hypothesis 7: Season 7 functions as the first conclusion with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. With the professional and personal planes effectively fused, the narrative establishes themes of atonement and reciprocity, dramatizing the debate on torture through the microcosm of the characters of Jack Bauer and Renee Walker. Although the ticking bomb scenario continues to be employed in the narrative's progression, torture is no longer sanctioned; rather it is scrutinized and officially forbidden.

The seventh season of *24* was the only season given an extended prologue, a two-hour television movie titled, *24: Redemption*, which aired in November of 2008, two months before the seventh season aired in January of 2009. *Redemption* is set forty-two months after the events of the sixth season, the longest time span between seasons of *24*, and the events portrayed in this prologue take place from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.⁸⁷ on Inauguration Day in the United States, with President Allison Taylor being sworn in at the end of the episode. The narrative finds Jack Bauer living in Sangala⁸⁸, Africa and working at the Okavango School, an American school run by Carl Benton, a former Special Forces member turned

⁸⁷ GMT – Greenwich Mean Time, which is 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

⁸⁸ A fictional African country that resembles Rwanda.

humanitarian who founded the school to help children.⁸⁹ Jack is visited by a man named Frank Tramell, a U.S. Embassy employee serving a Federal subpoena for Jack. Jack ignores Frank and Frank threatens to cut Benton's United Nations funding for the Okavango School. Jack, who has avoided the subpoena for more than a year and who has traveled across three continents doing so, decides to leave but before he can he is pulled into a situation at the school.

It is shown in other scenes that various African militant rebels are rounding up "little soldiers" by kidnapping young boys and forcing them to participate in their war against the government of Africa. A soldier named Youssou Dubaku comes to the Okavango School looking to round up the boys but Jack intervenes while the boys take refuge in a hidden basement of one of the school buildings. Jack manages to kill most of Dubaku's men, but Jack is taken captive and is tortured by Dubaku, who beats Jack and uses a burning machete to try to force Jack to disclose the location of the children. However, Benton stages a rescue and Jack is able to kill Dubaku by thrusting his legs around Dubaku's head and snapping Dubaku's neck. While there are violent scenes shown in the Sangala narrative⁹⁰ this is the only torture scene shown and it is interesting to note that it is Jack, once again, who is being tortured. In terms of the narrative's progression, Jack once again must pay for his past. He is able to avoid the federal subpoena but he is not able to avoid being tortured by Dubaku.

Indeed, it seems that Jack cannot escape torture, even on the other side of the world. Given that Jack is no longer an agent the torture scene becomes entirely personal. It is also important to note that Youssou Dubaku's death prompts his brother, Iké (pronounced ee-kay) Dubaku, to seek revenge and it is Iké Dubaku who is shown to be one of the main villains in the seventh season, thus, Jack's crime (killing Youssou Dubaku) follows him home, serving as one of the causes of the events that transpire in the seventh season. Eventually, Jack makes his way to the U.S. Embassy and returns to America with several children he has saved. What is paramount is that this prologue establishes a new narrative arc for Jack, one of

⁸⁹ It is significant to note that *Redemption* represents the first time we see Jack in a location other than Los Angeles. This trend follows as the seventh season is set in Washington, D.C. and the eighth season is set in New York City.

⁹⁰ Which is intercut with scenes back in Washington, D.C. of President-elect Taylor's family, especially her son, Roger, whose friend was involved with activities essentially related to the events in Sangala. Roger is then killed after the event of *Redemption* but before the events of the seventh season.

redemption (as the title of the movie suggests) in which Jack seeks to defend his actions but also in which Jack must learn to live with the choices he has made and forgive himself for whatever sins he thinks he has committed. In other words, the conclusion for *24*'s meta-narrative progression suggests not just that torture is wrong, but that the price one must pay for being a torturer (or that the country must pay for condoning torture) is severe to the point that its debt may never be fully or adequately repaid. While torture has now become officially forbidden in the government and its agencies (and CTU has been decommissioned specifically because its use of torture) the narrative progression of the seventh season re-dramatizes, if you will, the debate on torture seen in the previous six seasons, as a sort of recapitulation, not to re-argue the debate but rather to re-illustrate its negative aspects in a condensed and concentrated format by focusing on the character of Jack Bauer and especially on a new character, FBI agent Renee Walker. Let us now consider the narrative of the seventh season, which takes place sixty-five days after the *Redemption* episode.

After a brief prologue scene in which a computer expert is abducted by a terrorist squad, Season Seven begins at 8:00 a.m. with Jack Bauer being questioned in Washington D. C. by Senator Blaine Mayer. Mayer is chair of a Senate subcommittee investigating human rights violations by the recently disbanded CTU. Mayer questions Jack extensively with the goal of showing that Jack and CTU had used extreme methods in the interrogation of suspects. When Mayer pointedly asks Jack if Jack had tortured a man named Haddad, Jack answers: "According to the definition set forth by the Geneva Convention, yes I did. [...] when I am activated, when I am brought into a situation, there is a reason and that reason is to complete the objectives of my mission at all costs." Mayer, who does not agree with Jack's reasoning, suggests that Jack considers himself to be above the law, to which Jack responds:

For a combat soldier, the difference between success and failure is your ability to adapt to your enemy. The people I deal with, they don't care about your rules. All they care about is a result. My job is to stop them from accomplishing their objectives. I simply adapted. In answer to your question, am I above the law? No sir. *I am more than willing to be judged by the people you claim to represent. I will let them decide what price I should pay.* But please do not sit there with that smug look on your face and expect me to regret the decisions that I have made because, sir, the truth is, I don't (Season 7, "8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m." emphasis added).

What is paramount about this scene is that for the first time in the series the issue of torture is explicitly being questioned. While certain characters have voiced opinions on both sides of the debate from time to time in each season, the visual of Jack Bauer being questioned by a Senate subcommittee brings both the character of Jack Bauer and the issue of torture out into the open. Like the real-world incident involving the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame by journalist Robert Novak,⁹¹ Jack Bauer's identity is no longer protected. Moreover, having him answer for his actions and for the methods used at CTU allow the narrative to directly engage the debate on torture; a debate that continues throughout the season, especially after Jack is called away from the Senate hearing to assist the FBI in a terrorist-related investigation.

The FBI discovered a terrorist plan to infiltrate America's computer infrastructure and they subpoena Jack Bauer to aid in the investigation; according to the FBI's information, Tony Almeida (whom Jack thought was killed in the fifth season) is apparently working with the domestic anti-government terrorist group and Renee Walker believes Jack can help. In terms of the narrative's progression, this serves to establish the ticking bomb scenario, but since it is the FBI's investigation (and not the disbanded CTU's investigation) the methodology is different. Not long after Jack is brought to the Washington, D.C. FBI office he is able to deduce that Tony is likely working with a man named Schector. Renee's boss, Larry Moss, wants to issue a warrant and do things "by the book" but Jack suggests that Moss's plan would waste time. Consider the following excerpt from a scene with Larry and Jack that takes place during the first episode⁹²:

Jack: You don't have time to go through the motions with Schector.

Larry: So, what's the alternative Jack? Break in and torture the guy like you used to do? Isn't that how you ended up in front of a Senate subcommittee? [Jack stands up] Oh, is this how it starts? You get in my face, tighten your jaw, then if I say something you don't like, you slam me against the wall?

Jack: You have no idea what I do.

Renee intervenes and pleads with Larry to let her take Jack in the field with her. Renee suggests that Jack's presence alone would help. Consider the exchange:

⁹¹ Novak mentioned that Plame was a CIA operative in his July 14, 2003 Washington Post column, effectively ending her career as a covert agent.

⁹² Titled "8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m."

Larry: So you want to intimidate him with Bauer?
Renee: Schector knows how far Bauer might go. Let's use that.
Larry: Yeah, and if Schector doesn't blink, then what?
Renee: I'll keep Bauer on a short leash.
Larry: Renee, we're the FBI, not CTU. We honor the law even when it's not convenient.
Renee: The situation is heating up fast, Larry. The president's into it now, and she's expecting results.

Larry agrees but says he will hold Renee responsible if anything happens. What is paramount, however, is that Renee begins to utilize the same logic seen in previous seasons: a ticking bomb scenario in which time is a factor is at play; the president wants results; and Jack's methods typically provide results. Renee is not condoning torture yet; however, she is at least acknowledging some merit to Jack's technique. Moreover, Larry's condition to hold Renee responsible serves as a warning (in the sense of foreshadowing) that she, like Jack, will ultimately have to pay a price.

Echoing Larry's warning, Jack advises Renee, prior to visiting Schector, that Schector will probably not divulge information easily to which Renee responds:

Just remember, this is an FBI operation. We work within the confines of the law. You can threaten him, but do not lay a hand on him. The minute I see you crossing that line, I will pull you back. Understood?

Jack understands but as the scene plays out Jack is proven correct. Schector feigns ignorance about Tony Almeida and as Schector's body-guard, a man name Ari, approaches Renee to try to force her and Jack to leave Renee physically assaults the body-guard (a man twice her size) and draws her weapon on Schector; Jack backs her up by drawing his weapon. Consider the dialogue that follows:

Schector: You two are going to prison. This was unprovoked. Unprovoked!
Renee: Your man Ari was going for his gun. I've got a witness.
Jack: Why don't we try having this conversation again? Where's Tony Almeida?
Schector: No. I'm not talking to you.
Jack: Where is he?
Schector: Tony Almeida is dead.
Jack: (to Renee) What do you want me to do? This is your call.
Renee: Whatever it takes.
Schector: This is against the law, you can't do this.
Jack: I'm going to enjoy this.
Schector: Enjoy what?

Jack grabs a ball-point pen, holds Schector down and is about to jam the pen into Schector's eye, but Schector decides to talk. However, before Schector can say anything a sniper shoots Schector and Ari,

killing them both. What is significant is that in less than an hour after being questioned by Senator Mayer, Jack has resorted to using torture again and, more significantly, Renee is quickly succumbing to Jack's methodology. Indeed, she does not just facilitate it she actively begins to participate in it, though not without reservations.

After their meeting with Schector, Jack suggests to Renee that perhaps the FBI is compromised and that they should work alone. Renee does not agree and she places Jack in custody. However, less than thirty minutes later Jack identifies a man he believes is the sniper and Jack convinces Renee to follow the man alone. She agrees and lies to other FBI agents and to Larry so that she and Jack can follow the suspect. She then questions Jack about how far he would have gone with Schector had the scene played out. Jack suggests that he would have done "whatever it takes" to get Schector to talk but that since Schector was killed "it doesn't matter now." Renee then questions how Jack justifies his past to which Jack responds:

You know, I've been answering a lot of questions lately about my past, and frankly, I'm done. I told you I'd help you find Tony Almeida. I even agreed to do it your way. Since the FBI's been compromised, that's no longer an option. Now, I can still help you find him, but you're going to have to let me do it my way.

As the episode plays out, Jack is proven correct: the suspect leads them to Tony Almeida's hideout on a boat and after a brief confrontation they are able to apprehend Tony. What is paramount is that Renee is beginning to realize that Jack's ways work and once they return to the FBI office with Tony, Renee convinces Larry to allow Jack to interrogate Tony. Accordingly, when the interrogation turns violent (Jack throws a table to the floor, slams Tony against a wall, and proceeds to choke Tony) she stops Larry from intervening. This inadvertently allows Tony time to whisper an old CTU code word to Jack ("Deep Sky") conveying to Jack that Tony is actually working undercover. Eventually, Jack learns that Bill Buchanan and Chloe O'Brian are working with Tony in an elaborate sting operation (to capture Dubaku) and Bill convinces Jack to help Tony get back undercover with a man named Emerson, which requires Jack to facilitate an escape from the FBI.

Jack had to subdue Renee (he forcibly holds her until she passes out) in order to help Tony escape and in the following episode (titled "11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.") Renee, feeling responsible for Jack and Tony's escape, illegally interrogates a man named Tanner (an accomplice of Tony's who was wounded in

the boat raid) so that she can learn where Jack and Tony may have gone. Renee convinces an FBI co-worker named Janice to help her covertly enter Tanner's hospital room. Renee blocks Tanner's ventilator, which forces Tanner to explain that Tony (and Emerson's crew) plans to abduct the Sangalan Prime Minister Ule Matobo. Renee then calls Larry to pass on the information and to inform him that she is proceeding alone to the Prime Minister's location. Larry sends help, however, Renee is taken hostage and by the end of the episode Emerson orders Jack and Tony to kill Renee and bury her in a ditch. Jack shoots Renee, she falls in the ditch, and Tony covers her with dirt. However, Jack only wounded her and she manages to escape at the beginning of the next episode with Bill and Chloe's help. What is significant is that within the course of a few hours Renee has essentially become a female Jack Bauer. She has facilitated torture, lied to her superiors, actively tortured, operated under her own authority, and placed her life in jeopardy. On the surface, this suggests that perhaps Jack's methods are the right ones to adopt. However, as the narrative progresses, Renee's seduction, if you will, actually serves to illustrate the horror of being Jack Bauer, making a strong argument against adopting his methods, regardless of what fruit they seem to bear. For Jack, who himself has been dragged into a situation in which he has had to quickly become "Jack Bauer" again, his rebirth eventually comes at a price, reinforcing the narrative progression's conclusion being developed in the seventh season.

As the season continues to unfold, Jack convinces Bill to disclose what they know to President Taylor. They meet with her in the Oval Office and inform her that they have discovered a plot to undermine her foreign policy with regard to Sangala (she plans to invade Sangala and stop General Juma's genocidal war). President Taylor is furious that the efforts of Jack and Bill led to a loss of 300 innocent lives when Dubaku utilized a device (obtained by Tony) to cause two airplanes to crash above the sky in Washington, D.C.⁹³ What is significant is that it is Renee who comes to Jack's and Bill's defense. As she tells President Taylor:

I was part of the FBI task force assigned to recover the C.I.P. device and I can personally vouch for what [Jack and Bill] are telling you. The loss of life was tragic, yes. But in my opinion, everything these men have done saved the lives of thousands.

⁹³ Which happened in episode six, titled "1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m."

In the middle of the meeting, however, President Taylor receives a call from Dubaku claiming that her husband has been abducted. Dubaku demands that President Taylor withdraw U.S. forces from Sangala and deliver the Sangalan Prime Minister by 4:00 p.m. (within forty-five minutes) or her husband will die; Dubaku proves he is serious by cutting off one of Henry's fingers while President Taylor listens to Henry scream over the phone. The White House Chief of Staff, Ethan Kanin, who was in the room, suggests that President Taylor give in to Dubaku's demands to which President Taylor responds: "How can I ask the American people to make sacrifices that I am not willing to make myself?"

Despite President Taylor's resolve, Jack convinces her to go along with Dubaku's demands in order to give him and Renee time to find her husband; he seals the deal with his standard phrase: "You don't have another choice." She agrees and Jack and Renee (who is still officially presumed dead in order to continue to convince Dubaku and his men that their plans are working) meet with Larry to devise a plan concerning a secret service agent named Vossler, whom they believe aided in Henry Taylor's abduction. Jack argues that since Vossler is a former special forces soldier he cannot be "broken" in time, so Jack suggests that Renee find Vossler's family (a wife and 11-month old son). As Jack reasons, "The only way to get him to cooperate is to make him think we're going to hurt his family, his wife and his kid." Larry refuses and Renee exclaims: "That's stepping over the line, Jack." Jack reminds her that she crossed the line when she interrogated Tanner and Jack effectively argues that the villains do not play by "the same rules" and that their job is to do whatever is necessary to stop the villains. Although she appears reluctant, Renee decides to find Vossler's family. After she leaves, Larry confronts Jack saying, "You have lost everyone and everything you've ever had by doing what you think is necessary. I won't let you do it to her, Bauer. Renee will not end up like you [...] the rules make us better," to which Jack responds, "Not today."

Jack appears resolute in his conviction; yet, minutes later when he has captured Vossler and Renee is holding Vossler's wife and baby hostage, Jack appears squeamish. Jack holds Vossler at gunpoint and forces him to listen to his wife and son scream; it is the baby's screams that seem to affect Jack. Vossler refuses to talk, so Renee decides to walk over to the baby's crib. While the infant is heard screaming, it is not entirely clear if she actually harms the boy, as nothing physical is shown; his screams could simply be

out of fear. Nevertheless, the situation is traumatic and unsettling, as the baby's screams are horrifying. By contrast, Renee appears robotic and sterile, as if under a trance, causing the baby's mother to claim that Renee is "a monster." Renee's tactic works, however, as Vossler divulges information to Jack regarding the whereabouts of the President's husband. Afterwards, Jack calls Renee to convey the information and then asks her if she is okay, to which she replies, "No, I don't think I am," while looking as if she has come out of her trance and realized what she has done. Jack tries to comfort her telling her that perhaps she should quit. She tearfully agrees, but then adds "tomorrow."

Renee's digression is tragic. While the methods she adopts are successful and the resolve with which she carries them out is heroic, her downfall has come fast. Consider a conversation Renee has with Larry concerning her involvement with Vossler's wife and baby.

Larry: Jack Bauer is about to be strung up by a senate sub-committee and you are following his playbook. You got the A.G.'s office looking into that thing you pulled with Tanner's respirator and now this.

Renee: No one was actually hurt.

Larry: Bauer killed the woman's husband! Renee, I swear to you here, I am scared of what is happening to you. You put these people through hell, and it doesn't bother you.

Renee: I didn't say that it doesn't bother me, Larry. I said that it worked. Of course it bothers me, I can see the woman's face, she and her child staring at me with such – she had no idea that her husband was a killer, a traitor to his country and she looked at me like *I* was the monster.

Indeed, Renee's initial reaction to her own actions is one of disgust and disappointment, reactions that continue to plague her throughout the remainder of the season. Yet, she is also beginning to believe and use Jack's logic in order to justify her actions. For 24's narrative progression, however, this presents the first time that an infant is used as a means of interrogation⁹⁴ and given how the scene was disturbingly portrayed Renee would have likely harmed the child had it become necessary.

In the following episode ("4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.") Jack and Renee have tracked down Dubaku's girlfriend Marika at an apartment that she shares with her sister Rosa. They confront Marika about Dubaku and they learn that Dubaku is going to send a driver over to pick up Marika, who previously agreed to leave the country with him.⁹⁵ Renee's first instinct is to capture the driver and "get him to tell us Dubaku's location," however, Jack does not think they have enough time for an interrogation and suggests that they

⁹⁴ Though it is not the first time a suspect's family is threatened.

⁹⁵ Since Dubaku's plan to kill Henry Taylor failed, Dubaku decides to flee to Belize.

use Marika as bait. Marika agrees but the plan does not work. As a result, Marika is killed but Jack is able to retrieve information from Dubaku⁹⁶, who survives and is taken to a hospital. As Renee and Jack wait in a hospital corridor while Dubaku is being treated, Renee contemplates Marika's death. Jack is focused on the information they were able to recover from Dubaku, but Renee is conflicted. Jack suggests that their actions were necessary and that Renee "better figure out a way to live with it" to which Renee replies: "How, Jack? Pretend that it never happened? Is it that easy for you?" Jack does not respond but his visual reaction suggests that he does feel something emotionally. The difference for Jack, however, is that he has learned through years of experience as a torturer, as Tony claimed in the fourth season, to become comfortable in hell. Indeed, given all that Jack has done up to this point in 24's meta-narrative, another innocent person's death does not yet provide enough weight to distract Jack from his objective.⁹⁷

Renee, however, is confronted at the hospital by Marika's sister Rosa and after having to tell Rosa that Marika died Renee talks with Jack again. Jack insists that their actions were necessary but Renee disagrees. Consider the following excerpt from the tenth episode:

Jack: What happened to Marika was a tragedy. But I'm not going to stand here and tell you what we did was wrong, because we weren't. She made a choice, a brave one, to get involved. But *she* made it.

Renee: God, listen to yourself, Jack. You don't even sound human. Don't you feel anything? [...] When your wife was killed, did you feel that? Or did you just tell yourself that that was necessary?

Jack: What do you want from me?

Renee: I just want to know that you feel something. I want to know that you feel the same kind of pain that I do! (Renee slaps his face.) Do you feel that? (She slaps him again.) Do you feel that?

Renee begins to cry and Jack tries to comfort her saying that she "will learn to live with it" to which Renee responds "What if I don't want to learn to live with it?" Jack then tells her to quit and he walks away. While Jack has been shown to emotionally break down in previous seasons⁹⁸, his character, as Renee observes, has largely maintained an almost inhuman ability to disassociate himself from his actions and compartmentalize his feelings. However, Renee's questioning of Jack – like Senator Mayer's questioning –

⁹⁶ By telling EMTs to without treatment of Dubaku and by threatening to kill Dubaku's son who is back in Africa.

⁹⁷ It also helps that Marika died as a result of her own actions: she volunteered to help capture Dubaku and she caused a car accident to prevent him from escaping.

⁹⁸ Most notably at the end of season one when he finds his slain wife and at the end of season three when he cries in his car before driving back to CTU – after severing Chase's hand in order to stop bomb from exploding in a school.

allows 24's meta-narrative the opportunity to not just dramatize Jack's perspective (which is often proven right, as it has played out countless times in the various plotlines) but to articulate it as well, reinforcing his position that his actions (however deplorable) are not just right in his eyes, they are necessary. Indeed, Jack has made arguments (usually with his superiors) in favor of taking the action he knows will produce results, but not until season seven do we truly understand Jack's perspective, nor do we feel (as Renee was wanting to feel) Jack's emotion and inner conflict regarding the choices he has made. It is interesting to note that Jack and Renee both reflect the same inner turmoil, though in different ways. With the hospital scene serving as a nexus, Renee becomes more stoic and less emotional while Jack becomes less stoic and more emotional. Indeed, in the fifteenth episode Jack uncharacteristically jeopardizes a mission in order to save a security guard who had inadvertently got caught up in the situation; however, in the next episode Renee tells Jack that he "did the right thing."

As the season progresses Renee finds herself, like Jack in previous seasons, having to disobey her superiors and operate essentially as a rogue agent. Also like Jack, Renee succeeds in gaining valuable information that eventually leads to her being able to help capture a man named Alan Wilson, who is shown to be the mastermind of the day's events. In the final episode of the season (titled "7:00 a.m. to 8:00 am.") Renee confronts Wilson as he is being treated for wounds; she blames him for being responsible for all the lives lost during the course of the day and suggests that if he cooperates he may be able to avoid the death penalty. Wilson feigns ignorance, claims that Renee will not find any direct proof linking him to the terrorist activities, and essentially hides behind the law. Renee then finds Jack, who is also being treated for wounds and asks his advice on how to handle Wilson; she essentially wants to torture Wilson to make him talk. Consider the following passage:

Jack: I can't tell you what to do. I've been wrestling with this one my whole life. I see fifteen people held hostage on a bus, and everything else goes out the window. I will do whatever it takes to save them – and I mean whatever it takes. I guess maybe I thought if I save them I could save myself.

Renee: Do you regret anything that you did today?

Jack: No. But then again, I don't work for the F.B.I.

Renee: I don't understand.

Jack: You took an oath. You made a promise to uphold the law. When you cross that line, it always starts off with a small step. Before you know it, you're running as fast as you can in the wrong direction just to justify what you started in the first place. These laws are written by much

smarter men than me. And in the end, I know that these laws have to be more important than the fifteen people on the bus. I know that's right. In my mind I know that's right. I just don't think my heart could ever have lived with that. I guess the only advice I can give you is: try to make choices that you can live with.

Jack has resigned himself to the fact that he will likely die (in a matter of days, if not hours) as a result of being exposed to a weaponized pathogen⁹⁹ and his discussion with Renee takes place prior to his being transported to a hospital; Jack had continued to work toward stopping the terrorists despite his growing affliction, which by the twenty-fourth episode has become severe. Jack's only hope is an experimental stem-cell procedure that would require his daughter's help, but Jack refuses to allow his daughter to get involved and seemingly would rather die.

Indeed, after being exposed to the pathogen Jack begins to suffer seizure-like symptoms and although is willing to self-administer medication to keep manage the symptoms (and allow him to continue working to stop the terrorists) he refuses any pain medication every time it is offered, suggesting that he would rather feel the pain than ease it. In terms of the narrative's progression, then, we see Renee and Jack both embody the merged professional and personal planes of the torture debate. For Renee, she has quickly de-evolved from a law-abiding FBI agent into a person not just capable of torture but a person wanting to torture, not out of enjoyment but out of a dual desire to get results and to make the terrorists pay. Jack, on the other hand, has continued his trajectory of accepting the consequences that befall him. He is adamant that his actions are correct, but he also knows that he must face a reckoning and atone for what he has done. The reality of Jack is that he can no longer live with the decisions he has made. Therefore, while torture is once again shown to be useful and productive as a means of acquiring information and stopping terrorist activity, the price it requires – the loss of one's soul (for Renee) and the loss of one's life (for Jack) – are perhaps too much to bare for both the professional plane (for the agencies that protect us) and for the personal plane (for the general public). Indeed, the narrative seems to be suggesting, through the dramatization seen in Jack's and Renee's character arcs, that the collective loss of morality does not adequately justify the use of torture, that abandoning the law in the name of safety is not a fair tradeoff, and that the sacrifices made professionally and personally are essentially in vain if they cost having to

⁹⁹ Which happened in the fifteenth episode, titled "10:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.")

relinquish a nation's morality and collective soul. For example, during a scene between Jack and Senator Mayer that takes place during the fourteenth episode titled "9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.," Jack confesses that he regrets most of what he has done in his life, especially losing his family, but that what he most regrets is "that this world even needs people like me." Mayer responds by saying that "sometimes we need to incur the most horrible losses in order to uphold the ideals that this country was founded on," rhetorically adding, "How can we presume to lead the world, unless we set the example?"

In the final moments of the twenty-fourth episode of the seventh season, Jack is visited in the hospital by an Imam named Muhtadi Gohar, an Islamic mosque leader Jack had met earlier in the day while trying to apprehend a suspected terrorist. Jack, who at this point is preparing himself to die, essentially calls Gohar in an attempt to offer a confession and perhaps seek solace, if not redemption, in his final moments. Consider the following excerpt:

Jack: I made so many mistakes. And I always thought that I would have the time to correct them.
Gohar: You have the time. Right now.
Jack: You don't know what I've done.
Gohar: We live in complex times, Mr. Bauer. Nothing is black and white. But I do know this: I see before me a man with all his flaws and all his goodness. Simply a man. Let us both forgive ourselves for all the wrongs that we have done.
Jack: Thank you.

Jack, of course, is able to escape death yet one more time, as his daughter Kim volunteers for an experimental procedure without Jack's knowledge. Like Prometheus, Jack is caught in a seemingly endless cycle of torture as a result of helping humanity. That Jack cannot simply die and that he must periodically forfeit his identity suggests that Jack's rebirth is not one of joy or happiness, but rather one of more pain and misery. His penance of suffering must continue. That Jack is inadvertently able to bequeath his torment to Renee tragically suggests that the cycle of violence never ends. For example, in the final four minutes of the seventh season, Renee is shown inside a holding room where Alan Wilson was taken; she is observing Wilson through a glass wall. Janis gives Renee transfer documents to sign but Renee asks Janis to leave the room. Janis refuses so Renee breaks the keypad on the door and cuffs Janis to a pole. Renee then places her badge on a table and enters the room where Wilson is being kept and closes the door behind her. While

nothing else is shown, it is clear that Renee's descent is finally complete: torture begets torture. Let us now examine how the eighth season offers a final conclusion to the progression of *24*'s meta-narrative.

3.9 Conclusion Two: The price of peace

Hypothesis 8: Season 8 functions as the final conclusion with regard to the narrative progression of 24's meta-narrative. It becomes clear through the individual and tragic narrative arcs of Jack Bauer and Renee Walker that torture is wrong and that any possible professional benefits of its use do not outweigh its personal costs.

The eighth season of *24* begins eighteen months after the events of the seventh season, with Jack baby-sitting his granddaughter, Teri, and seemingly living a normal life in an apartment in New York City. Jack's daughter Kim arrives and Jack plans on meeting Kim and Teri at the airport later to start a new life. However, while Jack is packing his clothes an old associate named Victor Aruz, an informant who had helped Jack with the Salazars in the third season, arrives at Jack's door. Aruz was hired by a Russian agent to help get a contract-killer into the United States to assassinate President Omar Hassan of the Islamic Republic of Kamistan¹⁰⁰, who had negotiated a peace treaty with several countries including the Russia and the United States. However, Aruz was wounded when the Russian agent tried to cover his tracks. Aruz asks Jack to help him get immunity in exchange for what he knows and Jack agrees, but the Russian agent is able to track Aruz and kill him. However, Jack is able to get some information out of Aruz before he dies and Jack begins to work with the New York office of the reinstated CTU to protect President Hassan. While the eighth season of *24* continues to dramatize various scenes of brutality, murders, and extreme violence, there are actually relatively few torture scenes, making the scenes that do occur carry more weight. Accordingly, it is the character of Jack Bauer who gets tortured in the first two torture scenes, one that takes place during the third episode and one that takes place during the eighth episode, reinforcing that theme that Jack must continue to pay for his actions. Let us consider both of these situations.

¹⁰⁰ A fictional Middle Eastern country.

In the third episode, titled “6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.”, Jack has followed a lead to the home of an NYPD officer. When Jack arrives at the house he finds the officer and the officer’s wife dead. An NYPD squad car arrives at the house at the same time that Jack is there and Jack is caught off-guard. One of the officers thinks that Jack is the murderer (a “cop killer”) and decides to take Jack to the home’s basement and beat him up. Eventually, Jack is able to catch the officer off-guard and escape. Later, in the eighth episode, titled “11:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.”, Jack has again been captured, this time by associates of a Russian mobster named Sergei Bazhaev, who has helped President Hassan’s brother, Farhad Hassan, acquire nuclear rods for the country of Kamistan. Jack had been posing as an arms dealer using the alias Ernst Meier and Bazhaev’s men interrogate Jack, thinking that Jack is an undercover cop. Jack is taken to a back room in Bazhaev’s restaurant and, in a scene reminiscent of the second season, Jack is hung by his wrists from a pipe in the ceiling. Bazhaev’s man uses jumper cables to shock Jack; this is done several times but eventually Jack is able to use his feet to grab the cables and shock Bazhaev’s man. Jack then escapes and captures Bazhaev, who asks for immunity for himself and for his son, Josef. Jack calls President Taylor and she agrees.

It is interesting to note that during the first eight episodes of the season there are only two scenes of torture and both scenes show Jack Bauer being tortured. With regard to the narrative’s final progression, this suggests that Jack must continue to pay for his actions. This is contrasted with yet another terrorist being able to escape torture by cutting a deal in exchange for information. The next torture scene does not take place until the sixteenth episode, titled “7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.”, in which President Hassan allowed himself to be captured by a man named Samir, a Kamistani terrorist who had tried to assassinate Hassan and detonate a nuclear bomb in New York. During this episode, Hassan is beaten and then his throat is slit. Moreover, while villains continue to ask for and get granted immunity, these torture scenes do not have the same sense of urgency or necessity as with previous seasons; it is as if torture, for this portion of the eighth season’s narrative, is simply an indulgence. It is also worth noting that, at this point in the narrative, it is the villains doing the torturing, not the good guys, with Jack taking the brunt of the torture. Similarly, Renee is

shown in the eighth season as having to deal with the results of her actions and she continues to pay her own price.

Renee is reintroduced in the eighth season like Jack was in the second season: damaged and no longer working for the agency that helped facilitate the damage. It is revealed that she lost her job after her interrogation with Wilson at the end of the seventh season, in which she tortured him to near death; it is also revealed that Renee has survived a recent suicide attempt and has been having problems living a normal life. She is brought in to CTU by director Brian Hastings because of her knowledge of the Russian Syndicate believed to be part of the day's events; she had worked undercover with the Russians six years ago and Hastings wants her to resume her undercover identity. Renee reestablishes her cover in the fourth episode titled "7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m." when she meets a former contact named Ziya who claims that he cannot help her because he is wearing a parole bracelet. Renee convinces Ziya that she can remove the bracelet and after putting his arm in a vice she cuts off Ziya's thumb with a circular saw and removes the bracelet. Jack, who had been listening nearby, rushes in as he hears Ziya's screams and admonishes Renee, suggesting that Ziya will likely not help them now. Unfazed, Renee simply asks Jack to find something to cauterize the wound.

Renee's tactic works and in the next episode Ziya takes her to see a man named Vladimir, who is the head of a Russian gang and who also happens to be a man Renee had to be romantically involved with in her previous undercover assignment.¹⁰¹ However, Vladimir, who is not sure whether he can trust Renee, "tests" Renee, putting her through an emotional torture (which is shown to be severe, given her recent narrative) that worries Jack. Vladimir questions Renee about her whereabouts during the past six years and then he orders his men to put her in the trunk of a car (along with Ziya) and they take her to a waterfront location to kill her. Vladimir shoots Ziya and then holds a gun to Renee's head; however, Renee seems willing to die, as she is initially shown to not resist, closing her eyes as if she were relieved her life was over. This perplexes Vladimir and he hesitates, causing Renee to respond by demanding that he shoot her, saying "I have nowhere to go and no one to go to." While this works – Vladimir allows Renee to live and

¹⁰¹ It is noted that Vladimir had become "obsessed" with Renee to the point that he physically beat her (breaking her ribs) when she fought off his advances, including a rape attempt.

he agrees to do a deal with her¹⁰² – what is paramount is that Renee is serious, she has digressed to the point that her own life does not matter to her anymore. As she continues her assignment, she is eventually forced into having sex with Vladimir; he does not rape her but he does not seem to give her a choice – either she has sex with him or he will not agree to her deal. That she agrees reveals not a dedication to duty but rather a searching for something that matters, as she tells Jack who pleads with her in the next episode to get out: “everything I’ve done will be for nothing.” Indeed, it is this motivation that eventually helps prompt Renee to kill Vladimir.

As the episode played out, Vladimir was unable to find a supplier. Renee is furious and demands that he keep trying; however, Vladimir does not care about the deal anymore, he simply wants Renee to stay with him. She challenges him and he physically assaults her; she fights back by stabbing Vladimir in his left eye and when he falls to the ground she straddles him and continues to stab him fourteen more times, screaming “die, die, die.” Jack rushes in to stop the situation but when he tries to pull her away she stabs Jack in the abdomen and as she realizes what she has done she begins to break down and cry as Jack holds her. Afterwards, Renee tries to apologize to Jack. Consider the following excerpt:

Renee: I just thought that if I [went undercover], I could make it right. I could have my life back.

Jack: You can have your life back anytime you want. You just have to want it.

Renee: I’ve tried and I don’t know how. I don’t have anything, anyone.

Jack: You’ve got me.

The contrast for Jack and Renee reinforces their respective progressions. Renee has deteriorated, losing her will to live because of her past actions and feeling as if she owes a debt. On the other hand, Jack has become more optimistic and sees in Renee a chance for both of them to find redemption and forgiveness by being together. Tragically, it is this relationship which ultimately leads to Jack’s downfall at the end of the season.

As the narrative progresses, circumstances lead to Renee being killed in Jack’s apartment. By the seventeenth episode, titled “8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.”, Jack and Renee had effectively “gotten out” of the situation and had decided to start a life together. However, a Russian sniper sent to “clean things up” shoots Renee, but misses Jack. Jack is able to get Renee to a hospital but she dies as the final seconds of the

¹⁰² The “deal” requires Vladimir to help Renee find a supplier of nuclear rods in exchange for \$50 million.

episode tick away and in the following episode, titled “9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.”, Jack returns to CTU to interrogate CTU Agent Dana Walsh, who was revealed two episodes earlier to be a mole working with the Russians. Before Jack questions Dana, Chloe asks Jack if he is going to kill Dana, to which Jack replies that he needs to “wake her up to the idea of it.” Jack, distraught at watching Renee die, questions Dana, immediately slamming her face into a table when she doesn’t answer his first question. Jack then punches her several times and screams questions at her until she finally agrees to help him. However, Dana, who had negotiated an immunity agreement when she was previously found out (but which was subsequently rescinded when President Hassan was killed) demands that her immunity deal be reinstated. Yet, in the next episode, titled “10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.”, President Taylor, who is now working with and taking advice from former President Charles Logan, decides to declare Dana an enemy combatant and transfers her to a private location for interrogation by a private security firm¹⁰³. Consider the scene between President Taylor and President Logan, in which Logan (who is trying to protect himself) convinces Taylor to keep Dana Walsh “off the grid” and have her be physically tortured:

Logan: Mrs. Walsh may not give up the information willingly, but she will give it up and once we have it, it won’t matter what she claims.

Taylor: You’re talking about using physical coercion.

Logan: I know how deeply this offends your public and private sensibilities. It is repugnant, even immoral. But isn’t morality relative considering what’s at stake here?

Taylor: You are still talking about torture.

Logan: I’m talking about preserving a peace accord that is crucial to the security of this nation and that can only happen if you can acquire and control the evidence. Believe me Madam President I don’t make these suggestions lightly, I appreciate the implications but I’m trying to be as open and candid with you as I have with anyone and the truth is I regret many of my own actions when I was president and I’ve also had the time and the distance to see past them to a place of clear and deep understanding.

Taylor: What do you understand, Charles?

Logan: Wielding the kind of power that you now have and I once had can change the world, but that often requires making impossible choices that challenge our most sacred ideals. If you’re not willing to do that, you should [...] pull out now.

President Taylor eventually agrees and she orders CTU to transfer Dana into the custody of Agent Mark Bledsoe. Later in the episode, President Taylor confesses to now Secretary of State Ethan Kanin about her decision regarding Dana Walsh, saying that she is simply doing what is necessary to preserve the peace treaty. As she reasons: “It’s vital to the security of this nation and what I am doing is for the greater good.”

¹⁰³ Because Dana has evidence implicating those involved in President Hassan’s assassination.

Secretary Kanin does not agree and he resigns in protest, saying “You’ve crossed the line, Madam President.”

What is interesting here is that President Taylor, regardless of being corrupted and manipulated by President Logan, believes, like every other president in 24’s universe, that some things are necessary, including the suspension of certain human rights and especially resorting to torture, all in the name of peace. Nevertheless, it is significant that President Taylor, who was shown to be adamantly opposed to torture in the seventh season (and has thus far been shown to be a president of impeccable character and fortitude), betrays her own principles so quickly, mirroring Renee’s initial digression. Let us now consider the torture scene with Dana Walsh, which takes place in two segments, the first comes at the end of nineteenth episode and the second is shown at the beginning of the twentieth episode.

At the end of the nineteenth episode, titled “10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.”, Dana is shown being taken into a room wearing a black hood over her head. Once in the room, the hood is removed; she is held down by two men while Agent Bledsoe questions her:

Bledsoe: You told Bauer you have evidence, I need to know where it is. Come on Miss Walsh, you know the deal, the sooner you tell me the easier it’ll go.

Dana: Please, I’ve got nothing to tell you, there is no evidence.

Bledsoe: If that’s the way you wanna play it fine.

Agent Bledsoe removes his suit coat while the two other agents take Dana to a wooden table and strap her down. The table is reclined and she is shown being waterboarded, as she is gagged with a towel and water is poured over the towel. While the episode ends with this scene it is presumed that her waterboarding continues into the next episode, titled “11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.”, as Dana is shown being raised up, coughing and gasping for air. During the scene Dana is shown, like Jack, to be defiant, unafraid, and even courageous, telling the men torturing her to “bring it on.” Dana is eventually rescued by Jack Bauer and CTU Agent Cole Ortiz, who kill Bledsoe and his men and eventually recover the information Dana had on the Russians.

At first, Jack simply asks Dana for the information in exchange for letting her go free, but when she refuses he holds her at gunpoint and she then discloses the location of where she hid the evidence. What is essential about Dana’s torture is the manner in which it was implemented. Jack wanted the

information Dana had as much as President Taylor, but for different reasons: Jack wanted to expose the people behind Hassan's murder; Taylor wanted to cover it up. Yet, both Jack and Taylor use force to compel Dana to surrender the information. At this point the narrative returns to its argument of necessity, both for Jack and President Taylor; in both cases the clock is ticking down to a potential signing of a peace treaty. Jack is trying to stop it and Taylor (with Logan's help) wants to ensure it happens. While Jack and Taylor are working at odds with one another, their motivation is paradoxically the same: to do whatever is necessary for the good of the country. Likewise, the message is the same, as both Jack and President Taylor are operating with a loss of morality.

Despite Jack's patriotism, he is motivated by a need to avenge Renee's death. As such, Jack becomes more brutally focused and determined in his resolve to seek retribution, even if it costs him his own life in the process and during the course of the season's final episodes CTU, the government, and all of New York's law enforcement agencies engage in hunting down Jack while he engages activities that lead him to viciously kill several Russian operatives, the most gruesome of which is a man named Pavel Tokarev, the Russian assassin who killed Renee. In the twenty-first episode, titled "12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.", Jack questions Tokarev about Renee's death and about Tokarev's superiors. In what serves as 24's final depiction of torture, Tokarev is taken to an industrial building where Jack has readied a table with various interrogation tools. Jack stands directly in front of Tokarev (who is cuffed to what seems to be a sort of chain-link wall) holding a pair of pliers. Given that this scene represents Jack Bauer's final torture, let us consider it in detail:

Jack: To be honest with you, Renee Walker was more than just my friend. But you already know that don't you, because you saw us in the bedroom in my apartment. Now either you're not very good at what you do, or you wanted her to suffer. Because with that rifle from that range it was an easy kill shot. But instead, you shot her right there (Jack puts the pliers on Tokarev's chest) two inches below her heart so she would bleed out slowly. I watched her gasping for air as the blood filled her lungs. See, she died in agony, which is exactly what I'm gonna make you do. Unless you tell me what I wanna know. (Jack takes the pliers and seems to pull something out of Tokarev's torso, causing Tokarev to scream in extreme pain.)

Jack: Start talkin' to me!

Pavel: You wanna know who killed your girlfriend, I did it, I killed your bitch!

Jack screams and begins to beat Pavel brutally. In the next room a journalist named Meredith Reed pleads with an associate of Jack's named James Ricker, saying "Please, you've gotta stop this." To which Ricker

replies: “He needs answers and he’s gonna get them.” To which she responds: “I can use this [recording] there’s enough here, he doesn’t need to do this.” Jack had contacted Reed and gave her the information he had obtained from Dana Walsh; Ricker was an old friend who owed Jack a favor. Pavel passes out from the beating and Jack uses smelling salt to wake him up and continue his interrogation.

Jack: Why don’t we start this again (Jack gets a knife) I already know that you killed Renee Walker, what I wanna know is the Russian pig inside your government who gave the order.

As Jack speaks he cuts Tokarev’s torso in various places, as if he is tenderizing him. Tokarev spits in Jack’s face; Jack wipes it off and gets a bottle of fluid, possibly some kind of acid or flammable liquid, from a nearby table, saying “You think you know about me, you don’t know anything yet.” Jack squirts the fluid on Tokarev’s wounds, causing him to scream: “Give me a name! Who gave the order? Who inside your government wanted Renee Walker dead? All you gotta do is give me the name.” Jack grabs Tokarev’s head with one hand and with the other Jack cuts Tokarev’s abdomen again, Tokarev stares at Jack in horror.

Frustrated, Jack throws the knife and walks over the table to get a blow torch. Jack then states: “You people are so stupid. Renee Walker was no threat to you. Her work was finished, she was done. We were out. All you had to do was leave us alone. Why couldn’t you just leave us alone?” Jack uses the blow torch on Tokarev’s wounds and Tokarev screams again. Tokarev claims that he killed Renee on his own but Jack believes that he is lying and exclaims to himself “this isn’t working.” Jack then notices Tokarev’s phone, which had been placed on the table. Jack examines the phone and realizes that the phone’s data card is missing. Jack then deduces that Tokarev swallowed it, so Jack gets the knife again, walks up to Tokarev and says: “This is for my friend.” Jack proceeds to cut open Tokarev’s abdomen, reaching into Tokarev’s stomach and pulling out the phone’s data card. Jack then cleans the data card, places it back in the phone, and dials the last call received, which reaches President Logan’s voicemail; Tokarev is left bound to the chain-link wall, eviscerated. As the final episodes play out, Jack kills and threatens more people on his way to uncovering the conspiracy, but he does not torture anyone again nor does he endure torture again. However, the events of the final episode offer an interesting summary with regard to the theme of judgment.

As events had played out, Jack had decided to assassinate former U.S. President Charles Logan (who was responsible for many of the things that had happened to Jack since the fourth season) and current Russian President Yuri Suvarov (who was responsible for ordering Renee's death). However, Chloe convinces Jack to let her help him publicize his evidence; Jack agrees and formulates a plan that requires Chloe to shoot him so that she can remain free of suspicion. While Chloe shoots Jack, she is nevertheless suspected of helping Jack and the plan does not work, as President Logan convinces President Taylor (who by this point has become a puppet of Logan's) to kill Jack by ambushing his ambulance convoy, otherwise Jack would expose her role as well. President Taylor initially agrees but after watching a video Jack had made for Kim in which he apologized for his life¹⁰⁴ President Taylor orders the assassins to stand down as they are about to execute Jack. What is significant is that President Taylor realizes that her actions (sanctioning torture and covering up many decisions she made throughout the day) were reprehensible. Her public confession and resignation of the presidency is presented not just as the right thing to do but, ironically, as the only (honorable and moral) choice. In other words, as with Renee's descent, President Taylor's downfall in the final season represents a brief but no less powerful account of the consequences of engaging in torture. President Taylor also apologizes to Jack and she advises him to escape, as he did in the end of the fourth season, since various Russians and Americans will likely be after him. Jack may live to fight another day but does not "get away," as he must again give up his identity and his life to endure an ongoing punishment, living not as a free man but as a haunted soul.

In terms of the narrative progression, then, *24*'s eight seasons conclude with the dramatization of torture as an act of unnecessary and inhuman violence, suggesting that those who torture lose their own sense of humanity – indeed, it is almost a requirement of doing the job. While the argument based on necessity was sustained on the professional and personal levels from one season to the next, the use of torture essentially ended where it began, as a ritual. Of course, while the difference between Jack's first torture and his last is extreme (they almost exist in different worlds) torture nevertheless functions as an indulgence, revealing revenge as the true (and perhaps only) justification for torture and suggesting that

¹⁰⁴ Which serves as a sort of confession for Jack.

torture (with apologies to *The Godfather*) is not professional, it is entirely personal. Indeed, while the professional plane came to embrace and sanction torture as a matter of protocol, it also realized (most directly through President Taylor's resignation) that torture was wrong, not just because it is ineffective, but because it costs the lives of those who torture. In the end, revenge and the moral depravity torture demands is ultimately not a sufficient reason to engage in torture. As the storylines of Jack and Renee (and many other characters, especially President Taylor) illustrate, those who torture become the very evil they are trying to fight, owing a debt to humanity for what is essentially a crime against humanity. For characters like Renee, the payment begins by trying to atone for past actions and ends by having to die. For characters like President Taylor, the payment requires confession and acceptance of punishment. For Jack, however, the payment began with his wife's death in the first season but it seemingly has no end, for not even the loss of his life (whether through actual death or by changing his identity) is enough. The final point, then, for *24*'s debate on torture suggests that the villains and victims of torture are one and the same. The very act of torture, in other words, serves as a nexus where good and evil merge: villains become victims and victims become villains to the point that good and evil cannot be distinguished. Therefore, with regard to the real-world post-9/11 debate on torture, *24*'s narrative ultimately claims that an America that tortures becomes not just a tortured nation but also a terrorist nation, one that loses its moral standing, owing a debt to world that future generations will have to try to repay.

CHAPTER 4
THE NARRATIVE OF TORTURE ON LOST

4.1 Introduction

ABC's *Lost*, which aired in six seasons from 2004 to 2010, told the story of a group of survivors whose plane crashed on a mysterious hidden island while en route from Sydney, Australia to Los Angeles, California on a fictional Oceanic Airlines Flight 815. Using a variety of storytelling devices (most notably flash-backs, flash-forwards, and flash-sideways) *Lost* explored the human condition through multi-layered stories, incorporating various aspects of religion, science, philosophy, and fantasy from Western and non-Western perspectives. Accordingly, *Lost* is essentially set in a "state-of-nature" with every character's life in constant jeopardy.¹⁰⁵ From this, many issues are explored throughout the various narratives spun from episode to episode and season to season, including the issue of torture. As Peter S. Fosl, who examines the state-of-nature in *Lost*, suggests:

Like the American republic in the wake of September 11, 2001, *Lost* finds itself both endorsing and fretting about the use of torture. By implication, we might wonder if, like the American republic, *Lost* isn't fretting about how far it's willing to endorse liberal ideals. This anxiety unfolds on the show not only in the frequency with which torture is used. It also appears in the way the show almost simultaneously regrets and excuses torture's application (162).

Fosl views the very presence of torture on *Lost* as a violation of the state-of-nature, human rights, and natural laws – ideals that Fosl argues permeate the society constructed by the survivors, especially those who survived from the main fuselage.¹⁰⁶ From this, Fosl outlines what he refers to as a template for torture on *Lost*:

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the producers of *Lost* established early on that just about any character could be killed on any given episode.

¹⁰⁶ The first season dealt with forty-eight survivors who were seated in the middle of the plane; twelve of which became the main cast. During the pilot episode, three survivors found the cockpit section of the plane. The pilot of the plane was alive, but he was later killed by an unseen island monster (which was later

When those on the island resort to torture, they do so with clearly liberal justifications for its use; their use of torture, however, almost invariably fails in its objective, and those who engage in torture suffer the pangs of guilt afterwards. When, on the other hand, people besides the survivors, on and off the island, and in survivor flashbacks torture [...] the conduct is more unambiguously wrong, though even then the show does its best to present mitigating circumstances when torture is administered by someone [...] who will become a survivor (162).

Although Fosl's template is interesting, it is not the goal of this chapter to examine torture on *Lost* through the pattern Fosl outlines. Rather, what is paramount is Fosl's observation regarding the simultaneous justification and guilt associated with the use of torture.

As with *24*, characters on *Lost* find reasons to justify torture yet wrestle with the affects afterwards. Where *24* justified torture largely through necessity, *Lost* justifies torture mostly through revenge. The main survivor who engages in torture on *Lost* is the character of Sayid Jarrah, an Iraqi communications officer who served in the Republican Guard during the first Gulf War and who learned how to torture from an American military unit that captured him and forced him to torture his former superior officer in order to gain specific information about a missing American pilot. While Sayid is essentially *Lost*'s version of Jack Bauer, if you will, many characters on *Lost* (as in *24*) engage in activity that can be defined as torture, whether physical or psychological. Where *24* utilized the ticking bomb scenario as a rhetorical situation to dramatize a debate on torture, *Lost*, as Fosl also observes, utilizes the state-of-nature scenario to establish and dramatize a debate on torture. However, *Lost* also employs the devices of flash-back, flash-forward, and flash-sideways as platforms for debate. From this, *Lost* illustrates a pro-torture stance through the concept of revenge and an anti-torture stance (like *24*) through a loss of morality. Where *24* utilized professional and personal planes to debate torture, *Lost* engages the torture debate solely through a personal plane¹⁰⁷, especially as regards the issue of what I will refer to as emotional torture. Like *24*, *Lost* employs themes of judgment, sacrifice, and atonement, ultimately suggesting that

revealed to be the infamous black-smoke monster). However, during the second season it was revealed that the tail section of the plane had landed on another part of the island, with another group of survivors. The contrast between the two groups showed the fuselage survivors as being somewhat civil and organized into a relatively peaceful and trusting society, while the tail-section survivors were shown to be more paranoid and militant.

¹⁰⁷ While it should be acknowledged that Sayid is a professional torturer, his job (like the jobs of all the survivors) does not officially exist on the island. Survivors continue to operate in their trained capacities (Sayid tortures, Jack is a doctor, Sawyer is a con-man) but these capacities have no real authority or office.

those who torture suffer great pain and owe a debt. However, through these themes *Lost* also employs a technique of manipulation that preys on a character's emotional investment. Where *24*'s Jack Bauer occasionally used a terrorist's family as a means of getting a terrorist to divulge information, *Lost* illustrates scenarios in which Character A convinces Character B to lie, betray, and kill (or to tell the truth) by using whatever Character B is emotionally invested in as a means of persuasion – revenge may factor in to the equation, but it may be secondary (depending on the context) to whatever the character cherishes. Thus, the torture is emotional and psychological, as the character acts irrationally and out of a sense that whatever they are invested in will be harmed. The difference for *Lost* is that the characters who survive the plane crash are not terrorists who possess some valuable piece of information necessary to stop an attack from taking place; rather, the survivors are victims of circumstance, people whose lives have been thrown together as the result of a plane crash.¹⁰⁸ However, these characters are not completely innocent, as most of the original fourteen survivors (as well as a majority of other characters introduced throughout *Lost*'s six seasons) have committed murder or are shown to be responsible in some way for another person's death. Accordingly, they are all metaphorically "lost," as the paths their respective lives are traversing (which are shown through flashbacks to intersect with one another) typically lead to dead-ends and disappointments, though as *Lost*'s narrative eventually reveals, all of their paths ultimately led to Oceanic Flight 815 and to the island.

It should also be noted that *Lost*'s serialization is different than that of *24*'s, as *Lost*'s six seasons are completely serialized, with subsequent seasons continuing where previous seasons left off¹⁰⁹, effectively presenting one complete meta-narrative and for *Lost* the meta-narrative can be divided into the following format with regard to narrative function: Season 1 functions as an exposition; Season 2, Season 3, and Season 4 function as a three-part development; and Season 5 and Season 6 function as a two-part conclusion. As such, the remainder of this chapter will examine and maintain the following arguments: (1) that torture is dramatized through a state-of-nature scenario and the accompanying themes of revenge,

¹⁰⁸ As the narrative unfolds it is suggested that the survivors were brought to the island by a man named Jacob and that it is their destiny to be together. Nevertheless, the survivors are essentially strangers to each other and must learn to live and survive together.

¹⁰⁹ Typically with the exact same scene, only minutes later.

judgment, and atonement; (2) that those who torture become more affected and afflicted by torture than those who are tortured, effectively losing not just their morality but a piece of their soul; (3) that torture is also dramatized through the use of flash-backs, flash-forwards, and flash-sideways to examine the past, present, and possible future actions of a given character and the effects those actions have produced, are producing, or will produce; and (4) that torture is ultimately shown to be wrong because it results in a loss of one's soul.

4.2 Exposition: If you do this

Hypothesis 1: The first season functions as the exposition with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative, laying a foundation for a debate on torture through a state-of-nature scenario, the use of flashbacks, and the presence of Others. Revenge is established as a means of justification for torture, judgment is established as means of arguing against torture, and emotional investment is established as a means for illustrating revenge and judgment.

As with the first season of *24*, *Lost's* first season narrative (which covers a narrative time frame of forty-four days) does not immediately engage in torture; most of the first season is spent revealing and developing the previous and present lives of the main cast of fourteen survivors and explaining how they all came to be in Australia, on Oceanic flight 815, and ultimately on the island. Briefly, these include: Jack, a spinal-surgeon who was looking for his alcoholic father and found him dead in Australia; Kate, a fugitive wanted by federal marshals; Sawyer, a con-man looking for the man who killed his parents; Locke, a man paralyzed below the waist who wanted to go on a walkabout; Sayid, a former member of the Iraqi National Guard who was looking for a woman he loved named Nadia; Michael, a father who was estranged from his son Walt; Walt, whose mother and step-father recently died; Jin, a Korean man who worked for his wife's father; Sun, Jin's wife who was going to America in an attempt to leave her husband; Boone, a wealthy young man looking for his step-sister, Shannon; Shannon, a spoiled young woman who was cut-off from her father's money by her step-mother after her father died; Claire, pregnant young woman who was going

to America to give up her baby for adoption; Charlie, a heroin-addicted British rock-star; and Hurley, a lottery winner who believes he is cursed with bad luck. During the first season, *Lost*'s narrative essentially focused on developing one main character per episode and it is during the eighth episode, titled "Confidence Man," that (1) we learn about Sawyer's past and (2) that the issue of torture is introduced.

During the first seven episodes (which cover a narrative period of nine days) Sawyer was shown antagonizing anyone and everyone, taking and hoarding whatever supplies he could find (mostly from the plane's fuselage, such as medical supplies, food, and bottled water) and trading rather than sharing them. In the eighth episode Shannon begins to suffer from asthma attacks after her medication has run out and Boone suspects that Sawyer has Shannon's medication in his stash. Boone searches Sawyer's hoard which results in Sawyer physically beating Boone. Given Sawyer's mostly negative attitude during the first seven episodes and his actions thus far in the eighth episode, Jack and Kate decide to confront Sawyer under the assumption that Sawyer possess the medication. However, Sawyer appears obstinate – he doesn't admit that he has the medication, nor does he deny it, but his behavior makes him look guilty. Tension between Jack and Sawyer also had been established in previous episodes, especially with regard to Kate, as both men were attracted to her. Thus, Jack seems to want to attack Sawyer not just to avenge Boone and protect Shannon, but also possibly impress Kate – it should also be noted that Shannon's situation could be seen as a ticking bomb scenario, though the actions that ensue seem best described as revenge. Kate convinces Jack to let her talk to Sawyer alone. Sawyer claims that he will tell Kate what she wants to know if she gives him a kiss; she refuses, but Sawyer's actions seem to reinforce that he knows something but that, as with previous episodes, he will only trade, not share.

As the episode continues, Shannon suffers a more serious attack. Jack demands that Sawyer give him the medication for Shannon; Sawyer refuses so Jack begins to physically attack Sawyer but stops when he sees the horrified looks on the faces of other survivors who were watching. After Shannon suffers another attack Sayid suggests to Jack that stronger methods must be used. Consider the dialogue:

Sayid: What will happen if she doesn't get the medicine? [Jack nods, suggesting something bad.]

Then we have to make Sawyer give it to us.

Jack: Yeah. That's what I'm gonna do.

Sayid: No. Not you. Me. I served five years in the Republican Guard.

Jack: I thought you were a communications officer.

Sayid: Part of my training entailed getting the enemy to communicate. Just give me ten minutes with him. He'll give us the medicine. [Jack looks down.] Is that a yes?

Jack: Yes.

Sayid and Jack find Sawyer asleep on the beach. Sawyer wakes up only to be knocked out by Sayid who then, with Jack's help, drags Sawyer to a secluded area in the jungle. Kate protests to Jack and Sayid, exclaiming: "If you do this ...". Kate does not finish the sentence, but it nevertheless functions like a rhetorical syllogism, allowing viewers not only to complete the thought but also to make the argument that engaging in torture is morally wrong. Jack answers Kate claiming that it was Sawyer's choice (because Sawyer refused to cooperate), implying that torture is the only choice left to resolve the situation and thereby (in Jack's mind) absolving Jack (and Sayid) of any responsibility for harming Sawyer. However, as the scene plays out, Kate is proven correct. Let us consider the scene.

Sawyer is tied to a tree and Sayid begins to carve pieces of bamboo with a knife while Jack observes. Sawyer does not try to get out of being tortured; rather he tries to make Jack feel guilty about resorting to torture. However, as Jack tells Sawyer: "we gave you the chance to do the right thing. Now, all I want is the asthma medicine. Just tell me where the inhalers are and we'll stop." Sawyer remains stubborn, almost as if he wants to be tortured, and Sayid begins to try to intimidate Sawyer by describing the bamboo that he is carving. Sawyer suggests that Sayid is not really a torturer, to which Sayid replies: "Unfortunately for us both ... you're wrong." With that statement Sayid inserts bamboo underneath Sawyer's fingernails. Consider the dialogue that follows:

Sawyer: That's it? That's all you got? Splinters? No wonder we kicked your ass in the Gulf ...
(Sawyer screams repeatedly and loudly as Sayid continues more aggressively.)

Jack: Sayid!

Sawyer: No. Don't stop now. I think my sinuses are clearing.

Jack: (to Sawyer) What the hell is wrong with you?

Sayid: (grabs Sawyer's head and holds a knife to Sawyer's face) Perhaps losing an eye will loosen your tongue.

Sawyer: Okay!

Sawyer seems to succumb to the torture but when Sayid asks about Shannon's medication Sawyer says that he will only tell Kate. However, when Kate arrives Sawyer insists that she kiss him first. She reluctantly agrees and they share a long, somewhat romantic kiss; afterwards Sawyer claims that he does not have the

medication. Kate believes him but she punches him in the face for making her kiss him. Regardless of Sawyer's motive, Kate's approach – talking with Sawyer with civility and treating like a human being – ultimately gets Sawyer to cooperate, serving to establish a theme of emotional investment, if you will, with regard to interrogation, a theme that develops through the progression of each subsequent season.

Sayid, however, does not believe Sawyer and he proceeds to attack Sawyer with a knife. Sawyer fights back and during the struggle Sayid is able to thrust the knife through Sawyer's right arm, hitting an artery. Jack immediately begins to help Sawyer, who, continuing in his stubbornness would rather have Jack let him bleed-out and die. Through the narrative that follows Sawyer is proven right – he did not have the medication¹¹⁰ – so Sayid decides to banish himself and the episode ends with Sayid leaving the survivor's beach, offering to Kate the excuse that “someone needs to map the island.” In terms of the narrative's progression, then, this first scene of torture effectively lays the groundwork for future debate. Sawyer was tortured out of a perceived need for revenge (for Shannon and Boone and for Sawyer's general “bad boy” attitude) but it is Sayid (at to some extent Jack) who ultimately suffers and it is Sayid who now owes a debt that must be repaid. For Sawyer, being tortured allows him to repay a previous debt. Let us consider the latter first.

During the episode, Sawyer, whose real name is James Ford, reveals to Kate some information about his past: when he was boy a con-man, who went by the name of Tom Sawyer, seduced his mother causing his father to murder his mother and commit suicide; Sawyer took the name of the con-man and vowed to find him so that he can kill him in revenge.¹¹¹ It is also later revealed in the sixteenth episode, titled “Outlaws,” that Sawyer had tracked a man to Australia that he thought was “Tom Sawyer” and that Sawyer had killed this man the night before Flight 815 took off. Therefore, Sawyer's willingness to be

¹¹⁰ Indeed, in the sixth season, Jack and another survivor, Hurley, found Shannon's medication at the caves; ironically, the inhalers had been by Shannon all along (because she chose to reside in the caves instead of the beach) but nobody had bothered to look for them. In the “Confidence Man” episode, Shannon's asthma is managed with the help of a Korean survivor named Sun, who finds eucalyptus leaves.

¹¹¹ As a boy, Sawyer had written a letter addressed to “Mr. Sawyer” describing what the con-man had done; Sawyer kept this letter with him at all times so that he could one day give to “Mr. Sawyer,” make him read it, and then kill him. During the first seven episodes, Sawyer is shown periodically reading the letter to himself and in one scene he contemplates burning it.

tortured was, in a sense, cathartic for him, as it allowed him to serve a sort of penance for murdering an innocent man. Similarly, in the next episode, Sayid is afforded an opportunity to atone for Sawyer's torture.

In the ninth episode of the first season, titled "Solitary," Sayid gets caught in a trap set by a French woman named Danielle Rousseau who has been on the island for sixteen years; she is the only surviving member of a French research team and she has been looking for her daughter, Alex, who was taken from her (by a group of people Danielle refers to as "The Others"¹¹²) after Alex was born on the island¹¹³. Rousseau has spent the majority of her nearly two decades on the island alone¹¹⁴ and when she captures Sayid she suspects that he is an Other and that he knows the whereabouts of Alex. Rousseau straps Sayid to a metal frame and proceeds to electrocute him. For *Lost*'s progression, it wasn't enough for Sayid to punish himself; Sayid had to endure the same physical pain he had just administered, reinforcing the idea of owing a debt. Indeed, as we learn in the same episode, through flashbacks into Sayid's past, that he tortured a woman named Nadia while serving in the Republican Guard. In the mythology of *Lost*, Nadia was a childhood friend of Sayid's and she was also the initial love of Sayid's life.¹¹⁵ Let us consider the scene we are shown of Nadia's torture:

Sayid: Now you're a traitor to your country. Tell me what you know about the bombing, Nadia. Tell me, or I swear I will hurt you.

Nadia: Oh, I know, Sayid. This is not my first interrogation by the Republican Guard. This is where they burned me with acid. They pierced my hands with a drill. Would you like to see the soles of my feet? Where they flayed the skin off? These are the handiworks of your friends. The people you swear allegiance to.

Sayid: If you are innocent, I'm sorry. But this bombing is a different matter. Nadia ...

Nadia: Go on, Sayid. Do your work. I'm not going to tell you anything.

Sayid: Then I'm going to hurt you.

Nadia: I know.

¹¹² Though all the survivors of Oceanic 815 are essentially strangers to one another, they quickly form a bond and consider everyone who survived as being part of a collective. Rousseau is the first "other" person shown on the island in comparison to the survivors and her mention of "others" is the first reference to the possibility that other people are on the island. The people Rousseau refers to are eventually revealed to be strange, brutal, and mysterious, willing to terrorize, kidnap, and murder with what seems like heartless indiscriminateness.

¹¹³ Danielle had arrived on the island pregnant.

¹¹⁴ In later episodes it is revealed that the rest of Rousseau's team succumbed to an island sickness (a sort of madness brought on as a result of an island entity known as the black smoke monster) and Rousseau shot and killed every member of the team, including her husband, Robert.

¹¹⁵ Sayid spent eight years looking for Nadia after he left the Republican Guard. He eventually marries her, but she is soon killed in a seemingly random traffic accident. On the island, Sayid and Shannon fall in love, but she, too is killed in a seemingly random shooting.

None of the flashback scenes with Nadia actually show Sayid physically harming Nadia. Although she is shown to look increasingly haggard, the dialogue between Nadia and Sayid suggests that perhaps Sayid's methods are more verbal than physical. What is paramount, however, is that Nadia is able to appeal to Sayid's affections and Sayid ultimately decides to shoot and kill his superior officer and shoot himself in the leg in order to facilitate Nadia's escape from the prison. In Sayid's narrative, Nadia's torture serves as a catalyst for Sayid deciding to swear to never torture again. Of course, things change for Sayid once he is on the island. While Sayid tortures Sawyer, suffers extreme guilt, and is then tortured by Danielle seemingly as punishment, Sayid continues to consider torture a viable option, given the state-of-nature and given the need for revenge.

Sayid eventually escapes his confinement with Rousseau and returns to the survivor's camp. During the same episode, however, Claire and Charlie are abducted by a man named Ethan, an "Other" who had infiltrated the survivor's camp shortly after they crashed. Ethan did this because he realized that the survivors had learned that he was not on Flight 815 and because Claire happened to be pregnant; in the mythology of the show, women who became pregnant on the island were unable to bear the fetus to term, so Claire was of significant importance to the Others, as she offered them a research opportunity. Ethan took Charlie because Charlie happened to be with Claire and because Charlie could be used as warning for the rest of the survivors to stay away – Ethan left Charlie's body hanging from a tree in the jungle. Charlie was found by Jack and Kate; Jack was able to revive Charlie and save his life. Ethan, then, provided the narrative (and the survivors, especially Jack and Charlie) another opportunity to engage in torture for revenge.

In the fifteenth episode, titled "Homecoming," Locke finds Claire wandering through the jungle with no memory of who she is or where she has been¹¹⁶. Later in the episode Ethan confronts Charlie and Jin while they were gathering wood in the jungle. After knocking Jin unconscious, Ethan tells Charlie that he will kill a survivor on the beach every day unless Claire is given back to him. The survivors set up shifts to guard the beach and caves, but Ethan is able to kill a survivor named Scott on the beach, giving the

¹¹⁶ It is later revealed that Claire had escaped with the help of Rousseau's daughter Alex.

survivors another reason for revenge. So Jack, Locke, and Sayid decide to set a trap for Ethan using a still amnesic (and still nine-months pregnant) Claire as bait. Sayid and Jack want Ethan alive so that they can interrogate him. Their plan works and Jack captures Ethan and severely beats him while Claire, Kate, Locke, Sayid, and Sawyer watch. However, a distraught Charlie shoots Ethan before Sayid can interrogate him. While this prevents the survivors from gathering any information on the Others, it nevertheless serves two purposes regarding the narrative's progression. From one perspective, the revenge was completed, as Ethan's death served as payment for what he had done to the survivors. Yet, from another perspective, the interruption of his torture allows the survivors a moment of pause, halting (for a while) their moral descent.

While murder is no less deplorable than torture, as the scene is dramatized (through the facial expressions of those who watch Jack beat Ethan) the murder is at least a less personal, less brutal, and less sustained form of punishment. Nevertheless, revenge takes place in a state-of-nature where the survivors are only bound by natural law and their own sense of morality. No other scenes of torture take place during the course of the first season; however, the interaction between survivors and a fear of the Others continue to provide the survivors with reasons to seek revenge, leading to a heightened sense of distrust and a quickness to resort to physical and/or threatening violence. Briefly, for the survivors, this includes the following altercations: between Jin and Michael (because Jin thinks Michael is romantically involved with his wife Sun); between Shannon and Locke (because Shannon's brother Boone died while he was in the jungle with Locke); between Jack and Locke (for Boone's death as well as for an extreme difference of opinion); between Jack and Sawyer (because of the tension that exists between them); between Sayid and Locke (because they don't trust each other); and between Sayid and Sawyer (because they don't trust each other). For the others, the most notable altercation occurs in the final episode of the season.

Michael had decided to build a raft (with Jin's help¹¹⁷) and in the final episode Michael and Walt set sail with Jin and Sawyer in an attempt to find rescue for all of the survivors. As they sail through the night they encounter what appears to be a fishing boat; however, it quickly becomes clear that the men on the fishing boat are Others. The Others approach the raft and take Walt at gun-point, shooting Sawyer and

¹¹⁷ Jin and Michael had been able to work through their differences.

blowing up the raft with a Molotov cocktail bomb, causing Jin and Michael to fall in the water and the season ends with Michael screaming Walt's name as the fishing boat speeds away. Again, while no torture takes place, the scene culminates the fear that has been developed over the course of twenty-four episodes (and, narratively, forty-four days) and it gives the second season an initial cause for revenge a reason torture. Let us now examine how this gets developed in *Lost*'s second season.

4.3 Development One: He's one of them

Hypothesis 2: The second season functions as the initial development with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative, continuing the theme of revenge as a justification for torture, the theme of judgment as the price of torture, and the use of emotional torture as means of illustrating the themes of revenge and judgment. The state-of-nature is developed through the heightened presence of Others and the introduction of the Dharma Initiative; the use of flashbacks continues to develop individual character's backgrounds.

The second season begins immediately where the first season ended. However, due to multiple storylines that were left hanging at the end of the first season, the arc involving Walt is not addressed until the second episode, titled "Adrift," though it occupies a significant part of the narrative for the next ten episodes, drives the narrative in the final five episodes, and essentially frames the trajectory of the entire second season, as it helps introduce other survivors from the tail section of Flight 815 (who crashed on another part of the island) as well as introduce more Others. Indeed, both of these groups of "others" serve to develop the themes of revenge and judgment and the state-of-nature environment found on the island, as well as the issue of torture. Let us first consider the second group of survivors, known as the "Tailies," which includes the following characters: Ana-Lucia, a former officer with the LAPD; Mr. Eko, a former Nigerian drug lord and smuggler who was also a priest; Libby, a former clinical psychologist; Bernard, a former dentist; and Cindy, a stewardess on Flight 815.

Michael and Sawyer wash up on shore on the other side of the island and immediately encounter Jin running out of the jungle; Jin's hands are tied behind him and he is being chased by a group of people

Jin simply refers to as “others.” These “others” capture Michael, Sawyer, and Jin and place them in a deep pit in the jungle because they suspect that Michael, Sawyer, and Jin are Others. What is interesting is that each group considers the other group to be Others, but rather than being comical, the situation is presented dramatically. The Tailies are shown to be extremely paranoid, largely due to how their initial forty-four days were spent on the island: originally numbering twenty-two, three survivors were “taken” during an attack by The Others on the first night; four survivors died a few days later as a result of their injuries from the crash; two weeks after the crash nine more survivors were taken, including two children (Emma and Zach); a survivor named Nathan was then killed by an Other named Goodwin (who had infiltrated the Tailies from the first day); and then Ana-Lucia killed Goodwin on the twenty-seventh day. Similarly, given the experience on the raft, Michael, Sawyer, and Jin are suspicious of the Tailies. Eventually, both groups realize their true identities and decide to head back to the other side of the island to find the original group of survivors. However, as they approach the original camp, the Others manage to kidnap Cindy, causing Ana-Lucia to draw her gun. Ana-Lucia then shoots Shannon, who had been running through the jungle with Sayid. What is paramount is that this helps develop the themes of revenge and judgment.

Through Ana-Lucia’s flashback we learn that she was shot by a robber as he made his escape and that Ana-Lucia found the robber and killed him in an alley in cold blood, saying “I was pregnant.” Like Sawyer and Sayid in the first season, Ana-Lucia harbors extreme guilt for what she has done and continues to do. Shooting Shannon presents her with more guilt and she reacts by tying up Sayid as if she were going to torture him. Eventually, she unties Sayid and gives him her gun, hoping that he will kill her. As she tells Sayid in the eighth episode titled “Collision,” “I feel dead [...] go ahead, pick it up, I deserve it,” to which Sayid replies, “What good would it be to kill you if we’re both already dead,” suggesting that they both share the same pain, but also implying that must suffer through the pain rather than end it. The torture that takes place, then, is psychological and self-inflicted. Indeed, the relationship between Sayid and Ana Lucia develops throughout the second season, as both characters, each haunted by a somewhat similar past¹¹⁸, become linked through Shannon’s death. Nevertheless, she owes a debt, one that she eventually repays

¹¹⁸ Especially as regards the issues of torture, murder, and redemption.

when she is killed by Michael in the twentieth episode titled, “Two for the road.” Before we consider the end of the second season, however, let us consider how the Others are developed in the second season, a development which includes physical torture.

During the middle of the second season, Rousseau traps a man who calls himself Henry Gale and when Rousseau informs Sayid about her capture, Henry tries to escape and Rousseau shoots Henry with an arrow. Sayid then takes Henry to Jack and Locke, who at this point in *Lost*'s narrative primarily reside in an underground Hatch.¹¹⁹ Rousseau told Sayid that Henry is an Other and Sayid believed her, though Sayid wishes to interrogate Henry to be certain, especially in light of what the Others have been shown to be capable of throughout *Lost*'s narrative. In the fourteenth episode of the second season, titled “One of Them,” Sayid questions Henry intensely and resorts to beating Henry repeatedly and viciously, as Sayid begins to suspect that Henry is in fact an Other. Consider the following exchange between Henry and Sayid:

Henry: I don't know why you're asking me all these questions. I don't know why you're treating me this way, why I have to explain to you who I am, when you don't tell me who you are.

Sayid: I was twenty-three years old when the Americans came to my country. I was a good man. I was a soldier. And when they left, I was something different. For the next six years I did things I wish I could erase from my memory, things which I never thought myself to be capable of. But I did come to learn this: there is a part of me which was always capable. You want to know who I am. My name is Sayid Jarrah, and I am a torturer.

As with Renee Walker's descent in 24, Sayid's descent on the island is tragic. Where he had sworn of torture and was able to keep that promise for eight years before coming to the island, it only took him ten days to initially resort to torturing again and now, nearly two months later, Sayid defines himself as a torturer. While he feels absolute shame for the things that he has done, he seems to accept that his identity is that of a torturer, an identity that he continues to embrace and nurture. Consider a conversation that Sayid has with Charlie at the end of the episode:

Sayid: There is a man down in the hatch. A stranger captured by Rousseau. I beat him. I beat him badly.

¹¹⁹ The Hatch is a station built in the 1970s by the Dharma Initiative, a group of scientists who came to the island to study the island's special electromagnetic properties and to conduct psychological and sociological experiments. Locke initially finds the Hatch, which is inhabited by a man named Desmond who has been pushing a button on a computer for three years – because in doing so, Desmond believes he is saving the world.

Charlie: Why are you telling me this, Sayid?

Sayid: Jack asked me how I knew, knew for sure that this man was lying, how I knew for sure that he was one of them, one of the Others. I know because I feel no guilt for what I did to him. But there is no way I can ever explain that to Jack, or even Locke, because both of them have forgotten.

Charlie: Forgotten? What?

Sayid: That you were strung up by your neck and left for dead. That Claire was kept for days during which God only knows what happened to her. That these people, these Others, are merciless, and can take any one of us whenever they choose. So tell me, Charlie, have you forgotten?

That Sayid expresses no remorse for torturing Henry speaks as much to Sayid's state of mind as it does to the state of the survivors at this point in *Lost's* narrative, as most of the survivors have become distrustful and somewhat paranoid. This pessimism is understandable, yet, as regards the use of torture, it ultimately proves more destructive than beneficial.

In the two instances where Sayid has tortured on the island (Sawyer and Henry) the torturing does not work. *Lost's* narrative underscores this in the case of Henry, as Locke asks Ana-Lucia to speak with Henry. Her interrogation is non-violent (though she does her best to intimidate and ensure Henry that he will suffer as much at her hands if he doesn't cooperate) and she is able to procure seemingly positive results. Henry had claimed that he crashed on the island in a balloon and Ana-Lucia gets Henry to agree to draw a map to the balloon's crash site (where Henry also said he buried his wife just two weeks earlier). Ana-Lucia approaches Sayid and Charlie to seek their help in finding Henry's balloon. When Sayid asks her how she got Henry to draw a map, she simply replies, "I asked nicely," developing the psychological theme established by Kate in the first season. Like Kate, Ana-Lucia was perhaps more motivated than Sayid to get information from Henry. Sayid wanted revenge (for Shannon's death) and his emotions got the best of him, yet Ana-Lucia wanted forgiveness (for shooting Shannon)¹²⁰ and she kept her emotions in check.

During their trek to find Henry's balloon, Ana-Lucia tells Sayid that she is sorry for what she did and, to his credit, Sayid, though he doesn't say he forgives her, says that he doesn't blame her (since she was simply acting to protect her group), claiming that it is the Others who are responsible for Shannon's death (because they have made everyone paranoid). Eventually, they are able to find Henry's balloon, as

¹²⁰ And Kate wanted to bestow forgiveness.

well as a grave. However, Sayid is still suspicious and decides to dig up the grave and learns that the real Henry Gale that had been buried. After the man posing as Henry (whose real name is eventually revealed to be Benjamin Linus) is confronted with this in the eighteenth episode titled “Dave,” Sayid and Ana-Lucia begin to interrogate him again; however, the setting is markedly different.

Ben’s hands are bound to the ceiling and his feet are bound to the floor (he looks like the letter “Y”), Sayid sits on a bench and Ana-Lucia stands, the door to the vault is open. Sayid questions Ben, repeatedly catching Ben in multiple lies, which escalates Sayid’s emotional reactions to the point that Sayid draws a gun on Ben and threatens to shoot him. Consider the following excerpt:

Sayid: You have three seconds to answer my question. How many of you are there? One.
Ben: He’ll kill me.¹²¹
Sayid: I’ll kill you. Two.
Ana Lucia: Sayid!
Ben: You can’t do this. I am not a bad person!¹²²
Sayid: Three. (Ana Lucia grabs Sayid as he pulls the trigger, making him shoot the wall behind Ben)
Ana Lucia: What the hell’s wrong with you?
Sayid: He’s a liar!

Narratively, torture is shown not to work again, as Ben does his best to lie to Sayid and Ana-Lucia, frustrating them both and gaining them nothing. This frustration (and the need for revenge) prompted Sayid to want to kill Ben but Ana Lucia stopped him – again, keeping her emotions in check. However, in a subsequent episode Ana-Lucia decides that she indeed wants to kill Ben after Ben attacks her when she brings him food; he tries to choke her to death but Locke stops him. While Ana-Lucia was able to subdue her emotions in an effort to atone for Shannon’s death, Ben’s attack served to reignite her need for revenge, reminding her of the torment she and the other tail-section survivors suffered, as well as of the pain she suffered after being shot and losing her baby. Ana-Lucia steals a gun from Sawyer but when she enters Ben’s cell she is unable to pull the trigger – her change of heart seemed to stem from a desire more for

¹²¹ During the interrogation, Ben was more afraid of what would be done to him if he told, not by Sayid but by a man named Jacob.

¹²² This is an interesting comment coming from Ben. As his narrative is developed it is shown that Ben is not only a master at the art of lying, he is also, like Sayid, a very cold and capable killer – most notably, on the island, when he “purged” the Dharma Initiative from the island, killing dozens of people with poisonous gas, including his own father as revealed in the twentieth episode of the third season, titled “The Man Behind The Curtain.” As well as off the island, most notably when he murders John Locke in the fifth season.

redemption than revenge, as if the pain she harbored from having committed multiple murders was too severe to augment. Afterwards she discusses the situation with Michael, who went looking for Walt alone and who had recently returned:

Ana Lucia: We caught one of them, the Others. He's locked up in there.

Michael: How long has he?

Ana Lucia: Over a week.

Michael: And you're what, taking care of him?

Ana Lucia: He tried to kill me today. So I wanted him dead. I couldn't do it. I couldn't even kill him. I looked at him, and he ... I can't do this anymore.

Michael: Then let me do it. They're animals. I've seen these people and they are animals.¹²³ They took my son. Right out of my hands. They took my son, and ... I'll do it, give me the gun, I'll kill him. 'Cause that's what they'd do.¹²⁴

Like Sayid and Ana Lucia, Michael's need for revenge was strong. However, where Sayid and Ana-Lucia failed to exact their revenge, Michael is able to succeed, though in a disturbing way.

While the survivors thought that Michael had been in the jungle looking for Walt, the truth is later revealed that he had been taken by the Others and was held captive. Knowing that Ben had been caught and was being held by the survivors, the Others convinced Michael that if he freed Ben and brought Kate, Jack, Sawyer, and Hurley to them they would give him back his son and let them go free. Michael agreed and the Others sent him back to the survivors and Michael uses the situation with Ana Lucia to free Ben. It is interesting to consider that Michael's descent came quickly. Where Sayid resorted to torture after being on the island for only ten days, and Ana-Lucia resorted to murder (of Goodwin) within twenty-seven days, Michael, after being with the Others for less than ten days is able to be convinced to betray the group of survivors that he had come to know and suffer with. While we might excuse Michael, given that his motivation is simply to do whatever he has to do to save his son, the trust he places in the Others and not in the survivors (especially after all that had been experienced) is tragic.

After Ana-Lucia gives Michael the gun Michael shoots her, he then shoots Libby (who had come to the Hatch innocently looking for a blanket) and then opens the vault and shoots himself in the arm – all

¹²³ Up to this point in *Lost*'s narrative the Others are shown as being dressed in tattered clothing that resembles a very primitive society, they are always barefoot, and their overall appearance is filthy. However, it is later revealed that this is all an act and they actually live in a hidden community on the island in small homes with modern conveniences, including running water and electricity.

¹²⁴ Michael is correct. Despite the deceptive appearance of the Others they remained a brutal clan, killing without hesitation or remorse.

to make it look like Ben had escaped. Eventually, Michael is able to convince Jack, Kate, Sawyer, and Hurley to go with him to hunt down Ben and find Walt. But Sayid is suspicious of Michael, fearing that the Others have gotten to him and Sayid devises a backup plan. However, it doesn't work and the Others are able to capture Jack, Kate, Sawyer, and Hurley, letting Michael and Walt go free.¹²⁵ In terms of the narrative's progression, the torture of Ben ultimately leads to the death of two survivors (Ana-Lucia and Libby), the capture of four other survivors (Jack, Kate, Sawyer, and Hurley¹²⁶), and it places the rest of the survivors in great peril. That Michael and Walt escape provides little hope to the remaining survivors, for Michael would not be able to send any aid or rescue, as doing so would lead to the truth about the two murders that he committed.

In terms of the themes of revenge and judgment, then, while revenge understandably drives the motivation to torture, the results are ultimately disastrous, creating a steep spiritual and moral debt. The debt, as collected by the Others, requires an initial down-payment in the form of Jack, Kate, and Sawyer. As collected by the island, if you will, Ana-Lucia must give her life and Michael must be banished. However, Sayid remains, able to either pay or atone for his use of torture. Let us see how this gets further developed in *Lost*'s third season.

4.4 Development Two: I'm sorry for what I've done

Hypothesis 3: The third season functions as the second development with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative, continuing the themes of revenge and judgment and expanding the theme of emotional investment. The state-of-nature continues to develop through the introduction of more Others, most notably, the character of Juliet. Accordingly, the use of "flash" scenes further develop individual characters and the narrative progression as a whole.

¹²⁵ Michael and Walt are given a boat and are told what bearing to follow in order to leave the island's somewhat mystical barrier, which prevents the island from being seen.

¹²⁶ Though Hurley is set free to warn the other survivors to stay away.

In the eleventh episode of the third season, titled “Enter 77,” a flashback scene that takes place sometime after the Gulf War shows Sayid working as a chef and living under an alias in Paris. After tasting a meal cooked by Sayid, an Iraqi man named Sami offers Sayid a job as a chef in Sami’s restaurant. However, Sami’s offer is a trap and Sayid is captured in order to confront Sami’s wife, Amira. Sami chains Sayid to a drain in the floor of the restaurant’s stock room; Sami wants Sayid to admit that he tortured Amira and then, presumably, to kill Sayid in revenge. Sayid admits that he was a torturer in the Republican Guard but he claims that he did not torture Amira and that he does not know her. Sami, who wholeheartedly believes that his wife was tortured by Sayid, beats Sayid for refusing to acknowledge Amira and eventually, after what appears to be several days, Amira confronts Sayid alone. She tells Sayid that she has lived in fear since being tortured and she asks Sayid to simply give her the dignity of acknowledging that he remembers her and that he tortured her. Consider his tearful reply: “I remember you. I remember your face. Your face has haunted me ever since I left Iraq. I am sorry. I am so sorry for what I did to you. I am so sorry.” Amira tells Sayid that she forgives him and when he asks her why, she replies, “We are all capable of doing [horrible things], but I will not do that, I will not *be* that.”

Indeed, it is significant that Amira, a woman who suffered greatly at Sayid’s hands, is willing to forgive Sayid, seeking not revenge, but only the simple gesture of being acknowledged, thus being made whole through respect. With regard to the theme of judgment, this flashback scene with Amira suggests that Sayid had been given a second chance, one borne out of repentance, reinforcing the tragedy of Sayid’s fall in his short time on the island. As a torturer, Sayid has been shown to be brutal and as his character has been developed he has been shown to be an effective and heartless killer, especially in the fourth season, as will be later discussed. However, as a captive, Sayid has been shown to be quite weak at withstanding torture inflicted upon him.¹²⁷ With Rousseau, he vigorously protested, maintaining his innocence and pleading with Rousseau to stop electrocuting him. With Sami, Sayid was quick to admit his guilt at being a

¹²⁷ Which, in terms of comparison to 24, is a stark contrast to Jack Bauer’s ability to withstand and accept torture. While both Sayid and Bauer seem to invite judgment, Bauer appears more able (and more willing) to endure it.

torturer for the Republican Guard and when face-to-face with Amira, Sayid immediately broke down and sobbed, admitting his guilt and offering a seemingly heartfelt and sincere apology.

What is paramount is that Sayid's life constantly wrestles with the issue of torture, as if he is trapped, unable to escape its grip. Nevertheless, by this point in the third season, Sayid seems to have grown genuinely abhorrent about torture, re-renouncing its practice and seeking absolution for having tortured, yet, the scenario of revenge continues to exert its pull. Consider the following scene that takes place during the sixteenth episode, titled "One Of Us," during which Sayid questions an Other named Juliet, a woman who had seemingly been left behind by the rest of the Others when Locke, Kate, Rousseau, and Sayid found the Others' hidden camp in an attempt to rescue Jack.¹²⁸

Sayid: I want to know what you people are doing on this island, why you're terrorizing us, making lists, kidnapping children. I want to know everything. But the first thing I'd like to know is: who are you?

Juliet: If I told you who I was, if I told you everything that I know, you'd kill me.

Sayid: What do you think I'll do if you don't?

Jack: Leave her alone.

Sayid: Sooner or later she'll answer my questions.

Jack: She'll answer your questions when she's ready. And you'll wait until she is. She's under my protection.

Jack became averse to torture after the initial situation with Sawyer. However, in this scene Jack's protection of Juliet is not necessarily because he's afraid Sayid will torture her, rather Jack and Juliet had made a deal with the Others to leave the island in exchange for saving Ben's life.¹²⁹

As with Michael, Jack's deal with the Others is somewhat tragic. While Jack does not directly betray the survivors (his motive is not to save himself, rather it is to save the group) his trust of Juliet seems to run contrary to his demeanor seen in previous episodes, as Jack has been shown to hold nothing but disdain for the Others. For Jack, Juliet – who wants to leave the island as much as anyone – is no different

¹²⁸ The initial rescue did not work, however, circumstances allowed Jack, Kate, Sayid, and Juliet to leave the Others' camp and head back to the survivor's beach. Locke remained with the Others and Rousseau disappeared into the jungle, deciding not to get involved.

¹²⁹ Ben had developed a tumor in his spine and Jack agreed to operate in exchange for being able to leave the island. Juliet, an obstetrician with some surgical experience, assists Jack and asks for the same deal. The operation was successful, however, Locke, in his attempt to help rescue Jack, blew up the submarine that Jack and Juliet were going to leave on. Jack and Juliet then devised a plan to defeat the Others, but kept this plan to themselves.

from the rest of his group of survivors.¹³⁰ However, Sayid – who was captured by the Others and chained to a swing-set for three days in the Other’s camp during his attempt to rescue Jack, does not trust Juliet and he has grown suspicious of Jack. When Sayid, Jack, Kate, and Juliet make it back to the survivor’s beach, the survivors hold a meeting to discuss Juliet. Consider the following excerpt:

Sawyer: Here’s a wacky idea. Let’s sic our resident Iraqi on her, let him do what he does, then see [what happens].
Sayid: No, I don’t do that anymore.
Sawyer: Well, ain’t that convenient?

The survivors want to know more about Juliet, but Jack insists that everyone be patient. However, Sayid and Sawyer decide to follow Juliet when she leaves to retrieve a case of medicine (because Claire has become ill). Sayid and Sawyer hold Juliet at gunpoint and confront her. Consider the following excerpt from the scene:

Sayid: You said earlier if you told me everything you knew, I’d kill you. I’m gonna test the validity of that statement.
Sawyer: He means “talk.”
Juliet: We don’t have time for this [...] you know it’s interesting that you two are now the camp’s moral police. I’m curious, Sayid, how long was it that you told everyone on that beach exactly how many people you’ve tortured in your life? Do they know about Basra? And I’m sure the first thing you did when you got here, James, was to gather everyone in a circle and tell them about the man you shot in cold blood the night before you got on the plane. So why don’t we just skip the part where you two pretend to be righteous? I’m taking the medication back to Claire, and you’re gonna let me. Because if she doesn’t get it, she’s gonna die. And the last thing either of you need right now is more blood on your hands.

Juliet grabs the case and heads back to the survivor’s beach, leaving Sayid and Sawyer stunned, unable to speak or move. As regards the narrative’s message, in this scene Juliet develops the theme of judgment, while also reinforcing the psychological theme established by Kate and Ana-Lucia in the first and second seasons in which words are a more powerful force than weapons or brutality.

¹³⁰ Juliet had essentially been held against her will for three years prior to the plane crashing on the island. Initially, she was recruited by Ethan and an Other named Richard Alpert (who represented a fictitious scientific research company) to come to the island to help pregnant woman carry their fetuses to term – in the island’s mythology, woman could not bear children on the island and would die in the last trimester. Juliet was recruited because she was able to find a way for her sister – who was infertile, due to radiation therapy for cancer, which was now in remission – to become pregnant. Juliet was told her assignment would last only six months, however, Ben did not let her leave and he threatened to let Juliet’s sister die, if Juliet did not agree to stay on the island – Juliet was never successful in being able to help the women of the Others carry a baby to term (or stay alive after getting pregnant).

Juliet, who was clearly at a disadvantage when initially confronted by Sayid and Sawyer, turned the tables on them not by fighting, but by using information about their respective pasts against them, disarming them not with physical force, but with words. *Lost*'s narrative reinforces this every time Ben is captured, as he is shown to be able to talk his way out of any situation by using information to his advantage, though, when necessary, Ben shows himself to be quite physically and mentally capable of defeating anyone. Consider the following scene between Ben and Juliet (who are observing Jack on a monitor) which takes place in the fourteenth episode titled "Exposé" during a flashback scene that occurred prior to Ben being captured by Rousseau and which gives insight into Ben's methodology:

Juliet: [Jack] will never agree to do the surgery.

Ben: No, I can convince him to do it.

Juliet: How?

Ben: The same way I get anybody to do anything. I find out what he's emotionally invested in, and I exploit it.

Like Juliet's scene with Sayid and Sawyer, Ben was eventually able to use Jack's past and present against Jack to convince Jack to operate on Ben's spine to remove a tumor.¹³¹ More to the point, however, is Ben's (and Juliet's) method of being able to use words instead of physical violence to achieve their goals. What is paramount, however, is that this method is essentially a form of psychological torture, which, as *Lost*'s narrative seems to suggest, is more insidious, more brutal, and more effective than being physically harmed. Nevertheless, it remains a form of torture, as it preys not on a person's ability to physically withstand being tortured, but rather on a person's vulnerability to emotionally succumb to being mentally tortured. As Ben claims, it is a person's emotional investment that ultimately betrays them. Indeed, each character on *Lost* is emotionally invested in someone, most notably: for Michael, it is his feelings for his son Walt; for Sawyer and Jack, it is their feelings for Kate; for Sayid, it is his feelings for Nadia; and for Ben, as will be revealed in the fifth season, it is his feelings for Rousseau's daughter Alex, whom he raised as his own daughter. In terms of the narrative's progression, then, this type of torture serves to create

¹³¹ Through flashbacks we learn that Jack is obsessed with "fixing" people, that he has absolute confidence in his surgical skills, to the degree that he could be characterized as having a "god complex." So, it is not much of a stretch for Ben to think that Jack will agree to perform the surgery. However, given that Ben is an Other, Ben uses Jack's feelings for Kate and Jack's desire to leave the island to seal the deal with Jack.

greater feelings of guilt and a stronger desire for redemption, as we come to see in the dramatization of the narrative that unfolds in the fourth season.

4.5 Development Three: Who's next?

Hypothesis 4: The fourth season functions as the final development with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative, continuing the themes of revenge, judgment, emotional investment, and developing Sayid's character from a torturer to an assassin, which, in turn, serves to transition to the conclusion of the narrative's progression seen in the final two seasons. The state-of-nature continues to develop through the introduction of still more Others and the use of "flash" scenes continue to develop both character and story.

The fourth season ends with six survivors being able to escape the island: Sayid, Jack, Kate, Sun, Hurley, and Claire's baby, Aaron.¹³² Collectively, this group of survivors becomes known as the Oceanic Six¹³³ and throughout the fourth season their post-island storylines are explored through the narrative technique of flash-forwards, which, for the most part, replace the flash-backs. In an ingenious technique of story-telling, then, the season's narrative unfolds in two timelines (the present time on the island, 2004, and the future time off the island, 2005 to 2007) which function to primarily develop the Oceanic Six characters. Sayid's flash-forward storyline, which gets developed in only two episodes¹³⁴, shows Sayid

¹³² A man named Desmond, who had been on the island for three years prior to Oceanic 815 crashing, also escapes, but he does not return to the "real world" with Jack, Kate, Sayid, Hurly, Jin, and Aaron. Instead, Desmond remains with Penny Widmore, the love of his life who had been looking for him and who found him after he left the island. A man named Frank Lapidus also escapes the island. Lapidus is a pilot who was originally supposed to fly Oceanic 815, but didn't, and who was then brought to the island by Charles Widmore in an attempt to capture Benjamin Linus in the fourth season. Lapidus simply returns to his old life as a pilot, with Penny's help.

¹³³ Before leaving the island, Locke tells Jack that if Jack leaves the island he will have to lie about what happened and about the remaining survivors – because of the nature of the island and because of the strange and extreme circumstances they experienced. Jack realizes this once they're found by Penny's boat. What is paramount is that the Oceanic Six (who all agree to lie) become psychologically haunted by their lie and their off-island lives are not happy or successful.

¹³⁴ The third episode, titled "The Economist" and the ninth episode, titled "The Shape of Things to Come."

working for Ben¹³⁵ as an assassin. Ben is at war with a man named Charles Widmore¹³⁶ (because one of Widmore's associates killed Ben's daughter, Alex) and Ben convinces Sayid to kill various associates of Widmore with the ultimate goal of killing Widmore's daughter, Penny.¹³⁷ Ben is astutely aware of Sayid's capabilities and Sayid's feelings for Nadia and Ben uses this to recruit Sayid as an assassin. When Ben arrives back in the normal world¹³⁸, he learns that Nadia has been killed and that Sayid (who had married Nadia) was going to bury her in Tikrit, Iraq. During the funeral procession Ben confronts Sayid and convinces Sayid to exact revenge on a man named Ishmael Bakir, the man Ben claims is responsible for Nadia's death. Sayid and Ben then find Bakir and Sayid shoots him, emptying his gun. Afterwards, Ben tries to walk away but Sayid confronts Ben. Consider the scene:

Sayid: Wait! Where do you think you're going?

Ben: We're finished here, Sayid. Turn around and walk away. Mourn your loss; get on with your life.

Sayid: I have no life. They took it from me.

Ben: Go home, Sayid. Once you let your grief become anger, it will never go away. I speak from experience. This is my war. It's not yours.

Sayid: I spent the last eight years of my life searching for the woman I love. I finally found her and I married her. Then I buried her yesterday. So don't tell me this is not my war. Benjamin ... who's next?

Again, we see Ben be able to manipulate Sayid by preying upon Sayid's emotional investments. That Ben uses Sayid's skills as an assassin, instead of his skills as a torturer re-establishes Sayid's narrative through the remaining seasons of *Lost*, in which his character develops into a cold and very capable killer; Sayid's swearing-off of torture simply gets transmuted, if you will, into a vow to murder. For example, in the flash-forwards shown in the third episode (which chronologically take place after the flash-forwards shown in the ninth episode) Sayid callously shoots a man on a golf course. The man had approached Sayid, who was about to make a shot toward the putting green, and bet Sayid that a different club would work better. Sayid lost the bet and then shot the man, who had grown suspicious after he learned that Sayid was one of the

¹³⁵ Who left the island at the end of the fourth season.

¹³⁶ Who we learn used to be an "Other" on the island but who was banished by Ben.

¹³⁷ The same Penny that helped the Oceanic Six get rescued.

¹³⁸ Ben technically leaves the island before the Oceanic Six – he leaves by "moving the island," which causes him to vanish off the island and this occurs when the Oceanic Six are in a helicopter flying over the ocean adjacent to the island. The island disappears because it gets temporally moved. Likewise, Ben travels through time, arriving in the Sahara Desert ten months after the Oceanic Six were rescued.

Oceanic Six. Later, Sayid is shown romancing a German woman named Elsa, spending several weeks with her (becoming her lover in the process) and then killing her, after she shoots him first (but only wounds him). Likewise, throughout *Lost*'s narrative, Sayid is shown to have finely-honed fighting skills, snapping the necks of various bad guys with his hands and feet, in self-defense or in defense of the survivors. What is tragic, for Sayid, is that his journey through the worlds of being a torturer and a murderer has occurred because of his emotional investment in Nadia. Where her torture (at his own hands) causes him to swear off torture only to torture again; her death causes him to take life and eventually, as will be shown in the sixth season, to willingly give up his soul in the vain hope that she will be brought back to life. Let us now consider how the *Lost*'s narrative progression begins to conclude in the fifth season.

4.6 Conclusion One: It's in your nature

Hypothesis 5: The fifth season functions as the initial conclusion with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative. The themes of revenge, judgment, and emotional investment are weaved together to demonstrate that torture is ultimately wrong. Accordingly, the narrative progression expands the sense of temporality and its use of "flash" scenes and continues to develop the state-of-nature through the introduction of more Others.

In the fifth season, three different timelines are developed: one which takes place in the off-island present (2007) with the Oceanic Six survivors and various other characters; one in which some of the Oceanic Six are shown returning to the island in 2007; and another in which some of the Oceanic Six are shown returning to the island in 1977, where some of the survivors have made a life as members of the Dharma Initiative.¹³⁹ Sayid's narrative is developed in the Oceanic Six present and in the 1970s island.

¹³⁹ *Lost* explored aspects of time-travel and temporality in all six seasons to various degrees – the island itself seems to exist in its own unique temporal space. This makes the overall narrative sometimes difficult to follow, especially when combined with the techniques of flashbacks, flash-forwards, and flash-sideways. The fourth season ends with Ben "moving" the island in December of 2004 (which causes him to appear in the real-world in late 2005). However, it also causes the island (and the survivors left on it) to begin randomly shifting through time. Eventually, Locke moves the island again, causing it to temporally stop in 1974, leaving Sawyer, Juliet, Miles, Jin, and Faraday to rebuild their lives and join the Dharma Initiative,

In the Oceanic Six present, Sayid's role as Ben's assassin gets further developed, becoming a significant aspect in the conclusion of *Lost*'s narrative progression. In the tenth episode of the fifth season, titled "He's Our You," Sayid is shown in Moscow eliminating a Russian man named Andropov, who tries to give Sayid a lot of money (to spare his life) but Sayid simply shoots the man (almost with pleasure) and returns to Ben for another assignment. Consider the scene between Sayid and Ben that takes place after the assassination:

Sayid: Where to now?

Ben: Nowhere. You're done.

Sayid: What do you mean I'm done?

Ben: We're done. Andropov was the last one. You've taken care of everyone who posed a threat to your friends.¹⁴⁰ It's been a pleasure working with you, Sayid.

Sayid: So that's it? I killed all those people for you, and now you're just walking away?

Ben: You didn't kill them for me, Sayid. You're the one that asked for their names. There's no one else in Widmore's organization that we need to go after. Congratulations. Mission accomplished.

Sayid: What do I do now?

Ben: I suppose you should go live your life. You're free, Sayid.

As the scene plays out, Sayid is shown looking dejected, sad that there is no one left to kill. Yet, his sadness does not seem to stem from his need to avenge Nadia's death, rather he seems to have grown accustomed to being a killer – he is good at it and he simply doesn't know what else to do. In terms of the narrative's progression, his descent is essentially complete. However, to his credit Sayid is shown in this episode (as well as in the seventh episode, titled "The Life and Death of Jeremy Bentham") eventually doing humanitarian work in the Dominican Republic, building homes for the poor in Santo Domingo – a form of penance seemingly more rewarding than self-inflicted torture, though it is still a form of self-imposed exile.

While in Santo Domingo, Sayid is visited by Locke, who tries to convince Sayid to return to the island. Sayid refuses, essentially arguing that his life is better off away from the island, because Nadia is

which was just beginning to build its stations around the island. Back in the real-world, the Oceanic Six all board Ajira Airways Flight 316 en route from Los Angeles to Guam, which is piloted by Frank Lapidus and which crashes on the island, temporally separating the Oceanic Six: Jack, Kate, Hurley, and Sayid arrive in 1977; Sun, Ben, Lapidus, and Ilana arrive in 2007. Claire's baby, Aaron, who was one of the Oceanic Six, does not return to the island. Kate leaves him with Claire's mother in Los Angeles. Likewise, Desmond, who was not officially an Oceanic Six but who nevertheless left the island (and whom Ben tried and failed to kill) also does not return to the island, staying with Penny in Los Angeles. However, Widmore eventually brings Desmond to the island in season six.

¹⁴⁰ Ben manipulated Sayid into being an assassin, using, not just Sayid's feelings for Nadia, but also his feelings for the other survivors, especially the rest of the Oceanic Six.

dead and because he doesn't find himself in life and death situations anymore. A short time later, Sayid is visited by Ben, who appeals to Sayid's need to protect the rest of the Oceanic Six and tries to convince Sayid to resume his work as an assassin. Consider the scene:

Sayid: What do you want, Ben?

Ben: John Locke is dead. I think he was murdered.¹⁴¹

Sayid: Why would anyone kill him?

Ben: I'd say it was retribution for the work you and I have been doing. So you're in danger, Sayid. If I can find you, so can the people that found Locke. The same people who, even as we speak, are sitting outside Hugo's mental institution.¹⁴²

Sayid: They're watching him?

Ben: A man in a sedan has been there all week. Just waiting, presumably for you or me to show our faces.

Sayid: And that's why you're here. You actually came all this way to suggest that I kill this man?

Ben: You don't want to?

Sayid: What makes you think I want to?

Ben: Because, Sayid, to put it simply, you're capable of things most other men aren't. Every choice you've made in your life whether it was to murder or to torture ... it hasn't really been a choice at all, has it? It's in your nature. It's what you are. You're a killer, Sayid.

Sayid: I am not what you think I am. I don't like killing.

Ben: Well then I apologize. I was mistaken about you.

Ben is of course again trying to manipulate Sayid and Ben is successful, as Sayid kills the man watching Hurley and then takes Hurley to a motel where Sayid kills two other assassins while getting shot with a powerful tranquilizer dart. What is paramount, however, is that Sayid has indeed moved from being a torturer to a being a killer. While he might be motivated to protect those he cares about, his skills as a killer are finely honed and administered without hesitation and Ben's observations regarding Sayid's "nature" are expounded on through two other scenes.

The first is a flashback scene from Sayid's childhood in which Sayid's father tries to make Sayid's older brother, Omer, kill a chicken as a rite of passage to becoming a man. Omer refuses so Sayid enters a chicken coup, lures a chicken with feed, and then picks up the chicken and snaps its neck, giving the chicken to Omer. Their father is pleased with Sayid, telling the boys, "at least one of you will be a man." The second scene occurs just prior to the Oceanic Six returning to the island. Sayid has just made it clear to

¹⁴¹ As usual, Ben is not being entirely truthful, as he is the one who killed Locke at the end of the episode "The Life and Death of Jeremy Bentham."

¹⁴² Hugo is Hurley's birth name. When Hurley returned to the real world as an Oceanic Six he began to see various characters that died on the island so he admitted himself into a mental institution, the same hospital he had been admitted to before originally going to the island.

the rest of the Oceanic Six and to Ben that he does not wish to return to the island. He is then shown getting drunk at a bar when a woman named Ilana approaches him and begins talking with him. Consider the scene:

Ilana: So other than drinking alone at bars, what do you do for a living?

Sayid: I'm between jobs at the moment.

Ilana: So what did you do?

Sayid: The only thing I was ever good at.

Ilana: Then why did you quit?

Sayid: I'm trying to change.

Ilana: I know why you're sad now. When you're that good at something, there are always going to be people who tempt you into staying the same.

It is later revealed that Ilana was working for Jacob, who tasked her with making sure that the Oceanic Six survivors were protected and made it back to the island. Ilana arrests Sayid under the pretense that she is a bounty hunter taking him to Guam on behalf of the family of the man he shot at the golf course, telling Sayid “you have to answer for what you did.” It is interesting to note that Sayid is indeed trying to change is nature, which, as the flashback showed, began when he was a boy. What is significant for his narrative, then, is that this change comes late and at great cost, to Sayid and to others survivors as well, as will be later examined in the sixth season.

With regard to the 1970's timeline, while Sayid “landed” on the island in 1977, he didn't land in the same spot as Jack, Kate, and Hurley. Instead, Sayid landed in a different section of the island and gets apprehended by members of the Dharma Initiative, who think that he is an Other.¹⁴³ Sayid gets placed in a holding cell by Sawyer (who has become the head of Dharma's security and who goes by the name of James LeFleur), where Sayid meets a twelve-year-old Benjamin Linus. The young Ben, who has a strained relationship with his father, Roger, ran away from the Dharma Initiative when he was eight-years-old and met an Other named Richard Alpert in the jungle. Ben expressed interest in joining the Others but Richard told Ben to be patient. When Sayid is caught by Dharma, young Ben believes that Sayid has come to take him to the Others. As such, young Ben devises a plan to free Sayid.

¹⁴³ Actually, the Dharma Initiative refers to the Others as “Hostiles” – because of their aggressive behavior – however, for purposes of clarity and consistency the term Others will continue to be used.

In the meantime, other Dharma members decide to interrogate Sayid, giving viewers another scene in which Sayid is being tortured. During this scene Sayid is taken to the jungle where a man named Oldham¹⁴⁴ (who lives in a teepee and listens to Billy Holiday records on an antique phonograph) forcefully administers a truth serum to Sayid, while Sayid is bound to a tree. Sayid actually answers Oldham's questions truthfully, but none of the Dharma members believe him because he tells them that he is from the future. For Sayid, however, he has come to believe that he returned to the island for only one purpose: to kill Ben – because doing so would negate everything the adult Ben ever did, meaning, for Sayid, that his own life would be different because he not only would never become an assassin, he would have never experienced life on the island and would have never tortured again.

After his interrogation, Sayid is placed back in his cell. Later, the young Ben creates a diversion in the Dharma camp (he sets a van on fire and it crashes into a house, causing a larger fire that occupies most of the Dharma personnel) and frees Sayid. Ben accompanies Sayid to the jungle, in the hopes that Sayid will take him to the Others, but then Ben and Sayid encounter Jin (who was sent looking for Sayid). Sayid knocks out Jin and takes Jin's gun. Sayid pauses a moment and tells a confused young Ben: "You were right about me, I am a killer." Sayid then shoots Ben and runs into the jungle. Sayid is not seen again until the fifteenth episode, titled "Follow the Leader." Sayid is shown hiding in the jungle, where he shoots an Other who was about to shoot Kate, who was with Jack and another Other named Eloise.¹⁴⁵ Kate tells Sayid that young Ben was saved by the Others¹⁴⁶ and Jack tells Sayid about the plan to detonate a hydrogen bomb, prompting Sayid to team up with Jack in an effort to change the future – like Sayid, Jack essentially wants to erase his past. In the season finale¹⁴⁷, Sayid gets shot by Ben's father, Roger, while trying to help

¹⁴⁴ When Sayid asks Sawyer who Oldham is, Sawyer replies, "He's our you," meaning that Oldham is a torturer.

¹⁴⁵ They were looking for a hydrogen bomb that was buried on the island. Jack, following Faraday's idea, believed that detonating the bomb would change their futures, that they would never crash on the island in 2004.

¹⁴⁶ Kate and Sawyer took the wounded Ben to see Richard Alpert, who then took Ben to the Other's temple to heal him – an event that essentially (and ironically) made Ben into the man he came to be: a killer, like Sayid. As Richard tells Kate, Ben would lose his innocence and would be different as a result of being healed.

¹⁴⁷ A two part episode (16 and 17 for the season) titled "The Incident."

Jack get the explosive material to the site of the original Hatch the survivors found in 2004.¹⁴⁸ Sayid and Jack had to make their way through the Dharma camp, but Roger, not knowing what is actually happening but recognizing Sayid, is able to catch Sayid by surprise, propelling the final arc to Sayid's narrative,¹⁴⁹ and the progression on torture, which is developed in the sixth and final season of *Lost*.

4.7 Conclusion Two: I feel sorry for you

Hypothesis 6: The sixth season functions as the final conclusion with regard to the progression of Lost's meta-narrative, solidifying the argument that torture is ultimately wrong, as the cost it demands requires not just a loss of morality but a loss of one's soul. Accordingly, the narrative progression expands the sense of temporality through the depiction of an alternate universe and the state-of-nature continues to develop through the introduction of more Others.

While the fifth season ends with the detonation of the hydrogen bomb, the sixth season begins with what seems like two alternate universes. In the first universe¹⁵⁰, the effect of the bomb did not seem to work and the survivors still find themselves on the island, though they have left the 70s and moved to the year 2007, joining the rest of the survivors who were already in 2007.¹⁵¹ In the second universe, the bomb seems to have worked, as the survivors are on board Oceanic Flight 815 on what seems to be September 22, 2004, the original date of the flight. However, the survivor's respective lives are slightly different and none of them know each other, yet they do interact with one another in various ways – as if they are “meeting” each other again. Additionally, the survivors seem unaware of their time on the island and the island is shown to be on the bottom of the ocean, suggesting that it sank because of the bomb. However, the season

¹⁴⁸ Because the Hatch was built over a large pocket of electromagnetism, which essentially caused the Oceanic 815 plane to crash when Desmond failed to push the button on September 22, 2004.

¹⁴⁹ It is also somewhat ironic that Sayid gets shot by Ben's father, considering Ben's and Sayid's complicated relationship.

¹⁵⁰ Which resembles the original universe or what is essentially the narrative present.

¹⁵¹ Tragically, Juliet, who by this point had become a trusted member of the survivors, dies during the first episode of the sixth season, causing Sawyer (who had fallen in love with her during the past three years) to vow to kill Jack, whom Sawyer held responsible. What is paramount, however, is that Juliet essentially sacrificed herself in order to save everyone (she detonated the bomb by hand) and her death served as a means of creating an alternate universe.

finale reveals that the original timeline continued to persist,¹⁵² while the alternate timeline was actually a purgatorial plane that the survivors existed in after they respectively died so that they could find each other again, remember their actual lives together, “let go” of their regrets and pains, and “move on” *together* instead of alone.¹⁵³

For Sayid, his narrative transition from torturer to killer continues in the 2007 original universe, where he is still wounded from being shot (thirty years ago) by Ben’s father. In the first episode, titled “LA X,” Sayid is with Hurley, coughing up blood. Consider the brief dialogue:

Sayid: When I die, what do you think is going to happen to me? I’ve tortured more people than I can remember. I murdered. Wherever I’m going, it can’t be very pleasant.

Hurley: Sayid, come on.

Sayid: I deserve it.

Shortly after, Jacob (who died in the final episode of the fifth season¹⁵⁴) appears to Hurley and tells Hurley that he needs to take Sayid to a place on the island called The Temple¹⁵⁵, that the people there are the only ones who can save Sayid. Sayid is important to Jacob because Sayid (along with Jack, Hurley, Sawyer, and

¹⁵² The bomb did not negate anything; all it did was propel the 1977 survivors back to 2007.

¹⁵³ They also apparently constructed the purgatorial plane, a place devoid of temporality, with each survivor arriving when he or she died, but arriving in the image (and age) they were when they were on the island. Accordingly, where Juliet’s death seemed to serve as a catalyst for creating the alternate plane, Jack’s death in the final moments of the season seemed to finish its creation, as Jack’s death (also like Juliet’s) was a sacrifice done to save the other survivors.

¹⁵⁴ Jacob was killed by a nameless man simply referred to as “The Man in Black” (because he literally wears black clothing – and Jacob wears white). It is later revealed in the sixth season episode “Across the Sea” that Jacob and the Man in black are twins born on the island nearly two thousand years ago. They are essentially in competition, with Jacob forcing the Man in Black to remain on the island (because his nature has become evil and his leaving the island would essentially destroy the world) and the Man in Black trying to find a “loophole” to both kill Jacob and leave the island. Moreover, shortly after Jacob came to power as the island’s protector he fought with the Man in Black, killing him and throwing him down a tunnel on the island. This transformed the Man in Black’s soul into the island’s black smoke monster. Accordingly, the Man in Black is able to transform himself from his smoke form into any corporeal form, so long as the corporeal form he chooses is one that is dead. In the fifth and sixth seasons the form he chooses is that of John Locke.

¹⁵⁵ This is the place that Jacob’s followers reside, it is a sacred, hidden, and protected place and it is also the place Richard took the young Ben to heal him.

Kate¹⁵⁶) is a “candidate” chosen by Jacob to replace him, which is now extremely important since Jacob has been killed.¹⁵⁷

Hurley takes Sayid to the Temple, however, Jacob’s followers are unable to save him and Sayid dies, only to wake up several hours later on his own, seemingly (and mysteriously) resurrected, prompting Sawyer to quip to Kate in the subsequent episode titled “What Kate Does”: “He’s an Iraqi torturer who shoots kids, he definitely deserves another go around.” During this episode, Sayid is taken by two of Jacob’s followers, a man named Dogen and a man named Lennon. Dogen and Lennon proceed to essentially torture Sayid by blowing ash on him, electrocuting him, and burning him with a hot poker. They do this as a way of testing him to see if he has been “infected” with a sickness that has infected other people on the island before, a sickness seemingly caused by the Man in Black. Dogen believes that Sayid has indeed been infected. Dogen tells Jack that Sayid will essentially lose his soul (and become an evil agent of the Man in Black, thus posing a threat) so Dogen tries to convince Jack to kill Sayid by giving Sayid a poison pill. Jack refuses and Sayid confronts Dogen. Consider the scene, which takes place in the sixth episode titled, “Sundown”:

Sayid: I want to talk to you. I want some answers.

Dogen: Answers to what?

Sayid: Let’s start with that machine. You hooked me up to this thing, you stuck needles in me, and you called it a test.

Dogen: For every man there is a scale. On one side of the scale there is good, on the other side, evil. This machine tells us how the scale is balanced. And yours tipped the wrong way.

Sayid: That’s why you tried to poison me?

Dogen: Yes. I think it would be best if you were dead.

Sayid: You think you know me, but you don’t. I’m a good man, so if you’re trying to kill me ...”

Dogen attacks Sayid and after an intense fight Dogen gains the advantage, but decides to banish Sayid from the Temple rather than kill him.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ One of the Kwon’s (either Jin or Sun) is also a candidate (it is never stated which one) and John Locke was a candidate.

¹⁵⁷ The Man in Black’s “loophole” was to assume the identity of John Locke (by essentially becoming John Locke after the real John Locke’s corpse was brought back to the island). As John Locke, the Man in Black manipulated Ben into killing Jacob – because “the rules” prohibited the Man in Black from doing it himself.

¹⁵⁸ Despite being convinced that Sayid has become evil and needs to die, Dogen is moved by the memory of his own son, whom Jacob healed in exchange for Dogen coming to the island – which meant that Dogen would never see his son again.

What is paramount is that Sayid, who again is shown to be weak when being tortured, believes that deep down he is a good man, regardless of the infection (or his past as a torturer and murderer). That Dogen lets Sayid go reveals that Dogen is also essentially a good man, choosing compassion rather than murder. However, as Sayid's narrative plays out, Dogen, like Ben, decides to use Sayid's skills as an assassin to kill the Man in Black. Consider the scene:

Dogen: For years, he has been trapped, but now that Jacob is gone, he's free. This man will not stop until he has destroyed every living thing on this island. He is evil incarnate.

Sayid: And you want me to speak to him?

Dogen: No. I want you to kill him. He will come to you as someone you know; someone who has died. As soon as you see him, plunge this deep into his chest. If you allow him to speak, it is already too late.

Sayid: Since I've been here, I've been drowned, beaten, and tortured at your hands. Why would I ever do anything for you?

Dogen: You said that there is still good in your soul. Then prove it.¹⁵⁹

Dogen, who like Ben uses Sayid's emotional investment to convince him to work for him, gives Sayid an ancient-looking knife; Sayid takes it and leaves.¹⁶⁰ Sayid is later shown in the jungle where he encounters the Man in Black. But since the Man in Black looks like Locke, Sayid hesitates for a moment; Sayid stabs the Man in Black, but not before the Man in Black is able to speak, simply saying "Hello, Sayid." It is too late and the Man in Black removes the knife. Consider the following excerpt from the scene:

Man in Black: I feel sorry for you.

Sayid: Why?

Man in Black: Dogen, the man who sent you out here, knew that you had no chance of killing me. And he believed that I would kill you if you tried. And this wasn't the first time that he tried to get someone else to do it for him, was it?

Sayid: No.

Man in Black: Then shame on you for being talked into it so easily.

What is interesting is that, like Dogen, the Man in Black is able to talk Sayid into working for him, sending Sayid back to the Temple to kill Dogen. Consider how the Man in Black preys upon Sayid's emotional investment:

¹⁵⁹ Dogen is not necessarily manipulating Sayid, like Ben. Rather, Dogen is relying on Sayid's killer instinct to be able to kill the Man in Black.

¹⁶⁰ The knife Dogen gives Sayid is later revealed to be the same knife the Man in Black used to kill a previous island protector – she, too, is not named. She was responsible for killing the Man in Black's and Jacob's birth-mother and she then effectively destroyed any chance the Man in Black had of leaving the island. So the Man in Black killed her with the special knife before she was able to speak. So, Dogen's instructions to Sayid are accurate.

Man in Black: Sayid, if you'll do this for me, what if I told you that you could have anything you wanted? What if I said you could have anything in the entire world?

Sayid: I would tell you that the only thing I ever wanted died in my arms and I'll never see it again.

Man in Black: But what if you could?

Again, like Ben, the Man in Black manipulates Sayid, using Sayid's love of Nadia. Moreover, like Ben and Dogen, the Man in Black is not truthful with Sayid: Sayid could have killed the Man in Black if Sayid had acted more quickly and the Man in Black has no intention of giving Nadia to Sayid, nor does he have the ability to do so.

What is paramount is that Sayid is again willing to make a deal with someone he has no reason to trust allowing himself to be used and effectively selling his soul in the process, as Dogen's assessment of Sayid (that Sayid's infection will consume his soul) begins to come true in the remainder of the season. Sayid's fall begins when he returns to the temple and kills Dogen and Lennon, which in turn allows the Man in Black (in his smoke monster form) the opportunity to enter the temple and kill the majority of Jacob's followers. Accordingly, Sayid proceeds to become increasingly "infected," visually displaying a complete lack of emotion or feeling.¹⁶¹ This falling into darkness, if you will, is juxtaposed with scenes from the alternate universe that depict a Sayid who has sworn off violence.

In these scenes, Nadia is married to Sayid's brother Omer, who owes a large sum of money to a loan shark. Omer asks Sayid for help, implying that he wants Sayid to use extreme methods, Sayid refuses but offers to pay Omer's debt (Omer refuses out of pride). Omer is then severely beaten for not paying his debt and Sayid vows revenge. Nadia does not want Sayid to resort to violence, but Sayid is adamant and because he is contemplating violence he also confesses that he does not deserve to be with her. Sayid is then taken by the loan shark's men to see the loan shark, but Sayid is able to kill everyone in the room and he flees the scene. Again, it is significant for Sayid's narrative that Nadia is essentially the motivation behind his actions, which in both universes are violent, suggesting that his "nature" (at least in relation to

¹⁶¹ As a matter of fact, Sayid tells the Man in Black in the tenth episode titled "The Package" that he doesn't feel anything, "anger, happiness, pain, I don't feel it anymore." To which the Man in Black replies: "Maybe that's best, Sayid. It will help you get through what's coming."

Nadia) is inescapable. That the alternate Sayid is actually dead and existing in a self-designed purgatory suggests that his soul desires to exist in this nature as a sort of extreme form of self-exile.

Those who survive the Man in Black's raid on the temple join the Man in Black with the understanding that they will all be able to leave the island. Sayid essentially becomes the Man in Black's right-hand man and in the eleventh episode titled "Happily Ever After" Sayid kidnaps Desmond, who had been brought to the island by Charles Widmore, bringing Desmond to the Man in Black, who then drops Desmond in a well. Later, in the thirteenth episode titled "The Last Recruit" the Man in Black asks Sayid to kill Desmond. Consider their dialogue:

Man in Black: I need you to go out to where I've got Desmond.
Sayid: I thought you weren't going to give him back.
Man in Black: I'm not. You're going to kill him. That's not going to be a problem is it, Sayid?
You do still want what you asked me for, right?
Sayid: Yes, I do.
Man in Black: Then go do what I said.

Sayid leaves but when he finds Desmond he is unable to immediately kill him; they have shared many traumatic experiences on the island together and Desmond is essentially Sayid's friend. Consider their exchange:

Desmond: So what did he offer you? If you're going to shoot me in cold blood, brother, I think I have a right to know what you're getting in exchange for it.
Sayid: He told me I could get something back I lost.
Desmond: And what did you lose?
Sayid: The woman I loved.
Desmond: And where is she now?
Sayid: Dead.
Desmond: And what makes you think he can bring her back?
Sayid: I died and he brought me back.
Desmond: So what will you tell her?
Sayid: What do you mean?
Desmond: This woman, when she asks what you did to be with her again, what will you tell her?

Sayid doesn't answer and he doesn't kill Desmond, though he tells the Man in Black that he does. In the alternate scenes Sayid is shown being apprehended at Nadia's house by two police officers (who happen to be Sawyer and Miles¹⁶²) for the murder of the loan shark. While Sayid seems beholden to the Man in

¹⁶² Miles is a man originally hired by Charles Widmore to find Ben in the fourth season. Miles essentially makes a deal with Ben and he eventually finds himself with the other survivors who remained in 1977. Miles becomes Sawyer's right-hand man in the Dharma Initiative.

Black, this episode suggests the Sayid might perhaps be finding his emotions again, and by extension, his soul and his goodness. For the original 2007 narrative, Sayid is again willing to protect his friends, putting their lives above his own (and above his desire for Nadia). In the sideways narrative, Sayid does not resist arrest and seems content being caught, as if he understands that he must eventually pay for his sins. This is exactly what happens in the fourteenth episode titled “The Candidate.”

As the narrative develops, the Man in Black has manipulated events so that all the survivors who are listed as Jacob’s candidates (Jack, Kate, Sawyer, Hurley, Sun and Jin Kwon, and Sayid) board Charles Widmore’s submarine, thinking that they are escaping the island. However, the Man in Black placed a bomb in Jack’s backpack, which Jack discovers when he looks for supplies to help Kate, who had been shot by Widmore’s people. Jack believes that, like the Hydrogen bomb, nothing will happen when it goes off. Sawyer is not willing to take the chance and tries to disarm it, which instead only serves to accelerate the bomb’s timer. So Sayid, realizing that the bomb will indeed explode, grabs the bomb and tells Jack where to find Desmond. Sayid then runs to another compartment, hugging the bomb so that it he can absorb its detonation. The bomb explodes and Sayid dies; however, the explosion also blasts a hole in the submarine (which at this point was fairly deep underwater) causing it to flood. Sun is trapped and she and Jin drown together; the only people who escape are Jack, Kate, Sawyer, and Hurley.¹⁶³ Therefore, in the original narrative timeline of the show, Sayid dies on the island in 2007 while attempting to save the lives of his friends. However, Sayid’s narrative continues in the alternate storyline.

In the sixteenth episode of the final season, titled “What They Died For,” Sayid is still being held in a jail cell, which happens to be next to a cell where Kate is also being held.¹⁶⁴ Throughout the alternate narrative, Desmond has been visiting all of the survivors with the goal of bringing them together so that they will become aware of where they are and why they are there. To this end, Desmond turns himself in to

¹⁶³ Frank Lapidus, who was also on the sub, is eventually found floating in the water by Miles and Richard in the final episode.

¹⁶⁴ In the purgatorial narrative, Kate’s storyline mirrors or original arc in which she was a fugitive wanted for murder and she has been apprehended by Sawyer and Miles when her car hit Sawyer’s as she was on the run.

Sawyer and Miles¹⁶⁵; he is then placed in Sayid's cell. Desmond does this because he has arranged for Hurley and Ana-Lucia to rescue him, Sayid, and Kate when they are transported from the jail cell to another facility. Once rescued, Desmond takes Kate to a concert and Hurley takes Sayid to run some errands. The narrative continues in the series finale (episodes seventeen and eighteen, collectively titled "The End") and after finding Charlie (and taking him to the same concert that Desmond and Kate went to) Hurley and Sayid sit in Hurley's Hummer outside a bar at night. Consider the dialogue that takes place in what is essentially Sayid's final scene:

Sayid: What are we doing here?

Hurley: I'm not allowed to tell you.

Sayid: What do you mean you're not allowed?

Hurley: There are rules, dude.

Sayid: Who's rules?

Hurley: Don't worry about it. Just trust me, okay. I trust you.

Sayid: And what, may I ask, have I done to deserve your trust?

Hurley: I think you're a good guy, Sayid. I know a lot of people have told you that you're not. Maybe you've heard it so many times you started to believe in it. But you can't let other people tell you who you are, dude. You have to decide that for yourself.

Sayid: I'm sorry, but you clearly don't know anything about me.

Hurley: I know a lot about you, dude.

Their conversation is interrupted when they see two guys come out of the bar fighting in an alley. A girl then emerges, telling one of the guys to leave her brother alone, only to get hit and knocked down. Seeing this, Sayid exits the car and quickly takes down the aggressive guy and when he approaches the girl, they recognize each other and when he grabs her hand to help her up they remember their time on the island together. The girl is Shannon, who was killed at the beginning of the second season and who Sayid had professed to love during her funeral.

What is significant is that it is Sayid's brief relationship with Shannon that ultimately saves his soul. While he may have genuinely loved Nadia, she ultimately served as a catalyst for his destruction, because she represented the evils of his life. In contrast, Shannon represented Sayid's time on the island, a time that, while traumatic, allowed Sayid the opportunity to find new love and redemption. As regards torture, it is through Shannon's love (and by extension the survivors' love and friendship) that Sayid finds

¹⁶⁵ In the purgatorial narrative, Desmond tries to "awaken" Locke and Ben by running over Locke with his car and by beating Ben up – both of these incidents mirror incidents that happened to Locke and Ben in their former lives.

forgiveness and goodness, as Hurley claimed. But what is paramount, for Sayid and for *Lost*, is that Sayid needed to be forgiven. As much as Sayid tortured in his life no one was more tortured than him, as he let his guilt overwhelm him to the point that he willingly became soulless in the sixth season.

In terms of the narrative progression, then, Sayid's forgiveness effectively concludes the argument against torture. By dramatizing the effects/affects of torture through Sayid (and through other characters) *Lost's* narrative suggests not just that torture is wrong but that it risks something greater than simply breaking a law: it risks losing one's soul. Accordingly, through the illustration of emotional torture, *Lost's* narrative suggests that the most powerful influence in our life is that which we cherish; yet, if we truly cherish it then we should not betray it by acting in deplorable ways (as Sayid and Michael and many other characters did), rather we should honor it by being willing to let it go (as Juliet and Jack ultimately did). Of course, as the narrative also suggests, letting go is not easy, it is a torturous process that can either destroy a person or set them free. So, torture is illustrated both as a means of exacting revenge not just on others, but, more egregiously, on ourselves. What is finally found through *Lost*, then, is the message that we are all tortured souls who must learn, as Jack says in the first season episode titled "Tabula Rasa," to either "live together, or die alone." Therefore, with regard to the real-world post-9/11 debate on torture, *Lost's* narrative ultimately suggests that an America that tortures essentially tortures itself and that if we as a nation cannot learn how to live in a global community that forbids torture we will exist as a solitary nation, one that has lost its soul.

CHAPTER 5

THE NARRATIVE OF TORTURE ON BSG

5.1 Introduction

The “reimagined”¹⁶⁶ *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*) was a military-oriented science fiction drama that told the story of a group of human survivors who escaped their system of twelve planets (known as the Twelve Colonies¹⁶⁷) in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust at the hands of a race of machines known as the Cylons. According to *BSG*’s mythology, humans created the Cylons to help make life easier but at some point the Cylons evolved into sentient beings who felt they had been enslaved by humans and thus waged war. This human/Cylon war ended in a truce that lasted forty years until the Cylons returned to the Twelve Colonies and in a surprise attack destroyed the majority of the human population – from a population that numbered in the billions, only about fifty thousand survivors were left to flee their worlds in search of a new home and continued existence. The survivors band together in a fleet of ships which is commanded jointly by Commander William Adama (whose ship is the *Battlestar Galactica*) and President Laura Roslin¹⁶⁸ (whose ship is *Colonial One*). According to producers Ronald Moore and David Eick, *BSG* was

¹⁶⁶ This is the term the producers use to distinguish the 2003 series from the original 1978 series, yet it is appropriate considering that the new series is not a remake but in fact re-imagines the elements of the original show, updating them to fit a post-9/11 world, revising some plotlines and narrative details, and recasting some characters: most notably, Starbuck and Boomer, who were males in the 1978 series but who are females in the 2003 series. For all intents and purposes, however, the 2003 series is essentially its own series as it does not continue the original series (like *Star Trek: The Next Generation* did) but instead tells the story anew.

¹⁶⁷ In *BSG*’s mythology, humans originated in thirteen tribes on a planet called Kobol. At some point the tribes fled Kobol; twelve founded the Twelve Colonies (which correspond to our real-world zodiac signs, such as Caprican, Picon, Aerelon, Gemenon, etc.) and the thirteenth tribe founded Earth.

¹⁶⁸ Who was elevated from Secretary of Education to President as a result of the attacks.

intentionally created to represent a post-9/11 world¹⁶⁹ and its narrative was deliberately fashioned to engage in a plethora of issues¹⁷⁰ relevant to a post-9/11 American public, including torture. As Moore states:

We just wanted to ask the questions. We really just wanted the audience to have to get in that room and really search their own souls for how they felt about [torture], and what's right and what's wrong. [We wanted] to just let it live in the ambiguity of the circumstance. [...] Our show, I think, is at its best when you're just not sure, [when] you're just not comfortable because you can't decide [...] when you're struggling with these moral dilemmas (Solove, Concurring Opinions).

One of the differences between the reimagined series and the original – and one of the features that creates ambiguity – is the depiction of Cylons as humans. In the original series, the Cylons were machines and were clearly the “bad guys.” However, in the reimagined show, Cylons come in different models, including some that look human,¹⁷¹ and it seems as if all Cylons have some organic component, including their spaceships, making them (at least in part) living beings rather than mere machines. The human Cylons, which come in twelve models and are referred to by model numbers (though some are given human names) are essentially clones with a nearly endless supply of copies.¹⁷²

According to the show's mythology, some human Cylons know that they are Cylons, while some Cylons are programmed to think that they are human. In the course of the narrative, however, some of the models' clones (especially models No. 6 and No. 8) develop distinct personalities and thus create a tension among the otherwise homogeneous Cylon culture, which helps generate the ambiguity referred to by Moore with regard to the overall treatment of Cylons on the show. For example, the human-Cylon models who were programmed to think that they are human, try to remain human by supporting the human cause, maintaining relationships (friendships, intimate relationships, and professional working relationships) with

¹⁶⁹ With the initial analogy being that the humans represent America and the Cylons represent terrorists.

¹⁷⁰ Such as civil rights, justifications for war, pre-emptive strikes, revenge, democracy and forms of government, military tribunals, religion, and abortion.

¹⁷¹ Human Cylons make an appearance in the spin-off series *Galactica 1980*, but they are not developed to the extent as they are in the reimagined series.

¹⁷² The identity of these twelve models is revealed slowly throughout BSG's narrative. For example, only four are revealed in the miniseries and first season, with three others revealed by the end of the second season. Four, of what become known as the “final five,” are revealed at the end of the third season and the last model is revealed in the fourth season. It should also be noted that the No. 7 model named “Daniel” is never shown (because his line has been discontinued due to a programming error) and the No. 6 model is given multiple names and identities, becoming the most developed of the human-Cylon models, as many of her “copies” take on various different roles throughout the series. Massive Cylon ships known as “Resurrection Ships” house thousands of copies of each model.

humans, and fighting and working alongside humans in an effort to defeat the Cylons and find a new home. On the other hand, most of the Cylon models who know they are Cylon (especially model numbers 1, 4, and 5) work tirelessly to bring humanity to extinction¹⁷³. For the narrative's progression, the ambiguity directly relates to the real-world war on terror, as the Cylons represent both the terrorists and the victims. Likewise, humans are also shown to be both victims and terrorists.¹⁷⁴ As Sara Livingston observes, *BSG* "rarely tells us what is the "right" thing to think or feel; if anything, we are challenged to search for the answers through discussion and debate on our own" (151). As Eick recounts, he and Moore decided that the Cylon's narrative would essentially proceed from the notion, in terms of evolution, that humanity's time had passed and it was now the Cylon's time – that this is what a typical Cylon would believe. As Eick states:

Therefore, we could dispense with what typically seems to have accompanied antagonists in stories like [the old *Battlestar Galactica*], where they have an axe to grind, a bloodthirsty agenda, a grizzly destiny that they're trying to perpetuate [...] To empathize with the antagonists, to feel that their point of view was justifiable, that it had legitimacy, that you could not only relate to it, but also sympathize with it. So we talked a lot about different cultures that found themselves faced with questions like that. How do we press on? How do we move forward? (Solove, Concurring Opinions).

Indeed, the reimagined series makes the Cylons essentially "humanity's children," and while it might seem easy to analogize *BSG* to other science fiction tales, such as *The Terminator*, in which machines turn against humans and in which human-like models exist, such a comparison would marginalize the complexity of *BSG*'s narrative, especially as regards the grappling of philosophical issues. Indeed, technology seems to be more of an afterthought for *BSG*, something that is assumed to exist (humans have the ability to travel in space and make sentient robots) but not dwelled on as in shows like *Star Trek* or *Terminator*.¹⁷⁵ What matters more to *BSG* are the questions humanity must continually ask itself, especially in a climate such as the one that was created after 9/11, questions perhaps best encapsulated by the

¹⁷³ Although, toward the end of the series the Cylon models Nos. 3, 6, and 8, as well as the Final Five decide to work together with the Colonial humans for mutual continued existence.

¹⁷⁴ Humans, especially after the first season, engage in various terrorist-like and morally questionable activities.

¹⁷⁵ Very little "techno-babble" exists in *BSG*.

following statement made by Commander Adama in the second season episode titled “Resurrection Ship, Part 2”:

“It is not enough to survive, one has to be worthy of survival.”

As regards the issue of torture, then, *BSG* asks what is says about a culture that chooses to engage in torture. For Brian L. Ott, the answer to this is not necessarily clear. As Ott writes:

BSG does not regard torture as morally just or unjust; it argues that we in the audience create the context (through language) that justifies the use of torture, and are thus not simply responding to some external context beyond our control. The ambivalent frame encourages reflexivity – an awareness of our complicity and cooperation in war (19).

For Erika Johnson-Lewis, *BSG* questions fundamental notions of humanity and civilization “about who we are, and what we hope we might be” (38). Johnson-Lewis suggests that *BSG*’s narrative illustrates issues such as torture as surfacing from a state of emergency and a state of exception, circumstances that allow laws to be suspended (or broken) as a paradoxical means of upholding them, a process that requires the enemy to be dehumanized and defined as an “other” who exists outside the boundaries of society, therefore making these others not subject to society’s laws in terms of having rights and privileges. As Johnson-Lewis writes:

In blurring the boundaries between human and inhuman, between barbarism and civilization, and by exposing that anyone might find himself in the no-man’s-land of the exception, stripped to bare life, *BSG* asks us to resist the Manichean logic of “with us or against us” when its only possible outcome is not only the dehumanization of the other, but the dehumanization of ourselves (38).

It is through this prism of self-reflection, dehumanization, and exception that we will examine the issue of torture on *BSG* as seen through *BSG*’s meta-narrative, which consists of an initial mini-series followed by four seasons (which are divided as Season 1, Season 2.0, Season 2.5, Season 3, Season 4.0, and Season 4.5) and two television movies titled *Razor* and *The Plan*.¹⁷⁶ However, this dissertation treats the “ambivalent frame” observed by Ott and the “no-man’s-land” Johnson-Lewis identifies not as a state-of-emergency or a state-of-exception, but rather as a state-of-survival, in which torture is employed (by both humans and Cylons) as a means to ensure continued existence. Where the “ticking bomb” scenario dominated the narrative of *24* and the state-of-nature scenario directed the narrative of *Lost*, a state-of-survival can be seen to govern the narrative of *BSG*. Accordingly, this state-of-survival relies on the theme of revenge to

¹⁷⁶ As noted in the first chapter, *BSG* (like *24*, and *Lost*) presented micro narratives through various other media, such as Internet Webisodes.

support an argument for torture, which is dramatized through a theme of dehumanization, and a theme of atonement to support an argument against torture, which is also dramatized through a theme of dehumanization. Thus, the examination of torture in *BSG*'s meta-narrative will focus on how torture was dramatized through a state-of-survival and its accompanying themes of revenge, dehumanization, and atonement.

Like *Lost*, *BSG* presents one continuous narrative in which episodes and seasons typically begin where previous episodes and seasons end. Accordingly, the device of flashback is used to more fully develop characters and storylines, most notably in the *Razor* and *The Plan* movies, making the nature of the storytelling layered and complex. In terms of narrative function, then, *BSG* will be examined as follows: the Miniseries and Season 1 function as the narrative's exposition; Season 2.0, Season 2.5, Season 3, *Razor*, and *The Plan* function as the narrative's development; and Season 4.0, and Season 4.5 function as the narrative's conclusion.¹⁷⁷ As such, the remainder of this chapter will examine and maintain the following arguments: (1) that torture is dramatized through a state-of-survival scenario and the accompanying themes of revenge, dehumanization, judgment, and atonement; (2) that those who torture become more dehumanized than those who are tortured; and (3) that torture is ultimately shown to be wrong because it results in a loss of humanity.

5.2 Exposition: Flesh and bone

Hypothesis 1: The Miniseries and Season 1 function as the exposition with regard to the progression of BSG's meta-narrative, establishing a state-of-survival scenario and the themes of revenge, dehumanization, and atonement.

BSG's two-part miniseries begins with a Colonial officer sitting in a remote space station looking at a picture of his wife and son. As a text shown over the scene explains, the space station was built so that

¹⁷⁷ While *Razor* aired prior to Season 4.0, *The Plan* aired after season 4.5. Nevertheless, its chronology takes place prior to Season 4.0. However, since it aired after the series concluded and since it does not contain any scenes of torture, it will not be examined in this chapter except to account for its function.

humans and Cylons could meet to maintain diplomatic relations after an armistice was reached to end the Human/Cylon war; however, the Cylons have not sent anyone in more than forty years. Suddenly, a woman (who is later revealed to be a human-Cylon model No. 6) arrives at the space station and the attack on the Twelve Colonies begins. While the Miniseries contains violent and emotionally disturbing scenes, no physical torture takes place; the torture is all psychological and it is inflicted on the humans, as the narrative slowly diminishes the human population from several billion to fifty thousand. What is paramount, however, is how the narrative dramatizes and establishes what will become the main themes of the overall series and the meta-narrative's progression: a state of survival, revenge, and dehumanization. Let us consider these elements one at a time.

In the course of being attacked the humans are shown having to make excruciating decisions based on the need to survive. In each instance, the decisions are portrayed tragically, yet, each situation is resolved from a utilitarian perspective, with the greater good prevailing. For example, an initial attack on the Battlestar Galactica creates a situation in which a section of the ship (which has caught fire) must be sealed off in order to prevent the entire ship from being destroyed (because the fire could incinerate the ship's fuel lines). Galactica's executive officer, Colonel Saul Tigh, orders the hatch sealed, causing eighty-five crewmembers to die (most of them were vented into space in order to put out the fire). Chief Galen Tyrol complains to Commander Adama, but Adama assures Tyrol that Tigh made the right call, the survival of the ship was more important. In another scene, a Raptor ship from Galactica that had to make an emergency landing on the planet of Caprica (in order to make repairs) is surrounded by a small mob of people who managed to survive the nuclear attack. Lieutenant Sharon Valerii (whose call sign is "Boomer") and Lieutenant Karl Agathon (whose call sign is "Helo") institute a lottery to choose three survivors who can board the ship after all the children who were in the crowd were put on the ship. However, Helo (who was wounded during the attack) gives up his seat when he recognizes a man in the crowd: Gaius Baltar, one of the Twelve Colony's leading scientific minds.¹⁷⁸ Recognizing the gravity of the nuclear holocaust, Helo reasons that humanity's survival is going to depend on great minds like Baltar's.

¹⁷⁸ Who, unbeknownst to Helo, was unwittingly responsible for aiding the Cylons in the attack.

After it is learned that the President of the Colonies and most of the government's officials have been killed, Secretary of Education Laura Roslin (who had toured Galactica and was en route back to Caprica) is sworn in aboard her ship, which becomes Colonial One. One of her first decisions is to try to find as many survivors as possible among the many civilian ships traveling through space. Initially, the small fleet she gathers comes under attack, but rather than flee she orders the ships to stand their ground.¹⁷⁹ Fortunately, Captain Lee Adama (whose call sign is "Apollo" and who was her ship's official escort back to Caprica) finds a way to deceive the Cylons into thinking their small fleet has been destroyed. However, under the logic that the Cylons would soon realize their mistake, Lee suggests that they proceed to "jump" the ships to rendezvous with the Galactica with the logic that it is a "numbers game" – they need to save as many as possible before the Cylons return or every ship (and what is essentially left of humanity) will be destroyed. Realizing Apollo is correct, Roslin reluctantly agrees and as the scene plays out, protests are heard from the captains of the ships being left behind as the ships capable of jumping flee while the Cylons begin to attack. Once reunited with Galactica, Roslin tries to convince Commander Adama that "the war is over, we lost" and that the only choice left is to escape to find a new home, as she tells Commander Adama: "We need to start having babies." Eventually Adama agrees and the fleet manages to escape; the Galactica battled the Cylons allowing the civilian ships to flee. Once the fleet escapes the Cylons a memorial ceremony is held on Galactica to honor the military personnel lost in the battle. During the ceremony Commander Adama suggests that the fleet will search for the home of the thirteenth tribe: the lost colony of Earth. After the ceremony Roslin questions Commander Adama about Earth, telling him that she knows the Earth is a myth, to which Commander Adama replies: "It's not enough to just live; you have to have something to live for, let it be Earth [...] the most important thing is the survival of the human race." Indeed, survival quickly and repeatedly becomes the main scenario used to frame the Miniseries, and eventually the entire series. Accordingly, the concept of revenge is weaved into the narrative's texture.

The text shown during the opening moments of the Miniseries begins with the following line, "They were created to make life easier on the twelve colonies and the day came when the Cylons decided

¹⁷⁹ Because she was trying to transfer personnel from ships that didn't have the capability to perform a "Faster-than-light" (FTL) jump to ships that did so that they could all escape together.

to kill their masters,” implying the Cylon’s motivation to be revenge for being treated (in the Cylon’s minds) as slaves. As the narrative unfolds and as the humans struggle to survive, the idea of revenge takes hold on several characters, especially those in the military. Commander Adama provides the best example of this reaction, as he is committed to fighting back. Indeed, even though he eventually decides to retreat (and look for Earth) he negotiates with President Roslin to retain a military authority so that he can make “military decisions” when necessary. He recognizes her authority as President, but, because he considers the fleet to be “at war” he is unwilling to concede his ability to wage war. Accordingly, while the Cylons attacked the humans in revenge, the Cylons also recognize the human’s need for revenge and in the final scene of the Miniseries the Cylons discuss whether or not they should pursue the Colonial Fleet or let them go. A No. 5 Cylon (named Aaron Doral) states, “We can’t let them go,” to which a No. 2 Cylon (named Leoben Conoy) replies, “If we do, they’re return one day and seek revenge,” to which a No. 6 (the same model seen in the opening space station scene) adds, “It’s in their nature.”

With regard to the theme of dehumanization, both the human characters and the human-Cylon characters display an animosity toward each other that reflects not just a hatred of one another but a consideration of one another that holds each respective race as not being worthy of existence. While revenge factors into this conception, the Cylons attack the Twelve Colonies because they consider humans to be inferior lesser beings, not just physically but also (ironically) spiritually and morally. Likewise, the humans consider Cylons to be nothing more than programmed machines, “walking toasters” who do not have a soul and therefore do not really exist in the sense of being alive. For both sides, this dehumanization allows each side to treat one another with impunity and depravity. Indeed, for the Cylons, it is not enough to kill billions of humans; fifty thousand survivors must be hunted down. For the Colonials, the Cylons are a mortal threat that must eventually be extinguished. That the humans (at this point only Commander Adama, Colonel Tigh, Gaius Baltar and a few other key personnel) know the Cylons can take human form, adds to a growing suspicion and hatred. This leads to the exploration of the concept of atonement (and perhaps judgment).

In the initial narrative of the miniseries, the Battlestar Galactica was set to be decommissioned and turned into a museum. During a decommissioning ceremony (which took place prior to the attack on the colonies) Commander Adama delivers a brief speech in which he offers a commentary on humanity that serves to foreshadow the events that subsequently ensue. Consider the following excerpt:

When we fought the Cylons we did it to save ourselves from extinction but we never asked ourselves why? Why are we as a people worth saving? We still commit murder because of greed, spite, jealousy. And we still visit all of our sins upon our children. We refuse to accept responsibility for anything that we've done. [...] You cannot play god and then wash your hands of the things that you created. Sooner or later the day comes when you cannot hide from the things you've done.

Indeed, Adama's statement is prophetic considering how the narrative plays out. But what is significant is that it helps establish the idea that humanity is being judged, not just by the Cylons but more importantly by humanity's own actions. By asking whether or not humanity is worth saving, Adama (and the narrative in general) essentially implies if we are worthy saving then we need to demonstrate our collective value by first accepting responsibility, which, I would argue, leads to atonement and perhaps even forgiveness. Let us consider how the state-of-survival, revenge, dehumanization, and atonement are more fully developed in the first season through the use of torture.

The state-of-survival is dramatically portrayed throughout the first several episodes of BSG's first season, most notably during the first episode, titled "33" (in which the Cylons are shown to find the Colonial Fleet every thirty-three minutes, an episode that culminates in President Roslin having to order a civilian ship with thirteen hundred passengers destroyed in order to save the rest of the fleet) and the fifth episode titled "You Can't Go Home Again," (in which Apollo and Commander Adama risk the entire fleet to save Starbuck). Thus, when torture enters the narrative in the eighth episode, titled "Flesh and Bone," the progression of the state-of-survival has led the humans (especially those who know Cylons look human) to become somewhat paranoid, or at least, extremely cautious.

In the beginning of the episode, a copy of Leoben is captured onboard a ship called the Gemenon Traveler and President Roslin and Commander Adama decide what to do with "it." Consider the scene between Roslin and Adama:

Adama: I'll send a team over to destroy it immediately.

Roslin: I want this man interrogated first.

Adama: First of all, it's not a him, it's an it. Second, anything it says cannot be trusted. Best thing to do is to destroy it immediately.

Roslin: I'd like to hear what this thing has to say. It might be important.¹⁸⁰

Adama: Madam President, I've dealt with this model before.¹⁸¹ It'll fill your head with doubletalk, half-baked philosophy, and confuse you.

Roslin: Then send someone who won't be easily confused. That's an order, Commander. I want him interrogated.

Adama: Order understood.

Adama orders Starbuck to interrogate Leoben. At first, Starbuck seems nonchalant about the idea, as she is more interested in working on a captured Cylon Raider.¹⁸² But Adama impresses upon her that Leoben is dangerous and likely has a goal. As Adama states: "It's a goal you won't understand till later. Your job is to make sure he doesn't achieve the goal." While Starbuck's character has been shown to disregard authority,¹⁸³ Adama and Starbuck have a special relationship¹⁸⁴ and Starbuck accepts this assignment. When Starbuck first sees Leoben he is sitting in a chair with his hands cuffed and his head on a table, looking as if he is asleep. She then notices that he is sweating. In their initial conversation Leoben guesses her name and he tells her that he has planted a nuclear bomb on one of the ships in the fleet and that it will detonate in less than nine hours. After telling this to Roslin and Adama, Starbuck begins to perform an enhanced interrogation, with the goal of getting Leoben to reveal the location of the bomb; in the meantime, Adama orders the fleet to be swept for radiological signatures. While on the surface this seems to establish a "ticking bomb" scenario, the scene actually serves to develop the state-of-survival, as well as the concepts of revenge and dehumanization. Let us consider some excerpts in detail.

¹⁸⁰ Roslin, who is suffering from cancer and who is taking a hallucinatory drug known as "kamala extract," has seen a vision of Leoben.

¹⁸¹ Commander Adama fought and killed a Leoben copy during the Miniseries.

¹⁸² In the fourth episode titled "Act of Contrition," Starbuck takes on a squadron of eight Cylon raiders. After seven are disposed of, Starbuck's Viper collides with the eighth Raider and both ships crash on a nearby moon. With her ship destroyed, Starbuck eventually finds the Raider (in the following episode titled "You Can't Go Home Again") and is able to fly it back to Galactica, where Galactica's deck crew try to learn what they can from it.

¹⁸³ She was placed in Galactica's brig for hitting Colonel Tigh.

¹⁸⁴ Special and complicated, as Starbuck was engaged to Commander Adam's son, Zak, whom she trained to be a Viper pilot. However, Zak was not a good pilot and he died after crashing his Viper. Starbuck feels guilty for Zak's death since she passed Zak's basic flight training, not because he deserved to pass but because they were engaged. Nevertheless, Commander Adama considers Starbuck family and when she was lost on the moon he endangered the entire fleet in his attempts to rescue her.

As Starbuck questions Leoben she begins to eat in front of him and when Leoben asks if he can eat it, she simply moves the tray in front of him and he begins to devour it, without any regard for its flavor.

Consider the dialogue (emphasis is added):

Leoben: I'm starving. Haven't eaten in days.
Starbuck: Kind of bad programming, isn't it? I mean, why bother with hunger?
Leoben: Part of being human.
Starbuck: *You're not human*. How's your lunch?
Leoben: You know how it is. When you're starving, anything tastes good.

Starbuck gestures to a guard who hits Leoben in the back of the head, causing his scalp to bleed. She asks Leoben if it hurt and after he replies yes she responds by saying: "Machines shouldn't feel pain, shouldn't bleed, shouldn't sweat [...] See, now a smart Cylon would turn off the old pain software about now. But I don't think you're so smart." Leoben makes a quip and Starbuck gestures to the guard, who strikes Leoben again in the head. Consider the dialogue that follows:

Starbuck: Here's your dilemma. Turn off the pain, you feel better, *but that makes you a machine, not a person*. You see human beings can't turn off their pain. Human beings have to suffer, and cry, and scream, and endure, because they have no choice. So the only way you can avoid the pain you are about to receive is by telling me exactly what I want to know. Just like a human would.
Leoben: I knew this about you. You're everything I thought you would be. But it won't work. I won't tell you anything.
Starbuck: Maybe not. But then, you'll know deep down that I beat you, that a human being beat you, and that *you are truly no greater than we are. You're just a bunch of machines after all*.

As torture goes, this scene is relatively tame; Leoben is simply being beaten and given that he is a Cylon, his pain does not seem real, especially since he has been shown to possess extreme strength.¹⁸⁵ What is more important, however, is the manner in which Starbuck is depicted and the approach she takes to dehumanize Leoben.

While Starbuck does not actually inflict pain (she simply gestures for the guards to inflict pain) she seems completely at ease as an interrogator. It is certainly significant that out of the entire Galactica crew Adama chose Starbuck to question Leoben¹⁸⁶ and it seems that this decision was made not necessarily

¹⁸⁵ Leoben picked up Adama by the neck and threw him. Adama was able to kill Leoben through luck and perhaps through sheer will. Given that Leoben cannot really die, Leoben, it could be argued, was not as concerned with protecting his life.

¹⁸⁶ Roslin wanted someone that would not be easily confused, yet Starbuck, in previous episodes, was shown being extremely torn between her guilt over Zak's death, and her duty to train new pilots. In fact, her general demeanor can be seen as one of confusion and conflict, as she is both a heroic pilot as well as a

because Starbuck is physically tough (though she is depicted as being able to handle herself in a fight) but because she is mentally tough, as if her psychology allows her to be able to dehumanize and torture another being without remorse or regret. Consider the next scene between Starbuck and Leoben (with emphasis added):

Starbuck: Now, *if you were human*, you'd be just about ready to start offering up some false information about the location of the nuke. Some tiny thing that might get you a reward and maybe spare you a few minutes of this. But then, *I keep forgetting you're not human. You're a machine.*

Leoben: I am more than you could ever imagine. I am God.

Starbuck: (laughs) I'm sorry. You're God? Wow. Nice to meet you. That's good. We'll give you a couple of minutes with that.

Leoben: It's funny, isn't it? We're all God, Starbuck. All of us. I see the love that binds all living things together.

Starbuck: Love? *You don't even know what the word means.*

Leoben: I know that God loved you more than all other living creatures and you repaid his divine love with sin, with hate, corruption, evil. So then he decided to create the Cylons.

Starbuck: The Gods had nothing to do with it. *We created you. Us. It was a stupid, fracked-up decision, and we have paid for it.* You slaughtered my entire civilization! That is sin. That is evil. *And you are evil.*

In the next scene, only two hours remain until the bomb Leoben allegedly planted will detonate. So Starbuck has the guards bring in a large bucket of water. They then hold Leoben's head under until his body begins to shake and gasp for air. While the scene does not depict a typical "waterboarding" technique, it at least suggests a "waterboarding" type of interrogation – where the prisoner is being threatened with the possibility of drowning. Consider the arc of the scene (emphasis added):

Starbuck: Tell me where the warhead is, otherwise you're gonna drown in that bucket.

Leoben: I can't drown. I can't die.

Starbuck: Right. Commander Adama mentioned that how if your body dies your consciousness is downloaded or transferred into another body. Something like that?

Leoben: No, exactly like that.

Starbuck: But you see I've been thinking. Why is a Cylon willing to talk at all? Why does he care if we destroy his body? Won't he just transfer away and laugh at all of us and our stupid human ideas? (He is held under water again.) Tell me where the warhead is.

Leoben: This is not your path, Starbuck. You have a different destiny.

Starbuck: Don't interrupt me. You see, I'm gonna dazzle you with my poor human brain. You see, I think that you're afraid. You're afraid that we're a long way from home. What if you don't transfer all the way back? What if when you die here, you really die? It's your chance to find out if you're really God or *just a bunch of circuits with a bad haircut.*

disgrace as an officer, seeming more of a Maverick than a disciplined and focused soldier. Despite this contradiction, however, what is consistent about Starbuck is her toughness and perseverance. She survives (as she did when she crashed on the moon with a Cylon Raider and as Adama did with Leoben) through sheer will.

Leoben: I'm not afraid of dying.

Starbuck: *Somebody's programmed you with a fairytale of God, and streams, and life ever after. But somewhere in that hard drive that you call a brain is a beeping message: Error, error, does not compute. I don't have a soul. I have software. If I die, I'm gone.*

The guards hold Leoben under water again several times, with Leoben stating the confusing double-talk and “half-baked philosophy” Commander Adama alluded to. What is significant about this scene, despite the technique of Starbuck to try to dehumanize Leoben, is that Leoben is essentially allowing himself to be tortured. It is as if he understands the human ritual and is willing to participate in it to his own momentary detriment because he is trying to be human and, more importantly, because he is trying to get into Starbuck's head – which seems to be his ultimate goal. In a sense, then, Starbuck and Leoben are torturing each other. For Starbuck the goal is dehumanization, she knows Leoben cannot die but since he can feel pain she wants him to suffer, at the very least, for some small revenge, as she later tells President Roslin who questions Starbuck's methods: “It's a machine, sir, there's no limit to the tactics I can use.” For Leoben, on the other hand, the goal is judgment; he wants to delegitimize Starbuck by making her feel guilty, not for torturing him but rather for being human.

As the episode plays out, the bomb was indeed a ruse on Leoben's part designed to torture Starbuck and to plant a seed of doubt in President Roslin, as Leoben is able to convey to Roslin the message (which turns out to be false) that Commander Adama is a Cylon. What is significant is that it is President Roslin who ultimately decides to kill Leoben and at the end of the episode Roslin orders Leoben to be flushed out an air-lock. For Roslin, Starbuck's torture of Leoben was a waste of time, as she tells Starbuck:

You've lost perspective. During the time I have allowed him to remain alive and captive on this ship he has caused our entire fleet to spread out defenseless. He puts insidious ideas in our minds. More lethal than any warhead. He creates fear. But you're right. He's a machine. And you don't keep a deadly machine around. When it kills your people and threatens your future you get rid of it.

It is also significant to note that at the end of the episode Starbuck goes to her locker and takes out to religious figurines and says the following prayer: “Lords of Kobol hear my prayer. I don't know if he had a soul or not. But if he did, take care of it.” This serves to development the theme of judgment and

atonement, as Starbuck feels guilt for what did to Leoben to the point that she is willing to pray for his soul, an act that suggests she is also worried about her own soul.

For *BSG*'s narrative and the torture argument, then, Leoben's torture suggests that torturing Cylons is futile. Therefore, when Cylons are tortured, they are likely being tortured out of a need for revenge and a need to dehumanize a mortal enemy, making atonement more difficult to attain. With regard to the state-of-survival, then, torture is simply a tactical maneuver, it is not necessarily used to gather information; rather torture is employed as a weapon designed to inflict psychological and emotional pain. What is contradictory about this application of torture, however, is that torturing Cylons remains futile; if they are machines then they cannot be psychologically or emotionally compromised. Thus, what is ironic is that the humans are essentially torturing themselves, with the psychological and emotional damage becoming a self-inflicted reciprocal effect/affect and they are preventing themselves from being worthy of survival. From this, let us consider the next episode in *BSG*'s first season in which the interrogation of a prisoner is seen.

In the eleventh episode, titled "Colonial Day", representatives from the twelve colonies (known as the Quorum of Twelve) meet for a political summit on a ship in the fleet called Cloud Nine, a luxury liner with a simulated blue sky and white clouds. Apollo and Starbuck are placed in charge of security for President Roslin and for the entire ship, not just from potential Cylon agents, but also from a man named Tom Zarek, a domestic-terrorist who was on a prison ship called the Astral Queen¹⁸⁷ and who, after an incident aboard the Astral Queen, was given control of the ship¹⁸⁸ and eventually became an elected representative of Sagitaron – and thus was now part of the Quorum. Given Zarek's past¹⁸⁹, he posed as

¹⁸⁷ At the time of the Cylon attacks, all of the prisoners on this ship were being ferried to a location for parole hearings.

¹⁸⁸ With the fleet's water supply threatened, Galactica found ice on a moon. Since harvesting the ice was deemed too dangerous to use military or civilian personnel, Apollo was tasked with making an offer to the prisoners on the Astral Queen: "freedom points" in exchange for harvesting the ice. However, the plan backfires when Zarek (who rallied the rest of the prisoners) takes Apollo and his team hostage. But an agreement is eventually reached in which the prisoners would harvest the ice in exchange for them being given the Astral Queen ship and for a guarantee that elections would be held in accordance with Colonial law – Zarek being a political prisoner wanted to declare Roslin an illegitimate president.

¹⁸⁹ A thirty-year career as a domestic terrorist and agitator in which he blew up a government building on Sagittaron.

much of a threat, not just to President Roslin but to the government and the population in general, as any Cylon. As the episode unfolds, a man named Valance (who was able to smuggle a gun onboard Cloud Nine despite heightened security) is caught and interrogated by Apollo and Starbuck. Consider an excerpt from the scene:

Starbuck: Your pal Grimes says different. He gave you up.
Valance: You're bluffing. You haven't got anything.¹⁹⁰
Apollo: We don't need anything, Valance. Because this isn't a trial. This is just you and us in this room.
Starbuck: ... there's no due process. This is your courtroom.
Apollo: (loads the ceramic gun) And that would make us your executioners.
Starbuck: So you might want to cooperate or else you're going out an airlock. Because that's what we do to traitors.¹⁹¹
Valance: Look, I, uh, just came over here for the booze and the food. That's it.
Apollo: You know what? Frak you!

Apollo grabs Valance and as the camera pulls away for a scene change, it seems as if Apollo proceeds to beat Valance while Starbuck watches. In the next scene Apollo is making a report to President Roslin:

Apollo: We put all the heat on Valance that we could and we still can't tie him to Zarek.
Roslin: I know Zarek's behind this, keep working on Valance.
Apollo: We will.

Other than physically beating Valance (which is not explicitly shown) and threatening his life, it is unclear exactly what "heat" Apollo and Starbuck applied. However, when Apollo and Starbuck return to continue "working" on Valance they find him dead, with his wrists mysteriously slashed. What is paramount is that state-of-survival and the themes of revenge and dehumanization are at play in Valance's interrogation, as are the themes of judgment and atonement. Although Valance is not suspected of being a Cylon, he is nevertheless treated with impunity, as Starbuck and Apollo operate with absolute and presidentially sanctioned freedom, highlighting the need to protect humanity (which in this scene is represented by the threat to civilian government) at all costs. Let us consider how these themes continue to develop in the narrative progression seen in the subsequent seasons.

¹⁹⁰ Valance is correct; Starbuck is bluffing.

¹⁹¹ Starbuck is referencing Leoben and by extension is equating Valance to a Cylon.

5.3 Development: Valley of darkness

Hypothesis 2: Season 2.0 and 2.5 function as the initial development with regard to the progression of BSG's meta-narrative, continuing the state-of-survival scenario and the themes of revenge, dehumanization, and atonement.

The finale of the first season ended with a cliffhanger in which Boomer shoots Commander Adama twice in the chest after she returns from a dangerous yet successful mission that resulted in the destruction of a Cylon Base Ship, as if Adama represents the continued judgment of humanity. The second season begins with a continuation of the same scene, with Colonel Tigh ordering marine guards to “secure that thing in the brig” because, even though it is not known for sure to anyone in the fleet¹⁹², Boomer “must be a Cylon.” Later in the episode, Tigh questions Boomer, asking her who gave the order to shoot Commander Adama and if any other pilots are Cylons. Boomer is shown to be confused, alternating between her Cylon personality (which knows that she shot Adama) and her human persona (which does not want to admit or believe that she is a Cylon). Tigh beats Boomer and she calls him a coward, telling him to shoot her, but he cannot bring himself to do it.¹⁹³ While this scene does not contain severe torture (though a woman being beaten is visually off-putting) it develops the animosity directed at Cylons and it establishes a disdain for Boomer (and the No. 8 “Sharon” model in general) that will remain for several seasons and will lead to a prejudice against Sharon from the fleet (because she shot Adama) that manifests itself verbally and physically.

For example, in the fourth episode of the season, titled “Resistance”, Colonel Tigh (who has been in command since Adama was shot) interrogates Chief Tyrol, who had been stranded on the planet Kobol since the end of the first season and had just returned to Galactica.¹⁹⁴ Since Chief Tyrol had nursed a

¹⁹² Except Gaius Baltar who altered his Cylon detection test to show that Boomer was human.

¹⁹³ This could be because Tigh knows that she won't die, but will simply be downloaded and reborn into another clone copy.

¹⁹⁴ In the twelfth episode of the first season, titled “Kobol's Last Gleaming”, Boomer finds the planet Kobol during a scouting mission and Chief Tyrol was part of a team dispatched to Kobol to study the planet for resources. Tyrol's Raptor was shot down and it crashed on the planet and his team does not get rescued until the end of the third episode of the second season, titled “Fragged.”

relationship with Boomer during the first season, Colonel Tigh questions Tyrol on the assumption that Tyrol either knows something or might himself be a Cylon. Consider the following excerpt from the scene:

Tigh: You know what we do with Cylons, Chief?
Chief: I'm not a Cylon.
Tigh: Roslin came up with the execution method.
Chief: I'm Galen Tyrol.
Tigh: She put a Cylon out of the airlock.
Chief: My father was a priest. My mother was an oracle.
I've served on Battlestar since I was 18 years old. The Pegasus, Columbia, Atlantia, Galactica ...
Tigh: Don't talk to me like you're a soldier! (Tigh hits Tyrol, knocking him to the ground) You are not a soldier!

Again, this scene does not depict torture so much as it develops the need to avenge and dehumanize the Cylons. However, the next interrogation scene resembles something right out of Jack Bauer's (or Ben Linus's) playbook.

With Boomer being revealed to be a Cylon, Gaius Baltar's reputation suffers because Sharon's outing means that Baltar's Cylon detection test does not work (at least in the minds of the fleet, since Boomer had actually passed the test). So Baltar decides to question Boomer, wanting to know how many other Cylon agents exist in the fleet. Yet, rather than questioning her in a traditional manner, he uses Chief Tyrol (who has been placed in the same cell with Boomer) to play on Boomer's affections. Baltar enters the cell and injects Chief Tyrol with a lethal substance, causing Tyrol to immediately pass out. Consider this scene:

Boomer: What did you do to him? He's not breathing.
Gaius: No, he's dying right now, Sharon. I can save him, if you tell me how many Cylons there are left in the fleet.
Boomer: I don't know.
Gaius: Yes you do. Now, buried, deep down in that thing you call a subconscious, you know. How many?
Boomer: I don't know!
Gaius: He doesn't have time for this, Sharon. His organs are shutting down. In ten seconds he'll experience complete brain-stem death. Now, how many? Do you love him, Sharon? Only you can save him. Ten ... nine ... Do you love him? Do you love him, Sharon?
Boomer: Eight, there are eight!

Baltar administers an antidote to Tyrol and Tyrol comes back to life. Later in the episode, Gaius tells Tyrol that a new jail-cell is being constructed on Galactica, specifically designed to run tests on Boomer.

However, as Boomer is being transferred and walked down one of Galactica's corridors she is shot and killed by Callie, a deckhand who works for Tyrol.

What is paramount, again, is that the hatred of Cylons and the need for revenge and dehumanization against Cylons is being nurtured throughout *BSG*'s narrative. Yet, at the same time, a sympathy for Sharon (and by extension Cylons as a race, if you will) is also being cultivated, further developing the judgment against humans. For example, in sixth episode of the second season, titled "Home: Part 1", Starbuck returns to Kobol with Helo and a copy of Sharon. Apollo immediately recognizes Sharon and in revenge for Boomer shooting his father Apollo grabs the Sharon copy and holds a gun to her head, causing Helo (who fell in love with this copy of Sharon during the first season and who has impregnated her) to hold a gun to Apollo's head. Roslin quells the situation by assuring Helo that Sharon will not be harmed, but after Helo and Apollo lower their guns Roslin orders marine guards to "put that thing out an airlock." Sharon protests claiming that she has important information about Kobol and about Roslin's belief in "the path to Earth." While Roslin decides to let Sharon live, it is interesting to note that Roslin (as Tigh claimed) is willing to adhere to her method of Cylon disposal, which includes lying (using a demeanor and resolve that is just as cunning as the Cylons) and not keeping her word, which is somewhat disturbing given that she is the president.

In contrast to Roslin and Tigh, this copy of Sharon (who eventually marries Helo and adopts the call sign "Athena"¹⁹⁵) proves herself worthy to the fleet (and in support of the fleet and humans in general) on various occasions. In the seventh episode titled, "Home: Part 2", Sharon helps Roslin find the mythical "tomb of Athena" and she defends Commander Adama against an attempted assassination plotted by Tom Zarek, saying to Adama, "I'm Sharon, but I'm a different Sharon and I make my own choices." In the ninth episode titled, "Flight of the Phoenix", Sharon helps purge a Cylon virus¹⁹⁶ (and then sends the virus back to a squadron of Cylons) saving Galactica and the fleet from a Cylon attack; it also allows Galactica's Vipers to essentially slaughter defenseless Raiders. In the tenth episode, titled "Pegasus", Sharon is actually

¹⁹⁵ In the third season.

¹⁹⁶ By physically interfacing with Galactica's computers – which she does by slicing her left palm with a knife and then shoving a fiber optic cable into her arm, which seems to cause her a great deal of pain.

spoken of favorably by Commander Adama as “an excellent source of intelligence” and in the sixteenth episode, titled “Sacrifice,” as “a military asset providing us with vital strategic intelligence.” Given Sharon’s importance, let us consider the events that begin to occur in the “Pegasus”¹⁹⁷ episode and in the two subsequent episodes titled “Resurrection Ship: Part I” and “Resurrection Ship: Part 2”¹⁹⁸, as well as the television movie titled “Razor”¹⁹⁹, in more detail. It should be noted that in order to keep this “copy” of Sharon distinct from other copies, she will be referred to as Athena during the remainder of the chapter.

Approximately six months after the Cylon attack the Colonial Fleet encounters the Battlestar Pegasus, a ship that had also managed to survive and had been fighting the Cylons²⁰⁰ using guerilla tactics. The Pegasus had been tracking Cylons when it happened to jump to the Colonial Fleet’s location. Since the commander of the Pegasus, Helena Cain, held the rank of Rear Admiral, she effectively took command of the Colonial Fleet. During an exchange of information between Battlestars it becomes apparent that both ships have Cylon prisoners: Galactica has Athena (a No. 8) and the Pegasus has a No. 6 copy known as Gina Inviere.²⁰¹ The treatment of both prisoners, however, is markedly different. On Galactica, Athena’s freedom is curtailed²⁰² but she does seem to retain certain rights and privileges, as she is shown wearing normal clothing, exercising in her cell, and presumably being able to eat and maintain her personal hygiene. While Athena is derided and called names such as “toaster,” “thing,” and “it”, some still refer to her as “Sharon” (and eventually Athena) and she is allowed to maintain her relationship with Helo.²⁰³ Moreover,

¹⁹⁷ Two versions of the “Pegasus” episode exist, one contained in Season 2.0, which is a normal length episode and one contained in Season 2.5, which is an extended episode. Both versions will be considered, as both are available on the respective season DVDs and since the extended scenes provide more development of the narrative, especially with regard to torture.

¹⁹⁸ While all of BSG is essentially one epic narrative, the episodes “Pegasus”, “Resurrection Ship: Part 1”, and “Resurrection Ship: Part 2” (the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth episodes of the second season) are essentially one episode divided into three parts.

¹⁹⁹ The “Razor” movie was released after the third season and is technically catalogued as the first two episodes of the fourth season. However, the “Razor” movie portrays events on the Pegasus in multiple timelines, one of which corresponds to the events of the second season. Therefore, these events will be discussed now, as they directly relate to the issue at hand.

²⁰⁰ In contrast to the Galactica and the Colonial Fleet running from the Cylons.

²⁰¹ The name Gina Inviere is never mentioned in the “Pegasus” episode. However, the name is used in the “Razor” movie. For the purposes of clarity, the name Gina will be consistently used.

²⁰² She is kept in the cell that was constructed for Boomer.

²⁰³ Not physically, however, as they are only allowed to see each other through glass windows and talk to each other via a telephone.

while no scenes are shown, it is reported that Gaius Baltar has regular conversations with Athena in order to learn information from her about the Cylons.

In contrast, Gina, who is never referred to by name (she is only referred to as “it”), is kept bound to the floor of her cell, wearing only a tattered gown (presumably with no underwear). She is kept alive but her physical needs are barely attended to; her body is filthy and it is bruised and scarred from multiple beatings, including gang rape and whippings which have left her catatonic. During a visit that Admiral Cain is making to inspect Galactica, Cain meets with Baltar, who explains to her his methods in Cylon interrogation. Cain and Baltar stand in Athena’s cell, along with Athena (who is sitting) and two fully armed marine guards.²⁰⁴ Consider the dialogue:

Cain: (intensely staring at Athena) I can never get over how human they look.

Baltar: Yes, it’s uncanny, isn’t it? This model has been very useful, in fact. It’s given us key insights into Cylon information systems, tactics, strategic plans.

Athena: I take it we’ve encountered another Colonial warship?

Cain looks stunned that Athena is speaking. Cain takes a moment, as if she is counting to ten, and then speaks to Baltar, ignoring Athena’s question.

Cain: You’ve gotten all of this intel without coercion?

Baltar: Oh, yes. I find the application of physical coercive techniques to be counter-productive.

Athena: You’re going to ignore me, pretend I can’t speak.

Cain continues to look at Athena with extreme coldness and contempt. On the other hand, Baltar, who looks demonstrably nervous around Admiral Cain, looks as if he feels sorry for how Cain is treating Athena. As he states to Admiral Cain: “We treat this model as if it’s the human being it pretends to be. That seems to make it more cooperative.” Cain does not know how to respond to Baltar’s last statement. She looks at her marine guards then at Gaius then at Athena and then she walks out of the cell without saying a word. As Baltar follows her out of the cell Cain asks Baltar to examine Gina to see if he can “glean anything from it” because they haven’t been able “to get anything useful out of it.”

As was shown in the “Razor” movie, Gina was revealed to be a Cylon when a group of Cylons board Pegasus during an attack – a No. 6 copy was among the boarding party and an officer named Lieutenant Kendra Shaw (who had worked closely with Gina, who was a communications officer)

²⁰⁴ This scene is shown in the extended episode of the “Pegasus” episode.

recognized the clone. Once the attack is quelled, Cain and Shaw are in the holding cell, staring at Gina. Shaw reports to Cain that the battle left eight hundred and sixteen dead and one hundred and twenty-one injured, as well as thirty-two Vipers destroyed and sixty-one badly damaged. Consider the dialogue (emphasis added):

Cain: It's a rather high price for a tactically insignificant victory.

Shaw: I wouldn't say it's insignificant, sir. I'd say we put the enemy on notice. The price we paid is my fault.

Cain: How do you figure that, Lieutenant?

Shaw: Well, I gave her ... *it* my access codes. *It* must've used them to override our security lockouts.

Cain: You gave *it* something far more important than that. You gave *it* your trust, as did I. But *this thing* really knows how to manipulate human emotion. Preys on them. (Lieutenant Thorne enters the room.) Lieutenant Thorne. I want you to interrogate our Cylon prisoner. Find out everything *it* knows. And since *it's* so adept at mimicking human feelings, I'm assuming that *its software is vulnerable* to them as well. So, pain. Yes, of course. Degradation, fear, shame. *I want you to really test its limits*. Be as creative as you feel you need to be.

Thorne agrees and he enters the room with Gina. This scene took place several months before the Pegasus encountered Galactica, but it demonstrates the emotion felt by Cain (who, in the Razor movie, was shown to be romantically involved with Gina) toward Gina as well as her willingness to engage in a "gloves off" approach in interrogating Gina, brutally developing the themes of revenge and dehumanization. It also gives insight into why and how Gina became abused: Cain's affection turned to hatred and this in turn led to Cain seeking absolute revenge (not just on Cylons but on anyone who got in her way) at all cost, providing an extreme example of judgment on humanity. As Cain tells a recently promoted Captain Shaw in the Razor movie (emphasis added):

Cain: Sometimes we have to do things that we never thought we were capable of, if only to show the enemy our will. Yesterday, you showed me that you were capable of setting aside your fears, setting aside your hesitation, and even your revulsion.²⁰⁵ Every natural inhibition that, during battle, can mean the difference between life and death. (Cain opens a knife). When you can be this for as long as you have to be, then you're a razor. This war is forcing us all to become razors, because if we don't, *we don't survive*. And then we don't have the luxury of becoming simply human again.

For Cain, survival requires having to become the enemy before returning to being human.

²⁰⁵ Cain had ordered her executive officer, Colonel Fisk, to shoot the families of civilians in order to convince the civilians to cooperate. Fisk hesitates, Kendra doesn't.

As with her sanctioned torture of Gina, this advice to Kendra also brutally develops the state-of-survival scenario, suggesting that survival comes first, being human comes second.

Returning to the storyline in which Baltar visits Gina, Baltar enters Gina's cell, along with his Virtual Six, who was unaware that Cain's prisoner was a No. 6 clone. Moments before they enter the room, Virtual Six teases Baltar, but the mood quickly changes when they walk in and see Gina. At first, only the facial expressions of Baltar and Virtual Six are shown, indicating looks of both disgust and disbelief: Virtual Six's horror and anger are almost palpable, especially when she turns her gaze on the character of Lieutenant Thorne. Eventually Gina is shown in full frame and the Baltar's and Virtual Six's reactions become realized. Consider their dialogue:

Baltar: She must've struggled. She must've fought back.

Virtual Six: That doesn't justify this.

Baltar: Stop it. (to Gina) Hello. Hello. Can you hear me?

Virtual Six: She's obviously been abused. Tortured.

Baltar: Yes. But there's no obvious sign of head trauma. (He shines a flashlight into Gina's eyes.) Voluntary eye movements suggest conscious thought.

Virtual Six: Can't you stop being a scientist for one moment and look at the abused woman lying there in front of you?

Baltar: Now, listen. I know this must be very difficult for you.

Virtual Six: Don't patronize me.

Baltar: I'm not patronizing you. I'm trying to reason with you. If I'm going to help her, I have to understand her first.

Virtual Six: Will you help her, Gaius?

Baltar: I will do everything I can. After all, she's remarkably similar to someone I care about a great deal. I think it would be best, if you left us alone for a time.

Virtual Six leaves and Baltar remains with Gina, looking extremely sad and confused – not just because Baltar has a physical and mental relationship with the No. 6 model (one in which he believes he is in love with No. 6) but also because her condition is the manifestation of Cylon hatred at the hands of military personnel. Indeed, the parallels to the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo scandals are apparent.

Later in the episode Baltar discusses Gina's condition with Admiral Cain and Colonel Fisk, Cain's executive officer.

Baltar: In order for my technique to work, the technique I used so successfully on the Cylon who called herself Sharon Valerii, the prisoner must be allowed to bathe adequately and eat. If proper clothes could be provided and other sundry comforts, then that would be ideal.

Cain: The comfort of that thing is of no interest to me. It killed over 800 members of my crew.

Baltar: If you'll permit me, Admiral, as I understand it, it allowed a group of centurions to board your ship, but it itself did not commit ...

Cain: Are you making excuses for it, Doctor? Have you become too close to your subjects? Lost perspective perhaps?

Baltar: Quite the opposite. The Cylons are a brutal and deadly opponent; the universe would be a substantially better place if they were exterminated entirely. But my job is not extermination. My job is investigation.

Cain suggests that Baltar's investigation has not yielded any new information to which Baltar responds by saying that Gina's damage is not physical but rather psychological. As Baltar reasons: "It shows that Cylon consciousness is just as susceptible to the same pressures and cleavages as the human psyche. It can be manipulated in the same fashion. Simply put, Admiral, you have already used the stick. It's time to use a carrot." Cain orders Colonel Fisk to "give the doctor whatever he needs" and Baltar returns to Gina's cell with food, he has Gina's restraints removed and as she slowly begins to eat it seems that Baltar has made some immediate progress with her, not by abusing her but by being treating her humanely. Later in the narrative, Admiral Cain visits Baltar in Gina's cell to check on Baltar's progress.²⁰⁶ Consider the scene:

Cain: Well I see that you got it to eat. That's progress, I suppose. Can you get it roll over, beg? (Cain hands Baltar reconnaissance photos taken of Cylon ships) See what it can make of these. You know, this thing used to sit in our mess and eat our food and listen to our stories. (looking at Gina) Didn't you? You just sat there, listening to us, pretending to be our friend. Didn't you? (Cain kicks Gina.)

Baltar: Admiral, please! Any physical contact with the subject will only help to set my efforts back at this point.

Cain spits on Gina and orders Baltar to see what Gina knows about the Cylon ships. Cain leaves the room and as Baltar stares at the photos, Gina gets to her feet and lunges at Baltar, knocking him down. She straddles him and tries to choke him, but they both break free and each retreat to opposite ends of the room, both on sitting on the floor. Then Gina, who is crying, speaks to Baltar, saying: "I want to die. Will you help me do that? Will you kill me, please?" Baltar looks stunned. He has clearly made progress, as Gina is no longer catatonic; however, it is unclear if Gina is operating as a Cylon agent²⁰⁷ or as an entity who simply wants to end her suffering.

Later, Baltar brings Gina "a fresh set of clothes" and he peeks at her while she gets dressed; he sees multiple, deep scars on her back from being whipped and beaten. Baltar then asks her if she knew she was a Cylon or whether she was a "sleeper agent." Consider the scene:

²⁰⁶ This takes place in "Resurrection Ship: Part 1"

²⁰⁷ Because death would mean resurrection (and thus escape) for her.

Gina: I knew what I was. I was a soldier. I had a mission. I carried it out. But, I thought that when it was done, I was going to die, that you would kill me. Then I would download into a new body. Be reborn. But you didn't kill me. The things you did to me. Baltar: What they did to you was wrong, evil. But I'm not one of them. You have to believe me. Things are going to get better for you from this moment on. I promise.

Gina: I don't want things to get better. I want to die.

Baltar: But you know you can't die. You do know that, don't you? Your consciousness will merely transfer, and you'll wake up in another body.

Gina: (Gina looks at the photo) Not if you destroy that.

Baltar: What this? This ship? Tell me. What's so important about this ship?

Baltar learns that the mysterious Cylon ship is called a "resurrection ship" and that it allows the Cylons to be reborn, as it contains thousands of clone copies ready to be downloaded. By this point in the narrative, Baltar has grown extremely attached to Gina, wanting to help her not just recover, but exact revenge on Admiral Cain. So Baltar helps Gina escape her cell²⁰⁸ and tells her that she does not need to die she needs "justice" – at the end of the episode Gina, hiding in Cain's quarters, shoots Cain in the head and escapes. Cain's judgment (and humanity's) is complete, with no hope for atonement.

In contrast to Gina's storyline during the "Pegasus" narrative, Athena is questioned by Lieutenant Thorne, whom Admiral Cain sent over to Galactica to interrogate about the mysterious Cylon ship – this happens parallel to Baltar's meetings with Gina in the episode titled "Pegasus" and it further illustrates a judgment on humanity. Sharon's interrogation is prefaced by a scene on one of Galactica's hangar decks in which crewmembers from Pegasus (mainly Sergeants Vireem and Gage) are fraternizing with crewmembers from Galactica (mainly Chief Tyrol and Helo). Consider the scene:

Vireem: I heard you guys even got yourself a Cylon, heard she's a hot one, too.

Gage: Get me some of that Cylon stuff. A little of the "Oh yeah, oh yeah."

Vireem: Remember when Thorne put that "please disturb" sign up on the brig there?

Gage: I got in line twice.

Vireem: Oh, I hear that. Remember she was just laying there with that blank look on her face?

Gage: Do you think Thorne will give us a chance with this one, too?

Vireem: No, I heard him say he's gonna have to break her in a little first.

Helo: Who the hell's this Thorne?

Gage: Lt. Thorne, sir. Cylon interrogator. Rides them hard and keeps them talking.

Vireem: Your little robot girl is in for quite a ride. Hee-haw.

²⁰⁸ This happens in "Resurrection Ship: Part 2"

Helo lunges at both Vireem and Gage but Tyrol stops him, imploring him that they need to find Athena before Thorne gets to her. Tyrol is correct, as this deck crew scene is intercut with a scene in Athena's cell in which Lieutenant Thorne and two marines arrive to interrogate her.

During the scene with Athena and Lt. Thorne, Athena is shown a reconnaissance photograph of the Resurrection Ship and asked to divulge information about it. However, Lt. Thorne is physical in his interrogation, hitting Athena between questions. As the scene escalates, it seems clear that Lt. Thorne is more concerned with harming Athena than with learning any information, as Thorne eventually hits Athena hard enough to cause her to fall onto her bed. Thorne's men hold her down over her cot while Thorne removes her pants and then his pants. In the broadcast version of the episode, Thorne does not succeed in raping her, as he is shown only with his pants down, but in the extended version of the episode Thorne is shown raping Athena. In both versions of the scene, however, Tyrol and Helo (who were shown running through Galactica from the hangar deck to Athena's cell as Athena is being beaten and questioned) arrive and immediately begin assaulting Thorne and his men. Tyrol grabs Thorne and slams him into one a wall, knocking Thorne's head into a bolt and killing him (illustrating a final judgment on Thorne and a continued judgment on humanity); Helo takes on the two marines, but one of them manages to get to his feet and grab his gun. Tyrol and Helo are then arrested and taken to Pegasus to be executed by Admiral Cain, prompting Adama to order a squad of marines to "get his men" back to Galactica.

The situation with Tyrol and Helo is eventually resolved after Cain's murder, yet what is paramount is that, despite the fact that Athena is a Cylon, Tyrol and Helo are willing to risk their lives (and take the lives of other human soldiers) in order to protect her, providing an instance of atonement. Likewise, Commander Adama is willing to put Galactica at risk (Pegasus is clearly a superior ship) not just to save his men but also because he believes that Cain's men were wrong to assault Athena, extending the example of atonement. In the episode "Resurrection Ship: Part I" Galactica's physician, Dr. Cottle, tells Adama that what happened to Athena was "unforgiveable" and Adama personally apologizes to Athena, taking responsibility for her attack because it happened on his ship under his watch, again offering an example of atonement.

Clearly, a difference exists between the Pegasus and Galactica crews with regard to judgment and atonement. Where the Pegasus crew continues to illustrate the depravity of humanity, the Galactica crew offers a glimpse of humanity's capacity for compassion. For example, the episode "Resurrection Ship: Part 2" opens with a scene in which Tyrol and Helo (who are still being held on Pegasus) are beaten by Vireem and Gage, who wrap a bar of soap in a towel and take turns hitting Tyrol and Helo in the gut. Eventually Colonel Fisk stops the beating, reprimanding Vireem and Gage in what amounts to a verbal slap on the wrist and when Helo and Tyrol try to thank the Colonel for helping them Fisk replies that Thorne was a good man who saved a lot of lives on Pegasus. Helo argues the point, saying that Thorne tried to rape a prisoner, to which Fisk coldly replies: "You can't rape a machine, Lieutenant."

Thus the crux of the narrative debate on torture, then, regards the nature of the human-Cylons. For the Pegasus crew (and for some Galactica crew, most notably President Roslin²⁰⁹) Cylons are nothing more than machines. That they look human bears no weight with regard to their treatment. In fact, it seems to make their treatment more severe – for it is extremely doubtful that Thorne or any of his men would even attempt to rape a Cylon centurion model (which is entirely metal). However, in the form of a No. 6 or a No. 8 – which, by human standards, are both very physically attractive – the thought of physical contact becomes easier to entertain for Thorne and those who share his views. Indeed, Admiral Cain, herself a female, has no problem whatsoever seeing Gina treated in such a manner and it is disturbing that, even though Cain sanctioned Thorne to do whatever he wanted, Cain (nor anyone else on Pegasus) does not question Thorne's desire to use rape as an interrogation tool – rape seems not just acceptable, it almost seems to function as protocol, and the visual described by Vireem of men lining up to "please disturb" Gina suggests a level of such depravity that it is the humans who come across as villains, echoing not just Cain's lesson to Kendra, but also the theme of dehumanization and subsequent judgment in an extreme way. On

²⁰⁹ Roslin's first instinct is not necessarily to torture but simply to kill. As regards Sharon, Roslin tries to have Sharon's pregnancy terminated (in the second season episode "Epiphanies"). However, Baltar finds that the baby's blood (and seemingly Cylon blood in general) is more resilient than human blood and Baltar is able to cure Roslin's cancer by essentially injecting Roslin with stem cells from the fetus. Nevertheless, Roslin continues to consider Sharon's fetus a possible threat and once it is born (in the episode titled "Downloaded") Roslin arranges for the baby to be switched (with a dead baby) to make Sharon and Helo think that their baby died – with Roslin giving the baby to another woman to secretly raise.

the other hand, while the Galactica crew (and the original Colonial survivors) regard Cylons as the enemy, the Pegasus micro-narrative, if you will, brings to light the horror of the themes of revenge and dehumanization, causing Commander Adama to remark (as previously quoted) that “it is not enough to survive, one has to be worthy of survival,” suggesting that to become worthy humanity must acknowledge and atone for its sins. Let us now examine how this debate continues to develop in the third season.

5.4 Development Two: On the side of demons

Hypothesis 3: Season 3 function continues the development with regard to the progression of BSG’s meta-narrative. The debate on torture is further dramatized through the state-of-survival scenario and the themes of revenge, dehumanization, and atonement.

BSG’s second season concludes with Gaius Baltar being elected President of the Colonies, due to his advocacy of settling the fleet on a planet found by Galactica that became dubbed “New Caprica.”²¹⁰ After Baltar is sworn in, the narrative flash-forwards to one year later, showing that a large portion of the Colonial Fleet has settled on New Caprica, with only a few ships (including the Galactica, commanded by Admiral Adama, and the Pegasus, commanded by Apollo) in orbit. Suddenly, the Cylons arrive, catching the Colonials off guard, and in response the fleet in orbit jumps away and President Baltar unconditionally surrenders to the Cylons. The third season picks up the narrative four months later, which depicts the Cylons trying in vain to establish a joint-colony on New Caprica. The Cylon presence has divided the humans, with some seeking to join the Cylons and their law enforcement agency known as the New Caprica Police (some out of fear and some out of a genuine desire to seek peace) and others forming an insurgency. The first four episodes of the third season chronicle the insurgent Colonials’ attempt to coordinate with Galactica and plan an exodus off the planet. Collectively, these episodes focus more on the insurgency’s efforts to thwart the Cylons – ironically, by using terrorist tactics, such as public bombings and suicide bombings for specific and strategic targets. Although nothing is really shown, torture is

²¹⁰ Roslin, who ran for re-election, wanted to keep looking for Earth.

referenced in the narrative's dialogue and it is understood to be taking place in the Cylon's detention facility.

In the first episode, titled "Occupation", former president Roslin is shown writing in a diary and in a voice-over she states: "Hundreds of us have been rounded up by the Cylons, held in detention, questioned, tortured. Others have simply vanished." At the beginning of this episode Colonel Tigh is shown in one of the detention cells, his appearance is haggard and he has a patch over his right eye. Tigh is eventually released²¹¹ and after rejoining Chief Tyrol²¹² and Samuel Anders²¹³, to resume planning strikes against the Cylons, Tigh states: "The eye is gone. Ripped it right out, onto the floor, picked it up and showed it to me. It looked like a hardboiled egg." In the second episode, titled "Precipice," Roslin is taken to the detention center where she is visited by President Baltar, who is upset that the resistance used a suicide bomber to kill thirty-three New Caprica Police recruits during a graduation ceremony. Baltar claims that these men were only going to serve the settlement and provide order. Consider an excerpt from their conversation:

Roslin: Order? By arresting innocent people in the dead of night, detaining them indefinitely without charge, torturing them for information!
Baltar: Now wait a minute. Nobody's been tortured!
Roslin: Tell that to Colonel Tigh.
Baltar: Nobody has been tortured.

Baltar is scared both politically and morally, though his political concerns seem not only selfish but futile, as he is essentially a puppet for the Cylons. Morally, Baltar simply does not want to admit that he could be complicit in anything harmful to his fellow humans – this is a pattern for Baltar, who repeatedly convinces himself that he bears no responsibility whatsoever for the initial Cylon attacks. Yet, it also serves to illustrate (as with the Pegasus narrative) Adama's remark regarding the denial of responsibility. Where Baltar wants to deny that he is harming humans, the insurgency (headed by Colonel Tigh), is specifically

²¹¹ Thanks to his wife, Ellen, who was having sex with the Cylon clone model No. 1, known as Cavil, on a regular basis in order to procure some leniency for her husband.

²¹² At this point in the narrative, Tyrol has married Callie and they have an infant son named Nicholas.

²¹³ Anders was initially found on Caprica by Starbuck at the end of the first season but she had to leave him on Caprica, vowing to return. After lobbying Roslin and Adama throughout the second season to mount a rescue mission to Caprica, Starbuck eventually returns to Caprica and brings back several survivors, including Anders. Starbuck and Anders are among those who choose to settle on New Caprica and at the time Starbuck is kidnapped, she and Anders have been married for several months.

targeting humans, especially those (like the New Caprica Police) that have chosen to support the Cylons and does so without regret. Judgment then falls to both Baltar (for not taking responsibility) and to the insurgency (who is willing to commit immoral acts).

Indeed, after her conversation with Baltar, Roslin voices concern with the insurgency's tactics, as does Chief Tyrol, who asks Colonel Tigh: "Whose side are we on?" To which Tigh responds: "We're on the side of the demons, Chief. We're evil men in the gardens of paradise, sent by the forces of death to spread devastation and destruction wherever we go. I'm surprised you didn't know that." At this point in the narrative progression humans and Cylons have essentially switched roles, solidifying Admiral Cain's philosophy articulated and dramatized in the second season, as revenge, dehumanization, and judgment openly extend to humans who aid the Cylons.²¹⁴ This gets developed later in the fifth episode of the season titled "Collaborators," in which a group of humans who refer to themselves as "The Circle" exact "military justice" on anyone thought to have helped the Cylons on New Caprica. This leads to a series of executions, sanctioned by President Tom Zarek.²¹⁵ The Circle review scant (and seemingly circumstantial) evidence gathered on people deemed to have been collaborators, branding these people as traitors and executing them by flushing them out an airlock. Yet, Roslin, after regaining the presidency, stops the executions (which had numbered thirteen) and issues a general pardon for all humans, as a way of moving forward.

While this need for vengeance is not illustrated through physical torture, it does utilize a psychological torture, one that affects both the accused and the accusers, serving to further develop the narrative's progression with regard to the themes of revenge and dehumanization, as well as the state-of-survival and atonement. Certainly, as it has been demonstrated thus far, Roslin and Tigh (and several other human characters) have no problem dealing with Cylons (and humans referred to as "Cylon-lovers" or "Toaster-lovers") in a vicious manner. At this point in the narrative, several characters have been guilty in one way or another of aiding Cylons; yet, it is the character of Gaius Baltar that becomes the focus of the

²¹⁴ The insurgents' tactics are certainly questionable, however, it should be noted that the resistance was not shown to torture, rather they simply killed through bombings and strategic strikes.

²¹⁵ Tom Zarek, who was Baltar's Vice President, became President when the Colonials left New Caprica (since Baltar was presumed dead or missing). Zarek's term was brief, however, as he made a deal with Roslin for Roslin to become President and Zarek to remain Vice President.

human's collective anger and collective need for revenge. Fittingly, it is Baltar who gets tortured twice in the remainder of the third season, first by Cylons and then by Roslin, Tigh, and Adama on *Galactica*. Let us consider these two situations.

During the exodus of New Caprica, Baltar was offered asylum by the Cylons, specifically by D'Anna (a No. 3 model) and a No. 6 model referred to as Caprica (the resurrected No. 6 Baltar had a relationship with on the planet Caprica before the initial Cylon attack). In the sixth episode, titled "Torn", Baltar helps the Cylons find a route to Earth, as they, like the Colonials, wish to find a new home. A *Baseship*, dispatched to a specific location given to them by Baltar, goes missing and after it is learned that the missing *Baseship* has been infected, Baltar volunteers to investigate. He discovers a virus and learns, from an infected No. 6 model, that the virus originated with the mythical Thirteenth Tribe, who left the virus in a space beacon, presumably to prevent Cylons from finding Earth.²¹⁶ However, when Baltar returns from his mission he is not forthcoming about the beacon and in the subsequent episode, titled "Measure of Salvation", D'Anna and Caprica question Baltar. Baltar valiantly tries to talk his way out of trouble throughout the scene, but D'Anna and Caprica simply look at Baltar with both pity and disgust, not believing Baltar's improvised explanations and they decide to interrogate him.

During the interrogation, Baltar is shown with his *Virtual Six*: they are in a beach setting, with Baltar on a reclined beach chair and the *Virtual Six* straddling him – this is intercut between scenes of Baltar strapped to an interrogation table aboard the Cylon ship, where D'Anna proceeds to question and torture Baltar. As he begins to be tortured, Baltar shifts his mind between the beach setting and the setting of the room he is being held in. The scene is also intercut with other scenes from the various storylines being developed. However, we will examine Baltar's torture as one unified scene. This scene is one of the most vivid and interesting torture scenes depicted on *BSG*. As such, it is worth examining it in detail, as it serves to illustrate the various themes of the narrative's progression regarding the issue of torture. Let us trace its evolution.

²¹⁶ This is what is initially believed, however, it is later stated that the presence of the virus on the beacon was likely happenstance; human germs left behind.

Gaius is shown strapped to a sort-of hospital bed with wires attached to his torso and his fingers and it appears that his neural pathways are being stimulated to a high degree and he screams in extreme pain.

Gaius: No! No! Please! Please! No!

D'Anna: I want it to stop, Gaius. I don't want you to feel this pain. And neither does Caprica. (to Caprica) Do you?

Caprica: No.

Baltar: (looking at Caprica) I love you.

Virtual Six: I can help you. I can guide you through the torment and beyond, but you'll have to do the work.

Baltar: I'll do anything. Anything! (Baltar projects back into the interrogation room)

D'Anna: Tell us what we want to know. How was the virus invented? Did they make a cure?

Virtual Six: Look at me. Look at me. When you make love to me, Gaius, you don't always think about me. Your mind wanders, I know that. You think of equations, puzzles, your laundry ... it's the nature of the mind to disconnect from the body and journey on its own. Separate your mind from your body. Keep your mind in that room. Use your intellect against her. Reason. Logic. Analysis. Find the holes in her psyche.

Baltar: I can't, the pain ...

Virtual Six: The pain is only in your body, so keep your body here with me. Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

D'Anna manipulates the controls on the machine she is using to inflict pain on Baltar to demonstrate to Baltar what the absence of pain feels like. Baltar continues to assert his ignorance about the human virus. As the scene progresses, Baltar, with the help of his Virtual Six, is able to withstand his torture while simultaneously interrogating D'Anna. Consider what follows:

Baltar: I'm a scientist. And as a scientist, I believe that if God exists, our knowledge of him is imperfect. Why? Because the stories and myths we have are the products of men, the passage of time. The religion you practice is based on a theory, impossible to prove, yet you bestow it with absolutes like "there is no such thing as coincidence."

D'Anna: It's called faith.

Baltar: Absolute belief in God's will means there's a reason for everything. Everything! And yet, you can't help ask yourself how God can allow death and destruction, and then despise yourself for asking. But the truth is, if we knew God's will, we'd all be Gods, wouldn't we? I can see it in your eyes, D'Anna. You're frustrated. You're conflicted. Let me help you. Let me help you change, find a way to reconcile your faith with fact, find a way towards a rational universe!

D'Anna tries to dismiss Baltar's response, calling it a game. She then holds back his head and inserts a hand-held drill into Baltar's mouth; he screams and his Virtual Six instructs him to give his body to her as they begin to virtually have sex while D'Anna is shown holding the device next to Baltar's ear. Baltar exclaims: "I want you to believe in me! Don't stop. Don't stop! Please! Please don't stop! You have to believe in me. You're all that I have left!" While he is saying this to his Virtual Six, D'Anna thinks that he

is saying it to her; she stops drilling, as blood is shown dripping from Gaius's ear. Baltar then states: "I believe in you! I believe in you. I love you. I love with all my heart." Gaius says these last words while looking at D'Anna, who ends Baltar's torture and simply looks at him with sympathy. Baltar is no longer tortured by the Cylons and in subsequent episodes Baltar is shown to have developed a sexual relationship with D'Anna and Caprica, presumably assuaging any doubts they may have harbored.

It is significant that while the Cylons' crimes have been repeatedly chronicled throughout *BSG's* narrative, Baltar's torture is the first (and only) Cylon on human torture actually depicted in the series; the torture of Colonel Tigh and other humans on New Caprica was never shown. In terms of the narrative's progression, this develops the theme of revenge, with Baltar representing a judgment on the whole of humanity, as well as encapsulating the state-of-survival. In contrast to Baltar, and in a development of the human's proclivity to resort to extreme measures and hatred of the Cylons, Galactica has become aware of the infected Cylon Baseship and taken several infected human Cylons as prisoners – initially because Dr. Cottle wanted to study them to learn about the virus. Dr. Cottle, President Roslin, Admiral Adama, Apollo, and Helo debate what to do with the Cylon prisoners. Through the interrogation of one of the Cylon prisoners they learn that if the Cylon prisoners die near a resurrection ship, they will infect all Cylons when they resurrect. Apollo suggests that the prisoners be used as weapons and he devises a plan to jump near a Resurrection ship and execute the infected prisoners so that they will download and infect the clones and eventually annihilate the entire Cylon population.

While this is not torture, the plan resembles the Cylons' plan for humanity, a plan Helo objects to but a plan that Roslin (and everyone else) approves, which returns to the theme of judgment against humanity and serves to thwart any possibility of atonement. However, Helo manages to kill the infected prisoners before they reach the resurrection ship, thwarting Apollo's plan and essentially giving everyone (human and Cylon) a second chance. Yet the plan itself and the tactics used in getting information out of the infected prisoners further illustrate the methods that humans (especially Roslin) are willing to resort to for the sake of survival and for the need for revenge, methods that continue to be used in the thirteenth

episode, titled “Taking A Break From All Your Worries,” in which Baltar once again represents a judgment on the whole of humanity.

At the end of the twelfth episode, titled “Rapture”, Baltar is captured by Chief Tyrol²¹⁷ and taken back to Galactica and as the thirteenth episode begins it is shown that Baltar is being forced to stay awake in his cell. Baltar protests his captivity by not eating and by trying to commit suicide – he tries to hang himself in his cell, but the guard manages to revive him. Roslin decides to visit Baltar herself, to see if she can get any information from him; Roslin and Adama want to know what Baltar told the Cylons about Earth. When Roslin enters his cell, she gives Baltar his glasses and she lights a cigarette for him. Roslin proceeds to question Baltar, showing him pictures of people who died during his presidency on New Caprica and promising Baltar that his cooperation would end his current suffering. Baltar claims he is not responsible for anything that happened on New Caprica. Roslin escalates her interrogation, ordering Colonel Tigh to get rid of Baltar and flush Baltar out of an airlock. As Baltar is carried kicking and screaming down a corridor Roslin suggests Baltar look at the photos that adorn the walls, people she claims Baltar “sent to their deaths.” Baltar recognizes one of the photos and claims that he would never harm anyone and that he is innocent; not wanting to kill him yet²¹⁸, Roslin and Tigh take Baltar back to his cell.

In the next scene, Adama proposes a different means of interrogation. As he explains to Roslin and Tigh (emphasis added):

Military once ran an experimental interrogation program involving drugs: hallucinogens, specifically. The goal of the program was to create a state of anxiety so intense that the subject believed that *their very survival* was at stake. Interrogators would exploit that, become less an adversary and more a lifeline. At least that was the idea, it might get Baltar to talk, tell us what the Cylons know about Earth. But it’s dangerous, especially for someone in Baltar’s condition.²¹⁹

Roslin agrees with Adama’s suggestion and later in the episode Baltar is shown in a medical room, his vitals are being monitored and he is being prepped (by Dr. Cottle and a nurse) for a pharmaceutical interrogation. Baltar pleads for his life and his rights; he is joined by his Virtual Six.

²¹⁷ D’Anna was convinced that she could see the faces of the final five Cylons and she and Baltar find the mythical “Temple of Five,” which is also found by Galactica. The Temple is also significant to ultimately finding Earth.

²¹⁸ It is revealed that the treat to Baltar’s life was a bluff to get Baltar to talk; it didn’t work.

²¹⁹ Baltar has always been mentally unstable, due to his conversation with his Virtual Six, which has not gone unnoticed by the crew of Galactica.

Baltar: I'm a human being, I have rights. I said I have rights. (To Virtual Six) Please, help me.
Virtual Six: I'm not sure I can, Gaius. Pain is one thing, but this? Without free will, what are you? Can God even pity such a creature?
Baltar: (seemingly speaking to Virtual Six and Roslin) Why not just admit you're doing this for your own satisfaction? That's the truth isn't? I don't know why you're not putting the needle in yourself.

Baltar is given an injection in his neck and Adama tells everyone in the room to try to “not make any loud noise.” Adama then tells the nurse to put a head strap on Baltar, who has passed out from the effects of the drug. The scene depicts Baltar floating in a large pool of water (this is his hallucination) and, as with Baltar's torture scene on the Cylon ship, the scene visually alternates between Baltar's hallucination and the actual room he is in. However, unlike the Cylon interrogation – in which Virtual Six aided Baltar – Baltar is alone, facing only the horrors of his crimes manifested in zombie-like figures that approach him during his hallucination. This provides a stark contrast in the sense that the human interrogation is more disturbing than the Cylon interrogation (which, because of the Virtual Six sex, was imbued with a sense of levity). Let us consider the human interrogation scene in more detail, as it vividly illustrates the various themes being weaved throughout the narrative's progression, serving as a complement to his torture at the hands of the Cylons. Indeed, in both instances Baltar represents humanity and its struggle to survive; that Baltar is being judged by both Cylons and humans serves to equate both races in the concepts of dehumanization and revenge.

Baltar is first shown to be in a dark pool of water, barely treading water. Baltar is unable to see anything other than the dark water and all that he can hear is Admiral Adama's voice. Baltar is disoriented and begins to swim around as he gets used to hearing Adama's voice. Baltar then begins to explain his survival of the original attack on the Twelve Colonies:

Baltar: Caprica ...she saved my life. She shielded me from the explosion.
Roslin: Doctor [Baltar], did you conspire with her to subvert our defense system?
Baltar: Conspiracy requires intent. I never intended. But she said deep down, I'd always suspected. But I didn't know. How could I know? Did I conspire? Did I? No! No! I don't know. No! It wasn't my fault. It wasn't my fault! I am not responsible!

Baltar rambles on about being chosen and seduced by Caprica, as he begins to be unable to stay afloat in his hallucination. Adama then instructs Baltar to divulge details or “we will let you drown alone in the dark.” Baltar screams:

No! Don't leave me! Don't leave me! I know I'm flawed! I never claimed to be ... yes, mistakes. Mistakes were made. Terrible mistakes! Were they mine? Am I solely to blame? I was a player. That's all I was, a player! I was struggling to ... struggling to find my place in God's plan, God's resolve. I ... I never intended for certain things to happen! Doesn't that matter?

Adama continues to question Baltar about the Cylons and about finding Earth. Baltar, who is now hallucinating that he is in a Cylon resurrection tub and is surrounded by children with bloody faces, reveals that the Cylons (specifically D'Anna) were trying to find the so-called "Final Five" Cylons and Baltar confesses that he told the Cylons that he wanted to be "one of them." When Roslin asks why, Baltar responds:

Baltar: All my sins forgiven. A new beginning.

Roslin: Are you a Cylon, Doctor Baltar?

Baltar: No.

Adama: That's not good enough, Doctor. Tell me. Tell me what you told the Cylons. What do they know? Tell me, or I'll have to let you go, Doctor. I'll have to let you go. Tell me, or I'll have to let you go, Doctor.

One of the bloody children in Baltar's hallucination starts to push Baltar under water and he begins to sink to a great depth. Dr. Cottle, who claims that Baltar is dying, stops the interrogation.

Later Roslin, Adama, and Tigh discuss what to do next. Roslin believes that Baltar is telling the truth about the Final Five Cylons, but she also believes that Baltar knows more. Consider this scene:

Roslin: He's holding a lot back, Admiral, I'm sure of it.

Adama: Then maybe we should resort to more direct methods.

Tigh: Direct methods. Now you have my vote.

Roslin: No. We tried the stick. It's time to try the carrot. The thing he's most deeply afraid of is that even if he talks, we'll kill him.

Tigh: Smart man.

Roslin: We have to ease his fear. Make him believe that, if he collaborates, at the very least he'll have his life.

Adama: He won't buy that coming from us.

Roslin: Of course not. We have to find someone he trusts.

They send Lieutenant Gaeta, who served as Baltar's Chief of Staff on New Caprica, to talk to Baltar in Baltar's cell. They watch the discussion through security cameras. However, Gaeta does not gain any useful information, as his goal was not to interrogate Baltar but rather to kill him: Gaeta stabs Baltar in the neck with a pen, but Baltar does not die. The episode ends with Roslin and Adama discussing what to do with Baltar. Consider this scene (emphasis added):

Roslin: I told him I didn't take any satisfaction in seeing his pain. But the truth is *I was willing to see him endure a great deal of suffering in order to get what I wanted*. It wasn't some intelligence or some truth. I wanted a genuine admission of guilt.

Adama: That's something that you're not gonna get from someone like Baltar. He doesn't see himself that way. That's not who he is. In his eyes, he's the victim, not the criminal. *It's not too late for him to just disappear*.

Roslin: We can't do that. For all his crimes he's one of us.

Adama: So what happens next?

Roslin: We give him his trial.

Indeed, it is telling that President Roslin, Admiral Adama, Colonel Tigh, and Dr. Cottle (all leaders among the fleet) are willing to suggest and perform extreme methods on Baltar in their collective effort to get Baltar to talk and to get Baltar to suffer, as Roslin acknowledges to Adama. It is also worth noting that Baltar's human torture is decidedly more personal, more hands on, more invasive, and perhaps even more evil, if you will, given that Baltar is used a means to focus humanity's collective hatred of Cylons and collective need for revenge. Therefore, what is paramount is that Baltar's second torture does not just develop the themes of the narrative progression, it also illustrates that the humans are possibly more brutal than the Cylons, putting a question mark around Adama's "worthy of survival" remark.

Consider the following monologue delivered by Apollo during Baltar's trial, which illustrates the point made above and effectively summarizes the events of *BSG* thus far, providing insight into the reasoning held by several characters and a rationale used to both sanction and forgive the extreme measures used by humans, on Cylons and on each other. As Apollo states in the final episode titled "Crossroads: Part 2" (emphasis added):

Did [Baltar] appear to cooperate with the Cylons? Sure. So did hundreds of others. What's the difference between him and them? The President issued a blanket pardon. They were all forgiven, no questions asked [...] Colonel Tigh used suicide bombers, killed dozens of people. Forgiven. Lieutenant Agathon and Chief Tyrol. They murdered an officer on the *Pegasus*. Forgiven [...] The Admiral instigated a military coup d'état against the President. Forgiven. And me? Well, where do I begin? I shot down a civilian passenger ship, the *Olympic Carrier*. Over a thousand people on board. Forgiven [...] I'm the coward. I'm the traitor. I'm forgiven. I'd say we are very forgiving of mistakes. *We make our own laws now; our own justice*. And we've been pretty creative in finding ways to let people off the hook for everything from theft to murder. And we've had to be, because...because *we're not a civilization anymore*. We are a gang, and we are on the run, and *we have to fight to survive. We have to break rules. We have to bend laws*. We have to improvise. But not this time [...] not for Gaius Baltar [...] [Baltar] should have been killed back on New Caprica, but since [he] had *the temerity to live*, we're going to execute [him] now [...] This case is built *on emotion, on anger, bitterness, vengeance*. But most of all, it is built *on shame*.

Thanks to Apollo's impassioned speech Baltar is found "not guilty" by a vote of three to two and he is set free, allowing him to once more escape punishment and death. It is significant that Apollo's insight into the crimes of the fleet points both to shame and guilt, not just to a select few but to everyone who has managed to survive up to this point in the narrative. It is later shown that Admiral Adama, who was on the panel and who voted "not guilty", believed that the defense made its case, yet President Roslin is angered at the verdict and would rather have seen Baltar found guilty. Adama points out to Roslin that "not guilty" does not mean "innocent" and it seems that Adama is willing to accept that even his own actions, like Baltar's and like a great many others, are certainly not innocent, but they are also not guilty.

During the Pegasus narrative, Adama suggested to Colonel Tigh that context matters most in a given situation²²⁰ and as regards torture context certainly provides a reason to torture. Yet, Apollo's speech and Admiral Adama's acceptance of it suggest that while no one is guilty or innocent (or is both guilty and innocent) what matters in the end is being able to live with yourself and the choices you have made. While the Cylons are not generally shown to struggle with the morality and ethicalness of resorting to torture or killing²²¹, humans in *BSG* are constantly shown to be wrestling with issues like torture and whether or not it is justified; and if, like Adama suggests, context matters most, then *BSG*'s narrative can be seen to also suggest that, despite the horrible nature of torture²²², there are times in a state-of-survival when torture (and all its accompanying horrors) is acceptable as long as one is willing to live with the shame. If not, then atonement must be gained so that humanity can again become worthy of existing. From this, let us now examine the fourth and final season of *Battlestar Galactica*.

5.5 Conclusion: Breaking the cycle

Hypothesis 4: Seasons 4.0 and 4.5 function as the conclusion with regard to the progression of BSG's meta-narrative. While the debate on torture is further dramatized through the state-of-survival scenario

²²⁰ To the point that Adama almost seems to excuse Admiral Cain's methods and actions.

²²¹ With notable exceptions being Caprica and Athena.

²²² Which Roslin, paradoxically, abhors on New Caprica but supports prior to and after New Caprica.

and the themes of revenge, dehumanization, and atonement, the narrative ultimately concludes that torture is wrong, expanding on the idea of “being worthy of survival” and the shame associated with the use of torture.

The fourth season’s narrative involves the Cylons’ and humans’ simultaneous search for Earth, a search that creates divisions among both Cylons and humans, especially when the so-called “Final Five” are revealed.²²³ This essentially leads to a state of civil war, with lines drawn and sides taken.²²⁴ Eventually, a coalition is formed between the Colonial Fleet and a group of Cylons (the No. 2’s, No. 6’s, and No. 8’s) with the common goal of survival, suggesting, for both races, that atonement is possible. As Roslin and Adama acknowledged in the miniseries, babies need to be born, especially since the initial population of fifty thousand has been reduced to little more than thirty-eight thousand by the end of the fourth season. Likewise, the Cylons have not been successful at natural procreation and since their ability to resurrect has been destroyed, their continued existence is threatened.²²⁵ Therefore, both races decide to form an alliance with the goal of finding a place to settle – a decision that tests the will of everyone, especially when the mythical planet Earth is found in the tenth episode, titled “Revelations.” Earth proves to be nearly uninhabitable²²⁶, not because it is a barren planet but rather because the ruins found on the planet suggest that its previous civilization was destroyed in a nuclear holocaust, mirroring the Colonial’s fate and bringing a sharp realization to the oft-quoted scripture from the Colonial’s sacred scrolls which states: “All of this has happened before, and it will happen again.”²²⁷ As the fleet grapples with the reality of Earth and

²²³ The Final Five include Colonel Tigh, Sam Anders, Chief Tyrol, Tory Foster, and Ellen Tigh.

²²⁴ A civil war in which the human-Cylon clones divide up (with No. 2’s, No. 6’s, and No. 8’s on one side and No. 1’s, No. 4’s, and No. 5’s on the other) and in which a mutiny (led by Tom Zarek and Felix Gaeta) attempts and fails to execute Adama and Tigh and take control of the fleet.

²²⁵ One of the secondary plotlines through the series involved the Cylons’ inability to reproduce, which led the Cylons to experiment with humans as well as with the emotion of love (which they did not seem to completely understand). Additionally, the Cylon civil war led to the destruction of the resurrection hub, which meant that death was now a finality for the Cylons, making the need to find a successful form of reproduction essential.

²²⁶ The only person, if you will, who remains on this “original” Earth is D’Anna – who is the only No. 3 left in the universe.

²²⁷ Especially when it is revealed, through the Final Five, that the thirteenth colony (which settled on Earth) had Cylons (the Final Five) who escaped and were able to find the Centurion Cylons (in the twelve colonies during the first Cylon war) and build the human-Cylon models which, in turn, killed the majority of humans (in the twelve colonies) causing the survivors (led by Galactica) to eventually find Earth again

the realization that a new planet needs to be found, the human-Cylon known as Cavil (a No. 1 copy) devises a plan to kidnap Hera, the hybrid child of Helo and Athena, with the logic that Hera (since she is a hybrid) holds the key to survival. Cavil's abduction provides a narrative opportunity to re-illustrate the contrast between revenge and atonement and the argument regarding torture, judgment and the state-of-survival. However, to better understand Cavil's abduction, let us briefly examine Hera's storyline.

Hera has a significant but complicated story in *BSG*'s narrative, with her life being in peril several times. During the second season Hera was born one month premature on Galactica, but, fearing that Hera represented a danger to the fleet, Roslin kidnapped Hera (with Cottle's help) and gave Hera to a woman named Maya, letting Athena and Helo think Hera had died. At the end of the second season (and into the third season) Maya had settled on New Caprica with Hera, who was called Isis to hide her from Helo and Athena. Maya was then killed in the exodus skirmish between humans and Cylons in the third season but Baltar and D'Anna found Hera and took her to live on a Cylon Base Star. Eventually, Athena and Helo learn that Hera is alive. Athena then convinces Helo to shoot her so that she can resurrect with the Cylons and then bring Hera back to Galactica. The plan works, however, Cavil, who resided on another Base Star (and was holding Ellen captive²²⁸) allows Boomer to take Ellen back to Galactica in an elaborate plan to kidnap Hera and return with Hera to a place known as the Cylon Colony²²⁹ and it is during this storyline that the issue of torture makes its final appearance in *BSG*'s narrative.

Given the nature of *BSG*'s overall story, the writers of the show have oftentimes illustrated the harsh realities of war, nuclear holocaust, and the associated "collateral damage" with bleak veracity, none more devastating than how these realities affect children. Indeed, the first death that occurred in *BSG*'s

and come full circle – a circle that gets traversed again when the fleet find another planet and settle on it and it is then shown – 150,000 years later – that this planet is our real-world Earth, suggesting that we are on the verge of creating Cylons (or at least advanced and possibly superior technology) and the cycle will likely repeat itself again.

²²⁸ Ellen was helping her husband, Colonel Tigh, in the resistance on New Caprica. However, Cavil had forced Ellen to give him information about the resistance. Sam Anders learns this and Colonel Tigh decides to kill Ellen for betraying him. At this point, none of the "Final Five" are known and when Ellen dies, she resurrects on a Cylon ship and Cavil holds her captive for several months.

²²⁹ The original factory where the human Cylons were first created by the Final Five.

narrative happened to an infant in the miniseries when a No. 6 Cylon²³⁰ snapped the neck of a baby asleep in its carriage while its mother was distracted.²³¹ Of course, the actual murder was not shown – viewers only see No. 6 reach into the stroller and then a crackling sound is heard – though the scene is still disturbing. However, with Hera, while most of the scenes involving her torture are verbal (with characters discussing what might be done to her), one scene is shown in which Hera is technically being tortured.²³² Let us consider how this scene is established.

In the seventeenth episode of the fourth season, titled “Someone to Watch Over Me,” Chief Tyrol helps Boomer escape Galactica. Tyrol did not know Boomer’s plan to kidnap Hera, his only concern was to help Boomer, who was being handed over to a Cylon delegation by Roslin.²³³ Once free, Boomer attacks Athena, makes love with Helo (to distract him) and then takes Hera from a daycare center on Galactica, putting Hera in a large military case and escaping Galactica on a stolen Raptor.²³⁴ In the next episode, titled “Islanded in a Stream of Stars,” Boomer is piloting the Raptor while Hera (out of the case) is crying. Consider the scene:

Hera: I want my mommy, take me home.

Boomer: What?

Hera: I want my mommy, take me home.

Boomer: You know what? It’s too bad they never upgraded the FTL on this relic, but if you think I’m gonna put up with your sniveling and your whining for another dozen jumps, guess again.

Hera: I want my mommy, take me home.

Boomer: Fine! Let’s see if you can cry in your sleep.

Boomer looks through a medical kit for an anesthetic. Boomer finds a syringe with a long needle and proceeds to try to inject Hera. However, Hera’s screams and cries affect Boomer and, realizing the medication might be too much for Hera to handle (not mention being a cruel thing to do to a child) Boomer decides to use the Cylon technique of projection to calm Hera (and herself) down. To Boomer’s surprise,

²³⁰ Who ended up being the character known as “Caprica Six.”

²³¹ Later, a young girl named Cami, who is met by the newly sworn-in President Roslin is shown playing with a flower in a garden area of her ship (which didn’t have an FTL drive) as the Cylons attack; echoing the infamous 1964 “Daisy” commercial aired during LBJ’s presidential campaign.

²³² Indeed, this scene is the final scene of torture seen on BSG, effectively bookending the miniseries infant death scene, but having a more positive outcome as Hera is ultimately saved.

²³³ The delegation wanted to charge Boomer with treason (from her involvement in the Cylon Civil War) and execute her. Tyrol, still harboring feelings for Boomer, decided to take matters into his own hands.

²³⁴ In fact, Boomer “jumps” the Raptor in close proximity to Galactica, which, in turn, severely damages Galactica.

Hera (being a hybrid) is able to project as well and both Boomer and Hera picture themselves in a peaceful house. Later, when Boomer arrives at the Cylon Colony, she is noticeably different, showing extreme concern for Hera's well-being and when Boomer hands Hera to Cavil, Hera begins to cry for Boomer in protest. While neither of these scenes amounts to torture – certainly not in the same sense as seen in previous torture scenes – given that Hera is a child, I would argue that in Hera's mind she is being tortured, as she has been forcibly abducted, ill-treated, and taken to a dark, sinister place. Indeed, Hera's situation is heart-breaking and since *BSG*'s narrative has never had a problem killing any character whose death served the storyline²³⁵, her outcome is uncertain, especially considering what happens to her in the next episode.

In what amounts to a three-part series finale, titled “Daybreak: Part 1” and “Daybreak: Parts 2 & 3”²³⁶, Admiral Adama, who was against mounting a rescue of Hera after she was initially abducted²³⁷, decides to attempt one final mission and get Hera back, a mission that seems to energize all who volunteer, human and Cylon alike, and a mission that serves to give the Fleet's journey (and the Cylon allies' journey) a renewed meaning – since Hera represents the future of civilization's existence and represents an opportunity for humanity to atone for its collective shame. Once it was known that Hera is abducted (and it was surmised that Boomer would likely take Hera to the Cylon Colony) various characters suggest what might happen to her. Ellen claims that Cavil would likely examine Hera; Starbuck suggests that Cavil would dissect her; and Athena thinks Hera is already dead and that Cavil would slice and dice Hera into a thousand pieces. This pessimism is heightened in “Daybreak: Part 1” during a scene in which Cavil discusses Hera with Simon, Doral, and Boomer.²³⁸ Hera is drawing on a pad while the others discuss her situation. Consider the scene:

Cavil: Dots. Lots and lots and lots of dots.²³⁹ She's clearly very gifted.

²³⁵ Even children, as Cavil is shown coldly killing a young boy in *The Plan*.

²³⁶ Daybreak: Part 1 is considered the nineteenth episode and Daybreak: Parts 2 & 3 is considered the twentieth episode.

²³⁷ Because it didn't seem practical, given that the Galactica was suffering severe damage, and because Adama had grown tired of having to consider issues of destiny, God, Gods, Cylons, and humans.

²³⁸ Simon is the No. 4 model and Doral is the No. 5 model.

²³⁹ In previous episodes, Hera was shown drawing and coloring dots on paper as she played. In “Someone to Watch Over Me” Starbuck, Tigh, and Ellen realize that Hera's dots drawings actually represent the notes to a song – a song that Starbuck's father used to play, that “switched on” the Final Five, and that led the

Simon: She hasn't eaten in days. I think we should begin intravenous nutritional supplements to build up her strength before we begin testing.

Boomer: She wants her mother.

Cavil: She can't have her mother now can she? I'm sorry. I forgot to sound all sappy and soft when speaking of the child.

Boomer: She *is* a child, a frightened one.

Cavil: She's a half-human, half-machine object of curiosity that holds the key to our continued existence somewhere in her genetic code. So let's get a tube in her and get her ready.

Cavil and Doral leave the room and Simon begins to prepare a drill and a long needle. Boomer looks on with dread. While Hera appears fine (she doesn't speak but her drawing activity seems normal) the fact that she "hasn't eaten in days" suggests that Cavil is not concerned with Hera's well-being at all.²⁴⁰ In fact, his only concern is with what he can potentially learn from her examination. It should be noted (and it is worth remembering) that, given that Hera is a child, her abduction itself should be considered torture, as a child does not have the mental capacity to fathom what is happening and will likely be unable to adequately process her circumstances. Likewise, any forced medical examination performed on a child (even if the child is sedated) should be considered torture, as the non-consensual nature of such a procedure constitutes a violation of the child.

In the series finale, Galactica jumps nose to nose with the Cylon Colony and various teams from Galactica penetrate the Colony and search for Hera and it is during this rescue attempt that Hera is finally shown being tortured. Hera is sedated, wearing a white gown, and is strapped to a medical table. Simon is performing "tests" on Hera and he appears to be using some sort of electric drill on the crown of Hera's head and then on her ear. Boomer looks on in disgust and questions Simon for continuing to test Hera while the Colony is under attack. As Simon moves from Hera's right ear to her left, Boomer approaches Simon from behind and snaps his neck, killing him. Boomer then escapes with Hera and finds Athena and Helo in a corridor, where, after giving Hera back to Athena, Boomer tries to apologize, but Athena shoots Boomer several times. The series ends with the Colony (and the "bad" Cylons – Cavil, Simon, Doral) being

Fleet to Earth. Cavil does not know this and he sarcastically considers Hera's drawings to be nothing more than a child's random doodles.

²⁴⁰ Indeed, in the television movie "The Plan", which aired after the fourth season and the series concluded (as a means to provide some backstory on the Cylons and some perspective from their point of view) Cavil is shown on Galactica (where he is posing as a clergy) befriending a young boy only to later kill the boy for seemingly no reason at all, illustrating Cavil's cruelty and coldness when it comes to human life and children in particular.

destroyed and with the remnants of the Colonial Fleet (and the “good” Cylons – Leoben, Caprica, Athena) settling on a new Earth planet serendipitously discovered by Starbuck when she jumped Galactica to escape from the Cylon Colony. The final scene of the series, which takes place 150,000 years later and is set in New York City, suggests that the planet Earth is the real Earth and that Hera is the common ancestor of our human civilization.²⁴¹

As regards torture, what is paramount is that the *BSG* narrative depicts the torture of a little girl, which is perhaps the most reprehensible kind of torture imaginable. Thankfully, her torture is not harsh or graphic, nor does it seem to truly affect her in any way, as she is shown happily running through a field in one of the series’ final scenes. Yet, in terms of *BSG*’s narrative, Hera’s torture plays a special significance, one that, despite the producers’ desire to maintain narrative ambiguity, is undoubtedly clear, as it brings the protagonists and antagonists into sharp focus. Cavil and his followers have no qualms about torturing a child and they justify her treatment in the name of survival, which to this point in the narrative’s progression was the justification used by humans. Indeed, Cavil’s cold language suggests that he views Hera as nothing more than an object of study, her mixed heritage is both a blessing and curse as it is used to justify her abuse – she is being examined precisely because she is mixed and it is because she is mixed that Cavil is able to dehumanize her, again adopting a human justification. In Cavil’s mind, Hera has no standing and no rights; therefore he has no reservations about harming her. In fact, for Cavil, the torture cannot bring her harm, for how can an object be harmed? On the other hand, it is equally significant that Admiral Adama decides to equate Hera’s rescue with the fate of civilization; it is still survival but one that is deemed worthy. It is clear to Adama (and to everyone involved) that Cavil intends to torture Hera and even kill her in order for Cavil to get the information he wants. So, the rescue attempt can be seen as being a narrative argument against Cavil’s intentions and therefore against torture. That Hera is a child makes the argument compelling, as does the manner in which it is made – Adama tapes a red line down the middle of a hangar deck and forcefully tells his crew to “make your choice.” Once sides have been chosen, those who attempt to rescue Hera are heroically shown planning their assault on the Cylon Colony and when the

²⁴¹ Which means that we are all part Cylon and that no “pure” humans exist.

actual assault begins the battle that ensues is epically portrayed in an “all for one” fashion, with several people losing their lives for the sake of saving Hera’s. Atonement is achieved, revenge and dehumanization are extinguished, and the state-of-survival takes on a new meaning, one in which existence has to signify something more than simply being alive.

In terms of progression, then, the meta-narrative unfolded *BSG*’s four seasons dramatized a debate on torture through a scenario in which survival was the primary importance for both humans and Cylons. As the narrative progressed, both sides used the concept of revenge to justify the use of torture and, accordingly, used torture to exact revenge on one another and on themselves. Whether torture was physical or psychological, the main technique (which also served to justify torture’s use) was to dehumanize the person (or machine) being tortured. However, as the narrative progressed, the dramatic effect of dehumanization eventually extended to those who tortured to the point of losing not just their moral status but their own sense of humanity. Torture, then, for *BSG*, results in a loss of one’s right to exist, as its use shames those who employ it to the point that the shame extends (fairly or not) to one’s entire race. It is only when humans and Cylons come together to stop the torture of a child that both sides are able to earn the right to survive. Indeed, the first words spoken in the Miniseries are uttered by a No. 6 copy when she asks a bewildered Colonial officer “Are you alive?” He responds “yes” to which she replies “prove it.” In light of the narrative’s progression from this opening scene to the rescue of Hera, what *BSG* seems to be asking is: “Are we *worthy* of being alive?” Perhaps, as *BSG*’s meta-narrative seems to suggest, one way to prove whether or not we are worthy of being alive is to learn how to exist together, human and Cylon, in peace rather than in torture.

CHAPTER 6
THE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE RHETORIC

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation began by suggesting that the question of whether or not America should torture so-called “enemy combatants” as it waged a retaliatory “War on Terror” in the aftermath of 9/11 was not so much debated as it was asserted by the presidential administration of George W. Bush and the news media contemporary to his administration. Building on an initial observation by media researcher and scholar Sasha Torres, who recognized a representation of thinking on television that served to counter the Bush Administration and the media, the following three questions were posed: (1) If debate was indeed suppressed during Bush’s administration, did the representation of thinking on television (and television itself) function as an alternate forum for debate? (2) If so, what does this “narrative rhetoric” or “dramatized argument” suggest with regard to the fields of narratology, rhetoric, and critical theory? (3) And what does viewing television as an alternate forum for debate suggest about America’s cultural identity in a post-9/11 world? The goal of this dissertation was not necessarily to provide definitive answers to these questions (though possible answers will be later discussed) but rather to investigate how television possibly functioned as an alternate forum for debate by examining the narratives of three serialized television programs which were largely aired during the years contemporary to the Bush Administration: FOX’s *24* (2001 – 2010), ABC’s *Lost* (2004 – 2010) and the SyFy Channel’s reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*, 2003 – 2010). Each of these programs dramatized the use of torture to some degree, presented storylines relevant to a post-9/11 world, and provided an “available means” to discuss the issue of torture in a compelling way, allowing viewers to more fully contemplate the pros and cons of torture, as

well as the social, moral, ethical, logical, and philosophical issues related to the questions of whether or not torture is acceptable. From this, a possible theory of narrative rhetoric was outlined.

Building on the theories of Walter Fisher (who traces a narrative's aesthetic proofs), James Phelan (who tracks the continuously changing configuration that exists in the interaction between the narrative and the reader), Michael Kearns (who notes the coded and focalized patterns in a narrative), and Mark Currie (who observes positionality) this dissertation proposed a theory of narrative rhetoric (TNR) that approaches narrative analysis by charting a narrative's progression and function, accounting for the introduction, development, and conclusion of a narrative's message, as well as the vehicles and themes used to convey a narrative's message. From this, the method of TNR can be used to suggest a possible intention (on the part of the author/creator) and can be used to outline a possible range of acceptable audience responses to the narrative, but TNR does not suggest that these intentions or interpretations would be comprehensive or definitive. TNR's analytical method simply focuses on the coherence, configuration, and coding of the narrative itself, allowing a reasonable message (argument) to be determined and allowing probable conclusions to be drawn regarding the purpose of and response to the message. TNR defines narrative as *dramatized argument* and its method, in the most simplistic terms, seeks *to determine narrative message through narrative progression and narrative function*.

Following in the tradition of many critical theories, narrative theories, and rhetorical theories, TNR does not purport to offer itself as a "new" theory. Rather, TNR is offered as a practical method of analyzing *how* literary and dramatic works argue, especially in specific contexts. For the purposes of this dissertation, the specific context was one that existed in the mixture of a post-9/11 climate in which the debate of torture was actively discouraged by the Bush Administration and the news media and in which television narratives provided a possible available means for thinking about torture. As this dissertation claims, viewers who chose to watch *24*, *Lost*, and/or *BSG* (especially viewers who experienced these program's entire meta-narrative) likely accepted the philosophy and ideology these respective shows offered, which includes the positions each show dramatized regarding the issue of torture. Let us now review the conclusions regarding each television program's narrative progression to understand how the

issue of torture was collectively debated and how this debate relates to the assertions made by the Bush Administration.

6.2 The narrative of torture

As was stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, on the most fundamental level, the question of torture rests on three points: (1) whether or not torturous treatment of a human being is acceptable; (2) whether or not a situation exists in which the use of torture is the only possible course of action; and (3) what exactly constitutes torture. The first point contemplates the act of torturing, the second point ponders the impact of context, and the third point considers definition. For the Bush Administration, these three points were hurdles to be cleared. By rewriting law and by redefining torture as “enhanced interrogation” the Bush Administration effectively made torture “legally” acceptable. By relying on the flawed logic that torture is vital to national security, the Bush Administration argued that torture was necessary to keep the country safe from possible future terrorist attacks and the ticking bomb scenario provided the Bush Administration with the means to justify both the acceptability and necessity of torture. Since these positions were asserted rather than debated, no counterpoint was offered. However, it is worth noting that, for the Bush Administration, the ticking bomb scenario also provided a means to dramatize the need for torture, thereby making their position compelling. Of course, this dramatic affect was not as developed or as fully illustrated as the dramatizations seen on television, which offered a better opportunity not just to depict torture but to debate it as well.

As the examinations in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 demonstrated, the narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each offered what can be characterized as a debate on torture by dramatizing the use of torture through various scenarios in which both sides of the debate were essentially given equal play. However, the narratives of all three programs can also be seen as ultimately concluding that torture, which is defined in all three programs physically and psychologically, is not acceptable and certainly not necessary. As such, the examinations discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 can be seen as drawing the following conclusions with

regard to the debate on torture: (1) that the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each employed a primary “scenario” that served to govern the dramatization of torture; (2) that the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each employed “themes” to support a pro-torture stance and an anti-torture stance; and (3) that the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* each maintained the conclusion that torture is wrong, not because of the effect it has on those who are tortured but because of the affect it has on those who torture. Let us briefly recount each program’s conclusions.

Like the Bush Administration, *24*’s primary scenario used to dramatize torture was the “ticking bomb” scenario, in which events were influenced by an imminent threat, making the argument for torture one of necessity. For the pro-torture position, the logic suggested that torture was the only choice available to gather the information needed to stop a threat from happening; torture, then, was promoted as necessary tool for prevention. Accompanying this position was the theme of revenge, as those who tortured were seen at times to engage in torture not just to gather information but also to exact retribution for terrorist activity. On the other hand, themes of judgment and atonement served to help articulate the anti-torture position, in which those who tortured were shown to experience remorse and great personal suffering because of having tortured. As a result, a payment was required to atone for the sin of torture in which characters typically had to sacrifice their own life. Additionally, for *24*, the ticking bomb scenario and the themes of revenge and judgment were dramatized through a professional plane, which illustrated the torture debate through official representations (such as CTU, the White House, and the U.S. Government in general), and through a personal plane, which illustrated the torture debate through the characters involved in torturous activity. Accordingly, *24*’s debate on torture can be seen as being organized as follows: Seasons 1 and 2 function as a two-part introduction which establishes the vehicles from which the debate on torture proceeds in subsequent seasons – the ticking bomb scenario, the professional and personal planes, and the themes of revenge and judgment; Seasons 3, 4, 5, and 6 development the debate on torture through the vehicle, with Season 6 also functioning as a transition to the concluding stage; and Seasons 7 and 8 function as a two-part conclusion in which a sense of resolution to the debate is offered by demonstrating the anti-torture position as being more correct.

The narrative progression seen in *24*'s eight seasons, then, concludes with the dramatization of torture as an act of unnecessary and inhuman violence. Those who torture are shown to endure severe personal trauma, losing not just their morality but also their humanity. Therefore, while the argument of necessity was compellingly portrayed throughout *24*'s meta-narrative, the themes of revenge and judgment, as well as the depravity torture demands in its execution, render any perceived necessity moot, suggesting that there is no sufficient reason to engage in torture. Accordingly, the dramatization of torture on *24* portrays the heroes as the true villains and victims of torture, with the act of torture serving as a means for good and evil to merge to the point that they can no longer be differentiated. With regard to the real-world post-9/11 debate on torture, *24*'s meta-narrative maintains that by endorsing torture (by making legal and by redefining as enhanced interrogation) America becomes the very terrorist nation it seeks to combat. As a result, it forfeits its moral standing, owing a debt to humanity.

Where the Bush Administration and *24* employed the ticking bomb scenario, *Lost* primarily relied on a state-of-nature scenario to dramatize its debate on torture. While the state-of-nature scenario can be seen as being somewhat similar to a ticking bomb scenario, in the sense that both scenarios generate tension through the possibility of impending doom, the state-of-nature scenario does not necessarily rely on a temporal factor. As such, the state-of-nature does not create the same sense of necessity with regard to having to make quick decisions – though, for *Lost*, necessity did sometimes occur. What is paramount is that both *24* and *Lost* relied on the theme of revenge as a means of justifying the use of torture. Likewise, both *24* and *Lost* dramatized the effects of torture through the concepts of judgment and atonement, with characters on *Lost* having to pay for their transgressions typically by sacrificing their own life. In terms of the function of *Lost*'s narrative progression, these arguments on torture were presented through a completely serialized format as follows: Season 1 functioned as exposition, introducing the vehicles of the state-of-nature scenario and the accompanying themes of revenge, judgment, and atonement; Season 2, Season 3, and Season 4 functioned as a three-part development in which the vehicles were utilized to advance the debate on torture; and Season 5 and Season 6 functioned as a two-part conclusion in which

torture was ultimately shown to be wrong because the personal and collective price it requires (having to sacrifice one's own life and one's own soul) is too costly to pay.

The narrative progression delineated through *Lost*'s six seasons, then, concludes with the dramatization of torture as an inhumane act in which the torturers become the tortured. Like *24*, characters on *Lost* who torture are shown to experience great personal trauma, losing not just everything that matters to them (friends, family, and jobs) but their own life and soul, too. While the theme of revenge presents a fairly convincing argument in favor of torture, the themes of judgment and atonement provide a more compelling counterargument, rendering torture not just wrong but immoral. Accordingly, *Lost*'s dramatization of emotional torture (which was seen in *24* to some degree, especially in later seasons) suggests that we often betray that which we honor by, ironically, trying to honor it. For *24*, this was dramatized when torture was used to "protect" the citizens of this country; for *Lost*, this was dramatized when characters chose to betray one another in order to "protect" the ones they loved. With regard to the post-9/11 debate on torture, then, *Lost*, like *24*, ultimately concludes that an America that sanctions torture in the name of protecting its citizens effectively forfeits the souls the very same citizens it is trying to protect, sacrificing any sense of national morality. Accordingly, in order to regain moral status – in order to gain redemption – those who torture must choose to sacrifice their life as payment for the debt they owe to society and to honor the ones they love.

BSG's state-of-survival scenario, which is similar to *Lost*'s state-of-nature (and to a lesser extent to *24*'s ticking bomb scenario), allowed *BSG*'s meta-narrative to engage in a debate on torture, generating the theme of revenge seen in *24* and *Lost* as a means of justifying torture. However, where *24* and *Lost* relied on themes of judgment and atonement to argue against the use of torture, *BSG* employed dehumanization and judgment to demonstrate an anti-torture position. The theme of dehumanization served *BSG*'s meta-narrative as a means of vividly demonstrating the depravity associated with torture, on both sides of the proverbial coin, as it was used tactically on the pro-torture side (as a means of exacting revenge) and psychologically on the anti-torture side (as a means of illustrating how torture affects those who torture). Accordingly, *BSG* often illustrated the debate conveyed through dehumanization through the

same characters (most notably Admiral Cain) just as *24* was able to illustrate both sides of the argument through Jack Bauer and *Lost* was able to illustrate both sides of the argument through Sayid Jarrah. Like *Lost*, *BSG*'s narrative was presented in a completely serialized format as follows: the Miniseries and Season 1 functioned as the narrative's exposition, introducing the vehicles of the state-of-survival scenario and the themes of revenge, dehumanization, and judgment; Season 2.0, Season 2.5, Season 3, *Razor*, and *The Plan* functioned to develop the vehicles employed in the narrative's progression; and Season 4.0 and Season 4.5 functioned as the narrative's conclusion, arguing that torture is wrong because it dehumanizes those who torture, creating a debt that must be paid through atonement.

The narrative progression delineated through *BSG*'s four seasons, then, concludes with the dramatization of torture as a ruthless act in which the torturers become dehumanized. Like *24*, and *Lost*, characters on *BSG* who torture are shown to experience extreme personal loss and while the theme of revenge presents a forceful argument in favor of torture, the themes of dehumanization and judgment offer a substantial counterpoint, depicting torture not just as an act that is wrong, but an act that is not human. In terms of atonement, then, *BSG*'s message is similar to that of *24* and *Lost*, in that redemption is achieved (indeed, it is the goal of those who torture) only through self-sacrifice. However, for *BSG* the sacrifice comes not from one person sacrificing their life to save many, but rather from many people (humans and Cylons) sacrificing their lives for the sake of one child. With regard to the post-9/11 debate on torture, then, *BSG*, like *24* and *Lost*, essentially concludes that a humanity that sanctions torture in the name of protecting its citizens (for the sake of survival) relinquishes the right to survive and that in order to regain the right to exist, the entire society must be willing to risk its existence in order to atone for its collective sin.

Therefore, the debate on torture seen through the meta-narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* can be summarized as follows: whether through a ticking bomb scenario, a state-of-nature scenario, or a state-of-survival scenario, the collective narratives of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* dramatize torture as a concept that emerges as a perceived need, but one that must be justified. That all three meta-narratives use the concept of revenge as a means to justify torture mirrors the similar justification offered by the Bush Administration, suggesting that revenge was perhaps the best (familiar, understandable) concept available through which the narrative

could convey a need for torture. However, this concept was balanced in each meta-narrative by the concept missing from the Bush Administration's position (because they relied on assertion instead of deliberation), namely, judgment and its accompanying themes of dehumanization and atonement. Indeed, in all three meta-narratives, the argument against torture was most vividly illustrated through the effects/affects torture produced on those who tortured and in all three meta-narratives those who tortured were shown to owe a debt for having tortured, one that typically had to be repaid through personal (or collective) suffering and one that oftentimes required self-sacrifice. Returning to the three fundamental points of the debate on torture, then, the three meta-narratives can be seen as dramatizing a debate on torture to conclude that torture is not acceptable, that no justification can be sufficiently offered, and that whether torture is defined physically or psychologically, its effect is the same: those who torture become the tortured.

Returning to the initial questions posed in the first chapter of this dissertation regarding the Bush Administration and the representation of thinking on television, this dissertation has effectively demonstrated that certain television narratives aired during the years contemporary to the Bush Administration did in fact debate the issue of torture. This dramatized argument was examined through a theory of narrative rhetoric (TNR) that accounted for a narrative's progression and a narrative's function with regard to how the drama argued. This, in turn, helps illuminate the fields of rhetoric, narratology, and critical theory by offering TNR as a companion theory for analysis, one that can be used to help inform other theories and analytical approaches in all three fields. Accordingly, viewing television as an alternate forum for debate on torture and considering how torture was debated on the programs of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG*, suggests that torture was a significant issue with regard to America's post-9/11 cultural identity, as the nation struggled not just with the issue of torture, but with the companion issues of revenge, judgment, and atonement. Indeed, the issue of torture related to America's ability to maintain a moral standing in the world, as a victim of terror, and as the debates on *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* reveal, for America to maintain its moral standing it must not engage in torture. Indeed, as was dramatically illustrated, if and when America does engage in torture it does so at its own peril, causing the collective whole of the country to lose not just its morality, but to owe a debt to humanity. This is the debate that the Bush Administration failed to engage

in; yet, as the examinations of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* suggest, the American public, through dramatized argument, was able to not just engage in the debate, but, more importantly, to come to a conclusion: torture has no place in human society, American or otherwise. Let us now reapply these conclusions to TNR to understand TNR's significance.

6.3 The rhetoric of narrative

As has been stated, the theory of narrative rhetoric defines narrative as dramatized argument and its goal is to analyze a dramatized argument by examining argument's progression and function, accounting for the introduction, development, and conclusion of the dramatized argument, as well as the vehicles and themes utilized to put forth and maintain the dramatized argument. Indeed, the ability of a narrative to argue resides in its ability to be dramatized. This dissertation examined the medium of serialized narrative television because it provides an environment in which an argument can be sustained and developed through multiple episodes and seasons. Yet, regardless of the medium, it is the ability to dramatize and it is the nature of drama that renders narrative argument potentially more compelling than traditional argument.

For example, a politician uttering the phrase "torture is morally wrong" during a debate or a stump speech at a community town hall meeting may be convincing enough to some voters to cause them adopt the message of the phrase as a position on torture. Certainly, if such a politician were to develop the argument through techniques of logos, ethos, and pathos – by saying phrases like "studies show that torture doesn't really produce reliable results," "according to soldier X, who was tortured in country Y," or "how would you feel if you were bound and gagged and forced to endure the sensation of being drowned?" – the politician may be even more convincing to voters. However, what this dissertation has worked to demonstrate is that when an argument is dramatized its potential to persuade becomes maximized; it is simply more compelling to a given audience to tell a story than to deliver a speech. Showing heroic and tragic characters like Jack Bauer, Sayid Jarrah, or Gaius Baltar endure the evils of torture is more vivid, more memorable, and ultimately more persuasive than any political speech could hope to be.

Therefore, where a traditional argument offers proofs to support a claim and refute a counter-claim, a narrative argument dramatizes a claim using techniques of storytelling as a means of supporting a claim and refuting counter-claims. Of course, just as in traditional argument, the outcome of narrative argument is not guaranteed – too many variables exist. Yet, as an “available means,” the potential of narrative argument to persuade (because of its compelling nature) is arguably greater than the potential of traditional argument to persuade and if the claims are consistently maintained and changes or modifications in the claims are accounted for as the narrative progresses, then the potential to persuade is strengthened, in much the same manner as a Toulmin argument is strengthened when the claims, data, warrants, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttals work in concert. The difference, of course, is that whether one models an argument on Toulmin or Aristotle or Rogers or any other theorist, the effect of the argument is simply not as compelling as an argument made through narrative. Accordingly, while a traditional argument depends upon the aspects of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery of the author/orator, narrative argument depends on the dramatization. Therefore, the aspects that render narrative as dramatized argument comprise what this dissertation labels as a *theory of narrative rhetoric* and what they reveal is that narrative functions rhetorically not by employing any new technique but rather by dramatizing the traditional ones. Indeed, it is precisely the nature of narrative – which can be as logical, emotional, and authoritative as traditional argument, if not more so – that renders narrative more convincing than other forms of argument; it is simply a form of argument that, especially when done well, as in the case of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG*, generates an investment on the part of viewers.

Certainly, it could be argued that viewers come to develop long-term relationships with the characters of stories, becoming emotionally involved in the character’s arcs as if they were real. While the goal of TNR is not to investigate a given audience’s emotional investment in a given narrative, what is paramount is the recognition that such an investment likely exists, hence, the importance of being able to account for how a given narrative wields an argument. As was explained in the second chapter of this dissertation (and as Appendix A shows), TNR does not directly investigate the audience or the author. Rather, TNR is focused on the narrative itself, on how the narrative argues. While TNR contends that

narratives are more compelling than other forms of argument, TNR also maintains that regardless of how compelling any argument may be, the outcome of the argument is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, if narratives are more compelling then perhaps it is worth investigating how they argue. Certainly, this could help inform any future studies that seek to understand audience response and authorial intention.

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, TNR's significance resides in its ability to enhance or complement other critical theories. While it is limited, in a sense, by its generality – in the fact that it is not as specific in its focus as theories such as feminism, Marxism, or psychoanalysis – its strength is that it can help inform these other critical theories by demonstrating *how* a text can be read from a feminist perspective, Marxist perspective or psychoanalytic perspective. Where these theories traditionally cite examples to support a critical analysis, this dissertation suggests that TNR allows a better understanding of how the perspective works by tracing how the narrative progressed, serving to illuminate cited examples in terms of how they function within the a meta-narrative structure: examples are still cited, but they are accounted for in terms of function and progression rather than merely as examples. While TNR is also limited by its flexibility, in the sense that it is not a “definitive” method (nor does it claim to be or try to be) this variability nevertheless allows for a broad spectrum of critical perspectives, as TNR can be applied to a given narrative in a manner of different ways. For example, this dissertation chose to utilize TNR as a means of understanding how the specific issue of torture was debated in three different television programs by examining the vehicles of the debate (scenarios and themes) and by explaining how these three debates were strikingly similar in their conclusions. However, another approach could have used TNR not to examine the vehicles of the debate but rather the dialogue (including delivery and intonation) of the debate. Still another approach could have examined the filming of the debate (focalization, cinematography, camera angles), and yet another approach could have examined the role of acting and directing in dramatizing the debate or the use of logos, ethos, and pathos in portrayal of the debate. In other words, while TNR is essentially no different from a general rhetorical analysis in terms of sharing the goal of defining an argument and examining how the argument is made, TNR (unlike a typical rhetorical analysis) is able to account for many different factors depending on the approach of a given researcher, both in

method and philosophy, as all of these approaches could be traced in terms of narrative progression and narrative function with regard to the dramatized argument. In the most simplistic terms, then, traditional rhetorical analysis and critical theories examine by example; TNR examines by progression and function.

In the final analysis, then, this dissertation has demonstrated a value in viewing narrative as dramatized argument. With regard to the specific television programs of *24*, *Lost*, and *BSG* and their relation to the post-9/11 context, viewing narrative as dramatized argument allows us to understand how the issue of torture was debated in a climate in which debate was discouraged. With regard to the fields of rhetoric, narratology, and critical studies, viewing narrative as dramatized argument helps bring these disciplines together by viewing the goal of each discipline as having a similar focus: studying story as argument. With regard to possible future study, TNR could be further developed to more fully account for the perspectives of the author and the reader. While TNR is decidedly text-centered, the author and reader are too significant to ignore, as regards the communication process. Nevertheless, the philosophy of TNR hopefully provides something readily useful and meaningful with regard to the analysis of narrative and argument, as well as something that can be built upon.

APPENDIX A
COMPARISON OF CRITICAL THEORIES

Critical Theory	General Analysis Question	General Theory/Philosophy	General Focus
Authorial Intention	What did the author mean to communicate?	Author is the primary concern of analysis.	Author
Cultural	What cultural work does the text perform?	High and low culture is defined by the dominant class; however, there is no meaningful distinction between high and low culture.	Text/Reader
Deconstructive	What do we learn about the ideology (or ideologies) operating in the text by analyzing the text's contradictions rather than by trying to resolve them?	A text's meaning is undecidable, existing in an indefinite, plural, and conflicting array of possible meanings. Thus, a text has no meaning.	Text/Reader
Feminist	How is the text shaped by its representation of patriarchal norms and values and by its embodiment of the ideologies that support or undermine those norms and values?	Patriarchal gender roles are the ultimate source of our experience.	Text/Reader
Lesbian/Gay/Queer	How is the text shaped by its representation of non-hetero forms of sexuality?	Textual and subtextual clues reveal conscious or unconscious presence of Lesbian, gay, and queer themes.	Text/Reader
Marxist	How is the text shaped by its representation of capitalism and/or classism and by its embodiment of the ideologies that support or undermine those systems?	Socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience.	Text/Reader
New Criticism	Does the text itself have organic unity and themes of universal significance?	Text works as a unified whole.	Text
New Historicism	How does the text participate in the interpretation of history?	There is no presentation of facts, there is only an interpretation of facts.	Text/Author
Psychoanalytic	How is the text shaped by its representation of the psychological desires, needs, and conflicts of the Story?	If psychoanalysis helps understand human behavior and conflicts of the characters, then it can help understand literary human behavior.	Text/Reader
Reader-Response	How do readers make meaning as they read the text and what is the relationship of the meaning they make to the text?	Readers create the text.	Reader
Structuralist	What is the underlying structural system by which we make sense of the text?	Structural systems make possible an understanding of the chaotic world.	Text
TNR	What is a narrative's message(s) and how is the message(s) dramatized through the narrative's progression and function?	Defines narrative as dramatized argument; examines how an argument is dramatized.	Text

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