warTIME: Combat, Chronotope, and the Global War on Terrorism

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Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in

English Literature
May 14, 2021
Nashville, Tennessee

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1. Military Time

“Come on, LT, you’re smart, you can figure it out. Just think about it.” This was a conversation I was having with my new Platoon Sergeant (PSG) about tactics. It is the accepted role of the PSG, a person who has years of Army experience at their disposal, to pass their knowledge onto their Platoon Leader, a Lieutenant usually less than two years out of college. Fortunately for me, the “Platoon Daddy” I was currently paired with, Sergeant First Class (SFC) Bernthal, was at the time — and remains — a highly motivated and self-actualized individual when it comes to informal education: always relentless in pursuing knowledge. This meant that he could seamlessly combine the practical experience from his combat deployments with his theoretical understanding of tactics, maneuver, and warfare, and bring the weight of that didacticism to bear against the inexperience of his Platoon Leader (Yours Truly).

In this particular discussion, SFC Bernthal had just asked a very theoretical question: *what are the two combat factors that never change in a firefight*? I got the first one in about half a second: “terrain.” Essentially, if you are fighting an enemy on a hill, that hill will not move or alter for the duration of the engagement. True, continuous combat can and will change a landscape into an anti-landscape as a war continues, but the immediate terrain surrounding soldiers as they fight in shorter instances of combat does not change. The second part was harder, as it had a slightly metaphysical aspect to it. I had been thinking for about 45 seconds or so when I hesitantly suggested the correct answer: “time.” The gist of the lesson was that because time and terrain were the only immutable elements of combat, all my planning, decisions, and direction should have the purpose of controlling them. Not gaining control, or worse, losing control of them to an adversary, would likely have fatal consequences. Unbeknownst to either myself or SFC Bernthal, I had just completed an introductory, practical lesson to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope*.

Bakhtin, a Russian literary critic, developed the chronotope as an analytical construct in the late 1930s. Broken down into its Greek roots the word is a simple combination of *chrónos* (time) and *tópos* (space). In the decades since Bakhtin proposed it, the chronotope has become a metric for the literary critic to distinguish between the structures of different genres and styles.[1] And though it may seem coincidental, the overlap of "time/space" and time/terrain intimately connects war to the chronotope. At the small unit level, the chronotope manifests itself in the struggle for control of time and terrain, but the linkage between the chronotope as a literary construct and military operations is one of an abstract concept in comparison to its relating praxis. That is to say, one can view military operations as a practical manifestation of the chronotope in that time and space are ultimately the determining factors in all military operations. Military planning methodologies confirm this. Intelligence efforts literally define a threat's actions in *time* and *space* to enable commanders to synchronize their forces in *time* and *space* to defeat said threat: "For Army forces, operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose" (ADP 3-0, 2-2). The military, then, is essentially a practical embodiment of the chronotope at *all* levels.

If military operations at echelon function as a chronotope, then war itself, by extension, is also a chronotope. Society automatically conceptualizes war temporally with the moniker

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[1] In a chapter of her book, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, Mary Louise Pratt offers a useful paraphrase of Bakhtin's idea, stating that a chronotope is a "particular configuration of time and space that generates stories through which a society can examine itself" (170).

wartime. Add the public nomenclature to the fact that wars are frequently named for their locations and the result is a chronotope manifested within history as opposed to just literature. Additionally, the neat packaging of war in this manner produces a simplified collective perception — a *war myth*, to borrow Samuel Hynes' term.[2] The thing about all myths is that they create expectations, tinted lenses through which we see the world. But every so often, new experiences impart new insight on society, so that the old myths can no longer account for reality. America is at one of these critical junctures. Our current war, the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), does not fit our war myths. If war can be neatly packaged as a chronotope, then what we are going through is an unsuccessful attempt to come to a consensus of the experience — to package the conflict away nicely. That is because, in regards to the neatness of the history books, the GWOT is a *frustrated* chronotope.

To explicate the GWOT as a frustrated chronotope, I turn primarily to three texts: one critical, one practical, one retrospective. The aforementioned Prof. Hynes' work bears much weight in this conversation. Hynes is both a literary critic and a veteran, which makes his text, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War,* the quintessential bridge between literary criticism and war studies. Written for the wars of the twentieth century, *The Soldiers' Tale* discusses temporality in warfare at length — albeit never directly evoking the chronotope — and defines the previously mentioned concept of the war myth. Mary Dudziak's *War-Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* in a similar way seeks to correct our social understanding of how war functions. Her work, however, focuses on how legal practices contradict public conceptions of wartime. She explores how the temporality of legal action directly dissolves our neatly bounded wars — though she also neglects to borrow from Bakhtin's insights. Finally, I use Hynes' and Dudziak's ideas in combination with Bakhtin to show how Elliot Ackerman's GWOT memoir, *Places and Names: On War, Revolution and Returning*, exemplifies the concepts of the frustrated chronotope. Ackerman, a U.S. Marine turned novelist, tells of his attempts to find closure for his combat experiences while watching the Islamic State (IS/ ISIS) sweep through lands he once fought to defend. His memoir provides a unique perspective as he was both a participant and a close observer of the GWOT. Throughout this analysis, I draw on texts that are pertinent to this discussion. However, Hynes, Dudziak, and Ackerman are my primary interlocutors, and their words in concert can best tell the story of our frustrated chronotope.

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[2] Hynes' literary criticism is heavily influenced by his time as a Marine fighter pilot in the Second World War. In the instances where he specifically focuses on war as his topic, as in *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to the Modern War*, he works to extract the personal voices and experiences out of the occlusive fabric of history: "Nevertheless, that notional tale is my subject: what happened in war, one man at a time; who the men were who told war's separate stories and what their stories tell us (and don't tell us) about war" (xiii)

2. The Chronotope and War

As a structure, the chronotope is ubiquitous. Just like all combat action is rooted in its relation to time and terrain, all forms of art can be defined by their specific time/space orientation. Thus, this literary concept is the theoretical twin of the tactical theory I learned as a new Lieutenant. Bakhtin himself notes that any historical narrative necessitates applying the chronotope to war: "For a long time the central and almost sole theme of purely historical narrative was the theme of war" (217). To illustrate the chronotope, I prefer to reference a well-known film example, technically a *war* film no less. "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away…" introduces the exposition in all the *Star Wars* movies. It overtly establishes the Skywalker saga's spatial and temporal relationship to the viewer. It shows that *Star Wars* is a story that has run its course as it was a “long time ago,” and “far, far away” provides a mythic quality, as we can never actually see the sands of Tatooine or the snows of Hoth.

The military, being aware of its spatio-temproal dependence, produced its own didactic chronotope story in 1990. “The Musicians of Mars” was written to illustrate the importance of synchronization, the military’s method of chronotope control: “The term ‘synchronization’ is commonly used to describe the actions that must occur at critical *times* and *places* to achieve an intended outcome” (“Musicians” preface; emphasis added). The title depicts the God of War conducting a symphony of death, with the “musicians” arranged in time and space, working harmoniously to achieve the maximum deadly effect. Military lethality, in other words, is chronotopically dependent. And war, practically speaking, is the violent, real-world application of Bakhtin’s concept. Bakhtin validates this weird transference between literature and praxis by admitting to taking the inspiration for the chronotope from praxis in the first place: “The special meaning it has in relativity theory [Einstein’s Theory of] is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely)” (84). This paper merely brings the chronotope as a metaphor back into the real world, where it started.

With the relationship between the chronotope and war in general firmly established, we can use the chronotope to examine the particular difficulties espoused by the GWOT. This methodology may seem unorthodox — applying a century-old idea outside of its original context, but literary scholars appeal directly to Bakhtin while interdisciplinary academics simultaneously and intentionally push the chronotope’s boundaries. Postcolonial scholar Mary Louise Pratt uses the chronotope to examine the “time-space configuration” of both our past and "deep future" in terms of the Anthropocene (170).[3] Anthropologist David Lipsit uses the chronotope as a metric for examining agency as it relates to time and place in real-world, modern American courtship.[4] As evidenced by such examples, the chronotope is elastic in its utilization so that I can readily apply it to reorient social perspectives in relation to past wars, to examine how the contemporary conflict continues to unfold, and to provide insight on wider military operations. With the chronotope, we can nationally and globally reevaluate our current condition to address numerous issues that have come to light since the turn of the millennium. Based on this premise, what I present in my argument is simple, but it is no small thing: I argue that we (Americans) are experiencing a *frustrated chronotope* in regards to the GWOT. That is to say, the unresolved temporality of the Global War on Terrorism frustrates the personal and social efforts to define the experience in literature and thought, manifesting as a crisis of social-historical context and personal memory.

To truly understand the frustrated chronotope, however, requires a slightly deeper look into Bakhtin's ideas than just knowing the etymological basis of his primary terminology. He did more than give the world a combination of Greek words and make the obvious statement that everything has some inherent aspect of time and space. Bakhtin used his concept to redefine literary categories: "It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time" (85). In realizing that the aesthetic depictions of time and space had distinct formal aspects, he was able to redefine forms of literature accordingly. Bakhtin's first example in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" is the Greek Romance. He defined the works in this category by their specific attributes such as common love plot motifs, significant variance in geographic location, and encyclopedic depictions of culture and artifacts. Most importantly, he noted the un-altering, binding affection between two lovers, which also binds the plot by two specific points in time: "The first meeting of hero and heroine and the sudden flareup [sic] of their passion for each other is the starting point for plot movement; the endpoint of plot movement is their successful union in marriage" (89). Put simply, Bakhtin defines each chronotope by its own set of characteristics; each chronotope has a distinct fingerprint.

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[3] *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene (2017):* "Alongside these new naturalists, it becomes easy to imagine an Anthropocenic flâneur who remakes the city as a multispecies chronotope where human, animal, plant, fungal, and viral life-forms negotiate their cohabitation." (172-73); "deep future" is a term borrowed by Pratt from feminist scholar Karen Barad, referring to our planet's geologic future.

[4] "On The Bridge: Class and the Chronotope of Modern Romance in an American Love Story" (2015). "I introduced two chronotopes of romance: a Homeric one that I associated with stories told by a segment of rural youth in Papua New Guinea, and a modern one that I imagined might be found in Euro-American romance narratives" (166).

As a manifestation of Bakhtin's own principles, the frustrated chronotope similarly possesses specific characteristics. If we imagine wartime as a period of conflict neatly defined by start and endpoints within a specific location, the frustrated chronotope is something that breaks up that expectation. And though it may initially mirror a known chronotope, it ultimately becomes undefinable by normal wartime standards. The frustrated chronotope— in relation to the war myth/wartime construct in this case — has three very specific characteristics. First, it has somehow exceeded or disrupted the expected narrative of the known war chronotope in a spatial or temporal manner. Second, it possesses no clear or possible objective, no path to resolution, no futurity. And third, it produces the effect of a suspended experience — that is, that there can be no cognitive closure and no moving on from events.[5] This paper demonstrates that the GWOT, as conflicts are defined, aligns with these generic facets in our present experience.

Now that I have laid out the basis of the chronotope as relates to war, I must compare the GWOT's current perceptions to the significant war mythologies of the twentieth century. It is important to touch on these before diving more deeply into the analysis of the GWOT because they are the ideals against which we judge our current time. Admittedly the brief points of comparison offered below could each be the subject of their own book, and in some cases already are. The main point is that there is always the temptation to make sense of the present and the future by comparing them to the past. With the GWOT, however, those comparisons are not feasible options because none of the major twentieth-century conflicts meet all three components of the frustrated chronotope, though some do share characteristics. Nonetheless, this paper's thesis requires a brief explanation as to how the GWOT chronotope differs from its predecessors and is subsequently frustrated.

The difficulty in making such comparisons lies in the fact that there are certain aspects of the GWOT that feel so much like the other wars. For example, there is the similarity in the titles and their subsequent implications between the *Global* War on Terrorism and the two *World* Wars. This particular allusion to the scale of place at first seems like an obvious link, but the World Wars, though they are spatially vast, have their places as neatly defined as their temporalities. They are easily divided into fronts and theaters, aspects that solidified those conflicts even as they were ongoing. The world was involved, but still neatly segmented and any boundary shift followed a logical, causal progression in accordance with traditional war narratives. Globally speaking, the GWOT has a fluid quality where, though erupted primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan, it can emerge unexpectedly anywhere at any time, in any form. This results in the disruption of the accepted war chronotope. Similar questions of place defeat the comparison of the GWOT to the Vietnam War as well. Much has been said about both conflicts relying on Counter Insurgency (COIN) tactics, and you can make a valid comparison if you were to focus on a single place such as Afghanistan. Afghanistan, however, does not encompass the entirety of the conflict, though it is the longest-running combat zone in it. Even though there are interesting similar facets between the GWOT and the conventionally structured twentieth-century wars, comparing them through the lens of the chronotope marks significant distinctions.

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[5] cognitive closure: 1. the state in which an individual recognizes that he or she has achieved an understanding of something. 2. the final stage in figuratively seeing the total picture and how all pieces of it fit together. (The American Psychological Association)

There are also wars from the twentieth century that function with a similar temporal ambiguity to the GWOT — the Cold War and the Korean War. The Cold War is interesting not only because of the length but also because of the ambiance it created over that span of time. Dudziak notes that “extending military action to Iraq showed that the war on terror was conceptualized along the lines of the Cold War era: “It was a battle against an ideology that could be found anywhere on the globe” (108). Though the disrupted spatial narrative and the effect of a suspended experience mark a strong resemblance with the GWOT, there is still a difference that makes the comparison incomplete. Yes, events could happen globally, and, yes, it was a duel between opposing ideologies, but the Cold War was also still a confrontation between two established state powers. At its core, it was a showdown between the U.S.S.R. and the United States. So even though there were no conventional battle lines, the power structures were located in established physical places. This resulted in a specific, if somewhat blurry, futurity, even though the amount of time was indeterminable. The global community expected the conflict to end when either the U.S. Capitol or the Kremlin crumbled, which is what ultimately happened. The GWOT does not have this foundation of physical location to stabilize perspectives or the futurity to progress through temporal ambiguity.

Even though the Korean War, as a sub-conflict of the Cold War, continues to be temporally ambiguous, it has the same sense of futurity as its progenitorial conflict. When the open fighting ceased, Coalition forces and the South Korean people were left with a hostile entity staring at them from across what is now the most heavily fortified border in the world; and that stalemate continues to this day, even with the threat of either hostilities or social implosion continually looming: "The United States and other regional powers are already confronting North Korea's nuclear progress. They may confront the state collapse challenge as well, although it is unknown whether the conditions for collapse could emerge within the medium term" (Mazarr, et al. 1-2). As a chronotope, the Korean War maintains its spatial integrity as well as its potential for future resolution despite the suspended experience of protracted military readiness. Military strategists and citizens alike can visualize peace, and it either looks like the fall of an authoritarian dictatorship or a tenuous handshake across rows of barbed wire. Most believe that it is just a matter of time.

Comparing the GWOT to America's other war myths shows that, as a frustrated chronotope, it is problematic to modern American memory because it has no easy model for resolution; we have never encountered anything quite like it. It has a nice temporal point of entry, similar to World War II, but unlike every other war, there is no clearly marked strategic or temporal exit point. It may not be the longest technical conflict in American history, but it certainly has that potential. It is the future in the sense that it seems like it will always be there and has no chance of being relegated to its place in history with all of our other wars. For this reason, we cannot make any sense of our conduct: we cannot pass judgment as to the necessity of our actions or the morality of our methods and intent. We cannot package it neatly for a history book, though not for lack of trying. This type of war defeats our mental defense mechanisms. As it is, we cannot control it, and that frustrates us.

3. The GWOT and the War Myth

It is common knowledge that the GWOT started on the morning of September 11th, 2001; more than nineteen years later, we are still at it. There was the usual wartime experience initially – the anger at the sudden attack, the patriotism, the near national unity – but those things have worn off while the fighting remains. 2011 brought the GWOT into a new dimension of public thought when it became our longest active war. Since that point, the biggest question on the minds of politicians, scholars, other nations, generals, soldiers, families – all of us – is when it will end. Unfortunately, Dudziak observes that the social consciousness of the American public and the rhetoric of American leaders has adjusted to living comfortably in uncertainty: "President Barack Obama has called our own day 'an age without surrender ceremonies,' and yet we continue to believe that wartime comes to an end. We are routinely asked to support our troops, but otherwise war requires no sacrifices of most Americans, and as conflict goes on, Americans pay increasingly less attention to it" (8). Yes, we can collectively recognize the GWOT's time and place of inception; and "collective memory," as Martin J. Murray states, "has the power to simplify the past, constructing coherent stories of heroism and sacrifice, or trauma and loss" (12). But our collective memory is frustrated in that we cannot construct a simple and coherent narrative conflict that has disrupted our temporal ideas of war.

Usually to Americans, wars serve as historical markers. We are taught history — particularly our own — en masse as neat sets of dates: start point, stuff happens, endpoint, on to the next thing. That being the case, it is no wonder Hynes wrote that “Americans like anniversaries — even anniversaries of disasters” (Hynes, *On War and Writing* 37). Our anniversaries provide reference. Reference provides closure. Most importantly, closure enables understanding. If wartime is a chronotope, then a completed war is also a completed chronotope. Wars become things that we can observe (disaster) or celebrate (triumph) annually, as there is distance between us and the event. At this point, wartime becomes war myth. For the GWOT, we have an anniversary, and observance — memorials sites included — for the beginning. The logical progression, then, in our expected framework is that it should have been neatly concluded by now. But there is neither an atomic detonation nor an Armistice at the eleventh hour for our generation’s experience. Dudziak, again, provides useful insight on this matter: “In particular, we tend to assume that wartime is always followed by peacetime, and therefore that an essential aspect of wartime is that it is temporary” (4). Any expectation that the average American had about the GWOT fulfilling the established idea of a normal, limited temporality has slowly changed with the face of the conflict. Instead of shifting from the familiar wartime chronotope to war myth, the GWOT shifted to a *frustrated chronotope*. Without an end in sight, it is hard to plan for the future; without a recognized conclusion, it is hard to confront the past.

In this way, the GWOT is specifically a frustrated chronotope as opposed to a developing one. Imagine being on the landing craft headed towards Utah beach. Likely your fear is palpable, but there is a sense of futurity in the operation. Seizing the beachhead is one more step towards realizing the goal of liberating Europe and ending the Nazi threat. As that landing craft moves towards the beach, you also move towards an expected outcome; that is, if you survive and achieve mission success, the Allied war effort will be one overt step closer to its end goal: "There are two important consequences of this shift [into wartime]: first, we have entered a time that calls for extraordinary action, and second, we share a belief that this moment will end decisively, so that this shift is temporary" (Dudziak 22). The virtue of this defined reality is that a developing chronotope has a potentially telic result, and therefore it is a work in progress as opposed to a suspended experience. And, once complete, it will be examined as one of those neat, temporal packages, which we like to teach in American middle schools. But we have moved beyond that potentiality futurity regarding the GWOT, or at least that sort of possible resolution has moved beyond our ability to either visualize or comprehend it.

While Dudziak sorts through the temporal complexities surrounding war in general, her work also yields a great wealth of insight. She provides a detailed explanation and examination of what wartime is in relation to the legal ramifications and, more importantly for this paper, how we perceive it at a social level as Americans. She points out that time itself, not just wartime, is a social construct: "Just as clock time is based on a set of ideas produced not by clocks, but by the people who use them, wartime is also a set of ideas derived from social life, not from anything inevitable about war itself" (21). What she means is that our collective temporal concept — the expectation that war is simply a commercial break in the peaceful prime time programming of life — is actually a projection onto events as they occur rather than anything related to the actual nature of a conflict. In other words, war is what we make of it.

Another critical perception of wartime is its temporal boundedness, which is the notion that war follows a typical event structure with defined beginning, middle, and endpoints (Dudziak 7). This perception yields two specific products. First, it creates the expectation of neatness in the conduct of a current war or the study of a past one. Each separate war is its own experience, its own nice little chronotope, packaged for academic consumption. Second, as a neat temporal snippet, it provides those easily chronicled before and after historical eras, which also can be conveniently categorized (3). There is the programming preceding the *and now for a word from our sponsors* moment, and after the war is finished, we can resume the regularly scheduled historical program. A second-order effect of the two previous ideas is the belief that wartime permits drastic actions because of its temporary nature: "Once we enter it we expect the rules to change. Some burdens are more tolerable because we think of war as important and exceptional, and also because, by definition, wartime comes to an end" (Dudziak 15). Wartime then, as we commonly perceive it, is a neatly defined and temporary interruption in our lives that justifies extraordinary actions and powers.

As she expands her ideas, we find that Dudziak is not alone in her thinking. After she articulates the cultural perceptions and expectations of wartime, Dudziak demonstrates that those perceptions are incorrect, and that wartime is actually the normal state as opposed to being the temporal interruption. This is where there is significant overlap between her work and Hynes' idea of the war myth, which describes the public's engagement with established wartime chronotopes: "By myth I don't mean a fabrication or fiction; I mean rather the simplified narrative that evolves from a war through which it is given meaning: a Good War, a Bad War, a Necessary War. Myths seem to be socially necessary, as judgments or justifications of the terrible costs of war" (Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale* xii). Dudziak's argument addresses the war myth by focusing on the legalities of conducting war — things like formal, legal declarations of war, emergency powers, and the reach of military authority. She argues that the legal trappings of war generally exceed the publicly recognized start and endpoints of a war, a view to which Hynes' words provide further clarity: "All wars have antecedent causes, no war begins with the first shot" (181). In this regard, the neat chronotopes that we generate via our war myths are, at best, mean simplifications of complex chains of events.

The war myth has another effect: it causes social blindness in regards to current events and amnesia in regards to past wars. Dudziak points out that, through the Twentieth and Twenty-first-centuries, America — the government — has been operating as if it were continuously at war, whether it be from a legal perspective or actually deploying troops for operations around the world. The problem, as she sees it, is that "in American memory, the nation's wars are large scale battles against evil, and not small wars in pursuit of less grand ambitions" (32). An important part of the war myth, then, is that it lends a sense of romance to events. As a result, the general public discounts smaller conflicts, ignoring the resulting legal ramifications on the home front and the dangers the soldiers face in foreign lands. Raymond Haberski, in his study of American Civil Religion, argues that this simplification of, or blindness to, fact happens because "we cannot live without myths and the symbols that represent them." He also notes, however, that our collective mythologies enact social bonding, meaning that "we cannot function as a people without a way to talk about, believe in, and yes, critique those myths" (254). While Americans have no trouble believing our myths, we often have trouble critiquing them.

Unlike our past wars, where memory is the vehicle for cognition, living through a protracted war in the present creates other perceptual problems. In her final chapter, Dudziak specifically unpacks a pull between public war mythology and the other considerations surrounding the GWOT. Similar to many other scholars, she notes that, as far back as 2012, the conflict seemed to be perpetual: "We find ourselves in an era in which wartime—the war on terror—seems to have no endpoint" (40). Her words help define a significant factor in understanding the GWOT as a frustrated chronotope. War *should* be temporary. According to the myth, it should end; the people should be able to visualize that end. The problem is that neither the military nor the population can see the end in the case of the GWOT. Dudziak then points out a resulting split of experience between the conflict's participants and the shielded civilian population. This divergence is another result of the frustrated GWOT chronotope. She writes that "as the [GWOT] era pressed on, Americans turned their focus to their daily lives, even as American troops continued to patrol dangerous territory in Afghanistan and Iraq, and as American unmanned war planes bombed targets in Pakistan" (119). Simply said, there are two sides to this American coin — one that still lives with the reality of the war as participants, and the other that has slowly let it slip away from their conscious thought. Ironically, both sides are struggling with the indeterminate temporality of the era in which they live. Both sides of the coin are frustrated because, nearly two decades later, we should have to look *back* to see the GWOT, not around us, and certainly not ahead. The fact of the matter is, however, that "now we find ourselves in an era when American political leaders announce an end to hostilities—'mission accomplished'—but the war continues" (Dudziak 16). The war goes on. Civilians ignore it, if they can; the military fights it, as they can. But it still affects us all.

Though Dudziak's work is beautifully executed and is vital to this paper, there are still points of departure between her argument and mine. She focuses on demonstrating that our perceptions of wartime are the inverse of reality — that wartime and the implications *are* the regularly scheduled programming, not the commercial interruption. This paper, however, examines the implications and consequences of applying a war mythology to the GWOT. Both of us are reacting to the same wide-reaching social construct; Dudziak simply refutes it where I analyze the effects that stem from it. Though a refutation of an unjustified social principle is important, it is also necessary to parse the effects produced by said incorrect principle, especially as war myths are still active constructs in society.

War myths are not bad in and of themselves; they are not even, as Hynes noted, necessarily false, just simplified. They are the means by which society judges its nation's actions and determines public and private significance. It is the completeness of the war myth chronotope that allows judgment, both personal and collective. The nice thing about the war myth is its clean form: "A war as a whole will be an action in Aristotle's sense –it will have a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale* 101). Form, especially in literary criticism, is important because it gives the analyst something familiar to dissect. Endings are particularly practical because "endings impose meanings on narratives" (93). At the end of everything, we can ask simple questions: Did we win? Was the cause truly just? Was it worth the cost? How we answer these, the yesses and the nos, will shape how we perceive the war. Simple questions are easy to answer, and they produce simple narratives — simple myths. We remember the Second World War kindly because, when we distill it down, we can answer these questions in favor of our biases: "It [WW II] was moral at the beginning and moral at the end" (96). The war is neatly concluded, the questions of remembrances are positive, so everything is good and we move on to the next war. The simple and affirmative moral conclusion allows society en masse and individual persons to apply positive remembrances to the war; this is how the war myth functions. But it takes time and distance from a completed action in order to process it fully on any level. The GWOT is still in process; with no path to resolution, there can be no cognitive closure, ergo no war myth.

4. Building a Personal Chronotope

The connection between viewing war either through the lens of the chronotope or the war myth is that they are both methods of cognitive processing. These two frameworks, separate or in unison, enable an understanding of historical events, not only through packaged dates but also as communal guiding points of reference. Anniversaries, as points of reference, serve as a common language that connects the individual to society: “Each celebration of, say, July 4, serves to reinforce the memory of the events that led to American independence [...] Periodic celebrations serve as focal points in the drama of reenacted citizen participation” (introduction, *On Collective Memory* 23-4). Anniversaries, then, are *social* chronotopic reference points.

Particularly with events in living memory, personal experiences overlap and social distance closes when human beings relate their perceptions to a common event. Martin notes: “The translation of memory across *space and time* is a central feature of both the rituals of everyday life and to the exceptional moments of remembrances associated with tragic events and untimely deaths” (13; emphasis added). For example, the question *where were you when the first airplane struck the tower* connects a person’s location (place) to 9/11 (a moment in time). The question, in essence, expands the personal chronotopes for both parties via social engagement. In this case, the person asking the question has the event in their own living memory, but it also works if someone was born too late to have shared the experience, which is now the case for all the children of America in regards to 9/11. Those too young to hold their own memories borrow from the chronotope’s public living memory to form their relation to history. This makes living memory powerful. It creates a chronotope, it creates the mythology.

Because the nature of military life necessitates a highly varied experience with place over a short period of time in service, service members often rely on the chronotope as a method of social connection. This especially occurs when there is an overlap in place through such locations as duty stations, training events, military schools, and deployment Areas of Operations (AO). The U.S. Army, in particular, has several visual signifiers, unit patches/crests and service ribbons, that denote location and serve as prompts for such questions as *where/when were you in Afghanistan* or *when were you at this base* or *with this unit*. A good example of this is the instance when I wore my unit hat to the store and the gentleman in front of me in the checkout line asked when I was with 1-67 AR. I had been in that unit for two years fairly recently (2017-19). He was with them in 2003 for the invasion of Iraq. The unit's home base is in El Paso, Texas; the conversation took place in Nashville, Tennessee. This interaction demonstrates that the exchange of time and place in personal memory actually builds a wide-reaching, cultural crossover that enables an integrated and wide-scale chronotope — a chronotope in six degrees of separation.

War, specifically the GWOT, provides an opportunity for the expansion of cultural experience via the expansion of the chronotope to include all participants on either side of a conflict. Any number of combatants can identify across cultural borders by use of the same type of interaction. Ackerman, in his memoir, recounts a conversation he had with a former member of Al Qaeda who was operating in Iraq in the same timeframe as Ackerman's several deployments. This conversation took place in a town on the border of Turkey and Syria, in the lull between the Syrian Revolution and the rise of ISIS in the region. The former Al Qaeda fighter, Abu Hassar, was once an insurgent, once an enemy prisoner of war, and, during the conversation with Ackerman, a refugee. It was a conversation, necessitating an interpreter, in which two fighters from opposing sides of a war attempted to define their relationship to each other, even as the war they both fought in persisted and evolved. The important scene comes when Ackerman, to break through the language barrier in the momentary absence of the interpreter, draws a map of Iraq and denotes his personal chronotope by placing the locations and dates of his deployments. Hassar likewise shares: “Our hands now chase each other’s around the map, mimicking the way we once chased each other around this country. *Haditha*: 07.2004/ 02.2005. *Hit*: 10.2004/11.2006. On it goes. Only the dates and the names matter. These are the common language to us” (27). The war chronotope is powerful enough to supersede not only the linguistic gulf but also — in this case — the animosity of old enemies. Ackerman and Hassar can speak without hostility because they understand each other’s past experiences.

Though Ackerman’s interaction with Hassar has the gratification of providing perspective in the same way sharing a personal 9/11 chronotope does, it also serves as an example of how *war as a chronotope* (wartime) has a defining quality over longer periods. Sharing the living memory of the attacks or similar inciting experiences is only a chronotope’s beginning. Holistically understanding something as complex as a war, even a small part of a war, requires a log of entries, not just one moment. That being the case, Ackerman and Hassar create the necessary artifact between them: “The log we make on those two notebook pages contains the truth of our experience” (27). The reality of war, then, is that it necessitates a more expansive chronotopic outlook than a single anniversary. Ackerman and Hassar layout the entire span of their places and times within Iraq. It takes the totality of their knowledge combined for each of them to learn that, though there was much overlap in place between the two of them, there was no overlap in time. This realization gives relief to Ackerman, and, as far as he can tell, to Hassar as well. Needless to say, the rest of the interview would have been very tense if their chart had shown that they shared an intimately hostile chronotope — that is to say, if they had actually been in direct opposition on the battlefield. But since they fully express their chronotopes and, as a result, confirm that they never were directly at odds, they can proceed amicably.

If Ackerman and Hassar's first meeting is an example of the chronotope successfully bridging perspectives, their second meeting exemplifies how the frustrated chronotope can negatively play into social interactions. The many superficial differences between the two scenes — location, social environment, even clothing — augment the distinction in the discussions. Previously, they had focused on the past; their completed personal chronotopes that they both had left behind. This allowed them to achieve a shared understanding. Additionally, Hassar's appearance (traditional Arab dress) and the location (a third world desert village) imbued their first conversation with a familiar sense of their former lives as fighters in Iraq. The latter discussion, however, is brought entirely into the memoir's present moment, which was the height of the Syrian Refugee crisis. The location is a modern city and Ackerman is speaking to a Hassar who has modernized his appearance to fit the setting, though he still maintains his traditional beliefs. The focus similarly shifts from past, completed experiences to the complex evolution of the GWOT unfolding around them at the time. Over the course of the conversation, the conflict and international politics become entangled with ideological and religious opinions. Hassar repeats Ackerman's move from their first meeting and draws another map, but this time the result is dissonance between him and Ackerman.

This new map was of the entire Middle East region, not just Iraq. In this sense, the conversation has, like GWOT itself, overflowed the prescribed spatial boundaries of the conflict, and become embedded in global complexities. There is a point of tension that reflects this when Ackerman attempts to place Israel on the map, to which Hassar corrects with "Palestine," verbally and in ink (175). The second map is not meant to be a bridge like the first, which had the bounded and neat effect of a normal wartime chronotope. The new map's purpose was to illuminate further complexities in the conflict. It not only outgrows the physical boundaries of their previous discussion but also the temporal markers. In the conflagration of politics, current events, and religion, Hassar extends the GWOT chronotope into the realm of prophecy: "In Dabiq the armies of the West will fight the Islamic armies of East in a great end-of-days battle. Our armies will be led by the Mahdi. And God will make his judgment" (175). Though Hassar defines place, his "end-of-days" mindset is indicative of the indeterminable temporal quality of the frustrated chronotope. Hassar cannot say when this battle will occur; he simply plans to endure and then to fight when the time comes.

The effect of the frustrated chronotope appears again at the end of the chapter. I have to say the end of the chapter and not of the conversation because, unlike the first meeting to which we are shown a satisfying conclusion, the second meeting morphs into incomprehensibility and fades from the text's conscious surface without resolution: "All their political arguments, their arguments about the war, about religion, slowly blend together. And then, like a thousand discords ascending into a single keynote, they merge" (183). Separated from the events of their previous lifestyles, Ackerman and Hassar can empathize when they first meet, even though they have contrasting opinions and were once enemies. A clearly defined past permits such a relationship. When, in the second meeting, the conversation moves into the frustrated realm of their present, they can no longer empathize when speaking of the war. Ackerman records while Hassar prophesies, and their words degrade in the text to mumbled, meaningless units of sound. And because there is no possible resolution, Ackerman closes the curtain on the scene and moves on with his story, no better off for having tried once again to gain a measure of peace.

5. The Frustration of False Summits

There is a trail that starts at the base of the Rocky Mountains on the backside of a small town, Manitou Springs, Colorado. It is called "The Incline." It is a short trail, technically less than a mile long. The catch is that throughout that less than a mile, it ascends nearly 2,000 feet, a climb consisting of a straight line of 2,744 steps made from railroad ties. The average grade is about a 45-degree slope, which at certain points increases to almost 70 degrees. Gut check.

In addition, The Incline plays a cruel trick on the unsuspecting hiker. There is a rise in the trail about two-thirds of the way up. Five minutes after starting, when you look up you see the rise, not the actual summit. So you orient on that rise, the false summit, and you climb, and you sweat, and you gasp — the base of the trail is about 7,000 feet altitude — and you climb higher. Step up, step up again and you see that you are almost at the top. You desperately want the hike to be done. You are in pain, and then you see it; the real summit starts to rise above the false one. And you are defeated. Fortunately, for the faint of heart, there is a bailout trial at the false summit that forks back down the mountain. Everyone else keeps climbing, keeps climbing, keeps climbing…climbing.

If you have ever hiked The Incline,[6] you know exactly how a frustrated chronotope feels and functions. It is more than the standard impatience of something that takes a long time. It is the confusion and anger and loss of heart that results from focusing on what should have been the glorious end and then finding out that what you were striving towards with all that time and effort was not, in fact, the goal. That first time up The Incline can mess with you psychologically, emotionally, and physically. But if you can keep on for just about twenty more minutes, you will actually be done. This is the point where the comparison between The Incline and the frustrated chronotope falls apart. The Incline only has one false summit to literally get over, and even if you do not know about said speed bump, you still can know the exact details of the rest of the hike before you pass the trailhead. The experience is also one that you can repeat at your leisure and build familiarity with. You can even come to enjoy it in time, or at least be prepared to *embrace the suck.*[7] September 11th was a new trailhead for us as a Nation. We started to climb with a fresh set of legs, a fist full of dollars, and copious amounts of national pride and moral indignation. But there have been many false summits along the way, and we still cannot see the end. The effects have manifested themselves in many ways, personal and social. Some are still climbing, some have opted to take the bailout; all are frustrated.

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[6] The Incline is a fairly well-known trail in Army circles because it is near Fort Carson in Colorado Springs. It is well known in the state of Colorado, and people will drive hours to suffer at its behest. A hiker can actually climb for about another 6.5 hours and another 5,000 ft. after they complete The Incline to get to the summit of Pike's Peak (14,115 ft. altitude).

Ackerman's memoir contains a particularly significant false summit. There are several in his text if you are willing to tease them out, but there is a glaring one, which ruptures his attempt in concluding both a personal and social chronotope for the fighting in Iraq. He first inserts himself in the larger GWOT chronotope by defining his personal point of entry, a photo of him being commissioned as an officer in the Marines in 2003 (97). From this point, his personal chronotope aligns with the GWOT chronotope. He even cites particular events to solidify the temporal relationship to the reader: "The photo was taken about three weeks after President Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech" (97). Did you catch the false summit there? At this point, he is a full participant, and his life is defined by deployments and events until he leaves the Marines. But even when he leaves the service, when he exits the larger GWOT chronotope, he does not get the benefit of resolution, as the conflict continues and even evolves. He watches and tries to make sense of the larger scenario when ISIS comes to power and sweeps into Iraq between 2013 and 2014. The U.S, who had withdrawn from Iraq (false summit number two in this paragraph alone) in 2010 to focus on Afghanistan, does not re-invade but is forced to commit air power and Special Operations Forces (SOF) to help a battered Iraqi government and defeated Iraqi military. The power vacuum created by the Coalition withdrawal invited many regional players to participate in the fight against ISIS. For this, Ackerman has a second picture, one from the beginning of multinational combat response to the ISIS occupation of Iraq in 2014.[8] He pairs this second photo with the first to close out the chronotope of Iraq. That picture was of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, outside the Iraqi town of Amirli where Soleimani's Shiite militias had just won a significant victory.

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[7] Popular military slang for stoically bearing hardships

What is powerful in both photos is that they each represent meaningful points of time and place. The picture of his 2003 commissioning on the deck of the *USS Constitution* in Boston is Ackerman's starting point, while Soleimani's smile on the outskirts of Amirli in 2014 seemingly closes out the period of turmoil and foreign influence in Iraq. Ackerman uses these two temporal markers to provide the closure needed for reminiscence via the construction of the war myth:

> I have often felt the urge, looking at the picture of the two of us from 2003, to pair it with the other one [Soleimani], as if to bookend the war and that period of my life. If, during this time when wars seem to lack a defined end, I could not have a

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[8] Wilson Center's "Timeline: The Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State." provides general details from ISIS's inception to defeat as a conventional force. 15 October 2014 is when the Department of Defense officially christens the campaign against ISIS "Operation Inherent Resolve."

> Lee at Appomattox or a surrender on the deck of a battleship,[9] perhaps I might make a separate peace. (98-99)

Ackerman's sentiment beautifully illustrates the details of the frustrated GWOT chronotope. He feels the "urge" to gain some semblance of resolution both on a personal and on a social level. Since he is tied to the GWOT, he must mentally close out the conflict to gain such resolution. He even recognizes that he is not going to have the benefit of a clean war myth to work with, at least not in his life. As a result, he tries to build his own: "Given that wars are no longer punctuated by clear declarations of victory or defeat, the photo [of Soleimani] seems an appropriate bookend, concluding one memory of Iraq so that another can begin" (100). He seeks a conclusion for himself and for Iraq so that both he and the country can move forward, as a resolved war chronotope traditionally allows. However, after publishing his book, Ackerman's false summit broke his plane of view on January 2, 2020. Amid growing tensions in Iraq stemming from Iranian influence, Soleimani was killed in a U.S. drone strike outside of Iraq's International Airport in Baghdad (CBS News.com). Ackerman had found his resolution in the photo from 2014. Based on the understanding he gains from his resolution, he writes his memoir. He publishes it in 2019, only to have whatever peace he drew from its composition corrupted by one night's events. What Soleimani's death shows us is that the future of Iraq is still in question, and while that question remains unanswered, writing a memoir is an almost fruitless task, as Ackerman's memory of Iraq is still ongoing.

Because of the complexity and the endurance of the conflict, Ackerman is not isolated in his experience of false summits. It starts from the significant amount of thought that goes into how to conduct, and subsequently end, the war. Both main theaters, Iraq and Afghanistan, have gone through several distinct phases in regards to how U.S. policy changes the experience. There have been invasions, occupations, surges, COIN phases, advising focuses, drawdowns, withdraws, returns, and now even a peace deal with the Taliban. The politics of the GWOT lend to the confusion as well: "Since 9/11, war has been framed in a boundless way, extending anywhere in the world that the specter of terrorism resides, even as some of the country's political leaders — on the left and right — denounce its seeming endlessness" (Dudziak 5). These redefinitions and variances in strategic approaches make a war myth almost impossible to establish, even if the GWOT were to somehow be resolved in the near future. That being the case, it is nearly impossible for any participant to even know what is actually going on in the present moment, much less have any plan for the future or any chance of remembrance. Every new phase in the GWOT is a response to an old false summit, and most likely the next false summit in our path.

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[9] September 2, 1945: The Japanese surrender on the deck of the *USS Missouri* to formally end WW II.

6. The Problem with the Public Chronotope

What happens, though, if you do not know, or more accurately forget, what is going on around you? What do false summits look like then? That is to say that the GWOT, through the effects of its frustrated chronotope, has manifested itself differently with the American civilian population. Dudziak observes: "As war goes on, Americans have lapsed into a new kind of peacetime. It is not a time without war, but instead a time in which war does not bother everyday Americans" (135). Far from evolving, as it did for its participants, the GWOT simply faded into the collective American subconscious over time. The anger, the national pride, the unity, the patriotic vigor, the tsunami of affect that originated from September 11th eventually dissipated, but the conflict still went on. So, in a sense, the populace suffered from the same lack of resolution that the participants did, but with less superficially drastic consequences. As a result, false summits occur more as interruptions in the daily lives of Americans; like a venereal rash that resurfaces every so often, inconveniently reminding the host body of its past poor decisions.

As Ackerman does not deal with the interruptive nature of GWOT from the civilian perspective, I must turn to other sources for examples. One such incident, as Dudziak notes, was the death of our generation's boogieman: "For a moment in spring 2011, Americans were jolted to attention with the news that Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks, was killed by Navy Seals in a compound in Pakistan" (119). This news struck in the same sudden and unexpected way that the 9/11 attackers had. Americans had simply adjusted to the war — as we were adjusted to peace beforehand — when we were shocked by unexpected events. A traditional war myth would have ended there, but the problem with the GWOT is that it is not your traditional war; it continues to interrupt the public. 2017 had another such moment of public discomfort, and even outcry, after the U.S. Air Force made news for dropping its largest conventional munition, the M.O.A.B.,[10] in Afghanistan (Cooper, *New York Times*). The military satirical website Duffelblog.com actually perfectly illustrated the absurdity of this facet of the frustrated chronotope with an article titled, "American public learns we're still fighting in Afghanistan after Pentagon drops huge bomb there."[11] But after the moment of public outcry was over, we again forgot about the war. This indicates that the frustration manifests itself as cognitive dissonance in the minds of the public. After all, how could there be a justification for utilizing the most powerful sub-nuclear bomb we have on an area where major combat operations were supposed to have ended three years prior? Additionally, in the wake of Soleimani's 2020 killing, there even briefly loomed the specter of a third world war. More than a year later, Iraq is still in shambles and the tension with Iran remains. Unfortunately, interruptions like these are generally how the public has perceived, and still does perceive the war.

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[10] The "Mother Of All Bombs" officially named the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast

[11] "According to defense officials, the bombing was yet another blunder for the Pentagon, since news of it dashed hopes that most people outside of the military wouldn't ask too many questions or even think of the longest war in American history" (Sharp, Duffelblog.com).

Though, in a weird twist, the general populace has actually developed a pattern of living in which these sorts of temporal anomalies, the random incursions of the ongoing global conflict, do not have such a shocking effect as it once did. In the age of mass media, time has sped up even as our cultural perception of it has slowed down. We are no longer attuned to prolonged events, we are attuned to moments. Things like videos and memes go viral and then are forgotten for the next new thing in the same way that interrupting headlines burst onto our social media feeds and then we keep scrolling. Think for a minute on how everyone perceived the GWOT's inciting event: "For several weeks after September 11, we saw and re-saw films of the planes crashing into the buildings, the smoke, the devastation" (Torgovnick 17). In a strange foreshadowing of today's technological reality, this moment in time was looped into our memories in the way that we now process seeing a GIF online. The GWOT's false summits do not impose the same dread on civilians as on its participants because of the way American society receives information of all sorts, cathartically reacts to it, and then moves on. The funny result of this is that the GWOT chronotope is frustrated for civilians in the opposite extreme that it is for the participants. The latter experience the GWOT's indeterminable temporality, and each false summit is a reminder that there is no end in sight. On the other hand, the former perceive the GWOT in temporal snippets. Those snippets cut the conflict into bite-sized portions that give the illusion of a completed chronotope so that people are surprised when another one pops up.

7. The AAR[12]

How a person or a group conceptualizes a problem is indicative of the methodologies that they will take to solve it. We cannot continue thinking about this war in the same way that we have thought about our wars of recent history. The military has had to relearn this bloody lesson many times over. Though time and terrain — essentially time and space, as I was taught — will, for the foreseeable future, remain important governing battlefield concepts, our wider understanding of wartime appears to be antiquated. Our war myths, with their cognitively convenient spatial and temporal delineations, do not, in our current moment, provide the value that they once did. But this problem is not limited to the battlefield; its effects have extended throughout the homefront, playing a defining part in things such as budgets, policies, elections, and lives. Participant and civilian alike continue to search the GWOT for what past wars provided — resolution, perspective, understanding, etc. — and they also look to move on from the experience. Bakhtin's concept provides a good model for the past, but looking at the circumstances of Ackerman's experience through the lens of Hynes and Dudziak shows that the GWOT cannot fit the common narrative. The frustrated chronotope — with its broken expectations, temporal and spatial disruption, suspended present and lack of either future or resolution — is really no chronotope at all. The chronotope was made for stories, and all stories have endings, good or bad as the case may be. We want to tell and hear the GWOT story, but it cannot, at this moment, be written. This may sound dramatic and defeatist, but part of what the frustrated chronotope might mean is that the GWOT may not have an ending, good or bad, in any way that we can perceive as such. And it hurts to keep expecting one.

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[12] The After Action Review (AAR) is the U.S. Army's methodology for discussing failure or success after any operation. If conducted to standard, an entity will have a collection of practices that it should sustain as well as those that need to be improved officially documented and available for reference during the next operation.

The complexity of the issue at hand extends way beyond what the construct of the chronotope can explain. If anything, the chronotope adds one more layer of confusion, while not doing anything to actually fix the situation. The reality is that we are experiencing a *new* reality and have been for the past twenty years; this paper just pointed out a way to perhaps better define and organize our perceptions about what is broken and why. As Dudziak says: "Our ideas about wartime clash with our experience of twenty-first-century war, revealing that a confusion about time obscures our understanding of contemporary war" (4). This brings us back full circle to the idea of controlling time and terrain as a function of military planning. How then can we possibly control that wild and unintelligible chronotope that is the Global War on Terrorism? How do we finish the story? How do we move on? How do we create a war myth? The better question, however, might be, *should we even want to*?

Maybe it is just a matter of accepting that we live in an era beyond the possibility of mythology. It might be the right time and right move to listen to Hynes and Dudziak when they say that "war is not the occasional interruption of a normality called peace; it is a climate in which we live," and, "war is not an exception to normal peacetime, but instead an enduring condition" (*The Soldier's Tale* xii; *War-Time* 5). This would mean thinking of the GWOT specifically, and maybe war in general, not as a neat box of events — no longer as a chronotope — but as the basis of reality. Just as the onset of the First World War saw the ideas of the imperial, romantic style of fighting die under a hail of machine-gun fire and clouds of mustard gas, it might again be time to change our foundational thoughts on the matter. The resolution to the frustrated chronotope could be the point, not when we employ a radical new weapon with devastating effect, but when we shed outdated spatio-temporal constructs of how we perceive our current conflict. But that could also be another false summit.

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