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Disturbing Movies: Narrative Security in Post-9/11 Documentary Film

In the past decade, American documentarians produced some of the most illuminating but disconcerting films exploring, among other things, issues of the Iraq war and its various socio-political ramifications, economic crisis and its reasons and implications. Such films as Alex Gibney's *Taxi to the Dark Side* and Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure*, for example, investigate in grueling detail instances of torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib; while films like Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story* and Leslie and Andrew Cockburn's *American Casino* look into consequences of economic meltdown for the American working class. Although dealing with different but equally difficult problems, what the films share, this part of our presentation will argue, is the aspiration for "narrative security": construction of a coherent narrative, explaining both institutional and personal motivations behind the disturbing instances of either military torture or financial machinations. Placing these examples within the context of recent documentary filmmaking, this paper will analyze how the filmmakers reconcile the disturbing and complex reality of the profilmic situations with the urge for narrative construction and closure.