FCJ-004 The Military-Entertainment Complex: A New Facet of Information Warfare

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> All by itself, a Go piece can destroy an entire constellation synchronically; a chess piece cannot… Chess is indeed a war but an institutionalized, regulated, coded war… Go is war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy, whereas Chess is a semiology. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 353)

A revolution in military affairs (RMA) has taken place in the US since the first Gulf War as the data-processing power of the computer has been applied not only to the strategic complexities that had prompted the development of the computer in the first place but, now, to the systematic operations of small units and individuals. The ability to micro-manage the organisation of logistics has raised the possibility of micro-managing the organization of information to target particular audiences among both the enemy and one's own populations to produce close control of the media agenda. This process rests on the technologies and techniques that elide reality and simulation and mirror similar trends apparent in late capitalism's embrace of the globilisation project. The RMA may also be seen as the US military-corporate-political response to the post-Cold War spread of fundamentalisms (both Islamic and Christian) and even as a means to police the emerging US Empire.

A number of authors have documented the rise of the information terrain as a major field of military endeavour. Greg Rattray considers the United States development of strategic information warfare in the '90s and finds many similarities with their development of strategic air power in the '20s, '30s and '40s (2001). Dorothy Denning argues for a view of information warfare based in the available countermeasures to economic threats such as computer break-ins, fraud, sabotage, espionage, piracy, identity theft and invasions of privacy (Denning, 1999). In a similar vein John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, working for the Rand Corporation contract from the Office of the US Secretary of Defense, suggest the rise of netwar in the work of transnational criminal networks, gangs, hooligans, and anarchists while they spend a lot of time analysing the role of the internet in promoting democracy in Burma and Mexico (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001). Again Andy Jones, Gerald Kovacich and Perry Luzwick approach information warfare from the point of view of the CEO looking for competitive advantage (2002). In contrast, Gerard Stocker and Christine Schopf draw together a range of views, offered at the Ars Electronica Festival '98 Symposium, critical of the intrusive and manipulative practices of the military establishment (Stocker and Schopf, 1998). James Der Derian's map of the emerging military-industrial-media-entertainment complex hints at the new connections emerging as the US military co-opts advances in games technology developed by the entertainment industry (Der Derian, 2002).

But the recent war in Iraq extended the information war concept into new territory. It was different to previous wars in one major way: this war was waged as entertainment. It is not that the sight of a pathetically armed and disorganised rabble being blasted to oblivion by a massively armed military machine is in itself entertaining, though the ratings were not bad. Rather the US war machine has learnt much from the entertainment industry and is now pursuing battle plans that treat the "enemy" as the audience. This is what shock and awe is all about – give them a big production number and their hearts and minds will follow.

The entertainment paradigm is used not only to wage war against the Iraqis but also to manage the home front. The words of one senior White House official sums up the approach: 'Boom, boom, we're going in hard and fast,' the official said. 'By this time next week, sit by your TV and get ready to watch the fireworks' (Coorey and Schlink, 2003). War as entertainment even played a role in focusing the efforts of US troops. As Vice-Admiral Timothy Keating told a massed meeting of US personnel just before the war: 'Make no mistake, when the president says go, look out, it's hammer time' (Roberts, 2003). This a direct reference to the stylings of rap musician, MC Hammer. But the enemy is not always in on the act. The US has forgotten the power of the active audience so that Lt. General William S. Wallace was left to complain: 'The enemy we're fighting is a bit different to the one we war-gamed against…'. [1]

Former US President Eisenhower warned in 1961 of the power of the Military Industrial Complex shortly before that confection of influence peddling, political opportunism and inter-locking

commercial interests led the US into Vietnam. Now there is a new force in the land, the military-entertainment complex evident in the close co-operation – and sharing – of ideas and resources: between computer games producers and the military, particularly on pre-training prospective candidates for the US armed forces; between Hollywood producers and the US government on language and concepts post September 11, 2001; and between the military's propaganda machine and the entertainment industry's thirst for manufactured and timely "reality" that precludes the possibility of the critical representation of the real.

8 The flexibility of the military-entertainment complex is evident in the interchange of personnel between both wings, from military to entertainment (Coffee, 1995 : 30; Pollack, 1997: 1) or a virtual-reality expert from Disney's Imagineering group joining the National Security Agency (Peter Huck, 2003). In the carefully plotted production of the second Gulf War, it seems that the military has turned to the entertainment industry to respond to Baudrilliard's critique of the first Gulf War:

9 > …the war, along with the fake and presumptive warriors, generals, experts and television presenters… watches itself in a mirror: am I pretty enough, am I operational enough, am I spectacular enough, am I sophisticated enough to make an entry onto the historical stage? … this uncertainty invades our screens like a real oil slick, in the image of that blind sea bird stranded on a beach in the Gulf, which will remain the symbol-image of what we all are in front of our screens, in front of that sticky and unintelligible event. (Baudrilliard, 1995: 31)

10 From the attention-grabbing intro of fireworks over Baghdad, through the chase scenes of tanks racing across the desert, with the sub-plot of Saving Private Jessica to the toppling of Saddam's statue, this time the story was seamless. Each moment designed for prime time, each plot point subtly inter-woven into one unstoppable meta-narrative. Resistance is futile, you can't stop the music. At least until the President declares the war is over and the real war begins between an occupying army and a fanatical guerrilla opposition indistinguishable from the population. It took about six months to move the full circle. The simulations that began as theories about reality for planning and training purposes took on the form of reality in the heat of battle only to be revealed to be inaccurate as either reality or simulation in the harsh light of peace. Private Jessica's own disavowal of the military's mythology is a case in point: the military continues to claim she was raped while Jessica denies it.

11 The military uses of entertainment and entertainment's uses of the military have a long history that precedes their well-orchestrated double act in the recent troubles. It is useful to consider how their purposes came to be so closely integrated, not only to appreciate the actual course of recent history (as opposed to the big concept story lines of good vs. evil that occupy the front pages and TV news breaks). But also to understand the possibilities for countering the growing power of the military-entertainment complex.

A Quick and Dirty Pre-History

12 The military have always found a use for entertainment. Recruiting songs and marching songs prepared the soldier's mind to over-ride the self-preservation mechanism in the heat of battle. Propaganda has always been best served as entertainment. Goebbels knew that '…to be perceived, propaganda must evoke the interest of the audience' and movies made under his control worked within existing genres, particularly the musical, to spread the Nazi message (Doob, 1954: 513). He is reported in the documentary We Have Ways of Making You Think to have told one producer: 'Don't come to me with political films'. Goebbels conceived propaganda as the production of a total world-view inculcated subtly into the populace to produce responses that matched the requirements of the regime. Casablanca worked on a similar plane for the United States, using the conventions of the thriller and romance to make its anti-isolationist point, teaching its audience how to achieve both the sublimation and realisation of romantic love via commitment to the war effort (Mayer, 1982).

13 During the Second World War, the United States systematised relations with Hollywood. So as not to disrupt studio shooting schedules, stars were enlisted into the armed forces part-time without the expectation of fighting but rather to service the publicity requirements of recruitment and war bond drives. United Services Organization (USO) shows featured Hollywood stars like Bob Hope to provide entertainment to battle-weary troops and the Department of Defense gave Hollywood many story lines and the logistical support to make them into films. The military also used the

entertainment industry's radio broadcast and marketing expertise in psychological operations (PSYOPS) to build support for the Allied war effort behind enemy lines.

14 The Cold War space race provided the impetus for the military and entertainment industry to work more closely as their technologies merged with the introduction of geo-stationary satellites. Suddenly they were in the same business: information management. The military saw a satellite system as a crucial element in its global reconnaissance and command system. Satellites also gave the military the opportunity to gather signals intelligence (SIGINT) including radio and television signals from anywhere in the world. At the same time telecommunications and the burgeoning television industries saw opportunities to build an international network for gathering and distributing content. Separate satellite networks had the potential to be disrupted by attack on just one satellite, so in March 1964 President Johnson approved the procurement of satellite communication services under National Security Action Memorandum 252. This required the Secretary of Defense to enter into business arrangements with the "quasi-private" Communication Satellite Corporation to provide half of the cost for two 18-piece independent satellite systems capable of world-wide traffic even after attack. The remaining funding for the project came from the formation of Intelsat, an international communications consortium. [2]

15 The military origins of the computer and the internet are well-documented. Hinsley and Stripp discuss the origins of the computer in World War II cryptography, particularly that carried out at Blenchley Park as the Allies cracked the German's Enigma coding machine (1993). The Internet grew from work done by the Pentagon-funded Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) during the Cold War that developed protocols allowing networked computers to send small packets of data to one another (Lister, 2003, 165). The US establishment saw their failures in the Vietnam War of the 1960s and '70s to result from a lack of communication between themselves and the US population. The military control of information had been disrupted by independent journalists using light-weight equipment to get stories onto the evening news that varied graphically from the official story. By the first Gulf War, the military had re-exerted control so effectively that journalists were physically constrained from approaching the front lines and had no option but to cover the prepared story. This produced a high level of dissent from journalists but more significantly their stories lacked the cohesion required to carry the people with them, as was evident in the first George Bush's subsequent defeat. To counter this effect, the United States sought to engineer a revolution in military affairs (RMA) that applied the revolution in information technology to military purposes. This sought to leverage the massive increases in distributed computational power not only to solve the problems of the battlefield but also to manage the psychology of both enemy and one's own population. In the first instance this saw the development of a technology management strategy that utilised commercial multimedia solutions for military purposes. [3]

16 In 1997, the National Research Council (NRC) developed a joint research agenda for defense and entertainment, particularly in the modeling and simulation areas where common problems and synergies were apparent in the development of immersion technologies, networked simulations, interoperability, computer-generated characters and tools for creating simulated environments. In the entertainment industry, such technology lies at the heart of video games, theme park attractions and entertainment centres, and special effects for film production. For the Department of Defense, modeling and simulation technology provides a low-cost means of conducting joint training exercises, evaluating new doctrine and tactics, and studying the effectiveness of new weapons systems. [4] While defense and entertainment had historically opposed cultures, the 1990s saw the emergence of common economic interests based around the sharing of opportunities produced by the rapid pace of technological development. Some argue that tremendous technological innovation and growth in the entertainment industry offer a strategic advantage to the military that it misses at its own peril (Capps, McDowell and Zyda, 2001: 37-43). In return, the entertainment industry integrates its interests more closely with those of the United States government which has now set out to create a "free trade" in cultural products that will effectively secure a US entertainment hegemony throughout the world producing "captive" audiences.

War Games

In the mid-90s, in a bid to streamline government defense spending, there was a conscious decision by the U.S. military to move away from sub-contracting to outside interests for their development needs. Instead they began a campaign to bring skilled people into the forces to foster their own R&D culture and that had major implications for the relationship between the military and entertainment industries based particularly in their joint interest in games. The military are very familiar with the reality of simulation, particularly as games – they have been part of their training about strategy as long as commanders have coordinated groups of people for large-scale combat. As Michelle Barron notes:

> Games of all sorts – video games, board games, and games kids play in the backyard – have historically been about conflict and warfare. Whether you're playing Chess, which is a simulated battlefield, or a game like Go, an ancient Chinese game that is also a simulated battlefield, or you're playing a board game like Risk or Axis and Allies, you're essentially at war and you're playing out military conflict. The history continues with electronic games. (Barron, 2003)

Further Tim Lenoir and Henry Loward also point out that the:

> …notion of the war game as a simulation, as an imitation of combat by other means, preceded the use of computer-based models for encoding rules, data, and procedures. War games have taken many forms ranging from large-scale field exercises to abstract strategy games played with maps, counters or miniatures. (Lenoir and Loward, 2002)

In particular during the twentieth century, air crew training came to depend on the use of simulators that allowed pilots to practice flying without putting their lives, or more importantly, their expensive aircraft in danger. Flight simulators made a quick transition to the digital and many early computers shipped with games that gave the experience of flying. Lenoir and Loward track the development of the initially tenuous links between the computer simulation industry and the US military and the subsequent development of intimate connections between them (2002). These connections share an interest in computing technology that could deliver optimal performance, high reality simulations.

The military have been dabbling directly in the commercial computer game environment for less than a decade. In 1996, Marine Corps Commandant General Charles C. Krulak issued a directive suggesting that Marines use PC-based wargames to improve military thinking about the tactics and techniques of modern warfare (Lister, 2003). This led to the first concerted attempt at harnessing computer gaming technology and led to the military release of an add-on pack (a mod) for Id Software's Doom II. The mod is now readily available to download from the World Wide Web. You still need a copy of Doom II in order to use the mod, but once you have installed the modification the whole game changes into a real-life simulation where the monsters become terrorists and the locations become realistic (ID Software, 1997). In 2001 the US Military assembled a team of designers (under the name Rival Interactive) to create a real-time strategy combat game called Real War in the same vein as Command and Conquer. The purpose of Real War was to teach soldiers how to think like commanders (Lenoir and Loward, 2002).

Such moves, testing the waters of commercial technologies, planted the seeds for the eventual development of the Department of Defense funded computer game America's Army by the MOVES Institute, based at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. In a pre-design briefing, the creators expressed their goal for the project (which exists in two parts: Operations and Soldiers) as two-fold: 'We conceived America's Army: Soldiers as a realistic look at army personal and career opportunities via sophisticated role-playing… Our goal within America's Army:Operations was to demonstrate life in the infantry' (Lenoir and Loward, 2002).

In practice, the educational value of the project seems incidental to what America's Army: Operations actually is: a multiplayer first-person-shooter game. As anyone who has played any multi-user shooter game knows, when you get people in a death-match game it becomes a free-for-all where expert players race through and show off their immensely honed skills with the game interface by slaughtering other players. In a typical training scenario, America's Army will deploy the "team" of marines near the zone of engagement. The first thing the user learns when playing is that you can't afford to be flippant about things. One well-aimed shot to the avatar's vital zones and it's lights out. As the player's avatar expires, the corpse slumps to the ground (or is thrown forward like a crash-test-dummy, depending on the physics of the weapon causing digital demise).

Then for the remaining time that the skirmish plays out (until one side achieves the objective or a whole team is defeated), the user is detached from the game and becomes an "observer" who can change the camera view but otherwise cannot affect the game.

25 The elements of strategy and teamwork, and of gradually gaining experience and rewards for playing the game as often as you can (and very importantly: playing the game by the rules), creates an environment which frustrates the kind of player-killer approach most games have. There is no Deathmatch function per se (that is, every player against every other player), but that doesn't deter players from running amok and slaughtering anyone left standing. In fact one can find opposing players co-operating by letting themselves be shot so their friends could build up skill points and in the next turn their friends stand still while the player slaughters them for extra points in return. Hardly the sort of rule-bending the Army wants to encourage. Further, the game is at the bleeding-edge of graphics technology, with a crisp and clean take on reality that forgoes the cartoon feel of many games. Yet it is strangely sanitised, promoting violence and death, which involve no blood or thrashing about. The simulation loses touch with reality and the result for the user is quite surreal.

Hollywood and the Beverly Hills Summit

26 In November of 2001, top Hollywood executives, key players in the film and television industry including Jack Valenti, chairman of the Motion Picture Association of America, met with Bush Administration officials in Beverley Hills to discuss ways that the film and television industry could assist in the War Against Terror. White House strategist Karl Rove briefed the executives on the war effort, stressing that he had no intention of giving marching orders to Hollywood. 'The industry will decide what it will do and when it will do it', he said as he emerged from the Sunday morning meeting. Instead Rove explained the White House's seven-point message:

27 > ...that the war is against terrorism, not Islam; that Americans must be called to national service; that Americans should support the troops; that this is a global war that needs a global response; that this is a war against evil; that American children have to be reassured; and that instead of propaganda, the war effort needs a narrative that should be told, said a straight-faced Rove, with accuracy and honesty. (Cooper, 2001: 13)

28 Jack Valenti argued that there was no question of Hollywood turning to pro-war propaganda films; instead discussions centred around public service spots for TV and cinemas, documentaries on terrorism and homeland security, live shows for American troops featuring Hollywood stars and help spreading the American message abroad (Lyman, 2001). A patriotic, three-minute montage of movie clips, The Spirit of America, was duly shown in US cinemas (Huck, 2002).

29 This meeting merely formalised the status quo. Hollywood barely needs the White House's guidance in toeing the line as they do it not only instinctively but also with an eye to the patriotic bottom line. The rush to self-censorship in the aftermath of September 11 provides a useful case in point. Many film studios edited films (Spiderman) or postponed their release (Schwarzenegger's Collateral Damage) where it was thought they contained material that the audience might judge unpatriotic or too close to actual events (Townsend, 2002). At this point Hollywood abdicated its rights and responsibilities to pursue debate in a knee-jerk attempt to second guess the audience.

30 Of course, Hollywood cannot be treated as a monolithic ideological enterprise. Actors such as Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins led nation-wide resistance to the Iraq war. However, the historic relationship between the military and the entertainment industry has firm foundations in an economic-ideological trade that both sides find mutually beneficial: practical assistance from the military also assists the studios' budget bottom line and in return the military has special access to tamper with stories. Scenarios for overtly patriotic movies such as Top Gun, Pearl Harbor and Black Hawk Down are vetted by Pentagon officials before producers are given access to expensive weaponry to assist production. [5] Beyond these contractual obligations, the integrating power of American ideology is apparent: even an ostensibly anti-war movie like Apocalypse Now, which did not depend on the availability of US military hardware, turns into a celebration of the American spirit: 'I love the smell of Napalm in the morning' has been shorn of its irony to become a testament of faith among rednecks everywhere.

31 The Beverley Hills summit was significant because it did formalise the relationships and expectations on which the propaganda facets of the military-entertainment complex rely. While industry and government both purport to disavow propaganda, the government is clear in its

expectations of media (to define evil, to rally the populace behind the military and to create sympathetic narratives) and the industry is clear in its contributions (public service announcements, documentaries and the allegiance of its stars demonstrated via shows for the troops).

32 Another activity of the entertainment industry that is useful to the military is the constant testing and trading of story-lines that precedes the production of movies and games. This hot-housing of scenarios, particularly outside regular security and intelligence channels, provides valuable input into the analysis of potential threats and tactics. To work most effectively, the game theory models employed by US strategists include the full gamut of possible moves and while the disciplined thinkers of the National Security Advisors office are good at manipulating the data, they need the creative input of Hollywood to ensure that they have the wide selection of data they require.

33 At the time of the Beverley Hills Summit another meeting took place at the Institute for Creative Technology, affiliated with the University of Southern California:

> 34 Set up in 1999 with a $US50million$(A92 million) budget provided by the US Army, (the ICT) seeks to create advanced training simulators that will help the army shift from a Cold War mentality into a more flexible force, able to respond within 96 hours to complex missions – from civil wars to natural disasters. (Huck, 2002)

35 Sponsored by the Institute, a group of 30 screenwriters, directors and producers who normally work on action films and video games met to devise possible terrorist scenarios. 16 new scenarios were dispatched to Washington. For some time Paramount has been supplying the Pentagon with rewrites of simulation exercises adding three-dimensional characterisations with complex histories and personalities that prepare trainees for the complexities of an actual crisis. Paramount remains reluctant to discuss its involvement in the StoryDrive Engine project but it is understood that it produces versions of the flood of information that comes at a real national-security team during a crisis: from classified intelligence reports to State Department cables, military analysis and even real-time news coverage. Thousands of military personnel have passed through the “final flurry exercise”, as the project is called (Lippman, 2001).

36 Thus, besides its propaganda work, Hollywood brings central strategic skills to the practices of information war. The ability to understand formulas and how to play with them, to think outside the box, against the grain and backwards from completion provided by the entertainment industry gives the military a much deeper and more subtle grasp of the realities it faces, as long as they factor in Hollywood’s propensity to simulate.

The Battle for Reality: News and Counter-News

37 All war is a fight for the right to define the reality of the situation and the United States took the pre-emptive option when military hackers and special operations forces sought to corrupt Iraqi air defence networks and toy with their email system to sow confusion and distrust among the Iraqis (Mannion, 2003). Reuters reported in February that President Bush ordered his government to draw up guidelines for cyber attacks against enemy computer networks (2003). Of particular significance was the flurry of bogus emails in the first days of the war that suggested Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was defecting. The story was attributed to a Bulgarian source by UK Foreign Office minister and picked up by various news networks, including Fox News and MSNBC. The “defection” is now viewed as a ruse by the Pentagon’s disinformation outlets (Fahey, 2003). This is textbook information warfare, spam assaults that massage reality to sow confusion among the enemy and build confidence at home. However, the second Gulf War saw the military-entertainment complex move to an even more heightened level of information war that seeks to use mass media channels systematically to massage reality not only for home consumption but also, and most significantly, as part of an integrated weapons system aimed at the enemy.

38 One of the most significant developments in the mediasphere between the first and second Gulf Wars was the emergence of reality television. Based in documentary formats, particularly cinema verité, but without any of the critical edge to which that genre usually aspires, reality TV offered immediacy, intimacy and drama but limited its purpose to mere entertainment. Early successes of the reality TV genre include Cops, a show that ceded the point of view to the law enforcement officer while demonising alleged offenders. As the genre matured, it began to apply the same fly-on-the-wall approach to increasingly manufactured and competitive environments such as

Survivor and Big Brother. In the more serious mood after September 11, the frivolity of reality TV became a potential turn-off factor, so some of the studios turned to the military for content. The military were at this time looking for ways to keep the public interested in the War on Terror that did not promise the constant and engaging fire works of earlier conflicts. As James Poniewozik observes: 'The symbiotic solution: send reality TV to war' (2002). With Pentagon co-operation, networks scheduled programs such as Boot Camp (following a group through the rigours of military induction), Profiles from the Front Line (personal stories from military personnel in Afghanistan, the Philippines and elsewhere), Military Diaries (MTV-sponsored soldiers with cameras record their days and talk about the music that helps them survive) and American Fighter Pilot (produced by Top Gun director Tony Scott, follows three F-15 pilots through training). The programs had mixed success. The comic antics and competitive tension in Boot Camp saw it run for a whole season while the gritty production values of American Fighter Pilot produced poor ratings and saw the show canned after two episodes. Thus one might see the limits of the entertainment industry as a propaganda tool – the propaganda must still be entertaining.

39 The US military learned from their reality TV experience and realised that while excluding journalists from the information flow ensured no commentary critical of command processes, it did not always make interesting television. In the run up to the second Gulf War, the military decided to put the journalist back in the mix but in ways that allowed the military command – and news editors – to control the story. Journalists were given the opportunity to be embedded within military units. This essentially gave the journalists a soldier's view of the war so while the process offered moments of intense action and excitement, most of the time journalists were witnesses to the mundane reality of war: waiting for orders, achieving complex tasks for no apparent reason and so on. Further, the close relationships that sprung up between journalists and soldiers had the potential to compromise the quality of the journalists' coverage because they were too easily pulled into the world view of the soldiers who were feeding and protecting them.

40 The activities of the military-entertainment complex reached a high-point in the saving of Private Jessica. Captured and hospitalised by the Iraqis, Jessica Lynch was rescued by Marines. The first footage of the operation released by the military featured a frantic search through the corridors of the hospital filmed with night-vision filters that gave the images a green glow. The texture of the shots broadcast around the world was similar to textures found in games like Doom or Quake and had a sense of urgency reminiscent of those games. The attractive Ms. Lynch was quickly dubbed a hero, her capture blamed on Iraqi attack and her rescue facilitated by a doctor who had witnessed her torture. A bidding war broke out among TV networks over the rights to her story (Wright, 2003). It now transpires that Lynch was injured when she got lost and her truck collided with another from her unit; she was rescued from the desert by Iraqis who far from torturing her provided sound medical treatment; the doctor with information was in fact a lawyer and the military operation to rescue her was unnecessary as the Iraqis had already withdrawn – an ambulance would have sufficed. The TV networks are still interested in the movie rights. It is expected that Jessica Lynch's story will continue to blur distinctions between news and entertainment, factuality and actuality as it is turned into a movie of the week – 'based on a true story'.

Alternative Strategies for Information Warfare

41 There is a danger that critics of US policy will throw up their hands in despair when faced with the force of the military-entertainment complex, with the intimate fit it can produce between reality and simulation. Information war was bad enough, but what happens when the war moves from the computers and into the wiring of all the entertainment appliances around the house. Some may argue that the military-entertainment complex's ability to define and manage reality is such a mind-suck that resistance is futile. Against this defeatism, the suggestion is made that subverting, co-opting and reconstructing the military-entertainment complex provides new possibilities for strategies of alternative information warfare.

42 To make the point theoretically in Deleuzean terms: when the State appropriates a war machine (like the entertainment industry), it lays the foundations for the war machine to appropriate the State. While the war machine may be transfixed by the hyperreal, it is liable to 'continually recreate unexpected possibilities for counter-attack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 422). In considering the

categories discussed above, there is a rich profusion of mutant possibilities. In the first place games, through their binary nature, often provide the opportunity to play the role of the terrorist. By toying with the point of view (POV), experience of the simulation can create new empathies. Alternatively, games or pseudo games can be quickly adapted and produced to carry sophisticated anti-war messages. At one site there is a Flash production that mimics a game while working through possible game theory moves as a result of the second Gulf War. It was in place before the war began but has been surprisingly accurate in predicting the complex outcomes of the war. [6]

43 With regard to Hollywood product, the power of the audience to create their own readings of the movie or game can never be underestimated and any increase in propaganda output is only likely to create cynicism among the viewers. Similarly, management of news either through embedded journalists or the simulacra of the news created by reality TV tends to produce scepticism among the audience as was evidenced by the cancellation of various poorly performing military-based reality TV programs. Further, the experience of some journalists shows that they were not made so complicit by embedding, particularly where they used satellite phone and lightweight editing technology to cut and transmit stories straight back to their newsrooms so they avoided reliance on military communication channels. Good journalists are always testing to see where the limits really are and what they can get away with. Iraq was no different.

44 Then there are the challenges to the mainstream media provided by new media interventions. When people became disillusioned with the managed news provided by the mainstream, they could quickly find alternative sources via the internet. The work of Salam Pax is particularly instructive. Using a simple and available weblog technology, this anonymous Iraqi was able to post updates about life on the streets of Baghdad until very late in the war. His work provided a good reality check to the mainstream media and foreshadowed the likely nature of news coverage in future wars.

45 If the military is now so integrated into the entertainment industry, if we are at a new stage of information war where reality and simulation are fused, then it is incumbent upon those with an alternative view to create new forums and methods to debate and organise. Alternative means of disseminating information to large audiences still remain the most effective way of countering the large-scale operation of the State-funded info-war project. One of the more pressing questions for the responsible global citizen/audience is how to counter the feeling that the individual is indeed a hostage to the streams of information channeled through very precise vectors of distribution. The alternative media maker and user's greatest asset is the porosity of the media monolith, its constant search for new product, the opportunities created by competition between media outlets and its dependence on humans who have independent opinions. The media is always open for business for those who can play the game and toy with the interaction between simulation and reality.

46 The real danger for the entertainment business, which has for so long enjoyed the benefits of free speech, is that it now is in danger of becoming an agent for the closure of debate. We depend on the media to use their freedom of speech to allow a variety of opinions to circulate. The fate of the Dixie Chicks is eloquent here: the sudden drop in their record sales following a mild statement of opposition to the war has sent former critics of the war into a disorderly retreat. The ghost of senator Joseph McCarthy, leader of the 1950s anti-communist blacklist, was seen on the battlements and the ball is back in our court. The exercise of free speech has always come at a cost, particularly for those taking an alternative viewpoint in times of war. Nevertheless, in face of the massive simulation that is the war against terror, one cannot help but think that the market for reality is about to improve.

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Notes

[1] 'Who Said What about the War, and When They Said it', St Louis Post-Dispatch, 6 April (2003): 7.

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[6] See the Gulf War 2 (World War v2.5) Flash simulation here, https://www.idleworm.com/nws/2002/11/iraq2.shtml

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