

cloaks their work. Still, his book represents an invaluable contribution through surveillance of the past to promoting alertness for the present and future.

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Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

Although it is now commonplace to observe the way in which politics is increasingly reliant on marketing strategies to deliver its message, rarely is such an observation so rigorously and compellingly pursued as it is in Paul Rutherford's *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*. Rutherford provides a bracing account of the days leading up to the invasion of Iraq and details how the Bush administration packaged and sold the war with great success to the American public. Bush's address to the nation in March 2003, just days before the actual invasion began, was less a report to the citizenry on matters crucial to the nation than the culmination of the elaborate promotional campaign designed specifically to transform the idea of war against Iraq into a desirable product.

By the time the bombs started falling on Baghdad, enthusiasm for the war had reached a fevered pitch among certain sectors of the American public, and all that was left for the Bush administration to do was to deliver this product to eager consumers. The news media served as the ideal distribution mechanism for this. Whatever the opportunities the Internet provided to assemble a dissenting or dissonant account of the events in Iraq, television retained its privileged place as the primary source for information about the war. Rutherford is at his most incisive and illuminating in detailing the experience of "real-time war" as broadcast on the trinity of twenty-four-hour news channels that control the American market: CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. But such a "real-time war" could not have occurred without the Pentagon serving as its co-producer, not simply in terms of actually waging the war that served as the raw material for television reports, but by investing in all manner of media technology to ensure that it would be the primary content provider for the media's coverage. The quirks of advanced technology came to define a Pentagon house-style. Ranging from the greenish hue of the footage gleaned from night cams attached to soldiers' helmets to the perpetually disintegrating pixellated images bounced from desert to satellite to newsroom, these stylistic tics served to authenticate the reports filtered, processed, and often completely assembled by the Pentagon that the news channels frequently conveyed without question or commentary.

Rutherford evades the temptation to portray the working relationship between the news media and the Pentagon in terms of overt conspiracy or calculated collusion. Instead, he suggests that the military and the media are “locked into a symbiotic relationship” that is more a result of converging interests than deliberate scheming (77). Such an interpretation does not deny that the Pentagon attempted at every level to manage how the war was represented in the media, but rather points to how willing the media were to comply with the accounts of the war offered by the Bush administration. The media’s acquiescence reveals how invested (libidinally as well as financially) they were in providing the product which they played a crucial part in promoting. Such compliance ultimately veered toward complicity. Rutherford provides the best example of this when he analyzes how rapidly the media embraced the vocabulary manufactured by the Pentagon for the war. The incessant repetition of phrases such as “shock and awe” and “decapitation strike” (voiced by anchors with no small measure of erotic charge) was the surest sign that the media had relinquished any effort to report on the war directly, and instead had chosen to serve as a mere conduit for the military’s fabrications. Likewise, the embedded journalist became a symbol of the symbiotic relationship between the media and the military. After what the Pentagon had viewed as the renegade and rogue reporting of Vietnam, and also to a lesser extent of the first Gulf War, the practice of embedding journalists was devised as a way to return to the Ernie Pyle/WWII tradition of war reporting. The major media outlets brushed aside accusations of compromise or partiality primarily because they craved access to the images that only the Pentagon could provide. As a consequence, the embedded journalist functioned less as a reporter of ongoing events than as a proxy for the viewer at home, bound and constrained by the homosocial camaraderie of the unit.

However striking the images that emerged from Iraq, Rutherford is alert to the central role that narrative played in the ongoing management of the war. Emblematic in this regard is the story of Private Jessica Lynch, whose rescue from capture by a special-forces team, Rutherford notes, “was made to order for the propaganda machine” (68). The Pentagon carefully drew on an extensive set of fictional precedents, from the imperial adventure story to Hollywood action film, to craft the story, but ultimately the tale was a victim of its own success. The media were so excited to have a story that was the stuff of Hollywood that exaggerating it proved too much a temptation. Even when reporters from the BBC and the *Toronto Star* discovered that the actual rescue bore little resemblance to the *Saving Private Ryan*-type escapade into which the American media had transformed it, many outlets stuck doggedly to the fantasy they had concocted while most others tried to salvage it to some degree.

Rutherford makes reference throughout to the domain of popular culture, and rightly notes that America’s understanding of the rest of the world is fil-

tered through narrative archetypes and situations primarily derived from Hollywood. His appeals to cinematic examples are never as abrasive or explosive as, say, Slavoj Žižek's are in *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (2004), but they nevertheless do provide a catalogue of America's fantasies about its adventures in the world. Rutherford's text, however, stops short of discussing how the collective fantasies articulated through conventional narratives can operate at an unconscious as well as conscious level. Such a consideration would further an understanding of how the media can insist on their independence and objectivity even in the face of obvious capitulations and compromises. That those at the Pentagon are to a certain degree conscious of the narrative conventions upon which they draw is indisputable, but the extent to which the news media disavows its reliance on narrative formulas gleaned from the crassest of Hollywood spectacles is a good deal more disturbing.

Rutherford's dissection of the symbiotic relationship between the media and the military in the United States is complemented by his analysis of how the commodity they produce and distribute is consumed elsewhere. He assembles a citizens' panel of twenty in order to assess the impact that the ubiquitous media coverage of the war had on those who stand just outside the target market. Talking to Canadians, Rutherford discovers that they looked with varying degrees of scepticism on the Bush administration's claims and imperatives and reacted with varying degrees of aversion to the patriotic enthusiasms that were offered by the major news networks. Whatever reservations one may have about Rutherford's hastily assembled panel – the comment that he drew his panellists from among “the articulate public” seems particularly unfortunate as it appears to consign those beyond the academy and professional classes to inarticulacy – it does afford a chance to think about structuring fantasies of Canadian identity as well. Nearly all of Rutherford's panellists reported a disgust or disdain with the coverage the US media offered, but many admitted that CNN became a guilty pleasure in times of war. The embarrassed disavowal of this pleasure points to a more ambivalent relation to the US media than Rutherford suggests here. Canadians may not be the precise demographic targeted by either the Bush administration or the major American networks, but they do stand close enough to suffer collateral damage. The weapons of mass persuasion may not have struck a direct hit on Rutherford's panellists, but their comments do suggest that they were shaken by them.

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