

Panarticon

Discorder Magazine. May 2003.

tobias c. van Veen

As I write this Hussein has not been found, nor is there even talk of finding him. Once again—speculative writing as world events much larger than we have yet to understand unfold in the Middle East.

The Cruelty of Whiplash

Scenario: "I told you so." The US "finds" chemical weapons, or plans thereof (a single, small missile, a crude and dated schematic; it does not matter, simulacra or actual treasure). The whiplash of the international press (notably "Military Cheerleader" CNN): "France and Germany should be ashamed." The EU is split; the US dollar regains control as Iraq oil is given the "freedom" it deserves (Amnesty Int'l has already complained that oil pipelines have better US military support than hospitals, water supplies, and food convoys). Although unlikely, the US makes a move for Syria, and complete control in the region is established *not through an iron fist, but through chaos*. What is occurring right now in the Middle East—looting, ransacking, widespread violence and disorder, a return of despotic warlords, the increasing influence of religious power—is the prime condition for a cruel control *not of territory, but of corridors and movements*: pipelines are conjoiners of strategic points (oil wells, port cities, airports); regional areas provide blanket ethical cover ("Baghdad is back under control"—placation of Int'l community) while vast distances are given over to local totalitarian control (fund various theo-despotic factions; let them destroy each other, or better yet, let *them* continue the hunt for Bin Laden, Hussein et al in the mountains or Syria, and further divide the Muslim communities). In such a scenario the UN is irrelevant. While in mid-March Blair was offering assurances as to the involvement of the UN, the short-memored media has already embraced the "propositional future" forecasted by Rumsfeld and the Bush Administration: that the US-UK unilateral forces will control the region through force and appointed regional puppetry.

Lynch(-)Bush

If Bush's face is, as Brian Massumi claims, devoid of affect, a televisual black-hole, a centre of nothingness that calls upon the nation to fill its frightening crevices with meaning—then, to give oneself over to the Face (so as to avert the pure meaninglessness of its gape and yaw), a Face that ultimately desires the image of the nation-state to overlay its wrinkles, in the formation of a despotic leader-father (the US Flag, the Twin Towers); then, Pfc. Jessica Lynch's face is the blue-eyed transfusion of whiteness that acts as the saving grace to American aggression. Infamously backdropped against the American Flag (see TIME), Jessica's face is the stand-in for Bush, a substitution that serves as classic white beauty in the face of (Arab) terror. A transvestite doubling: LynchBush. Already conjoined with patriotism, heroism, and the uniquely American yearning for the naïve innocence of war ("support our [poor, young, innocent] troops"), Lynch's eyes are nonetheless devoid of the same meaning: they remain empty, a hero who did nothing but survive, saved no one. A "hero" with no substance to the nominalism: "An American Hero." What happened to coloured women Army Spc.

Shoshana Johnson (recovered) and Army Pfc. Lori Piestewa (dead)? In the news, but barely present in the image banks, and certainly not on the cover of TIME. NBC is already making a movie of Lynch's life: live like her, young children of the McWorld (Be all you can be...). But avoid ending up like Piestewa—she was no hero; nor like Johnson (for she doesn't *look* like one). The next model of Barbie—"Jessica," the Convoy Support Girl.

Was there ever a War?

After Gulf War I, Jean Baudrillard published a rather infamous book: *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Widely misunderstood, Baudrillard's analysis was pertinent and precise in its hyperbole. A showdown never took place. Bush I walked out at high noon, cowboy style, to the Main Street shoot-out, but Saddam was nowhere to be found. Hide and seek. Perhaps even an orchestrated war, with blanks and backdrops; Saddam was comfortably reinstalled in power a few months later, and attempts by the Southern Iraqi people to overthrow the Gov't were ignored by the US and Int'l community (hence their reticence in acting today), while sanctions against Iraq simply restrengthened Hussein's regime and disastrously decimated the population and its access to health supplies, food, etc.. Come Gulf War II: Bush II *really* means to get Saddam this time—or so we think. Have we found Saddam? For that matter, have we found bin Laden? Have there been any links uncovered between bin Laden and Hussein (never mind that bin Laden named Hussein's Iraq as *also* a potential target, for its "secularism")? This time something did take place—but a "War" proper it was not. A *slaughter* would perhaps be a more appropriate word; a *crime* would be another. Long live Salam Pax <dear_raed.blogspot.com>.

Re-Code Disinfopedia

Did you know that Wal Mart is the second most sued organisation in the world behind the US Gov't? In any case, hacktivists Re-Code.com have been shut down by a mix of Wal Mart, Price Chopper and Kellogs lawyers. Re-Code set out to realise a little known portion of US law: that when you buy something, *the price is negotiable*. Attacking chain stores for their consistent practice of overpricing, Re-Code assembled a database of alternative barcodes that *could* be pasted over supermarket originals. Re-Code claimed it was all for satirical intent—after all, it's the equivalent to *publishing instructions* and not actually performing any illegal act—but the Lawyers didn't think so. Cease and Desist! Kudos is due for Nathan Hacktivist and Re-Code.com. Oh—& know your propaganda: <www.disinfopedia.org>. Disinfopedia.org is "a collaborative project to produce a directory of public relations firms, think tanks, industry-funded organizations and industry-friendly experts that work to influence public opinion and public policy on behalf of corporations, governments and special interests." In the world of Total Information Awareness, we need total information on those who control and produce it. The site includes close to 700 articles, and a dedicated section on Gulf War II entitled "Weapons of Mass Deception."

Total Information Awareness—and We Know Nothing...