Militarizing the Body Politic: New Mediations as Weapons of Mass Instruction

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Introduction

This article offers a description of political systems as living systems – literally, *bodies politic*. Our purpose is to model how such entities can become militarized over time. We begin from a view of the global context as one characterized by increasing militarization, massification, and humanitarian degradation. The kinds of bodies we describe here are not metaphorical or figments of discourse; they are meta-organismic living systems comprised of people in their specific, concrete relationships. Those relationships constitute a body politic, a complex set of technological, intersubjective, and bodily *mediations*: the fundamental aspect of human relationships is the movement of meanings, moved in specific ways, through and across finite times and spaces to produce specific political forms (Silverstone, 1999). Bodies politic, accordingly, are in no sense identical to or isomorphic with the individual human organisms that comprise and enact them at any given time. Rather, they are living forms through which persons live, and which express their characteristic modes of relatedness.

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We first provide an exemplar of how new mediations can militarize the character, form, and trajectory of bodies politic. We then offer a theorization of bodies politic as living systems, drawing from Bourdieu's (1977, 1980) concepts of *habitus* and *collective habitus* and the autopoietic sociology of Luhmann (1995; cf. Maturana and Varela, 1980). We argue that neoliberal governance and economic globalization are now producing their historical antitheses. What was purported to be a political and economic movement towards ever-increasing amounts of wealth, freedom and liberalization is morphing into a system of increasing militarization, oppression and aggression.

We argue that the current trend towards the militarization of bodies politic throughout the world is a function of an emergent neofeudal corporatist system that is characterized by a suite of regressive trends in the character of political forms; a reversion to religious fundamentalism welded to state powers (or the collapse of the division between church and state); the abandonment of 'common weal' values in favour of redirecting the bulk of surplus production through taxation to a corporate, 'privatized' military sector; and the transnational infusion of militaristic corporatist values and dispositions throughout the organs of governance as a precondition to participation.

An Early 20th Century Prologue

> The 'war will' of the civilian population . . . depends upon the degree to which people can be made to consecrate and concentrate body, soul, and spirit in the supreme effort of service and sacrifice, giving complete assent to the truth that all business is the nation's business and every task a single task for a common purpose. . . . Ask any admiral or general, and he will admit that propaganda – the fight for public opinion – is as integral a part of any war machine as ships, guns, and planes. The 'mind' of a people must be mobilized as well as its man-power. (Creel, 1941)

The conscious and systematic study of new media is an intellectual pursuit which first emerged from the study of 20th century militarizing, propaganda. Lasswell's (1927/1971) study of the Creel Committee is a turning point in the analysis of new media forms. Creel was charged with 'preparing' the United States for the First World War through the Committee on Public Information (hereafter, CPI) (Creel, 1941; Larson and Mock, 1939; Lasswell, 1927/1971; Lutz, 1933; Steele, 1970). At the time, the USA was expressly, if not actually, an isolationist nation. Creel's success in galvanizing popular support for the USA to enter the war in Europe was remarkable, if only for its contribution to the reversal of widespread isolationist sentiment. In so doing, Creel manufactured a first approximation of an American polis unified via mass mediations – a self-conscious body politic organized around a militarizing movement.

Despite the lack of instantaneous electronic mass media, the CPI successfully reached and influenced a massive cumulative audience, with quantity of production, distribution and quality assurance substituting for speed and replicability. The domestic section of the CPI was explicitly a weapon of mass instruction – it 'had for its aim the instruction of the public for entering the war and historical matter of an educational nature' (Larson and Mock, 1939: 14). This was achieved largely by volunteer 'writers, educators, and translators' who, within only two years, disseminated 'more than 75,000,000 pieces of literature' (Larson and Mock, 1939: 14).[1] The CPI enlisted every available communications technology of organizing public opinion: press, film, and theatre; civic organizations such as the Boy Scouts, 'women's organizations, churches, and schools'; cartoonists, photographers, painters, and other artists; 'novelists, writers, and professors'; and immigrant organizations comprised of 'the foreign born' all became media for the militarizing function of the CPI (1939: 12–16). The messages were staged to cut across popular and 'high culture', mass and elite, formal and informal outlets.

The 'Four-Minute Men', comprised of 75,000 'locally endorsed speakers', gave prepared speeches four minutes in length 'on behalf of war aims at a theatre or other meeting place', reaching a total audience in excess of 300 million people (1939: 14–15). At the same time, in an effort that predated the use of radio, film and other mass media in the interwar period (later the object of Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis), more than 40 films were made in the glorification of the war effort. In this way, Creel's approach combined a locally-based, putatively 'grassroots' push (local soapboxes) with a centrally developed and replicable apparatus of text production. A memorable example of the latter was the personification of the body politic in James Montgomery Flagg's *Uncle Sam*, which first gained recognition in the 'I want you' army recruitment poster (Library of Congress, 2002). The poster had a print run of four million during the 18 months of the CPI's activities and made such a successful and lasting impression that it was used throughout the Second World War for recruitment. It remains a powerful and recognizable icon.

It was important to delimit what was *not* to be said in public. The CPI coordinated an active and systematic program of censorship ultimately backed by the US Espionage Bill (passed 15 June 1917). In addition to troop movements and so on, proscribed topics included 'possible peace', 'differences of opinion between allies', and 'difficulties . . . with neutral countries' – anything at all which may have impeded 'the creation and stimulation of a healthy, ardent national sentiment' (Larson and Mock, 1939: 12). While cooperation on censorship was largely voluntary, the press and other media institutions were more than enthusiastic in assisting the CPI in curtailing counter-opinion (1939: 11).[2]

The establishment of a nationally organized and centralized body for the propagation of warlike attitudes in the USA – and for the suppression of pacifism – was a milestone in strategic mass mediation and public pedagogy. In the space of two years, without the aid of electronic mass media; through thousands of newspapers, magazines, periodicals and civic organizations; in pictures, words, slogans and legislative acts; in what Creel called 'a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising' (as cited in Allen, 1999), the CPI built a public, militarized consciousness. This was achieved in a far less centralized, asynchronous and unruly media blend, with nothing like current patterns of corporate ownership, board and CEO control, media convergence, cross-media marketing and messaging.

The example of Creel tells us a great deal about the institutional precedents and habits so visible and durable in the USA, especially since the events of September 11, 2001. Ironically, less than 12 months prior to the CPI, Wilson had narrowly won the 1916 presidential election with the slogan 'He kept us out of war'. Creel had assaulted public memory and contributed to the historical construction of the most powerful militarized body politic in history.

Creel and the CPI managed to do this by means of *new mediations*, movements of meaning through disparate social contexts, connecting formerly disconnected social domains and weaving them into coherent patterns (cf. Silverstone 1999: 13–14). Creel's mobilized and defined new myths, new values, new symbols and new understandings of what it meant to be a citizen of the United States – an 'American'. With Creel, a new political form – a new body politic – emerged as a self-conscious, active entity.

Theorizing Bodies Politic as Living *Habitus*

Bodies politic must be at once dynamic and relatively durable to maintain themselves as coherent, recognizable entities over time. The concept of *habitus* foregrounds the patterns of social systemic attitudes that both emerge from and remake patterns and modes of social organization within and between bodies politic, and how (re)mediations (as patterns of political organization) function to (re)produce social systemic durability and flexibility over time. Historical durability relies upon artefacts of narrative histories and mnemonic devices to express and sustain the organizing principles that characterize bodies politic as specific and recognizable forms (for example, 'the Roman Catholic Church', 'the United States of America', 'The Royal Society', 'the World Trade Organization', etc.).

By *bodies politic*, we do not confine ourselves here to notions of 'the State', Working from an autopoietic perspective, we view bodies politic, like all

bio-environmentally constituted systems, as *living* systems (cf. Graham and McKenna, 2000; Lemke, 1995, 2000; Luhmann, 1995; Maturana and Varela, 1980; Wilden, 1982). As such, they are neither fully explicable in terms of aggregated 'countable' structures or elements, nor wholly predictable in their historical remediations (Wilden, 1982). We further assume that human social systems – identifiable, more or less regular and recurrent forms of human association – have a political dimension at whichever scale or level they are seen to exist. The political dimension is that through which the concrete relations, traceable distribution, and visible and invisible exercise of power are realized.

An autopoietic perspective views social systems as *knowing and learning systems* (Graham and McKenna, 2000; Luhmann, 1995; Maturana and Varela, 1980; Wilden, 1982), resistant to phenomenal or analytic homeostasis. That is to say, social systems grow, change, deteriorate and die according to dynamic principles common to all living systems; they have identifiable histories and notional, if not autonomous, isolable, fully predictable or hierarchical stages of development. A powerful element of any living system is its *autodidactic* capacity to teach both about and to itself; about past, present and future; about its exemplary forms and social fields; and, as a corollary, about its Others. These kinds of self-instruction provide narrative and expository explanations of its legitimacy and character, continually re-narrating and re-articulating histories to explain, explicate, and justify scenarios of war, peace, prosperity, loss, safety and risk (Lyotard, 1981). Autodidactic processes enable bodies politic to maintain and transform their intergenerational durability. The *habitus/body politic nexus* thus provides grounds for a dynamic, social systemic theory of acquisition and learning, with the potential to model the uptake of public pedagogies: civic and corporate technologies of self-instruction and self-discipline.

The concept of *habitus* allows us to step beyond debates over whether and how a systemic view might preclude agency, reflexivity, and systemic transformation. The social and historical 'conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence' that produce the 'durable, transposable dispositions' which comprise *habitus* are inseparably tied to 'the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated' (Bourdieu, 1980: 53–55). Here we find a bridge between the theoretical gap separating individualist phenomenology and the phenomena of bodies politic, seen as a dynamic set of social fields and mediated meaning systems.

At the same time, the phenomenological problem we are foregrounding here is not the dialectic of individual and social system, but the problematic relationships *between* bodies politic, i.e. between various classes of social systemic entities that are variously scaled in terms of time and space, and which have

divergent (even thoroughly opposed) histories, public pedagogies, and principles of association and organization (Lemke, 2000). Our notion of 'bodies' does not refer to individual persons, but to 'third-order' autopoietic entities – social systems (Graham and McKenna, 2000). Specifically, we are concerned with the political character of relationships within and between such systems *qua* complex social fields, and the political environments that are produced and characterized by the mediations through which those relationships are maintained, expressed and transformed.

Further, our approach to *habitus* does not refer here to the embodiment of dispositions in individual persons per se, but to the *actualization* (or *realization*) of political dispositions in bodies politic as they become historically active entities. The *habitus* to which we refer is, then, a function of 'the system/environment relation', the context for social systemic processes of (re)production (Luhmann, 1995: 200). Bourdieu's approach to understanding of class provides a useful link between the production of political dispositions and collective action (1977: 81–3):

> The 'real' class, if it ever has 'really' existed, is nothing but the realized class, that is, the mobilized class, a result of the struggle of classifications which is properly symbolic (or political) struggle to impose a vision of the social world, or, better, a way to construct that world, in perception and reality, and to construct classes in accordance with which this social world can be divided. (1998: 11)

Bourdieu is describing here what he calls in earlier writings 'class *habitus*' – a phenomenon that 'functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*', all of which, in turn, are functions of social situatedness – historical, political, economic, cultural and so on (1977: 81–3). The link between class *habitus* – the structuring structures of bodies politic – and collective action is *mediation*. Seen from the political perspective, the link between mediation and political mobilization is a function of politically contested evaluations – the simultaneous valorization of one group and corollary devaluation of another in political divisions of the social world. At the level of the living system, *habitus* can thus be construed in taxonomic terms as a classificatory but dynamic schemata which situates ways of knowing and being in hierarchical relations. We can construe the constitution of bodies politic as participation in a system of mediations and remediations as well as a categorical yet dynamic relationship to the *means* of mediation, by and through which bodies politic position themselves in relation to each other. Further, the *habitus* of bodies politic are blended, hybrid, multiple and dynamic; they are made in relation to a variable and (theoretically) infinite blend of 'tastes', dispositions and disciplinings specific to particular bodies politic (Luke and Luke, 1999).

Their formal or taxonomic qualities notwithstanding, for bodies politic, the mediations through which *habitus* are propagated are, *pace* Bourdieu, systems of 'economic exchange' in which meanings derive their value in 'relation to a market' (Bourdieu, 1991: 66–7). In turn, the value of specific mediations (for example, policy documents, news reports, election campaigns, government propaganda) derive social force from established relations of power, and from the variable expectations through which relations of power are articulated (1991: 67). Mediations within bodies politic thus are both expressions and (re)producers of the 'whole class habitus' (1991: 83). The political dimension of mediation is expressed in specialized knowledge registers designed 'to produce and impose representations (mental, verbal, visual or theatrical) of the social which may be capable of acting on this world by acting on agents' representations of it'; they function 'to make or unmake groups . . . by producing, reproducing or destroying the representations that make groups visible for themselves and for others' (1991: 127).

The (re)production and mediation of political visions and divisions is the most powerful autodidactic function of bodies politic and their institutional agents. They are systems of self-justification and self-delineation of the body politic to itself. Bodies politic, by definition, *must* engage in forms of 'public pedagogy' that broadcast not only preferred representations, but also set out preferred systemic relations and predispositions towards categories of inclusion and exclusion (Luke, 1996). Hence in the contemporary context of a 'globalized' humanity, the continual construction and reconstruction of 'unpeople' (Pilger, 2002: 9), of more and less valuable people, and of the relative values of other bodies politic is a function of new mediations.

As in the case of the Creel committee's achievements, the current trend towards the militarization of bodies politic throughout the world, the forging of new political alliances (for example, 'the coalition of the willing'); the imposition of new political visions and divisions (for example, 'the axis of evil'); and the apparent destruction, silencing, or rendering impotent of formerly powerful bodies politic (for example, the United Nations) both requires and implicates new mediations. It also implies the imminent emergence of new political forms – new bodies politic – the organizing principles of which are characterized by the suite of new mediations through which these new forms emerge. The character of these new organizing principles can be defined in terms of *values* and *evaluations*.

Values, Evaluation, Attitudinal Meaning and Collective Action

To establish and maintain themselves as recognizable entities, bodies politic 'require corresponding resources and corresponding information, and they must be able correspondingly to condition the scope of behaviour within them' (Luhmann, 1995: 201). The necessary and sufficient resources required to produce new political forms are firstly oriented towards the production of social systemic *expectations*, the ultimate arbiters of action (whether in a positive or negative sense, or whether collectively or individually realized) because they are primarily future-oriented *pre*dispositions and thus function to delimit potentials for future action (Graham, 2001). Social systemic expectations derive operational force in the production, manipulation and contestation of social systemic values:

> On the highest attainable level of establishing expectations, one must . . . renounce all claims to establishing the correctness of specific actions. One works only with – or talks only about – *values*. Values are general, individually symbolized perspectives which allow one to prefer certain states or events. Even actions can be assessed this way – for example, as promoting peace, as just, as polluting the environment, as an expression of solidarity, as the willingness to help, as race hatred, and so forth. (Luhmann, 1995: 317–8)

Luhmann's assertion here is that the production of 'preferences' (an analogue to *habitus*) is a political enterprise concerned with the production of 'symbolic values' (Bourdieu, 1991a). The systemic resources that constrain what can count as 'possible', 'desirable', 'important', 'reprehensible', etc. in bodies politic are political *and* economic resources because they mediate relationships between the distribution and exercise of power (the political) and the production and exchange of values (the economic) within and between bodies politic. Values are expressed in what Lemke (1998) calls the 'attitudinal' dimension of meaning.

The attitudinal dimension of meaning is that which specifies 'position takings', acts of self-location within a field of meanings and relations (cf. Bourdieu, 1998; Lemke, 1998). They are acts of *evaluation* and, as such, realizations of systemically produced patterns of preference in bodies politic. Patterns of evaluation are never entirely stable; they are always generative, primarily and particularly in the spheres of political economic force (Firth, 1953). Militarizing mediations thus function by firstly increasing the value differential between bodies politic along normative lines, of which morality is a significant part (Lemke, 1998). This is a perennial phenomenon which can be seen in militarizing mediations since Urban II launched the first crusade in 1095 (Graham et al., in press). Such mediations typically construe a monolithic, homogeneous and morally reprehensible Other (for example, 'huns', 'gooks', 'terrorists', 'the axis of evil') while simultaneously providing a suite of positive symbols (e.g. 'freedom', 'justice', 'security', 'democracy') that function to reinforce the unity and legitimacy, as well as crystallizing

the character, of bodies politic engaged in the process of militarization (Graham et al., in press).

Apart from the ruinous effects of war, a significant function of militarizing mediations is the literal amplification and multiplication of antagonistic evaluative patterns within bodies politic. Following from the theoretical framework we have outlined thus far, a change in evaluative patterns entails a change in the distribution and character of *expectations* within bodies politic and, in turn, fundamental changes in the character of their political economic forms. Our position is that the emergent political economic form can be characterized as neofeudal corporatism.

New Mediations in the Emergence of Neofeudal Corporatism

Despite claims of 'a new imperialism' (Pilger, 2002), the current systemic trend is towards various species of neofeudal corporatism. Our rejection of 'a new imperialism' is based on the assertion that the 'empires' are more or less tightly controlled political units coordinated through a central authority (an 'emperor') located in a particular place, as per the empires of antiquity or colonialism (cf. Hobsbawm, 1987). In a more strict sense, the designation of 'imperialism' confounds current trends in political and economic relations with those of the late 19th century, during which time the term 'imperialism' was coined as a 'neologism', a 'novel term devised to describe a novel phenomenon' (1987: 60).

The phenomenon called 'imperialism' can be described, roughly, as a 'rush by the leading industrial states to carve up the globe into colonies and spheres of influence' (1987: 65). In other words, the 'new imperialism' of the late 19th to early 20th centuries was a 'competitive', globalizing extension of state-based industrial capitalist bodies politic (1987: 73–4). There were numerous powers of this type. Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Austria, Russia, Japan, China and Persia all claimed the status of 'empire' and included 'emperor' in the titles of their heads of state (1987: 56–7). The 'new imperialism' of the 1890s was widespread, competitive in nature, state-based, and tied to the expansion of markets as well as to new sources of raw materials; it was firstly economic in its impetus, but was also 'a political and cultural phenomenon' which made 'good ideological cement' for both fledgling and established nation-states alike (1987: 64–76). Its main mediating technologies included 'a tightening web of transport' which encircled the globe, the emergence of the telegraph, the new electrical and motor industries, and the various resources that were required by new 'high-speed technology' (1987: 62–3; cf. Innis, 1951).

The historical period during which such political forms proliferated, and

which Hobsbawm describes as 'the Age of Empire', should in our view not be confounded with current trends, in which a single hegemon – apparently 'the United States' – extends its political, economic, cultural, and military influence throughout the world. But to comprehend this hegemonic body politic either as 'the United States', or as any kind of formerly recognizable entity, is to misunderstand the new political form that is currently exercising what appear to be imperialist prerogatives under the banner of 'the United States' and the values that symbol has come to represent.

Not only is the locus of power for this newly emergent body politic not identical to 'the United States', it is neither nationalistic nor geographical in either orientation or constitution. It is corporatist in its constitution, which is to say, power and legitimacy are vested in the group (Saul, 1997). Its constituent groups are transnational corporations; various (allegedly) 'neoconservative' think-tanks and foundations; and various theocratic organizations dispersed throughout the world (cf. Lind, 2003; Saul, 1997). The elites of the new hegemon, who have appropriated the symbolic values of 'the United States', along with its executive apparatus and attendant military, might appear to be enacting a eugenic, millenarian radicalism (Lind, 2003; Lobe, 2003), the essence of which is summed up by George W. Bush: 'Events aren't moved by blind change and chance. Behind all of life and all of history, there's a dedication and purpose, set by the hand of a just and faithful God' (Bush, 2003a). Bush is hailed as 'God's President' by the Christian Right (Conason, 2002). His discourse resonates with the millenarian consciousness that has infused technocratic elites throughout the West since at least the 12th century (Noble, 1997/1999). The weight of Christianity's evangelical history, according to 'God's President', is the joint burden of Americans and God: 'We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know – we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history' (Bush, 2003b).

But the new hegemonic entity is *not* 'the United States' or 'Americans'. The corporate constituents of this body politic have no national roots, or at best only ostensive ones: it has been a well-noted function of 'globalizing' (re)mediations to disperse corporate ownership and membership while simultaneously separating ownership from control and distancing administrative activities from productive ones, regardless of which domains a particular corporation operates in (cf. Roe, 2000). Whether commercial or theological; whether media or military; whether legislative, executive, or judicial in function; the corporate constituents of the new hegemon are globally dispersed yet systematically interdependent parts of a global corporatist administrative complex.

DynCorp is exemplary. It is currently recruiting 'rent-a-cops' for the newly 'liberated' Iraq, just as it has done in other places around the world, including Bosnia, Afghanistan, Colombia and the USA, where it 'reviews security clearance applications of military and civilian personnel for the Navy' (Chatterjee, 2003). DynCorp's advertisement for new positions in Iraq conveys a sense of the complex and confusing relationships being forged in the new environment:

> On behalf of the United States Department of States, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, DynCorp Aerospace Operations (UK) Ltd. (DAOL), a CSC Company, is seeking individuals with appropriate experience and expertise to participate in an international effort to re-establish police, justice and prison functions in post-conflict Iraq. Interested applicants must be active duty, retired or recently separated sworn police officers, correctional officers or experienced judicial experts. US citizenship is required. (DynCorp, 2003)

An 'aerospace operations' company purporting to be located in the UK recruiting a private-sector police force for the US Federal government to impose order on a country in the Middle East and requiring employees to be US citizens is *prima facie* confusing. Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), DynCorp's new owner, was the first software company to be publicly listed (in 1964) and has operated since 1959 – its major clients include Raytheon (makers of Patriot missiles and significant amounts of other military hardware), the United States Marines, D&B (formerly Dunn and Bradstreet), and BT (British Telecom) (CSC, 2003). While its corporate headquarters are in California, it has operations in 69 countries (CSC, 2003). At June 2002, CSC had 119,340 globally dispersed shareholders, many of whom are themselves publicly listed corporations (CSC, 2002: 61).

For shareholders of CSC, and those of other corporations awarded 'massive' contracts (predicted to be worth more than $US100 billion) for 'dynamic reconstruction' in 'post-conflict' Iraq, corporate 'nationality' is entirely irrelevant (cf. World Trade Executive, 2003). In fact, a direct function of globalization has been the de-territorialization, dispersion and distancing of ownership, commercial, financial, administrative and productive functions. Allegiance to particular national or regional labour forces has become, at best, a commercial liability (Klein, 2001; Saul, 1997).

The close links between transnational corporations, the White House, and the Pentagon in the current US administration are well documented: all but a few members of Bush's cabinet have intimate ties to transnational corporations (Centre for Responsive Politics, 2003; Kellner, 2002). Vice-President Dick Cheney has received a million dollars per year in 'deferred compensation' payments from Halliburton since retiring as the corporation's CEO immediately

after his nomination as Bush's running mate in 2000 (CBS Broadcasting, 2003; Cable News Network, 2003). These people are corporate lobbyists – *courtesans* – who have direct control of the world's most powerful military force. Like the worst courtesans of the *ancien regimes*, they appear entirely unconcerned with the health of the body politic over which they claim stewardship (Saul, 1997).

This is evidenced by its economically and socially dismal state: massive unemployment (more than 10.2 million in April 2003 including 1.4 million people who have stopped looking for work altogether, with a further 4.8 million severely under-employed) (Herbert, 2003); the largest budget deficit in history (Baird, 2003); potential bankruptcy of numerous State Governments (Herbert, 2003); and massive welfare and public services cuts in a country which is already recognized for its low standards of public welfare. By the end of 2001, 6.6 million adults in the USA were 'on probation, in jail or prison, or on parole . . . 3.1% of all U.S. adult residents or 1 in every 32 adults' (Bureau of Justice, 2003). Of these, more than 2 million are incarcerated in 'privately' (i.e. corporately) owned prisons, a multi-billion dollar global 'industry' (Beiser, 2001). Of the 1.49 million bankruptcies filed in the USA in 2001, 1.44 million were filed by individuals (Harris, 2002). Despite these economic and social indicators, the press still habitually refers to the USA as 'the world's strongest economy' (Grattan, 2003).

The global complex of corporatized police, corporatized prisons, corporatized governments and corporatized militaries, all of which are ostensibly owned collectively yet largely administered by the arbitrary exercise of power, most of which depend upon and actively appeal to Christian fundamentalist millenarians for political legitimacy (Milbank, 2001), are expressions of a new political form. The emergence of these relations marks a regressive moment in the character of bodies politic; a reversion to religious fundamentalism welded to state powers, or the collapse of the division between church and state; the abandonment of 'common weal' values in favour of redirecting the bulk of surplus production through taxation to corporate military and security sectors; and the thorough infusion of militaristic values and dispositions throughout the organs of governance world-wide at the expense of 'commoners'.

Since the second age of feudalism, few political forms have achieved such degrees of distance between ruling elites and the ruled, confusing distinctions between property rights, proprietary discretion, executive privilege and military force (cf. Bloch, 1962: 345–54). Like 'second age' feudalism, the feudal aspects of our current age are characterized by contractual allegiances underwritten by an intense religiosity and militarism; systematic corporate subjection (or the subjection of one group to another) through ties of political and economic interdependence; 'the rigorous economic subjection' of the great majority of people 'to a

few powerful men'; 'the identification of wealth . . . with power'; and the highest of economic priorities being placed on the maintenance of a professional military class. Far from reflecting a new totalizing force of the state, it arises from and accelerates a 'profound weakening of the State' (1962: 441–52).

Neofeudal Corporatism and the Militarized Body Politic

The most overt similarity between our current age and that of feudalism proper is the social logic of a 'permanent arms economy' – a total 'protection racket' (White, 1962). In feudal societies, excess agricultural production was promoted for the maintenance of a professional military class. Most historians accept that 'feudalism was essentially military, a type of social organization designed to produce and support cavalry' (White, 1962: 3). The currently dominant form of social organization is 'designed' (in the same loose sense) to produce and support high-tech, massive, globally operative, corporately owned military institutions.

Today, the largest item of trade in tangible things is the trade in arms (Saul, 1997: 21). But the predominance of militaristic values only begins with armaments. Research, military personnel, government personnel, public relations campaigns, intelligence services and multi-million dollar movie budgets can all be put under the banner of military expenditure (Herman and Chomsky, 1994). When added to security budgets more generally – police, jails, private security firms, border protection forces, multilateral peace-keeping forces – along with the various and invariably large bureaucratic, ministerial and administrative organizations associated with these combined parts of the disciplinary industrial complex, the expenditure on organized legitimate violence, and the suppression of organized illegitimate violence both domestic and transnational, is literally incalculable.

This is even more so when one considers that the global mediations of corporate militarism reach into practically every level of consumer society. The density and reach of corporatist mediations makes it impossible to delineate militaristic mediations along public–private lines, or, within that, between individual and collective interests, or between general activity and specifically military activity. Among the largest corporate manufacturers of military hardware and software can be found some of the world's largest personal finance companies (General Electric, General Motors); telecommunications and IT companies (Siemens, Texas Instruments, IBM, NEC, Toshiba); media and entertainment companies (CBS, NBC, HMV, EMI); aeroplane manufacturers (Boeing, McDonell Douglas, Lockheed Martin, British Aerospace), household appliances (Samsung, General Electric); and car makers (General Motors, Rolls Royce, Ford, Mitsubishi, Fiat,

Daimler-Benz). Consumers and investors cannot help but subsidize military research, development and manufacturing, however directly or indirectly. Consumers ('commoners') are now woven into a global network of militarized corporate mediations at almost every level of existence; if not by direct consumption, then by direct or indirect taxation, investments, pension funds and insurance.

Militarism is also a pervasive production value for corporatist culture industries. As one commentator notes:

> The special history of the United States has given us a very unique mythology of violence. We tend to regard certain forms of violence – violence that pits advanced against primitive peoples, whites against non-whites – as violence that produces good things, produces progress, produces moral advancement, produces civilization. (Slotkin, 1994, in CDI, 1994)

It would be one thing if such 'entertainments' were merely a by-product of a social consciousness which had emerged from total immersion in militaristic milieux. But militaristic production values are direct, strategic and purposive. The Center for Defense Information (CDI) details almost a century of direct and conscious involvement by the military in the production of movies (CDI, 1997) – a practice which, as we have seen, began with Creel. The CDI documents extensive, ongoing, and direct military involvement in major Hollywood 'blockbusters' (the name of a bomb), including direct censorship tied to 'hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of subsidies, and scripting decisions over major productions designed to impress upon the public the virtues of military ideals and technologies (CDI, 1997). As Arnold Pacey (1999/2001) points out, the fact that extreme and explicit violence is a staple theme in the mass entertainment economy should give pause for concern. But when we focus more closely on the idea of violence as entertaining, especially within the context of a globalized media environment, the relationships that emerge between entertaining representations of violence, the militarized *habitus* of bodies politic, and actual mass murder become more rather than less overt.

Today, there is no necessary connection between a person's physical strength, intellect, or character and their ability to participate in violence on the most massive scale. The perceived outcomes of the most technologically advanced military violence, as experienced by perpetrators, are formally and technologically indistinguishable from mass entertainments, a fact which became apparent during the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre of September 11, 2001. Countless people who saw live coverage of the attacks 'thought they were watching a movie' (see, for example, Gray, 2001). Even people who witnessed the devastation in person said it 'was like watching a movie' (see, for example, Balaghi, 2002).[3] Hence, Bush's *Top Gun* style-appearance on the USS Abraham

Lincoln, landing on the flight-deck in a jet fighter dressed in an Air Force flight suit to announce that the 2003 'war' in Iraq was over (Brown, 2003). As one military strategist says of the Pentagon-funded movie: "Top Gun" showed that we could shoot down airplanes, that our aircraft carriers could go anyplace, and that our pilots were the best. And so, when the Gulf War comes along, there's no reason for any American civilian to believe that we can't beat Saddam Hussein' (CDI, 1997). Bush's intertextual claim on the symbolic and economic values of *Top Gun* is but one new mediation that exemplifies a neofeudal corporatist body politic.

In many mass mediated texts, legitimate violence is an *expected* response to illegitimate violence. The seemingly immutable schema is violence in the name of 'good' versus violence in the name of 'evil', however, these qualities might happen to be defined. Heroes are represented as acting on behalf of the body politic, for the good of family or society, usually in pursuit of revenge, usually with total disregard for themselves – violence is presented as unselfish civic duty and thus becomes an *expected* response to injustice. Legitimate violence thus is represented as socially sacrificial in nature and, more perversely, as the ultimate expression of the general good. Violence therefore becomes the ultimate expression of applied morality, and social justice becomes identical with violent revenge. The schema presented does not merely *cause* violence by increasing its social, moral and political worth – it *is* violence. It is, or at least can easily become, the mass production of hatred and fear, and the mass production of *expectations* for revenge. The *habitus* of a body politic thus conditioned responds accordingly to perceived 'evils'. The global mediations of neofeudal corporatism promote global militarism, global fear and global hatred, regardless of which 'side' people happen to be on.

Resistance is Fertile: Neofeudal Corporatism and Denials of Pacification

There is a new global political economic system emerging. It is a living system, a self-conscious political force, with a new militaristic bodily *habitus*. It is built from mediations that weave together the elite of the corporate administrative complex with everyday consumption patterns. The heavily invested symbolic values of 'the United States' – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; democracy, freedom of speech, independence, and so on – have been appropriated, not just in the USA, but throughout the world. In their place, the values and attendant expectations of a vengeful and righteous God ensure that 'the evil doers' must and will be punished. 'Wall-to-wall' FoxNews militarism, which has the effect of flattening out the realities of war and death, brings them to the same

discursive levels and tropes of talk shows, cartoons, action movies, computer games and soap operas.

The emergence of neofeudal corporatism presents critique with very difficult dilemmas and paradoxes. The new body politic literally thrives on critique, both in terms of constructing Otherness ('If you're not with us, you're against us') and in terms of a repressive pseudo-tolerance ('We're fighting for your rights to criticise us'), thereby providing material to sharpen rhetorical tools for new militarizing mediations and the discursive means of dehumanization. Its public pedagogies tends to symmetrize and flatten out critique, reducing it to debates over tactics rather than strategy (Wilden, 1986), over policy 'options' rather than structural and systemic alternatives to the very systems of (re)production that generate bodies politic systemically oriented towards self-destruction.

This presents an ironic twist, both contradictory and potentially generative, to the 'end of nation', 'end of the state', 'end of ideology', proclamations of the 1990s. The emergent system is neofeudal not only because of the redistribution of surplus wealth, labour, and resources towards a warrior class and its affiliated institutions and technologies, political and corporate. It also has relied upon a reassertion of the most open form of nation-state militarism: the projection of technology, mediation and immanent physical force – a powerful coalescing of the kinds of new mediation strategies developed by Creel, refined for almost a century by corporate advertising and public relations – with sheer physical presence and embodied power on a global scale. This is done, for once, not under the auspices of multinational corporations or some transnational governance. Rather, it is falsely professed by ostensibly nationalistic, embodied leaderships, allegedly in defence of national borders, of a particular form of life which no longer exists, and of a non-secular moral order. At the same time, political leaders make policy for, on behalf of, transnational corporations, and are themselves members of the nexus of corporation and political party.

This is an analogue to Creel's work. Since and unlike 1968, and since the coming down of the wall, a transnational political economy has fused relations of production with postmodern modes of information. The result is the formation of new political forms that embody their self-contradictory values – hence, the 'end of nation' hypothesis, both as an attempt to empirically describe these new formations and as an obfuscatory move. Yet ironically, these positions allowed the state and its military-industrial complexes – material, political, psychological and mediational – to recede under corporate cover while the political machinery of the most powerful State of all was 'stolen' in the most controversial of elections (Kellner, 2001).

The nation is back, at least in symbolic form, as exemplified by 'brand

America' (MacKinnon, 2003). There is little talk in US media discourse of 'globalization' now. As the largest economies continue into economic free-fall, degraded social conditions are used to foreground older structures of capital, and even older structures of governance – the very pivots of the military industrial complex that Dwight Eisenhower described in his farewell address: energy, technology and armaments. In this sense, the emergence of neofeudal corporatism is, in many ways, anachronism – it is an empty symbolic and cynical 'return' to a crude pre-transnational nationalism; a reassertion of a nation-state values writ large in order to obscure the character of a new global body politic without *any* national or common weal allegiances. Like Creel's, the new mediations of neofeudal corporatism are a clearly enlisting a putative subordination of mere economic goals to the military priorities of nationalist values, which exist in symbolic form only, while their antitheses thrive in the lived experience of 'commoners'. Like so many militarizing moments before, the newly militarizing body politic clothes vested interests in the garish drag of 'national' interests, and, however quietly it is put, in the hierarchical reordering and revaluation of persons along crude lines of race, 'creed', morality and other perennial bases of political Otherings.

Reliant as the current militarizing trend is upon new kinds of technologically enhanced warfare, it demands of the body politic remediations of its *habitus* through, for example, opinion polls, newscasts, action movies and talk-shows, of particular narrative scenarios – played out on cable and free-to-air – which are arbitrarily augmented from time-to-time by embodied sacrifice of its youth. In this way, unlike the 'War to End all Wars' endorsed by Creel, the systematic remediations of the new body politic are based on a militarized, globally amplified simulation of its *former* self: it constructs and asks for the martial reaffirmation of a disembodied, *literally dead* body politic in the negation of life, humanity, and the values of the decomposing body which it holds up as a political ideal. It is through new mediations – public pedagogies, weapons of mass instruction and the production of militaristic, millenarian expectations – that the new body politic is being forged.

Notes

1. May 1917–June 1919.
2. There are obvious parallels to the current moves in the USA following the 'patriot' legislation, with a focus on self-censorship and alignment of media messages.
3. To see how widespread this perception was, type 'September 11' and 'watching a movie' into www.google.com – there are literally hundreds of personal accounts, as well as much research, detailing the effect.

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