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Militarising the Body Politic: New Media as Weapons of Mass Instruction

Phil Graham & Allan Luke

University of Queensland

Abstract: As militarisation of bodies politic continues apace the world over, as military organisations again reveal themselves as primary political, economic and cultural forces in many societies, we argue that a new form of political economic organisation is emerging: neo-feudal corporatism. Drawing upon Bourdieu, we theorise bodies politic as living habitus. Bodies politic are prepared for war and peace through new mediations, which are also forms of public pedagogy. The process of militarisation requires the generation of new, antagonistic evaluations of other bodies politic. Such evaluations are inculcated by means of new mediations, the movement of meanings across time and space, between histories, places, and cultures. New mediations touch new and different aspects of the body politic: its eyes, its ears, its organs, but they are consistently targeted at the formation of dispositions, the prime movers of action.

An early twentieth century prologue

The “war will” of the civilian population is a nation’s second line, and “war will,” particularly in a democracy, 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. —**George Creel, 1941**

The conscious and systematic study of new media forms in their social contexts is an intellectual pursuit which first emerged from the study of twentieth century militarising, propaganda. Lasswell’s (1927/1971) study of the Creel Committee marks a turning point in the analysis of new media forms in massifying societies. Creel was charged with ‘preparing’ the United States to enter the First World War through the Committee on Public Information (hereafter, CPI) (Creel, 1941; Larson & Mock, 1939; Lasswell, 1927; Lutz, 1933; Steele, 1970). At the time, the US was expressly, if not actually, an isolationist nation, militarily, economically, and politically. Creel’s success in galvanising popular support for the US to enter the war in Europe was remarkable, if only for the reversal of widespread isolationist sentiment. More remarkably, Creel also

manufactured the first approximation of an American polis unified via a system of mass mediations—a self-conscious body politic organised around a militarising 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 what speed and replicability would later achieve. 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 & 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 & Mock, 1939: 14).¹ The CPI enlisted every available communications technology of organising public opinion: press, film, and theatre; civic organisations such as the Boy Scouts, ‘women’s organizations, churches, and schools’; cartoonists, photographers, painters, and other artists; ‘novelists, writers, and professors’; and immigrant organisations comprised of ‘the foreign born’ all became media for the militarising function of the CPI (1939: 12-16). The messages were staged to very deliberately 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’, and in this way reached 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 forty 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 centrally developed and replicable apparatus of text production. A

memorable example of the latter was the personification of the militarised US 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 WWII for recruitment and remains a powerful and recognisable icon for the militarised body politic of the US today.

Creel realised that 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 June 15, 1917). In addition to troop movements and so on, publicly 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 & 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 Journalistic and institutional self-censorship in such matters continues to be largely the case today (Pilger, 2002).

The establishment of a nationally organised and centralised body for the propagation of warlike attitudes in the US—and, conversely, for the suppression of pacificism—marks a major turning point in mass mediation strategies. In the space of two years, without the aid of electronic mass media; through thousands of newspapers, magazines, periodicals, and civic organisations; 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 created nothing less than a unified, militarised consciousness at the behest of the

administration of Woodrow Wilson. This was achieved in a far less centralised, asynchronous, and unruly media blend, where the patterns of corporate ownership, board and CEO control, media convergence, cross-media marketing and messaging that permeate today's world were unimaginable.

The example of Creel tells us a great deal about the institutional precedents, patterns, and habits which have so visibly endured in the US, especially since the events of September 11, 2001. Ironically, less than twelve months prior to establishing the CPI, Wilson narrowly won the 1916 presidential election with the slogan 'He kept us out of war' (Whitehouse, 2002). Creel therefore also successfully launched a mass assault on public memory, and, through the application of what would later be known as advertising and public relations techniques, helped construct the most powerful and potentially destructive militarised body politic in history.

Theorising bodies politic as living habitus

We theorise bodies politic as living habitus to foreground the relationships between patterns and modes of social organisation, mediations and remediations, the social systemic attitudes which both emerge from and remake those patterns and modes, and how they act both durably and flexibly over time. We therefore emphasise the historical character of bodies politic: they have narrative histories and mnemonic devices that extend far beyond those of the people that constitute them, often by many centuries. These histories—which are also intersubjective histories of interactions, mediations and technologisations—express and sustain the organising principles of bodies politic.

By bodies politic, we do not confine ourselves here to concepts of the State, although that is certainly a form of association and affiliation which is most overtly

political in its constitution. Our basic theoretical stance here is autopoietic. That is, we view human social systems, like all ‘ecosocial’, bio-environmentally embedded systems, as living systems (cf. Graham & McKenna, 2000; Lemke, 1995, 2000; Luhmann, 1995; Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1987; Wilden, 1982). As such, they are neither fully explicable by the net total of ‘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 association—have a political dimension at whichever scale or level they are seen to exist. The political dimension of human association is that perspective from which the relations, distribution, and exercise of power are rendered visible. Our definition of a body politic, then, is a living social system of any type seen in its political aspect.

An autopoietic perspective entails the assumptions that, because they are living systems, social systems are also knowing and learning systems. It also entails the assumption that they are resistant to phenomenal or analytic homeostasis—that is to say, they grow, change, and die according to dynamic principles common to all living systems—that they have identifiable histories and notional, if not autonomous and isolable, fully predictable and replicable stages of development. Likewise, they have a powerful autodidactic element. All such systems are capable of teaching both about themselves and to themselves about past, present and future; about their relationships between the ostensive “self” that the body politic constitutes and, as a corollary, its others. This instruction is the principal means by which nations, nationalities, and bodies politic of all kinds provide both narrative and expository explanations of their legitimacy, continually renarrating and rearticulating their histories to explain, explicate, and justify approaches to their futures (Lyotard, 1981). That is, it is through

autodidactics that such systems self-reproduce and maintain their intergenerational durability.

In respect of such a view of social systemic learning, Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus steps beyond constraining debates over whether and how a social systemic perspective might preclude individual agency:

The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. [...]. Overriding the spurious opposition between the forces inscribed in an earlier state of the system, outside the body, and the internal forces arising instantaneously as motivations springing from free will, the internal dispositions – the internalization of externality – enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated, i.e. in a durable, systematic and non-mechanical way. As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions in the particular conditions of its production – and only those. ... [T]he habitus is an infinite capacity for creating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production ... (Bourdieu, 1980: 53-5)

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is formulated to bridge the theoretical gap between the phenomenology of individual persons and the phenomena of bodies politic in which individuals are embedded. One of its overlooked virtues is that it provides grounds for a social theory of acquisition and learning: it has the potential to model the uptake of the kinds of public pedagogies – the technologies of mass instruction and discipline – described above. The phenomenological link we are proposing here is not the obvious one between the individual and social system, but of social units which are scalable in terms of time and space, and which are political and economic in character (Lemke, 2000). Thus our notion of “bodies” here does not refer to individual persons, but to ‘third-order’ autopoietic systems, or social systems more generally, and to the relationship between those systems and the environments in which they are embedded (cf. Graham & McKenna, 2000). It is, we might say, the habitus of habitus to which we

refer—‘the system/environment relation’ which is the context for social systemic processes of (re)production (Luhmann, 1995: 200).

To exist as such, social systems ‘require corresponding resources and corresponding information, and they must be able correspondingly to condition the scope of behaviour within them’ (1995: 201). It is this ability to remediate - to maintain the reflexivity and open-endedness of the possible transformative processes in relationships within and between bodies politic - the scope of possible behaviours within social systems which delimits the system’s very existence as a political entity. This “conditioning”, or, more precisely, constraining, function can be seen as the production of expectations which, in turn, are given 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)

Thus, the resources and information which constrain what might be conceptualised as possible in human social systems are political economic resources—they partake in and mediate the relationships between the distribution and exercise of power within and between social systems (the political), and ways in which values are produced and exchanged within and between those systems (the economic). Specifically, we are concerned here with the production and distribution of symbolic values (Bourdieu, 1991a), expressed in what Jay Lemke (1995, 1998) calls the Attitudinal (or Orientational) dimension of meaning.

Values, evaluation, Attitudinal meaning, and collective action

In Lemke's schema, 'Attitudinal' meaning stands in contradistinction to the 'Presentational' and 'Organisational' aspects of meaning (Lemke, 1995: 41-2).³ Presentational meaning refers to the way members of a social system construe things in the natural or social domains by their 'explicit descriptions as participants, processes, relations and circumstances standing in particular semantic relations to one another' (Lemke, 1995: 41). The Organisational aspect of meaning can be read, roughly, as the way meanings derive their coherence within specific social systemic contexts—the social relational properties and potentials of any given social system. Attitudinal meaning is the aspect of meaning by which a social system can be seen to orient itself to others' meanings, and to the Presentational content of its own meanings (1995: 41). In this sense it is something akin to the late 19th century concept of apperception – it constitutes a system of schematic and embodied predispositions to particular patterns of representation and social relations.

Attitudinal meanings also enable 'position takings', acts of self-location within a field of meanings and relations (Bourdieu, 1998). So when we refer to Attitudinal meaning, we refer to an active terminology, the constant taking and retaking of stances towards aspects of the world. We call these acts of evaluation. The terms, values and attitudes, which have gained widespread familiarity in such instruments as opinion polls and psychological tests, tend to reify the historical and biographical dynamics of bodies politic and their Attitudinal meanings. Social systemically conditioned patterns of evaluation are never quite stable; they are always generative, primarily and particularly in the spheres of political economic force, where the mass media, the state, and their hosts of interrelated institutions engage with and attempt to "write upon" the collective habitus.

Bourdieu provides a useful link between the production of symbolic values, evaluations, habitus, and collective action at the level of the living social system:

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’, which ‘functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions’, all of which, in turn, are functions of social situatedness—historically, politically, economically, culturally, and so on (1977: 81-3). The link between class habitus – the structuring principles of bodies politic – and collective action is primarily political; it is a function of political evaluations: the simultaneous valorisation of one group and corollary devaluation of another in political divisions of the social world. Habitus can thus be construed in almost taxonomic terms, as a classificatory but dynamic schemata which situates ways of knowing and being in particular hierarchical fields and relations of power. As a basis for understanding social class, the concept of habitus thus is anti-essentialist. First, and crucial for our purposes here, we can construe class as at least in part participation in a system of meanings, mediations, and remediations, as well as a categorical yet dynamic relationship not only to the means of production, but significantly to the modes and means of representation by and through which class position is produced and reproduced. Second, class becomes blended, hybrid, and multiple; it is written and construed in relation to a variable and (theoretically) infinite blend of ‘tastes’, dispositions, and bodily trainings (Luke & Luke, 1999).

Their formal or taxonomic qualities notwithstanding, meaning systems in bodies politic are, according to Bourdieu, systems of ‘economic exchange’ in which meanings derive their value in ‘relation to a market’ (1991a: 66-7). In turn, the value of meanings

derives social force from established relations of power and the field-variable expectations (and, indeed attitudes) through which these relations of power are articulated (1991a: 67). The meaning systems of bodies politic are expressions of a ‘whole class habitus’ (1991a: 83). In this context, we can view political meanings as specialised knowledge registers that aim ‘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’ (1991a: 127).

In this regard, the production of political meanings is yet another autodidactic function of the state and its corporate and institutional agents – a formal self-justification of the body politic to its sovereign subjects. The body politic, by definition, must engage in forms of ‘public pedagogy’ (Luke, 1996) that broadcast not only preferred representations (in an Orwellian sense), but also, to recall Lemke’s categories, set out preferred intersubjective relations and attitudinal predispositions towards critique, categories of inclusion, and towards its Others (Luke, in press). Hence in the current context the creation of ‘unpeople’, and of more or less valuable people, becomes a function of mass-mediated political meanings (Pilger, 2002: 9).

With the current political trend towards reducing all values to expressions of price, the crudest of evaluations become possible: ‘Some people are more valuable than others’ (American Broadcasting Corporation, 1978, as cited in Bagdikian, 1997: 114). This is nowhere more evident than in the screen-to-screen media saturation on the first “anniversary” of the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001. The deaths of 2,882 people commanded almost two weeks of global media attention, culminating in a 24-hour global media blitz on September 11, 2002. While the deaths are undoubtedly

tragic, and the acts which brought them about morally reprehensible, they are no more so than the more than 75 million violent deaths which have happened since ‘peace broke out’ in 1945 (Saul, 1997: 12). There are no anniversaries for the remainder of these deaths. They are largely the deaths of “unpeople”; people from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and South America. Unpeople are politically devalued to the point of worthlessness by being rendered almost entirely invisible to “the masses” of Western mass media (Pilger, 2002). While the West mass-mourned the deaths of less than 3,000 people in New York and Washington, 12 million people in Africa were starving to death (World Health Organisation, 2002).

Militarising mediations thus function by increasing the value differential between bodies politic. At once they construe a monolithic, homogeneous and morally reprehensible Other. At the same time, they create hierarchical evaluations that are tacitly based on what counts as a death, what counts as war, and, indeed, which acts constitute war – with binaries between, for example, warfare and terrorism, legitimately induced death-by-military-action and criminal behaviour, urban and peasant deaths, and between deaths in one kind of body politic and another. These are based on new hierarchies of complex categorisations of bodies politic along lines, of course, of class and gender, ethnicity and race, space and place, but, increasingly as well religion (a species of ‘attitude’ and moral pre-disposition, to recall our earlier categories, especially in relation to non-secular statehood) and new vectors of visible colour/race/ethnicity.

Bodies politic, class, and policy

By seeing bodies politic as living systems, we can better understand how they have become—and are presently becoming—militarised. It is Douglas Kellner’s conclusion that the current state of global militarisation ‘ends the fantasies of neo-

liberalism that the market alone can solve all social problems and provide the best mechanism for every industry and sector of life' (Kellner, 2002). We would go a step further to argue that the mode of political economy erroneously called "neoliberalism"—the allegedly laissez faire market dogma which has dominated world affairs since Reagan and Thatcher—in fact entails militarism and mass violence, on whichever scale such ideas are propagated (cf. Armitage & Graham, 2001).

Marx (1973) recognises this in classical theories of laissez faire:

The economists express this as follows: Each pursues his own interest and only his private interest; and thereby serves the interests of all, the general interest, without willing or knowing it. The real point is not that each individual's pursuit of his private interests promotes the totality of private interests, the general interest. One could just as well deduce from this abstract phrase that each individual reciprocally blocks the assertion of the others' interests, so that, instead of a general affirmation, this war of all against all produces a general negation. The point is rather that private interest is itself already a socially determined interest, which can be achieved only within the conditions laid down by society and with the means provided by society; hence it is bound to the reproduction of these conditions and means. It is the interests of the private persons; but its content, as well as the form and means of its realization, is given by social conditions independent of all. (Marx, 1973: 156)

Marx's point here is doubly instructive. First, the vulgar liberal concept of "self-interest", when transformed into policy, generates a raft of exhortations to further the general good by promoting ceaseless and thorough competition amongst and between every organ of society, and at every level of human association—literally, a 'war of all against all' becomes policy. This policy has been inculcated at every level, from the interpersonal to the international, for more than 20 years. But Marx also refers us to what is "up for grabs" in terms of pursuing self-interest, socially speaking, and to the rules by which one is supposed to go about "grabbing" whatever is at stake in any given social context.

Put simply, in any context, individual economic interests are socially determined: the "stakes" are set externally of individuals. In business, it is one's self-

interest to increase money profits. In war, it is one's self interest to annihilate the enemy. Under a globalised "neoliberalism", what appears to be in the self-interest for any given social system is determined precisely by the situation of that system in a globalised 'field of struggles', and in terms of the limited (although often allegedly limitless) stakes on offer in a global system (cf. Bourdieu, 1998: 32). When we consider the global economic 'war of all against all' legislated for by latter-day neoliberals, and when we situate economic "self-interest" as being determined by bodies politic situated within a global field of struggles, one which has different forms of symbolic capital at stake at every level of "the game", we see that the system is structured to pit every group against every other, and often against the individuals that constitute the group, since each absorbs the resources of the group by merely existing as a constituent. What appears to vulgar liberalism as a dynamic of self-interest functioning unquestionably in the general good becomes a many-sided dynamic of mutual destruction—total and comprehensive war. A senior US defense advisor expresses the long-term outcomes of neoliberalism in unequivocal terms:

No stages. This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq, then we take a look around and see how things stand. That is entirely the wrong way to go about it ... If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don't try to ... piece together clever diplomatic solutions ... but just wage a total war against these tyrants, I think we will do very well. Our children will sing great songs about us years from now. (Perle, 2001, as cited in Dixon, 2001)

The militaristic impetus informing Perle's discourse, as with most aspects of the formation, character, and constitution of bodies politic, can most readily be identified from a new 'mediations' perspective (Silverstone, 1999: 13).

New mediations, new bodies politic, and the emergence of neofeudal corporatism

New mediations emerge when meanings are moved between formerly disparate or distant bodies politic. Results can range from new understandings to new

misunderstandings; from new friendships to new conflicts; or from cultural openness to intense intercultural antagonisms. New mediations are, by definition, new ways of relating. New forms of relatedness are necessarily overlaid upon older forms, often giving rise to conflicts and crises of understanding. This is most obvious when a new medium is oriented towards control over space rather than time (Innis, 1951). Those using new media forms to propagate ideas and direct action across vast geographical spaces will invariably encounter cultural resistances, which are the product of disparate histories, and thus are time-based. Cultural resistance is firstly axiological—that is, evaluatively based. Human resistance to exogenously triggered changes is self-evidently a function of felt needs for autonomy, or justice, or social equilibrium, or survival, or all of these. Cultural disruptions that emerge from new mediations are manifest expressions of perceived threats to cultural autonomy in the determination of values; of a sense of justice in the formal and informal relationships between people; and of a clear historical tendency in social systems towards social equilibria. New mediations disrupt all of these, giving rise to new political economic configurations, new bodies politic, and new intra and inter-bodies politic relations.

It is our contention that, despite claims of ‘a new imperialism’ (Pilger, 2002), the current systemic trend is towards a species of neo-feudal corporatism. One notable similarity between our current age and feudal relations is the social logic of a “permanent arms economy”—a total “protection racket” (White, 1962). In feudal societies, excess production was promoted for the maintenance of a 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 organisation is “designed” (in the same loose sense) to produce and support

high-tech, massive, globally operative military institutions, most of them corporately owned.

Today, the largest item of trade in tangible things is the trade in arms (Saul, 1997: 21). The most expensive items that “developed” countries produce are arms-related: aeroplanes, satellites, space vehicles, nuclear missiles, mass-produced light armaments, and so forth. The predominance of the military in terms of consuming resources only begins with armaments. Research, military personnel, government personnel, public relations campaigns, intelligence services, and even multi-million dollar movie budgets can all be put under the banner of military expenditure. 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 organisations associated with these combined parts of the military/disciplinary industrial complex, the expenditure on organised violence and the suppression of same becomes literally incalculable.

The implications of contemporary militarism are far-reaching. At a practical level, we cannot separate military organisation along public-private lines, or, within that, between individual and collective interests, or between general activity and specifically military activity. The profound influence of the military upon our current age cannot be isolated and pointed to as something which stands apart from any of us. It is no accident that among the 40 largest corporate manufacturers of military hardware can be found some of the world’s largest finance companies (General Electric, General Motors); telecommunications companies (Siemens, Texas Instruments); media organisations (CBS, NBC); manufacturers of aeroplanes (Boeing, McDonnell Douglas), household appliances (Samsung, General Electric); and automobiles (General Motors, Rolls Royce, Mitsubishi, Fiat, Daimler-Benz).

Militarism is a pervasive production value for the culture industries. Speaking about the history of violence in US mass culture, one commentator has this to say:

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.

[...]

The way the myth works is to restrict the actors' sense of available options. “A man's got to do what a man's got to do.” That's what the myth says to you. It says that there's only two choices, kill or be killed. If you approach a situation of conflict in those terms, you've already eliminated the possibility of negotiations you've eliminated the possibility of compromise. (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 military influence in cultural production is direct, strategic, and purposive. A documentary produced by the Center for Defense Information (CDI) entitled The Military in the Movies details almost a century of direct, conscious military involvement in the production of movies (CDI, 1997)—a practice which, as we have seen, began with Creel. The CDI documentary is filled with examples of direct military involvement in major Hollywood “blockbusters” (the name of a bomb used to destroy large parts of cities since WWII), 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 methods (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 entertainment, especially within the context of a globalised media environment, the relationships that emerge between mass mediated representations of violence, military-mindedness, and actual mass murder become more rather than less obviously direct.

Violence is no longer a matter of brute physical strength, or even of conscious control over who gets killed or hurt. Today, there is no necessary connection between a person's physical strength, intellect, or strength of character, and their ability to perpetrate violence on the most massive scale. The perceived outcomes of actual violence, as experienced by the perpetrator, are formally and technologically indistinguishable from mass-mediated entertainment, 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, eg, Gray, 2001). Even people who witnessed the devastation in person said it 'was like watching a movie' (see, eg, Balaghi, 2002).⁴

Since Creel, public opinion thus has become merely and principally another "button" to be pressed in the prosecution of mass violence. It is all the more easy to press that particular button when violence is generally understood as a solution to social problems, even moreso when it is a staple theme of entertainment and an accepted expression of morality. The concept of "entertainment" implies evaluations of enjoyment, amusement, frivolity, and triviality. Violence is a staple theme of mass entertainment. The implication is that violence is generally regarded as being enjoyable, frivolous, etc. The dominant view presented in globally mass-mediated culture of violence as a form of social justice and heroic endeavour implies social schizophrenia in terms of evaluations, especially in the domain of morality. As it is presented in mass culture, legitimate violence is always a response or reaction to illegitimate violence. The basic and seemingly eternal schema is violence in the name of "good" versus violence in the name of "evil", however these qualities might happen to be defined. In mass culture, even fiscal rewards do not figure as motivation for violent solutions. Invariably, heroes act for the good of family or society, usually out of revenge, with total disregard for

themselves—violence is thus presented as a matter of unselfish civic duty. Violence in the name of the “good” is presented as socially sacrificial in nature and, more perversely, as the ultimate expression of a commitment to the general good. Violence thus becomes the ultimate expression of applied ethics. The violence presented in mass culture does not merely cause violence by increasing its social and political worth—it is violence.

Resistance is fertile: neofeudal corporatism and denials of pacification

There is a new political economic system emerging. Its position is being cemented by the current trend of militarisation. This is a ‘wall-to-wall’ FoxNews militarism that has the effect of trivialising both war and death – bringing them to the same discursive levels and tropes of talk shows, cartoons, and soap operas. The emergence of neofeudal corporatism presents critique with very difficult dilemmas. The most difficult of these is that the neofeudal system thrives on critique, both in terms of constructing Otherness (“If you’re not with us, you’re against us”), in providing material to sharpen the rhetorical tools of mass mediated war, and in providing a source of commodifiable discourse. Further, the public mediation of critique tends to symmetrise 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 and technologically oriented towards mass destruction.

In some ways, the emergence of neofeudal corporatism presents an ironic twist, both contradictory and potentially generative, to the ‘end of nation’, ‘end of the state’, ‘end of ideology’, proclamations of the last decade. But those were never more than blatant Western triumphalisms. The emergent system is neofeudal not only because of

the redistribution of surplus wealth, labor, 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 naked and open form of nation-state militarism: the projection of technology, mediation and immanent physical force – a powerful coalescing of the kinds of discourse strategies developed by Creel and refined for almost a century by corporate advertising and media with sheer physical presence and embodied power. This is done, for once, not under the auspices of transnational corporations or – however the current diplomatic debates turn out – by means of some form of global governance. Rather, it is professed and committed by national, personified leadership, in defense of national borders, and in defense of a particular form of life and moral order. At the same time, these same leaders make policy for, on behalf of, and in the interests of multinational corporates and are themselves members of corporate groups called “political parties”.

In this regard, it is a form of militarisation of the body politic that marks out a return to Creel, not a departure. The formation of the body politic since 1968, and doubly since the coming down of the wall, has been undertaken by a transnational political economy dominated by corporate multinationals who have brought together traditional means of production with postmodern modes of information in the pursuit of new political economic formations which better suit their agendas. Hence, the ‘end of nation’ hypothesis, both as an attempt to empirically describe these new formations and as an ideological move. Yet ironically, these positions allowed the state, its military-industrial complexes – material, psychoanalytic and mediational – to recede under multinational corporate cover.

The nation is back. There is little talk of multinationals or globalisation now, and as the NASDAQ and Silicon Valley – the infrastructure and capital of the new semiotic economies – continue into economic free-fall, the current conditions have orchestrated a

shift to 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 and armaments. In this way, the emergence of neofeudal corporatism is in many ways both political economic anachronism – a return to a crude pre-multinational nationalism – and a reassertion of a domestic economics writ globally. Like Creel, it is a clear enlisting and putative subordination of mere economic goals and means to the military aims of nation state. Like so many militaristic moves before, it clothes economic interests and aims in defense of nation and borders, and, however quietly it is put, race, “creed”, morality, and other perennial bases of evaluative biases.

As a new genre of technologically enhanced warfare, it demands of the body politic a mediated endorsement (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 merely augmented from time-to-time by actual physical, embodied sacrifice of its youth. In this way, unlike the ‘War to End all Wars’ endorsed by Creel, it constitutes a militarisation of a simulation—it constructs and asks for the martial consent of a disembodied politic in a total negation of life. These are the new technologies of mediated warfare.

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¹ May 1917-June 1919

² There are obvious parallels to the current moves in the US following the ‘patriot’ legislation, with a focus on self-censorship and alignment of media messages.

³ It should be noted that all these dimensions of meaning – the Presentational, Attitudinal, and Organisational – are instantiated at once in any given act of meaning,

whether our focus is words, pictures, colour, intonation, gesture or whichever mode of meaning making.

4 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.