In the mid-1990s, scholars turned their attention toward the ways that ongoing political, economic, and cultural transformations were changing the realm of the social, specifically that aspect of it described by the notion of affect: pre-individual bodily forces, linked to autonomic responses, which augment or diminish a body’s capacity to act or engage with others. This “affective turn” and the new configurations of bodies, technology, and matter that it reveals, is the subject of this collection of essays. Scholars based in sociology, cultural studies, science studies, and women’s studies illuminate the movement in thought from a psychoanalytically informed criticism of subject identity, representation, and trauma to an engagement with information and affect; from a privileging of the organic body to an exploration of nonorganic life; and from the presumption of equilibrium-seeking closed systems to an engagement with the complexity of open systems under far-from-equilibrium conditions. Taken together, these essays suggest that attending to the affective turn is necessary to theorizing the social.

"From the trauma of cultural displacement to the political economy of affective labor, the essays brought together here examine the many facets of affect, focusing on its consequences for theories of the social and well-informed by recent rethinkings of power. Expertly framed by Patricia Clough's introduction, the volume presents a diversity of voices engaged in a shared exploration of the conceptual landscape stretching beyond the bend of 'the affective turn.'"
—BRIAN MASSUMI, author of Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation

"Framed by Patricia Ticineto Clough's stunning essay, this collection weaves together many of the most profound changes that have characterized not only critical scholarship in the human sciences for the last thirty-five years or so but the social, political, and economic changes that describe the world as 'glocal'—the entwined and so-fast linking of the stubborn and material 'hereness' of life as lived and breathed, on the one hand, and an array of forces and practices spanning place and time marked by terms such as technoscience, telecommunications, flexible accumulation, and molecularization, on the other."—JOSEPH SCHNEIDER, author of Donna Haraway: Live Theory

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We approached these stories and photographs with a sense of caution, aware of their problematic production and circulation, but also suspicious of our own overdetermined and emotionally complex attraction to them; in choosing to write on this media, we knew that we had been seduced by it. We wondered with what agendas we might be complicit in engaging this documentation, given the phenomena of the embedded journalist and governmental control of war imagery. What were we doing taking these stories seriously when U.S. media had, in part, been so discredited that the New York Times apologized for some of its own coverage?3

The question for us became, then, not how to determine the accuracy of this coverage, but rather how to explore what forces it mobilizes, excites, provokes, draws together and makes possible; when focusing on the effects of this media, its truth becomes incidental. Given how deconstruction has seriously drawn into question the possibility of truth in representation and has displaced intellectuals from our presumed vantage point outside representation, it should not be so difficult to give up on truth claims. Nonetheless, academic scholarship continues to engage media objects as exterior, applying theory against them to interpret or reveal their meanings and truths. But understanding academic practice not only from within the logics of representation but also as intimately implicated with the dangerous stuff of flows of capital, governmental, and transnational information networks means that we are and can only be caught in the intellectual production of war and death. These concerns exceed accountability, forcing us to ask how complicity can work or be worked. For us, this is to begin practicing methods of writing from within an undefined terrain of “no outside.”

We intend working from no outside seriously as a methodological goal, not simply as a rhetorical device. For example, our method parallels one engineered by World War II lieutenant colonel S. L. A. Marshall. Interviewing soldiers after battle, Marshall found that no one soldier could offer a complete account of what had taken place; a coherent narrative could only be pieced together from the partial and imprecise recollections of the entire company. As we will discuss later, Marshall’s research illuminated the traumatic experiences of soldiers in war, yet this information was used not to tend to their individual needs, but to develop more effective training procedures that could, for example, anticipate and resolve the fear of killing another human. Regardless of their uses within the military, for us Marshall’s studies survive as fragments of a history of trauma, war, and bodies that might serve other ends.4 Similarly, to produce our own account, we untangle and stretch articles, photographs, sound bites, and the theory we find through them as facets of a story the
ultimate “truth value” of which may be less relevant or interesting than its utility in drawing together some of the contemporary tendencies in operations of power. Our writing aims to produce documentation of our assembling theoretical and historical essays with contemporary media. Our mediated distance from the soldiers storied in the articles is, for us, no more problematic than the distance between the soldiers themselves and their lost memories.

This claim of documentation and our complicity within it makes us vulnerable to the criticism that our project is merely descriptive with no politic of its own. Of course, a document that is merely descriptive is entirely impossible, a point that we think undoes this criticism and furthermore suggests a politic that cannot be mapped in advance but for which conditions of emergence could be fostered. Rather than ascribing politics to a plan or a set of theoretical or ideological allegiances, our politics might be found in the impulses that drive us, or the attractions that draw us to the documents we investigate. So we arrive at this project in part because of a shared opposition to the occupation of Iraq, a morbid fascination with damaged bodies, and an ambivalence about technoscience that vacillates between philic and phobic. Accounts of the wounded soldier and his medical rehabilitation call to us as they surround us, and though our engagement itself may not be a political choice (it may only be a giving in), we hope that something in our process might spark us toward an other politics that could prove unexpectedly viable.

While we piece together fragments of stories about specific soldiers, those stories move us away from the individual or human subject to consider how the trauma of war operates on other levels. Situating trauma in theories of power draws our attention to how trauma organizes biological matter in excess of the individual. Following Michel Foucault’s argument that techniques of discipline and control coexist and cooperate, we will entertain the thought that the injured soldier be considered an assemblage of capacities. From this viewpoint, the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers is not the first instance of modifying or directing the form and expression of their bodies, but rather constitutes a singular practice within networks of technoscience and capital that continually calculate, engineer, and mutate the matter of life itself. We thus suggest an alternative theory of trauma that does not perceive a soldier’s body as being whole, then broken, and then finally put back together. Rather, the soldier can be perceived as a temporary composition of matter/energy flows that conducts the networks of technoscience and capital in which it is embedded, allowing those networks to adapt and survive. The so-called rehabilitation of the wounded soldier is therefore incidental before the constant rehabilitation

of technologies of power. Trauma in this sense occasions unexpected productivity, for which narratives of loss cannot fully account.

**TRAUMA, MATTER**

In her treatment of trauma theory, Ruth Leys recounts the historical development of a general theory of trauma focusing on the work of Sigmund Freud, the so-called father of trauma studies, and his disciples Abram Kardiner and Sandor Ferenczi. Leys highlights the work of Kardiner, whose compelling case studies of returning soldiers helped catalyze a paradigm shift within psychology and what would be called trauma studies, from an explanatory emphasis on libidinal forces to what Freud termed the life and death instincts. Leys cites a series of documented symptoms that, while not unknown within medicine and psychiatry when Kardiner published his findings in 1932, were nonetheless provocative within psychoanalysis, where war neuroses still “occupied a peculiarly uncertain position.” Kardiner’s list of symptoms would eventually occasion a new diagnosis, “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD):

Terrifying repetitive nightmares connected to the war, often of an annihilating or sadistic nature, or hallucinatory reenactments of the traumatic situation; motor disturbances, including tremors and convulsions or motor paralyses, such as loss of speech; sensory deficits, such as hysterical blindness and other anesthesias; fainting spells or fits of unconsciousness resembling epileptic fits; irritability, including startled reactions to sudden noise and other stimuli; uncontrollable aggressive outbursts; intense fear and anxiety; disturbances of the autonomic system; and amnesia for the traumatic event. Above all . . . a profound mental “paralysis.”

This description provokes a reconsideration of the relationship between the mind and material flesh, as the two fold together such that the emotional stress of war disorders the body’s proper functioning, inducing loss of motor control and sensory failure. This embodiment of war trauma, in which the mental traces of war injure the body after its return, exposes a current running through the history of trauma studies, that is, how a certain historically situated understanding of biology and physics (theories of homeostasis and thermodynamics, respectively) underwrites the emergence of trauma theory, largely determining the forms such theory would assume through the twentieth century.

This current begins with early conceptions of trauma, which described “a surgical wound, conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective
envelope of the body resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism.” As Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle evidences, doctors and psychologists appropriated this definition, interpreting and treating war neuroses as a biological disruption of the nervous system sustained during a traumatic event. Freud, however, influenced by Kardiner’s case histories of soldiers who had not experienced “the intervention of any gross mechanical force” during the war but who experienced similar traumatic neuroses as soldiers who had,9 insisted on a theory of trauma that separated, to some extent, the traumatized mind from the traumatized body. In this split, Freud nonetheless favored an account of biological wholeness and bodily trauma that could be extended to the workings of the mind. This is evident in his definition of trauma: “We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break though the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism’s energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure” (33). Freud’s theory posits a self-contained biological organism whose interior is delimited by a protective shell and to which violence and trauma are external. Under a stable set of conditions the shell functions properly, regulating the movement of energy flowing into and out of the organism; this expresses what Freud referred to as “the dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general . . . to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli” (67). Freud’s account of the biological organism follows the psychophysicist G. T. Fechner’s constancy principle, which ascribes biological organisms a tendency toward homeostasis or stability, an expression in part of the “inertia inherent in organic life” (43). The nontraumatized body is perceived as an order of biological organ relations (including Freud’s “organ of the mind”) and psychological systems that function cooperatively and self-calibrate, achieving a state that Ferenczi calls “unified.”

With this model of the regulation of energy, psychoanalytic theory articulates war trauma and neuroses as fragmentation, or a puncturing that disrupts the homeostatic unity of the organism’s protective shell and produces “an anarchy of the organs, parts and elements of organs, whose reciprocal cooperation alone renders proper global functioning—that is to say life—possible.” In other words, trauma, understood as an excess of stimulation/energy, disrupts the organism’s unified state, overwhelming the mind/body’s capacity to effectively bind incoming energy and moving the organism far from equilibrium toward death. As Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova state: “The [thermodynamic] organism must ward off death constantly by charging and releasing the energy thus accumulated; nothing must be dissipated, everything must be used up and discharged once it has exhausted its function.” According to a general theory of trauma, the traumatized organism can restore homeostasis and prevent imminent death by channeling excess energy to the unconscious. This energy later manifests through traumatic neuroses, which repeat the failure of the organism to effectively bind the energy, impairing the complete reunification of the organism until the repression of the initial trauma can be sorted out, presumably through psychoanalysis.

We read the description of such a traumatic split in Dan Baum’s “The Price of Valor,” in which he recounts the following conversation with Dan Knox, a Vietnam veteran: “On the day we were talking, the Times ran a page-one story on Army snipers in Baghdad. A sniper who had killed seven men in a day was quoted as saying that he felt no remorse. ‘He’s got the thousand-yard stare,’ Knox said, tapping the accompanying photograph with his index finger. ‘Go back and find him in fifteen years.’” Knox describes his own experience in Vietnam as a constant double image, the superimposition of war imagery/memory on the present: “I see you sitting in that chair, and I’m also watching this funeral party I gunned. In a few minutes, it will be a sampam I gunned on a river, with a woman and her babies falling out of it into the water and kicking around as I shoot them.” Referring to soldiers recently returned from Iraq, Sara Corbett describes this type of delay as “psychological afterburn.” She quotes the damaged soldier Robert Shrode: “My body’s here, but my mind is there.” This separation is one of many disjunctions experienced by returning soldiers, including significant memory loss that soldiers must be convinced they have experienced. For example, Michael Cain remembers nothing from between the time he was injured and the time when he woke up in a hospital; his memory is later pieced together from other soldiers’ accounts. Keeping in mind a homeostatic perception of life that locates traumatic neuroses in the organism’s failure to bind energy, we read Corbett’s description of soldiers’ volatility as that of an energy crisis. She describes “a visceral undercurrent of anger that makes them walk around feeling ready to explode” (40). Corbett quotes the damaged soldier Brent Bricklin: “I can go from being happy-go-lucky and joking to having someone’s throat in my hand, like that . . . . My fuse is short . . . it’s real short” (40).
Psychoanalytic theories of trauma do not merely record manifestations of trauma in the mind or body but mobilize specific ways of addressing bodily matter, intensifying perceptions of the body as a systemic organization of capacities and energy that, like a steam engine, can be regulated, overwhelmed, or cease to function altogether. If this thermodynamic model underwrites psychoanalytic accounts of trauma, it is in part due to the connection between thermodynamic organizations of bodily matter and what Foucault called disciplinary mechanisms of power. As Parisi and Terranova write, “The disciplined body is the thermodynamic organism, the hierarchical organization of organs, bounded within a self, crossed by currents of energy tending towards entropy and death.”16 That is, disciplinary mechanisms direct a perception of the body as solid matter which, like a machine, conducts energy, “centralizes the blockages and segments of the body, [and] intensifies reactive forces and delimits its function to a molar order.”17 The perception of this enclosed, systemic body emerged alongside industrial capitalism, which looked toward a solid body that could be trained and worked, and toward a social body whose labor could be exploited en masse.18

Though other works by Foucault (The History of Sexuality and Madness and Civilization come to mind) explore the “political anatomy” of docility and discipline, the soldier of Discipline and Punish allows Foucault’s argument about disciplining to crystallize, bringing together in his body economic, political, and social arrangements and practices that characterize a disciplinary society.19 For Foucault, the disciplinary society is not born at once, nor does it mark a revolution or complete break with the past; rather, it collects itself over a span of both sudden and slow mutations, transformations, and exchanges: “The invention of this new political anatomy must not be seen as a sudden discovery. It is rather a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method” (138). At these “scattered locations,” disciplinary mechanisms operate on two different levels: first, producing the organic body, organized as systems within fleshy contours that are set in line with the limits of the self/subject, as well as addressing compositional or preindividual levels below the body-form (as parts and movements); and second, arranging body-forms in compositions and collections, what Foucault calls “enclosures” (the hospital, barracks, family). Approaching the first set of disciplinary mechanisms, those that not only enclose the body as an organism but also manage and develop its bodily capacities, forces, and movements, Foucault explains that docility is a “question not of treating the body, en masse, ‘wholesale,’ as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it ‘retail,’” individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself—movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity; an infinitesimal power over the active body” (137). Practical manifestations of this making docile, which we see recapitulated in the U.S. military today, would include exercises in posture, comportment, and placement of feet when walking or standing; the regulation of waking, eating, and sleeping times; and repetitive drills toward exact and timed performance of specific tasks. Therefore the soldier’s body becomes one “that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds; becomes skillful and increases its forces.”136

Hence our interest in discipline is not in terms of the identity of the soldier as such, but rather in terms of his capacity to act. The breakdown of the body into capacities that can be minimized or maximized renders the soldier more docile, more effective, and more controlled. In “The Price of Valor,” Baum offers what we take as contemporary examples of preindividual disciplinary techniques characterized by an Army trainer as follows: “We attempt to instill a reaction. Hear a pop, hit the ground, return fire. Act instinctually.”20 Such instinctual reactions are clearly described in the following rescue:

Brown resisted the impulse to move straight to the glaring red wounds, and instead snapped into protocols. Doing his best to ignore Cain’s shrieking, he did an ABC check on his friend—airway, breathing, and circulation. Then he, Blohm, and two other medics lifted Cain out of the shattered cab and laid him on a litter. Cain wasn’t in danger of bleeding to death; the bubbly, malodorous burns caused by the blast had cauterized his arteries. Though the pain was obviously horrible, Brown gave Cain no morphine, because he knew that he would be heading for immediate surgery and wanted him lucid enough to sign surgical-consent papers.21

In addition, Baum explains how the Army developed techniques to “play down the fact that shooting equals killing” in order to maximize the number of soldiers who would fire their weapons at other human beings.22 This was largely achieved by isolating and managing the technical ability to discharge weapons, and disaggregating these skills from their possible meanings, for example, that shooting equaled killing; shooting instead became an end in and of itself. Hence, as Baum points out, the word kill is almost never used in Army training, which instead uses massing fire, a term that signals a technological
shift from single-fire weaponry aimed at a specific target toward automatic weaponry that discharges a field of bullets across an undistinguished and hostile terrain. Developing combat capacities through these technological innovations circumvents a limitation posed by single-fire weapons: “A soldier who has learned to squeeze off careful rounds at a target will take the time, in combat, to consider the humanity of the man he is about to shoot.”

The docility of the soldier’s body not only describes its openness to manipulation and regulation. It also proposes that of the capacities harnessed by discipline, the most significant perhaps is the capacity for openness, to give up to or give into. Thus addressing the soldier’s body in terms of its preindividual forces or capacities also facilitates an understanding of the way in which those forces can be set into relation with other forms—specifically here, tools and weaponry—a process Foucault describes as “body-object articulation.”

Departing from a Marxist ontology in which capitalism separates the laborer from the machine and the product of labor given up, Foucault emphasizes the process of giving up itself, a matter of practices that are invested in and reconstitute subject-object relations.

For instance, the manoeuvre of eighteenth-century military theory elaborates a precise coordination between the soldier and his rifle, aligning the parts of his body with the parts of his weapon and specifying a succession of movements and relations between them. In an example cited by Foucault, the act of “bringing the rifle forward” requires three distinct stages outlined in detail. For example, in the third and final stage, the soldier is instructed: “Let go of the rifle with the left hand, which falls along the thigh, raising the rifle with the right hand, the lock outwards and opposite the chest, the right arm half flexed, the elbow close to the body, the thumb lying against the lock, resting against the first screw, the hammer resting on the first finger, the barrel perpendicular.”

Foucault thus argues that disciplinary tactics produce a synthesis or “coercive link” between parts of bodies and machines that a Marxist analysis of alienation may not effectively account for. He writes that the military maneuver “constitutes a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex.”

For this reason, the term soldier seems inadequate, as it reifies a subject position that exists prior to its technological articulation. Rather, we propose the term soldier-body to focus a perception of what are commonly called soldiers as temporal, technical compositions of military and technoscientific intervention whose borders are open to continual renegotiation.

We see this sort of body-tool-weapon-machine articulation in the aforementioned description of mass-fire weaponry. In this case, the articulation releases what the military sees as a moral obstacle, rendering the soldier more effective. We also see this body-tool-weapon-machine articulation in descriptions of the use of armor worn by U.S. soldiers. Neela Banerjee reports in the New York Times, “Thanks to advances in everything from flak jackets to battlefield medical attention, many soldiers survive attacks that would have killed them a generation ago. But as more survive, more inevitably return from Iraq with grievous injuries, including amputations.”

Baum writes, “The ratio of wounded soldiers to killed is higher in this war (a little more than five to one) than in the Second World War and Vietnam, probably because of body armor and advances in battlefield medicine.” He continues, “Rather than trying to pierce shielded torsos with bullets, the Iraqis increasingly rely on blowing off the Americans’ unprotected arms and legs with explosives: car bombs, mines, rocket-propelled grenades, and ‘improvised explosive devices.’”

The soldier-body’s protective shell, under these circumstances, is not simply the skin, but the skin armor, a complex relation that extends the body and secures and exposes soldiers to different harms such as dismemberment, increasing its capacity to avoid death in what have, in other wars, been unbearable traumatic collisions.

The training that the injured soldier Robert Shrode receives to manipulate his $35,000 carbon-fiber prosthetic is therefore a retraining or a continuation of training that sees the arm and its replacement alike as an embodied value potential. Even before the soldier-body enters the military, the military invests in the arm’s potential value. For example, “America’s Army,” a video-game recruiting tool, invites civilians to participate in a real-time networked simulation of battle that not only draws their interest toward a military career (information about which is a hyperlinked click away) but also affords an opportunity to develop hand-eye coordination in simulated missions; the trigger finger thus learns to fire at virtual suspected targets long before it fires at actual ones.

If, in battle, the trigger finger or arm is valued for making the soldier efficient, it is also valued in its destruction—exposing it to harm and then reconstructing it with prosthetics, therapy, and medication. As Shrode’s case suggests, the soldier’s arm thus offers an entry point for networks of technoscience and capital. “The Army had flown him several times to Walter Reed to work with its best occupational therapists,” Corbett writes of Shrode, “training the tiny reflexive muscles in his elbow so that they eventually could control the carbon-fiber myoelectric hand that was being custom-built for him in Nashville.”

If his new prosthetic does not “work out well,” Shrode can choose to have his elbow amputated and be fit for a more effective prosthetic. He thus acquires an interest in the destruction of his organic flesh—an event no longer
figured as traumatic, but rather as value producing insofar as it contributes to the health of biomedical institutions, and in the retraining of his muscles/prosthesis. In this way, Shrode himself invests in a body-tool-weapon-machine articulation, one that renders the organic and technological indistinguishable. The violence of this indistinguishability is made starkly clear by the wounded soldier Ed Platt: “The signature moment of his calamity was when the medics used the ribbons of his leg—shattered by a rocket-propelled grenade—as its own tourniquet.”

As mentioned before, discipline does not only seek to develop capacities and organize them into a bodily form; it also seeks to arrange bodies within larger enclosures. Therefore, the soldier-body operates as part of greater entities. Not only is the arm of the soldier part of a body-tool-weapon-machine articulation, the soldier-body also forms part of the composition of other bodies. By the nineteenth century, the thermodynamics of discipline operated not only on the organism but also across organisms. The factory of thermodynamic industrial capitalism evidenced this organization of docile bodies in coordinated arrangements, as workers were dynamically placed within the enclosure of the factory toward a maximization of collective output and a minimization of energy lost to work. Similarly, military science takes the docile soldier-body and situates it dynamically into compositions with other docile bodies, drawing from and feeding into other enclosures such as primary and secondary schools, enclosures that over time together solidify a general and coordinated arrangement of bodies and spaces. The troop of infantry in battle demands a certain occupation and articulation of space, and the individual bodies of soldiers become calculated in terms of how their synthesis serves those needs—soldiers are allocated a volume to inhabit with their body parts and movements toward a total volume required by the troop. In this sense, the soldier-body “is constituted as a part of a multi-segmentary machine.”

Following Foucault’s explication of how discipline operates on and below the level of the body as well as across groups of bodies, we can now see how the soldier-body is never whole and never wholly his own. It cannot be rendered incomplete (punctured, violated, fragmented) even if dramatically injured in battle. Rather, it must be constantly engaged in a process of completion that precedes injury, in fact precedes the organism itself, and goes on and on. This is what we mean when we describe the making docile or disciplining of the soldier-body. As Foucault writes, “If economic exploitation separates the force and product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constraining link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.” We can thus better understand Foucault’s argument that the invention of the military suggests not simply the development of armed forces by which a nation-state engaged the “economic and demographic forces” of external enemies; in the development of military institutions and military sciences, there was an invention of “tactics by which the control of bodies and individual forces was exercised within states.”

Simultaneously serving external and internal needs, Foucault’s military develops a soldier-body that regardless of what is intended of it in battle, is not the property of itself, but always very much belongs to the domestic enclosures that draw it through networks of energy and capital.

A BIOPOLITICS OF CONTROL

Foucault’s analysis suggests that the soldier-body belongs to complexes, compositions, or assemblages, the nature or form of which may change through the course of the soldier-body’s training, deployment, destruction, and rehabilitation. However, as our ability to delimit the enclosure of the military breaks down, or as this enclosure opens up and bleeds into other enclosures (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps programs in schools; military hospitals; Veterans Administration offices and programs; and more recently, National Guard troops in city subway stations), discipline may not be the only arrangement of power worth considering. The military institutions that inspired Foucault’s analysis have changed dramatically since the latter half of the twentieth century, and this has necessitated changes in the nature of the soldier-body, and what can be done with it as well. While the rehabilitation of a wounded soldier-body can be understood as a process of making docile, its capacities restored, altered, or enhanced, here we want to move to an analysis of biopolitical control that encourages us to look to another level—not to the body of an individual soldier, but to the treatment of a population of soldiers. At this scale, we can consider the regularization of the health, energy, and productivity of populations of soldier-bodies. To consider biopolitical control requires examining techniques of power that extend or intensify discipline, but also understanding the application of power toward making live and letting die.

The current context of U.S. military action in Iraq demands such a move to theories of biopolitical control. When we consider the unprecedented role of reserve and privately contracted security troops that challenge distinctions between civilian and soldier; when we learn that the summer of 2004 witnessed the largest turnover of forces in U.S. military history, with two hundred thousand soldiers rotated out and another two hundred thousand moved in; when
we grapple with the disappearance of a front line and a surprising mix of both long-distance, automated-weapon deployment (which characterized the first Gulf War as well as Kosovo) and so-called hand-to-hand combat (more reminiscent of Vietnam-era guerilla combat tactics) — when we make note of the reorganization of combat units to include formerly centralized roles such as medics — we can only but grasp at other ways of comprehending what is taking place and what becomes of the soldier-body and its training in this context.

For Foucault, the distinction between what he calls the “anatomo-politics of discipline” and the “biopolitics of control” hinges on scale. The power of biopolitics, Foucault writes, is “not individualizing,” as is disciplinary anatomo-politics, but rather “massifying,” what he calls a “biopolitics of the human race.” Whereas discipline operates on the body or its subunits (parts, movements, gestures), biopolitics operates on the population, larger in scale than and different in quality from the enclosure. Biopolitics seeks to regularize capacities, both below the human body and above the human subject, treating them as populations. Biopolitical control is “addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on” (242). This does not mean that the organism or body of discipline is erased in the population, but that the organism is opened up, its capacities freed to be administered as a population of capacities. As Foucault states, both anatomo-politics and biopolitics “are obviously technologies of the body, but one is a technology in which the body is individualized as an organism endowed with capacities, while the other is a technology in which bodies are replaced by general biological processes” (249). Biopolitics employs “forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures” (244) that operate through mechanisms of “insurance, individual and collective savings, safety measures, and so on” (246). Increasingly, these mechanisms are informed with the products of all sorts of biotechnologies that operate at genetic, biochemical, and cellular levels.

Though Foucault argues that, historically, anatomo-politics emerges prior to biopolitics, he writes, “they are not mutually exclusive and can be articulated with each other,” citing examples in urban planning, sexuality, and medicine that demonstrate the coexistence of both (250). We understand the anatomo-politics of discipline and the biopolitics of control as both addressing preindividual capacities — energy, ability, attention, knowledge, skill. Through techniques of discipline, capacities are organized within an organism/subject (for the soldier-body, these include energy for fighting, talent and skill at military tasks, strategic faculties, capabilities to interact and coordinate within a troop); through control, capacities are disaggregated from the individual and addressed at a mass scale. While we may find that biopolitical techniques are coming to free themselves of disciplinary arrangements, it seems fruitful to think, at least for the United States during a time in which disciplinary enclosures are mutating but not disappearing, of how anatomo-politics offers a ground for the emergence and articulation of biopolitical technologies. This is to think of how the making docile of bodies renders them available for mechanisms of control. Drawing from Foucault’s own work for an example, we can see how the disciplining of the family arranges sexed relations between bodies toward reproduction, crystallizing sets of acts in terms of identity formations. This disciplining of sexual behavior within families, in turn, makes possible a broader and more general regulation of the birthrate, through natalist policies, across a mass of familial enclosures.

We see many examples of this folding of discipline into control in the contemporary context. The work of biopolitics moves through familiar gendered arrangements of the family, and so the specificity of some biopolitical techniques may be difficult to recognize. For example, various writers note the role played by the wives and mothers of returning soldiers in helping them adjust to new bodies and cope with the emotional fallout of war. Typical photos of injured soldiers depict them in domestic settings: the youthful soldier, missing a limb, immobile on a made-up bed, held in a motherly manner by a wife or girlfriend. “At night, in the quiet of their rented farmhouse, Robert Shrode lets Debra pick the shrapnel out of his body. Over the last six months, she’s tugged out 15 pieces as they have worked their way to the surface of his skin. She has picked them from his legs, from his neck, his face. Sometimes he will study them, these twisted aluminum chunks that have managed to escape while so many more will forever live inside him.”

Predictably, this description offers up the effeminization of the wounded soldier, who, interrupted in his militarized socialization into manhood, becomes trapped in boyhood. It also inscribes the dutiful work of the wife/mother, tending carefully and quietly. But we cannot stop at this familiar narrative. We must also take note of other labors performed by the mothers/wives, such as the navigation of military and medical bureaucracies and the calculation of insurance claims. This labor, though channeled through a gendered anatomo-politics, characterizes the work of biopolitics, the assessment of generalizations, norms, and statistical measures. We see this in the story of Charlene Cain, who herself goes on antidepressants during the time of her son’s return: “At the kitchen table, she is often immersed in the maze of forms required for every treatment, trying to insure that care will be adequate and costs will be covered — complexities that
sometimes take her hours a day to manage. After using up all her allotted vacation and sick pay at her job to assist her son Michael, Charlene relied on her coworkers’ collective donation of one hundred hours of their own paid time off so that she could continue to give care to her son. The demands of laboring with the technological apparatuses of biopolitics, this labor of care directed not at soothing the body but at calculating its costs and probabilities against population standards, exposes how biopolitics draws from disciplined familial arrangements. Thus, even as nuclear families erode and marriages fall apart, biopolitics nonetheless travels through the networked remains of this enclosure.

Similarly, therapy groups in veterans’ hospitals can be said to play a disciplinary role by containing the emotional energy of trauma and directing it back toward productivity. But many soldiers also report on these groups as sites for trading information about insurance claims, benefits programs, and self-medication.

A number of soldiers confess that they were initially put off by the concept of group therapy, figuring it was going to be “a bunch of guys crying and wiping snot on their sleeves.” Most insist they attend not for emotional release but rather to receive information—about disability benefits or discharge procedures. The soldiers’ questions often reflect a me-against-the-world mistrust of what’s to come, an indistinct but entirely accurate perception that this country has failed veterans of past wars. The war will stay with them, they realize, but after a point the Army won’t.

The failure of the contemporary U.S. Army to maintain itself as an enclosure expels returning soldiers into an unpredictable and risky terrain of being home. Here we witness the pressures of biopolitical life mutate the therapeutic setting into a node for information exchange; emotional healing takes a backseat to biopolitical practicalities as the soldiers, too, mutate and modify, adapting new survival skills for navigating the vast accounting bureaucracies that characterize biopolitical societies.

Again, the biopolitics that moves through and perhaps subsumes anatomo-politics seeks something other than docile bodies. As Foucault writes, the purpose of statistical measures such as a birthrate “is not to modify any given phenomenon as such, or to modify a given individual insofar as he is an individual, but, essentially, to intervene at the level at which these general phenomena are determined, to intervene at the level of their generality.” The forces that discipline makes docile—more useful and more dominated—are those which biopolitics regularizes, across bodies and toward a massification of populations. Of course, soldiers are addressed by biopolitics not only in the above examples of rehabilitation. Biopolitics in fact organizes soldier-bodies as a soldier population, a massified body set to statistical predictors, in all phases of its deployment. The work of S. L. A. Marshall alluded to earlier helps elucidate what we could think of as the statistical soldier of control. Marshall’s study of soldiers’ performance in battle led to the formulation of an “average firer,” a type whose behavior could be predicted and calculated. His analysis of the fact that soldiers in battle were often incapable of firing their weapons due to a fear of killing that overwhelmed a fear of being killed provided military tacticians with information from which to develop new training procedures, such as the earlier example of massing fire. As a result of such innovations, the Army subsequently found an increase of up to 90 percent of soldiers shooting back. Hence we have not only a disciplined soldier-body but also a biopolitical soldier-type, a population of likelihoods and percentages with, for example, a suicide rate calculated to be one third “higher than average.” The contemporary crises of insufficient fighting forces for the continued occupation of Iraq (resulting in a mass mobilization of reserve forces and extensions of tours of duty) and the disproportionate impact of military needs on poor and nonwhite populations points to other biopolitical management techniques. Army recruitment practices draw from already statistically organized biopolitical populations, targeting neighborhoods and schools with raced and classed populations marked by a likelihood of military labor. The obvious point that the majority of current recruits enter the military due to a lack of educational and employment opportunities must be understood as the quantification and maximization of availability for absorption into military service.

If indeed damaged soldier-bodies returning from Iraq are drawn from the statistical bodies of soldier-types and if, as such, they are moved through routes that feed off of discipline, what might this mean for these soldier-bodies? Current journalistic profiles, echoing early theories of trauma, depict the return of U.S. soldiers as the final stage of a movement from wholeness to fragmentation and back toward wholeness. As our discussion of discipline shows, an alternate account considers the returning soldier-body as already placed within a web of disciplinary anatomo-politics that constantly organizes its capacities and corporeal forms. Furthermore, an analysis of biopolitics of control suggests that we not only consider the individualizing procedures of disciplinary treatment but also turn toward larger-scale procedures for measuring and assessing damage: “Whereas most soldiers without major injuries will touch down on American soil and undergo a relatively impersonal and perfunctory post-deployment medical screening before returning to duty,
many of the injured soldiers have already spent months being routinely examined, assessed and questioned about their well-being—arguably making it easier to ask for help. As the qualifier “arguably” implies, the connections between the quantification of illness and the methods for improving the health of injured soldiers remain dubious. The science of measuring the health of this population perhaps serves other biopolitical ends. Hence we can look at processes for medical discharge, for example, as a technique of control. As a New York Times article reports:

In order to be medically discharged, soldiers must go before the Army Physical Evaluation Board, which assesses their injuries and then either approves or disapproves the discharge. Eventually they receive a “disability rating” from the Department of Veterans Affairs, which determines how much money they are eligible for. A soldier deemed “100 percent disabled” is granted a base payment of $2,239 monthly. (The payment can be supplemented depending on the severity of the injury.) Though the V.A. judges each case individually, an amputated arm generally gets you a 60 to 90 percent disability rating.

The soldier-body that survives in Iraq does so to be absorbed into systems of calculating the value of illness against potential productivity loss. Though biopolitics might work toward an elimination of the accident or the biological anomaly, illness nonetheless proves useful, productive—an opportunity for shifting and reorganizing flows of capital and energy. Foucault writes: “The field of biopolitics also includes accidents, infirmities, and various anomalies. And it is in order to deal with these phenomena that this biopolitics will establish not only charitable institutions . . . but also much more subtle mechanisms that were much more economically rational than an indiscriminate charity which was at once widespread and patchy . . . We see the introduction of more subtle, more rational mechanisms: insurance, individual and collective savings, safety measures, and so on.” If illness threatens the effectiveness of anatomo-politics as a leaking of capacities, a loss of energy available for work, it registers differently for biopolitics. The giving of illness toward calculation and regulation is for biopolitics a capacity, organized by the Army as balanced data of capital and life chances.

The biopolitics of control therefore arranges time, capacities, and value on a common plane, such that units of each can be interchanged. For individual soldiers operating within this field, their ability to present illness to the Army Physical Evaluation Board is necessary to obtain access to medical and other state services. Soldiers are thus embedded in a complex calculus of illness, in which the relationship between health and value cannot be predicted in advance, but rather must be continually negotiated, as when soldiers measure the benefits of a higher disability rating against potential earnings that could be greater than medical relief. Injured soldiers face impossible choices, knowing that requests for antidepressants from their military doctors will be recorded in their files, quite possibly jeopardizing future career advancement. Medical “help” from this perspective looks more like a loss of options than actual assistance or rehabilitation. For example, Jeremy Gilbert, an Army medic who survived with a leg so damaged it required four operations in six months, wrestled with how to move ahead in his Army career. “He was hoping to stay in the Army for a few more years after he recovered, but worried that if he ‘toughed it out’ for a while, the fact that he was able to perform his duties (though in pain) would lower his disability rating when he did leave the service—a difference of potentially thousands of dollars.” The shock of absorption into biopolitical insurance technologies, or the everyday experience of living as a soldier-type, characterizes return for the contemporary soldier.

What, then, do we make of trauma within a biopolitical field? As discussed earlier, trauma as formulated by Freud and his peers (and as reformulated by doctors and in the popular imagination) addresses the human body as a thermodynamic system and characterizes trauma as an event that disrupts homeostasis. We associate this model of trauma with disciplinary anatomo-politics. The biopolitics of control, on the other hand, addresses bodily matter not as a closed, homeostatic system, but rather as an open, turbulent system. As capacities are freed from bodily constraints to be massified across populations, their disordering within an individual body matters less. Biopolitics, in other words, does not require a reduction of traumatic interference; the management of trauma is itself an end for biopolitics. Biopolitics therefore requires moving away from a model of trauma that constrains or fragments the body, and toward an understanding of trauma as a condition of possibility for technological development; away from an analysis that imagines critically wounded soldiers as the loss of a fighting force, and toward an analysis that assesses traumatized soldier-bodies as productive—productive, that is, for capital, military, and technoscientific interventions. The trauma of the Iraq war, a form of biopolitical illness, offers unexpected returns: opportunities such as the financialization of health, illness, and injury discussed above, as well as the development of new rehabilitative technologies, all of which offer the possibility to modify and extend governmental management and the administration of mutations of life.

We anticipate these developments within the biopolitical trauma of control.
to be extended to populations beyond those of soldier-types, just as, according to Foucault, mechanisms of discipline developed in the military traveled to and were modified within other enclosures. Thus we cannot privilege a body’s capacities before trauma, which would imagine them as untouched by or prior to power. In other words, we cannot, therefore, interpret the traumatic event as a loss. To argue that trauma takes away or reduces capacities is to miss how conditions of trauma within biopolitics facilitate, develop, submerge, or redirect capacities. Of course we recognize that the body in trauma may experience itself as constrained and split, especially in a social order that privileges normative embodiments; we do not mean to dismiss self-narratives of traumatic experiences of war. Nonetheless, taking seriously a Foucauldian theory that power does not repress, but incites, provokes, and creates suggests that traumatic occurrences mobilize productive networks that do not prevent an organism from moving forth, but rather undo the individual such that bodily matter adapts around networks of trauma and statistical health. No longer able to perceive an organic body that could be returned to wholeness, under biopolitical trauma we might instead explore the uneven distribution of exposure to and security from trauma and the directions and intensities of violence within those distributions.

**Coda: Ghosts of the Biopolitical**

A consideration of the returning soldier, soldier-bodies, or soldier-types should not only concern health and injury. Biopolitical forces urge us to rethink the very nature of life and death in a society of control. For us, this is not to contrast soldiers that return with those that do not, as this distinction breaks down at the level of energy or force, where the dead may become material, palpable, affective. We cannot say, as one reporter does, that “for whatever societal void the dead disappear into, it is the wounded who must live with the confounding mix of anonymity and exposure wrought by surviving a war.” For us, given the saturation of all matter with biopower and capital’s investments at levels above and below that of the individual, there can be no societal void. Rather, the phrase *confounding mix* might better describe the collapse of multiple spatialities in the temporality of trauma: “My body’s here but my mind is there” (43). Who or what has returned in this case? *Confounding mix* may also describe the confusion of longing, mourning, and missing—not for home, but for battle: “It wasn’t until the newcomer mentioned that he wished he were back in Iraq that anybody else chimed in. ‘I miss it, too,’ another soldier said. ‘At least there was a purpose.’ ‘I wish I was in Iraq because my buddies are there,’ Robert Shrode offered” (43). Finally, *confounding mix* might best describe the copresence of the dead among the living. Stories of the current war reveal, if not forge, an ontology of death: the dead bodies of soldiers return as a haunting presence in the minds of soldiers, in collective memory. About an injured soldier who returns but cannot shake her memories of Iraq, Corbett writes, “Then there is the dead marine who visits her as she tried to sleep. A young guy, he can be angry, accusative, and sometimes he just shows up quietly and stares at her until she’s jarred awake, heart racing—another night’s rest stolen away” (39). The much-discussed ban on photographing coffins should not mislead us into thinking death has been disappeared—conversation about that absence is itself a form of being there, an afterlife in consciousness. The materialization of ghosts as PTSD, uncontainable energies that flow from soldier to soldier, is another.

Foucault and other writers such as Giorgio Agamben have demonstrated how the biopolitical management and production of life represents the reversal of an earlier sovereign authority to put to death or allow to live. Biopolitics, rather, is said to make live or let die—calling to mind the productivity of insurance and health regulation, but also biomedical engineering, gene therapy, and experimental forms of life such as the prosthetic-organic hybrids of damaged soldier-bodies. This is why Agamben argues that biopolitics, or what Foucault calls the “bioregulation by the state,”69 addresses bare life, or life itself. The “man” located in biopolitics is not the autonomous human subject that lines up with an anthropological human form. It is man-as-species, a form of biological life shot through with potentiality that exceeds the individual of discipline; in such a context, to be alive describes a material state prior to humanist notions of experience or meaning.

The characterization of biopolitics as the power to make live or let die takes on a chilling tone when read alongside a VA administrator’s invocation of “the price of surviving war” for U.S. soldiers coming back from Iraq. Making live here is not just productive, but is a forceful command—you *must* live. This is the power to disallow death. The haunting words of the returned soldier Jeremy Gilbert recall this command: “You’re not healing the way you thought you would. You start thinking, I wish they’d cut my leg off. You think maybe I was supposed to die.”99 When life itself becomes valuable for capital, and not always for the living, death becomes for biopolitics a threat that must be held off. As Foucault states, “Death becomes, insofar as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too.”60 Hence biopolitics operates to draw life out through technoscience and techniques of regulation, processes that may have nothing to do with claims of returning wholeness to the wounded soldier, but
rather concern the life, health, and longevity of biopolitical processes and arrangements themselves.

NOTES

4. We were first made aware of Marshall’s work by Dan Baum, “The Price of Valor,” New Yorker, July 12 and 19, 2004, 44–52.
5. We use male-gendered pronouns to refer to a general soldier throughout this essay as an indicator of the gendering of war trauma in the articles we address. Because the storying of war trauma assumes and depends on a normatively male gender, to impose gender-neutral language would mask these complexities of gendering. Questions of how narratives and theories of trauma colude with systems of regulating gender warrants its own extended analysis.

7. Ibid., 48.
11. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Hence the various strands of revolutionary ideology that seek to restore to the body its wholeness, its humanity. This formation, as we see it, begins to dissolve as the disciplinary enclosures of industrial capitalism are opened up to the intensification of biopolitical control.
19. For Foucault, docility describes an apparently contradictory but actually reciprocal practice of making bodies more useful as they are more deeply and effectively controlled. He writes: “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Vintage, 1977], 198). Disciplines, then, are the methods of producing and securing docile bodies. Foucault is suggesting that power operates at the level of force or energy and it is especially this aspect of discipline and its historical, theoretical articulation that interests us—the articulation and direction of bodily energies, capacities, or forces. This is to say that the thermodynamic energy is not simply enclosed in discipline; it is actively incited, assembled.
23. Ibid.
24. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 152.
25. Ibid., 153.
26. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
32. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 164.
33. Ibid., 134.
34. Ibid., 138.
37. For an excellent and thought-provoking analysis of the contemporary context of the war on occupation of Iraq in terms of (neo)colonialism, media and military technologies, adaptations in military strategy related to Israel’s management of Palestinian territories, and what Giorgio Agamben calls the “state of exception,” see Derek Gregory, The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).
38. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 243.
42. Susan Jeffords critically explores this theme, a powerful trope in discourse around


44. Corbett, “The Permanent Scars of Iraq.”


48. Ibid.


50. Ibid.

51. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 244.

52. Adriana Petryna makes a similar argument about postsocialist citizenship in relation to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, in which a biological status of illese serves to claim the state protection—economic and social entitlements. She writes, “Protection is a legal right no longer self-evidently emanating from the state, but whose existence is at least partially assured by citizens’ everyday exercise of their democratic capacities to identify, balance, or neutralize opposing forces that give or take life.” Her formulation in this insightful essay helped clarify our own understanding of biopolitical negotiations. See Adriana Petryna, “Science and Citizenship under Postsocialism,” Social Research 70.2 (2003): 562.


54. Ibid.

55. Within an analysis of trauma in biopolitical control, further questions arise about the way in which soldiers’ feelings and narratives of trauma are themselves captured and modulated, generating media coverage, mental health practices, and emotional flows that can be generalized and distributed.


57. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 250.


60. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 248.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


