

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Patricia Ticineto Clough and **Craig Willse**, eds. *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011, 389 pp. paper (978082230170)

B*eyond Biopolitics* marks a significant contribution to the flourishing field of biopolitics. Clough and Willse have assembled a collection that speaks from the heart of a US radical tradition that is deeply antiracist, anticapitalist, internationalist, and (over the past generation) queer positive. The volume brings the concerns of this radical tradition into engagement primarily with Foucault's biopolitical work, and secondarily with the Italian biopolitical tradition, specifically Agamben and Hardt and Negri. This collection marks a refreshing change from the growing body of Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian work divorced from and sometimes antagonistic to critical scholarship. In common with the broader body of contemporary biopolitical studies, its fifteen chapters are by turns fascinating, intellectually ambitious, and sometimes vague, as it is often not clear how the authors conceptualize "biopolitics" or "life."

Transdisciplinary in approach, *Beyond Biopolitics* takes as its problematic the revision of neoliberalism since 9/11 and its relation to a biopolitics of war. Tellingly, the first empirical discussion (in the introduction by Clough and Willse) pertains to waterboarding by the US military. The collection has three thematic areas: a) governance, torture, and exception, 2) occupation, migration, and necropolitics (politically caused deaths), 3) a residual category of critical methodology and responses by artists to warfare and attacks against civilians. It remains centred on the human rather than taking up any of the concerns related to an ecological biopolitics. Overall the collection is of a high caliber, with many excellent chapters. It would be suitable as a graduate course book in whole or part.

Although this collection makes several important and original contributions to the field, one of its major drawbacks concerns the conflation of biopolitics with governance. In the preface to the collection Clough and Willse (pp. 3–4) explicate their reasons for taking the "governance of life and death beyond biopolitics" as their theme, citing Foucault's statement about the preeminence of biopolitics as a power apparatus. The cited

passage from Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population* is, however, a commentary on governmentality as the preeminent power apparatus, not biopolitics. Foucault (2007:1) treats governmentality as a much broader power apparatus than biopower, the latter being: "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy." The effects of expanding biopolitics to fill the space of governance inflate its importance at the expense of its specificity. Use of the word "life" is equally broad and unexamined in this edited volume. What does the "governance of life" mean? Are there any social or cultural processes outside the governance of life? "Life" occupies a key place in Foucault's formulation of biopolitics, but he (unlike Agamben) leaves it untheorized in his biopolitical work, as does this collection. Interestingly, the biological concept of life is theorized in Foucault's earlier work, *Les Mots et les choses (The Order of Things)*, although few of those with a biopolitical focus have cared to read it. If biopower was first constituted in late 18th century medicine and biology, then the power apparatus that has come to be known as biopolitics would consist of the effects of biological governance on human embodiment, politics, and ways of living. It could be expanded in an ecological sense as many scholars of biopolitics are doing today. In this sense then, political branding processes in digital and mass media, the focus of contributions by Clough and Willse and Parisi and Goodman, is very important and consequential research, but it would not *prima facie* be biopolitical. Biopolitics today is an overstuffed concept.

Given my own scholarship on the genealogy of global health security, I was riveted by Brian Massumi's lead chapter, an analysis of the systemic features of the national emergency post-9/11. He shows that "indiscriminate threat" requires preemptive solutions that weaken the distinction between civilian and military, natural and national, unifying them against an overarching "environment of life" organized into complex and interconnected subsystems (natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, organized attacks on civilians). Massumi argues that the national emergency seeks to preempt or to create the conditions for the reemergence of living beings and is thus prior to a biopolitics/biopower that has to do with enhancing the health of persons, populations, and, at a limit, organic life. He calls this "ontopower," a level of being that is anterior to the forms of human and more broadly, organic, life and upon which the existence of living beings depends.

Puar and Han's chapters stand out in a volume distinguished for its exploration of the biopolitics of racism. The separate empirical cases they investigate make important contributions to theorizing biopolitics. Puar analyses the post-9/11 surge in the US of assaults, murders, and

racial profiling of Sikh men wearing turbans. The racist association of turbans with terrorism was accompanied by their interpretation as symbols of perverse sexuality, both hetero and queer. In her concluding comments Puar suggests that racial biopolitics operates at an infra level below the security of population — an infrabiopolitics. Her work should be basic reading for those in Canada interested in understanding the recent political struggle (spring 2013) around the ruling of the Quebec Soccer League that prohibited the wearing of turbans by players in soccer matches. Han's chapter considers the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War in light of the 1984 US Supreme Court judgment in the *Korematsu* case. This legal decision overturned the criminal conviction of a Japanese American for remaining in his city of residence during World War 2 despite a law that excluded those of "Japanese ancestry" from that location. The judgment in *Korematsu* allowed for the suspension of a racialized group's civil rights on the grounds of "pressing public necessity." In one of the few sustained engagements with biopolitical analytic concepts in the collection, Han challenges Agamben's interpretation of biopolitics as occurring solely in the state of exception (when law as such is suspended). The biopolitics of racism, she argues, operates within, rather than outside, the normal juridical order.

Since the publication of Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics" in 2003, critical race theorists have taken issue with the elision of "making die" and sovereignty from Foucault's conceptualization of biopower. Except for Foucault's analysis of eugenics and state racism during the Nazi period, his work on biopolitics concentrated on "making live," that is the social, political, and discursive effects that result from implanting health on a population and individual basis: the imperative of (human) health that is now being extended into less anthropocentric directions in animal studies and radical ecology. Mbembe argued that "making die" — the sovereign power of the sword — was continuously present in the history of racism against Africans and the African diaspora. The analysis of necropolitics is discussed in several chapters in *Beyond Biopolitics*. Eyal Weizman asks about the connection between politics and death in his close description of targeted assassinations used by the Israeli state against Palestinians in Gaza; his reply is that assassinations are done by the state of Israel to control Palestinians. Çagatay Topal's "Necropolitical Surveillance" examines the intensive surveillance of Turkish immigrants within Germany. The surveillance is done in the name of reducing potential threats to public order and constitutional law, what Topal terms the "death productivities" of immigrants from the perspective of German governance. Eugene Thacker undertakes a history of the body politic as

a symbol of political order in the history of political theory, pivoting to discuss the dissolution of the body politic: its necrologies. I see no reason in principle why “making die” could not be integrated into a Foucauldian conception of biopolitics, although it would require a reconsideration of negative power and complex, tandem operations of negative and positive power. Recent work on the relation between neoliberalism and neoconservatism leads in this direction.

Several of the chapters are concerned with the critique of capital. Some are broadly Marxist in formulation, although done without reference to the long history of Marxist-Foucauldian dialogue and hostility. Randy Martin, in the context of an argument about finance capital and state debt, calls on leftist intellectuals to recognize the significance of capital for theorizing the biopolitics of race in the war on terror. Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey in “Blackness and Governance” contribute a densely aphoristic piece inflected through the biopolitical work of Hardt and Negri. Ana Anagnost analyzes the commodification of Chinese peasants’ blood in the Henan countryside during the 1980s and 1990s through Marx’s metaphor of capital as the vampire that drains surplus value from living labour. These chapters signal a renewed encounter between biopolitical work and the critique of capitalism, an encounter that begins to go beyond the categories of pomo economics.

Beyond Biopolitics contributes to international scholarship on biopolitics through its deep commitment to critique, particularly by exploring the interconnection of biopolitics and racism. The theoretical concept of ontopower/infrabiopolitics found in both Massumi and Puar’s contributions formulates an important horizon for future work as our present moves in the direction of governing the conditions of emergence of biological life, human and nonhuman.

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