The biopolitics of corpses of mass violence and genocide

Yehonatan Alsheh

Introduction

For the past four decades, students of biopolitics have been probing why the spectacular growth in the application of technologies and policies that aim at the optimization of human life has been articulated with a parallel proliferation of human death. Various studies have been suggesting many objects or sites that are arguably highly symptomatic of the issue at hand – a privileged epitome of the biopolitical quandary. The most famous of these is the camp that Giorgio Agamben crowned as the ‘biopolitical paradigm of the west’,¹ but there are also more mundane objects and sites, such as: archives of biometric data; DNA tests; or the die-hard racial typologies of physical anthropology. This chapter suggests adding corpses of mass violence and genocide to this list.

However, the corpse is not suggested here as yet another privileged object that happens to register all, most or even only some of the mysteries (note the theological slippage) of biopolitics. In fact, as argued below, privileging certain objects or sites within the context of the phenomena concerned, assuming them to somehow be more symptomatic or of primary agency in some underwriting causal scheme, is exactly what a serious look at corpses should help one stop doing.

Corpses of mass violence and genocide, especially when viewed from a biopolitical perspective, force one to focus on the structures

of the relations between all that participates in the enfolding case study; to acknowledge and account for the emergent nature of mass violence and genocide; and to loosen and problematize any clear-cut distinction between active and intentional agents and all the inert 'dumb' things through which and on which those actors operate.

Putting together an analytical toolkit for the study of corpses of mass violence and genocide, this chapter looks into what a biopolitical interpretation of mass violence and genocide has brought and may still bring to the table, adding to the already available and productive ideological, behavioural, Marxist, institutional, post-colonial and psychoanalytical interpretations of these phenomena. Noting how little these interpretive frameworks have actually contributed to the study of corpses of mass violence and genocide, this chapter attempts to address the subject matter in view of the remarkable capacity of corpses to resist attempts to reduce them to a mere illustration of a theoretical principle.

The first part of the chapter provides a general introductory outline of the biopolitical approach to the study of genocide and mass violence, pointing out its central problems and limitations. The core problem of the biopolitical approach to genocide research lies in what one may term the correlationist nature of the paradigm. Instead of confronting the actual real phenomena, one is satisfied with musing on the intricacies and aporias of the correlation between a certain consciousness – a certain rationality – a certain thinking collective subject and the constructed reality grasped by this thinking subject. As argued, such a correlationist approach forces a homogenized image of the violence perpetrated, blocking from the very outset any option of opening up to the multiplicity of acts actually perpetrated by various actors who are variously motivated and who target various victim groups.

In view of the criticism detailed in the first part of the chapter, the second part outlines the ways by which the research into corpses of mass violence and genocide is able to support a proper biopolitical analysis of the phenomena concerned. Presenting some of the ideas suggested by the existing research on corpses of mass violence and genocide, this section suggests: (1) a biopolitical interpretation of the agency of corpses in the emergence of the violence, as well as in the aftermath of the violence, from a biopolitical perspective; (2) the historically specific inscription of sovereignty on corpses; (3) the emergent effects of populations of corpses; and (4) the role of forensic anthropology in tapping into corpses as resources for legal and scholarly investigations of mass violence and genocide.

The biopolitical interpretation of genocide and mass violence

Biopolitics, defined in the terms of contemporary social systems theory,² is the historically specific structural coupling of the political social system with the biological life system.³ As of the last decade of the nineteenth century, various scholars, from both the social sciences and the life sciences, have been trying to observe and to effectively theorize the structural coupling of these systems.⁴ One may summarize those past 120 years of biopolitical scholarship as suggesting four basic configurations of the concept. These may be tentatively termed: naturalist; politicist; historicist; and ontologist.

The first and earliest configuration – naturalist biopolitics – has two distinct historical versions: a pre-1945 organicist version and an individualistic–behavioural version that emerged in the 1960s. Naturalist biopolitics in both its versions assumes the political to be epiphenomenal and hence in need of being traced back to its underwriting biological determinants and processes. The organicist version of naturalist biopolitics assumed collective social entities to be organic wholes that both precede and exceed the individuals composing them.⁵ These were termed races or nations and were understood as primordial and organic as oppose to contractual and historically contingent. Politics according to naturalistic biopolitics is essentially derivative – passive manifestations of the internal operations of the biological life system.

The individualist–behaviourist version of naturalist biopolitics and was from its very beginnings in the 1960s fully conscious of the unholy reputation that the organicist version had gained since 1945. Hence it deals only with the way that the biology of individual human beings (who are not racially differentiated) underwrites their political behaviour. The individualist–behaviourist version of biopolitics suggests a redeemed version for a biology of politics simply by pinning all that led to (inspired or justified) the abominable policies of the Nazi era on the racist and collectivist premises of the organicist version of naturalist biopolitics. This version of naturalist biopolitics produces studies exploring the way pheromones affect people's choice of candidates in elections; the hard-wiring of human tendencies to prefer their 'own kind' or to dislike the unliked; but also reconstructions of evolutionary mechanisms and circumstances that make people prefer, under certain conditions, authoritarian, repressive regimes to liberal ones.⁶

The second configuration – politicist biopolitics,⁷ which emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s – may be presented as advocating the mirror image of naturalist biopolitics, in that it points out the political constitution of the biological life system. Rather than assuming, as naturalist biopolitics does, that the primary operations of the biological life system unilaterally steer the political, this kind of biopolitics observes and theorizes the political regulation and in-depth manipulation of biological life. At the same time it also unveils the thoroughly politicized nature of biological research.

In 1976, Michael Foucault redefined biopolitics, pioneering the third configuration of the concept, which one may term historicist biopolitics.⁸ Foucault suggested that the targeting of human life through social and scientific engineering as well as expert administration has been developing since the mid-eighteenth century (a contested periodization which nevertheless parallels Luhmann's periodization of the emergence of modern functionally differentiated social systems).⁹

Rather than trying to discover the biology of politics, or the politics of biology, Foucault argued that one should study the historical development and deployment of multiple strategies and technologies for the political administration of biological life as normalized phenomena. For Foucault, biopolitics came to mean a new form of political power (added to his famous though fuzzy typology of sovereign power, pastoral power and disciplinary power),¹⁰ the object of which is neither the subject (as it is for sovereign power and pastoral power) nor the singular human body (as it is for disciplinary power), but the biological features of human beings as they are measured and aggregated on the level of populations.¹¹

Interchangeably using the term 'biopower', Foucault tried to capture the emergent development of technologies of power that address the management of and control over populations. The technologies collected under the title of biopower have been superimposed on top of and around the already pervasive disciplinary technologies of power.

Biopolitics as an emerging new configuration of power was designed to control life and the biological process of humans as species, aiming at regularizing life. Just as with regard to his concept of disciplinary power, by 'biopolitics' Foucault meant a growing and ever more sophisticated apparatus of forecasts, statistical estimates and various means of measurement – an assortment of security mechanisms.

According to Foucault, biopower and disciplinary power operate as two layers or planes of an integrative form of power (biodisciplinary power) that is – arguably – fundamentally different from sovereign power.¹² While sovereign power is deductive in essence (the sovereign takes away either taxes or life), biodisciplinary power fosters, develops and cultivates: it is generative in essence.

Hence, while sovereign power has always been oppressive and mechanistic in nature, biodisciplinary power brought about a completely new way of exercising power: the gradual and elaborate development of the fine art of cultivating self-regulating systems. This emerged out of the vary praxis of disciplinary power, since the creation of various practices and technologies of discipline led to the unavoidable discovery of the limits of coercion. But it also discovered a new frontier: the tuning and optimization of all that is capable of self-regulation (individual humans but also their social systems). Whether referring to various so-called ‘technologies of the self’, to the market or to populations, the mechanical conception of power (Newtonian mechanics) gives way to statistical phenomena, with their normal and abnormal patterns of distribution.¹³ But more importantly, it opened up precious room for fine manipulation, by means of a careful targeting of the margins of normalized phenomena (for example the development of the marginal school in economics).¹⁴

Elaborating on the difference between sovereign power and biodisciplinary power, Foucault hypothesized that the genocidal potential of biodisciplinary power arises from the historical integration of biodisciplinary power with sovereign power (his famous announcement that we are yet to cut off the king’s head).¹⁵ Arguably, genocide comes about once sovereign power’s death function (the sovereign’s inalienable right to kill) is incorporated into biodisciplinary power as another means for optimizing life – weeding and trimming as functional elements of cultivation.

Tragically, this new biopolitical meaning of death liberates sovereign power’s insatiable hunger for death (which modern political philosophy never took seriously enough) from all that used to restrain it beforehand.¹⁶ This suppressed dark essence of sovereignty, which modern biopolitics freed to loom large, informs the fourth configuration of biopolitics, which one may term ontologist biopolitics. This configuration appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century, and consists of the works of various thinkers (some saw it as an Italian school),¹⁷ most famously Giorgio Agamben,¹⁸ Antonio Negri (co-authoring with Michel Hardt)¹⁹ and Roberto Esposito.²⁰

This configuration of the concept of biopolitics focuses on the fact that historical experience most clearly and brutally shows that biodisciplinary power has never fostered, nurtured or cultivated all human life. To the contrary, biodisciplinary power was always deployed in a way that optimizes the life of some populations while abandoning, when not actively sacrificing, the life of other populations. Biodisciplinary power has always operated as if there is an unwritten rule that the optimization of the life of certain populations justifies (when not necessitating) the exposure of other populations to less than optimal conditions, and even the killing of them. The question is of course why? And what is one to make of it?

One may begin by noting that biodisciplinary power has never been deployed in the service of humanity's universal interest, due to the unfortunate inexistence of a collective actor embodying such an interest. Hardt and Negri seems to be the only theoreticians of ontological biopolitics believing in the very possibility of such an actor, while the others follow Carl Schmitt in insisting on the ontological impossibility of an all-inclusive political community (the act of exclusion as the constitutive act of political communities).²¹

While biodisciplinary power was never all-inclusive in its operations, either contingently so or out of principle, it was developed by and in the service of states – the modern colonial nation-state.²² These states have always been governed by certain population groups (the ruling classes, national groups whose nation-state it was) as a means for dominating other populations (the exploited masses, colonized peoples).

But what has informed this discriminatory and unequal deployment of biodisciplinary power since the mid-eighteenth century (or any alternative periodization that may be suggested)? How is it decided which lives are worth living – worthy of optimization – and which are not, or even which are in need of extermination, so that the worthy life will be optimized? If life itself is the ultimate and only source of value (as developed by thinkers of *Lebensphilosophie* since the second half of the nineteenth century),²³ then where did the notion of life that is not good – life not worth living – come from?

While naturalist biopolitics will trace the origin of this distinction to the biological life system (inter-racial hatred, evolutionary aversion towards unfit lives and so forth), and politicist biopolitics will trace it to the political social system (the interest of some collective actor), historicist biopolitics will suggest the historical emergence of this distinction as part of the restructuring of the

coupling of the systems. More specifically, as already mentioned, it was the integration of sovereign power with biopolitical power. Foucault combined this process with a proposed genealogy of racism (unfortunately, or even symptomatically as some less charitable minds may argue, an all too Euro-centric one and hence somewhat garbled). The core issue, however, is that the integration of sovereign power and biopolitical power was premised (most clearly from the second half of the nineteenth century) on an essentially conflictual social ontology – a social ontology in which social groups, either races or classes, struggle throughout history.

Sovereignty in this regard must be understood as essentially partisan – given to one social group to be used against another. Simply put, historicist biopolitics suggests that while sovereign power's death function used to be a communicative gesture – a way to state who is sovereign – the emergence of biopolitical power enabled the sovereign social group to optimize its own life by means of minimizing the life of its adversary (or assumed to be adversary) social group.

Ontological biopolitics attempts to elaborate this historical emergence of the distinction between life worthy of living and life unworthy of living by accentuating its negative normative value. Whether embodied in the trans-historical figure of the homo sacer, empire's radically novel mode of subjugation in postmodern times, or the result of a constitutive immunizing logic that political philosophy has not yet transcended, the structural coupling of biological life and the political social system is ontologically flawed. It is so in the sense that it is not just a contingent abusive modality of this structural coupling – a bad version within a variety of already available alternatives: in these pre-messianic times, nothing escapes this flaw.²⁴

Ontological biopolitics differs from the other configurations of the concept by being thoroughly normative in approach. Ontological biopolitics constructs its concept around what is understood to be the biopolitical production of evil, even radical evil in the case of Agamben and Esposito – genocide. As Thomas Lemke and others argue, for Agamben biopolitics is above all 'thanatopolitics'.²⁵

Problems with the biopolitical interpretation

One can point out three basic problems with the biopolitical interpretation of genocide and mass violence. The first is the tendency

to present a genocidal interpretation of biopolitics rather than biopolitical interpretations of genocide.

It so happens that up until now the literature on biopolitics and genocide has been mostly written by theoreticians who were far more interested in (and informed about) biopolitics than in genocide as their main object of enquiry. Rather than using biopolitics as an analytical perspective or a toolkit for the study of mass violence and genocide, providing new insights and developing new research agendas, it was the historical occurrence of genocide, or a very particular representation of it, to be exact, that was invoked as laying bare the nature and meaning of modern biopolitics.

Genocide in fact becomes in ontological biopolitical literature a manifestation, a negative revelation, most notably in the literature musing on the inconceivability of the Holocaust,²⁶ of biopolitics' alleged inner essence, which one should uncover and acknowledge. The various intersections between the biopolitics of genocide and the political theology of genocide should not be overlooked, yet at the same time one should avoid an uncritical slippage from one to the other. The more grotesque versions of this argument, in which one is called to somehow acknowledge that there is no noteworthy difference between a United Nations refugee camp and a Nazi extermination camp, have been sufficiently criticized.²⁷

However, even in its more subtle and nuanced versions (for example as presented by Roberto Esposito and Achille Mbembe), the actual historical phenomenon to which the concept of genocide is meant to refer is forced into a process of growing abstraction, so that it may indeed be revealed at the heart of every act of modern biopolitical sovereignty and not only when a *genos* is actually being destroyed. Soon, what is left of genocide is its moral severity, its being a non-contested manifestation of radical evil, an exclamation mark in the middle of an otherwise endless flux of indifferent and undifferentiated eventuation – the one consensual example of the bad polis, in view of a complete inability to stabilize any argument regarding the nature of the good polis.

As Dirk A. Moses powerfully argued with regard to the literature analysing the relation between genocide and modernity, upon which biopolitical interpretations of genocide heavily rely, the analysis of genocide as symptomatic of modernity has unjustifiably focused on the Holocaust, while disregarding genocidal campaigns that took place in the colonial context.²⁸

In order to assume the exceptionality of the Nazi genocidal projects, one needs to forget not only colonial precedents but also

the destruction of Armenian and other Christian populations in Ottoman Anatolia during the First World War. Much of the high-pitched disillusionment expressed by many intellectuals in the aftermath of the Second World War, which ontological biopolitics still carries on, is the unflattering result of Euro-centric navel gazing. All too ironically, students of ontological biopolitics wish to present the Nazi horror as symptomatic of biopolitics in all its expressions, yet the drama of the provocation is based on unveiling a deeply hidden symmetry between the two great opposing camps of the Second World War. This in turn is meant to prove the power of the in-depth philosophical analysis practised by students of ontological biopolitics. However, much of this seems to collapse once the unsettling effect of the discovery is revealed to be nothing but the sad outcome of the parochialism that is of course the true meaning of Euro-centrism.

This leads us to the second problem with the biopolitical paradigm in genocide research, which was already pointed out in Dan Stone's account of this approach.²⁹ Appreciative of the insights provided by the biopolitical approach to genocide research, and its obvious effectiveness in inspiring scholarly attention to and writing on the subject of genocide, from disciplines other than history, Stone also showed that this approach, though unfortunately ignorant of the centrality of colonial genocide in the historical emergence of this phenomenon, is nevertheless compatible with the findings of current research concerning colonial genocide. Stone notes a certain resemblance between the so-called functionalist school in Holocaust historiography and the biopolitical approach.³⁰ He argues that the biopolitical approach and the functionalist school share the same unjustified disregard of the role played by: irrational ideology; primordial fantasies of violence; dynamics of contamination and sacrificial cleansing; and regeneration and redemption via violence and transgression. These atavistic irrationalities, as opposed to the common and symptomatic mentality of political modernity advocated by the biopolitical approach, were completely historically contingent, budding and flourishing in certain political cultures while being weeded out in others.

The biopolitical approach, it may be argued, explains why genocide can take place, yet it does not answer why it usually does not. This also sheds some light on ontological biopolitics' insistence on a hidden (or not, as it sometimes surfaces) genocidal core in all modern biopolitical regimes. However, one may also choose, instead of arguing that genocide is somehow universally

characteristic of all biopolitical regimes, to point out the historically singular elements responsible for the activation of genocidal potentials in modern biopolitical regimes.

One would not have been so perplexed by this stubborn insistence on a genocidal interpretation of biopolitics if there was not so much to be gained from a biopolitical interpretation of genocide. An illuminating example of a fruitful perspective that historicist biopolitics may open up, leading to a better understanding of the historical phenomenon of genocide, can be found in Foucault's claim that:

this power to kill, which ran through the entire social body of Nazi society, was first manifested when the power to take life and death, was granted not only to the state but to a whole series of individuals, to a considerable number of people (such as the SA and the SS and so on). Ultimately, everyone in the Nazi State had the power of life and death over his or her neighbors, if only because of the practice of informing, which effectively meant doing away with the people next door, or having them done away with.³¹

The above argument, once one moves beyond reading it as nothing but a contribution to the analytics of modern political power, leads one to look into what the historian Christian Gerlach called the participatory nature of the violence in cases of mass violence and genocide.³² While the term 'mass violence' is commonly understood as referring to the massive number of victims, Gerlach pointed out that in most of the relevant historical case studies the number of perpetrators involved is also massive.

However, one should beware of bracketing away the participatory nature of the violence by simply homogenizing the perpetrating multitude with the assumption that they all had the same intentions, the same understanding of all that was going on, the same motivation for doing what they were doing, the same image of the victimized populations, the same criterion for selection of victims and the concrete violent acts actually performed, and so forth. Instead, one should acknowledge the substantial variation within the perpetrating multitudes, which empirical findings have so exhaustively indicated. Acknowledging this variation leads, as Gerlach so powerfully showed, to a strikingly different image of mass violence and genocide.

Although, as Gerlach's work itself shows, written documents do not exclusively represent the perspective of the political centre but also its various negotiations with the scattered on-the-ground

actors, there is nevertheless a certain homogenizing bias to written documentation that the researcher must read against, maintaining the hermeneutics of suspicion.

The growing use of oral history in the study of mass violence and genocide, and its constant methodological sophistication, has, to a point, countered this problem of written documentation. However, there is much to be said for the role corpses as a source for reconstructing the heterogeneous reality that takes place at the ground level of perpetration.

While written documents provide one with the way things should have happened, as framed by the perspective of those producing the documentation, corpses document – albeit partially and in a fragmented way – what was actually done to the victimized populations. In this regard one may even suggest that corpses constitute an almost privileged site of evidence with regard to the realities of participatory violence, as opposed to traditional archival sources that bracket away the core significance of the fact that certain kinds of violence are participatory in nature.

The third (and one may suggest the most severe) problem is that biopolitics, at the height of its theoretical sophistication, that is, biopolitics of the Foucauldian historicist kind, is thoroughly correlationist in its approach. The term ‘correlationism’ was suggested by Quentin Meillassoux in 2006,³³ as referring to any current of thought maintaining that one only ever has access to the correlation between thinking and reality and never to either of these considered apart from the other. Meillassoux argues that twentieth-century correlationism focused on language and/or consciousness as the medium of the correlation between the alleged ‘thinking subject’ and the ‘thought-of object’.

Turning back to the subject at hand, historicist biopolitics indeed identifies and analyses the historical emergence of a distinct kind of political consciousness (mentality) embodied in/produced by language – a distinct political rationality embodied in/produced by discourse and an elaborate apparatus of discipline and security technologies and practices.

Foucault is in fact the most influential example in continental philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century for strong correlationism, in which the thoroughly contingent nature of the correlation is pushed to its most radical conclusion.³⁴ Foucault’s biopolitics (as well as his analyses of disciplinary power and technologies of the self) should be understood as continuing the corporalization of Kant’s transcendental subject, following

the work of Martin Heidegger and its influential development in the thought of Morris Merleau-Ponty. The thinking subject is completely embodied, that is to say thoroughly constrained and conditioned by the biological and social systems of which the subject is merely an emergent effect.

However, while Foucault was only drawing conclusions from the corporality of the thinking subject, by suggesting that the historical emergence of disciplinary and later on biopolitical societies necessarily led to the production of subjectivities whose correlation with whatever is thought of has been dramatically restructured, he also brought about (though never noting it himself) the collapse of correlationism.³⁵

By labouring to reconstruct an entire typology of different structures of correlation between thinking subjects and thought-of objects (though the result may be criticized in retrospect for being grossly generalized, Euro-centric and arbitrary) Foucault confessed the absolute nature of contingency, not only of the correlation but in fact also of reality itself – the contingent nature of reality itself, regardless of the presence of absence of anyone thinking it.

Exactly because different subjectivities are emergent effects of different biological and social systems (which in turn continue to vary in their historically specific structural coupling), one must admit that there have been and still will one day be biological and maybe even social systems that did not and will not produce any subjectivities at all.

Often throughout the last seventy years, people have imagined the coming of a society that will bring humanity to its end. Such a nuclear, ecological or what-have-you apocalypse will be as real as it gets, even if, afterwards, there is no longer anyone to witness it, that is, to be its correlate by thinking it.³⁶ Just as an apocalyptic future reality will exist even though there is no subjectivity to think it, so the reality that existed before the first biological and social systems to produce a thinking subjectivity emerged with whatever structure of correlation to a thought-of world.

The correlationism of biopolitics has led to the interpretation of genocide as a possible manifestation (a most symptomatic one) of a correlation between a historically specific political subjectivity – to be sure, a collective subjectivity – and a political reality that neither precedes nor derives from the political subjectivity experiencing it. One cannot consider the historical reality of genocide without the biopolitical rationality thinking it, which is the very point ontological biopolitics constantly makes.

At the same time, one cannot contemplate biopolitics without genocide. And that is exactly where the problem is. This correlationist approach denies from the very outset one's ability to be surprised by historical reality, which is, after all, always more complex and other than it is thought to be. Just as the excesses of reality are declared from the very outset to be unintelligible, so are the excesses of the other side of the correlation. It also denies a meaningful plurality of thinking subjects – a viable assemblage of only partially compatible perspectives, each operating within a different political rationality.

Hence this correlationist approach ends up forcing a false homogeneity on the actual historical occurrence of genocide. This homogeneity is forced on all components of the phenomenon: the perpetrators, who are assumed to be a homogenized mass of actors operating within the same single political rationality; the victims, who are assumed to be a homogenized mass of 'bare lives'; and the genocidal acts themselves, which are assumed to be killing or the intentional bringing about of exposure to death.

Gerlach showed how such a homogenized conception of genocide prevents research accounting for what is in fact a non-focal multiplicity in which a variety of different perpetrator groups target in many different ways and for many different reasons a variety of victim groups. The situation is extremely variable overtime and across territories.

However, biopolitics is in no way necessarily correlationist. In order to continue the study of the biopolitics of various phenomena in a non-correlationist way, all that one needs to do is to turn from the study of the historically specific structure of the correlation to the study of the historically specific structure of the coupling between the political social system and the biological life system.

Populations of corpses

A good way to begin substantializing this suggested turn from the study of structures of correlation to the study of the structures of the coupling of the systems is to re-examine Dan Stone's aforementioned criticism of biopolitics' blindness to genocide's irrational, carnivalesque, sacrificial and liminal dimensions. Stone stressed the ideological origins of these aspects, aiming at a description of the perpetrators' collective consciousness, which is of course a thoroughly correlationist approach to this issue. However,

one can just as much address the production of this unworldly atmosphere, that profound and uncanny sense of a time and place that are out of time and displaced, with its far-reaching effects on prevailing taboos and people's sense of what they can and cannot – may and may not – should and should not – do, 'from below'. That is to say, one can try to understand how that horrible carnivalesque and liminal ambiance emerges from the bare and physical presence of corpses 'on the ground': sensually there, in all their revolting and nauseating potency (noting Sartre's invocation of nausea as the somatic sensation of estranging oneself from the subterranean taken-for-granted instrumental 'tool-being' of things).³⁷

The ways by which the bare presence of corpses seems to contribute dramatically to an escalation in the violence perpetrated has in fact been pointed out in many empirical case studies (one such is presented in chapter 5). The interaction between the physical presence of the corpses (in its most direct sensual sense, the sight of death, the smell of death) and certain – alleged – primordial deep layers of consciousness in humans, a speculated deep-seated aversion to and terror in the presence of embodied death, has also received noteworthy attention, as Finn Stepputat critically outlines.³⁸

Understanding the corpse as the ultimate signifier of death, certain psychoanalysts pointed to the emergence of the primordial and omnipresent fear of death (assumed to be the originary form and ultimate meaning of all other fears) as an explanation for corpses' emotive capacities. However, as long as one indeed argues that the corpse is understood by all people at all times and in all cultures as the ultimate fearsome signifier of death, the presence of which causes all people to react in certain ways, one is subject to all the aforementioned limitations of naturalistic biopolitics.

In fact, by arguing that a corpse is a signifier (let alone an ultimate one), whether of death or of anything else, one is missing much of the point here. Joost Fontein pointedly suggests explaining at least some of the potency of corpses by noting that corpses appear impossibly to be both person and object – or just as impossibly neither person nor object. In any case, the corpse is a site where this constitutive distinction most effectively malfunctions.³⁹

In other words, rather than being signifiers of anything, corpses bring about (but do not represent!) a collapse of signification, which in such cases (as opposed to art or other contexts of well contained ecstasy) is not pleasant but rather ghastly and uncanny. Julia Kristeva in this regard, building on the work of George Bataille and Merry Douglas, suggested understanding the corpse as the ultimate

'abject', by which she meant a pre-objectified 'thing' whose radical exclusion constitutes one's subjectivity, and whose forced presence threatens to collapse one back into a pre-subjective mess.⁴⁰

This speculative explanation has its limitations of course – it is not entirely clear how Kristeva evades falling into the naturalistic assumption that all this somehow applies to all people at all times and in all cultures. However, it can be interpreted as dealing with the dynamic of real interactions that precede the emergence of a thinking subject and thought-of objects (before the successful exclusion of the abject) and what may still happen after the collapse (the failure of the exclusion) of the correlation between the subject and the object.

Moreover, Kristeva's theory of abjection suggests looking into the complex way by which correlational aspects and non-correlational aspects interact and coexist. For example, it suggests looking into exactly when the presence of bare corpses disrupts the stable structure of an existing correlation between a given subjectivity and its world, bringing forth the detailed ways in which the real structural coupling of the political social system and the biological life system (but also other couplings of systems of course) still condition, constrain and pattern the havoc of the over-flooding abjection.

One often reads about the unsettling effects of the abject, and more specifically about the way that the corpse unsettles the distinction between a person and thing. However, it seems that very little is actually explained or even described by the adjective 'unsettled'. Interestingly, Fontein widely refers to unsettled spirits that haunt Zimbabweans, demanding the exhumation of their bones from foreign lands and their proper burial in their ancestral land.⁴¹ However, while it is clear what will settle those angry spirits and how this may be accomplished (repatriation of the bones and their proper burial), it is completely unclear what may settle the unsettled distinction between person and object in the case of the corpse. In fact, by using the term 'unsettled' to describe the corpses' effect on the distinction between person and object, one unjustifiably smuggles in an expectation for a resettlement of the distinction.

The abject in general, and corpses more concretely, indeed seem to uproot one from a secure and immersed being in and with the world. Yet what do corpses do when they are said to unsettle? In the terms suggested by Graham Harman, they may be said to confront one with the ontological drama of the reversal between the interacting accessible systems and their withdrawn abyssal depths, insular and singular as they ever-elusively are.⁴²

By declaring certain effects to be unsettling, one is missing out on the chance to point out the reality (fleeting and elusive though it is) of things. It is this exact dynamic of limited disruption – bounded and always partially structured malfunction of sense – that corpses may (only may) force on some of those co-present with them. It is this dynamic that brings forth the excess that everything always hold in reserve. This excess is inaccessible and as such an unknowable-unknown, yet its existence is grounded in the absolute contingency of it all.

The above collapses of meaning lead to Stone's horrid sanguinary carnival, taking place within reality and as such produced by it (for example through the physical presence of corpses). But just as importantly they are conditioned, constrained and patterned by it. Although there is no reason to assume that all the actors know and understand all that indeed goes on (as simplistic ideology-centred explanations uncritically assume), or that all actors involved are somehow sufficiently similar to be regarded as thinking the same (a criticism applying to all existing theoretical understandings of genocide, save that suggested by Gerlach), the variation among the actors involved is nevertheless still constrained by the reality of the situation.

Hence, a typology of being with corpses traceable in the various case studies of genocide and mass violence is called for. Such a typology would be able to differentiate, for example, between –

- bounded sites of mass slaughter over a relatively short duration, such as:
  - the prototypical modern battlefield with its dense distribution of living survivors, dead corpses but also substantial numbers of people in 'inbetween' states, such as people with wounds of various degrees of severity, and some portions of scattered bodily matter (dismembered organs, blood etc.)
  - the slaughter pits and massacre sites in which the murdered victims are piled within a mass grave, often sheltering a few survivors who manage to hide (or being unconscious are presumed dead) among the corpses, all in the presence of the perpetrators and those physically producing the site (digging the grave, piling the corpses and so forth)
- bounded sites in which mass death occurs over more extended durations such as:
  - the detainment/concentration/labour camp, with its high mortality rate due to starvation, exposure, epidemics, where

corpses function as a biohazard, greatly exasperating the spread of epidemics

- o the industrialized killing factory, in which the high-pressure slaughter characteristic of the battlefield and the slaughter pit takes place almost daily over a long duration of time
- normal, 'everyday life' sites turned sites of mass death such as:
  - o the village
  - o the urban setting
  - o the bombarded area
- but also non-bounded sites of mass death over extended time spans, in which the survivors are forced to move on, leaving the corpses behind, such as the trail marched during forced expulsions and death marches
- and last but far from being least, societies on their own territory in the aftermath of a conflict, facing the state-sponsored, accidental or purposeful resurfacing of corpses and mass graves.

The above is of course also historically specific – parading its absolute contingency in the restructurings that the passing of time forces.⁴³ It also meaningfully intersects with political theology (the historically specific structural coupling of the political social system with the religious social system). Corpses of mass violence and genocide are highly capable of producing religious experiences, whether of the presence of the horrific sublime or of the shattering loss of all faith in a benevolent Almighty, and any other possible formulation.

Bataille's speculative analysis of the relations between death, its embodiment in the corpse and the political phenomenon of sovereignty well exceeds the use Kristeva made of certain elements in his theory. However, Bataille appears to suggest tracing the political back to its alleged religious underpinnings, not only explaining away the coupling of the systems by understanding the political social system as epiphenomenal to the religious social system, but in fact denying the very differentiation of those systems from each other. In this regard Charles Taylor rightly points out that Bataille is completely premodern.⁴⁴

This is of course also the problem, since corpses cannot be understood without noting the profound historicity of the very distinction between life and death that corpses so effectively embody. The ultimate radicalization of the distinction, in which life became everything while death became nothing but a limit concept – the utter nothing that life negates – is relatively recent, emerging only in

the second half of the nineteenth century with the aforementioned *Lebensphilosophie*.

As the distinction between life and death has often been suggested to run parallel to the distinction between heaven and earth – the godly realm and the human realm – immanence and transcendence, it is hardly surprising that the radicalization of the distinction between life and death went hand in hand with the radicalization of the distinction between immanence (becoming nothing less than all that is) and transcendence (so fundamentally non-existent that the mere notion is declared unintelligible) at about the same time. However, one cannot avoid wondering whether the fact that the corpse is so inconveniently something, as opposed to an embodiment of radical nothingness, does not suggest yet another dimension to the abjection its bare presence causes.

Certain corpses and even mere fragments of certain corpses came to be regarded in a dramatically different way during the late fourth and fifth centuries, with the rise of the cult of saints in Latin Christianity.⁴⁵ Peter Brown in his classic study of this phenomenon suggested interpreting this rising tendency to worship not only the graves of certain holy figures but also their bare bodily remains (often in the form of actually touching and kissing them) as signifying a radical change in the function of the dead and the cemetery in the crumbling Roman world.⁴⁶ Beyond moving the dead and their site of burial to the very centre of the city, and their constitution as one of the Church's cardinal forms of capital, the corpse was assumed to retain in a very significant way its link with the soul. Adopting and deeply reinterpreting the Jewish conception of the resurrection of the dead, the corpse was now understood as an unfolding drama (at a somewhat glacial pace, obviously): a reversal between its decaying dead surface and its withdrawn, heavenly depths, from which the soul and with it resurrected life will re-emerge once kingdom come.

In fact, it was exactly because the corpse's life withdraws into the invisible and inaccessible substratum that the corpse was identified as a privileged gateway to that inaccessible transcendence. Rather than unbearably embodying the distinction between life and death, the cult of the saints presents a substantial period in which western Christianity assumed the corpse to be the blessed and most joyous place where this distinction appears ephemeral.

This historicity of the corpse and the distinction between life and death is deeply related to the rise of modern biopolitics. In presenting his account of the historical emergence of the modern

structural coupling of the political social system and the biological life system, Foucault underlined a profound change in the meaning of death around the early eighteenth century. Death used to be a great public moment of transition, as the dying abandoned their particular direct sovereign in this world and were surrendered to the ultimate sovereign of all. Death used to be a spectacular moment of affirmation – the dying individual was finally brought to justice – the fearsome divine ruling that each individual was advised to carefully expect finally came. Life used to be, in this sense, nothing but a fleeting duration in which the individual might have succeeded in temporarily escaping sovereign power, to sin without immediate punishment. Death affirmed that there is no escape, and that the real sovereign – the Almighty – patiently yet surely waits.

This meaning of death gained prominence in western Christendom only from the thirteenth century onwards, gradually replacing the one briefly sketched above. This new meaning of death is traceable in various paintings, inscriptions and sculptures of corpses being eaten by worms, the skeleton hidden beneath the flesh and other grim representations of death as the ultimate truth of life.⁴⁷ It is only from then onwards that one may speak of the horrifying quality of corpses, now emanating from their function as signifiers (not embodiments!) of the fearsome divine judgement that waits all after their death. Interestingly, as for example Fontein shows with regard to current-day Zimbabwe, certain societies prefer to keep corpses lying in shallow mass graves, or any other form of inappropriate burial, so that they may be used as evidence once (or should) the political constellation enable the establishment of a court (either international or national).⁴⁸ It seems that though today corpses no longer represent the inescapable final and just judgement of the Almighty (at least not necessarily), an awaited just trial is still somehow inscribed on them – figuring on a horizon they open.

As mentioned, Foucault characterized premodern sovereign power as a deductive mode of power, a subtracting power that takes away (whether taxes or freedom or life). The losses created by the exercise of power are awesome monuments to its potent presence, just as execution and the collection of taxes are ceremonial gestures of its sovereignty. Modern biopower, on the other hand, is a generative, cultivating power that seeks to stimulate, enhance, accelerate, better, regulate and normalize its object of concern – human populations. Rather than taking life or allowing to live, biopower fosters

life or disallows it to the point of death – it is a power that makes populations live and hence can just let certain populations die.

This of course entails a substantial change in the meaning of death. Rather than monuments to the potency of the sovereign, death becomes either failure – proof of impotency – or a testimony of absence: where biopower is not doing its job, because of intentional abandonment but also non-intentional state collapse.

With the advent of modern biopolitics, death, rather than ending all impunity as the dead person was surrendered to the Almighty, became the moment at which the individual finally and irreversibly escaped power (as in the frustrating suicide of the offender before the court had the chance to sentence her or him to death).⁴⁹ As such, death became the absolute moment of annihilation, power's absolute limit.

Death, argued Foucault, changed from a most public spectacle of affirmed and inescapable pan sovereignty to the most private moment imaginable: that which no one could witness, not even the dying man himself.⁵⁰ The living body came to be understood in the age of the subject as the literal embodiment of subjectivity, that which communicates the otherwise secluded psychic system – it is through the body that the consciousness accesses the world, as well as being accessed itself.

The living body negates in this regard the privacy of consciousness, which is why its death results in a terminal moment of absolute privacy. An absolute privacy, which seems to be unbearably violated when the corpse is laid bare – pornographically (as western discourse tends to term it) exposed.

Yet, the above picture of a persecuting power, roaring in frustration around the corpse which by dying managed to escape, is of course also misleading. After all, why would modern biopolitics be frustrated when some lives cross over its ultimate limit, that is, die? All too often, chasing those lives away is deemed necessary for the prosperity if not outright survival of other lives.

As mentioned, historicist biopolitics and afterwards ontological biopolitics diagnosed the working of a reason advocating that the survival of certain populations necessitates the extinction of certain other populations. This often appears in a weaker version: the prosperity and well-being of certain populations justifies the exposure or abandonment of some other populations. Death is as bureaucratically planned and organized as life. Because of the political power to generate and preserve gross inequality in the distribution of access to resources, services and risk-free and

pathogen-free environments, it is possible to cultivate some healthy and prosperous populations.

Yet the above also stipulates the managed disposal of corpses, not just for reasons of hygiene but also because the production of death as one of the means by which the good life or certain populations is produced is better kept away from sight, or at least under the pretence of complete control. The corpse as the embodiment of death appears in modernity as always also subversive, while populations of corpses have the effect of spreading so much subversion that they create the nightmarish horrid carnivalesque atmosphere mentioned above, with its profound unruliness.

It is in this context that one needs also to consider and to understand the work of forensic anthropologists on exhumed human remains in the aftermath of mass violence and genocide since the mid-1980s onwards.⁵¹ The truly Promethean attempt to identify each corpse and trace it back as much as possible to a concrete perpetrator and on-the-ground event, while obviously motivated by the desire for justice and closure⁵² for the surviving relatives, is also meant to reconstitute the spectacle of political control over death and to defuse all subversive effects that those corpses may still unleash.⁵³

A cardinal characteristic of corpses of mass violence and genocide is the trivial fact that there are so many of them, both widespread and in large concentrations. The specifically modern structural coupling of the political system and the biological life system can be modelled via the notion of populations as self-regulating collective entities with emergent properties. Emerging properties appear (activated, actualized) only when the various units composing those populations interact with one another.⁵⁴ Put simply, large concentrations of corpses are far more – and significantly different – than the mere sum of individual corpses. One is hence called to study the characteristics and implications of corpses as populations – the various emerging effects of large concentrations of corpses in their various patterns of distribution across time and space.

To start with, populations of corpses constitute a biohazard, generating epidemics that dramatically increase mortality, as seen in various case studies.⁵⁵ Hence several detailed typologies are called for in which the various case studies are sorted into those in which epidemics played a central role in increasing mortality rates, and those in which this was less so (or not at all) the case. The evidence suggests the latter is in fact a practically empty category – despite

the image of an efficient, 'clean', industrialized extermination advocated by certain biopolitical interpretations of genocide.

Given that, one is required to outline the various ways by which people, from the victimized groups, third parties or perpetrators, neutralize – or fail to neutralize – this biohazard: by means of traditional methods; by means of modern technology and logistics; or under the stringent conditions of acute emergency.

Another typology stemming from a focus on the emerging effects of populations of corpses consists of classifying all the ways in which people (again, perpetrators, other victims or third parties) extract resources out of large concentrations of corpses: from jewellery and other on-the-body valuables (gold teeth, but in this day and age also the harvesting of organs) to hair, fat (the infamous soap production rumour) and finally (ultimately?) cannibalism.⁵⁶

As mentioned, since the mid-1980s and increasingly with every decade that passes, corpses become a resource for both legal and scholarly investigations. Populations of corpses are in this regard planes of inscription, documenting some of what was actually perpetrated. Far from displaying the clean, dispassionate, efficient and uniform killing advocated by some biopolitical conceptions of genocide, one finds an entire repertoire of variations and excesses.

On the corpses one finds the traces of the various kinds of perpetrating groups who targeted those people for various reasons, in various circumstances and by various kinds of violence.⁵⁷ In this regard, corpses put forward the noteworthy plurality of what actually happens, as opposed to the homogenic state-sponsored project envisioned by ideological schemes and pretences.

How, given the above, is one to understand the biopolitics of forensic anthropology, which is the main discipline specializing in the contextual interpretation of corpses? Is it premised (as seems to be the case) on an intuitive suspicion of naturalistic biopolitical assumptions? If so, is it necessarily so, and if not, what kind of biopolitics underpins forensic anthropology?

An enquiry in the biopolitics of forensic anthropology is also called for because it is currently one of the key disciplines that confront the problem of race – a cardinal example of a biopolitical problem, which of course has a deep association with genocide and many manifestations of mass violence.

On the one hand, the American Association of Physical Anthropologists stated in its 1996 *Statement on Biological Aspects of Race* that: 'Humanity cannot be classified into discrete geographical categories with absolute boundaries';⁵⁸ and the American

Anthropological Association argued in its 1998 *Statement on Race* that: 'it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguously clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups'.⁵⁹

On the other hand, in a conference organized by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists held in New Mexico in May 2007, on the issue of race, the so-called 'geneticist' camp (advocating that human genetic variation does not support racial classification) was challenged by a so-called 'morphologist' camp, which argued that: 'worldwide geographic patterning in cranial form does produce observable regional patterns and that, although these flow into one another, there are some fairly distinct clusters'.⁶⁰

The lingering – diehard – insistence on the actual biological existence of something similar enough to that category called race is fuelled in the field of physical anthropology by the practice of forensic anthropologists whose position is well explained by Conrad B. Quintyn, an associate member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences: 'When I began to assist law enforcement in identifying human skeletal remains, they wanted race'.⁶¹ Quite simply, if forensic anthropologists want to retain (and of course enhance, as is the way of the world) their practical aspect they need to read the inscriptions of racial categories on bare decomposed human corpses, not educate the masses that racial categories are not really in the flesh. In this regard, forensic anthropology is forced into a naturalistic biopolitical stand, tracing political categorizations and identities to their alleged biological origins.

In this, forensic anthropologists are in no way unique, since it was the attempt of physicians in the first half of the twentieth century to carve new niches of applied expertise for themselves that fuelled the initial development of naturalistic biopolitics in its organic version.⁶² This said, as discussed above, forensic anthropology has more to it than the willingness to supply society with the allegedly biological underpinnings its discourse of legitimization requires. When working with skeletonized human remains from events of mass violence and genocide, acting as expert witnesses for international tribunals, a more sophisticated approach appears, in which what is reconstructed from the corpses is the 'gaze of the perpetrator'. In other words, instead of a biologization of political categories and identities, forensic anthropology, when working in the context of the requirements of international humanitarian law, aims to reconstruct, from whatever inscriptions it happened to leave on the corpse, the concrete resonance of the biological life system and the political social system in a particular historical moment.

Conclusion

Biopolitics is the historically specific structural coupling of the political social system and the biological life system. This structural coupling, which is always historically specific, is both inscribed on corpses of mass violence and genocide as well as embodied in such corpses.

Given this, the study of corpses of mass violence and genocide has much to gain from a biopolitical perspective. The first part of this chapter briefly sketched the history of the concept, pointed out the theoretical merits of its Foucauldian configuration, highlighted the three main problems of applying it to the study of genocide and mass violence, and suggested possible ways of overcoming them.

The second part of the chapter tried to substantiate the conclusions of the first part by suggesting certain analytical insights about corpses of mass violence and genocide. Arguably, the correlationist fallacy of Foucauldian biopolitics can be avoided by paying attention to the potent materiality of corpses, which, in the case of mass violence and genocide, means studying the emergent effects of populations of corpses (for example epidemics, but also hideouts). Likewise the 'functionalist' bias of the biopolitical approach to the study of genocide and mass violence should be countered by studying the way Stone's irrational carnivalesque qualities of genocidal events are produced (together with other things) by the very presence of multiple bare corpses and the effects this has on human behaviour. Such behaviour is of course never simply 'universal and natural', but rather variously historically constructed. Hence, as outlined above, one needs to look into the genealogy (i.e. the various genealogies of different cultures and contexts) of corpses as embodiments of death and the political implications and applications of this embodiment.

The chapter then referred to the biopolitical meaning of the rise of forensic anthropology as a professional and authoritative interpreter of corpses as planes of inscription. Arguably, forensic evidence supplements archival material and oral testimonies, and if allowed to introduce its own original input, may revolutionize existing assumptions concerning genocide and mass violence, which are currently profoundly correlationist and state centric.

Notes

- 1 G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 181.
- 2 Roberto Esposito mentions in passing the relevance of Niklas Luhmann's work to biopolitics in *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 – original Italian edition published in 2004), p. 49; see also Christian Borch's comparative-synthetic discussion of Foucault's and Luhmann's analyses of power, 'Systemic power: Foucault, Luhmann and analytic of power', *Acta Sociologica*, 48 (2005), pp. 155–67. An in-depth introduction to contemporary social systems theory is D. B. Lee & A. Brosziewski, *Observing Society: Meaning, Communication and Social Systems* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2009); see also F. Geyer & J. van der Zouwen (eds), *Sociocybernetics: Complexity, Autopoiesis, and Observation of Social Systems* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001). Introductory works on Niklas Luhmann by Hans-Georg Moeller are: *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006) and *The Radical Luhmann* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Luhmann's opus magnus is *Social Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995 – original German edition 1984).
- 3 Thomas Lemke in his excellent *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2011) defines biopolitics as a conceptualization, the suggestive power and potency of which stem from the instability and fragility of the border between 'life' and 'politics', which opens up a field of enquiry and critique that tries to account for the relations between and historicity of life and politics, rather than treating them as isolated phenomena (p. 4).
- 4 For an intellectual history of biopolitics see Esposito, *Bios*, pp. 13–44; and also Lemke, *Biopolitics*, pp. 9–31.
- 5 Lemke presents a detailed bibliography of the organicist version of naturalist biopolitics in *Biopolitics*.
- 6 See for example A. Somit & S. A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy: The Biological Bases of Authoritarianism* (Westport: Praeger, 1997).
- 7 See Lemke's outline and analysis of the politicist configuration of biopolitics in *Biopolitics*, pp. 23–31. The main examples of works within this configuration of biopolitics are: W. T. Anderson, *To Govern Evolution: Further Adventures of the Political Animal* (Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987); K. Cauthen, *Christian Biopolitics: A Credo and Strategy for the Future* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); and D. Gunst, *Biopolitik zwischen Macht und Recht* (Mainz: Hase und Kohler, 1978).
- 8 M. Foucault, 'The birth of social medicine', in J. Faubion (ed.), *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault* (New York: New Press, 2000), vol. 3, p. 137. The systematic elaboration of the concept was done later, in his 1976 series of lectures in the College de France – M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 239–64, as well in his *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), vol. 1.

- 9 See Moeller, *Luhmann Explained*, pp. 41–52.
- 10 M. H. Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 7–9.
- 11 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp. 242–3.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 250.
- 13 See the discussion by Norbert Wiener – the father of cybernetics – on this transformation in ‘Newtonian and Bergsonian time’, in *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1948), pp. 30–44.
- 14 See the original presentation of P. H. Wicksteed, *The Common Sense of Political Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1910); the second chapter is also available at www.econlib.org/library/Wicksteed/wkCS2.html#Book I,Ch.2 (accessed 28 November 2013).
- 15 See A. W. Neal, ‘Cutting off the king’s head: Foucault’s “Society Must Be Defended” and the problem of sovereignty’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29:4 (2004), pp. 373–98.
- 16 Lemke, *Biopolitics*, pp. 40–4; and see Achille Mbembe’s reading of Bataille with regard to death and sovereignty, ‘Necropolitics’, *Public Culture*, 15:1 (2003), pp. 11–40.
- 17 L. Chiesa & A. Toscano (eds), *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics* (Melbourne: Re-Press, 2009).
- 18 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*; G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999); G. Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); see also J. Clemens, N. Heron & A. Murray (eds), *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); L. de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
- 19 M. Hardt & A. Negri, *Empire: The New World Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); M. Hardt & A. Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
- 20 Esposito, *Bios*; R. Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); R. Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (London: Polity Press, 2011); see also *Diacritics*, 36:2 (2006) (special issue on Roberto Esposito); T. Campbell, ‘Bios, immunity, life: the thought of Roberto Esposito’, *Diacritics*, 36:2 (2006), pp. 2–22.
- 21 See for example, M. G. E. Kelly, ‘International biopolitics: Foucault, globalization and imperialism’, *Theoria*, 57:123 (2010), pp. 1–26.
- 22 See in this regard M. Levine, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State, Volume 2: The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).
- 23 See the work of Nitzan Lebovic in a special issue about philosophy and theory of Fascism, ‘The beauty and terror of life: Ludwig Klages, Walter Benjamin, and Alfred Baeumler’, *South Central Review*, 23:1 (2006), pp. 23–39.
- 24 See Vivian Liska’s criticism of Agamben’s messianism in *Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus* (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2008); and also

- Lorenzo Chiesa, 'Giorgio Agamben's Franciscan ontology', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 5:1 (2009), pp. 105–16.
- 25 Lemke, *Biopolitics*, p. 59; he also mentions P. Fitzpatrick, 'These mad abandon'd times', *Economy and Society*, 30:2 (2001), pp. 255–70.
- 26 See R. Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); K. Ball, *Disciplining the Holocaust* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008).
- 27 See Lemke, *Biopolitics*, pp. 58–63.
- 28 D. A. Moses, 'Genocide and modernity', in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of Genocide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 156–93; D. A. Moses, 'Modernity and the Holocaust', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 43 (1997), pp. 441–5.
- 29 D. Stone, 'Biopower and modern genocide', in A. D. Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 162–80.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- 31 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 259.
- 32 C. Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 17–122.
- 33 Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2008 – original French edition 2006); for discussion of Meillassoux see L. Bryant, N. Srnicek & G. Harman (eds), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: Re-Press, 2011); G. Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).
- 34 See R. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 65.
- 35 See in this regard Gilles Deleuze's monograph about Foucault, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
- 36 See Brassier's discussion, *Nihil Unbound*, pp. 49–53.
- 37 J.-P. Satre, *Nausea* (New York: New Directions, 1964).
- 38 F. Stepputat, 'Governing the dead: an introduction', in F. Stepputat (ed.), *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).
- 39 See J. Fontein, 'The politics of the dead: living heritage, bones and commemoration in Zimbabwe', at www.theasa.org/publications/asaonline/articles/asaonline0102.pdf (accessed 28 November 2013); J. Fontein, 'Between tortured bodies and resurfacing bones: the politics of the dead in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15:4 (2010), pp. 423–8; J. Fontein, C. Krmpotich & J. Harries, 'The substance of bones: the emotive materiality and affective presence of human remains', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15:4 (2010), pp. 371–84; J. Fontein & J. Harries, 'Report of the Bones Collective workshop, 4–5 December 2008', at www.san.ed.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/29110/Final_Report.pdf (accessed 28 November 2013).
- 40 J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press,

- 1982); see also Cecilia Sjöholm's critical interpretation in *Kristeva and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 95–9.
- 41 Fontein, 'Between tortured bodies'; J. Fontein, 'Shared legacies of the war: spirit mediums and war veterans in southern Zimbabwe', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36:2 (2006), pp. 167–99.
- 42 G. Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002).
- 43 See P. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).
- 44 See especially G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), vols 2 and 3; and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- 45 In connection with his thesis regarding corpses as both/neither person and/nor object Fontein cites Paul Geary, 'Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 169–91.
- 46 P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- 47 See for example Charles Taylor's discussion on the emergence of this approach to death in Taylor, *A Secular Age*.
- 48 Fontein, 'The politics of the dead'.
- 49 See in this regard the suicide of Slobodan Milošević. M. Scharf & B. Schabas, *Slobodan Milošević on Trial* (New York: Continuum, 2002).
- 50 In fact this is for Meillassoux the very Archimedic point from which one is able to transcend the correlationist stand. See *After Finitude*, location 821, Kindle edition.
- 51 See for example C. Joyce & E. Stover, *Witnesses from the Grave: The Stories Bones Tell* (New York: Little, Brown, 1991); C. Koff, *The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo* (New York: Random House, 2005); E. Domanska, 'Toward the archeontology of the dead body', *Rethinking History*, 389:403 (2005), pp. 389–413; E. Stover, W. D. Haglund & M. Samuels, 'Exhumation of mass graves in Iraq: considerations for forensic investigations, humanitarian needs, and the demands of justice', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290:5 (2003), pp. 663–6; W. D. Haglund, M. Connor & D. D. Scott, 'The archaeology of contemporary mass graves', *Historical Archaeology*, 35:1 (2001), pp. 57–69.
- 52 With regard to the tension between the forensic search for evidence and the families right of closure see A. Rosenblatt, 'International forensic investigations and the human rights of the dead', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32:4 (2010), pp. 921–50.
- 53 See Stepputat's discussion, 'Governing the dead'.
- 54 See in this regard M. DeLanda, *Philosophy and Simulation: The Emergence of Synthetic Reason* (New York: Continuum, 2011).
- 55 See with regard to biohazards produced by large concentrations of corpse in events of mass violence and genocide, Y. Schuliar, P. Juel & T. Knudsen, 'Role of forensic pathologists in mass disasters', *Forensic Science Medical Pathology*, 8 (2012), pp. 164–73.

- 56 With regard to cannibalism vis-à-vis the critical anthropological discourse suggesting the imagery origins of reports on such phenomena, see J. Pottier, 'Rights violations, rumour, and rhetoric: making sense of cannibalism in Mambasa, Ituri (Democratic Republic of Congo)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13 (2007), pp. 825–43.
- 57 See for example D. A. Komar, 'Variables influencing victim selection in genocide', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 53:1 (2008), pp. 172–7.
- 58 See www.physanth.org/association/position-statements/biological-aspects-of-race/?searchterm=race (accessed 28 November 2013).
- 59 See www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm (accessed 28 November 2013).
- 60 A. G. Morris, *Missing and Murdered: A Personal Adventure in Forensic Anthropology* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2011), p. 42.
- 61 C. B. Quintyn, *The Existence or Non-existence of Race: Forensic Anthropology, Population Admixture and the Future of Racial Classification in the US* (Amherst: Teneo Press, 2010), location 47, Kindle edition.
- 62 See in this regard Robert J. Lifton's classic *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Bibliography

- Agamben, G., *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)
- Agamben, G., *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)
- Agamben, G., *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999)
- Anderson, W. T., *To Govern Evolution: Further Adventures of the Political Animal* (Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987)
- Ariès, P., *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977)
- Ball, K., *Disciplining the Holocaust* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008)
- Bataille, G., *The Accursed Share* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), vols 2 and 3
- Borch, C., 'Systemic power: Foucault, Luhmann and analytic of power', *Acta Sociologica*, 48 (2005), pp. 155–67
- Brassier, R., *Nihil Unbound* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Brown, P., *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)
- Bryant, L., N. Srnicek & G. Harman (eds), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: Re-Press, 2011)
- Campbell, T., 'Bios, immunity, life: the thought of Roberto Esposito', *Dia-critics*, 36:2 (2006), pp. 2–22
- Cauthen, K., *Christian Biopolitics: A Credo and Strategy for the Future* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971)
- Chiesa, L., 'Giorgio Agamben's Franciscan ontology', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 5:1 (2009), pp. 105–16
- Chiesa, L. & A. Toscano (eds), *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics* (Melbourne: Re-Press, 2009)

- Clemens, J., N. Heron & A. Murray (eds), *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)
- de la Durantaye, L., *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)
- DeLanda, M., *Philosophy and Simulation: The Emergence of Synthetic Reason* (New York: Continuum, 2011)
- Deleuze, G., *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988)
- Diacritics* 36:2 (2006) (special issue on Roberto Esposito)
- Domanska, E., 'Toward the archeontology of the dead body', *Rethinking History*, 389:403 (2005), pp. 389–413
- Eaglestone, R., *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Esposito, R., *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 – original Italian edition published in 2004)
- Esposito, R., *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)
- Esposito, R., *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (London: Polity Press, 2011)
- Fitzpatrick, P., 'These mad abandon'd times', *Economy and Society*, 30:2 (2001), pp. 255–70
- Fontein, J., 'Between tortured bodies and resurfacing bones: the politics of the dead in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15:4 (2012), pp. 423–48
- Fontein, J., 'Shared legacies of the war: spirit mediums and war veterans in southern Zimbabwe', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36:2 (2006), pp. 167–99
- Fontein, J., 'The politics of the dead: living heritage, bones and commemoration in Zimbabwe', at www.theasa.org/publications/asaonline/articles/asaonline0102.pdf
- Fontein, J. & J. Harries, 'Report of the Bones Collective workshop, 4–5 December 2008', at www.san.ed.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/29110/Final_Report.pdf
- Fontein, J., C. Krmpotich & J. Harries, 'The substance of bones: the emotive materiality and affective presence of human remains', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15:4 (2010), pp. 371–84
- Foucault, M., *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), vol. 1
- Foucault, M., *Society Must Be Defended* (New York: Picador, 2003)
- Foucault, M., 'The birth of social medicine', in J. Faubion (ed.), *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault* (New York: New Press, 2000), vol. 3, pp. 134–56
- Geary, P., 'Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 169–91
- Gerlach, C., *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Geyer, F. & J. van der Zouwen (eds), *Sociocybernetics: Complexity, Autopoiesis, and Observation of Social Systems* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001)

- Gunst, D., *Biopolitik zwischen Macht und Recht* (Mainz: Hase und Kohler Verlag, 1978)
- Haglund, W. D., M. Connor & D. D. Scott, 'The archaeology of contemporary mass graves', *Historical Archaeology*, 35: 1 (2001), pp. 57–69
- Hardt, M. & A. Negri, *Empire: The New World Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)
- Hardt, M. & A. Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004)
- Harman, G., *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011)
- Harman, G., *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002)
- Joyce, C. & E. Stover, *Witnesses from the Grave: The Stories Bones Tell* (New York: Little, Brown, 1991)
- Kelly, M. G. E., 'International biopolitics: Foucault, globalization and imperialism', *Theoria*, 57:123 (2010), pp. 1–26
- Koff, C., *The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo* (New York: Random House, 2005)
- Komar, D. A., 'Variables influencing victim selection in genocide', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 53:1 (2008), pp. 172–7
- Kristeva, J., *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)
- Lebovic, N., 'The beauty and terror of life: Ludwig Klages, Walter Benjamin, and Alfred Baeumler', *South Central Review*, 23:1 (2006), pp. 23–39 (special issue on philosophy and theory of Fascism)
- Lee, D. B. & A. Brosziewski, *Observing Society: Meaning, Communication and Social Systems* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2009)
- Lemke, T., *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2011)
- Levine, M., *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State, Volume 2: The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005)
- Lifton, R. J., *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000)
- Liska, V., *Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus* (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2008)
- Luhmann, N., *Social Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995 – original German edition 1984)
- Mbembe, A., 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15:1 (2003), pp. 11–40
- Meillassoux, Q., *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2008 – original French edition 2006)
- Moeller, H.-G., *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006)
- Moeller, H.-G., *The Radical Luhmann* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)
- Morris, A. G., *Missing and Murdered: A Personal Adventure in Forensic Anthropology* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2011)
- Moses, D. A., 'Genocide and modernity', in D. Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of Genocide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 156–93

- Moses, D. A., 'Modernity and the Holocaust', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 43 (1997), pp. 441–5
- Nadesan, M. H., *Governmentality, Biopower and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2008)
- Neal, A. W., 'Cutting off the king's head: Foucault's "Society Must Be Defended" and the problem of sovereignty', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29:4 (2004), pp. 373–98
- Pottier, J., 'Rights violations, rumour, and rhetoric: making sense of cannibalism in Mambasa, Ituri (Democratic Republic of Congo)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13 (2007), pp. 825–43
- Quintyn, C. B., *The Existence or Non-existence of Race: Forensic Anthropology, Population Admixture and the Future of Racial Classification in the US* (Amherst: Teneo Press, 2010)
- Rosenblatt, A., 'International forensic investigations and the human rights of the dead', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32:4 (2010), pp. 921–50
- Sartre, J.-P., *Nausea* (New York: New Directions, 1964)
- Scharf, M. & B. Schabas, *Slobodan Milošević on Trial* (New York: Continuum, 2002)
- Schuliar, Y., P. Juel & T. Knudsen, 'Role of forensic pathologists in mass disasters', *Forensic Science Medical Pathology*, 8 (2012), pp. 164–73
- Sjoholm, C., *Kristeva and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005)
- Somit, A. & S. A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy: The Biological Bases of Authoritarianism* (Westport: Praeger, 1997)
- Stepputat, F., 'Governing the dead: an introduction', in F. Stepputat (ed.), *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014)
- Stone, D., 'Biopower and modern genocide', in A. D. Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 162–80
- Stover, E., W. D. Haglund & M. Samuels, 'Exhumation of mass graves in Iraq: considerations for forensic investigations, humanitarian needs, and the demands of justice', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290:5 (2003), pp. 663–6
- Taylor, C., *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)
- Wicksteed, P. H., *The Common Sense of Political Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1910)
- Wiener, N., 'Newtonian and Bergsonian time', in *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1948), pp. 30–44