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causality, assemblage, and resonance between heterogeneous elements. As we apply such concepts to these complexes the possibility of intervening in them in more positive, creative ways may grow.

Such concepts are pertinent to an encounter with American Christo-state-capitalism. Engagement with that assemblage, however, cannot proceed far until it absorbs the explorations of globalization, East and West, religion, the market, insurgent cosmopolitanism, and modernity in this volume. This is needed, because a world-wide series of spiritual, military, economic and civilizational responses have been triggered by the crystallization of this assemblage, and because the assemblage encounters the rest of the world through the categories of superiority, mastery, terrorism, resource base, market utility and military might. To the above list of strategically important concepts I would add another, perhaps implicit in several of them: the idea of the globalization of contingency. By that I mean how a volatile mixture of local, entrepreneurial, national and military adventures can generate a dangerous global result that none of the parties intended at the outset. One example of the globalization of contingency is the emergence of global warming as an event of potentially catastrophic significance. Another is the possible declination of states into a variety of civil wars as the pace of information, communication, travel, migration, and military life

accelerate, and a mood of recklessness continues to pervade several key actors. The next step, perhaps, is to bring the insights in several essays on global communication, religion, civilization, modernity and the market to the globalization of contingency.

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Emmett Till's body arrived home in Chicago in September 1955. White racists in Mississippi had tortured, mutilated, and killed the young 14-year-old African-American boy for whistling at a white woman. Determined to make visible the horribly mangled face and twisted body of the child as an expression of racial hatred and killing, Mamie Till, the boy's mother, insisted that the coffin, interred at the A.A. Ranier Funeral Parlor on the south side of Chicago, be left open for four long days. While mainstream news organizations ignored the horrifying image, *Jet*

magazine published an unedited photo of Till's face taken while he lay in his coffin. Till had been castrated and shot in the head; his tongue had been cut out; and a blow from an ax had practically severed his nose from his face – all of this done to a teenage boy who came to bear the burden of the inheritance of slavery and the inhuman pathology that drives its racist imaginary. The photos not only made visible the violent effects of the racial state; they also fuelled massive public anger, especially among blacks, and helped to launch the Civil Rights Movement.

From the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement to the war in Vietnam, images of human suffering and violence provided the grounds for a charged political indignation and collective sense of moral outrage inflamed by the

horrors of poverty, militarism, war, and racism – eventually mobilizing widespread opposition to these anti-democratic forces. Of course, the seeds of a vast conservative counter-revolution were already well underway as images of a previous era – ‘whites only’ signs, segregated schools, segregated housing, and nonviolent resistance – gave way to a troubling iconography of cities aflame, mass rioting, and armed black youth who came to embody the very precepts of lawlessness, disorder, and criminality. Building on the reactionary rhetoric of Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan took office in 1980 with a trickle-down theory that would transform corporate America and a corresponding visual economy. The twin images of the young black male ‘gangsta’ and his counterpart, the ‘welfare queen’, became the primary vehicles for selling the American public on the need to dismantle the welfare state, ushering in an era of unprecedented deregulation, downsizing, privatization, and regressive taxation. The propaganda campaign was so successful that George H. W. Bush could launch his 1988 presidential bid with the image of Willie Horton, an African-American male convicted of rape and granted early release, and succeed in trouncing his opponent with little public outcry over the overtly racist nature of the campaign. By the beginning of the 1990s, global media consolidation, coupled with the outbreak of a new war that encouraged hyper-patriotism and a rigid nationalism, resulted in a tightly controlled visual landscape – managed both by the Pentagon and by corporate-owned networks – that delivered a paucity of images representative of the widespread systemic violence. Selectively informed and cynically inclined, American civic life became more sanitized, controlled, and regulated.

Hurricane Katrina may have reversed the self-imposed silence of the media and public numbness in the face of terrible suffering. Fifty years after the body of Emmett Till was plucked out of the mud-filled waters of the Tallahatchie River, another set of troubling visual representations has appeared that has both shocked and shamed the United States. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, grotesque images of bloated corpses floating in the rotting waters that flooded the streets of New Orleans circulated throughout the mainstream media. What first appeared to be a natural catastrophe soon degenerated into a social debacle as further images revealed, days after Katrina had passed over the Gulf Coast, hundreds of thousands of poor people, mostly blacks, some Latinos, many elderly, and a few white people, packed into the New Orleans Superdome and the city’s Convention Center, stranded on rooftops, or isolated on patches of dry highway without any

food, water, or places to wash, urinate, or find relief from the scorching sun. Weeks passed as the flood waters gradually receded and the military and privatized rental-armies gained control of the city, and more images of dead bodies appeared on the national and global media. TV cameras rolled as bodies reappeared on dry patches of land as people stood by indifferently eating their lunch or occasionally snapping a photograph. The world watched in disbelief as images of bloated decomposing bodies left on the street, or in some cases on the porches of once flooded homes, were broadcast on CNN. A body that had been found on a dry stretch of Union Street in the downtown district of New Orleans remained on the street for four days. Alcede Jackson’s 72-year-old black body was left on the porch of his house for two weeks. Various media soon reported that over 154 bodies had been found in hospitals and nursing homes. The *New York Times* wrote that ‘the collapse of one of society’s most basic covenants – to care for the helpless – suggests that the elderly and critically ill plummeted to the bottom of priority lists as calamity engulfed New Orleans’ (Rohde et al., 2005). Dead people, mostly poor African-Americans, left uncollected in the streets, on porches, in hospitals, nursing homes, electric wheelchairs, and collapsed houses prompted some people to claim that America had become like a ‘Third World country’ while others argued that New Orleans resembled a ‘Third World Refugee Camp’ (Brooks, 2005). There were now, irrefutably, two Gulf crises.

The images of dead bodies kept reappearing in New Orleans, refusing to go away. For many, the bodies of the poor, black, brown, elderly, and sick came to signify what the battered body of Emmett Till once unavoidably revealed, and America was forced to confront these disturbing images and the damning questions behind the images. The Hurricane Katrina disaster, like the Emmett Till affair, revealed a vulnerable and destitute segment of the nation’s citizenry that conservatives not only refused to see but had spent the better part of two decades demonizing. But like the incessant beating of Poe’s tell-tale heart, cadavers have a way of insinuating themselves on consciousness, demanding answers to questions that aren’t often asked. The body of Emmett Till symbolized an overt white supremacy and racialized state organized against the threat that black men (apparently of all sizes and ages) posed to white women. But the black bodies of the dead and walking wounded in New Orleans in 2005 revealed a different image of the ‘racial state’ (see Goldberg, 2001), a different modality of state terrorism marked less by an overt form of white racism than by a highly mediated displacement of race as a central concept

for understanding both Katrina and its place in the broader history of US racism. That is, while Till's body insisted upon a public recognition of the violence of white supremacy, the decaying black bodies floating in the waters of the Gulf Coast represented a return of race against the media and public insistence that this disaster was more about class than race, more about the shameful and growing presence of poverty and society's failure to help those in need. Till's body allowed the racism that destroyed it to be made visible, to speak to the systemic character of American racial injustice. The bodies of the Katrina victims could not speak with the same directness to the state of American racist violence, but they did reveal and shatter the conservative fiction of living in a color-blind society.

The bodies that repeatedly appeared all over New Orleans days and weeks after it was struck by Hurricane Katrina laid bare the racial and class fault lines that mark an increasingly damaged and withering democracy and revealed the emergence of a new kind of politics, one in which entire populations are now considered disposable, an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves. The deeply existential and material questions regarding who is going to die and who is going to live in this society are now centrally determined by race and class. Katrina lays bare what many people in the United States do not want to see: large numbers of poor black and brown people struggling to make ends meet, benefiting very little from a social system that makes it difficult to obtain health insurance, child care, social assistance, cars, savings, and minimum-wage jobs if lucky, and instead offers to black and brown youth bad schools, poor public services, and no future, except a possible stint in the penitentiary. As Janet Pelz (2005) rightly insists, 'These are the people the Republicans have been teaching us to disdain, if not hate, since President Reagan decried the moral laxness of the Welfare mom.' While Pelz's comments provide a crucial context for much of the death and devastation of Katrina, I think to more fully understand this calamity it is important to grasp how the confluence of race and poverty has become part of a new and more insidious set of forces based on a revised set of biopolitical commitments, which have largely given up on the sanctity of human life for those populations rendered 'at risk' by global neoliberal economies and have instead embraced an emergent security state founded on fear, class privilege, and updated notions of racial purity. This is a state that no longer provides Americans with dreams; instead, it has been reduced largely to protecting its citizens from a range of possible nightmares. In this instance, a biopolitics of

disposability and bare life has combined with 'the imploding history of biocapital' (Comaroff, n.d.: 37).

Within the last few decades, matters of state sovereignty in the new world order have been retheorized so as to provide a range of theoretical insights about the relationship between power and politics, the political nature of social and cultural life, and the merging of life and politics as a new form of biopolitics, that is, a politics that attempts to think through the convergence of life and politics. Central here is the task of reformulating the meaning of contemporary politics and how it functions now to regulate matters of life and death, and how such issues are intimately related to both the articulation of community and the social, and the regulation, care, and development of human life. Within this discourse, politics is no longer understood exclusively through a disciplinary technology centered on the individual body – a body to be measured, surveilled, managed, included in forecasts, surveys, and statistical projections. Under the new biopolitical regimes, the body is understood primarily as an object of power, but it is a body that is social and multiple, scientific and ideological. Biopolitics points to new relations of power that are more capacious, concerned with not only the body as an object of disciplinary techniques that render it 'both useful and docile' but a body that needs to be 'regularized', subject to those immaterial means of production that produce ways of life that enlarge the targets of control and regulation (Foucault, 1997: 249).

While biopolitics, as taken up in the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, on the one hand, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, on the other hand, emphasizes the relations between politics and death, biopolitics, in their views, is less concerned with the primacy of death than with the production of life both as an individual and a social category. In Giorgio Agamben's formulation, the new biopolitics is the deadly administration of what he calls 'bare life' and its ultimate incarnation is the Holocaust with its ominous specter of the concentration camp. In this formulation, the Nazi death camps become the primary exemplar of control, the new space of contemporary politics in which individuals are no longer viewed as citizens but are now seen as inmates, stripped of everything, including their right to live. The uniting of power and bare life, the reduction of the individual to *homo sacer* – the sacred man, who, under certain states of exception and without fear of punishment, 'may be killed and yet not sacrificed' – no longer represent the far end of political life (Agamben, 1998: 8). As modern states increasingly suspend their democratic structures,

laws, and principles, the very nature of governance changes as 'the rule of law is routinely displaced by the state of exception, or emergency, and people are increasingly subject to extra-judicial state violence' (Bull, 2004: 3). The life unfit for life, unworthy of being lived, as the central category of *homo sacer*, is no longer marginal to sovereign power but is now central to its form of governance. Modern politics in this instance, as Jean Comaroff (n.d.: 22) puts it, 'reveals how modern government stages itself by dealing directly in the power over life: the power to exclude, to declare exceptions, to strip human existence of civic rights and social value'. State violence and totalitarian power, which, in the past, either were generally short-lived or existed on the fringe of politics and history, have now become the rule, as life is more ruthlessly regulated and placed in the hands of military and state power.

For Agamben, the coupling of the state of exception with the metaphor of bare life points to a biopolitics in which 'all subjects are at least potentially if not actually abandoned by the law and exposed to violence as a constitutive condition of political existence' (Mills, 2004: 47). Nicholas Mirzoeff has observed that all over the world there is a growing resentment of immigrants and refugees, matched by the emergence of detain-and-deport strategies coupled with the rise of the camp as the key institution and social model of the new millennium. The 'empire of camps', according to Mirzoeff, has become the 'exemplary institution of a system of global capitalism that supports the West in its high consumption, low-price consumer lifestyle' (Mirzoeff, 2005: 145). Zygmunt Bauman calls such camps 'garrisons of extraterritoriality' and argues that they have become 'the dumping grounds for the indisposed of and as yet unrecycled waste of the global frontier-land' (Bauman, 2003: 136). The regime of the camp has increasingly become a key index of modernity and the new world order. The politics of disposability not only generates widespread violence and ever-expanding 'garrisons of extraterritoriality' but also has taken on a powerful new significance as a foundation for political sovereignty. Biopolitical commitments to 'let die' by abandoning citizens appear increasingly credible in light of the growing authoritarianism in the United States under the Bush administration.

Under the logic of modernization, neoliberalism, and militarization, the category 'waste' includes no longer simply material goods but also human beings, particularly those rendered redundant in the new global economy, that is, those who are no longer capable of making a living, who are unable to consume goods, and who depend upon others for the most basic needs. Defined primarily

through the combined discourses of character, personal responsibility, and cultural homogeneity, entire populations expelled from the benefits of the marketplace are reified as products without any value to be disposed of as 'leftovers in the most radical and effective way: we make them invisible by not looking and unthinkable by not thinking' (Bauman, 2004: 27). Even when young black and brown youth try to escape the biopolitics of disposability by joining the military, the seduction of economic security is quickly negated by the horror of senseless violence compounded daily in the streets, roads, and battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan and made concrete in the form of body bags, mangled bodies, and amputated limbs – rarely to be seen in the narrow ocular vision of the dominant media.

With the social state in retreat and the rapacious dynamics of a market fundamentalism, unchecked by government regulations, the public and private policies of investing in the public good are dismissed as bad business, just as the notion of protecting people from the dire misfortunes of poverty and sickness, or the random blows of fate is viewed as an act of bad faith. Weakness is now a sin, punishable by social exclusion. This is especially true for those racial groups and immigrant populations who have always been at risk economically and politically. Increasingly, such groups have become part of an ever-growing army of the impoverished and disenfranchised – removed from the prospect of a decent job, productive education, adequate health care, acceptable child care services, and satisfactory shelter. As the state is transformed into the primary agent of terror and corporate concerns displace democratic values, the exercise of power increasingly becomes about evading social responsibilities. With its pathological disdain for public life and its celebration of an unbridled individualism and acquisitiveness, the Bush administration does more than undermine the nature of social obligation and civic responsibility; it also sends a message to those populations who are poor and black – society neither wants, cares about, nor needs you. Katrina revealed with startling and disturbing clarity who these individuals are: African-Americans who occupy the poorest sections of New Orleans, those ghettoized frontier-zones created by racism coupled with economic inequality. Excluded from any long-term goals and a decent vision of the future, these are the populations, as Zygmunt Bauman points out, who have been rendered redundant and disposable in the age of neoliberal global capitalism.

Katrina reveals that we are living in dark times. The shadow of authoritarianism remains after the storm clouds and hurricane winds have passed, offering a glimpse of its wreckage and terror. The

politics of a disaster that affected Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi is about more than government incompetence, militarization, socio-economic polarization, environmental disaster, and political scandal. Hurricane Katrina broke through the visual blackout of poverty and the pernicious ideology of color-blindness to reveal the government's role in fostering the dire living conditions of largely poor African-Americans, who were bearing the hardships incurred by the full wrath of the indifference and violence at work in the racist, neoliberal state. Global neoliberalism and its victims now occupy a space shaped by authoritarian politics, the terrors inflicted by a police state, and a logic of disposability that removes them from government social provisions and the discourse and privileges of citizenship. One of the most obvious lessons of Katrina – that race and racism still matter in America – is fully operational through a biopolitics in which 'sovereignty resides in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who may die' (Mbembe, 2003: 11–12). Those poor minorities of color and class, unable to contribute to the prevailing consumerist ethic, are vanishing into the sinkhole of poverty in desolate and abandoned enclaves of decaying cities, neighborhoods, and rural spaces, or in America's ever-expanding prison empire.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the biopolitical calculus of massive power differentials and iniquitous market relations put the scourge of poverty and racism on full display. But any viable notion of biopolitics has to be about more than subjection, crisis, abjection and apocalypse. The politics of exclusion only yields a partial understanding of how power works. To confront the biopolitics of disposability, we need to recognize the dark times in which we live and offer up a vision of hope that creates the conditions for multiple collective and global struggles that refuse to use politics as an act of war and markets as the measure of democracy. Making human beings superfluous is the essence of totalitarianism, and democracy is the antidote in urgent need of being reclaimed. Katrina should keep the hope of such a struggle alive for quite some time because for many of us the images of those floating bodies serve as a desperate reminder of what it means

when justice, as the lifeblood of democracy, becomes cold and indifferent in the face of death.

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