

because it remains asymmetrical. It overlooks the simultaneous birth of 'nonhumanity' – things, or objects, or beasts – and the equally strange beginning of a crossed-out God, relegated to the sidelines.

Latour [1991] 1993: 13

As an anthropologist of science and technology, Latour is invested in the study of the culture of technosciencelabs. This *culture* purifies its laboratory life as pertaining to the *natural* domain only. Latour demonstrates that this purification is a consequence of what his and Haraway's colleague Sharon Traweek (1988) calls a 'culture of no culture', the assumption that objectivity is at work and that gender, racism and other power dynamics are henceforth (or: naturally) kept at bay. Laboratories are assumed to be quintessential ivory towers. The point is, however, that 'All natures-cultures are similar in that they simultaneously construct humans, divinities and nonhumans' (Latour [1991] 1993: 106). In order to come up with a fully bounded human subject (the lab scientist), one needs to assume the messiness of the nature studied. And in order to study and capture messy nature as consisting of purely physical processes and phenomena, the scientist has simultaneously to assume a God's eye view and to rule out the processes and phenomena being of divine (i.e. immortal and uncapturable) nature.

Both Haraway and Latour study how nature and culture as bounded domains and the natural and cultural beings within these domains come into being and how this process is 'never finished, whole, simply there and original' (Haraway 1988: 586). Domains and beings do not pre-exist in nature(s)-cultures. What pre-exists in nature(s)-cultures are local 'collectives' (Latour [1991] 1993: 107), and the collectives as well as the relations within them are nothing but partial and temporal. In other

words, 'All collectives are different from one another in the way they divide up beings, in the properties they attribute to them, in the mobilization they consider acceptable. These differences constitute countless small divides, and there is no longer a Great Divide to take one apart from all the others' (Latour [1991] 1993: 107). The modern assumption of the Great Divide between nature and culture was not only ontologically false but also wrongdoing in its gendered, racialized and colonizing effects.

See also Cosmopolitics; Ecosophy; Econtology; (Material) Ecocriticism; Ecomaterialism; Medianatures; Terrestrial; Symbiogenesis.

Iris van der Tuin

NECROPOLITICS

As Michel Foucault (2003, 2008) outlined in his seminal work on biopolitics, the late eighteenth century saw the emergence of biopower, a new political economy of governmentality that included strategies focused on the systemic monitoring and regulation of living organisms. These included both human and non-human life-forms (see for instance agricultural techniques, water management and animal husbandry) and the management of populations through demographics, health and hygiene and modernized policing techniques. The bio-political management of early modern times was simultaneously pragmatic and instrumental. It introduced significant innovations into the notion of 'making live and letting die', which had been operational in the political economy of sovereignty since medieval times. Bio-political governmentality marked a significant shift from the exercise of absolutist

power to 'let live and make die' by a singular sovereign over the hierarchically organized people. As Foucault put it, this new governmentality brought into being a modernized notion of the social body and of the subjects that embodied it. Biopolitics exerts social and political power over a new type of social body:

not exactly society ... nor is it the individual-as-body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a social problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem.

Foucault 2003: 245

This population as the target of biopolitical management includes human and non-human agents, which in turn require modes of governance that combine the production of knowledge, the gathering of information and the invention and implementation of updated forms of monitoring and control. It is a mixed political economy where discourse and/as power produces a new type of social subject: the informed and willing citizen who self-implements the basic rules of law.

Now more than three decades after this insightful analysis, it remains 'urgent to assess the state of the theoretical debates on bio-power after Foucault, especially in terms of its legal, political and ethical implications' (Braidotti 2007). In a postcolonial, neo-imperial, neoliberal era in which technologies of destruction are not only more ubiquitous but are also more tactile (Mbembe 2003: 34), how to account for death and dying? Here, Achille Mbembe offers a supplement or corrective to Foucauldian notions of biopolitics in asking:

Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective? ... What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?

Mbembe 2003: 12

Life and death can, of course, not be separated and Foucault is the first to recognize it, going so far as to coin the term 'thanatopolitics'. In contemporary critical theory, biopolitics and necropolitics are not opposites but rather two sides of the same coin (Braidotti 2007; Mbembe 2003). They function like bifocal lenses that allow us to analyse power relations and examine the inextricable politics of life and death. Moving away from Foucault, necropolitics as a theoretical paradigm of analysis is concerned with how life is subjugated to the power of death (Mbembe 2003: 39). It asks who gets to live and who must die (or who must live and who is let die), in the contemporary political economy, thereby putting forth a different hypothesis from classical bio-power. Necropolitics uncovers the mechanisms whereby certain bodies nowadays are 'cultivated' or grown for the purpose of enhancing life and (re)production, while others are marked for or neglected into death. This shift of priorities constructs a new political economy based on constantly shifting boundaries between 'legitimate' subjects, indexed on life, and 'illegitimate' non-subjects, indexed on death.

Mbembe developed the concept of necropolitics to account for contemporary warfare and the various ways in which 'weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creating of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast

populations are subjected to conditions of life' (Mbembe 2003: 40). These death-worlds, which denote not only physical death but also social and political death, affect entire populations, 'conferring upon them the status of *living dead*' (Mbembe 2003: 40). Similarly, slow death (Berlant 2007: 754), and slow violence (Rob Nixon, 2011), that is to say the physical exhaustion and diminishment or elimination of certain human and non-human populations, is a defining mark of the contemporary era.

More recently, this theoretical lens has been cogently applied within queer studies. Jasbir K. Puar (2007) made significant inroads into this now-growing field of queer necropolitics, interrogating which queer lives can reproduce life and which are left to die or are actively targeted for killing. In their recently published volume *Queer Necropolitics*, Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco have pushed this paradigm further to show how the necropolitical can be read as 'a tool to make sense of the symbiotic co-presence of life and death, manifested ever more clearly in the cleavages between rich and poor, citizens and non-citizens (and those who can be stripped of citizenship); the culturally, morally, economically valuable and the pathological; queer subjects invited into life and queerly abjected populations marked for death' (2014: 2). In this volume, Foucault's and Mbembe's foundational thinking around biopolitics and necropolitics form the frame for deeper and more inclusive theoretical engagements, even as they are indeed queered.

Posocco underscores the connection between 'queer' and 'necropolitics': 'A consequence of the shift to a biopolitical and necropolitical theoretical register is precisely the detachment of "queerness" from one of its key referents, i.e., "gay and lesbian"' (2014: 84). In connoting "those

whose bodies are marked by racialized and sexualized technologies and produced through the *dispositifs* of race and sexuality for death, including social death, queerness has the potential to disrupt power structures and necropolitical networks (ibid.). Countering a focus on identity categories that might fall under the LGBT umbrella and challenging heteronormative, homonormative and transnormative assumptions and privileges, queering necropolitics illuminates the ways in which normativity is linked to neo-colonial and neo-imperialist processes and how the biopolitical and the necropolitical continue to exert life- and death-giving forces that have gendered and racialized dimensions.

Here, 'queer necropolitics' serves as a concept-metaphor to illuminate ambivalent processes of exclusion and inclusion, signifying how inclusion itself can also be viewed as deadly. As Haritaworn, Huntsman and Posocco incisively ask, 'If modern genders and sexualities (both dominant and subordinate) have been formed against constitutive Others whose primitivity is signified as perversity – and as a failure to perform proper gender binaries – what is at stake in seeing inclusion through or into these identities?' (2014: 3–4). A queer take on necropolitics further bolsters a framework for analysing life and death in an ever-increasingly neoliberal environment that folds in some previously othered others while marking other others for social extinction and social death (Patterson 1982), particularly those who experience intersecting forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, poverty, ableism and criminalization.

See also Bios; Bodies Politic; Geopolitics; Lampedusa; Neocolonial; War.

Christine Quinan