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## IS THERE LIFE BEYOND POPULATION HEALTH? Transformations in regimes of life control & exit

**Abstract:** In its 19<sup>th</sup> century materialisation, risk was calculable. Currently NATO's Parliamentary Assembly is discussing the policy implications of the risk's incalculability. This paper elucidates the shift by examining three regimes of life control. The Life/Culture System pervades early 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural and political thinking: working with the vitalism of life promises a better future. Following WWII, life's vitalism, creativity and potential are viewed with suspicion. The State is valorised as the guarantor of an objective, accountable and democratic regime of life control. Biopolitics comes to the fore; risk is called forth. Today, there is a renewed interest in life's inherent plasticity, in controlling life by recombining life. Efforts to work with free-floating and incalculable risk signal a new regime of control: the Emergent Formation of Life.

Together, the technological capacity to change biological life and the transnationalisation of risk contribute to these transformations in regimes of life control. However, something is commonly neglected in these accounts: the domain of the everyday. This paper argues that the Emergent Formation of Life regulates life by inscribing emergent recombinant practices into people's everyday experience. Exit from the Emergent Formation of Life takes place on same terrain – immanent, ordinary experience. An analysis of shifts in public health efforts to contain infectious disease and of the everyday experience of life beyond population health illustrates this argument.

### Regimes of Control

There is a widespread cultural imagination today that we possess the capacity to fundamentally change the conditions of our existence. This new master narrative of changing "life itself" pertains, on the one hand, to the technoscientific, transcendent aspiration to completely monitor, control, and transform life in its entirety. On the other hand it is germane to many critical accounts in social theory which assert that we have entered a historical phase in which there is nothing outside of the agonistic efforts to change life (e.g. Agamben, 1998; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Rabinow, 1996; Rose, 2001; Virno, 2003; see also

Loirey, 2006; Fraser, Kember, & Lury, 2005). And life itself surpasses each of these efforts, combines all together into a continual flow of intensities. Both trends constitute, what I will call in this paper, the regime of life control. The regime of life control is the attempt to systematically manage and control the field of life, that is human experience, the human body as a biosocial entity, and, finally, the everyday. Each of these three dimensions constitutes the field of life as it emerged towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Life/Culture System

A 19th century vitalism unfurls in early 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural life and political thinking. “I desire you: you are worth knowing”, Nietzsche says to life (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 115). For Nietzsche life itself is the promise. He elevates banality to something extraordinary, superhuman: one’s escape from life occurs through returning to life itself. This is immanence. The ordinary life is not an enemy, it is the object of desire and the ultimate place to be. Even a life which is not worth living is a desirable life which can be changed. Life is the appropriation, expansion, accumulation of energies; life means overpowering life (and others). “Life, in its flow, is not determined by a goal but driven by a force: hence it has significance beyond beauty and ugliness” (Simmel, 1968, p. 17). This activism is equally connected to negativity and pleasure, to pessimism and optimism, to beauty and barbarity. I want to use an image to suggest something about how a Nietzschean investment in the recombinant capacities of life travels into 20<sup>th</sup> century European political life.

Insert Figure

**Umberto Boccioni, Unique Forms of Continuity in Space**

1913, Bronze, 111.2 x 88.5 x 40 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York City

In his sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) Boccioni celebrates the plasticity of the human form and its connection with the environment. In keeping with the futurist movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in which he was key, his sculpture attempts to capture the dynamism of life, to break with traditional objective lines of interpretation and let the objects speak on their own. Futurists believed that objects have a vitality and plasticity in themselves, objects escape a transcendent gaze because they embody more forces than stable qualities, more conflicts than representations. Space is continuous, objects and environment fuse, materiality transforms under the pressure of the multiple forces extending across space. Boccioni’s figures are mixtures of humans, robots, automata, animals, machines, environment. Boscagli (1996, p. 136) writes that there is

a dramatic redefinition of the human figure.. ... the human form is denied the stability that anchors the subject to a specific, individual body in order to privilege a drama of fusion with the surroundings.... the Futurist male body goes beyond his human, organic possibilities to develop new capabilities and even new organs. [...] ... As mechanized

matter, the Futurist man-robot must be devoid of any sign of individuality and humanity.

Boccioni saw his sculpture and himself as continuous with life: “in fact, we have life itself caught in a form which life has created in its infinite succession of events” (Boccioni, 1913 in Apollonio, 1973, p. 93). Boccioni’s work evokes something of a particular regime of life control (elaborated more fully in Papadopoulos, Stephenson, & Tsianos, forthcoming). This is the Life/Culture System: changing life is making culture. Culture transpires out of the energetic flux of life, life is culture. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, this investment in life is not contained to the cultural sphere; it starts to legitimise people’s everyday public and political engagement (cf. Rasch, 1967, p. 17): consider the mass gymnastics so central to Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, the hiking, the embrace of nature and of the body. We now we think of all this as aligned with fascism – and this is indeed what happened (Sternhell, Sznajder, & Asheri, 1994). But the Life/Culture System was *common* across cultural expression and politics of the left and right in the inter-war period (Glaeser, Weiskopf, & Kurella, 1931; Simmel, 1968; Weidt, 1968; Willett, 1978; Peukert, 1987; Hermand & Trommler, 1988; Guttsman, 1990; Manning, 1993; Toepfer, 1997; Banes, 1998; Schenck, 2007).

Boccioni’s work simultaneously signifies the will for liberation from the traditional transcendent gaze and it is captivated in the facticity of its own involvement in the creation of an infrastructure of death. In hindsight, we know where this all led. It crystallized in the cultural and political codes of a patriarchy, fascism, and violence. Violence figured as a vehicle for restructuring the totality of life. Despite all its marvellous games with time and space and machine, this agonistic vision to traverse space ended up in an idolization of violence and war. The Life/Culture System—this mega machine which attempted to establish the regime of the control of life—in the beginning of the long century of life, in the time when life emerged as a means of generating society and culture, this system was inextricably entangled with a dramatic failure of a whole epoch in North-Atlantic societies.

### Biopolitics

After World War II, life and uncontrollable change figured as more of a threat than promise; people’s desire for tranquillity supported the emergence of a different mode of political engagement, personified by the democratic, welfare state. Vitalism, creativity, potential, virility, dynamism were viewed with suspicion, their historical connection to the aestheticisation of violence and warfare appeared as an immanent quality of life itself. Attempts to privilege life as a driving force orientating us towards the future had to be defended against in the second half of the 20th century. Life was disparaged as a mystical, and therefore dangerous, entity. For citizens in democratic states the promise of life no longer legitimises political engagement. Demands for rights, inclusion, equality, recognition:

these are the interests that mobilise people with the promise of a better, more democratic, future.

The suppression of life which occurred in the post-war period has its own history (to which I can only gesture here). Writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Hobbes (1994) describes sovereign power as muting the dangerous multiplicity of people's singular wills, trajectories and powers, and unifying them into "the people as one". In return for this kind of capture, people are promised a degree of protection from the unpredictabilities of life, the risks it entails. Here, sovereign power is understood as an essentially reactive force: it is focused on control and regulation of existing forces and directions (as opposed to active power, in the Nietzschean sense, a form of power which fuels new configurations in social relations). Hobbes' people are akin to Nietzsche's slaves who hand to another both the powers to regulate their own actions and to punish their transgression. Does democracy entail a similar move? de Tocqueville observes, firstly, that democratic governance cannot function without people's active involvement – only this distinguishes democracy from despotic rule. Secondly, he notes that governments need to take an active role in promoting this involvement by bringing people together. "In democratic countries the science of association" as in people coming together in interest groups "is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made" (de Tocqueville, 1963, p. 110). de Tocqueville identifies an imperative for democratic governments to actively organise social life. By deploying effective technologies of "association", governance is present in people's everyday social relations with others (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1996a). I want to suggest that in this emphasis on the importance, for democratic governments, of actively organising the modes through which people connect to each other, people's singularities and differences figure as threats to democratic governance – as forces which must be harnessed where possible and turned in the direction of governance. And what might be called, following Simmel, "life, in its flow... [un]determined by a goal but driven by a force" (1968, p. 17) is precisely what needs to be suppressed.

In this sense, the development of the welfare state signifies the erosion of faith in "life itself", in its place we have a grand narrative of protection, order and care. What is wild, life, must be saved from itself, domesticated, democratised. Now an alternate regime of life control, the components of which Foucault (1978, p. 120) traced as emerging in 18th century, takes the stage: biopolitics. The State is valorised as an identifiable, objective, accountable, modifiable, progressive and above all democratic regime of life control. The state has a concrete, statistically assessable object—the population. Risk and its pervasive government are called forth.

### ***Risk: National, Transnational & Everyday***

Before discussing contemporary risk governance, I want to note that, historically, risk has played an important role in the consolidation of nation states. Unlike an accident which

happens to individuals, risk affects populations and populations are constructed in specific ways. For example, Ewald points out that the 19<sup>th</sup> century political technology of “insurance contributes ... [to forging] a mode of association which allows [people] to *agree* on the rule of justice they will subscribe to” (1991, p. p. 207). Insurance against risk functions as a technology of association, constructing allegiance to and commonalities between members of an association. Hence, when the state enters the field and guarantees the stability of social insurance it is “equally guaranteeing ... its own existence” (Ewald, 1991, p. 209). Importantly, whilst there is an idealistic or nebulous quality to the security offered in the social contract (Hobbes) or in the democratic sciences of association (de Tocqueville), as the state becomes the guarantor of security, this protection against risk becomes tangible and concrete (Ewald, 1991)<sup>1</sup>.

However, much contemporary risk scholarship is devoted to interrogating the ways in which contemporary risk may be contributing to the erosion of nation states, or forcing their reorganisation. One reason for this shift is simply the proliferation of political technologies, rationalities of risk. This is well illustrated in the field of population health and the control of infectious disease in particular. The development of “surveillance medicine” can be traced from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through early 20<sup>th</sup> century efforts to manage the “social disease” (TB, VD, childhood illnesses, neuroses) (Armstrong, 1995). In the post-war period the gaze of surveillance medicine extends from the hospital to the population, and from the symptoms present in bodies to the risk factors inherent in the extracorporeal spaces in which the population is situated. Now risk no longer relates to a “fixed or necessary relationship to future illness, it simply opens up a space of possibility ... exist[ing] in a mobile relationship with other risks, appearing and disappearing, aggregating and disaggregating, crossing spaces within and without the corporeal body” (Armstrong, 1995, p. 401). Certainly, before WWII the spaces traversed by risk were being understood as transnational (Bashford, 2006). However, in the post-war period, the establishment of WHO intensified international and transnational health efforts (Tarantola, 2005). WHO adopted methods of disease surveillance which, by seeking out pathologies not in bodies but in entire populations, contributed to constructing nations as “nations of epidemics” (Fearnley, 2005). The “space of possibility” traversed by risk expands from bodies to nations to the spaces between nations and risk goes transnational. In this move, questions about the capacities, accountability, legitimacy and paternalism of different state actors become central (Tarantola, 2005). Now, informed by Beck (2001), NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly is discussing the policy implications of transnational risk and “tentatively concluding” that, although “states will remain the single, most important organising unit of political economic and security affairs over the coming decade... governance will emerge as a major challenge ...[and] increased international dialogue, cooperation and action on an ever-lengthening list of transnational issues may

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<sup>1</sup> And, as is frequently pointed out, this is why Thatcher was making sense when she said “There is no such thing as society! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people, and people look to themselves first.” (Thatcher, 1987, 31 October). The dismantling of social insurance underpinning the social contract effectively dismantles society as it has been constructed and lived in the post-war period.

prove the only way to reassert control over phenomena that might otherwise evade control” (NATO, 2005, p. p. 16). Whilst these shifts in the “spaces of possibility” through which risk moves contribute to challenging any notion that nation states are the main actors, states are of course, active in their ongoing efforts to manage and regulate risk and risk pervades the everyday.

Much work has been done on how neoliberal modes of managing risk are taken on by people and saturate the everyday. This individualising story has been told in Rose’s work on governmentality theory (Rose, 1996b, 1996c)—individuals were enjoined to take responsibility for population health (Race, 2001; Rosengarten, 2004), for the labour market (Dean, 1995), for their youth (Kelly, 2006), for their use of drugs (Bunton, 2001) and even to take responsibility for things which were suddenly said not to exist—such as class differences (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001; Skeggs, 1997). This work both tracks the development of the biopolitical regulation of populations described by Ewald and Foucault, and it signals a transformation in the object and means of regulation. That is, by the neoliberal 1980s and 1990s life is re-entering the socio-political domain, not only as a result of developments in technoscience and of new ways of imagining the body<sup>2</sup>, but also as a way to address and to manage the everyday social realm.

The proclaimed aim of the neoliberal project is to reduce social and political life to a matter of the market (Harvey, 2005). But perhaps this is not the definitive reason for the project’s resounding success (despite its immense local variations, s. Tickell & Peck, 2003). As Fredric Jameson points out, “the reasons for the success of market ideology cannot be sought in the market itself” (1991, p. 266). The strength of the neoliberal project stems from the combination of Post-Fordist strategies for the accumulation of capital *with* a transformation of social regulation which entails releasing the government from its protectionist responsibilities for society and *redistributing risk into the realm of the ordinary*.

Certainly, the state has withdrawn from its traditional role of centralised organiser of society. But the state is no less present. Instead, it has disseminated into the finest fissures of society. The most pervasive effect of neoliberal governmentality is to occupy and to proliferate in the realm of everyday life. Now life starts to be imagined in new ways. For instance, although neoliberal governance deploys the legitimising figure of the subject as an autonomous individual capable of taking responsibility and control, it simultaneously dispatches with that same subject. In place of sovereign agents we have the introduction of situated, porous, non-foundational entities that live and breathe uncontrollability. The state needs networked

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<sup>2</sup> Consider, for example, transformations in biomedical notions of immunity. The immune system had been conceived as hierarchical centre of command-control operations defending the body from invasion through its capacities to recognise “outsiders”. But this “biomedical imaginary” (Waldby, 1996) was disputed from *within* the discipline of immunology. The immune system was characterised as an inherently conflicted network, a distributed system which no longer operate by discriminating between inside and out, self and other, protector and invader. Immunity is a self-managing relation between context and body: “Context is a fundamental matter, not as surrounding “information’, but as co-structure and co-text” (Haraway, 1991a, p. 214).

subjects who, by assuming responsibility for creating connections between disparate actants, actively forge the assemblages neoliberal governance requires in order to make the shift from centralized to disseminated modes of regulation. What matters is the potentiality, the creativity, the life of these actants.

In its 19<sup>th</sup> century materialisation, risk was calculable (Ewald, 1991). Now NATO are discussing the “policy implications” of its incalculability (2005). I want to suggest that this shift is, in part, a consequence of the extension of risk into the domain of the everyday, a domain where it encounters the re-emergence of uncontrollable life. That is, the new uncertainty pertaining to risk does not simply stem from its transnationalisation, but from its extension into everyday experience. Moreover, “the harnessing of life’s forces” Lazzarato argues, is “tracing a new cartography of biopowers” (Lazzarato, 2002). We are witnessing further transformations in the regime of life control. Again, I want to illustrate this with reference to population health and contemporary efforts to contain infectious disease.

### The Emergent Formation of Life

A human influenza pandemic is likely to emerge unpredictably in the near future and to spread rapidly, some public health experts say (e.g. Imperato, 2005). Others caution the public that, although a high risk event, the probability of it occurring in the near future is low (Gust & Lane, 2006). In the field of public health predicting the course of infectious disease is widely acknowledged as a nebulous affair. The US Surgeon General’s claim in 1967 that “it is time to close the book on infectious diseases” is a canonical event which epidemiologists are cautious to avoid repeating. Add to this already blurred picture the spectre of a virus whose hosts respect no borders.

Bird flu amplifies the paradox of unpredictable threats to human health—and to global economic productivity, (McKibbin, 2006)—and firmly locates them in the everyday. If the public appetite for the horrors of emerging infectious diseases in a globalised world had been cultivated in the 1990s by films and by bestselling science reporters (e.g. Garrett, 1994, 1996), it is now being well fed by stories about the mutation and reassortment of H5N1. Bird flu demands that people actively imagine the future, not only in their capacities as health professionals or chicken farmers, but as employers and business owners, as teachers or as families (ABC, 2006). The work that goes into imagining emerging infectious diseases in pandemic proportions inserts a new vision into an old nightmare. There is the terrifying figure of the havoc to be wreaked by “viral carnage” (Garrett, 2005): families holed up with stockpiles wondering if they will survive only to emerge to an invasion of fleeing foreigners bringing more disease and ensuring a scarcity of resources. But the new twist is that the threat comes from within, from life. As infectious diseases are increasingly understood as emergent (Lederberg, 1996) the notion that life is an ingenious, uncontrollable threat which

cannot be contained by familiar modes of biopolitical regulation is reinserted into people's everyday existence.

Melinda Cooper's (2006) work tracks the journey from emergence to the everyday across three decades. Emergence was identified in microbiological research conducted in the 1950s and used to critique efforts to eradicate infectious disease as utopian; it suggested that war against infectious disease would inevitably be "met with counter-resistance of all kinds" (Cooper, 2006, p. 117). But the critique does not take hold in the field of public health. Cooper argues that its acceptance coincides with an expansion in the notion of risk to include catastrophic risk - a notion which arose in the 1980s in the financial and environmental sectors, rather than health. Catastrophic risk not only threatens calamity as its name suggests, but it invokes the possibility of life being *made anew*, mutating and reassorting as it is destroyed. Like the catastrophic event, the specific mode of life's transformation is completely unpredictable. Hence catastrophic risk suspends us in "a state of alertness, without foreseeable end" (2006, p. 120). This suggests a paradigm shift in the conceptualisation of risk - from protection to pre-emption - and resonates with other accounts of contemporary risk management. Ewald (2002) examines the rise of practices designed to manage low probability, catastrophic, incalculable risk, and identifies an emerging political rationality of "precaution". Similarly, when Collier & Lakoff (2006, February) examine the risk-management practices travelling through various domains of "security" in the post-war period, they distinguish two distinct political rationalities at play. "Population security" is a familiar biopolitical matter: it involves the identification of "social pathologies", the calculation and distribution of risk across a collective and interventions take the form of social interventions. "Vital systems security" signals a shift: it focuses on unpredictable, future events and in addition to the familiar surveillance of disease, preparedness efforts privilege the coordination of state and non-state agencies in the name of "readiness" (Lakoff, 2006; Rabinow, 2003).

What happens when the unpredictability of life, its emergence, enters the everyday? I want to suggest that the affects which accompany this shift are different to the sheer fear which has been identified as a contemporary mode of regulating populations (e.g. Massumi, 1993; Ahmed, 2003). People are enjoined to imagine the unimaginable and to actively prepare for protecting themselves from a threat that arises from within, the threat of remaking from within.

Not only individual bodies, but the population itself is transformed through international efforts to respond to emerging infectious diseases. International tracking and management of disease is not a new phenomenon—it has a long colonial (and military history) history (King, 2002; Anderson, 1996, 2002). But in the wake of scientific and public interest in emerging viruses, King identifies a distinct "emerging diseases worldview". This worldview accompanies a concomitant shift from international health as simply a nation state affair to a matter of "efficiently managing the global circulation of medical products", technologies and information (King, 2002, p. 779). Now this approach to international health with its

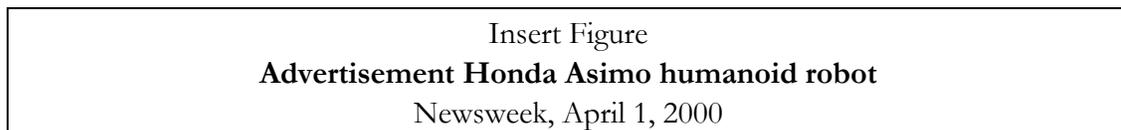
integrationist aim is intertwined with and reinforces still existing colonial practices of conversion. Predictably, the cooperative use of information technologies for infectious disease surveillance (as advocated in the *America's Vital Interests in Global Health* (IOM, 1997) report) includes actors involved legislation, private industry, market regulation and NGOs in addition to the familiar players from health departments and the military. Not only has the aim of international surveillance moved beyond identifying disease outbreaks to anticipating their emergence *before* they are discernible to the public, now everyone is involved. This pre-emptive shift means that: "In contrast to the panoptic institutional surveillance of a single prison or the clinic, which is easily identified as coercive or violent, this surveillance is imagined to be everywhere, at all times, producing data available to everyone: a global clinic" (King, 2002, p. 776). Whilst on the one hand, pre-emptive public health regulation *responds* to emerging viruses like H5N1, the spectre of pandemic influenza is serving to *activate* the nodes in this expanding network, to connect to new nodes and to anchor this new form of regulation in the social imaginary.

These transformations in approaches to the controllability of the body and of population health signal a new regime of life control: the Emergent Formation of Life. This contemporary regime of life control is emergent in the sense that it deals with life's inherent plasticity and creativity by working from within life, *countering life with life*. That is, rather than adopt a transcendent biopolitical perspective and seizing on life's potential to harness and channel it in the direction of power (Lazzarato, 2004), the Emergent Formation of Life functions by adopting the guerrilla tactics of an immanent player.

Life's new foothold is replayed in multiple spaces. Responses to the public health problem of containing emerging infectious diseases, for example, align and segregate as they cut through sectors of the pharmaceutical industry (the main recipients of Bioshield funding), military researchers working both domestically and in the surveillance centres re-opening worldwide, national governments (those who opt into the partnership approach to pandemic preparedness and those who opt out), NGOs and the bodies of those who might provide precious samples of emergence itself. In this field, transnational powers battle to stay afloat (e.g. the 2005 revision of the International Health Regulations with the aim of strengthening WHO's powers to contain disease). But the parallel vertical alignment of actors in the field of public health signals another transformation, from transnational to postliberal sovereignty (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2006). And this postliberal mode of regulating life is not, of course, constrained to the fields of population health or biomedicine. It is increasingly evident that the conduct of war, for example, is a permanent affair involving vertical alliances of multiple players and the predominant use of guerrilla tactics by all actors (Cooper, 2006; Weizman, 2006; RETORT et al., 2005). If the Emergent Formation of Life works with the immanent unfolding of life, a second characteristic is that it works with life as recombinant. Life transforms itself by shaping and making life (Franklin, 2000; Haraway, 1997).

*Meet the Family*

This is a process of recombination: the Emergent Formation of Life generates new combinations across all the multiple co-active levels of organisation—genetic, neural, organismic, environmental (Gottlieb, 1992)—and thus it transforms existence, introducing life forms which were not present before recombination. This means that the Emergent Formation of Life is not only a cluster of social technologies which are applied to the organization of life but also they actively change the very material conditions and elements of existence. “One is not born an organism. Organisms are made; they are constructs of a world-changing kind” (Haraway, 1991a, p. 208).



Recombination of life necessarily involves the reorganisation of social relations. Consider the family. Whilst much has been said about how this institution is under total siege—morally, economically, politically—look [at this image], it is also evolving and expanding. This system of social relations is transforming itself. The Honda Asimo makes the perfect family portrait. Everyone seems happy, a smile relays - through Asimo - between parents and children. Not even the dog is put out, the new presence underscores its friendly protectiveness. Asimo presents us with a domesticated vision of cyber-carnal recombination which affirms as it extends the heteronormative institution, celebrating the family’s inclusiveness. Certainly, recombination could problematise essentialist understandings of the heteronormative family and its underlying assumption of kinship relatedness. But Asimo seems to have the opposite effect: to shore up a heteronormative, liberal vision of the family as a bounded unit. The human-robot-dog articulation in the ad operates on multiple levels of racial, gendered, sexualised and class-based configurations of everyday life—read in the Asimo ad: white, heteronormative, patriarchal, middle-class Euro-American family.

Reformatting western kinship thinking is not just a question of rethinking biological links and shifting the boundaries between humans, animals and machines (Haraway, 2003; Strathern, 1992). It is a part of a broader order of social relations which also lie in the focus of the Emergent Formation of Life control. That is, although the Emergent Formation of Life functions by harnessing science and information technologies to change biological life (as science studies scholars have suggested, e.g. Rabinow, 1996), this is only part of the story. The Emergent Formation of Life controls life on a much broader domain than the liminal borders between nature and culture. This is the domain of the everyday. It regulates life by inscribing emergent recombinant practices into people’s everyday practices, it works on the plane of ordinary sociality. The Asimo ad evokes how this regime does not only control life by making life on a molecular, genetic or organismic level, but also by making life on the plane of ordinary sociality.

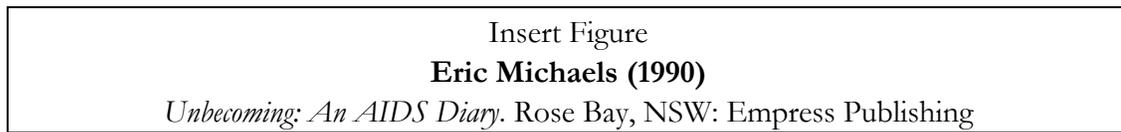
Like all regimes of control, the reach and limits of the emergent formation of life are shaped by its own history. The emergent formation of life harnesses potential in response to the problem of the statist suppression of life. But at the same time as it recombines life, it contributes to the pervasive proliferation of inequalities. It does this by dissecting immanent experience, and incorporating only those trajectories which it needs. These trajectories traverse the everyday travelling towards a transcendent vision constrained visions that are already articulated in the regime of control; these optic trajectories work with that which can already be sensibly represented without causing any political dispute over the nature of existence (Rancière, 1998). So while this regime of control recombines emergent forms of life, and in one sense it works with plasticity of everyday experience as described above, it simultaneously neglects unrepresentable experience, elements of the everyday which remain outside representation but which materialise never the less. This suggests that there maybe life beyond this regime of control. Daily action, transformations in life, everyday experience are always immanent, non-totalisable, haptic, material and situated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 492-500; Haraway, 1991b). But very different trajectories are carved out in this immanent terrain, life is transformed as it moves. These are trajectories of experience which travel across the everyday without moving towards a transcendent vision (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006), and again illustrate this possibility by turning to health, people's experiences of health and illness.

### Exit: Unbecoming

Illness narratives are typically valued to the extent that they can give meaning to lives which have been interrupted and redirected by disease: a good narrative opens possibilities for people to act agentially, to increase their capacity for choice and to take some measure of control over their lives (e.g. Frank, 1995). The promise is that a good narrative can offer some kind of restitution of one's identity, if not one's body. Eric Michaels' (1990) book, *Unbecoming*, is an anti-narrative – and this is its promise. Michaels was a gay American anthropologist who came to Australia and worked with Indigenous communities in central Australia (Michaels, 1986, 1987). He then took a job in the anthropology department at Griffith University in Brisbane, and tested HIV positive in 1987 in the process of having his application for permanent residency processed. He died in 1988. The book is a diary, written with the encouragement of his gay friends in Sydney, and written for publication.

The book evokes Michaels' struggle to work with the excess of his everyday existence to forge alterative modes of connection between actors, what Ross Chambers calls anxiety inducing relations (Chambers, 1998). If the book provokes anxiety, I want to argue that is only partly because (as Chambers suggests) Michaels adopts the role of the difficult and angry patient. Michaels risks estranging some readers in his efforts to forge connections which evade clichéd forms of capture (Bennett, 2003), and in his refusal of all transcendent

visions of what life should be. And in that refusal he evokes the attempt to acknowledge and cultivate existence beyond the constraints of the emergent formation of life.



Michaels' thanatography opens with – this picture – and an account of the “clear and insistent” narrative which is traversing his body: Kaposi's Sarcoma is described as a set of “morphemes, arising out the strange uncertainties of the past few years to declare, finally, a scenario” (1990, p. 23). HIV's destruction is irrefutable. Michaels is reduced to making a series of wish lists denoting the order in which he would prefer to lose his bodily functions, in the full knowledge that these lists will bear no relation to the course of the disease.

The book is part of his an active struggle to push his bodily transformation out of the realm of the “Foucauldian horror show” (1990, p. 25) beyond his containment in hospital and by the Australian Dept of Immigration, and into the public terrain of social and sexual relations. That is, he tries to work with the bodily transformations that AIDS bestows on him as a series of events which fuel recombination, not simply of himself, but of the communities to which he belongs. He writes to break the rules of representation and integration, transforming the game into a political dispute over his very existence.

Michaels is living in an era when a newly identified virus, HIV, is materialising as one element in a broader conservative turn in everyday, sexual politics. He writes to contest the very conditions in which HIV is emerging, to cultivate alternative trajectories along which the virus might materialise. He tries to draw his readers out of the safety of any “concerned” connection with a HIV positive gay man, and he does this by demanding some form of engagement with the new specificities of his embodied experience. He stays close to the details, of blood transfusions, the genre of farewell letters he receives from friends, his own continual transformation. Michaels does not refuse what AIDS is making of him, he tries to go with and in his own way. This involves undoing every position (social, sexual and kind of identity position) which has become congealed and no longer sustains the elasticity necessary for the move beyond himself that the virus demands. For example, there is nothing solidified about gayness in *Unbecoming*, it appears as immanent in social and sexual relations, something to be continually rediscovered and remade. Michaels evokes his own trajectory as both ordinary and highly contingent; his sexuality is described as something which would have taken a different course had he been born twenty years earlier or later. He describes coming out “[i]n New York, 1971, [when] ‘gay’ was something impossibly chic, central to the cultural life of the city, a public rather than a private form, beginning to assume that enormous sense of importance that Western society would accord gayness in the 1970s whilst straights bungled their sexual politics and aesthetics” (1990, p. 28). But by the 1980s “being a faggot isn't very interesting anymore...” (1990, p. 191), gay men had moved into a “lavender prison” in exchange for the art of conversation which enabled the play of excess in the

everyday connections developed between people.

Gay is a political project which has to be continually remade. This is Mardi Gras, 1988. Michaels writes about the parade itself as a fantastic spectacle of the kind only gay men could mount. But more exciting still was

the sea of partygoers ... tens of thousands of people flowing down the streets of Sydney for hours afterwards ... Astonishing and unarguably political, though it's impossible to venture a reading of what those politics might be or mean. The world really perched on the edge for a few hours, and could at any moment have collapsed into a black hole in the ground and disappear. As close to the "Day of the Locust" as I expect to see! (1990, p. 108)

The world is "perched on the edge for a few hours", enough to break the logic of policing, enough to experience a "play without a stage" and to fuel an appetite for the excess of the everyday and for the possibility of participating in different forms of social and sexual relations. The moment is marked by the fact of walking, of appropriating city space, of entering into the carnivalesque everyday and of becoming with others, becoming everyone. I want to suggest that it is the movement of becoming which makes this sea, this swarm, political. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) invoke the concept of becoming to point towards a political practice in which social actors escape normalizing representations and reconstitute themselves, changing the conditions of their material corporeal existence. Becoming is a force which enables desire. Every becoming intensifies and radicalizes desire, creating new modes of connection and new affections.

Starting "from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 272) and working with elements of experience that are "*closest* to what one is becoming and through which one becomes", Michaels' transformation is a drift away from representation. The book conveys something of how Michaels is transformed by remaining faithful to the forms and details of his own life: his sexuality, his ethnographic work with Indigenous communities in central Australia [picture], his friends, his loathing of Brisbane, his HIV.

On reading the cultural analyses offered in the 1987 *October* special issue on HIV, Michaels reports finding the academic pieces depressingly uninspiring - with the exception of Bersani's (Bersani, 1987) paper. In response to authors who wheel out familiar critiques of the pathologisation of gay men, Michaels retorts "we already know nobody likes faggots, and hardly expect late capitalism to show much sympathy" (1990, p. 157). More pointedly, he suspects

a sort of liberal humanism infects these analyses which, by exempting gays from criticism, in its own way renders us passive, and so victims in terms of our own arguments. I stuck my tongue (and my arm, and my cock) into some pretty odd places

during the 1970s and remain unsure about some of that. Desire rarely proved to be democratic. We continued to police the class structure as much by our sexual choices as our careerism. Is there no way to discuss these things, to evaluate them and possible complicities in our present conditions outside the tacky theologies of guilt and retribution...? (1990, p. 157)

This attempt to imagine a HIV politics which starts from and works with the specificities of the virus and its remaking of gay men's social and sexual practices finally legitimises the publication of *Unbecoming* for Michaels. That is, after months of questioning both his own purpose in entering into the questionable business of representing his experience and his friends' reasons for encouraging him to write the diary, on reading *October* Michaels articulates a role for his own work. Michaels' refuses transcendence by subjecting himself, gay men, gay cultural politics to penetrating critique. There is no reconstruction in this diary, there is simply a continual process of movement, a becoming which never congeals, an unbecoming.

Life beyond the contemporary Emergent Formation of Life Control is manifest as a material, irrevocable shift which changes the conditions of existence *without negotiation*. Michaels does not try to negotiate the meaning of his HIV with either the people we encounter in his book or with his imagined readers – he simply does it. This is the third entry in the Eric Michaels' diary, in which he signals his exit from life control. He describes how his life was organised according to common aspirations, so much so it might sound like “an epic fan magazine”, so:

This is why I have AIDS, because it is now on the cover of *Life*, circa 1987. And this is why I can't believe everyone doesn't have it, because of the sense in which I believe myself hypertypical. And if any of this is so, then it explains why the world I look out on now seems so drear and painful, so devoid of joy, so mean and petty, not such a bad place to leave. The implications of an end to liberated sex and the death of gayness has truly miserable cultural/ demographic/ historical implications, even more than just a world of mean-minded hypocrites and wowsers shaking their fingers “I told you so”. The reason I'm not terribly interested in living in such a world/future is not it isn't any fun. I haven't had, nor sought, any fun since 1975. It's the oppressions, the cathedrals of inequality and greed that are to be built out of that rhetoric of the failure of liberation that I have no great wish to see. (1990, p. 29)

This refusal of the constraints of the Emergent Formation of Life marks Michaels' exit.

### Everyone's Experience

Bypassing optic trajectories of existence, dis-identification, unbecoming, all these movements are traced out on the terrain of everyday experience. Partly because of its very ordinariness,

this excess of experience is easily neglected. The different manifestations of the regime of life control outlined in this paper each functions by seizing on everyday immanent experience. Historically, the mode of capture has taken different forms. The Life/Culture system glorifies the immanent potential of life, but reframes open possibilities as a limited set of transformations marked by their masculinist, violent and coercive desires. In the post-war period, life was treated with suspicion, as something to be controlled at times to the point of vilifying talk of its potential as mystical metaphysics. The patriarchal state emerged to fulfil the responsibility of suppressing “dangerous” life. Today, the Emergent Formation of Life is characterised by a renewed enthusiasm for life’s potential. And life is open to the Emergent Formation of Life’s embrace of its plasticity and creativity, its capacities for mutation and recombination; an embrace which simultaneously ties these capacities to the proliferation of risk and its concomitant solution, biosecurity – packaged and selectively delivered by postliberal vertical aggregates. However, a sociology of absences (Santos, 2003) suggests that there is an exit, there is life beyond population health.

Exit from the Emergent Formation of Life takes place on the terrain of immanent, ordinary experience – the same terrain in which capture is effected. Clearly, the regime is already firmly inserted in the everyday, mediating even immanent experience. Exit arises when trajectories of experience which do not follow a transcendent path come into tension with the regime of control. These are trajectories of continuous experience. Michaels reworks everyday experience, refusing and evacuating trajectories which shore up dominant discourses and by following trajectories of continuous experience.

As it washes through the connections between people, this excess of experience, continuous experience, exposes the internal incommensurability of being a subject in any kind of stable, predictable relation with oneself, others or the world. Experience *matters*: it fuels the imaginary necessary for embodying alternate modes of sociability, modes which refuse the exclusions of the Emergent Formation of Life. Continuous experience is mobilised between actants whose coordinated activity transforms, not themselves, but the environment in which they exist. As it flows between people it corrodes the fixtures and aspirations regulating people’s vision, it eats into eyes which see only control; it cuts through flesh and travels on beyond the body.

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