

Introduction: Combat Breathing: State Violence and the Body in Question

Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese

There is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured . . . under these conditions, the individual's breathing is an observed breathing. It is a combat breathing.

Frantz Fanon (1970: 50)

Strange intimacy of state violence: as apparatus, as technology, it is other to the body that is its target. And yet, even as it comes from the outside, even as it maintains its pain-inflicting exteriority, it intimately interpenetrates the very somatic fibres of its target, amplifying its wounding effects across the body to the point that it reduces the subject to a state of *combat breathing*.

From the moment we first encountered this extraordinary Fanonian term, we were haunted by it. It is the term that provoked into being this special issue of *Somatechnics*.

In Fanon's meditation on the violence of the colonial state, the subject who is on the receiving end of state violence is positioned in the fraught, traumatic and potentially fatal exercise of 'combat breathing'. Combat breathing names the mobilisation of the target subject's life energies merely in order to continue to live, to breathe and to survive the exercise of state violence. If Max Weber (2007: 310) long ago drew attention to what he termed the 'intimate' relation between the state and violence, it was Fanon who clearly embodied the intimate, because lived, effects of this relation.

Regardless of the fact that the term *somatechnics* did not exist at the time of his writing, across the entirety of Fanon's corpus the indissociable relation between technologies and bodies is always

brought into uncompromising focus. Fanon maps, with his unerring acuity, the impact of technologies of race, gender, law, colonialism, empire, capital and governmentality on the body in question. For Fanon, to be on the receiving end of state violence is always to be reduced to a body in question. One of the key objectives and lived effects of state violence is precisely to reduce the target body to an expendable body whose right to be is fundamentally placed in question. This target body, seized and somatechnically interpenetrated by the violences of the state, must thus be reduced to a soma of such utter political and economic vulnerability that the very possibility of respiration becomes the ultimate challenge. As such, the target subject's energies are fully committed merely to survive; as such, the logic of state violence is predicated on ensuring that the subject cannot begin to expend their energies in resisting, contesting or subverting the power of the state.

Throughout the collection of texts in this special issue, the authors attest to this brutal fact. Across diverse national and transnational spaces, institutions and geopolitical locations – Ireland's orphanages and Magdalene laundries, practices of child protection and asylum seeker detention in Australia, 'welfare villages' for Tamil refugees in Sri Lanka, the neo-imperial war in Iraq, the town camps of Alice Springs in central Australia, or the grounds of Boitanio Park, British Columbia, where the survivors of 'residential schools' for Aboriginal children gather to drink; from Indian-Australian diaspora organisations and popular cultural representations of zombies as figures of the refugee and the displaced to the lethal transnational operations of the state of Israel – the vanquishing power of state violence is tracked, mapped and named in all of its multiform incarnations.

And yet something other remains that cannot be reduced to an act of utter submission in the face of asymmetrical relations of power that the target subject is compelled to endure in the terrifying state of combat breathing. What is attested to in the course of the texts collected in this special issue is not only the possibility of survival and endurance, but also an answering back to the necropolitical command to cease to be. This answering back is at once a practice of resistance and a mobilisation of life-forces in order to enact political, economic and cultural transformation. The multigeneric texts that score this issue evidence lived testimonies of survival and resistance, poetic articulations of pain, rage and the search for justice, and theorised meditations on the networks of state violence that inscribe various bodies, sites and geographies.

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Situated within the context of a journal that opens up the space for the thinking, naming and performance of the differential articulations of technologies of bodies, this special issue works to mark the embodiment of a somatechnics of state violence, even as it draws attention to its limits. What are its limits? Is it possible to identify a point at which a technics of state violence fails in the face of the recalcitrant bio-matter of the body that persists in remaining other, regardless of the violence of capillary interpenetration? The texts in this special issue appear to perform two important moves: on the one hand, they trace the lines of force that are exercised by the state in order to secure the biopolitical life and death of its target subjects; on the other, there are also inscribed in these texts lines of flight that, momentarily and contingently, escape the state's monopolising hold on regimes of violence.

These are fragile moments of reprieve, respite and literal respiration that break the often fatal continuity of combat breathing. Kellie Greene, in her essay on her and her brother's survival as state wards in Ireland's 'architecture of containment', movingly writes of such a moment. After the back-breaking child-labour of unloading a shipment of coal on the docks, the supervising Brothers Corvax and Perryn allow the children a moment to swim in the sea:

That particular day I remember us getting all tarred and dusty black, and when the work was finally done, Brother Vale raised the whistle to his lips, and on his signal we all made for the sea. As the dust washed away we all came up as white as the driven snow, our awkward adolescent limbs thrashing the water like a bowl of bony soup, sending crystals arcing through the air, our scarred and scabbied skin prickling and burning with the ocean salt.

This is a fragile hiatus that enables the momentary cessation of combat breathing. This momentary hiatus belies the totalising reach of state violence, marking those breaks and folds in which the state relaxes its hold. This is the time in which the target subject regroups in order to be ready for the next assault – which will unfold with its own mix of planned governance and arbitrary violence. Immediately after this reprieve, Greene documents the killing of the young child, John Kelly, on the way back to the institution of confinement, his young body caught under the wheels of the coal truck, which, as its wheels were stuck in a rut, the children were ordered by the brothers to push. The routine of state violence here is shown to reassert itself in all of its necrological dimensions. The spectre of death is what haunts so many

of the texts in this collection: both as brutal outcome, but also, in moments of unutterable anguish, as desired end:

We had been pushing so hard that when the truck lurched forward, John Kelly who had been running up along the right hand side was suddenly caught and dragged beneath the wheels. I remember some of the boys screaming and the brown cowl of a brother moving swiftly and blocking my view. There is a gap in my mind, for the next time I see John he has been laid out in the infirmary. Us boys were sent in and told to kneel and pray for the repose of his soul, but the one abiding memory that has always stayed with me is that of John's face, which was all calm and peaceful like. When life got back to its usual routine in the school, it would be then that I would often think of John's face and wonder what it must be like, just to be at peace.

Greene's essay is so striking because it materialises with rare clarity the intimate and lived effects of biopower while simultaneously laying bare the ideological underpinnings that rationalise the state's enforcement of systematic violence against its most vulnerable subjects:

Post-independent Ireland became an intense site of applied, national bio-politics, with the majority of legislation focusing primarily on the enforcement of morality and the safeguarding of hegemonic material ambition, both of which were central to the highly fraught project of constructing an Irish Nationalist Identity.

Drawing on Giorgio Agamben, as do a number of our other contributors, Greene argues that those subjects who were external to the Catholic-nationalist social order of the new state (unmarried mothers, superfluous and 'unguarded' children) were construed as undermining its very foundations. At the heart of what she terms 'this, peculiarly Irish, state of exception', Greene locates 'the question of occupation: of who could rightly be a member of the newly emerging nation-state . . . : in short, *who could occupy and who must be occupied*' (our emphasis).

The question, 'who could occupy and who must be occupied', with its deeply Fanonian echoes, ramifies across each of the contributions to this volume. In 'Punitiveness and the Criminalisation of the Other' Kerry Carrington tracks the intersections between various genealogies of exception in Australia. She carefully theorises the emergence of a distinctive form of bio-power, one founded in the act of colonial invasion and white occupation and settlement, and

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subsequently shaped by ‘a collective conscience hell-bent on distancing its identity from the convict stain and violence of dispossession of the colonial past’. Carrington demonstrates how

these modern technologies of power operated through a bio-regime of strict immigration and quarantine controls, which focused on strengthening the nuclear family and normalising children of ex-convict heritage in the nineteenth century and the offspring of dysfunctional families in the twentieth century. This occurred against a backdrop of a bio-eugenicist regime concerned with protecting the purity of Australia’s white British blood stock from the threat of interracial reproduction and sexual contamination ... [and leading to the] criminalisation and punitive treatment of three population groups, state wards, unlawful non-citizens and the children and youth of Indigenous peoples.

Parallel to Greene’s identification of the official categories – ‘Lack of Proper Guardianship’, ‘Non-attendance at School’, ‘Indictable Offences’ – put in place to manage the threat constituted by some groups of children to the Irish Free State is Carrington’s discussion of the biopolitical technologies employed in the management in particular of children and infantilised populations. The latter were both rationalised and vindicated by an explicitly racial national project: White Australia. As such these distinctly Australian technologies of bio-power

while having profoundly disciplinary impacts on those assessed as abnormal, savage, unruly or deficient, were generally not understood, or discursively represented, as forms of repression arising from illiberal acts of sovereignty – in fact quite the opposite. The normalising interventions of the Australian state and its agencies consisting of punitive means such as mandatory detention, forced segregation on missions, forced removal of children through committal to wardship and confinement to an institution, were generally constructed in terms of a positive discourse of protection and benevolence. Immigration controls, the forced removal of Aboriginal children of mixed parentage, and the forced removal of children of dysfunctional families through wardship, were represented as acts of bio-power necessary to protect the nation, the population, its health, future, prosperity and wellbeing.

The ontological and epistemic violence of this ‘bio-eugenicist regime’, as Carrington elaborates, was obscured by discourses of ‘benevolence and protection’ – that is, the protection of a (neo)colonial order from racial and sexual contamination, and its subsequent normalisation and reproduction. The crucial questions, ‘who could occupy and who must be occupied’, come to permeate the most minute of practices as well

as the most intimate reaches of subjectivities and relations – identity, sexuality, family, health, home – exposing them to the full range of the state’s disciplining and punitive powers, even as they invoke the language of benevolence, improvement, inclusion and protection and are coupled with assurances of moral and material uplift to come: health, modernity, enlightenment, prosperity, salvation.

Greene’s Fanonian question, ‘who could occupy and who must be occupied’ resounds in the gaps and fissures between the seeming benevolence of the state’s biopolitical project and the bodies upon which that project is, systematically, unremittingly, enacted. In these cracks and aporetic spaces, the enlightened rationality claimed by the state’s biopolitical project assumes quite another aspect. Or, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres puts it in his astute analysis of Fanon’s critique of hegemonic rationality, it discloses the ‘particular pathological and contradictory characteristics’ this rationality acquires ‘in the colonial context’ (Maldonado-Torres 2005: 154). In the photographs that accompany Greene’s essay, the artefacts and consumer goods that represent the modernising biopolitical state project are, quite literally, revealed in a new light: a rusted and stained institutional sink, a religious icon pasted on the inside of a battered child’s trunk. Together with the stories and testimonies by a variety of voices in the contributions that follow (Carrington, Sukkarieh, Jackson, Smith, Razack) these are documents that speak of the combat breathing of the occupied subject.

Carrington’s essay is followed by two reports from the frontline that illuminate the pathologies and contradictions attending the biopolitical operations of the contemporary Australian state. Bec Smith’s discussion of the technics of ‘community policing’ of African-Australian young people in inner-city Melbourne points to the ways in which ‘this particular configuration of policing . . . use[s] the language of multiculturalism and inclusion to coopt community organisations and others – and in the process actually incorporate them into the technology of policing’. The deployment of inclusivist rhetoric of ‘community policing’, Smith points out, acts to conceal and reproduce its own forms of violence:

In our travels, we have come up against an almost unquestioning acceptance of community policing initiatives and activities. Our desire to critically discuss these initiatives has often been met with distrust and reserve. Why wouldn’t it be better for police and young people to get to know each other? What will happen to our organisation if we don’t cooperate with the police or engage in community policing projects?

The other side to the reasonable, practical appeal of ‘community policing’ (with only the barest hint of its hidden violence – *What will happen to our organisation if we don’t cooperate with the police or engage in community policing projects?*) emerges in Ray Jackson’s ‘Three deaths in custody’. Jackson, the President of the Indigenous Social Justice Association, who has tirelessly accumulated thousands of pages of testimony relating to the violence perpetrated by the criminal justice system against Aboriginals (and others) in Australia, here presents a simple juxtaposition of three stories.

Three deaths: of a sister, of a brother, of a son. Ranging in age from 59 to 21. Two allegedly suicided by hanging and one death was brought on by heart failure. It can be argued that there was great callousness shown to all three inmates . . . But why did one death outshine the other two? Why was it deemed to be more newsworthy? . . . Could it be that [one of them] was white whilst the other two deaths were of Aborigines?

The only possible answer, to these questions, Jackson asserts is yes, ‘Without any doubt or equivocation’.

Jackson’s unequivocal answer to the question concerning the superfluous status of the Aboriginal body in the context of contemporary colonial states such as Australia is transposed to a Canadian locus in Sherene H. Razack’s ‘The Space of Difference in Law: Inquests into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’. Opening her essay with the haunting imprimatur of state violence on the body of an Aboriginal subject – a literal boot print inscribed on the body of the Aboriginal victim – Razack proceeds to unfold the colonial dimensions of the legal genre of the inquest into Aboriginal deaths in custody. By positioning the genre of the inquest within the colonial relations of power that continue to drive the operations of white law in Canada, Razack discloses the asymmetries of power – legal, political, economic and spatial – that structure relations between Aboriginal people, the police and the criminal-justice system. Situated at the heart of her analysis is the body of Paul Alphonse, a Secwepemc man of Sugar Cane Reserve, British Columbia. The boot print that marks Alphonse’s dead body works to embody both the literal and symbolic dimensions of a legalised state violence that can be inflicted upon Aboriginal bodies with impunity. Razack compellingly demonstrates how this legalised state violence is shown to reproduce itself with a routinised predictability that effectively renders it normal and by-the-way – precisely so the colonial social order (of law) can continue to be preserved: ‘Violence is not visible when it is meted out to bodies whose

differences means that they can and in fact must be violated (if order is to be preserved)'.

The critical importance of Razack's analysis hinges on its steadfast insistence on the fact that the apparatus of white law is foundationally predicated on the theft of Aboriginal land and its 'legal authorisation through a variety of mechanisms'. Precisely as the machinery of white law works assiduously to frame the Aboriginal victims of its operations as dysfunctional and backward, and thus in need of the paternal assistance of white governance, Razack underscores how this foundational theft of land must be effaced and disavowed. The centrality of this foundational theft to the ongoing attempted destruction of Aboriginal society is movingly articulated by Chief Sandy, one of the witnesses at the inquest, who clearly names 'for the coroner what she thought was the heart of the matter: "It's the years that we've lost in our pride and our dignity from the abuses that happened at the residential school. It's the years of resources that we've lost from our lands ..."'

Once situated within the larger apparatuses of colonial governance, of which law and policing play fundamental parts, the genre of the inquest emerges as yet another site through which justice cannot be served for its Aboriginal victims – precisely because white law is predicated on a disavowed series of violent acts (theft, removals, massacres) that continues to enable its very conditions of possibility. The genre of the inquest, then, becomes yet another site through which white law both naturalises its violent occupation (of Aboriginal bodies and land) and continues to self-authorise its own legitimacy through the framing of the other (Aboriginal) body as the mere detritus of a lesser species.

Our own essay on a killing in a dry river bed in Alice Springs in Central Australia pursues a number of issues identified by Jackson, Carrington and Razack. We locate the essay in the context of Alice Springs as occupied territory – not only in the historical context of colonial occupation and its continuing effects of dispossession, but also in the current context of a state of emergency that operates in this part of Australia. The military 'Intervention', to give it its official name, currently underway in the Northern Territory, we argue, produces specific effects of violence for its Indigenous subjects. We focus in particular on the judgment handed down in the case, and identify how it reinforces the naturalised power dynamics and relations of violence that operate between occupier and occupied. Our essay returns also to the experience of white terror in the colonial context and the discourses and technologies that serve to mask these terrorising

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practices through the solicitations of reason, common sense, and the (violently) universalised values of whiteness.

Breathe in through your nose for a count of four; hold your breath for a count of four (one bomb, two bomb, three bomb, four); exhale through your mouth for a count of four; hold your breath for a count of four (one bullet, two bullet, three bullet, four), and then restart the cycle. Breathe deeply and methodically – completely filling and emptying your lungs during each cycle.

Omeima Sukkarieh, 'Unsewing My Lips', this issue

What if state violence were not an abstracted entity, diffuse and amorphous, but an embodied identity that could be named in the specificity of its incarnations? In 'Unsewing My Lips: Breathing My Voice – the Spoken and Unspoken Truth of Transnational Violence', Omeima Sukkarieh offers a devastating reply to this question. In her poem, Sukkarieh personifies transnational state violence in order to locate it within the lived spaces within which it perpetrates its atrocities, within which it grabs hold of its victims, and within which it leaves its trail of death and destruction. In an inspired move, Sukkarieh personifies and directly apostrophises transnational state violence in order to call it, personally, to account, to expose its murderous (ir)rationality by giving it a face: 'Unmask yourself, Transnational State Violence, so we can see your face'. Once unmasked, she asks who is provoking transnational state violence to deploy its regimes of death: '[it] simply said the walking dead and peace activists'. The walking dead are the survivors who have exercised combat breathing – 'one breath, two breaths, three breaths, four' – in order to endure the dropping of the bombs and the targeted and random spray of bullets. The dead and the survivors are named in the contexts of their own harrowing geopolitical loci: 'Israel, Palestine, the Gaza Flotilla, forged passports, Right of Return, Lebanon . . . Australia, Afghanistan, Iraq'. Sukkarieh maps transnational cartographies of state violence that are scored by the scandalous asymmetries that mark 'the free and the imprisoned, the citizen, the asylum seeker, the stateless and the refugee'. Visceral affect, razor sharp irony, unbearable catalogues, grieving interrogations – all are deployed by Sukkarieh in order finally to broach the possibility of desperately desired futures: 'that one day you and us, us and them, start breathing again, without combat'.

The mapping of transnational cartographies of state violence that Sukkarieh instantiates finds another form of critical elaboration in Goldie Osuri's 'Transnational Necropolitics: Hindutva and its Avatars

(Australia/India)'. Osuri locates the operations of transnational state violence within a series of ethno-religio-cultural-nationalist connectivities that bind India and Australia. These connectivities are framed by two foundational questions that orient the entirety of her paper:

How does a Hindutva organisation like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) incite and conduct violence against Muslims and Christians in India while representing themselves through discourses of diversity and multiculturalism in a liberal democracy like Australia? And conversely how do the structures and mechanisms of liberal multiculturalism and secularism enable and foster the activities of Hindutva organisations such as the VHP?

In working to answer these two questions, Osuri proceeds to trace the genealogical emergence of Hindutva nationalism against a backdrop of colonial-Hegelian formations that functioned to construe religious homogeneity as simultaneously racialised and nationalised in order to elevate it to that desired level of 'spirituality-cum-historicity' that would, in effect, give Hinduism a rationalist Hegelian gloss of 'universalism'. As Osuri demonstrates, this universalising and essentialising of Hinduism was predicated on the construction of all that was deemed to be religio-nationalistically 'foreign' to its enlightened claims: Islam and Christianity. Following this genealogical mapping, Osuri proceeds to embed Hindutva nationalism within transnational diasporic formations in order to flesh out its strategic complicity with the most troubling aspects of liberal multiculturalism. Co-opting the language of cultural diversity and multiculturalism so readily available within the Australian context, Hindutva nationalism is shown to present a front characterised by claims to tolerance, progressive education and universalism that, in effect, deflect the murderous transnational violence that it funds and promotes back in India. Drawing on funds raised in Australia, the diasporic Hindutva community proceeds to finance Hindutva operations in India that have been responsible for massacres, rapes and state-sanctioned attempted genocide against Muslim and other religious communities. Situated in this context, Osuri's essay calls for a critical and urgent interrogation of the necropolitical complicities that are enabled by the cultural essentialisms of liberal multiculturalism precisely by graphically exposing the disavowed transnational state violence that it unwittingly funds and unleashes.

Samuel Thampapillai's essay provides yet another critical elaboration of the relations between forms of state violence and the transnational forces that enable it. His focus is on the last bloody days

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of the thirty-year war in Sri Lanka, when hundreds of Tamil non-combatants were forcibly held on a narrow strip of ground between the advancing forces of the Sri Lankan state and the opposing Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who effectively used them as human shields. Thampapillai presents a nuanced and searching discussion, shuttling between colonial histories, contemporary nationalisms and counter-nationalisms, post 9/11 geopolitics and intra- and inter-ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Thus he queries the positions adopted by local intellectuals who dismissed the international criticisms of the Sri Lankan government ‘as hypocritical given the human rights abuses involved in the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan’, in the process allowing the Sri Lankan state to ‘obfuscate’ its own violence. From what positions, Thampapillai prompts us to ask, is it possible ‘to be both “anti-imperialist” and “anti-statist” in a post-colonial state . . . that is, to oppose Western double standards yet still agree with the content of their accusations against Sri Lanka’?

At the same time, Thampapillai considers the responsibility of the international community in a complex conflict which was ‘a struggle from multiple power-centres, including the state, for legitimacy to rule the target populations, with all parties vying for the allegiance of the civilian population using whatever techniques were expedient’ – including mass violence against civilians and non-combatants on all sides. The essay canvasses the geopolitical factors that allowed the international community to deploy ‘deeper politico-moral discourses that were able to sanitise and legitimise the use of state violence’ in Sri Lanka (even as the 2010 Wikileaks disclosures have revealed the broad awareness among the US and its allies of the intensity of the violence against non-combatants in the last days of the war).

I approached transnational violence recently after noticing it was walking around like a zombie and asked it what it was doing. It told me that it was combating stress and its negative effects through tactical breathing and that in law enforcement and military training over the years it was taught controlled breathing, combat breathing, to the point where it feels like its on auto pilot, doing it without thinking. When I asked why it told me that they were combat breathing all the time and only sometimes because it felt like dangerous criminals who were heavily armed were trying to kill it and they wanted to be able to be calm and rational when killing someone or imposing terror on them and that being in combat breathing was not only safe for them but safe for the world . . . When I asked who was trying to kill it, they simply said the walking dead and peace activists.

Sukkarieh, ‘Unsewing My Lips’, this issue

Zombies are a value stock. They are wordless and oozing and brain dead, but they're an ever-expanding market with no glass ceiling. Zombies are a target-rich environment, literally and figuratively. The more you fill them with bullets, the more interesting they become.

Chuck Klosterman, 'My Zombie, Myself' (2010)

The two final essays of this volume invoke, in very different registers, a quasi-apocalyptic, necropolitical terrain of neoliberal, neo-imperial violence and mass slaughter. The walking dead of Sukkariéh's poem stage a return in Jon Stratton's essay, 'The Trouble with Zombies', which pursues questions of state violence and exclusion in what might at first seem the incongruous context of proliferating contemporary popular cultural representations of the zombie (see also Klosterman 2010; Collins 2010). Stratton argues that

excluded from the rights and privileges of the modern state ... displaced people are positioned legally as bare life' and can be 'treated in a way that enables them to become associated with a condition mythically exemplified in the zombie. The consequence is that not only can the zombie texts of films and other media be read as reproducing this connection, drawing on present-day anxieties to increase the terror produced by these texts, but displaced people are characterised using the same terminology that describes the threat that zombies generate in zombie apocalypse texts.

In light of the policies to exclude asylum seekers adopted by a number of states in the global north, Stratton discusses the meeting between two genres of zombie film: one deriving from colonial representations of Haiti and its ongoing occupation by US forces; the other, 'the zombie apocalypse trope' that has seen a post-9/11 revival. Whereas in preceding decades, 'the link between the zombie and slavery, and by extension the worker in a capitalist economy, has been repressed' Stratton tracks how, in contemporary popular culture, 'in the films where the zombies can be read as displaced people, this connection [between neoliberal economics, death and zombies] is reappearing'.

In the concluding essay, 'Bodies to the Slaughter: Global Racial Reconstruction, Fanon's Combat Breath, and Wrestling for Life', Anna M. Agathangelou delineates, in uncompromising detail, infernal visions of the slaughter left in the wake of the pursuit of contemporary colonial wars and necroeconomics. By interlinking thanatopolitics and necroeconomics, Agathangelou traces the colonial and imperial relations of power that fundamentally inscribe such disparate geopolitical spaces as Iraq and Greece. By deploying a reinvigorated

reading of Fanon, she tracks the intersections of state biopower with venturist, neoliberal forces that generate necropolitical economies of crushing debt, political and economic disenfranchisement, and mass murder (in Iraq). Fanon's landmark work is mobilised by Agathangelou precisely because his analysis of colonial power never lost site of questions of wealth distribution, enslavement and the embodied effects of engulfing raciality in a white supremacist world.

Agathangelou grounds a significant part of her analysis of this intertwining of thanatopolitics and necroeconomics in the context of the war in Iraq. This is a war that has too quickly been sidelined in the politico-mediascapes of the west. Agathangelou demands we focus on the enormity of what has transpired in that country under the ruse of pre-emptive war and the fostering of neoliberal economic interventions: Agathangelou argues that the US has made Iraq the test site for the new liberal strategies of neo-liberal colonialism. The extraordinary series of administrative orders (that are foundational to Iraq's new economy, legal institutions and political structure) imposed by the US in Iraq evidence at every turn one of the essay's key arguments: that the venturist, sacrificial state will exact its tonnage of flesh through regimes of enslavement, political and economic disenfranchisement and mass murder/genocide.

In this context, mass murder is nowhere more graphically and emblematically marked than by the following series of provocations: 'But how is the neo-liberal imperial, as acts of governing, to unfold? Is it possible to rid Iraq of its "reason", its head, and to rule its body without also killing and reconstructing its potential capabilities?' The answer that Agathangelou delivers, via Fanon, is crushing: the imperial state, in all of its invigorated neoliberal monstrosity, lives and thrives on the sustained production of subjugated subjects that must be kept at that minimal state of combat breathing. On expiration, on the cessation of the labour of combat breathing, there is only death as the logical outcome of this necropolitical economy: 'these slaughter/slave relations are not contingent but fundamental to the configuration of political ontology': welcome to the slaughter house.

In the closing section of her essay, Agathangelou tranposes her necro-economio-political analysis to the financial crisis unfolding in Greece which, she argues, further evidences the superior flexibility, utter rapaciousness and inexhaustible appetite of the neoliberal imperial state. The transmutation, through 'toxic debt', of Greece into 'toxic ground' serves as an apt metaphor for the resultant thanatopolitics. The targets of these toxic attacks are, predictably, the most disenfranchised and vulnerable of subjects. The state proceeds to

deploy the instrumentalising rationality of the market in order to immunise itself through the toxic inoculation of its most disposable subjects: 'Markets are now orienting states to implement austerity policies, make job cutbacks, reduce social welfare, criminalise women, youth and the poor, and kill migrants. These strategies, while productive for capital relations, influence how capitalism generates anew itself, leading to what Fanon has already noted: the politico-ontological slaughtering and suffocation of flesh.'

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the generosity and support of those who made possible both this special issue of the *Somatechnics* journal and the symposium at which a number of the contributions were first presented: Nikki Sullivan, Sam Murray and the Somatechnics Research Centre, Macquarie University; the Centre for Advanced Studies of Australia, Asia and the Pacific (CASAAP) at Curtin University; Mark Evans and Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University. We thank Daniel Haile Michael, Shane Reside and Gracelyn Smallwood for their contributions to the Combat Breathing Symposium; Lisa Cuffe and Vanessa Fredericks for administrative support; and Kristen Phillips for her careful editorial work on the issue. For their assistance we are grateful also to Shampa Biswas, Vijay Devadas, Kerry Carrington, Holly Randell-Moon; Ray Jackson, Sankaran Krishna, Angela Mitropoulos, Goldie Osuri, Rajmohan Ramanathapillai, Radha Radhakrishnan, Charandev Singh and Susan Stryker.

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Somatechnics presents thoroughly multi-disciplinary scholarship on 'the body'.

Published: Biannual
ISSN: 2044-0138
E-ISSN: 2044-0146

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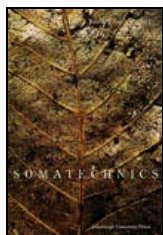
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Somatechnics presents thoroughly multi-disciplinary scholarship on the body, providing a space for research that critically engages with the ethico-political implications of a wide range of practices and techniques. The term 'somatechnics' indicates an approach to corporeality which considers it as always already bound up with a variety of technologies, techniques and technics, thus enabling an examination of the lived experiences engendered within a given context, and the effects that technologies, technics and techniques have on embodiment, subjectivity and sociality.

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Published: March & September
ISSN: 2044-0138
E-ISSN: 2044-0146

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Contributors

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Professor **Kerry Carrington** is the Head of School of Justice, Faculty of Law at Queensland University of Technology. She is the author of *Offending Girls* (1993), based on a PhD which won the 1991 Jean Martin TASA award. She has authored or co-authored several other books including *Offending Youth* (2009), *Critical Criminology*, (2002), *Who Killed Leigh Leigh*, (1998) and *Travesty! Miscarriages of Justice* (1991), and around another 60 scholarly publications. In 2003 Kerry worked as a senior researcher in the Australian Parliament where she developed a strong interest in immigration detention and border control issues.

Kellie Greene is a PhD candidate with the School of Visual Communications at the University of Western Sydney. Her project is titled 'Remembering and (Re)Presenting Lives within "Care"'. As a former resident of both the Cualann children's home in Dun Laoire and St Ann's girls home in Kilmacud Co. Dublin her project to date has involved returning to Ireland to embark on the creation of a photographic record of numerous sites throughout Ireland where residential homes, reformatory and industrial schools and asylums once stood and are now disappearing quietly from the Irish landscape.

Somatechnics 1.1 (2011): 249–251

DOI: 10.3366/soma.2011.0015

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www.eupjournals.com/soma

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Sherene Razack is professor, Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Her research and teaching interests lie in the area of race and gender issues in the law. Her courses include: 'Race, Space and Citizenship;' 'Race and Knowledge Production' and 'Racial Violence and the Law.' Her most recent book is an edited collection with Malinda Smith and Sunera Thobani entitled *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010). She has also published *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims From Western Law and Politics* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the New Imperialism* (University of Toronto Press, 2004), an edited collection *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping A White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998,1999, 2000) and *Canadian Feminism and the Law: The Women's Legal and Education Fund and the Pursuit of Equality* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1991). Dr. Razack is a founding member of Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equality (R.A.C.E.).

Bec Smith has been involved in community legal centres for 12 years, or most of her adult life. She is interested in community development and collective action with a particular focus on constructions of race, criminalisation and the prison industrial

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Jon Stratton is Professor of Cultural Studies at Curtin University. He has published widely on matters related to Jewish studies, popular music, and issues related to asylum seekers, race and multiculturalism in Australia. Jon's most recent books are Andy Bennett and Jon Stratton eds. *Britpop and the English Music Tradition* (Ashgate 2010) and *Jews, Race and Popular Music* (Ashgate 2009). Recently, Jon coedited, with Suvendrini Perera, *The Border, the Asylum Seeker and the State of Exception*, a special issue of *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol 23, no 5, 2009.

Omeima Sukkariah is a poet, writer, cross-cultural/ community consultant and an artist who has been working with communities for over 15 years. For many years she worked at the Race Discrimination Unit of the Australian Human Rights Commission on projects such as *Isma – Listen: national consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*; the award-winning *Living Spirit: Muslim women and human rights* national project and *Unlocking Doors: Muslim communities and police tackling racial and religious discrimination and hatred*. In 2002 Omeima created controversy for installing over 450 body bags in the centre of Sydney as an anti-war statement. Most recently her writing appeared in the anthology, *Auburn Letters*. Omeima is now the Manager and Community Development Officer at the Auburn Community Development Network, an organisation which helps to empower and build stronger communities through an arts, youth and community development programs. Omeima believes that it can take only one voice to make a difference and that this voice could even be yours.

Samuel Thampapillai is a researcher at the Sydney Centre for International Law at the University of Sydney Law School, where he recently completed an Honours degree in Law. He also has a First Class Honours degree in Economics from the same university where he held the Dean's Undergraduate Scholarship in Economics and Business. Samuel has represented the university internationally as a debater and has a long-standing interest in human rights and international relations. He has written on a range of contemporary issues, including the Sri Lankan conflict in a number of scholarly and online journals and in the media, including the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *New Matilda* and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *The Drum*.

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Published: Biannual
ISSN: 2044-0138
E-ISSN: 2044-0146

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