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BARING LIFE AND LIFESTYLE IN THE NON-PLACE

In this paper I offer an intervention into two prevailing approaches to the non-place – those spaces of transit that include hotels, airports, theme parks, and refugee camps. The non-place is treated on the one hand as an apolitical space of hypermediated consumption and mobility while, on the other hand, it also figures as exemplary of the biopolitical regulation of life within a ‘contemporary camp’. I argue that the non-place must be read, not as spectacle or camp, but as housing a very specific politics of place wherein the logic of the camp and the spectacle collide. What is of interest to me is not so much the camp as the hidden space of modernity, but how it finds a willing alibi in the spectacular media saturated spaces of capital. Within the non-place, the forces of global corporate capital have found an amiable space to both invest (lifestyle) and reduce (bare life) human life to maximize and optimize its own power.

Keywords non-place; bare life; biopolitics; *Dirty Pretty Things*; the Camp; consumerism

Ever since Frederic Jameson (1991) famously walked into the Westin Bonaventure Hotel and could not find his way around, there has been an increasing amount of theoretical contemplation over the fleeting conditions of spaces of transit. Spaces of transit, quite often called ‘non-places’, have been denigrated for their homogeneous architecture, their purified and pacified interiors, and lack of local referents to situate the traveler (Jameson 1991, Sorkin 1992, Crawford 1992, Virilio 1997, Gottdiener 2000). As nodal points in the circulation of goods, people, capital, and information, they include airports, theme parks, highway stops, chain hotels, entertainment mega-mall complexes and refugee camps. Non-places have functioned as a theoretical footnote to signal the loss of politics, the rise of the transaction over interaction, and the sad life of the lost traveler/citizen in the tragedy of contemporary civic life. Yet, getting lost in space is only one experience of the non-place.

Non-places are replete with the most up to date surveillance technologies to ‘find’ and sort the population into various categories – consumer, citizen, terrorist, and frequent, flyer to name a few. Accordingly, there has emerged

another theoretical trajectory (Bauman 2000, 2002, Fuller & Harley 2004, Diken 2004, Diken & Lausten 2006, Minca 2005, 2006, Ek 2006) concerned less with the fleetingness of place, than with the spatialization of biopolitics and disciplinary confinement within the non-place. As frequent targets of terror and sites of counter terror they are complicit spaces within the machinations of global corporate capital and the biopolitical regulation of life. This line of inquiry takes as its starting point Giorgio Agamben's assertion, in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), that bare life and the concentration camp are the founding paradigms for the political space of modernity. Theme parks and refugee camps are theorized alongside one another as 'twin camps' wherein the logic of the camp, not necessarily its brutality nor the horror, continues to play out.

The two prevailing theoretical discourses are joined by a sensibility that non-places and camps have in common the 'exterritoriality of the contexts in which they are located exceptionally, disposability of meanings, fluidity of identities, and the permanency of transience' (Diken 2004, p. 96). The former locates these as apolitical conditions of place characteristic of accelerated technologies and spectacular capital. The latter locates these as highly politicized conditions of place characteristic of the biopolitical operative extending from the camp. The first theorizes exclusively from the point of view of the traveler/consumer and the second generalizes to include all populations 'under the camp.' There is, however, a critical thread left dangling at the intersection of these two accounts: Capital's spectacular power has depended on and continues to depend on disciplinary control achieved through biopower. And more to the point, capital has depended on and continues to depend on what these theorists conceive of as bare life.

In this paper, I suggest that the non-place must be read, not as spectacle or camp, but as housing a very specific politics of place wherein the logic of the camp and the spectacle collide. One outcome of this collision is the emergence of a differential biopolitics, particular to the non-place, comprised of both bare life and the cultivation of what I term 'bare lifestyle'. Further to this, the logic of the spectacle and the camp enter into a codependent relationship. In the modern airport we are witnessing practices of 'air torture' where detainees are blindfolded and ferried off to destinations unbeknownst to them. At the same time, 'layover lifestyle' has become a prime initiative of airport architects and retailers (Kurlantzick, 2007). That human life can be affectively reduced and invested seamlessly in the non-place, and that these reductions and investments might also be interdependent, begs a significant reconsideration of the terms in which non-places are theorized.

In order to move towards a re-consideration of the non-place, I elaborate further on the two prevailing discourses. I reveal how they fail to adequately account for the dual presence and interdependence of the various investments and reductions into human life. Namely, it is their lack of regard to the human

labor of non-place that becomes endemic of what becomes a narrow and self affirming gaze. I then move to two filmic representations of non-places, *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and *The Terminal* (2004), to tease out the possibility of approaching non-places as producing and housing affective categories of difference along the spectrum of bare life and bare lifestyle. Both films focus on laborers of non-place who struggle between various intersections of camp and spectacle. Ultimately, the violence of the camp is alleviated by the promise of the spectacle's wares. In setting the spectacle against the camp, the films function as an articulation of logic of the tensions between bare life and lifestyle, a point of foreclosure, and a starting point for a renewed critique of the non-place.

Marc Auge, in *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), over a decade ago, asked what sort of theoretical gaze might be amenable to the non-place. In this paper I offer an intervention into current approaches to the non-place and offer an alternative gaze. What is of interest to me is not so much the camp as the hidden space of modernity, but how it finds a willing alibi in the spectacular media saturated spaces of capital. Likewise, it is not bare life or the lifestyle of the consumer *alone* that interests me but rather how they might be interdependent and relational categories of existence. The spectacular space of commodification and the biopolitical regulation of life operate together in the non-place. And what is more, they do so differentially. Within the non-place, the forces of global corporate capital have found an amiable space to both invest (lifestyle) and reduce (bare life) human life to maximize and optimize its own power.

Non-place narrative 1: Spaced doubt cultural theory

In his seminal piece Marc Auge introduces the concept of non-place to make a distinction from anthropological place. The latter is 'relational, historical, and concerned with identity' and is formed by collective identities 'through complicities of language, local references and the unformulated rules of living know how' (Auge 1995, p.101). The non-place, on the other hand, 'creates the shared identity of passengers, customers, and Sunday drivers' (p. 101). The non-place interpolates no-one in particular but speaks in a generalized text where 'it deals only with individuals as customers, passengers, users, listeners, but they are identified only by name, occupation, place of birth, and address only upon entering and leaving' (p. 11). Passports, visa slips, and train tickets affirm only an instrumental identity – the one required to keep on moving or to keep shopping. As Martha Rosler argues the non-place fosters individual anonymity which 'converts even the place of the public into a mere matrix of being, for communication occurs elsewhere and otherwise' (Rosler 1998, p. 50)' All the non-place asks of you is to plug in and pass through. Auge

contends they 'are spaces where people cohabitate without living together' (1995, p. 110). Gottdiener also questions, 'could the airport, as a distinct milieu that is increasingly dwelled in as we adjust to lives spent in air travel, be helping to create or amplify a new social character – the uncaring detached, self contained individual armed with a laptop, walkman, credit cards, cellular phone, Palm Pilot and business agenda' (Gottdiener 2000, p. 34). Here, the retreat of individuals into their own personal techno-spheres seems to infer a larger withdrawal of citizens from activating public space.

Andrew Wood's ruminations on airport terminal space opposes Auge's use of the term non-place in literal terms and argues that the airport terminal is indicative of a new kind of emerging polis – one that increasingly *is* the place that defines 'us'. Beyond this semantic difference he makes a similar claim as Auge by concluding that these spaces are important for anthropological and cultural analysis. Wood argues the significance of these spaces is precisely through the manner in which they dislocate us from truly meaningful public space. Non-places, including Wood's terminal space, are spaces of continuous movement and dislocation – grounds unfit for public life where 'formerly distinct geographies no longer occupy a site from which rhetorical contests of values may be mounted, or even imagined' (Wood 2003, p. 18).

For urban geographer and theorist of the network Manuel Castells (1996), the retreat of the individual inwards and the devaluing of physical space as a prime meeting ground are indicators of the socio-economic power of a rising class of itinerant elite who are bound by time-sharing practices. The non-place is an infrastructural requirement for capital freed from specific times and places. As the historical materialist geographer David Harvey (1989) argues, accelerated capital requires spaces to land. Thus 'the construction of (relatively) secluded space across the world along the connecting lines of the spaces of flows' ensures 'the traveler is never lost; and a system of travel arrangements, secretarial services, and reciprocal hosting that maintains a close circle of the corporate elite together through the worshipping of similar rites in all countries' (Castells 1996, p. 417). But this secluded space is also an exclusive space. Graham and Marvin, in *Splintering Urbanism*, consider how the non-place and its attendant architecture (skywalks, atriums, and people-movers) are 'the instruments of local and global bypass' which create 'a dialectically and mutually reinforcing process to turn their back on the wider metropolis' (2001, p. 228). Not only is pedestrian access limited, but quite often so is efficient public transit. Graham and Marvin attribute attraction to the non-place as a response to increasing fear of the post-modern city – one characterized as crime ridden, economically insecure, open to migration, and the mixing of cultures. The non-place offers instead a clean space, devoid of the homeless, squeegee kids, and crowds of others.

Beyond a secluded and exclusive infrastructure, non-places are also plagued by their distinctive sameness. A commonly cited experience is that of

the itinerant business traveler who trots across Sheraton and Best Western chain hotels across the globe only to find the same towels, soap scents, and feel of the sheets to be identical. The experience of sameness is such that a call to the front desk on a jet-lagged morning to ask ‘where am I’ is not entirely uncommon. Andrew Wood terms this multiplicity of non-places ‘omnitopia’ which refers to the construction and performance of geographically distinct spaces as perceptually ubiquitous place (2003, p. 1). Sameness disorients as it orients difference in a particular manner. For example by producing a specific brand of ‘diversity without tension’, Benjamin Barber claims,

We are inoculated against infection by the truly different with an immunizing shot of superficially distinctive. Taco Bell style that gives us Mexico without diarrhea or Chiapas rebellion, French Mediterranean ambiance without snotty waiters or people who think their language is better than ours, German castle cosmetics without Turkish works or Dachau.

(2001, p. 209)

By this account, culture is not so much contended with in the non-place as it is something that gets sold in the canteen. Wood concurs that even ‘momentary explosions of difference’, such as when a plane unloads its *different* passengers, becomes homogenized within the architecture of transit space. Likewise, Heather Menzies in *No Time*, a cultural analysis of the ‘speeding up of everyday life’, comments on her experiences of place along the highways stops of the greater Toronto area. For her, the service staff seems robotic and faceless. She bemoans ‘(e)veryone has nametags but they might as well be nameless’ (Menzies 2005, p. 33). The airport terminal, and other non-places, are found wanting to ‘minimize these moments of locality’ and instead privilege absence. And so the non-place narrative goes.

Intervention 1

What joins these accounts of non-place, as they come out of political economy, urban studies, anthropology, rhetoric, and post-modern theory is the same condemnation – non-places are a ruse of democratic civic life wherein all the virtues of political possibility get lost in abstraction, acceleration, and continuous movement. They are theorized in opposition to the idealistic tenets of public space and described in terms of an ever mounting lack – of culture, of authenticity, of dialogue, of discernable values, of difference, and of points of reference to anchor and ground the citizen. The bottom line for this theorizing is the failure of non-places to conjure up the place of the public. This failure is the point of entrance for critique and the point of conclusion. Final words on the non-place end with a concern that the consumer spectacle, the attendant flows of global corporate capital and increasingly mobile

populations ensure that the non-place is not disappearing but instead will continue to 'take up more room all over the earth today' (Auge 1995, p. 110). Because public space functions in this literature as 'other', the non-place is set up as an apolitical space that must be resisted through the cultivation of public space *elsewhere*. Public space must be reconvened, protected, and recovered.

In that sense, what we have here is not only a nostalgic critique that yearns for a past that might never have existed but more problematically, a critique that has said very little about the existing politics of the non-place beyond the purview of the traversal of the consumer/traveler. At its extreme one wonders if it sounds too much like a critique of customer service for an increasingly itinerant theorist. In fact it is not the non-place that displaces the local or creates asocial facelessness inasmuch as the theorist of non-place erases the local in these accounts of non-place. This condemnation of place is endemic of a specific type of gaze into non-place – which belongs to the traversal and the traversal alone. What is forgotten in such conclusions is that invisibility and the experience of alienation are a direct result of certain people's labor and *also* by the consumptive and cultural practices enacted by customers – and theorists alike. Moreover, the performative sunny dispositions that make for great customer service, something to put a name to a face, cannot be separated from a larger political context where capitalism, understood as a mode of subjection, is inexorably linked to the cultivation of dispositions of salespeople and service staff, what Hardt and Negri (2000) call immaterial and affective labor. It is time to step off the people mover and abandon the fixation to wallow in the disorienting experience of non-place. However, before moving to an analysis of non-place from the perspective of labor, I turn first to a second non-place narrative that is concerned with the ways in which power is actually quite orienting in the non-place.

Non-place narrative 2: Camp non-place

The 'non-place as camp' takes as its foundation Giorgio Agamben's (1998) theorizations of bare life and the camp as the political foundation of modern power and more specifically modern biopolitics. The camp is a space of exception that produces bare life by determining which lives are homo sacrine – those lives that may be killed without sacrifice. It is through mechanisms of the camp whereby *certain* populations are reduced to bare life and sovereign power is established. Sovereign power is based on the suspension of bare life (or natural being) and its relegation to the state of exception. The state of exception stands in opposition to the juridico-political order but is at once excluded and localized within the order. The state of exception is subject to the rule of the juridico-political order by its relation, 'at once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception

actually constituted in its very separateness, the hidden foundation in which the entire political system rested' (Agamben 1998, p. 9). For Agamben, this unarticulated foundation of modern power depends on the triad of birth, nation, and land as well as a series of other oppositions – namely public/private, friend/enemy, citizen/denizen, and right/left. However, these categories of sovereign legitimacy are blurring due to a contemporary political reality that is characterized by increasing migratory citizenship and a permanent mass of resident non-citizens.

The dissociation of birth (bare life) and the nation-state is a new fact of politics in our day which culminates in new spatial arrangements that challenge the clear delineations between exception/order. As the boundaries begin to blur 'the bare life that dwelt there frees itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it' (Agamben 1998, p. 9). Bare life, generally understood to be outside of the political order, becomes an indeterminate margin and coincides with the political realm. In other words bare life begins to 'run amok' establishing new spatial arrangements where bare life/legally protected bodies and the exception/order are caught in increasing zones of indistinction. Some of these new spatial arrangements might include the physical spaces of black markets and underground economies. Such spaces include the non-place, otherwise coded for leisure, business, and mobility, but easily re-coded as sites for sex trade, organ trade, and drug muling. Other spaces include refugee camps or war time prisons.

For Agamben, the birth of the camp as the ultimate suspension of juridico-political order needs to be understood, not as an historical suspension of order that belongs to past atrocities of the Nazi regime, but as a contemporary spatial arrangement increasingly inhabited by bare life,

The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the zones d'attentes of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities.

(Agamben 1998, p. 175)

Agamben aims to bring the political out of its concealment. It becomes the task of theory to contend with the increasing spatialization of biopolitics by revealing where the thresholds of the state of exception are currently being drawn, re-drawn, and delineated. He argues,

As long as the state of exception and the normal situation are kept separate in space and time, as is usually the case both remain opaque, though they secretly institute each other. But as soon as they show their

complicity, as happens, more often today, they illuminate each other, so to speak.

(Agamben cited in Minca 2005, p. 407)

Because the camp morphs itself and disguises itself 'all that is necessary is that we learn to recognize its shape and content' (Agamben 1998, p. 175).

Minca, Ek, and Diken, begin to spatialize and ground Agamben's theory in a specific space – the non-place. The non-place territorializes the biopolitical operatives of the camp via the exclusive entrances and exits. The difference being that 'some camps keep others out, some in' (Diken & Laustsen 2006, p. 9). Diken argues,

But nevertheless there are also more benevolent camps (for example gated communities, sex tourism, theme parking and so on) that repeat the logic of the exception for the winners. Thus taken in the first sense, as the exception, the camp can refer to both extreme exclusion and extreme inclusion. At both extremes, the distinction between the biological and the political tends to disappear and it becomes increasingly difficult to refer to the polis and politics in the classical sense.

(2004, p. 98)

Thus gated communities, theme parks, and refugee camps operate within a similarly coded logic of exclusion. One is distinguished by a freedom of choice to participate in the ban, such as the gated community. The other banned by force, coming up against restricted access, and/or banished to a particular space (refugee camp/detention center/war camps). Whether the camp is voluntary or not, the point is that space is arranged through risk management, confinement, and exclusion. As Bauman contends,

All measures have been taken to assure the permanence of their exclusion. People without qualities have been deposited in a territory without domination, whereas all the roads leading back to meaningful places and to the spots where socially legible meanings can be and are forged daily have been blocked for good.

(2004, p. 78)

The popularity of club meds and other holiday resorts, along with the increasing establishment of detention centers to contain would-be terrorists and displaced populations, are understood in this discourse as indicative of a generalized societal 'ban.' The multiplication of sites to contain populations speaks to the prevalence of a generalized state of exception. And it flows from here that the state of exception is asserted by these theorists as the dominating logic of spatial organization.

The generalized ban is understood as mobile and indistinct ban. Where and when the ban will constitute itself remains undetermined and this uncertainty ‘transforms all of us, in fact, into potential hominess sacri’ (Ek 2006, p. 407). Citing the accidental shooting and death of the Brazilian electrician in the London underground days after the July terrorist attacks Minca reflects on the relationship between non-places and the regime of exception,

All of us can become potential hominess sacri for the very fact that we travel on the Underground; for the fact that we enter into a vast and extraordinary space of exception – extraordinary precisely for its apparent normality. Within this space of exception the norm and its transgression are decided at the moment, they straddle a mobile confine that we, as citizens are not consented to know.

(2006, p. 387)

In a generalized state of exception bare life is understood here as a temporalized and essentialized category of existence. Bare life seems to be the essence of being, always-already, that rears its head when one is suddenly confronted as a life that can be killed without sacrifice. It is understood as the hidden potential in every living life when the exception becomes the rule – in other words today the bare life of every being is worn on the sleeve.

Another significant move made here is to distinguish between normalizing technologies of power such as the panopticon and what Bigo calls the Banopticon (cited in Diken & Laustsen 2006, p. 85). Non-places are not merely concerned with surveillance and techniques of normalization (panopticon) but pro-active risk management and control through banning (banopticon). While we learn from Foucault (1977) that disciplinarity is tied to risk management and control, it is the experience of place and the affective differences that enable us to see banoptic and panoptic power as somewhat distinct architectures of power. There are affective differences between the two. Although the literature does not delve too far into this, one could easily imagine that the *experience* of place is significantly different under technologies of the banopticon than under conditions of the panopticon. For example, in gated communities power is not just panoptic in that community members self subject – they are already living in a normalized community with much of the labor of normalization doled out (lawn cutters, painters, gardeners). Instead, the community is governed by the logic of the ban. It offers a feeling of protection by banning the local. In the sibling space of the camp, the ban has as terrifying dimension for those banished and relegated to the camps. In light of the increasing prevalence of the banopticon, the panopticon seems less terrifying. Diken and Laustsen argue,

It is the reason why the inmates of Woomera find the panopticon luxurious compared to the camp. After all, the camp was a model of

mutual involvement and confrontation that required the constant mutual engagement of power holders and those subject to power.

(2005, p. 86)

A panoptic power that seeks to discipline, regulate, and normalize becomes inviting compared to the ban that operates through techniques of risk management that already assumes the criminality of the migrant, loiterer, or the terroristic essence of a brown body.

Intervention 2

This theoretical move to spatialize Agamben's theory effectively politicizes the non-place and rescues it from its dismissal as a politically futile space. The first non-place discourse never strayed from the privileged gaze of the consumer/traveler. Yet, equally problematic this second theoretical account literally generalizes the state of emergency and makes its power seem rather arbitrary. Here, all populations are vulnerable to a mobile and sudden ban framed along a spectrum of indeterminate possibility. For example, this problematic reading is evident in Diken and Lausten's extension of Bauman's thesis on liquid modernity,

And there is nothing that automatically leads most subjects of liquid modernity from one extreme to the other. Rather, most people are suspended or plotted somewhere in the continuum between the extremes, which also materializes the fragility, characteristic of liquid modernity. This suspension, and the insecurities that follow, is part and parcel of the functioning of the camp in that it compels people to recognize power as potentiality (of abandonment).

(Diken and Lausten 2005, p. 96)

Significantly, the ban is conceptualized here as having an affective dimension which is experienced as insecurity. While this creates a wonderful opening to think of the affective logic of biopolitics as individuating and totalizing it fails to consider the improbability that all populations *are* insecure in the *same way*.

As I cautioned against the first non-place narrative as it writes off the non-place in one fell swoop as apolitical space because it *isn't* public space, we too must be careful with this assertion of a generalized ban as a bottom line. It negates the possibility to consider bare life as a differential and interdependent relation under modern biopolitics. Not all bodies are subject to the ban in the same way and the ban is never as arbitrary as this theory seems to imply. The death of the Brazilian electrician, his killing without sacrifice, does not simply indicate a generalized state of exception that all populations are now subject to – some bodies would never have been imagined as suspected terrorists. There

are some things that automatically lead subjects from one extreme of the banopticon to the other.

These affective possibilities under the ban need to be articulated to material realities and the specific technologies of power/self that they employ. This second narrative of the non-place (as camp) has taken Agamben and run in a somewhat limiting direction. Agamben (1998) argues that the various technologies of power and technologies of the self might blur under conditions of the spectacle. But his theorization by no means infers that the experience of biopolitics becomes undifferentiated, universal, and total. Yet, the potential of the ban is theorized in this subsequent work as a hovering power that will sometimes arbitrarily land and attach itself to the hidden essence of bare life that lies within the body of every single human life.

What needs to be emphasized, especially if bare life is understood as having an affective dimension, are the conjunctural politics at play here. That is, the mechanisms by which populations are plotted and suspended in the continuum between extremes that Bauman points to. A differential theory of biopolitics is necessary, not just to point out the complexity and multiplicity in all of this, but in order to consider the various technologies of power/self and the affective dimension of these investments and reductions into human life. For example, bare life needs to be examined for how it is quite often central to the effective functioning of capital. There are very specific mechanisms in which the ban and bare life will be constituted. The biopolitical regulation of life reduces *certain* life to bare life. At the same time it also invests in the lives of others, as in the maintenance of lifestyles. In other words *both* reductions and investments cultivate docile and productive bodies. Biopolitics, as a differential relation of power, is not merely a technology of power that hovers above. Instead, because it works through reductions and investments into life, it is tied to a range of affective struggles, strategies, and technologies of the self. And as I will show, the overinvestment into some results from the disinvestment into others. The biopolitical infrastructure that upholds the lifestyle of the overly invested is built upon the labor and bodies of the disinvested. The non-place is an architecture that houses the interdependent worlds of camp and spectacle. Investments and reductions in what it means to be a human in this world occur simultaneously and side by side, and prove to be equally productive for the effective functioning of global corporate capital.

It is precisely these struggles and investment strategies as they occur in non-places that are central to *Dirty Pretty Things* and *The Terminal*. Further, these sorts of struggles of bare life are in the films and elsewhere ultimately tamed by 'choosing' a lifestyle. My re-routing of theory through popular culture via *Dirty Pretty Things* and *The Terminal*, will provide a means to discuss this increasingly commonplace fact of the day: where one is hailed by the aromas of duty free perfumes and chocolates in one moment and then

processed by US homeland security in the other and where VIP airport lounges and detention rooms can be found on the same blueprint.

Baring life and lifestyles: Some dirty pretty things in the terminal

What the films accomplish through representation of the various laborers of non-place is a perspective of bare life that is affective and differential. The characters' lives are continually caught between the intersections of capital and camp where their lives are laid bare in varying degrees at different times. Here, the subjects of non-place are not just privileged travelers annoyed by the interruptions of their routes by the disciplinary apparatuses that control non-places. Instead, the films portray the laborious lives of asylum seekers, fugitives, and immigrants (documented and undocumented) who must employ different strategies and technologies of the self to navigate the modern biopolitical regime. The non-place emerges not as a singular space in the generalized state of exception or as the result of a diffuse and uncontrollable commodity fare, but as a complex site where the camp's thresholds of inside/outside and its spectacular nature fluctuate according to one's relation to the ban.

Dirty Pretty Things is set in the non-places (sweatshops, hotels, mini-cab offices, airports, and morgues) of London's underground economy – places bare life not only frequents but is also employed. *Dirty Pretty Things* involves the intertwining lives of various illegal workers in a west London hotel. Senay, a Turkish illegal, works as a chambermaid and sweatshop seamstress. Okwe, a Nigerian illegal, does a regular double shift as a concierge and a mini-cab driver. Juliette is a London sex trade worker. Senor Sneaky is a Spanish 'business' man who manages the hotel and operates an organ trade from inside. Through various traversals of non-place the characters struggle to overturn Sneaky's organ trade. While joining forces Senay and Okwe, the two central characters, also plan their escapes out of their predicaments in London. Okwe, tired of running from British immigration officers as he works around the clock, all the while managing a few hours of sleep between Senay's couch and the hotel lobby, wants to return home to his daughter in Nigeria. Okwe risks execution in Nigeria as he is wanted for the accidental death of his wife in a fire. Senay endures multiple sexual attacks from her non-place employers and aggressive intrusions by immigration officers. Two such officers scope out her apartment to make sure she is not harboring others and show up at the hotel trying to catch her working illegally. She dreams of a new passport with a new identity as far from London as from Turkey and her strict Islamic upbringing. Her route of escape is a better life in another 'world class city' – New York City (NYC). The American city functions as a productive mediascape

(Appadurai) in Senay's mind. She survives life in London through her affective investment in an imaginary NYC. It is an image and narrative of the city that she continuously scripts together from the disparate fragments of conversations and her picture postcards.

In *The Terminal* Victor Navorski's otherwise mundane existence as a sovereign citizen of a fictional eastern European nation-state, Krokazia, is suddenly made bare upon arrival at JFK international airport. Navorski has flown to NYC to visit a jazz club which holds sentimental value to him. He also arrives with hopes of 'buying the Nikes.' He arrives to find out that his country has disappeared in a military coup while Victor was in mid-flight. 'America is closed, that's it, see those doors, America is closed and you can't go through those doors' exclaims the chief of airport police as he points toward the revolving doors that exit the airport. Victor Navorski has become a newly anointed citizen of nowhereville. There are no visas or green slips for this sort of emergency and Victor is told that he is 'unacceptable.' Navorski has lost all rights except for one – to window shop. He is quickly told that the function of the airport beyond transit is consumption, 'There's nothing for you to do here but to shop.' Like *Dirty Pretty Things*, in *The Terminal* friendships evolve amongst laborers of non-place. Navorski befriends Gupta, an Indian janitor, Ray, an African-American baggage handler, and Enrique, a Puerto-Rican food cart operator. Together, though under constant surveillance, they elude the airport commander and chief of their activities. Through these friendships Victor is able to survive in the airport terminal. He works under the table at night with the evening construction crew, trades first class airliner food for romantic advice, and plays poker for lost and found items.

The camp literature argues that biopolitics has become spatialized within the non-place. Thus, something like the London Underground is all day everyday a state of exception waiting to be reconvened. When it is not spatialized the literature points to bare life as the hidden essence in every being. However, in *The Terminal* the spatialization of biopolitics occurs in relation to the individuated body and particular spatial demarcations. The state of exception is context specific. Bare life is activated by crossing a specific threshold of the order. Beyond the revolving doors Navorski would meet a situation perhaps akin to the generalized camp. But only, and this is crucial here, because he has physically crossed a threshold that exists for him and him only. To cross that threshold, the threshold of the order, would be to lose the protection of the Office of US Homeland Security to which he is in custody. To leave would be to exit the panopticonic gaze. Significantly, the excessive surveillance also offers protection for Navorski – not protection from others, as with gated communities, but protection from being further vulnerable to the extremities of *being* bare life. Without the panopticon he would be subject to the ban – unaccounted for and susceptible to a death without sacrifice. To exit into the streets of NYC would be to automatically become homo sacer.

Senay, Okwe, Senor Sneaky, and the organ trade 'patients' in *Dirty Pretty Things* and Gupta and Navorski in *The Terminal* are all homo sacer to the extent that they navigate a constant reality in which they can be killed without sacrifice. However, their lives are not experienced as bare in the same way. It is a condition that requires constant strategic maneuvering and self-maintenance in order to survive. The sexual violence that Senay endures repeatedly from her sweatshop boss and Senor Sneaky must go unreported as to do otherwise would risk unemployment. In one scene Okwe inspects and treats his fellow cab drivers who have become infected by a sexually transmitted disease. Lacking the documentation and status required for medical attention the back of the mini-cab office is re-convened as a temporary clinic for the illegal workers. Likewise, the physical violence that Julliete endures is considered an invisible act of violence. After being battered by a client, Okwe recommends that she call the police. Julliete replies 'no no remember I'm not supposed to be here.' In another scene the sweatshop where Senay works literally disappears when immigration officers appear. The seamstresses run out the back doors leaving a lone worker, the owner of the shop, to sit alone amidst a sea of still warm sewing machines. The shop does not *really* exist in the juridico-political order. It exists in the state of exception and is only present through the labor practices of the bare life it employs. Once again, the state of exception is convened by bodies who bare a particular relationship to the state — a banned relationship. And the space is not a sweatshop unless they are present.

Invisibility is a requirement of the banned economy to which these characters labor, but it is also a strategy of survival. The strategizing of invisibility is one way in which biopolitics can be seen as having a differential affective logic. Okwe passes as a doctor and then as a hospital cleaner in order to steal medication and other medical supplies to save a dying transplant victim who had been left to recover on his own with an open and infected wound. Donned in blue scrubs and his black skin Okwe is able to move through the hospital without intervention. No one questions his presence as he mops the hospital floors. Passing as a doctor is not difficult as his black skin makes him indistinguishable from other black faces to the rest of the hospital employees. Similarly, Gupta, in *The Terminal*, remarks on his ability to be on the run while employed at the airport as a janitor, 'Who's going to notice me, if I keep my head down and keep on working.' Black and brown faced janitors are hardly surprising fixtures within the non-place settings of London or NYC. Gupta and Okwe use this as a strategy of survival. While the films may be fictive the fact that non-places are also places of labor is far from fiction. By moving beyond the experience of the customer/traveler, best characterized by Menzies' dissatisfaction with customer service, the films highlight different kinds of labor and thus foreground different political concerns. The

films present a series of cultivated dispositions and strategies for surviving the non-place.

For many, the disciplining of the self means cultivating dispositions as necessary strategies for survival. For others, cultivating dispositions is a superfluous strategy for performance and profit. The biopolitical investment and optimization into life for the effective functioning of capital is not a smooth and generalized process. Instead individuals differentially maintain and discipline the self, in part, depending upon their relationship to the state – with implications also for consumption. Thus, while Navorski remains in the terminal, a stateless person in a semi-state of exception, protected he wanders in the rows upon rows of retail – Burger King, Sbarro Pizza, Hugo Boss. Although he has no currency to partake in the commodity fare, the aura of the commodities allows Navorski to move from bare life to acquiring something that almost resembles a lifestyle. He saves enough money to purchase a Hugo Boss suit and regularly dines on the fine wines and fare of the leftovers from first class's excess. In Navorski's case, his plight as bare life always returns to dismantle the fragile semblance of a lifestyle.

In *Dirty Pretty Things* sleep becomes an important site of strategizing and maintenance of the self. Okwe is constantly chewing on betel leaves to stay awake as he drives all day and then mans the front desk at the hotel through the night. At one point during his driving shift we see Okwe and his fare stopped at a red light. His fare, a tired businessman, is also falling asleep in the back seat. Both driver and fare are docile and productive bodies. They are both tired and overworked bodies caught in the cab – one node in the network of capital's accelerated circulation of goods, people, and information. However, the itinerant businessperson falling asleep in the backseat might find a VIP lounge in the airport where they can nap or take a hot shower. His life is optimized and invested in. Okwe, on the other hand, experiences sleep in such a way that reveals his life as a life whose worth is reduced rather than invested in. He must sneak moments of rest on Senay's couch or the front desk of the hotel. Okwe must be on top of his game, not to produce or accumulate capital but to negotiate his every step so that he can rest and sleep when he can and continue to elude immigration officers while making enough money to get by. Okwe and Senay's plight as illegals requires of them to remain disposed while dispossessed in a very particular way. They are not 'burning the candle at both ends' or waking up early to synchronize with Wall Street, nor are they insomniacs or narcoleptics. They are strategically trying to stay awake yet find enough sleep to survive – at bare minimum. The management and maintenance of the self becomes a strategy of life and not lifestyle. Thus instead of lattes and frappacinos we have characters chewing on betel leaves and falling asleep at work (behind the wheel).

Unlike the characters in *Dirty Pretty Things*, Navorski's condition of bare life seems rather temporary and lighthearted. Light because it revolves around

the aura of commodities – from the aroma of fast food to the duty free colognes. He is not in the cold mean streets of London but in a liminal zone of perpetual waiting where the consumer market of the airport offers protection and liberation for his bare life to move towards baring a lifestyle. Regardless of this lightheartedness there is a rather heavy weight of the clashing forces of camp and spectacle in the air. The way out of the state of exception, in both films, is the promise of an America lifestyle. It is the bareness of life, that unpredictable state of vulnerability and a disorienting existence that is literally ‘out of it’ (out of the order) that one leaves behind when they move toward acquiring or maintaining a lifestyle. A highly stylized and affluent life seems to provide a degree of protection from the type of violence one may endure as bare life. For Senay in *Dirty Pretty Things*, NYC offers its skyscrapers, yellow cabs and bright lights. For Navorski, America is offered up through the commodity fare of the terminal wherein the products, brands, and choice offers something to do, something to strive for, and in many ways a daily liberation out of his predicament as sudden bare life.

The critical point here is that within the films a highly commodified lifestyle is offered as a means out of bare life. This is not merely indicative of the commodification of all space, a long list that must now include the camp. Rather, it is indicative of the symbiotic relationship between the material structure and social relations of society (the spectacle) and the differential biopolitical investments and reductions into living life that legitimize the material structure. Here we have the logic of biopolitics as it extends from a geopolitical context. Capitalism’s underground economy in *Dirty Pretty Things* and the ambiguous and arbitrary power of Homeland Security in *The Terminal* enslave the characters while making them productive. There is also a strong desire cultivated for Nike, Hugo Boss, and the freedom of consumer choice synonymous with American style democracy. In the end the characters are docile and productive for the effective functioning of both capital and the camp, while alternative possibility is diminished.

Conclusion: Notes on the modern airport

The theoretical salience of camp and spectacle, as separate modes of inquiry into the non-place, is an increasingly inadequate conceptual guide to contend with a space whose very spectacular nature depends on the biopolitical regulation of life. It is no longer sufficient to conclude that it is a mere node in the networks of fast capital or that it is a space where the state of exception hovers above and sometimes touches down. The non-place is neither a spectacular and affluent space of seduction, nor is it simply a concrete manifestation of biopolitics where bare life runs amok. Rather, the non-place operates under a mixed regime of camp and spectacle, wherein bare life and

the cultivation of lifestyle enter into an interdependent relationship. The rise of lifestyle lounges at international airports in the UK and the US are directly related to the increased security measures post-9/11 (Altman 2007). The New Orleans Superdome, a spectacular sporting complex, and the various convention centers functioning as ‘refugee’ areas during the aftermath of Katrina gives cause enough for re-thinking the non-place in the terms I suggest here. The non-place operates along the plot lines represented in *Dirty Pretty Things* and *The Terminal*: the violence of the camp is hidden by the blinding lights of the spectacle.

The contemporary airport is arguably one of the fullest realizations of the logic of camp and spectacle’s strategic synchronization in physical space. The airport is replete with detention rooms, officers of the global war on terror, and increasingly invasive surveillance technologies. In these reductions of human life to bare life the airport also invests in the wellbeing of its travelers. In other words the space is not simply governed by the risk management and control of the ban as the camp literature would have it. It is still very much a space of normalization that produces docile and productive bodies. Napping pods are becoming more prevalent in airports as well as mega shopping malls. In fact, Minny-NAP-olis in the Mall of America provides a space for shoppers to nap who have literally shopped until they have dropped. Private terminals at Heathrow are on offer for those who prefer a sanctuary away from the crowded and *passé* business lounges. Mini Clinics and pharmacies have opened up in Newark International. Jet lag luxury meals are served at major US hotels that cater to the itinerant business travelers while requiring well trained maids in ‘jet lag etiquette’ (Ede-Moore 1993). Airliners, such as Emirates, have jets with ceilings that emulate the night sky keeping travelers ‘in time’, while non-place service staff must struggle to stay awake to serve the traveler – a traveler whose lifestyle is *regulated* according to the various tempos of their business transactions or holiday destinations. The non-place incorporates differential, interdependent, and affective social relations of power sutured along the biopolitical spectrum of bare life and lifestyle.

The two prevailing theoretical approaches to the non-place rest their gaze on the premise that the non-place transcends its locality. Locality appears to be the condition of possibility for a political public sphere, in one case, and a safeguard against the potentiality of a camp, in the other. If labor was taken into consideration then no claim to local bypass or extraterritoriality of its contents can justly be made. While non-places might be devoid of some forms of the local destitute – beggars and squeegee kids – this is not enough to substantiate the claim of local bypass. Traveling from airport to airport, if one’s eyes focus upon the laborers of non-place, then suddenly a locality to the non-place will emerge. Who are the shoe-shiners, the bathroom attendants, baggage handlers, cleaners, and security guards? Who they are speaks to local flows of immigration, the raced constitution of classed formations, and the

particular gendered divisions of labor that characterize the locality that the non-place shares.

The insistence that the spacious and pacified (purified) interiors disorients the consumer/traveler and erases the local is made without regard as the non-place is not just magically made clean nor spacious simply as some whimsical condition of post-modernity. Non-places are built environments that are not only built by people but cleaned *by people*. Furthermore, claims to inauthentic Mexican burritos as grounds for critiquing the *lack* of cultural difference at a non-place canteen or claims to the banning of difference in a gated community is utterly ridiculous in light of the amount of Mexican migrant labor that quite often tends to the gardens of gated communities across America and prepares the food in restaurants of all ethnic variety. Perhaps it depends upon what type of authenticity one is after. To imagine that the non-place is some transcendent node in the circulation of goods, people, capital and information, as the first discourse does, or a delocalized location defined in relation to the sovereign power, as in the second discourse, says very little about actually existing non-places. As the function of the airport extends beyond a site to merely pass through, and continues to offer a host of lifestyle accoutrements, the relationship between labor and the non-place becomes even more pressing. A view that is committed to the politics of labor as an unavoidable element in the production and maintenance of space demands a consideration of the production of differences in space that have heretofore been too often imagined as homogeneous and sterile.

It goes without saying that more and more spaces have begun to emulate the look and feel of the modern airport or borrowed design elements from gated communities. Within the non-place the mixed regime of camp and spectacle has the potential to take on several forms – forms that are contingent upon locality and geopolitical context. *How* the relationship between camp and spectacle is negotiated, the different compositions of bare life and lifestyle, and whose lives are reduced and whose lives will be invested in will be differentially determined according to context. Beyond the politics of particular geographical space there is also a larger issue of temporality and geopolitics. Thus, at certain moments the camp becomes the spectacle itself. The unsuspected travelers are quite often unwittingly treated to a conjectural theater of the geopolitical tensions of the day. Who is getting detained? Who is taking so long in the line-up? Who is being escorted off of the plane? Who have the risky and questionable bodies these days? As a site where the differential flows of immaterial and material traffic (of bodies, monies, and information) mix, mingle, and sometimes clash, the non-place must be contended with as a critical space within the political architecture of contemporaneity.

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