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REVISITING THE *CAMPO*: A BIOPOLITICAL READING OF PERRY MIYAKE'S *21ST CENTURY MANZANAR*

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ABSTRACT
This article approaches Perry Miyake's *21st Century Manzanar,* a recent example of neo-internment literature, from a biopolitical perspective. In his novel, Miyake revisits the history of Japanese American "internment" in a near future, when the US is waging an economic war against Japan and Japanese Americans are once more sent to concentration camps. I argue that, far from obfuscating the historical past, this novel teases out its less-obvious truths. First, racist profiling effectively places every single person of Japanese ancestry in a state of exception: as *homo sacer*, (s)he is beyond legal rights. Once in camp, having been reduced to *nuda vita*, the prisoners will submit to having their lives biopolitically "managed." I conclude that *21st Century Manzanar* acts both as an effective lens through which to re-interpret America's problematic past and as an astute warning against replicating such mistakes in the future.
RESUMEN
Este artículo aborda, desde una perspectiva biopolítica, la novela de Perry Miyake *21st Century Manzanar,* un ejemplo reciente de *neo-internment literature*. En dicha novela, Miyake retoma el "internamiento" de los japoneses americanos durante la segunda

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> guerra mundial y lo traslada a un futuro próximo, en el que los Estados Unidos libran una guerra económica contra Japón y de nuevo los japoneses-americanos son enviados a campos de concentración. Lejos de tergiversar o enmascarar la realidad del fenómeno histórico, esta novela consigue sacar a la luz sus verdades más ocultas. En primer lugar, el sistema racista convierte a cualquier persona de ascendencia japonesa en un sospechoso y lo coloca un estado de excepción: en calidad de *homo sacer*, se mueve en un peculiar limbo legal. Ya en el campo de concentración, los prisioneros son reducidos a *nuda vita* y dicha vida es "gestionada" biopolíticamente. Esto me lleva a concluir que la perspectiva adoptada en *21st Century Manzanar* nos permite reinterpretar, de una forma muy efectiva, el cuestionable pasado de los Estados Unidos, a la vez que sirve de advertencia para que evitemos repetir en el futuro los errores del pasado.

Executive Order 9066 changed everything. By signing that order on February 19, 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt effectively paved the way for the removal and imprisonment of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans, two thirds of whom had been born in the US and were therefore American citizens. With this presidential signature, the very concept of citizenship was divested of the constitutional guarantees that accrued to it. Once more, civil rights were denied to a racialized group that had been singled out for this special "privilege." However, unlike what had happened to African Americans for centuries, this time around it was the rights that had previously existed, those pertaining to American citizenship, that were effectively suspended. In fact, for many scholars, the massive incarceration of Japanese Americans from the West Coast in the 1940s constitutes a turning point in American history: it managed to create a "racial state of exception" (Lee). The paradox was remarkable: the same American government that had, purportedly, decided to enter the war to defend their territory, and uphold their sacrosanct principles of freedom and democracy, was at the same time denying those democratic rights to a racialized community mostly comprised of American citizens.

As is well known, the events leading up to Executive Order 9066, the process of evacuation, and life in the camps have all been narrated in what is known as internment literature. To 20th century classics like Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953), or Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to*

Manzanar (1973), we have to add recent novels like Perry Miyake's *21st Century Manzanar* (2002), Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002), or Cynthia Kadohata's *Weedflower* (2006), texts that can best be described as neo-internment fiction. Although such neo-internment novels continue to explore the ways in which internment shaped the lives of several generations of Japanese Americans, they generally depart from the "testimonial" stance of previous narratives, as some critics have pointed out (Beck 8; Manzella 146, 157-8). Probably the most experimental of these neo-internment narratives is Miyake's novel, which replays the history of Japanese American internment in a dystopian near future when the US is waging an economic war against Japan. If Roosevelt had used the shocking Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941 as the perfect excuse to enter World War II, in Miyake's America the government will concoct enough bioterrorist evidence to trigger World War III (Miyake 14). With Executive Order 9066-A, everything starts all over again. Once more, every person of Japanese American ancestry is sent to concentration camps.

Miyake's narrative attitude, however, differs from his famous antecedents in that it consciously echoes the biopolitical paradigm theorized by Foucault and Agamben, among other philosophers. It is my contention that reading *21st Century Manzanar* from the critical standpoint of biopolitics can prove highly illuminating. On the one hand, the "campo paradigm" put forward by Agamben helps us frame the "internment" of Japanese Americans in the 1940s within the larger biopolitical turn in history; on the other, the central biopolitical tenet of the "management of life" allows us to engage in a nuanced analysis both of Miyake's novel and of the events of the past, the internment experience, that it chooses to revisit. In *21st Century Manzanar,* I argue, Miyake convincingly mobilizes strategies to expose the biopower at work in the phenomenon of (neo)internment. The narrative not only describes how the scapegoating of Japanese Americans is orchestrated but, more crucially, it highlights the ways in which the state also attempts to "manage" these individuals' life in camp. In order to fully understand the analysis of the novel, then, it becomes necessary to delineate the theory underlying and buttressing such mechanisms of control.

BIOPOLITICAL THEORY: "INFLICTING LIFE"

"We are all virtually homines sacri.*"* (Agamben 123)

As Michel Foucault asserted already in 1976, in the first volume of his *Histoire de la Sexualité*, we now live in the era of bio-power (186). Despite the fact that the section of the book where Foucault made such a statement went largely unnoticed at the time, it is here that we find the seed of biopolitics, the *Urtext* of biopolitical theory (Campbell and Sitze 3-4, 7, 22). According to Foucault, the reign of biopower first emerged in Western societies at the end of the 18th century. To be more accurate, it was inaugurated at the precise moment when the workings of power started to move from the classical model in which the sovereign had "the right to decide life and death," which ultimately meant the right to kill his/her subjects, to a new paradigm whereby the state exercised its power through the management of life (Foucault, "Right" 258-260). Such mechanisms of life-management and regulation worked at both the social and the individual levels: as the *bio-politics of the population* and the *anatomo-politics of the human body*, respectively (262). While classical "sovereignty with all its laws didn't fundamentally 'seize' life"; in the new biopolitical paradigm knowledge-power finally had "a 'hold' over living beings through and across their bodies" (Campbell and Sitze 13). After this decisive shift from politics to biopolitics, power would focus less on death as punishment, and more on fostering, regulating and controlling life. Rather than exerting the right to kill, the new *dispositifs* of power focused on life; they were less interested in inflicting harm or death than in "inflicting life," so to speak. Biopower wanted to manage life, "to administer, optimize and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault, "Rights" 259); it was in fact the exercise of a more subtle form of power, related to that of the disciplines that "build a body of knowledge about the individuals" (Foucault, "Panopticism" 209). Of course, what might initially look like benign surveillance can soon turn into stifling control and deprivation of freedom. After all, Foucauldian panopticism and Big-Brother surveillance are tied in with the power dynamics of fear.

It is in Foucault's first explorations of biopower where Giorgio Agamben's philosophy finds its roots. For Agamben, who had been his disciple, Foucault had failed to discuss two key 20th century phenomena related to biopower: the concentration camp and the

structures of totalitarian regimes (131). In his *Homo sacer: il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (1995), the Italian philosopher reiterates Walter Benjamin's conviction that, in our times, the state of exception is not an *exception* any more (63). The concentration camp, Agamben claims, is precisely the "space" that opens when the state of exception starts to become the norm (188). If Hannah Arendt sees concentration camps as the "laboratories" of modern totalitarianism, he reverses the argument: it is the transformation of politics into biopolitics, into the space of *nuda vita*—epitomized by the camp—that has made possible the absolute control of totalitarian regimes (132). More crucially, the biopolitics that enabled the concentration camps to exist during World War II continues to underlie the present. The camp does not constitute an aberrant anomaly of the past but epitomizes the very political structures of modernity; it constitutes "il paradigma nascosto dello spazio político della modernitá" (135), the new biopolitical *nomos* of the entire planet (185, 198). In other words, we have all become virtual *homines sacri* (123, 127), human beings who can be eliminated with total impunity even if not ritually immolated.

It is my contention that Agamben's *campo* paradigm can prove highly instrumental in understanding both past events and present realities, especially because it goes beyond its literal rendering in the Nazi death camps of World War II. The concentration camp, according to Agamben, does not correspond exclusively to such extermination camps, but to any space where human beings are deprived of their rights as citizens and bare life becomes the norm, or, as he puts it, to any space where bare life and norm become indistinguishable from each other:

> se l'essenza del campo consiste nella materializzazione dello stato di eccezione e nella conseguente creazione di uno spazio in cui la nuda vita e la norma entrano in unha soglia de indistinzione, dovremo ammettere, allora, che ci troviamo virtualmente in presenza di un campo ogni volta che viene creata una tale struttura, indipendentemente dall'entitá dei crimini che vi sono commessi e qualunque ne siano la denominazione e la specifica topografia. (195)[2]

[2] English translation: "if the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created,

Among the examples of *campos* that the Italian philosopher cites in his 1995 volume are the football stadium in Bari where illegal Albanian immigrants where temporarily interned before repatriation in 1991, or the so-called *zones d'attentes* or waiting areas in French airports designed for those foreigners applying for refugee status (195). To these 20th century examples one can add more recent ones, like the Guantanamo prison erected after the 9/11 attacks or the temporary camps housing millions of refugees in the current Syrian refugee crisis. In all of these places, from the obviously restrictive to the seemingly "innocuous" ones, we witness a paradoxical reversal: "A un ordinamento senza localizzazione (lo stato di eccezione, in cui la legge è sospesa) corrisponde ora una localizzazione senza ordinamento (il campo, como spazio permanente di eccezione)" (197).[3]

Agamben complements his discussion of the *campo* paradigm with the figure of the *homo sacer*, meaning not so much a "sacred" type of human being, as it would seem at first sight, but referring to a dispensable outcast. For Agamben, it is neither legal discourse nor the sacrificial-religious metaphor of the Holocaust that best explains the massive killings of Jewish people during WW2, but the biopolitical concept of the *homo sacer* (27). In the old Roman order in which we first encounter such figure, the *homo sacer* constituted a paradox: he could not be sacrificed or ritually immolated, but at the same time he could be killed with entire impunity (91). In the Nazi concentration camps, Agamben claims, the political understanding of human beings as citizens had been annulled and people had been reduced to what he calls *nuda vita* (bare life), which could therefore be suppressed without committing homicide (154). I would venture to say that much the same happened in the American concentration camps: here, too, citizenship rights had been denied by the state authorities and prisoners had been reduced to bare life or *zoe*.

Therefore, the deprivation of political rights, if not of life itself, is common to all concentration camps, figurative or literal, and

independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography" (175).

[3] English translation: the "order without localization (the state of exception, in which law is suspended)" now has the mirror counterpart of "a localization without order (the camp as permanent space of exception)" (175).

the Japanese American "internment" experience is no exception. Deprived of freedom, Japanese Americans, many of them US citizens *de iure*, ceased to be so *de facto*. While, as we shall see, the application of the term *concentration camp* continues to be controversial, Agamben's concept of the *campo* allows for a more flexible approach to the Japanese American camps. This may be the reason why Japanese American incarceration has recently been interpreted as an apt illustration of Agamben's biopolitical theories. Both Fred Lee and Jeanne Sokolowski have used Agamben's philosophy in their respective explorations of the Japanese American experience. In his 2007 article Lee focuses on the handing out of the loyalty questionnaire to imprisoned Nisei and interprets this historical event under the light of Agamben's *homo sacer*. Sokolowski focuses more on literature than on history: for her, it is the apparently coincidental juxtaposition of fleeing refugees in Europe during World War II and the Japanese American "relocation" in Okubo's *Citizen 13660* that conjures up Agamben's theory about concentration camps. In much the same manner, biopolitical philosophy can likewise help us elucidate the complexities of the Japanese American internment as re-imagined in Miyake's *21st Century Manzanar*.

RELOCATION, INTERNMENT, CONCENTRATION CAMPS

"His folks and other Niseis just called it camp" (Miyake 1)

Miyake's novel starts with the hypothetical exodus of Japanese Americans at the beginning of the 21st century. The text follows the three Takeda siblings—Kate, John and David Takeda—in their attempts at reaching the camp, surviving it and, finally, escaping from it. As the title of the novel suggests, most of the action takes place in Manzanar, an old World War II internment camp that, in his imagined America, has been kept in working order. While Kate and her family take the train to Manzanar and arrive there safely, the two Takeda brothers prefer to drive their own cars and voluntarily report to the camp before the official deadline. The trip across LA and into Manzanar proves highly dangerous and only David manages to survive the journey. However, his life in camp will be equally fraught with dangers and humiliation. If the anti-Japanese hatred so pervasive 21st century America had forced David to earn his living by writing eulogies, in camp he will "sink" even lower in the social

hierarchy: he will be reduced to working as the "benjo man" in charge of cleaning the public restrooms.

The first scene of the novel, where David is preparing to leave for camp, contains two flashbacks: the first one travels two days back, to the moment when David is seeing Kate and her children off, as they are taking the train to Manzanar, and the other goes further back in the past, to his childhood memories. In this second flashback, inserted in and prompted by the first analeptic scene, David describes how his parents and grandparents, when reminiscing about their *internment* during World War II, invariably omitted the type of "camp" they had been sent to:

> His folks and other Niseis just called it camp.
> "We met in camp," they'd say. "We were in camp together."
> "Our families lived next to each other in camp," they'd say.
> Kids all thought they were talking about summer camp until they got to college and found out their parents' camp fit Webster's definition of a concentration camp. (Miyake 1-2)

The historical concentration camps, managed by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), had been officially called *relocation centers*, but over time these came to be known as "internment camps." The term *internment*, however, was at best an ambiguous denomination for the massive Japanese American incarceration during World War II. The use of this noun was not only equivocal but, at least in legal terms, inaccurate. Originally referring to a wartime practice legally sanctioned by the Geneva Convention, internment procedures had at least "a semblance of due process" that was absent in the case of the massive relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans (Daniels 190, 195). According to the Geneva Convention, wartime internment was only to be applied to "alien enemies," that is, to non-citizens; however, in the case of the Japanese American internment, two thirds of the internees were American nationals (205). Thus, using the term *internment* for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II conflated two different phenomena and two different collectives: the "properly speaking" internment of individual "alien enemies" (Germans, Italians and Japanese) that did become prisoners under the provisions of the Geneva Convention, on the one hand, and the massive evacuation and imprisonment of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, both citizens and non-citizens, on

the other (Chambers-Letson 136-137; Daniels 205). As a consequence, Daniels advises critics and historians to talk about *incarceration* and *concentration camps* rather than *internment*. In recent years several critics and historians have followed Daniels' cue and have avoided the inaccurate and relatively bland term *internment*. In general, however, most scholars and writers still shy away from using *concentration camp* in a systematic way. In contrast, Miyake uses the phrase openly and unashamedly from the very outset of the novel. In fact, in choosing to begin *21st Century Manzanar* with this questioning of political euphemism, Miyake prepares us for the ferocious critique that will follow.

Our terminological discussion invariably leads us to ponder the parallelisms between Japanese American experience and similar historical events. In fact, this constitutes the main reason for the continued reluctance to use the phrase *concentration camp* even in recent years. As World War II came to an end, the term could no longer be stripped of its genocidal, Holocaust-related connotations. And yet, even though the use of the phrase *concentration camp* to refer to the Japanese American camps remains polemical to this day, there is no denying that both *internment camp* and *concentration camp* belong in the same semantic field. Regardless of the efforts of historical sanitizing implicit in the conscious use of *internment camp* for many decades,[4] both noun phrases share obvious lexical features—same central noun, plus similar denotative features in the root verbs *intern* and *concentrate*—, and both can be read under the aegis of Agamben's theory of the *campo*. What is more important: it is only with the benefit of hindsight that we realize that what went on in the American camps was qualitatively different from what happened in Nazi extermination camps. It is crucial to keep in mind that, just as their counterparts in Europe, the Japanese Americans sent to concentration camps had no clear idea of how long and for what real purposes they had been placed there. In fact, one of the reasons adduced to keep the entire ethnic community in such camps was to turn them into "hostages to make sure Japan would not act in

[4] Miyake alludes to this official "white-washing" or historical sanitizing on several occasions, as when Lillian, the supervisor of Manzanar, complains that the liberal media often resort to "unauthorized terminology" such as "concentration camp" (147). Significantly enough, when the situation in Manzanar has deteriorated so much that Lillian feels is no longer under her control, the politically correct façade starts to crumble, and she catches herself using "unauthorized" terms such as "detention facility" (285).

a hostile manner toward the United States" (Kadohata pos. 206-207). This implied that, should Japan attack any US interests, these hostages could be sacrificed.

Such lack of control over one's life, which is remotely managed by a not always benevolent state, is one of the premises underlying biopower. This lack of control derives into constant anxiety, an uncertainty and fear that permeate the pages of *21st Century Manzanar*. An intimation of danger plagues not only the evidently hazardous trip out of LA, where one of the Takeda brothers dies, but also the apparently "safe" transport that will take Kate and her children to camp, which is wrapped in an ominous atmosphere. On departing for Manzanar and being locked inside their train wagons, Kate experiences a frightening epiphany: she suddenly realizes "that they were completely at the mercy of uncaring, uncontrollable sources" (Miyake 4). Looking at the soldiers overseeing the evacuation, her brother David cannot help but think of German Nazis, the American soldiers' "helmets bearing an uncomfortable resemblance to Nazi helmets" (2).[5]

The helplessness and lack of control associated with the biopolitical regime are also pervasive in the reopened Manzanar camp. Even though Kate had managed to "wring out" a description of the internment experience from her Nisei parents, and knew of "the mess halls and toilets with no dividers and community showers, the tar-paper barracks, the wind and dust" (Miyake 26-27), still she realizes that

> nothing had prepared her for the *absolutely helpless* feeling of standing in line with hundreds of other Japanese descendants in a camp full of thousands more. Surrounded by barbed wire in the middle of the desert, armed guards in towers aiming their rifles down at her and her children. Waiting for hours in a hot, cramped, airless mess hall to be processed, registered and assigned their

[5] A more oblique reference to Nazi anti-Semitism can be found in the pervasive yellow ribbons, vaguely reminiscent of the yellow badges that the Jewish people were forced to wear in Nazi Germany. In an ironic reversal, however, in Miyake's America it is the non-Asians, most notably the TV anchorpersons, who flash the patriotic yellow ribbon, instead of the victims, as was the case with the yellow David stars of World War II. The connections between World War II and World War III are conjured up on a few other occasions, for instance when the narrator compares the two wars (Miyake 13), or when the author chooses to have two of the main characters in the novel, Sidney and Milton Hayashida, named after their Jewish benefactors (152).

> living quarters. Waiting for someone to tell you where you will live, when you can eat, when you will sleep. (27; emphasis added)

That sense of absolute lack of control over one's life (151), of constant "[w]ondering if they would die there" (27), is compounded by a more acute suspense as people start disappearing in Manzanar (115). Arguably, the writer resorts to such thriller-like narrative techniques as much to keep the reader's attention as to conjure up the feeling of uncertainty that the actual evacuees had felt in the 1940s. Both suspense and empathy with the anguished prisoners increase after chapter 26, which ends with a last enigmatic word, "Plan." When Lillian, the two-dimensional director of Manzanar, discovers that a Japanese American teenager has got pregnant in camp, she feels disappointed in her "beloved guests," from whom all she expected "was to act more Japanese" (160). Frustrated and desperate, Lillian starts contemplating "a way to nip this problem in the bud, so to speak" (161). The scene concludes with a brief statement that the author highlights by placing it at the end of the chapter and in a single, separate paragraph: "If worse came to worse, there was always the Plan" (161). The last word sounds all the alarms. Both the use of an initial capital letter and the choice of the generic noun are highly reminiscent of the infamous Final Solution, the Nazi plan of genocidal extermination. These and other examples confirm that uncertainty plagued the Japanese American evacuees as much as it plagued the inmates of the homonymous camps in Europe at about the same historical time.

MANZANAR: THE RACIAL STATE OF EXCEPTION

> "*Manzanar was the way people were treated in the U.S. on planet Earth when the ones in power betrayed the constitution, convicting the loyal of guilt-by-race and leaving them with hopelessness and despair."* (Miyake 381)

Biopolitical readings have been particularly fruitful when applied to classic dystopias like Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. *21st Century Manzanar* is one more example that speculative fiction can effectively foreground the workings of biopower. Miyake's fictional America, as befits the genre, results from extrapolating present realities and revisiting past situations. In his novel Miyake plays not only with the old Yellow Peril scare that emerged at the

turn of the previous century, but with more recent fears, specifically the threat that Asian countries—Japan in the 1980s and later the East Asian "tigers" and China—seemed to pose to American economy.[6] Once more, this time in the new millennium, Japan comes to be widely perceived as both an economic and a cultural threat to America. In *21st Century Manzanar* anti-Japanese fever takes different forms. There are conspicuous examples in popular culture, like the aforementioned yellow ribbons or the offensive songs so fashionable among teenagers, regardless of their ethnicity. Thus, the patriotic "I Capped a Jap" (Miyake 2) supersedes and replaces the older generation's "I Shot the Sheriff" or, as Miyake indirectly implies, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Similarly, "Buy American, Screw Japan" (13) becomes one of the most popular mottos. As mentioned above, such specific hatred of Japanese corporations is not new: resentment against Japanese companies, most notably car-manufacturing ones, was so widespread in 1980s America that it led to Vincent Chin's murder at the hands of two laid-off autoworkers in Detroit in 1982.[7]

Miyake's most conspicuous nod at contemporary events appears in the last chapters. Towards the end of the book, Lillian seems so satisfied about the "happy" camp resulting from her political purge that she now considers Manzanar a "well-oiled machine" ready to "be converted from Japanese to Afghani or Arabic or whatever Homeland Security dictated" (Miyake 368). According to Beck, Miyake's novel was mostly written before the 2001 terrorist attacks, so it can be construed as "a prescient meditation on post-9/11 security anxieties" (287). To be precise, *21st Century Manzanar* was published in 2002, that is, shortly after the 9/11 attacks; therefore, it stands to reason that explicit last-minute warnings were included to contribute to the incipient security vs. freedom debate. In fact, Arab Americans are mentioned as either the previous or the next collective to be targeted by the American nation-state. Interestingly, in such commentaries of post-9/11 prejudice, the emphasis is now accorded to class barriers rather than ethnic or religious ones (50).

[6] See Miyake 279. For a brief discussion of "Yellow Peril" literature, see Sohn (6-8).
[7] See Choy; Chan. Although Chin was a Chinese American, he functioned as the generic Asian American scapegoat for these workers' frustration and anger. Chin's case is explicitly alluded to in the novel (Miyake 307).

But Miyake's novel proves even more effective when trying to understand the Japanese American incarceration during World War II. In incorporating this crucial event as the obvious historical precedent, Miyake's novel manages not to idealize or obfuscate the past but, instead, deepens into its less-obvious truths like the reduction of Japanese Americans to bare life to be managed in an Agambean *campo*. To start with, *21st Century Manzanar* emphasizes the arbitrary nature of concentration camps both in the past and in the imagined present. As had happened in the 1940s, in Miyake's America no-one can escape the order of evacuation. Racist profiling effectively places every single person of Japanese ancestry in a state of exception: as *homo sacer*, (s)he is beyond legal rights (Agamben 91).

In contrast with internment narratives that emphasize and denounce deracination from both the US and Japan, Miyake's novel puts the stress on the "re-Japanification" that the Manzanar camp inmates are forced to undergo. In her analysis of Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine,* Abigail Manzella claims that this novel clearly illustrates the fact that the Japanese American forced relocation not only involved "the movement of people but also the attempted alteration of them through the emptying of their self-worth, their individuality, and their connection not only to Japanese culture but to the United States as well" (144).[8] In *21st Century Manzanar,* this biopolitical strategy of "alteration" differs, since it attempts to reinforce, not suppress, the "Japanese connection," thus extirpating whatever is deemed "alien" to "real" America.[9] In the re-opened Manzanar, the *dispositifs* for the management of life are geared at de-Americanizing inmates and turning them into compliant, "perfect" Japanese, the *homo sacer* ready to lay down their lives for the common (American) good. The parallelisms between 20th and 21st century versions of the Manzanar camp are self-evident. In the atmosphere of popular paranoia that followed that attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans of Japanese ancestry became Agamben's *homo*

[8] If, during the last decades of the 20th century, claiming America had been the endeavor of Asian American activists, in the imagined 21st century, Japanese Americans have to prove, once more, that they are American in their own right. See Miyake 46, 117, 287.

[9] As Beck cogently argues (287), the new global dispensation described by Miyake necessarily "leads to a defensive enforcement of national identity whereby the "homeland" is defined through the containment and expulsion of "foreign" surplus": Japanese Americans.

sacer, the individuals to be sacrificed for the sake of the nation, regardless of their loyalty and formal status. The WRA could do what they wished with these dispensable bodies, who were forcibly uprooted, tagged as objects (Houston 17, Miyake 92), and sent to concentration camps.

In internment literature the dehumanization associated with the campo paradigm often takes the shape of animalization or commodification. Both processes can be found in Miyake's novel. One such example occurs at the moment David is forcibly taken to the newly re-opened Manzanar camp; having been beaten into unconsciousness, he gradually comes round and tries to recognize the place where the soldiers have brought him:

> … mountains rising to the west of a small patch of bungalows on the outskirts of a city of barbed wire fences and guard towers that stretched across the desert.
>
> David's duffle bags lay beside him, zipped open, the contents rifled, anything of value gone.
>
> He looked down for the silver feather mounted on a lapis globe hanging from a leather cord around his neck.
>
> In its place was a wire twisted to a thick, beige *tag*. (Miyake 92; emphasis added)

The hand-made pendant and its organic elements, leather and feather, are replaced with wire and a tag, signifying industrial and commercial commodification. David is now a product, an item. The gift that he had received from Rodney, his Native American friend, years before, a gift both valuable in itself and because of the humanizing value of friendship, is symbolically replaced with an impersonal, commodifying tag, not very different from the numbers assigned to the inmates of Nazi concentration camps. Once more, it becomes evident that the discourse that sustained the very existence of concentration camps, as theorized by Agamben, was common to both Japanese American and Nazi camps, even if their racial projects were different (Lee, par. 44). In both types of concentration camp, prisoners are reduced to *nuda vita* or *zoe*. As opposed to the Greek term *bios*, which "indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group," *zoe* referred to "the simple act of living," the mere existence that human beings shared with animals. As bare life, these prisoners are akin with non-human animals.[10]

[10] Narratives about the incarceration of Japanese Americans are also suffused with

Animalization, of course, was an integral part of racialist discourse, and the Japanese American incarceration during World War II finds its roots in such an ideology. Its racist nature is all the more obvious if one compares the situation of the Japanese Americans, convicted of "guilt-by-race" (Miyake 381), with that of other "enemy aliens," German and Italian Americans, who were not racialized and, consequently, did not suffer collective incarceration.[11] According to Lee, the Japanese American concentration camps constitute valid evidence of the "racial state of exception" (par. 21) imposed in the US during World War II. Lee argues that the "internment" experience should be better understood not within the "necessity-rights circle" (par. 3) which often frames it, but as a "racial state of exception from which a state project of racial assimilation emerged" (par. 2). Miyake's novel can indeed be read as the illustration of a racial state of exception, within the larger biopolitical framework. It must be noted, however, that biopolitical analysis exceeds the discourse of race. Or rather, it explains "racism without race" (Montag). It does not resort to pseudoscientific, racialist ideologies, but can equally establish hierarchies, segregate people and "manage" their lives through "ambiguous caesurae internal to a single 'species'" (Campbell and Sitze 19).

MANZANAR: CHARTING A BIOPOLITICAL PLAN

"*If worse came to worse, there was always the Plan.*" (Miyake 161)

Biopower, as we saw in our brief overview of biopolitical theory, is less interested in inflicting death than in "inflicting life." This new form of power, in Beck's words, goes "beyond the merely negative power of disciplinary separation and exclusion to achieve the convergence of life and politics through a thoroughgoing regulation of all aspects of life" (37). Lillian's "sworn duty" (102) as the camp supervisor is precisely to oversee, control and ensure the prisoners' "well-being," their life more than their death. Until the rice revolt takes place, she succeeds in selling the image that the

animal imagery. The very fact that they had first been moved to former horse stables and later sent to pen-like barracks reinforced the animality to which they had been reduced, the bare life they had come to signify (see Miyake 1-2)

[11] Daniels and Wald, among other scholars, have pointed out the incommensurability of the treatment of people of Japanese ancestry during World War II.

Manzanar "residents" have "voluntarily, of their own accord" (147), submitted themselves to the "benevolent" regulatory practices of biopower. The soft-power model that she builds for herself at first is not so much that of the despotic sovereign but that of the concerned parent: "'This is for your own good,' she reluctantly admitted, like a parent who has, against her will, been forced to administer punishment to a naughty child. David found himself absently nodding in agreement" (118).

It is important to remember that the biopolitical management of life focused as much on the *bio-politics of the population* as on the *anatomo-politics of the human body*. I contend that both sets of regulatory strategies are found in Miyake's novel. The larger bio-political control of the population is most visible in the massive segregation, evacuation and internment measures discussed so far. On the other hand, the anatomo-politics at work in the novel is rather subtle at the beginning. It is obliquely conveyed in the descriptions of the sub-human conditions in which the inmates are forced to live: the crowded sleeping quarters (Miyake 67, 150), the unhealthy diet (218), and the sanitary conditions sung in the "benjo blues" (chapter 16). Privacy and intimacy are denied to the Japanese American *homo sacer;* health is not denied, but kept at the level that suits the government's interests. David sympathizes with the newcomers who eat the greasy food at the mess hall and later have to rush to the latrines: "He knew very well the burning, cramping, seemingly endless misery of the human body's response when *invaded* by government food" (138; emphasis added). The tensions arising from such relentless biopolitical "invasion" will erupt in the rice revolution or "rice strike" (219-220), which marks the intensification of direct control and the restriction of movement inherent in the state of emergency. The result is hyperbolic: a curfew inside a concentration camp.

Biopolitical control of the inmates' bodies becomes more insidious and gets entangled with larger population policies when the Plan is first considered. As mentioned before, Miyake intelligently drops this enigmatic word at the end of chapter 26, but withholds the details until chapter 29 comes to a close. It is then that the narrator refers to rumors that speculated about a similar plan being devised during World War II:

> Rumor had it that while these Japanese American men were fighting for the United States, Congress was debating whether to sterilize the families that these men had left behind. […]
>
> And now it had been revived and was approved as a workable solution […].
>
> It was the Plan (177).

This policy of forced sterilization is perhaps the best illustration of biopower at work. The management of birth/death by the Manzanar authorities simply mirrors the larger biopolitical mechanisms of the nation-state, which may go as far as to create a lethal virus in order to "make a whole generation scared of sex" (160). Much though Lillian tries to defend that the "Plan is not punitive" but "beneficial to everyone involved" (286), the sterilization plan echoes earlier attempts at ethnic or racial genocide. It is no coincidence that the "ethnic cleansing" occurring during the Balkan war is explicitly mentioned as the standard with which the new American bio-policies are compared: "Unlike the slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there would be a medically approved and executed plan to produce a generation of clean, healthy Japanese boys and girls who wouldn't breed like *rats*…" (176; emphasis added). This scene—clearly focalized by Lillian, the too-villainous villain—makes evident that, while historical genocidal ideologies, most notably Nazism, focused on thanatopolitics and killing techniques, the biopower applied in Manzanar focuses on reproductive technology, which is developed and put into practice. And yet, the final objective is the same: the reduction or extermination of a given group of people.

The sterilization plan, like other biopolitical measures such as Christine's "managed" agony or the teenager's forced abortion, takes place at the camp's medical center. The bleak building, "white and sterile with its ever-present smell of alcohol," included "a terminal ward" crammed with patients waiting to die: the government had "shipped any dying Buddhaheads to Manzanar," for "real Americans had priority over death beds as well as real jobs" (130). David's dying friend, Christine, synecdochically represents all those living skeletons crowding the terminal ward, whose life-death is "administered" by the camp authorities (224, 229). Those "barely breathing skeletons" (130) are kept alive and "managed" by a government whose power lies precisely in their capacity for "inflicting life" as much as for terminating lives and pregnancies. Nothing escapes biopolitical control, not in this concentration camp, which is

but a microcosm of the larger state of exception that Agamben postulates as the paradigm of modernity.

It goes without saying that biopower is made possible and reinforced by more or less subtle mechanisms of surveillance. Most of the techniques listed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish,* like "timetables, collective training, […] hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification" ("Panopticism" 209), are present in *21st Century Manzanar*: an obvious internal hierarchy of surveillance, in this case Lillian-guards-trustees-semitrustees, with common prisoners at the bottom of the pyramid; externally-imposed schedules and tasks; or "collective training" intended to internalize racism among the inmates, mostly through anti-Japanese films. However, it is Foucault's concept of panopticism that seems more germane to a prison-like camp such as Manzanar. As is well known, the panopticon, in its original, literal sense, corresponds to Jeremy Bentham's architectural plan designed for penitentiary buildings. Such a system stressed the invisibility of the guard over the inmates, an invisibility that fosters self-regulation among the (real or figurative) prisoners. Foucault found in the panopticon the perfect metaphor to explain how "the codified power to punish" became "a disciplinary power to observe" ("Panopticism" 213). Although panopticism can be applied *sensu lato*, not all surveillance technologies, strictly speaking, conform to the pattern of the panopticon. In Miyake's novel, panopticism is not so much at work in the conspicuous watch towers, with their threatening armed guards, or in the flagpoles that David uses as privileged watching sites (103), as in the apparently less intrusive monitoring system, the CCTV cameras that may or may not be watching you (149). Panoptic surveillance also works through Lillian's aforementioned network of spies, the Japanese American trustees, who inform her from the inside. This invisible network is particularly insidious because the prisoners are never sure who among their fellow inmates they can trust. Lillian combines such panoptic strategies with her rhetorical powers in order to manipulate the prisoners and produce the desired self-regulation: "She would shame the rest of them into *policing themselves*" (160; emphasis added). It is only when tragedy occurs that some inmates finally run away from Manzanar and, in leaving the concentration camp, they also try to leave behind the *campo* paradigm.

The novel's resolution intimates that the only escape from

biopolitical government control is to be found in small non-regulated communities, preferably secluded, like the Dineh reservation, which are tolerant of difference (Miyake 347). If Manzanar represents biopower, when the prisoners flee and find a (temporary) refuge in the reservation, they escape biopolitical surveillance, since the Dineh land is now a "sovereign" entity, totally independent from the American government.[12]

To conclude this analysis, I choose to linger on an apparently trivial scene that takes place in the reservation towards the end of the novel. After welcoming the "refugees" from Manzanar, Rodney, one of the Native Americans,

> held out to each of them matching silver feathers emerging from blue lapis beads dangling from black leather cords.
>
> On this journey, David had lost the silver feather he'd gotten from Rodney years ago.
>
> He'd lost everything on the way to this place. (379)

David may be aware that, with "re-internment," he has lost everything, especially his dignity as a human being. Such pessimism, however, does not last. The narrative circularity hints at a different reading: the humanity that David had lost when his hand-made pendant had been stolen and replaced with the commodifying tag (92) is symbolically regained here, thanks to Rodney's simple gesture of (renewed) friendship. Just as ReVac invoked the circularity of history repeating, the pendant scene turned a vicious circle into a virtuous one: the inhumanity of neo-internment is redeemed by the humanity of solidarity.

CODA: "IT COULDN'T HAPPEN AGAIN"

> *"Only the stupid ones, like David, who still believed it couldn't happen in this country again, remained, muttering "Wait, this is America" as they were rounded up.*
> *They had no one to blame but themselves.*
> *Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice…"* (Miyake 4)

[12] It may be argued that this ending, like the healing wheel ceremony that precedes it, idealizes Native American culture and places it beyond any temptation of biopolitical control. It would be more accurate to say that the Dineh reservation provides the runaway characters with an alternative system based on a genuine ethics of care.

Unfortunately, the wheel does not stop turning. Once more, we seem to be living in uncertain times. As I am writing these lines, still shaken by the lingering echoes of post-terrorist paranoia in France and Belgium, and newly deafened by the strident xenophobic and racist discourse of certain presidential candidates in the US, I realize that Miyake's warnings may be more necessary than ever.[13] As I have tried to prove in the preceding analysis, in projecting the Japanese American incarceration onto an imagined future, *21st Century Manzanar* functions both as a powerful lens through which to re-interpret the concentration camps of the past and as an astute warning against replicating such mistakes in the future: "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice…" (4). We would do well in heeding such advice; and we should start by learning to read the signs, an urgent task for which literary criticism is and—hopefully—will continue to be an invaluable tool.

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[13] Sadly enough, just as I am proofreading this article prior to publication, these ominous remarks need to be corrected or at least qualified, for the candidate mentioned in the original text has just become the new president of the United States of America.

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