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SECURITY UNLOCKED AND FICTIONS OF TERROR

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Since 9/11 and the rising interest in state security, academia has been one of the many arenas encouraged to invest in the research and dissemination of security policies and technologies, as can be seen by the growing number of programs and research funding dedicated to 'security studies' in both US and European universities. This issue of the Review of International American Studies aims to provide a critical response to this wider phenomenon, by examining and challenging the current political and cultural climate of fear, exacerbated by the 'war on terror.' The contributions to this volume will consider the rhetoric, history, and social impact of current notions of 'Homeland Security.'

Since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in the US, notions of national and international security re-entered, with reinvigorated might, political discourse and praxis worldwide, through policies which extend to issues such as border protection, health and safety, immigration, citizenship and environment. This volume will explore 'security' not only as policy but as culture, as a central theme of official discourse and as a determining factor in the structure of our everyday life. Current constructions of national security can be said to be part of a mythology that goes back to the early captivity narratives, extremely popular in the US since the 17th century until the close of the 'frontier', but later rewritten and revisited in different forms and genres.¹ Narrative and fiction have always been fundamental to the construction of national self-images, as justifying means for political and military expansion. In this sense it may be opportune to draw on contemporary fiction as a way of seeing through the fictionalization of our national portraits. Jonathan Raban's novel *Surveillance* (2006), for instance, illustrates well the aggressive merge between political strategy and social anxiety which underlies our current obsession with security. Tad, one

¹For an examination of how the motif of 'captivity narrative' is explored not only in contemporary US fiction but also in recent European fiction see Susana Araújo (2007), 'Images of Terror, Narratives of Captivity: the Visual Spectacle of 9/11 and its Transatlantic Projections,' *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Relations*, 11 (2):27–47. In this analysis, Araújo pays particular attention to the way the image of the endangered citadel has recently migrated from New York fiction to European novels. The motif of captivity narratives in political rhetoric and the media is also explored in relation to gender issues in Susan Faludi (2007) *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (New York: Metropolitan Books). The paperback version of this book has had its subtitle changed to "Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America."



of the main characters in the novel, is an actor who makes a living working on performances for the emergency services or, as the narrator puts it, participating in 'dress rehearsals for terror' (Raban, 2006:5). These performances, called 'TOPOFFs', dramatize possible states of emergency where the FEMA, the National Guard, the fire fighters, police, ambulance men, and civic officials plot 'their lines and moves' (5). 'In TOPOFF 26, nearly every rescue worker had been contaminated, fatalities had vastly exceeded predictions, chains of command had been broken down, hospitals were overwhelmed' (5). But TOPOFF 27 was even more 'realistic':

A dirty bomb (two thousand pounds of ammonium sulphate, nitrate, and fuel oil, mixed with fifty pounds of caesium-137 in powdered form) had gone off in a container supposedly holding "cotton apparel" from Indonesia, recently unloaded from a ship docked at Harbor Island. A fireworks expert (the same guy who directed the 4 July display on Elliot Bay) created the terrific gunpowder explosion, and the rockets laden with talk to simulate the caesium. The tyre fire had been set with gasoline, the broken glass supplied by volunteers standing on roofs of neighbouring buildings. At least the pictures beamed to the other Washington would look great. (5)

Although this may sound like the stuff of fiction, Raban is drawing on an actual terrorism response exercise promoted by the Department of Homeland Security called TOPOFF2 (Top Officials 2) conducted, partly, in Seattle. The 'real' Top Officials 2 was one of a series of exercises 'involving top officials at every level of government, as well as representatives from the international community and private sector' (DHS, 2008). As the first emergency simulation since 9/11, Top Officials 2 was, at the time, the largest and most comprehensive terrorism exercise conducted in the United States:

TOPOFF 2 was conducted from May 12 to May 16, 2003, and involved federal, state, local, and Canadian participants in a full-scale exercise that assessed how responders, leaders, and other authorities would react to the simulated release of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in two U. S. cities, Seattle, WA and Chicago, IL. The exercise scenario depicted a fictitious, foreign terrorist organization that detonated a simulated radiological dispersal device (RDD or dirty bomb) in Seattle and released the pneumonic plague in several Chicago metropolitan area locations. There was also significant pre-exercise intelligence play, a cyber-attack, and credible terrorism threats against other locations. (DHS, 2003)

Since then there has been a number of other such exercises—TOPOFF 3 and TOPOFF 4 are already described in detail by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, 2008). Raban merely takes this project some years into the future. In his novel, these exercises continue to be practised with intense regularity so that the escalation of terror is scrupulously explored and exploited. In these performances, the practice of besieging American cities by the military becomes common: tanks, artillery, and armored checkpoints make their statement clear. In Raban's portrait of the near future, the Department of Homeland security's main role is, clearly but paradoxically, to maintain the public in a constant state of insecurity.

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security by the Bush administration in November 2002 with the goal to prevent and respond to domestic emergencies, particularly terrorism, ignited a growing debate—later exacerbated by the disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina—about the premises and practices of this institution from scholars in different fields. In American Studies, this discussion has been, necessarily, intersected with debates about the future of the field itself. In 2003, in her presi-

dential address to the American Studies Association in 2003, Amy Kaplan encouraged American Studies scholars to re-engage with the question of Empire made pressing by the invasion of Iraq. Kaplan highlighted that this re-engagement should be a crucial part of the internationalization of American Studies. Yet addressing directly the ongoing debate about the re-conceptualization of the field, she inquired about the directions of the so-called 'new' or 'postnational' American Studies.² By reminding us that 'Empire was itself a form of transnationalism' (Kaplan, 2004: 10), she drew on the work of W.E.B. Dubois to encourage the need for scholars to 'decenter the United States' whilst continuing to 'analyze its centralized imperial power' (12).

This special issue will address the issue of security as both a national matter and international problem. 'Whose security?' is, obviously, a question more meaningfully asked by the citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention the prisoners held in the legal black hole which grounds Guantánamo Bay during the Bush administration. However, apart from observing the ways security strategies have been implemented by US foreign policies (both as military campaigns and soft power tactics), it is also important to notice how security policies have, increasingly, become all-embracing strategies for countries other than the US. As is well known, security has become a key word for politicians all over the world, as well as an incentive to increase international cooperation and partnerships, shaping not only the geopolitical landscape but also the cultural and social fabric of contemporary societies.³ In order to address the issue of national/international security and its social impact, it is then vital to bring to this forum, not only the work of scholars from outside the US, whose work reflects a different experience of security, but also to highlight connections with other fields, by inviting scholars from outside 'American Studies' departments. This journal issue will be divided into two sections: the first section, Security Unlocked, will examine the historical, social and rhetorical workings of the 'security', hoping to open up the debate on this topic; the second section, Fictions of Terror, will look closely at the way novelists and directors challenge or absorb the new climate of fear.

SECURITY UNLOCKED

Entitled 'In the Name of Security', Amy Kaplan's contribution to this special issue pursues the project mentioned in her presidential address to ASA. If in her previous work Kaplan had scrutinized the concept of 'Homeland', in this article, she presents a historical and cultural etymology of the term 'Security'. She shows how, within the rhetoric of the Bush administration, this term breaks down boundaries between the domestic and the for-

² For a response to Kaplan's Presidential Address, questioning the role and positioning of the IASA *vis a vis* the internationalization of American Studies see Paul Giles (2004), 'Response to Amy Kaplan's Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association', *American Quarterly*, 56 (1) 19–24.

³ This has had a direct impact in the funding of academic research. In Europe, for instance, security has become a priority in research and teaching in the social sciences particularly through collaborative projects. One of the dominant themes of the new Cooperation Project, the largest research call of the Seven Research Framework Program (FP7) in Europe, is dedicated to security. As part of the Cooperation project only a total of 121.44 million is to be committed from the 2009 Community budget to the 'Security Work' Programme 2009. See Cordis, http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/home_en.html.



eign as it enables the merging of the military, border patrol, and police. Kaplan goes on to show how, since the Immigration and Naturalization Service was folded into the Department of Homeland Security, the borders of the US were further securitized and the Congress encouraged the construction of the security fence between Mexico and the US implying, among other things, that all aspiring immigrants are potential terrorists. Kaplan also highlights how the approach to 'freedom through security' underpinned by the Patriot Act and the secrecy and illegal surveillance of the Bush administration sees the upholding of free speech guaranteed by the constitution as a threat to security itself. Poignantly, her article concludes by showing how Bush's doctrine of preemptive war is as much about geopolitical expansion as about temporal projection: preemptive warfare is an expansion into a 'secure' (i.e. conservative) future, where social change is seen as a threat.

In 'Mobilizing Fear: US Politics Before and After 9/11' Scott Lucas shows how the concept of 'politics of fear' can be effectively applied to the reconsideration of US foreign policy in both historical and contemporary cases. By drawing comparisons between Truman's administration and later governments (not overlooking, for example, the contribution of the Clinton administration to the ongoing identification of countries such as Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Libya as 'rogue states') this article demonstrates how the mobilization of fear was linked to the quest for 'preponderance of power' as a main strategy of American foreign policy. Lucas goes on to show how a regime change in Iraq was on the agenda since the first meeting of George W. Bush's National Security Council in January 2001, and argues that September 11 was, thus, the opportunity for the Bush administration to reframe the battle for security in the service of its long-term foreign policy goals.

Frank Furedi presents us with a different take on this subject in his article "'The Long War': Who is Winning the Battle for Ideas?' He implies that the relentless expansion of security is not merely a foreign policy strategy and suggests, instead, that the tendency to expand the agenda of security is underpinned by the problems that Western societies have in endowing social experience with meaning. The focus of his discussion is the relationship between the inflated sense of insecurity and the ambiguities that surround the search for meaning. Referring to the so-called phenomenon of 'sudden radicalization,' Furedi argues that the media depicts radicalization as a symptom of vulnerability (i.e. as something that afflicts the young and vulnerable or those suffering from psychological problems) when it often expresses confidence and a firm set of beliefs. In opposition to this, the lack of confidence of political and cultural elites in the West to conduct a successful campaign in the battlefield of ideas reveals, according to Furedi, the absence of firm values and directions supporting 'the way of life', which the 'war of terror' is meant to defend.

Furedi's work also alerts us to the connection between current discussions on security raised by the 'war on terror' and previous debates about risk society—a discussion which has emerged over the past two decades in the social and political sciences. The work of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens has been highly influential, placing the concept of risk society firmly on the political agendas. According to Beck, modern society has changed fundamentally from a society characterized primarily by inequalities of wealth and income to a society where threats cut across traditional inequali-

ties. Beck argues that preoccupations with risk in industry, chemicals, pollution, nuclear accidents, global warming and terrorism correspond to a new societal phase, highlighting that in Late Modernity risks have become global, rather than nationally specific (Beck, 1992). Giddens equally approaches risks as a result of the modernization process arguing that they arise from the nature of modern social organization and that 'manufactured risks' are produced particularly by innovative developments in science and technology. Giddens, who coined the term 'risk-society', highlights that although this term would suggest the world has become more hazardous, that is not necessarily true. Instead, it is 'a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk' (Giddens, 1999: 3). This point is taken up and reformulated by Furedi who argues that safety and security have led to an increasingly moralizing approach to risk and change—a generalized posture which ultimately leads to social and economic paralysis (Furedi, 1997). Despite their differences, these approaches to the meanings, origins and consequences of risk in society are, nevertheless, worth taking into account when thinking about current questions of national/international security and the intrusion of security measures in everyday life. Indeed, seeing terrorism as a new chapter in world-risk society, Beck presents his vision of a 'realistic utopia': 'a cosmopolitan Europe, which draws its strength precisely not only from a fight against terrorism which simultaneously asserts liberal values, but also from the affirmation and domestication of European national diversity' (Beck, 2005). As scholars of International American Studies we may want to consider that view too, not only because of the ways in which it both connects to and detaches itself from US security strategies but, more significantly, because of the questions it raises about the creation and expansion of (perhaps competing, perhaps complicit) transnational surveillance states.

Surveillance, as the 'focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction' has undergone serious transformations in the twentieth century (Lyon, 2008: 14). Moving beyond the nation state model, it has gained new political and economical roles as it engages directly with consumer capitalism, supported by new digital technologies.⁴ If Foucault had conceived the Panopticon as the archetypal model of modern discipline, restricted to confined spaces (schools, workplaces, prisons), Deleuze showed how surveillance has, now, spread to all areas of life. In 'Postscript on the Societies of Control,' Deleuze highlights the shift in social regulation from 'discipline' to 'control,' noticing that current digital technology has allowed for new forms of reductive coding of individuals (into what he calls 'dividuals'⁵) promoting free-floating monitoring and demanding constant compliance. Through the swiping of cards or screen thumb-printing in business, services and as a way to access both public and private spaces, new forms of social sorting processes are, thus, created based to a great degree on processes of

⁴David Lyon has offered useful overviews of the field of Surveillance Studies (see Lyon, 2001; Lyon, 2007) and has recently turned his attention to the role of suspicion and challenges of human rights which characterize the post 9/11 context (Lyon, 2003).

⁵By using the word 'dividual' Deleuze highlights how the physically embodied human subject is endlessly divisible and reducible to data representations via the modern technologies of control, like computer-based systems (see Deleuze, 1992).



consumption (see Hart and Negri, 2000; also Bauman, 1998). 'Surveillance culture' or 'surveillance society' are, then, inescapable notions when considering the political and social influence and repercussions of security policies today. These issues are scrutinized in David Murakami Wood's 'Can a Scanner See the Soul? Phillip K. Dick against the Surveillance Society'. By drawing on the science fiction of Philip K. Dick, Murakami Wood takes us to a previous period of surveillance surge, during the 1960s and early 1970s. His article argues that Dick's works provide a discerning insight into the emerging Los Angeles model of neoliberal urban control which has become a key element of contemporary urban security worldwide. Dick's perceptive and visionary approach to the politics and practice of surveillance provides a powerful critique of the shaping of our social landscape in the beginning of the 21st century.

FICTIONS OF TERROR

The role of the media in the promotion of increasing security measures and social practices gains center stage in the second part of this special issue. Media scholars, such as David Altheide, concerned with the blurring lines between news and entertainment, detected in the post-9/11 climate an increased confusion between mass media, popular culture and governmental rhetoric, which would have profound repercussions on both our social expectations and civil liberties (Altheide, 2006). In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Žižek saw in the 9/11 attacks a screen image intruding in our 'reality': 'The September 11 attacks were the stuff of popular fantasies before they actually took place' (Žižek, 2002:17). Indeed, as has been noted, although Žižek attributed the title of his book (*Welcome to the Desert of the Real*) to the film *The Matrix*, the line was, itself, a well-known quotation from Jean Baudrillard's book, *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981). For Baudrillard the attacks revealed the internal fragility of the system: '[t]he symbolic collapse of a whole system came about by an unpredictable complicity, as though the towers, by collapsing on their own, by committing suicide, had joined in to round off the event' (Baudrillard, 2002: 8). The Bush administration's response to the attacks, although ultimately abject, was characterized by what many considered to be a 'post-modern' war, with the invasion of Afghanistan (Kelner, 2005) and latter re-affirmed as 'fully postmodern' with the invasion of Iraq (Hanson, 2003). These nomenclatures did not mean to ignore the military and political reality of the war, nor the very real suffering it continues to cause—the growing and unaccounted number of deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the hyper-reality of this 'long war' as a project did convey a generalized anxiety about its meanings and outcomes, as it became increasingly clear to many that the war, and the rhetoric of homeland security which underpinned it, could not be dissociated from the media spectacle which reflects 'the continuation of the absence of politics by other means' (Baudrillard: 2002, 34).

A related semiotic crisis promoted the 9/11 attacks, and aggravated by the heightened security climate that followed, was the way individuals all over the Western world were soon invited to consider everyday objects in a gothic light. As Martin Amis put it in relation to the second plane that hit the tower, 'I have never seen a generically familiar object so transformed by *affect*'. This threatening potential was not only conveyed by the plane but by every sharp object carried by the plane: 'a score or so of

Stanley knives produced two million tons of rubble' (Amis, 2001). Indeed, as government representatives and the media were quick to point out after the attacks—and as we are now duly informed in every airport—there are long lists of items with destructive potential in one's own luggage.

In the climate of fear which followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the 7/7 attacks in London and the 11-M bombing in Madrid, suspicion became a keyword and a justification for renewed forms of marginalization and social othering. In the 'war on terror', this 'long war', citizens have to prove themselves against their potential double status—in a redoubling of the 'You're either with us or against us' rhetoric, everyone must be understood as both potentially suspect and therefore, necessarily, a proactive spy (Packer, 2006). In this flexible warfare and under a system which advocates the need for serious curtailing of civil liberties in the name of 'freedom', official procedures could not be short of contradictions. As the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes in London (on the 22nd of July 2005) tragically revealed, an added problem of the new tracking and security measures was the confirmation that, not only is it difficult for authority agents to determine the behavior of a suspect, but police agents, themselves, receive contradictory and alarming messages about how to behave when facing a suspect. Indeed, the 'shoot to kill' policy that had been quietly implemented in the UK as a way of disabling bombers without risking detonating their explosives, was later considered a danger to public safety. The London Metropolitan Police was found guilty of 'failing to provide for the health, safety and welfare of Jean Charles de Menezes' (Crown Prosecution Office, 2006). To merely condemn the agents involved in this shooting would, however, entail ignoring the wider problems of the system which encourages such contradictory procedures. These issues are played out in many mainstream narrative texts produced after September 11th, as Stuart Price shows in 'Bureaucracy, Coercive Force and Individual Agency: The Gendered Protagonist in The "War on Terror"'. Stuart examines *The Kingdom*, *Spartan*, and *The Bourne Trilogy*, noting the existence of hostility to 'bureaucratic' rule that appears to be shared across the political spectrum. This 'anti-bureaucratic' perspective strives to demonstrate and validate the heroic agency of the professional specialist, an individual trained within, but often abandoned by, the coercive apparatus of the military and/or national security agencies. Agency is, thus, re-cast in fictional form as the attempt by a charismatic individual both to maintain personal integrity and to escape the restrictions of an overbearing and often anonymous structure. By paying particular attention to the performance of gendered behavior in these narratives and its imagined relation to the exercise of authority, Price shows how texts draw upon and re-compose salient features of the contemporary social order as these are circulated within fiction and non-fictional forms.

The omnipotence of the grand narratives provided by the media since the 9/11 attack has been a concern for many contemporary writers. This preoccupation is examined in David Brauner's article, "'The days after" and "the ordinary run of hours": counternarratives and double vision in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*'. Brauner argues that the novel insistently explores how the 'ordinary run of hours' that constitutes daily life after 9/11 both differs radically from, and at the same time closely resembles, the quotidian structure that preceded it, creating a curious double vision that has, in DeLillo's words



'changed the grain of the most routine moment' (DeLillo, 2001: 6). Like Jonathan Raban's *Surveillance*, referred at the beginning of this introduction, DeLillo makes use of a performance artist to heighten the hyper-reality of lived experience, raising questions not only about the virtualization of risk but of trauma itself.

In 'The End of Innocence: Tales of Terror after 9/11' Catherine Morley looks at three novels from disparate national contexts: *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006) by the Australian writer Richard Flanagan, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by the Pakistani British author Mohsin Hamid and *Terrorist* (2006) by John Updike. According to Morley, although these writers have absorbed the rhetoric and mechanisms of an ideologically construed notion of 'homeland', they 'differ from the usual fare in that they are not steeped in the domestic, inward-looking dramas which many writers have emphasized in their treatment of the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York'. Most of these authors share the sense of hyper-reality, also described by Brauner in relation to DeLillo's novel, which is here conveyed by cracks of untamed surrealism in the otherwise intensely realistic texture of these novels.

The thorny relationship between agency, meaning and authorship in the post-9/11 context is perhaps more clearly conveyed in Aliko Varvogli's article, 'Ailing Authors: Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium* and Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost*'. In this article, Varvogli examines the image of the ailing author in these two novels in order to interrogate the role of authorship in the aftermath of 9/11. In their earlier work, both Auster and Roth have asked important questions about the role of fiction, linking the author with the image of the American terrorist. Here, however, they present a passive, weak and troubling image of the author: in Auster the author suffers from weakness and amnesia while in Roth he suffers from impotence and incontinence. The withdrawal, unwillingness to register opinions and reluctance to participate, conveyed by these characters can reveal hesitations regarding the importance of writing in a climate that has become hostile to introspection. According to Varvogli, Auster and Roth are now 'considering the possibility that the author is more marginalized than ever before: a ghost, or a blank'.

One may ask if this return to a tortured form of self-reflection, which in the work of some authors can resurrect the torments of the prison-house of language, can be seen as a reaction or a response to the paradoxical messages conveyed by the current climate of suspicion and insecurity. In fact, a glance through much of the fiction produced in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 reveals that anxieties about security have contributed to a generalized resurrection of captivity narratives—what I have called, elsewhere, 'fictions of white middle-class captivity', to reflect the emergence of many novels which, as response to 9/11, withdraw into insulate private middle class scenarios and meta-fictional strategies (Araújo, 2007). Indeed, the stalemate conveyed by many of the authors analyzed in these pages also reflects a significant duality at the heart of liberal governments, where civil society is seen as a means and an end, a target and a resource of the securitization project. In the current climate of fear, this has been clearly translated into the requirement for people to act as responsible citizens (i.e. constant watchers of their neighbors, colleagues, fellow passengers, etc.), while leading individuals and communities to deal with continuous messages about their own fragility. This double bind is reflected in the constructions of subjectivity here under

analysis. If, in the face of this, fantasies about vigorous and re-masculinized heroes dominate much mainstream fiction today (although these fantasies have not been restricted to the popular), other fictional texts reflect, through the image of authorial crisis, a more generalized social impasse.

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