The Security Double Take: The Political, Simulation and the Border

Willem de Lint¹

Abstract

This paper conceptualizes the 'security double take' as an expression of the adaptation of longstanding parameters of security to reflexive ordering expectations. I proceed by examining legacy concepts of the modern liberal nation state and by interrogating the rupture between current and previous expectations of the sovereign spectacle. Although launched originally from the realist security discourse of political theory, the diminished priority of 'the real' in current political conditions reframes security as the sum of reviewable production values. The border is a site *par excellence* for the staging of security performances.

Introduction

The relationship between the exemplary and exceptional purview of sovereignty, the proliferating practices of surveillance and discipline, and the extension of regulation into the "societies of control" has attracted much discussion and exploration (Walters 2006; Scott 2007, Deleuze 1992). In the 1990s with the end of the Cold War and the entrenchment of neoliberal globalization it was expected that "history" and "ideology" would be eclipsed and take with them the hard binaries of the modern liberal nation-state (enemy-friend, war-peace). However, while post-modern attacks on consensus (even within the boundaries of the modern liberal state) have largely fallen short as a positive prescription of governance, radical theorists have been only too keen to revivify the necessity of the hard friend/enemy antagonism as the necessary assumption for new left politics (e.g. Mouffe 2005). Given this dearth of counter-ideology, the widest stream of liberal regulation continues to push its way through the rough terrain. That exceptionalism and existential violence are needed to maintain the pre-conditions of the nation-state remains a strong claim. Also present is the Malthusian undercurrent that conflict and contest will sort out the social stock; weakness and capitulation will never, it follows, bring up the threshold of frugal and useful participation. In sum, the necessity of hard boundaries between friend and foe is a rejuvenated view and policies today are expanding the internal play of the exception and the necessity of excluding from the norm or rule of

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¹ Sociology and Anthropology, University of Windsor, Canada. <mailto:delint@uwindsor.ca>

law an enlarged array of othered subjects. In this way is the security of politics attached to the politics of security.²

Missing from a good deal of thoughtful commentary is adequate reference to a societal tendency in “late modernity” (Giddens 1990) including mention of how the reflexivity or mediation between concurrent modes of governance (sovereignty, discipline, government) and an active, engaged polity bears on expectations of what the “is” of politics and security may become. Such a polity also consists of an inquiring audience, the management of which requires a variety of techniques including control of information (the separation of “signal” and “noise”) and the finessing of presentation. In this paper, I begin by reviewing the parameters of the relationship between politics and security in order to unpack the features of a reflexive governmental practice I will call the security double take. The first part of this paper concerns the interplay between what is called “the political” and politics and the field of security and security objectifications. The paper proceeds by showing how the political and security is conceptualized towards the firming up of political identity. It will be shown that security and politics mirror one another as discursive fields and that they are both similarly limited and dependent on narrow and paradoxical constructions. I take this necessary step to get to the further point in the debate over governance where security optics are not seen as epiphenomenal to an ontological or epistemological core. My question concerns the idea that the most important test of governmental strength to a significant portion of the engaged polity is not the frugality or utility of governance (a question that mines the true depth of insecurity) but rather the manner or measure of presentation. One way of reconciling this to the question of choices between modes of governance is to illustrate the continuous operation of exemplary and cohort- disciplining security practices, practices that refer to security brashly, bleakly and ironically. I will argue that in the context of reflexive encounters with the polity, the paradoxes of security and politics are bridged with irony or suspended belief: in liberal democracies regular simulations or productions of security are becoming a routine practice. Makeshift security performances also rescue the liberal pluralist heritage by referring obliquely and ironically to the distant value: equality, authority, freedom, the rule of law. The border is a site, *par excellence*, for the staging of such performances. It looks like it can stop further interpretations on security, and then *it looks like* it looks like it does.

1. Security

Security is everywhere being understood as the denominator on which public policy (c.f. Hornqvist 2004) is established and vetted. Perhaps the most pressing result of this is that

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² Security is the *sin qua non* of governmental objectives and the dominant ordering principle of social policy (Weaver 1995; Neocleous 2003). As Haubrich (2006) and Hornqvist (2004) among others have pointed out, the adaptation of security post 9/11 has had ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’ consequences. As security is globalized (Altvater and Mahnkopf 2002), not only is there a blurring of the line between crimes and acts of war, but the line between crimes and minor public order is also being erased. This has the much discussed consequence of displacing or encroaching on legal values, including equality, efficiency, and liberty (cf. Haubrich 2006; for an alternative position, see Waddington 2006). At the hardest edge, the movement from a legal order to ‘societies of control’ follows a progression from a power relation with subjects, souls and their correction to one of prophylactic management (see Walters 2006).

the terms “security,” “national” and “common” (despite the transmogrification of “common good” into the “national security” signifier [c.f. Neocleous 2006]) are diminished as a check on the more common and tangible denominator of quotidian experience or “daily life.” As Buzan et al. (1998: 21) summarize, Machiavelli’s advice to the prince has provided an enduring justification for the rootlessness of executive action: “Traditionally, by saying “security,” a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development.” This observes the distinction between external and internal mandates (police-law enforcement versus security intelligence, for example) and sets up security in binary terms (Wæver 1995) in much of the subsequent thinking on the modern liberal state and even governance more generally. Stemming also from Hobbesian traditions, much classic and current international relations (IR) thinking sees security language as organizing our relation to others via the presupposition of war or a state of war and the separation of interests territoriality through founding violence that in turn creates or preserves a legal framework (Wæver 1995; Der Derian 1993).³

Following this strong discursive connection between a nascent polity and militaristic violence and subject/other prioritization, security policy and practice is mostly understood⁴ as derivative of state auspices and connected with existential violence. Dependent on this *particular* conception of major politics (cf. Dillon 1996; Mouffe 2006), security is already instrumental, technical knowledge. It is most readily considered, in the first instance, in the static rather than transitory; unambiguous and determinate; security rather than securitization.⁵

While prior work has pointed to the importance of the discursive representation of security and its inherent politics (e.g. McDonald 2005; Wæver 1995; Neocleous 2006) the follow-up notion that security practice is therefore jarred loose from the “reality referent” is what concerns me in this paper. Previous work has pointed to both a security paradox and a political paradox, but has stopped short of reconciling these to the enlightened constructivism practiced by the receiver or audience.⁶ This is what I propose here.

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³ Wolfers (1962: 147–9) wanted to clarify the meaning of security to find out if ‘national security’ would be a more precise concept than national interest and a better guidance for national policy-makers. He was not primarily interested in eliminating ambiguities and inconsistencies but in demonstrating the meaning of national security, including the ambiguities it comprises.

⁴ More recent analyses conceptualizes security in terms of fluid and discursive (e.g. Foucault 1990; Holquist 1997; Huysmans 1998; Bigo 2001) rather than in fixed and normative (e.g. Loader and Walker 2001) or epistemological considerations. These analyses afford more spatial terminology including, fruitfully, according to network (de Lint et al., 2007a) and Bourdieuan (Bigo 2001) models. Critical security studies also view security in terms of its emancipatory properties or potentials rather than as negation (c.f. McDonald 2005).

⁵ Pluralist (e.g. Turk 1980, Tilly 1985) and more recent work has conceptualized or hybridized the security function relatively seamlessly between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ or inward and outward facing aspect (Bigo 2002; Scott 2007), as well as private, public or common auspices (Johnston and Shearing 2003; Shearing and Wood 2003) or ‘quality of life’ (eg. human security).

⁶ One point of entry into this literature is according to two somewhat independent concerns. One tracks what security is in its ontological essentials across any cultural (or other) boundaries. The second follows how that ‘universal’ plays out in politics and transmogrifies under dominant security discourse or epistemology. These are somewhat independent because while we need a definition that may perform as a constant, definitions will always absorb knowledge. Another point of entry is one that observes the inter-

Security, mortality and order

According to Jef Huysmans (1998) security practices (and IR understandings of them) are “embedded in a cultural tradition of modernity” [citing Walker 1986], particularly a knowledge about the threat of death that modernity has externalized [following Baudrillard 1976/93: 125–94]. The modern evacuation of death structures the “discursive formation of security” as an object that we can try to know. Various intermediaries including governmental and nongovernmental organizations will seek to represent our affective relation to the fears attendant with our mortality. This follows the gist of Arendtian political philosophy: just as the political encompasses immortality, security encompasses death. Accordingly, death or the possibility of death is viewed as the core essential, a pivot – also an “excess” – on which the political community relies for its existence (see also Dillon 1996: 67). Another way of expressing this is that security closely mimics death as the absence of movement or the arrest of political life (see Campbell 1992: 12); politics, in this reading, is on the faulty resuscitator of the modern state/security project.

Huysmans’ canvass covers both the existential and the structural. The structural is buttressed by how death is related to knowledge.⁷ Knowledge is inspired to keep death at bay, and the fear of death constitutes the condition for the possibility of knowledge.⁸ The discursive construction of IR knowledge, Huysmans (1998: 229) argues, mediates between life and death in its ontological form (concerning the “mediation of chaos and order”) and as everyday security (concerning “the mediation of friends and enemies”).

The powerful view that security is a temporary condition of self-awareness (however blind) produced through a violent act distinguishing life from death and proved in the speech act that can make such positive distinctions draws from political philosophy according to which the positive construction of the political self is bound to the discovery of threats. In decisionist and republican exceptionalism the founding and maintenance of the nation-state is a kind of existential emergency that cannot be made to play by the rule of law (cf. Lazar 2006). This is in accord with Benjamin’s ([1923]1996) argument that violence is a necessary precursor to law and also Derrida’s suggestion in *Of Grammatology* that political identity, like self-identity, is dependent on such linguistic violence. In this way the mediation on death is also a mediation on the liminal or the breaking and remaking of boundaries that continuously re-inscribe (or re-determine) the birth of the state with political and self-identity.

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subjective reflexivity between the security signifier, dominant social, cultural and political subjects, and strong conceptions of marginality, alterity or the dangerous other. If security must be constructed and if the construction must be both proactive and also attentive to dominant politics, then there are indeed limits to what the market will bear in the development of security policy.

⁷ The mediation of death also involves a guarantee of the principle of determinability itself:

While the threat construction literature concentrates on the objectification of death, and especially on how the specific content of the political identity, such as liberal democracy, depends on the formulation of a threat to this content, such as communism, it does not explicitly emphasize that this objectification also moderates the fear of death as the loss of determinacy — the fear of uncertainty and ambiguity — by guaranteeing the possibility of determinacy itself (Huysmans 1998: 240).

The violence in the liberal modernist project (sometimes referred to as “liberal exclusionality” (e.g. Mitchell 2006: 97)) that is this way structured into political and ontological existence and security has, of course, informed the routine production of enemies, *homo sacer*, abject others, etc. Indeed, some have gone so far as to say that given such a foundation “an ever expanding political inclusion within liberalism has been roundly and thoughtfully debunked” (ibid; see also Lazar 2006). However, violent exclusion is not itself excisable with the “outing” of the liberal object: not just liberal politics but political identity is at stake.

2. The Political

For many, politics is limited to a narrow sphere of state administration: state institutions of governance or the deployment of state auspices in such practices as policymaking and periodic elections (e.g. Bauman 1999; Nordlinger 1981). But according to the powerful view offered by Hannah Arendt (1954), politics must be conceived within the larger frame of “the political” if it is to have a chance to exceed its institutional formats. Accordingly, the political represents an open-ended bracket around politics: a chance to create beauty and an understanding of human dignity which “transcend[s] the life-span of mortal men” (Arendt 1958: 55). The Arendtian political is thus a site for the display of courage and uniqueness and the actualization of a hypothetical, hopeful and yet also dangerous subject (Kristeva 1982). It is a means for the exploration of the infinite nature of our humanity, founded on plural interactions and opening up “a space for reciprocal self-evaluation” (Cavarero 2004: 63).⁹

As Barnett (2004: 504) notes, the politics/the political distinction has been important to post-war Continental political philosophy and post-structuralist radical democrats. Accordingly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that the very essence of pluralist politics is the adversarial character of the conflict that shapes politics within the political, with the latter defined, again, as a relatively boundless space from which politics will borrow (see also Mouffe 2005). Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1997: 99) argue similarly that the political with its possibilities even for renewal will draw back where understanding of politics is restricted to its institutionalized forms. Hänninen (1990) says similarly that politics is therefore best conceived of as “living with ambiguity.”

Following this distinction between politics and the political it may be argued that politics is an explicitly delimiting rationality, deployed to fix the parameters or knowledge about political identity. The nature of power-relations is that the super-ordinate will fix or stop interpretation at a valuable register and that a hard distinction will be found where that is done. Fixing might always be deeper and the fixing that is done already assumes “knowing others” predisposed to a particular view. In Arendt’s language politics may, and more often than not does, limit political subjects to a restricted existence of “unfreedom

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⁹ It may be said that Arendt’s political space and the adaptation of it in radical democracy does already depend on a clear distinction or boundedness (assuming the configuration which is already too narrow and confined). In a globalized post-regulatory terrain (Scott 2005) enemies and antagonists have already been absorbed. That being said it is also clear that the realist presumption of IR permits the colonization of the political in a way which is contrary to its compatibility with pluralist democracy.

and work”¹⁰ rather than beauty and immortality. In the context of representation by residential population, not only the existence but also the boundedness of the nation-state restricts the play of freedom. The political paradox is that the very devices that maintain the necessary *indeterminacy* of the political build the restrictions of politics.

Political identity and damage

The lifeworld expectations of individual and collective identity are shaped by discursive currents of political thought. Following the Arendtian view, the emphasis has been on maintaining political identity by prioritizing (ideal) political freedom over everyday necessities. The post-Arendtian views of Mouffe (2005) follow this affirmative lead in maintaining that political identity is damaged when it becomes, as per Habermas, contingent upon communicative ethics or some other notion of immanent consensus. On the contrary, everyday or lifeworld interests together with the ideal of the political are *both* subverted by such practices or systems, with the effect of eviscerating the political in the name of “the social.”

This is also why security has been so privileged by analysts both on the right and left. Libertarians and socialists alike recognize that state auspices are necessary if there is to be space for political identity and that occupants *become* politicized in practices of differentiation and solidarity. In this context of the need to objectify and suspend endless deliberations, security policies emerge as practices essential to the condition of possibility for the political community. They rebuff the loss of political identity by postponing or containing death with the loss of determinacy (as per Huysmans 1998). Much security policy frames the politics of security narrowly as a quest to eternalize the lifeworld, countering and counting enemies in the prosaic effort of postponing or containing death. In practice, state security agencies are evaluated according to their successful dealing with the problem of the unknown, unknowability, and indeterminacy.

It follows that the drive to tease uncertainty and ambiguity out of the lifeworld is a common denominator of security and politics. As for security policy the paradox of political identity: political identity relies on the threatening force of the other, but security policy concretizes and then aims at eliminating this threat; if the policy is successful and the threat eliminated, the political identity is damaged¹¹ and may collapse altogether (Huysmans 1989: 239).¹² Threat construction shapes security and expectations of political

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¹⁰ Bauman, following the importance of consumption and consumer life to modern society, highlights the agora, a marketplace where the political has no place (Beacroft 2003).

¹¹ As noted by Schmitt and Mouffe and others, the ambiguity of the political is sufficiently connected with insecurity - and insecurity with a lack of external objects - that politics can become a quest for clarity which relies on the binary of friend versus enemy. As is well-known, the security order dependent on the construction of enemies and a well-defined determinacy about disorder (cold-war politics) was subject to collapse following the end of the Cold war. Although the external interloper was demonized in the constitution of the West, the subtext recognized a clash of values and not the inherent superiority of capitalism over communism or liberalism over totalitarian rule. The subtext allowed the cultivation of friends of communists or totalitarian rulers in the larger war, which was for practitioners about the extension of war beyond current boundaries.

¹² A ‘political vacuum’ is in this reading precipitous to a damaged identity, as when the 11/9 1989 collapse of Berlin wall left the US without a clear enemy and without an underlying determinacy. To many analysts, the multiplicity of suitors pitching to fill the vacuum (non-proliferation, environmental collapse)

identity so that the political spectrum is coloured by a stark existentialism; as was foretold in Rousseau's *Emile*, both the radical right and the radical left arc towards one another sharing much in common, most dramatically against pluralism. The border, following the nation-state as an expression of termination and the end of certainty and the familiar repetition of belief, system, ideology, represents the limit.

3. Dis/placing exemplary and routine interdictions

This view holding that political identity is dependent on exclusions and the certainty of death seems on first glance to be at odds with much post-regulatory and particularly with post-Foucauldian thought and the trajectory of biopower. Foucault problematized a break following the governmentalization of the state in which the management and extension of life rather than the power over death (and attendant prohibitions) was characteristic or typological: the power of saying “yes” rather than the power of saying “no.”¹³

However, a better initial reading is that the management and extension of the life of the population is *dependent* on the exclusions and certainty of death: and this would follow a *post-sovereign* governmentality (c.f. Vukov 2003: 338). In this, the security signifier supports both exemplary and normative or disciplinary practices. It embraces both a “flexible sovereign” (Stasiulis and Ross 2006) with its exceptionalism and optics or stagecraft and its normalizing surveillance and numbing duplication of processes and routines.

The sedimentation of these practices, as has been noted (Walters 2006, Bigo 2001), is perceived at the more dynamic sites at which subjects are registered as identities. Naturally, these will be the boundaries and limits: norms and exceptions and the play of subjectifying and objectifying practices will be seen most powerfully where separations and distinctions serve obvious regulatory utilities. In the context particularly of neoliberal globalization and flexible regulatory domains one should expect that the ordering of goods and people pushes against modern nation-state security and order.

As has been argued by Walters (following Andreas [2000:3]), the continuing importance of territory is witnessed in the fact that while the border is being demilitarized and economically liberalized it is also increasingly criminalized. Walters (2006: 188) calls this the “changing territory and political rationality of border control.” Walters (2006: 188) continues:

today, it seems, borders are becoming more and more important not as military or economic practices but as spaces and instruments for the policing of a variety of actors, objects and processes whose common denominator is their “mobility” [Adey, 2004], or more specifically, the forms of social and political insecurity that have come to be discursively attached to these mobilities [Bigo 2002; Huysmans 1995].

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was itself the chief danger to US politics and the certainty of its political identity. Given the heft of US politics in the determination of the politics of lesser states, the ‘world system’ was also seen as threatened.

¹³ Our IR reading of security may seem more consistent with classical sovereignty than biopower.

That mobility, to go back to the modernist or antecedent discourse, is also the ready ambiguity that, as noted by Simmel, is the check on identity that secures the life of the state. Indeed, this is to underline the point that the manipulation of the pre-eminent view of politics and security undergirds the rejigging of identities. What occurs is a reification of nation-state boundaries as dispersed sites of intervention on fluid, nation-transgressing cohorts.¹⁴

This up-scaled proliferation of disciplinary and sovereign practices is referred to as “surveillance creep” or “border spread.” The latter also encompasses a deepening and widening of ordering beyond the traditional barriers or territoriality of the nation-state. Zones of exceptional practices extend beyond the line of demarcation of the time/space of the border crossing to include a wide range of pre-emptory mobility checks in the interests and at the behest of extra-state agencies. According to Balibar (Balibar 2002: 84–5) borders become “a grid ranging over the new social space”. As Bigo (2002: 77) argues, border practices increasingly take place away from the edge or frontier of the territorial state. One illustration of this is carrier sanctions or the fines imposed on carriers (airlines, railways) for transporting undocumented passengers. These, as Walters (2006: 194) notes, make “the check-in desks of airlines and even travel agents into semi-formal spaces of migration control”. In sum, border spread is an instance of the externalization of internal security and internalization of external security. Understood as a dual movement, it has its roots in the legitimization politics of liberal political philosophy. The existential and exclusionary practices predicated on the modern liberal nation state are now continuing under other auspices.

Chasing monsters: Exemplary interdictions

Richard Devetak (2005, following Julia Kristeva [1982]), notes that “proper” subjectification requires the expulsion of all that disturbs propriety, order, and cleanliness. The Other, but especially the abject other, in disturbing the clarity of distinctions by its ambiguity (order/disorder, clean/unclean, proper/improper) may be reproductive of subjects’ identity. The Other has been all too convenient in the maintenance of political communities and identity. Following Agamben’s (1998) *homo sacer*, the excluded cannot be entirely banished or obliterated because of this functionality and are better held in a peripheral limbo.

Monsters are ambiguous; they are hard to know and consequently *objects of fear*. It is their liminality and resistance to classification, their defiance of normality, their

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¹⁴ Discourses of security and modern liberalism, including the societies or culture of control (Deleuze 1992; Garland 2000) refer to the context of information control and exceptional capacities against ambiguous, indeterminate, or outlier groups. Although networks, nodes and rhizomes, not subjects and states; performance and assemblage, not existence and order, would appear to be the more appropriate referents, the language and fields of meaning are overlaid on top of one another, so that what we have is a collage of interpenetrating discourses variously hailing (Althusser 1971) subjects/individuals/cohorts as strangers/enemies/others according expansive regulatory projects. These “security assemblages” incorporate up-scaled horizontal and vertical players (NGOs, state agencies, international and transnational bodies, etc.). In other words, reference to this liberal modern problematic of exceptionalism and the founding violence and existential necessity of the state is the basis of an extension of sovereign practices despite the post-regulatory terrain in which the nation-state is less significant as a player among players. (Thus, as at least in part according to Agamben (1998) the rise of petty sovereigns).

“categorical impurity” that makes them monsters. Devetak illustrates that Shelley’s Frankenstein may be a grotesque hybrid and mutant, still carrying traces of the human. Monsters, in Kristeva’s terms, are *abject*: the abject is opposed to the subject, but its defining feature is that it is ejected, cast off, or “radically excluded”. As abject others, monsters represent the indeterminacy and transgressiveness of the “Other.” The reference to monsters also calls up a deeper referent as to how “the political” and security are understood and how narrative constructions signal and buttress the practices of everyday life. Like they who would chase them, monsters are bigger than life. But they also pull practices in their wake: that is to say, it is in the chasing of monsters that political leadership is *reviewed*.

Bush’s “unitary presidency,” demonstrated in the redefinition of executive power post-911 and most recently in the enactment of the Military Commissions Act, envisions the exceptional and arbitrary power of the U.S. president as a necessary adaptation of domestic and foreign relations in a time of asymmetrical warfare according to which an extraordinary executive must be empowered to chase monsters across internal and external boundaries.¹⁵ Against the realist doctrine articulated by John Quincy Adams that America “does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy,”¹⁶ neoconservatives Robert Kagan and William Kristol (1996) ask:

[W]hy not?...The alternative is to leave monsters on the loose, ravaging and pillaging to their hearts’ content. . . . Because America has the capacity to contain or destroy many of the world’s monsters, most of which can be found without much searching, and because the responsibility for the peace and security of the international order rests so heavily on America’s shoulders, a policy of sitting atop a hill and leading by example becomes in practice a policy of cowardice and dishonour.

Routine or “administrative” abject object production

While GW Bush stomps about the world stage chasing exemplary monsters and heaving at goalposts that contain American political identity, a main feature of security practices is the mundane or routine outing of “the other” through screens and filters. Subjects are transformed into “waste” or excluded as abject others through social sorting. Screening deploys discretionary features buried in an information control logic, consisting of the moveable parameters of secrecy, espionage, and disinformation. Border or immigrant exclusions, criminalization, preferred traveler status, security clearances, biometric or virtual walls and fences, and even anti-nuclear shields are some of the devices behind

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¹⁵ In this context, the solution of terrorism appears to answer the problem of the security paradox (states dependent on monsters that cannot ever be finally vanquished). However, it does so by playing fast and loose with the boundaries which may heuristically (at least) contain the state and national security. Where national security is a way of settling the ambiguities of the political and builds knowledge about and externalizes the locus of death, globalized counter-terrorism extends the field in which clarification is to take place, necessitating a shift from nation-state protectionism to what is called *common* security.

¹⁶ He continued:

She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, . . . She might become the dictatress of the world.’

which information is given value. The resultant hodge-podge of measures suggests that the security screen is a patchwork, *not yet* woven into all infrastructures: planes, not yet trains or buses; gels or liquids today but not tomorrow.

Here, practices of regulation are not concerned with “soul training” or individual correction but rather work up the logic of the border in exploiting a fluid regulatory arsenal to push higher compliance demands in distinguishing goods from bads. As Manning (2006) argues, the appeal of risk reduction approaches is their routinization and prediction of events based on the known evidence and costs and the attraction that bureaucratic mechanisms can “simplify complexity in the interest of power”. However, there is “no risk which can even be described without reference to a value” (Giddens 1998: 30).

One example is watch lists. Identified with purges and emergency measures, watch lists numbered 13 in the U.S. in 2003 and, contrary to 2004 Government Accounting Office (GAO) recommendations, now number in the 20s if not higher.¹⁷ The U.S. no-fly list alone grew from 16 names before 9/11 2001 to over 80,000 in 2005 and in 2007 included 44,000 and another 75,000 for additional security screening. The National Counterterrorism Center - created in 2004 to be the primary U.S. terrorism intelligence agency - maintains a central repository of 465,000 names covering 350,000 international terrorism suspects or people who allegedly aid them, a number that has more than quadrupled since the fall of 2003, according to counterterrorism officials (Pincus and Eggen 2006). The FBI has a “terror watch list” of 509,000, although the number is classified (ABC News, June 13, 2007). In Europe, the Schengen Information System (SIS) already in 2003 contained information on 874,032 individuals subject to judicial interventions. Of these, 775,868 individuals or 89% were registered under Article 96 (“aliens who are reported for the purposes of being refused entry”). Only 1.6% were suspected criminals.¹⁸

These and other screens and filters perform a numbing array of social sorting exercises, but carry off a great deal of discretionary purchase. This is illustrated in the people ensnared in the nets, including at least one Senator, a Green party president, an ex-pop star, and several figures already possessing security clearances. Currently, Evo Morales is on the US no-fly list under three spellings but all with the birthdate of the president of Bolivia (CBS News, Oct. 8, 2006). A CBS 60 Minutes program featured a discussion with 12 Robert Johnsons who all reported delays getting on airplanes, likely because they share a listed name. “They are pulled aside and interrogated, sometimes for hours until someone

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¹⁷ In the EU “terrorist lists” and an asset-freezing regime infringes human rights guaranteed by the European Convention and principles of EU law. Such as freedom of expression (article 10), freedom of association (art. 11), interference with the right to a good reputation pursuant to article 8, arbitrary and discriminatory treatment (art. 14), lack of due process, procedural unfairness, lack of proportionality, failure to comply with the requirements of legal certainty.

¹⁸ And given all that collection, there is pressure on analysis, which is consequently being ramped up and automated by data mining, another tool of choice. According to the 2004 GAO report survey of 128 federal departments and agencies on their use of data mining ‘52 agencies were using or planning to use data mining....These departments and agencies reported 199 data-mining efforts, of which 68 [were] planned and 131 [were] operational...Department of Defense reported the largest number of efforts.’ (New York Times, December 25, 2005).

at the Transportation Security Administration decides they are not the Robert Johnson on the No Fly List. And they say it happens every time they go to the airport.” (CBS News, Oct. 8, 2006). Donna Bucella, of the Terrorist Screening Centre, told reporter Steve Kroft that “Robert Johnson will never get off the list” and was unable to explain why 14 of the dead 9/11 terrorists were on a March 2006 list and why persons with a known history of terrorism were not on it (CBS News, Oct. 8, 2006).

The popular interpretation is that mistakes, oversights, and misplaced zeal is what accounts for such overreach and that the kinks are being ironed out. In practice and in official and public commentary about no-fly lists, however, the discretionary properties are often showcased rather than hidden. The operation of screening technologies draws everyday security into power relations in part through deployment of the unstable and unpredictable identity referent. That administrators or government officials should from time to time trumpet a kind of quixotic animus is in keeping with the (necessary/exceptional) parameters of asymmetrical warfare where we, as superordinates, must also be hard to pin down. The mechanism that produces and integrates the lists defies a visible actuarial logic (this would risk disclosure of sources and methods - the greater danger is that it will be reducible to calculations that can be exploited by the “true” enemy). As well as operating in front of the screen in the linking of identity with identification (c.f. Amoores 2006), unpredictability or indeterminacy is also understood to operate behind it, where identification and identity are muddled through an information control logic. Thus it is not that there is too much discretion or that the final machine is not yet built; the streaming of data (and identities and subjects) into stop/go, yes/no bits reflects post-sovereign governmentality. A mysterious calculus then: one suspected of fraud, error, spite, and subplot, but in the meantime a deeper projection and spread of the hard divisions and control of the border logic.¹⁹ Indeed, the watch list is a portable technology of the border that normalizes the proliferation of exceptional exclusions beyond the existential foundation and boundary concerns of the nation-state.

4. Breakdown

In 2006, 82% of Britons believed that Blair’s decision to participate in the invasion of Iraq was a principle cause of the London bombings and a majority was sceptical about the veracity of a “plot” to blow up aircraft flying from Heathrow. Polled on October 2006 on what members of the administration knew prior to September 11th, 2001, about possible terrorist attacks against the United States, 81% of respondents answered that the Bush administration was “hiding something” or “mostly lying” (NY Times/CBS 2006). An earlier survey (NY Times 2004) found that 61% of people had not put together an emergency food kit with water “to prepare for another 911 type attack.” According to a report released Nov 6, 2006 by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, prosecutors declined to bring charges in 131 of 150, or 87 percent, of international terrorist case referrals from the FBI between October 2005 and June 2006, a strong decrease, while the number of agents assigned to such cases has risen greatly. In

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¹⁹ This is the compulsory double-play of information control. Information control reflects the pragmatic necessity to keep investigative targets (and their associates) uninformed (or misinformed) of their object status up to the final operational moments (against them).

the meantime, CSIS, MI5 and other security intelligence services have been starting to release figures in order to concretize the terrorist threat (eg. Shalot 2006). Late in 2006, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller of MI5 announced that there were almost 30 terrorist plots involving 1,600 people (Norton-Taylor 2006). Following this, a British editorial proclaimed “we need a minister of terror” (Sunday Times, Nov. 12, 2006)

Is our account thus far capable of explaining the wide gulf between popular views of threat and those promoted by the broadest security policies? The lack of fit between popular belief and security constructions (or in the policy and popular objectification of death) would appear to signal a legitimization crisis or demand a change in policy. To illustrate with a criminological example, the reason police have come to the conclusion that they cannot afford to be measured in terms of crime interdiction alone is because once married to the quantification of crime, their fortunes are too much outside of their own control, given that the police mandate is not equivalent, as it would need at least to be, to the governance mandate. Thus, like police before them, security policy would appear to be angling for a crisis of confidence, trust, or legitimization. If so far it is not, this needs to be explained. In the remainder of the paper, one possibility is explored.

5. The simulation of security

In America, it's as though Bush, his inner cabinet, and the neocons have been playing a video game, with fictional characters and victims, virtual death and torture. Now the disc has suddenly finished, and it's time to shut down the player. This is not just a figure of speech. American policy has been running on images rather than evidence of real nations and people doing things for real human motives (Pfaff 2006).

What I wish to add to this discussion of the relation between the political and security is reference to its highly iterative optics. Accordingly, the end of police and security technologies is the harnessing of the uncertain, ambiguous, and indefinite *not* in the production or reproduction of eternal life or peace, which in any case would make these technologies superfluous (as per the security and political paradoxes), but in *security simulations*. Since security and also the control or ordering of underlying conditions is in any case dependent on a compromised political identity, security policy can do no more than match those appearances by measuring out, piecemeal, and ironically, *figurative chaos*.

This follows on from a social context already sensitized to public relations and the disappearance of the object in the proliferation of information control as the important function of security services. Accordingly, simulation refers to the disappearance of the gap between the real and imaginary (Baudrillard 1998). In the consequent “reality effect” the absence of the real is concealed (Bogard 1994: 9). Security practices shape such absences. But in the final iteration, and following also the acknowledged role of third party observation in subject-object relations (i.e. image management), finesse in concealment of the absence of the real is what’s evaluated. Security is thus conceived and

carried out as *demonstration projects*,²⁰ which, although also accomplishing some ordering and identity-fixing, is chiefly measured in terms of its optics. The test of security policy becomes how the production was reviewed.

Given that the polity is already highly sensitized to the making up of *monsters*, it is not whether the US went to war to get Saddam (a monster) but whether the optics can stand up: in this effort was the *absence of real threat* finessed or did the veneer crack open, revealing scripts and codes? Again, it's not the working with an absent threat that is now objectionable – because working with real monsters already *ascribes too much to them* – it is the lack of finesse in launching security productions around such absences. To go back to the discussion of the double paradox of security and politics, a presumption of simulation and practices of information control line these up: the object/subject, certainty/ambiguity gap in both security and the political is aligned or overlapped in the simulation of security politics. It is the management of *threat optics* in the preservation of politics and determinacy.

The State as Performance, the Border as Trope, Tradition, Stage

The pluralist view holding that the state is the complex of actors that exercise society-wide decision-making authority (Nordlinger 1981) notwithstanding, the political philosophy that first conceived the state into form is predicated on a loud and violent *difference* of the sovereign. Foucault (1977) noted that until early modern times, the sovereign staged exemplary demonstrations concentrated on probing the corporal limit of a constituent principality or polity.²¹ Exemplary actions and founding excess is part of current power staging. This references the Machiavellian “idea of bringing a state back to its founding through a shocking display.” Lazar (2006:252) continues:

To bring about the sought-after effect, the situation requires, for Machiavelli, a display of violence. (We might say: the cathartic role of the theatrical is here revived.) Human action must rip through the normal

²⁰ Under the post-modern reference, the cycles between real world practice and training simulations shorten with each turn. Given that the gap cannot be closed in any empirical sense, what is left is the ‘simulation of surveillance’, by which the evidence of effectuality is the successful demonstration (Bogard 1996). It is not that such spectacles do not require empirical supports, but rather that they - much like empire-overreach as Giddens (1985) or sovereignty as Foucault (1979) theorized it - are intended for consumption as proof of capacity (Baudrillard 1983).

²¹ Following Foucault's tripartite distinction between sovereignty, discipline and regulation, there is some debate concerning the prioritization of each of these. The foregoing analysis is also concerned, albeit obliquely, with post-Marxist analyses of Schmittian exceptionalism (Scheureman 1990) and rule-making (Tilly 1984; Corrigan and Sayer 1984; Raz 1990). A third context is post-modernist approaches to social order (Deleuze and Guattari 1983; Baudrillard 1990). Regarding the first, it might be said that there is an obvious and continuous iteration between the highly figurative and demonstrative politics of the King, as Foucault would have it, and the almost visceral desire for everyday normality, expressed in routines, however invasively constructive of subjectivity they might be. With respect to exceptionalism, it would seem to remain the case that liberal democracies, despite the efforts of such works as *In From the Cold* (Lustgarten and Leigh 1996), are vulnerable and weak to the affirmations of the dominant security narrative and the realist-idealist tension often resolving in favour of decisive political action over deliberative ‘consensus’. Finally, regarding the post-modern affirmation of the spectral in the wake of the disconnect between the signifier and signified, it is contended here that the oscillation between sovereignty and normalization and between exceptionalism and liberal democracy has formed the backdrop against which doing security politics has confining optics.

course of events. It must be a visceral experience. Machiavelli describes a number of cases of shocking violence, which achieve a kind of renewal or cleansing. For example, there is the case of the Florentine magistrates of the mid-fifteenth century who would ‘resume the government’ every five years by renewing the sense of fear and awe in the people through some ghastly public punishment. Something shocking reawakens citizens to first principles and thus preserves them.

This repetition of founding exemplariness is functional and necessary; it is the sovereign who monopolizes existential ethics and sovereign exceptionalism is the co-condition of rule. The worthy state, according to Machiavelli but also following Locke and Rousseau, requires sovereign protection of the common good beyond what subjects might perceive, a point stretched by Karl Schmitt. Thus for Kant, the constructive founding act of the state as a space of ethical possibility was a “a categorical imperative.” As Lazar puts it: “the coming into existence of the state itself serves as a moral imperative governing action under existential political circumstances....The exceptional figure, but only the exceptional figure, acts according to existential ethics because his aim is the moral aim of establishing or preserving the worthy state” (Lazar 2006: 253). The basis of this normative staging between the place inside and outside the state is attached in much of the literature to the distinction between friend-foe, friend-enemy and the idea that existential protection affords dramatic othering and also, within the state, the relations of *homo sacer*, etc. Thus war and war measures have been identified with existential necessity and the norms of survival.

As Fraser (2003) has noted, by the early 20th century the mechanisms for producing what was coming to be called social order or social control were being adapted with Fordist and welfare state practices. These practices were still strongly invested in the nation-state, but they also utilized the power of the nuclear family and the living wage buttressed by unions and strong community services predicated on the model of the nuclear family. By the end of the 20th century, post-regulatory ideology and the rise of the global economy severed the connection between national corporate and national welfare, presenting a control/order vacuum that was filled with transnational ideological enemies. Also in the early 20th century, the rise of suffrage presented issues for the continuity of government and governance, particularly as obedience was being outmoded. As Holquist (1997) makes clear, in Great Britain, Germany, France and Russia, the ability to keep troops motivated and committed to fight on behalf on the arcane interests of the nation-state or empire was identified as a major problem that could no longer be addressed simply by means of excessive violence. Information control, through the state-administered collection and dissemination of opinion, began to be used effectively to stem wayward popular thinking. Finally, this governmentalization of the state, as Foucault described it, fostered the development of “national security” out of the “common good” justificatory reference. In the American example of post-war development, the gradual publication of the secret state and the identification of secret state weapons with the national security logos was the seemingly reasonable outcome of a defensive military posture in the international system.²²

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²² See Neocleous 2006. Following the Wilsonian doctrine, national security gradually became identified with the forward profile of the “warfare state” rather than with the vitality of the common good or welfare.

Despite these developments exceptionalism grounded in the founding violence of the nation-state remains the backdrop of current power staging. The performance of violence and its bedrock necessity (violent exclusion, abject othering) is a relic of nation-state governmentality that continues to have purchase as a trope and tradition on the conditions of possibility of current governance. So too, the interplay of efficiency and effectiveness (frugality and utility) that is also part of the trajectory of liberal governance and particularly the administration of populations into manageably productive constituencies. The border or the line separating now petty sovereigns is a space for both these references. The border is a site of exceptional and routine practice, of extraordinary majesty and mercy and thick classification. It rises up and down vertically to cut down abject others or to manipulate subjects/individuals/cohorts with shocking discretionary displays. At the same time it runs off the terrain of the polity, washing indifferent and dehumanizing harmonizing protocols across space. Border logic, consisting of an interplay of the frugal and utilitarian, exceptional and routine, carries friend/foe existentialism and the normative logic of exclusion across an expansive and expanding array of sites. In the post-regulatory condition, the idea of the nation-state and nation-state capacities become a costume for players who practice social sorting when the idea of the social and the norm for the sort is already past due.

6. The security double take: ironic productions

According to Manning (2006:456) front stage management (in the Goffman sense) deploys resources “to protect citizens, reduce risk, and make secure savings and assets.” However, backstage, it is the risks themselves that are “created and manipulated using experts, figures, data, tables, and hypothetical pay-offs.” “The frontstage presentational strategies are sterile, servile, and helpful, while the backstage is a rather mixed picture of competing rationalities (lower costs to consumer, higher profits to the industry, reinsuring one's one risks, redefining risks, etc.).” Consequently, in various sites, what is provided is “ritual reassurance” as a kind of permanent stop-gap against the various “unknown unknowns” as the backstage descriptor of the “true” security field (cf. also, Bigo 2002; Bajc 2007)

Both bureaucratic and political necessity drives the direction and stylistics of security productions. Political direction is constrained by major political and security narratives; it is modulated by available technologies and practices (cf. eg. McDonald 2005; van Brunschot and Shirley 2005). The bureaucratic function in turn bleeds into these political considerations: to stage the appearance of effectiveness and efficiency leaders must show that something is being done with the tools that are readily available: police saturation, restrictions on access to critical infrastructure, surveillance, walls, fences, rendition

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Moreover, the object of “national security” became an item conceived by way of a particular articulation: one that could be hammered out and hammered down only through the coordination of dedicated national security instruments including the CIA, the NSA, the National Security Director, etc. The temporal and spatial spread of exceptionalism (the border, discretion about limits) occurred as “national security” displaced the “common good” as the justification of arbitrary limits (Neocleous 2006).

flights, threat level indicators. A consequence: the spectacle of rights truly and profoundly trumped by discretionary, arbitrary and gratuitous events.

In a short period during the early summer of 2006, police in the United States, Great Britain and Canada made headline news with three unrelated high-profile counter-terrorist arrests. The Canadian contribution took place during the first week of June. “The number one news story in the world”²³ was the arrest of 17 Muslim-Canadians in Toronto on charges related to their alleged intent on using explosives to blow up one or more Toronto landmarks. A *Toronto Star* headline read: Police put on a “good spectacle”: Snipers, leg irons, selected evidence, police brass — all calculated to sway the public, lawyers and security experts say.”²⁴

The denouement for police is this production of discovered disorder. But the recursivity between crime, disorder, production and simulation (showing sample bags, placing snipers on rooftops) is such as to draw comment from mainstream media outlets. Already for the lay audience the question becomes, “what should we, as reviewers or audience members, take as the moral of the drama?” (cf. de Lint et al. 2007b²⁵)

Similarly, police and security officials are staging fake crises in order, according to their media spokespersons, to better equip officers for real emergencies. One of these is the simulated school shooting. One of these occurred in a small community in Southeastern Ontario and was reported under the banner headline “Mock Shooting so Real, “It was scary: Fired blanks leave casings littered on school floor, as police practice aggressive takedown” (Windsor Star, May 30, 2007: A5). The story began,

a school shooting simulation Tuesday took on such a realistic tone, thanks in part to the actor playing the deranged shooter, that some participants were reduced to tears. The exercise at *Ecole Secondaire L’Essor* involved about 50 OPP officers, including members of the Tactics and Rescue Unit (TRU) from London, as well as Sun Parlour paramedics and Tecumseh Firefighters. The scenario saw a pair of heavily armed women, played by drama students at the University of Windsor, enter the school at around 8:46 a.m. and begin randomly shooting students.

A large photo appearing with the story depicted a line of students leaving the school with their hands clasped over their heads, Columbine style, while heavily armed police looked

²³ According to WJR Radio, Paul W. Smith Show, June 5 2006

²⁴ The story began:

“A good spectacle ... theatrical atmosphere ... like 24 ... an awards show.” Reviews for a Mirvish production, right? Maybe a Hollywood blockbuster or fast-paced new action series on Fox? Wrong. It's how several lawyers and security experts describe the sombre, indeed frightening, events which transpired in the GTA over the past weekend. .... The anti-terrorism task force was careful about the wording of its news release, saying that the group “took steps to acquire” the three tonnes of ammonium nitrate, a popular fertilizer used to make bombs. As well, they laid out selected evidence for the photographers and TV crews, showing only “sample” bags of ammonium nitrate (Diebel, *Toronto Star*, June 5, 2006: A.03).

²⁵ The reference to this and the surge is taken in part from de Lint et al. 2007b.

on. In shades of Milgram's Berkeley authority experiments, the "shooter" herself was traumatized saying that "I felt really bad because there was a lot of crying going on in the room...I terrorized the children for about an hour and a half. It was really difficult. I broke down crying at the end of it."

Here, under the rubric of simulation, we see the spread of the border logic in the acting out of an exceptional display of coordinated authority. The message here is that the enemy is within, and that freedoms are suspended and victims may be villains as innocent students play the part of villain and suspects. In this further iteration the search for the proper presentation or look of the security performance is itself akin to an existential struggle for authenticity.

Another illustration of the loose reflexivity and specularity of the security double take is found in a similar practice known as "the Surge." Some police agencies now stage random dramatizations of force at landmarks, critical infrastructure (banks, hotels, bridges, etc.) or high symbolic value targets "to keep terrorists guessing and remind people to be vigilant." "Surges" are most developed in New York, where 1000 officers from the 37,000 person force are dedicated full-time to counter-terrorism and 600 comprise a secretive counter-intelligence unit (CBS, March 26, 2006). The entire NYPD is subscribed, rotationally, to daily surges in which heavily armed officers congregate in massive numbers in self-described "shock and awe" intimidation displays.²⁶ Officers "might, for example, surround a bank building, check the IDs of everyone going in and out and hand out leaflets about terror threats."

Surges exploit the spectacular randomness associated with the terrorist and terrorism's asymmetrical advantage. "Anybody who's bad and wants to watch to see if we're creatures of habit, we're showing them we're not. We're creating confusion" (Simonetti, in Kolbert 2003). "It's letting the terrorists know we are out there...We want that shock. We want that awe. The operations will keep terrorists off guard" (Miami Deputy Chief Frank Fernandez in AP, Nov 28, 2005). In practice, in the simulacrum of the exclusive and existential character of state security nomenclature rights and consent are re-staged as props, a downgraded norm to the upgraded exception. The whole enterprise is predicated on the logic of a boundary that is already superseded: "But at the same time, we don't want people to feel their rights are being threatened. We need them to be our eyes and ears" (AP, Nov. 28, 2005). In the meantime, public expectations are cultivated to the carnival or drama and surprise of order and control: order, like rights and economy is a production that comes to town on a surprise wind like a Bradbury circus. What happens to passersby is the experience of the security double-take: a visceral reminder that the boundary between friend and enemy is anywhere and anytime pried open and displayed as extreme theatre by 'real' actors.

The agency that does this trashing of the norm and smashing of the boundary, that objectifies and stages security, makes itself awesome, and divides everything in two, carries the logic of the border deep into the expectations of the polity. The practices

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²⁶ In addition, NYPD makes daily checks of landmarks, as by example, with mine sweeps of the Brooklyn Bridge, and posts officers overseas to keep abreast of the latest terrorist activities for first-hand reports to its own command.

described above are consistent with the weakly challenged security discourse based in exclusions and exceptions, but there is no agency that wants ironic security spectacles, no grand scheme that is unfolding through their proliferation. That is not say it has no format or proper form. For more knowledgeable audiences, irony or suspended belief is the proper attitude toward the paradox of security. At a lower register, the “security spectacle” is a signal or exceptional interruption of democracy in the service of frugal and efficient security production.²⁷ In either case, it is not necessary to believe in the finality of death, that there is such a thing as “true insecurity,” or that real monsters²⁸ are countered by the security double take or other technology. Ambiguity and discretion is showcased in public commentary because the dominant security discourse still holds that ordering or control will be arbitrary with the messy look of exclusive and exceptional authority. Thus: “why *did* World Trade # 7 go down?” becomes “*strong* medicine, that, the collapse of World Trade # 7.”

In the juggernaut of high modernity, there is a decreasing ability among governments to effect “real” control. In a highly reflexive post-modernity, the currency of production values count. Control practices are increasingly a matter of the look of authenticity and auspices; indeed “true” auspices and authenticity are those that look that way. In this context security productions are effective, powerful and compelling where they finesse ascendant security esthetics (appropriate-looking monsters and forward-pushing screens). The security double take is a signal or exceptional interruption of freedom and democracy that may not be real, but it doesn’t matter, because that reality is an “unknown unknown.” It is a training exercise, trial balloon, or random interdiction to match a reality-base long recognized as distorted all the way down. The security double take is a live simulation or spectacular, discretionary and volatile ordering production (cf. O’Malley 1999).

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²⁷ Indeed, there is a double if not triple signal within the security bandwidth. According to one reading, the security paradox is known and appreciated among most policy-makers, analysts and elites, and security narratives consequently consist of minor and major themes, just as there are dominant and subordinated conspiracies. The dominant story-line for the popular audience is that chasing monsters is necessary and the monsters are real and some of them are inside of the gates so people must be counted and checked. There is a righteous moral order and we are on the right side. A competing story-line is that the monsters are exaggerated, but exaggeration is functional because we need leadership, identity, and resolve lest we fall into the abyss. For instance, monsters and ghosts are really beggars at the gates in a condition of unsustainable wealth distribution, and when ‘we’ let those beggars in we destroy ‘our’ prosperity. The third story-line allows some view into how monsters are made up, and part of this line is to take distance from and yet celebrate security work as a production: “9-11 didn’t really happen according to the official story and bin Laden isn’t really ‘one of them’, but what a powerful story” – also; “give us credit for how well we are playing it – and by the way, ‘we’ isn’t really you and I.”

²⁸As opposed to ghosts. Ghosts occupy the space between life and death, somehow arrested in the journey of the spirit. They are also impossible to target, both absent and present, there and not-there. Their immateriality and spontaneous appearances provide a subtext to existence: death is not quite the end, but the status of the ghost is closer to the interminability of evil than of good. Ghosts also recall the dark arts of secret state agency and their subterranean and illicit countering activities.

Conceptualizing the security double take: necessity and the mothers of invention

What are the features of the security double take as I have tried to develop it here? First, it embodies the specularity of power relations that includes reference to audiences (thus “A” impacting “B” with reference to context “C”). Second, it pushes forward an assumption about audience expectations (otherwise an ideology) regarding the base conflictuality of power relations or politics. This base conflictuality recalls the originary existential violence that distinguishes identity through hard binaries including the friend/foe, included/excluded distinction. The unpredictable exceptionalism of sovereign capacity is here part of the necessity and utility of security mobilizations. Third, that existential or palpable reality is then already an instructive optics. To recall the elaboration of the point by Huysmans, determinacy itself can be fetishized or commodified and the provision of simulations can stand in for the indeterminacy of “true” or “real” insecurity. When passersby or media consumers do a double take in absorbing the event, they are helping to realize Machiavellian power relations beyond the frame of modern liberal order. The take on the event is not “eliminate it, it is unjustifiable,” but rather “Fix it so that it looks like a better play.”

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