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Banal Terrorism

Spatial Fetishism and Everyday Insecurity

Cindi Katz

I try not to mourn, I try to organize, in between I make jokes—pointed jokes. Jokes that I wouldn't burden with "resistance" but that at least reframe the familiar as strange, and so undermine the very banality by which hegemony is so often secured. Some of these come to mind as I walk through the public spaces of New York—the train stations, the charged intersections and squares, the marquee buildings—and see the National Guard, dressed in camouflage. They cluster next to clumps of New York cops, collectively alerting us to our need for alertness, their laconic postures surely a pose. I get through these spaces imagining the New Yorker cartoon I could draw, if I could draw: A guy dressed like a fire hydrant or in brick and pizza patterned fatigues tilting back to eye a more traditionally camouflaged soldier in Pennsylvania Station. The caption echoes Marisa Tomei in *My Cousin Vinny* to read, "Oh, and you blend!?!" The cartoon toys with a deadly serious question. Why would dressing for Desert Storm in the midst of New York City reassure residents and visitors of their safety? There is, of course, an exacting science and art of camouflage that surely has anticipated urban warfare. By what form of trifling with the imagination does the security state authorized—but not inaugurated—by September 11 place such inappropriate bodies in New York's and many other public spaces?

Likewise, the explosion of surveillance cameras and other strategies of public vigilance all around the city. Are "we" safer now that all bridge and tunnel entrances are guarded by some combination of cameras, police, and military surveillance? If I concede that inspecting vehicles moving in, out and through the city might offer some shred of protection—though the sheer numbers and sources of this traffic belie this—of what possible use, beyond security charade, is visual vigilance of tunnel entrances, turnstiles, or exit ramps? A couple of my friends got caught in one such breach of security, video-taping the spot where the number 7 subway train emerges from underground in its route from Manhattan to Queens. Within minutes they were confronted by a police officer who demanded their camera as he brusquely told them that all photography of public transportation was forbidden in New York. The filmmaker was madly rewinding the video just shot as they insisted that they had not actually filmed anything yet at that site. As the cop grabbed the camera, my friend hoped that she'd made it past the offending footage. She had, only to have reached an earlier shot. A map. Of the Middle East. Fortune was with them. The cop had been

educated in the United States and so was unfamiliar with what was mapped. "What's this a map of?" he demanded. "Europe!" my geographer colleague jumped to reassure him. After a few more questions about where they were from, the cop was mollified and retreated, leaving them with the camera and video intact.

These stories suggest visceral connections between geography and power, but not in a monological sense (Katz 2005). In the first instance, state power is expressed through deliberate geographic illiteracy; camouflage without any landscape referent. In the second, geographical ignorance was artfully manipulated to evade the state's authority. Apart from exposing the intertwinings of geography and power, I recall these vignettes here to reveal two potent instances of what I am calling "banal terrorism." They are everyday, routinized, barely noticed reminders of terror or the threat of an always already presence of terrorism in our midst.

I have developed the idea of banal terrorism through shameless appropriation of Michael Billig's notion of banal nationalism (Billig 1995). Billig provocatively suggests that the ideological foundations of nationalism are produced and reproduced in a banal and everyday way through what he punningly refers to as "flagging," the little, beneath the radar, and even surreptitious things that remind those in established nations of their nationhood. Determined to dislocate nationalism from its ready association with more virulent expressions, as something shared and produced by Serbs, Basques, Eritreans, Armenians, Tamils and other separatists or national liberationists, Billig insists that "we" too are nationalists. His argument is that those in established and even powerful nations are constantly reminded of their nationhood in the course of daily life, and that these banal practices—a lapel pin here, a bumper sticker there, an anthem at the start of a sporting event—produce identities of belonging that incorporate people in reproducing a "homeland" and with it a world of homelands that are themselves naturalized. Among the discursive and material social practices Billig flags as banal nationalism are the "unwaved" flags that, for example, droop everywhere in the United States; and the newspaper and other media accounts that incorporate people in "the" nation through such discursive mechanisms as "the" president, "the" elections, "the" army, which mark the unnamed us of the U.S. and bring us into the body of the nation as Americans. In other words, through the little—but constant—reminders of nationhood, a vigorous national identity is produced. Coursing through this identity is a congeries of beliefs, assumptions, habits, and practices that can be called forth during crises to rally support for national causes, the military, "us," "our" boys, national sacrifice, and the like.

Banal nationalism brings nationalism in from the periphery and makes it a home grown and homespun product. Marianne Gullestad (2001) makes a similar argument regarding Norwegian nationalism, which is *really* homespun. Folkloric and celebratory, it produces a self-congratulatory sense of belonging so powerful (and frequently smug) that Norway rejected membership in the European Union, one of only two western European nations to do so. Banal nationalism also calls forth what I am calling "banal terrorism," which is connected and analogous to it but distinct. Banal terrorism produces a sense of terror and fear in a drivelly and everyday way. The common (non)sense constructed and assumed around terrorism (and terrorists) in all sorts of banal ways can be hailed at moments of crisis to authorize such things as a suspension of civil liberties or an open-ended and clearly never-ending "War on

Terrorism." The material social practices of banal terrorism work at all scales and their intricate circuitry not only enables them to authorize and reinforce one another, but naturalizes their acceptability and seeming common sense. The banality of terrorism and the state of terror it invokes work almost at the capillary level; we've gone from duct tape and the farce of color-coded alerts to talismanic lunacy. I recently saw a license plate that said "fight terrorism." As the fight stoops to smiley face tactics, we are urged—everywhere—to "say something" if we "see something." I see something: Camouflaged soldiers in the midst of all manner of urban spaces. That, of course, is their point. Banal terrorism is sutured to—and secured in—the performance of security in the everyday environment.

Like banal nationalism, banal terrorism embraces a set of themes about "us"—"we" are "threatened," "they" hate/are jealous of "us," "we" share a "homeland"—but it goes a step further as these notions about "us" authorize and propel a common sense notion of "them" as threat. If in Billig's understanding, the very idea of "homeland" is an outcrop of banal nationalism, it is presupposed in banal terrorism, if only as a means to frame a fortress against polymorphous threats. Witness how quickly the term "homeland"—which I don't think I'm alone in associating with Nazism—got called forth in the security state fostered (but not invented) by the events of September 11, 2001. The fact that in the United States a cabinet level Department of Homeland Security was formed, with very little popular objection, as an über security apparatus, despite the many ways it compromises the nation's most sacred myths about itself, exposes the potency of banal nationalism and its obstreperous offspring, banal terrorism. Banal terrorism produces xenophobic discourses around "homeland" that work to narrow the channel of threat and danger. At the same time, its discourses produce themes of the nation as porous and perforated, but ready to be mobilized as a coherent agent against less coherent threats. Likewise, the material social practices of banal terrorism create and perform discursive formations around "duty" and "honor," leading to such things as the Patriot Act, which rallies around and assumes a particular brand of patriotism.[1]

Banal terrorism diffuses, reproduces, and reinforces these themes as common sense through such relatively innocuous mechanisms as the camouflagery, multi-colored security alerts, airport and other forms of screening, the increased presence of explosive sniffing dogs, and the proliferation of background noise and imagery exhorting us—everywhere—to report suspicious activity, people, and things. Banal terrorism also produces and reproduces common sense themes about what constitutes a terrorist. The common sense is predictably racist and also ignorant. It conflates Islam and Arab to embrace all brown men no matter what their national origins or religious beliefs. The working profile largely ignores women and excludes the angry white men of the Oklahoma City bombing as types. Without these home-grown Christian militiamen, the normalized profile of a terrorist is one of an antimodern, angry, jealous zealot; a heartless brainwashed agent living in a "sleeper cell," "who infiltrates and takes advantage of "the freedoms" of "our" everyday life even as he would destroy them. These themes of banal terrorism made supporting the "War on Terrorism" common sense and airbrushed away many of the slippages that authorized its extension into Iraq and its shameful excesses such as Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib.[2]

Here I want to address the spatial fetishism of banal terrorism, or the way particular performances of security in the landscape both create and reproduce a banal notion of terrorism—its paradoxical routinization—at the same time as they obscure and mystify the social, cultural and political-economic relations that propel global terrorism and undergird the security state.

The term "spatial fetishism" is used by critical geographers to describe understandings of space as producing effects; as causal of particular conditions and material social practices rather than as the outcome of specific social relations and practices—space as socially produced. While in a reductive sense this definition is apposite to my purposes in that it suggests a notion of space that obscures social relations and reifies space as having political meaning, I want to draw out the entailments of fetishism in the Marxist and Freudian senses of the term in order to point to both what is being concealed by the appearance of security and what sort of lack or trauma drives its production, reproduction, and ready consumption. Working through these entailments may help to clarify both our interpolation into the security state and its multiple manifestations and effects.

Marx, of course, brilliantly begins *Capital* with a close examination of the commodity, demonstrating that exchange value sets up a relation between things that obscures and mystifies the underlying social relations that both produce that value and make its abstraction possible. Relations between people—in all their unevenness—appear in "fantastic form" as a relation between things. Marx refers to this quintessential mystification of capitalism as commodity fetishism (Marx 1967).

Freud, in a 1927 essay, "Fetishism," bluntly, categorically, and even strangely avuncularly, gets right to his point by declaring that across all of his male cases the meaning and purpose of the fetish was the same—a penis substitute (Freud 1963). He quickly adds that it is not just any chance penis, but the mother's phallus, which young boys believe in and some do not wish to forego, associating the mother's castration with the potential for their own. As Freud delineates, the perception of the lost penis persists interlocked with an energetic action to keep up the denial of it, so that the belief (in the mother's phallus) is simultaneously retained and given up. A compromise is struck within the unconscious wherein a successor to the phallus is produced to absorb the interest that earlier went to the (imagined) penis. The fetish, then, creates what Freud calls a permanent memorial to the horror of castration; a marker of the repression of the knowledge of what has been lost, which of course was never there.

Drawing on these complementary notions of fetishism, I want to explore some instances of the spatial fetishism I associate with banal terrorism first to argue that through them the social relations of terrorism are concealed at the same time as the horror of those social relations are both denied and revisited, and so known viscerally. Second, to delineate what some of these social relations are and thus what is at stake in the reproduction of banal terrorism through the performance of security, spatial fetishism, and other means. Finally, I hope at least to gesture toward a politics that might not only disclose and reveal the social relations that hold these formulations in place across space and scale, but rework them as well.

The camouflaging I marked at the start of this piece is an instance of spatial fetishism that works at the scale of the body and urban space. It is—paradoxically—an

obvious performance to produce and reproduce the nexus of terror and security. In urban and other environments we call law enforcement personnel who want to move undetected, undercover, and we know from all manner of cop shows if not personal experience, that these guys "blend." And yet here we have soldiers who have little familiarity with their surroundings cropping up in jungle and desert motifs. They commonly stand near the police, who are already in ample supply. Their camouflage makes them visible—their bodies emblematic of a muscular state. None of this alters a thing regarding the protection of people and the spaces they traverse. This staging of security does nothing so much as authorize a security state and routinize the ever-presence of terrorism in our midst. This routinization engages the popular imaginary and reproduces docility vis à vis the state and its security operations. And this is, of course, the intent of making visible that which is designed for invisibility.

Meanwhile, at a vastly different scale and in wholly other environments, that security state grows unseen. But in part the unseeing, and the willingness not to see, are achieved through everyday performances of terror/security such as those of the camouflaged soldiers in U.S. urban centers. Well camouflaged in the deserts of the southwest, for instance, the military operates in what it calls the "black world." According to the artist-geographer, Trevor Paglen (2005), it is a world that does not exist, cannot be seen, and will not respond no matter what the provocation, even its own employees. In this world of deep secrecy and total camouflage, the military and national security operatives produce billions of dollars of war machinery with unlimited funding and zero accountability. Their operations are enabled, in part, by the militarization of the U.S. state, which, in part, has been enabled and authorized by our everyday seeing of threat-security performed. These stealth landscapes conceal the research and development and manufacture of weapons and material for enduring and globalized warfare (Paglen 2005). Concealed on the other side of the country is the always prepared bunker government, a stealth landscape buried in the mountains of Virginia and elsewhere. Fully operable, these vast bunkered spaces are ready to receive, house, and entertain representatives of state and some of their families in rotating shifts of ninety days (Willis 2003). The readiness of this shadow state is underwritten again in part by our incorporation in particular regimes of seeing and not seeing.

Another example of spatial fetishism is what Peter Marcuse refers to as urban citadelization. Not unconnected to urban camouflaging, these spatial practices exceed embodiment and involve the all too familiar forms of bunkering and fortressing of particular patches of real estate as well as the increased gating of communities; urban, suburban, and otherwise. Gating was an increasingly common practice globally prior to 9/11, but in the years since has been broadly expanded, democratized, and given the patina of a neat alibi. Citadelization performs security, but so selectively that it almost rehearses and reinforces the very vulnerabilities it is staged to counter. For instance, much of the attention is on so-called marquee buildings, prestigious addresses saturated with symbolic value. So the emblematic Empire State Building is surrounded by rampart-planters and bollards along with security guards, and all visitors including workers must pass through metal detectors and have their bags checked upon entering–all of this security is privatized of course, but that is another story. Meanwhile, its neighbors, including, for example, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York where I work, are open and relatively unguarded, to say

nothing of the sidewalks and streets that surround the building itself. So again, what is accomplished by these practices? What do such fetishizations of space conceal? What is revealed by even a scratch on their surface?

For one they reveal a stubborn vision of terrorism and a narrow imagination of its space-time. The whole point of terrorism—what makes it terrifying—is its unpredictability, the unexpected, unanticipatable registers of its space-time. The bunkering of marquee buildings may comfort (but more likely just annoys) their occupants, but why would the next attack rehearse the spectacular nature of the September 11 attacks? What if terrorism really does get routine? When quotidian sites like busses, cafes, subway cars become targets and the temporality of attack is humdrum, the relative futility of all manner of "preparedness" is made clear. Bunkering fetishizes the question; at best protecting certain people and targets, inevitably leaving countless others open and vulnerable. Its practices, and the fantasy of producing citadels of safety and security, defy the very meaning and essence of urban life—of open cities—although as Peter Marcuse suggests, these security practices (well underway prior to September 11) are part and parcel of producing divided cities; of walling off haves and have-nots, of invisibilizing the effects of neoliberal disinvestments in social welfare and reproduction (Marcuse 2003). Contemporary ghettos, he notes, are not just "night ghettos" like those of old, where people essential to the production of urban life—an integral part of the fabric of the city—went to sleep. Now we have twenty-four hour ghettos where excessed populations—homeless people, unemployed people—who are only a drag on urban life, are meant to stay (Marcuse 2003). Warehoused (to say nothing of those imprisoned); these populations would only disturb those in the citadels, their presence potentially reminding the privileged or just barely still-integrated of the social costs of their protection and potential vulnerability. Again spatial fetishization does its work of occluding, of repressing, of displacing the pain and price of the neoliberal security state.

Another sort of fetishism is also at work here. The citadelization of particular addresses, of symbolic sites, uncannily rehearses the mirage of the symbolism. These are empty signifiers, quite literally. While corporate headquarters have historically vied for prestigious addresses; needing a real estate claim in one global city or another—often more than one, their operations have been insistently decentralized and globalized over the past several decades. One of the things concealed through the spatial fetishization I am charting is this unhinging of production—material and symbolic—from particular places and all that unhinging allows. This will be addressed below; here I want to mark the largely inconsequential nature of address. This inconsequentiality was seen, as has been commonly noted, in how fast business as usual resumed even for those hardest hit by the September 11 attacks (except, of course, for the loss of life). In less than a week, back office operations and other corporate locations near and far from New York City had absorbed the functions of the spaces that were destroyed or compromised. Even the New York Stock Exchange was back to relatively normal operations a week later, suggesting a different sort of spatial fetishism—prior to and exceeding the security state. The corporate address increasingly had staged a prestigious, powerful presence that obscured its often hollowed out interior or a replicatability of function in the extended spaces of capitalist globalism. Since 9/11 marquee buildings and prestigious addresses have lost some of their allure,

even as symbols, as corporate deconcentration (in the name of safety) has continued to so-called edge cities or other less notable locations worldwide (Marcuse 2003). Meanwhile, urban citadels perform the play of safety while spatial divisions, which mark political-economic divisions, harden and expand.

The third and final spatial fetishism I want to address is the fortress nation. Here again there is a performance of bunkering; this time at a national scale. Among its signs are not only the increased border policing north and south, but the construction of an actual wall along a long stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border. The fortress nation is also reflected in airport screening, new harsh visa requirements, and other processes that invoke racial profiling on a world scale, the introduction of biometric fortressing through fingerprint entry requirements, and talk of instating pupil recognition identification modes for crossing borders or clearing security. The last is sure to sharpen the division between a mobile elite and a stalled, queued, interrogated, lumpen-travelariat. But the fortress nation, like the other fetishisms, is a spatial fiction. The nation is porous and perforated. Overlooked illegal immigration is essentially national policy, and millions of undocumented workers and would-be workers are essential to the United States and its globalized political economy. The performance of fortressing is belied everywhere by "wide-shut" borders (to say nothing of the fantastic security threat posed by containerized shipping, which remains essential unencumbered nationally and internationally.)

The contradictions, concealments, and horrors of this form of spatial fetishism are perhaps the starkest of all the ones I've traced. There is the performance of strict security—the reality of which falls on targeted racialized populations from the global south—at the juridical/legal level, while the economy, and therefore corporate leaders and small business owners alike, demands an open flow of immigrants. In another but intersecting realm there is the security state's mobilization of the nation as perforated—the creepy insistence that "they" may be anywhere and are everywhere, sleeper cells ready to be triggered, suicide bombers ready to roll, antimodern zealots hiding in the folds and interstices of "our" freedom. The banality of ever-present terror enables the nation to be mobilized as a coherent whole that is made coherent in part through deployments against less coherent threats. Terror, in other words, is mobilized to solidify a porous nation—the constitutive outside pushed inside and made interstitial; existing as Marx said of the Jews in ancient Poland, in the pores of society. The fortress paradoxically encloses what is in its pores as the always already perforated nation-space calls forth the fortress. Indeed the porosity of the United States is one of the foundational myths of the nation, and attempts to seal it off or solidify it threaten not only the nation's historical understandings of itself, but its vibrancy in the future.

Clearly, we are no safer for these instances of spatial fetishism or performances of security. But in any event, our safety would be at most only a byproduct of these performances. It is, of course, the nature of terrorism to work the interstices, to shock, to enact a repercussive unintelligibility. Its time-space does not conform to expected logics, and that characteristic is key to its success. Terrorists work in a deterritorialized way, puncturing the lull of the routine. If terrorism is inherently unpredictable, terrorism made banal is an attempt to routinize its presence while not addressing the contradictory truths of terrorism made routine. Since September 11, 2001 the U.S.

government has allocated over $18 billion to secure air travel, while appropriating only $250 million for mass transit security (Chan 2005). Not only does this allocation indicate skewed priorities and glaring vulnerabilities, but in the same week as the London underground bombings revealed the quotidian nature of contemporary terrorism, the U.S. Congress reduced next year's allocation for securing mass transit from $150 to $100 million. But then, of course, it's not clear how effective any of these expenditures are. All the camo in Pennsylvania Station wouldn't stop an attack on the numerous subway lines that run beneath it, and its presence should give us pause. As I suggested earlier, under the sign of such performances of security we find the growth and increasing ubiquity of what is known as a "surveillant assemblage," a Deleuzian idea that welds "big brother," whom we've familiarized through decades of fear, with rhizomatic surveillance, the current state of the game, which makes vigilance in every direction and at all scales the new normal.

If terrorism is part of the landscape (and the effects of banal terrorism make that so), then all means to ward it off are sanctioned. People submit to security searches; accept the proliferation of surveillance cameras; and don't mind that their e-mails might be filtered, read, or censored or that other means of seemingly private communication might be scrutinized. Many seem to welcome a military presence in civilian spaces and some call for such formerly objectionable things as national identity cards, even in the form of biometric "smart" cards that would be loaded with all sorts of personal data. The appeal of these cards is that "we" who have nothing to hide will be identified, while others will be flushed to the surface. That binary of false comfort notwithstanding, these cards are only as good as their source materials, and these can be fraudulent. If a forged birth certificate is used in the acquisition of a smart card, it won't be as smart as it seems. But then, we live in a society that in less virulent times took comfort in fences, making them higher in places that seemed more threatening. Yet no matter how tall, fences are almost always breached at the bottom. This obvious fact seems beside the point to those bent on securing particular environments. Likewise, when the banal security of the smart card is achieved through eclipsing its potential flaws of origin.[3]

Much of the state's intent in all this—which is laudable in obvious ways—is to prevent terrorism rather than prosecute it afterward. But prevention requires at once a massive security apparatus and a considered and informed allocation of limited resources. The former has already been deployed in ways that exceed what might reasonably be considered its mandate, often at the expense of the latter. Among the pernicious and extra-legal strategies are racial profiling; blanket surveillance of everyday material social practices long considered to be private; and "anticipatory policing," which, if we ratchet down the scale of its ambit and focus on yesterday's big fear, crime, would call for apprehending criminals before they commit a crime. These contentious policies and practices suggest some of the contradictions at the heart of the state's strategies. Apprehending and holding "terrorists" before they commit a terrorist act, because they fit a profile, for example, puts the state and those it inculcates through the daily practices of banal terrorism on a slippery and dangerous slope. In the UK, "profiling" is already being done among young people whom police consider "likely" to become criminals. Analogous with the U.S.'s unprecedented preemptive strike on Iraq, authorized by an unsubstantiated and fraudulent assertion of their

having weapons of mass destruction or the ability to make them anew, policing and security conducted in anticipation of certain people becoming criminals or terrorists is unacceptable, unwarranted, and dangerously erosive to the boundaries of long-standing social and political-economic contracts and conventions.

While some of the security measures that have been implemented in the past few years probably have prevented various attacks on innocent people, they will not, and, indeed, it is the nature of terrorism that they cannot, catch everything. Under these circumstances, it is ever more urgent to question not only the effectiveness of the security state naturalized in the course of the practices associated with banal terrorism, but the huge costs through which it is purchased. Among these is the diversion of state expenditures from the social wage to militarization at home and abroad. Far more people are hurt or killed from the preventable diseases of poverty, from heart disease and cancer, from HIV-AIDS, in automobile accidents, and in the course of everyday violence than in terrorist attacks. Yet state expenditure is wildly skewed toward the latter, which, of course, worsens the mortality and morbidity rates associated with the former. Another cost of banal terrorism is the erosion of civil liberties, authorized, in part, by the discursive construction of otherness; it seems to most Americans that state and other surveillance strategies are more about "them," than "us." But them is always already us, and the failure to recognize this jeopardizes the entire fabric of civil society.

There are perhaps some nonfetishistic means available to reduce the likelihood of future terrorist attacks, and I want to at least gesture toward these, though space prohibits a more detailed discussion. One strategy for thwarting the plans of terrorists, which was deployed in the first weeks after September 11, is to follow the money and cut it off at the source. Here, as is well known, law enforcement and other state agents followed the trail and quickly found themselves, or more accurately and abstractly the state that employs them and the ruling classes of corporate America. There are only so many international banks, and finance capital flows through narrow, well-defined, and quite ugly shared channels; witness the money laundering operations of drug cartels and how all too often they have been off limits in the "war on drugs." Not only are the houses of Bush and Saud intimately linked (Unger 2004), but the central circuitry of capitalist globalism is shared in soberingly similar ways by international terrorist organizations and multinational corporations. Their rhizomes traverse the globe, sprouting (and dying) in this locality or that as if they have local specificity, but the veneer of specificity is purchased through social relations at higher scales. The intertwined nature of these rhizomes seems to have limited the pursuit of many of the financial flows of terrorism. Following the trail of money did not go on for long or get very far, although it might have been quite productive in reducing the extent and number of terrorist attacks. In its place we find another enactment of spatial fetishism in the service of state violence. In the so-called War on Terror the United States and its allies have confronted a number of sovereign states purportedly to rout out various rhizomatic and deterritorialized organizations within their borders. The perpetrators of this war invoke and rely upon a Manichean geography of "good" nations—the "coalition of the willing" —against "bad"—the "axis of evil" or rogue states—to ease their way, attaching the trace of evil or roguishness to individual subjects as an alibi for torture or imprisonment that flouts international law.

Another means for reducing the chances of subsequent terrorist attacks involves intelligence that deserves the name. Evidence suggests that had local law enforcement, intelligence, and customs and immigration agencies shared their knowledge prior to September 11, 2001 they might have seen what was in relatively in plain sight (to say nothing of Bush having attended to his intelligence briefings in the summer of 2001, which indicated that airplanes might be used as weapons in an attack on the United States). Rather than knowledge sharing, however, the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities have a bureaucratized and bunkered approach to knowledge, as well as an inexplicable mining approach to its acquisition wherein information is gathered without limits, but not routinely sifted, interpreted, or analyzed. The knowledge exchange strategies of the intelligence community (if not its approach to knowledge formation) suggest the practices of those communities intent on guarding precious knowledge. For instance, at Los Alamos National Laboratories, where the atomic bomb was developed in a startlingly short time during World War II, scientists to this day compartmentalize their knowledge such that no one person knows everything. Through these means and others, the secrets of nuclear weaponry are secured from leakage or theft (McNamara 2001). Los Alamos, as it turned out, mimicked the practices of the Native American pueblos in whose midst they lived and worked. In these communities sacred knowledge was guarded through its compartmentalization and brought together in important ceremonies in a sacred protected site, the kiva. Not only does it take a community to produce and share important knowledge, but no single actor could hold or relay it all. While these strategies of knowledge production and exchange call forth community, they atomize knowledge to protect it. But even under the great web of Homeland Security, those who gather intelligence in the United States do not call forth community, but rather continue to keep their knowledge guarded and discrete, protecting their power and authority as they miss opportunities to put the pieces together and see a more developed picture of any given situation. Commission after commission have made clear that such practices are the opposite of what might be effective in preventing terrorist acts.

Of course, the surest way to thwart terrorism is to go to the roots; not just the shallow space-traversing rhizomes, but the issues that spur particular social actors to see terrorism as viable politics. Here I refer telegraphically to the material social practices of a globalized imperialist, racist, and sexist neoliberal capitalism that is as rhizomatic and mobile as international terrorist organizations. The social relations of production associated with contemporary global capitalism have increasingly separated production from social reproduction and in the process excessed millions of people not only from the promises of secular capitalist modernity but from any semblance of a viable future. The patterns of mobility and cultural production associated with this social formation have rendered these shifts manifest on a world scale. The changes and their wider visibility have provoked what might be thought of as ontological insecurity; an effect of the bleak futurity associated with the contemporary political economy. Ontological insecurity is called forth by the globalization of capitalist production over the past several decades, by the unmooring of previous advances in the social wage associated with the altered relationship between production and social reproduction, and by the construction of new ways of identification and new forms of subjectivity over the past few decades.

Banal terrorism works the circuitry of ontological insecurity, normalizing fear and the responses to it across geographic scale. Among these responses are household bunkering, domestic hypervigilance, gating of neighborhoods and guarding of buildings, all manner of screening in public spaces, and preemptive military strikes on sovereign nations.

Banal terrorism works to evade and mask the real sources of problems in the United States. More broadly, it avoids and tends to diminish the imagined importance of such things as the large and growing gap between rich and poor people, communities, regions, and nations; or the erosion of previously assumed guarantees about the future—that the next generation will be better off than the present one—in other words, the death of futurity. Indeed in the spring of 2004 banal terrorism was absurdly brought to bear on both social reproduction and the assault on the social wage when then Education Secretary Paige actually called the National Educators Association terrorists because of their insistence on providing real funding for President Bush's much vaunted but woefully underfunded No Child Left Behind initiative. In the very absurdity and fact of this utterance, it is easy to see the ways that banal terrorism is inserted in daily life and works a dangerous and suspect terrain.

While the parallels between the contemporary security state and its paranoias and those of the McCarthyist 1950s of the cold war are clear, something different and even more dangerous is going on now. With globalization and without the cold war there is no constitutive outside for either U.S. imperial ambitions or the sorts of solid (if mythic) identifications the nation once afforded its people. These circumstances are ontologically difficult. As the world has been mapped, gridded, and "worlded," and various boundaries—whether between inhabited areas and their surrounding wastelands, woods, wildernesses, or waters that terrified as they protected, or between discrete communities of all scales—have been made porous, the grounds of identity, of sovereignty, of power have shifted sharply over the past few decades prompting what I am calling ontological insecurity. It seems as if an enemy—a threatening evil other—must be conjured and reproduced not just to authorize state violence and militarism, but so that "we" can know ourselves. And here banal terrorism and banal nationalism blur. Banal nationalism makes "us" nationalists (and this is a "we" leftist critics must flag). The nation or "homeland" produced by banal nationalism is assumed and drawn on in the course of banal terrorism not just to call forth particular kinds of conformity, but to exhort "us" to purvey "civilization," order, "freedom" and "democracy" to others constituted as wanting if not abject. But this ordering is at once gloss and alibi. If banal terrorism is the latest apparatus of hegemonic consent, it is important to remember that less banal forms of terror—sponsored by the state—are present in its deployment. The mechanisms of state sponsored terrorism are ready to turn on "us" without warning and without provocation. It is the very banality of the ways terrorism is constructed and confronted in the contemporary United States that opens the door to just a little more of this everyday.

The performance of security in the everyday environment conceals both this rotten heart and the insecurities it provokes. It conceals the invasive social relations of the security state, conceals the militarization of the political economy (and its extraordinary deferred costs), conceals the ascendance of a theocratic authoritarian and possibly fascist state slowly and stealthily occurring around us, and conceals that

this antidemocratic, militarized state is being constructed upon a political economy hollowed out by thirty years of neoliberalism, and thus is built at the expense of collective social well-being with a huge mortgage on the future.

In a larger frame, the spatial fetishisms of the security state work in the Marxian sense of fetishism to obscure the social relations associated with ontological insecurity, which is attendant upon all these shifts; shifting our focus instead to the menacing other within and without, and not coincidentally incorporating some of the excessed into the military to wage multiple wars on terrorism. In the Freudian sense of the fetish, these spatializations mark the site of permanent vulnerability (to the impoverishments of the future as it currently stands as much as to terrorism), which we know but produce the fetish of security among other things to deny. But at a deeper level, in rehearsing the vulnerability, these spatial fetishisms repress our knowledge that in the post-cold war world "we" have/are the phallus. If as an imperial and largely unencumbered power the United States can do no better than to instantiate a venal, rapacious capitalism, which builds on and reinforces all of the uneven social relations of its past as if the social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental struggles of the twentieth century had never occurred, the horror is almost beyond comprehension.

This horror—and our implication in its production—can no longer be occluded by the fetishism of security and the routinization of terrorism. Exposing its contours and entailments is only a first step. Redressing its multiple oppressions in their rhizomatic spread and tangle requires a political imagination as geographically lithe and symbolically compelling as global capitalism, and its most viable counter force, Islamic fundamentalism, in the struggle to produce a more just, peaceful, and creative future.

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Notes

1. There are limits to the reach of banal terrorism even when well orchestrated and inflicted upon a vulnerable and willing population. Many Americans balked at former Attorney General John Ashcroft's and then Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge's proposal for TIPS (Terrorism Information and Prevention System), which sought to incorporate everyone into a domestic spy network. Neighbors were invited to inform on one another and delivery people called upon to report suspicious activities or wall hangings. This fantasy of a volunteer security corps ran aground along with many of the proposals that comprised Patriot Act II.
2. Some of the common sensibility of the War on Terrorism was performed by its predecessors such as the War on Drugs and the War on Crime, and, in another vein, the 1996 Immigration Act, but space precludes attending to these here.
3. The conveniences of bank, credit, and store discount cards; toll transponders; Internet accounts; medical identification cards; and the like have proven their vulnerability to illegitimate use, and the ascendence of identity theft makes clear that these flaws will proliferate, compromising "smart" identification systems at their origins.

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