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INTRODUCTION

Homo Securus and the Story of Insecurity

SECURITY OFTEN GETS told as a tale of lost innocence. In the version of this story presented by C. Vann Woodward, a towering figure in Southern history and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Americans throughout much of their history have enjoyed the good fortune of "a national disposition to look upon security as a natural right" (6). For close to two hundred years, "nature's gift of three vast bodies of water"—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the once frozen Arctic Ocean—protected the United States from "any other power that might constitute a serious menace to its safety" (2). Thomas Paine had perceived as much in 1776 when he observed in a bluster of exceptionalism that "no country on the globe is so happily situated" as the independent states of America. If not by divine arrangement, then the geographical luck of the draw had relieved the white inhabitants of North America of the affective need to worry about security. That era seemed to have come to a close by World War II and certainly by 1960 when Woodward made this pronouncement in the pages of the *American Historical Review* not long after the United States and the Soviet Union each had demonstrated a capacity to launch ICBMs that could cross oceans in a matter of minutes. President George H. W. Bush would belatedly reach a similar conclusion, announcing in 2002 that "oceans no longer matter when it comes to making us safe" (qtd. in I. Young 10). But for much of its earlier history, from late in the War of 1812 when British soldiers invaded Washington, D.C., and set fire to the White House to December 1941 when Japanese planes bombed the U.S. naval base in the Hawaii Territory, the United States had enjoyed "free security," comfortably relying on the "bounty of nature" (Woodward 2) to save it from

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costly military expenditures and onerous taxes that burdened European powers preparing for national defense.[1]

That innocence was lost again most recently on September 11, 2001. Making direct reference to Woodward's essay a half century earlier, the military historian John Lewis Gaddis in *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (2004) remarked that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 shattered "the assumption of safety that had long since become . . . part of what it meant to be an American" (10). Speaking in the grandiose terms suited for a grand narrative, Gaddis describes this "national security crisis" as a "national identity crisis as well" (10). September 11 came as a shock to much of the world, but Gaddis believes that the breach of national security should not have been a blow to historical consciousness. Even though the burning of the White House in 1814 constitutes a "barely remembered violation of homeland security," U.S. continental expansion throughout the nineteenth century and internationalism can be viewed as elements of a "grand strategy" for securing territorial borders that shifted and adapted in response to changing geopolitical conditions (12, 14). This perspective helps bring into focus the tenets of unilateralism, preemption, and hegemony that have guided much of U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century, but it fails to explain why this innocence about security is repeatedly lost only to be reasserted and remade so frequently.

The confusion stems from the concept of national security itself, which tends to assume the nation's internal stability and domestic integrity in the first place. Security by this thinking encompasses the state's interaction with foreign powers through diplomacy, armaments, espionage, new technologies, population management, and information gathering that fall under its purview. When security first emerged as a core principle of governance for Thomas Hobbes, the immediate context was the internal strife of the English Civil War, but today and since World War II security refers predominantly to external threats.[2] Security gets grounded in national identity, an "us" unified against the potential threat posed by "them," that ignores zones of the homeland that are constantly being enumerated, tracked, and surveilled, in short, securitized. What conceptual elements of security become newly available for examination once the cloak of the national is removed? Security clearly has national significance, but this orientation has also meant its other components from the affective to the philosophical and from the biopolitical to the speculative are construed as having lesser importance. National security entails discussions of policy and military strategy, but security—without the buffer of a state-supported adjective—appears as an aesthetic and affective concern

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whose dimensions are at once as expansive as the sublime and as narrow as individual personal privacy. Even momentarily stripping away the "national" modifier forces security to stand on its own, as it were, and allows more direct examination of its effects upon social feelings and political sensations.

The curious aspect of national security is that it almost always involves an international context whether the danger appears as the specter of terrorist cells associated with foreign entities such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda or as the "debounding of uncontrollable risks" (Beck, "Terrorist Threat" 41) created by ecological and financial crises that pay no attention to borders. Even though global warming is a planetary concern, "the national security implications of climate change" are laden with ominous consequences that "exacerbate existing stressors, contributing to poverty, environmental degradation, and political instability, providing enabling environments for terrorist activity abroad" ("National Security Implications" 3).[3] Troll farms and keyboard armies sponsored by autocratic states such as Russia, Iran, and North Korea pose a threat to the security of democratic elections. Spreading misinformation and stoking partisan divisions fall well short of a coup d'état, a strategy that the CIA pursued in Latin America for decades. Yet the dangers of cyberterrorism are unrelenting: what such plots lack in the drama or suddenness of a military overthrow is made up by the burden of an ever-present awareness of the electronic infrastructure's vulnerability to such attacks. Inflated worries about election security and voter fraud, recent chimeras of the American right wing, have become a regular feature of the political landscape—and not without international help.[4]

In the face of such continuous emergencies, "the state is back, and for the old Hobbesian reason—the provision of security" (Beck, "Terrorist Threat" 47). In making this point, the sociologist of risk Ulrich Beck nonetheless asserts that ensuring safety from terrorism and other threats requires transnational solutions. Such bifocal vision is rare, as the tendency across disciplines has been to focus security outward in ways that overlook interior zones such as internal colonialism on the frontier, domestic tensions surrounding race, even the interiority of whiteness. The international tenor of security discourse ignores a long history of American insecurity in which threat is always located within. The friend/enemy distinction, so important to Carl Schmitt's understanding of the political state, operates most forcefully at home. In U.S. contexts, the rise of the carceral state reflects the degree to which security takes shape as an internal project. Racialized links between the modern-day prison system and plantation slavery and its legacies of Jim Crow are as much a matter

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of affect as policy and law. Feelings of racial resentment and vulnerability, simmering since the seventeenth century, that Michelle Alexander has identified among whites concerned about loss of status have proven an ample reservoir of fear, more than enough to justify the mass incarceration of millions in the name of public safety. Locking up Black people in cages, no less than the summary executions of Black men, women, and children in public parks, in their own homes, during traffic stops, while jogging, and more, is really about the deprivation of security for an entire population, the denial, in Ta-Nehisi Coates's words, of "the right to secure and govern our own bodies" (8).

Concrete policy discussions as well as theoretical treatments of security suffer from a critical hyperopia, an inclination to take the nation as an already coherent actor whose security imperatives play out primarily in a global theater. Such farsightedness during the Cold War perhaps explains why Woodward mentioned the slave patrols of the plantation South only in passing, as an ancillary consideration in comparison to the momentous affairs of statecraft on the world stage. "The southern constabulary that patrolled the slaves was organized on military lines" and thus "was concerned with a domestic police problem," hardly a national security matter in Woodward's view (4). Like the ideology of "free land" that drove expansionism and supposedly eased class tensions in packed seaboard cities, the belief in "free security" saved the United States from having to waste resources and manpower as European countries did. Yet as subsequent chapters in this book show, enslaved people and free persons of color were perceived as chronic sources of instability that demanded an urgent infrastructural fix that took shape as the American Colonization Society. While that problem festered, white people and especially white nationalists reported feeling paralyzed by their fears for the future of the United States. Yet rather than rely solely on the anguished musings of white people—surely an overrepresented genre in the scholarly archive—in ways that might make this study complicit in their colonizing logic, *American Insecurity* looks to the archives of nineteenth-century Black periodical and pamphlet culture to reinterpret the data and algorithms used to construe the Black population itself as an untamable source of bioinsecurity.

For now, though, the point is that two common assumptions about security stand in need of correction: first, that only recently has security become a defining feature about such fundamental issues as safety, privacy, and whiteness; and second, that when security concerns finally did make an impression upon American consciousness, the scope remained primarily strategic and international in character. This latter point bears more commentary. While "no

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nation, not even the most powerful, can ensure its national security by itself" (Beck, "Terrorist Threat" 48), it is no less true that the idea of nation still sets the horizon for how security is imagined. National security all too often presumes a sense of united purpose within the homeland. In its most insistent manifestations, security asserts a coherent sense of national identity that can become indistinguishable from nationalism itself. After all, who among "us" does not want to take precautions against terrorism, identity theft, biological pathogens, or any of the threats that provide a rationale for policing, border security, cybersecurity, and other safety measures? "We" all do—this answer, however true, smooths over the contradictions, divisions, and conflicts that arise from implementations of security, which, following Schmitt, are always decisive.[5] Schmitt's essential opposition between friend and enemy implies an external other, yet the crisis that security creates by unavoidably generating anxiety, fear, and uncertainty—in a word, insecurity—returns as the repressed, coming back home as a constitutive feature of the political world and the subjects that populate it. So, while security in the classic form of realist political science identifies people against whom precautions must be taken (e.g., Islamic terrorists, Chinese hackers, Russian honeypots, U.S. military forces acting under the Bush Doctrine of unilateralism), the more nuanced approach described here argues that security has become effectively deterritorialized to encompass the contingency of freedom and the uncertainty of the future.

Such safety concerns, in both their vagueness and pervasiveness, install security as an everyday phenomenon. In contrast to a singular moment like the Cuban Missile Crisis or a supposedly one-time breach of the levees in New Orleans, crisis has readily become a permanent feature of governance because, as this book shows, it was that way all along. The "state of emergency" that, according to Walter Benjamin, "is not the exception but the rule" (*Illuminations* 257), describes not a temporary declaration of martial law or related seizure of powers but rather the normative condition of a society that perceives risk everywhere and at every moment.[6] The suspension of the law that defines the state of emergency arises when security is thought to be in crisis, when the constitutional order, territorial sovereignty, or public safety suddenly appears to be shaky and insecure.[7] Of course, though, the idea of what counts as *sudden* is relative, a judgment call. It is easy to see how a sovereign entity like a president or a congress might make this determination, but it is also enacted by a wide swath of actors with varying degrees of power: settler colonialists, property owners, white nationalists, humanists, and, perhaps most acutely, citizens with respect to their neighbors as well as their own selves. Just because swift

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authoritative action may establish a "temporary" state of emergency does not mean that it is going to disappear any time soon. The crisis that makes necessary and justifies extraordinary security measures, even and especially those that suspend legal norms, may seem "absolutely unthinkable for the law" (Agamben, *State of Exception* 51). Yet, as Agamben explains, this "unthinkable thing . . . must not be allowed to slip away at any cost" (51) lest the investments, both real and psychic, that the state and its subjects have in security be thrown into question. From the perspective of the state, "there is no end to prevention," according to the spymaster in Joseph Conrad's novel of anarchist bombing, *The Secret Agent* (1907). Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Infinite Justice, as U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the early twenty-first century were officially called, represent nothing less than the condensation of a logic that had made security continuous. At the risk of relying on academic shorthand, the dialectical slash within in/security marks the Janus-faced character of a fundamental political desire that promotes uncertainty as well as assurance, vulnerability alongside feelings of safety. It is, above all, a way of gesturing at a still visible scar on the political body that necessitates more critical observation.

Maintaining constant security awareness is draining. In financial terms alone, the United States, "driven by Americans' own material, ideological, and ontopolitical insecurities" (George 34), spends as much as all other countries combined on national defense.[8] Psychic and existential costs are much harder to calculate, but affective economies must invest heavily in "the ontology of insecurity within the constitution of the political" (Ahmed, "Affective Economies" 132). In other words, security regularly takes a toll on states and their subjects in requiring and then eating up a steady stream of material, intellectual, and emotional resources—but it could not be any other way since terror, not to mention less intense forms of disquietude and uncertainty, is structurally necessary to travel checkpoints, national defense, cybersecurity, and other precautions designed to ensure social stability. The state as both an institutional and affective formation ensures safety, but its position is beset by contradictions: on the one hand, people turn to the state for assurance against the threat of exceptional violence such as terrorism; on the other, the state monopolizes public safety in ways that can feed consternation for its subjects.

An abiding level of dread is found at the origins of the polis. If "biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception" that Agamben traces back to the ancient world (*Homo Sacer* 6), then so too is security. Where the Greeks

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located the state of exception in *homo sacer*, "a life that could be killed" (86), by the seventeenth century this vulnerability widened to encompass potentially everyone trapped under conditions where the war of all against all or *bellum omnium contra omnes*, as Hobbes memorably put it, represents the brutal fact of human existence. To the fundamental categories central to modern politics—public/private, right/left, absolutism/democracy—that define for Agamben the "biopolitical horizon" (4), it is important to add security/insecurity.[9] Moreover, Agamben's observation that these distinctions "have been steadily dissolving, to the point of entering today into a real zone of indistinction" (4) just as aptly applies to security societies that spawn and require insecurity. This slippage between "real insecurity and illusory security" (158) is for Carlo Galli a function of global politics while the "shuttle between security and insecurity [that] marks the exceptional citizens of the US security state" (2) is for Inderpal Grewal a function of neoliberalism, but it would be a mistake to conclude that an older style of liberalism associated with the colonizing and plantation societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not play an equal, if not greater, role in putting the state subject on constant edge. Rather than see the twinning and twining of security and insecurity about one another as a contemporary development, it is crucial to recognize how the contractual promise of safety and the affective state of fear have fed off one another for centuries. To chalk this dialectic up to modern surveillance society or the steady ravages of neoliberalism is to risk accepting the bargains, trade-offs, and other arrangements of convenience that predate and continue to buttress the creation of an identity I call *homo securus*.

If *homo sacer* simply meant "a life that could be killed," I build on that concept to propose *homo securus* as a life that could be first secured and then securitized. This political figure is already present in Hobbes, Schmitt, and Agamben; it is just a matter of connecting the dots to reveal the outline or, better yet, the profile of the subject who seeks protection and promises to obey. Schmitt's commentary on the Leviathan, composed in 1938 as a certain chill descended upon his relationship to the Nazi party, equated the lack of a strong, unified state to the Hobbesian state of nature.[10] People overcome a "'pre-political' condition of insecurity" only when "the accumulated anguish of individuals who fear for their lives brings a new power into the picture: the leviathan" (Schmitt, *Leviathan* 33, 46). This decision marks the moment when it is possible to proclaim that "a new secular God has emerged: Security" (Neocleous, "Securitati Perpetuae" 25). The first dots to connect are those that

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make security dependent upon the state, a conclusion that Schmitt shapes into the axiom, *extra civitatem nulla securitas*, literally, no security outside the city (48). This principle connects to the next dot when the state confronts a security crisis and responds by suspending the law and declaring a state of emergency. From here it is easy to get to the next point: as the danger to public safety becomes routine and as the exception also becomes the rule, "an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security" gets installed "as the normal technique of government" (Agamben, *State of Exception* 14) whereby everyone becomes a subject of security: *homo securus*.[11] Once decided, the security crisis "must not be allowed to slip at any cost" (51). *Homo securus* accepts this charge by watching for anything out of the ordinary, taking precautions, and exercising and consenting to surveillance, but perhaps the most important action is simply a set of affective responses: tremble as Thomas Jefferson did when contemplating the future of a multiracial society; experience the sublime when confronted with the floods of information described by writers as diverse as Charles Brockden Brown, Claude Shannon, and Maurice Lee; discern how liberalism requires fear, horror, and vulnerability as political theorists Judith Shklar, Elisabeth Anker, and Wendy Brown do.

While the decisive lines in this connect-the-dots sketch are provided by the state, there is plenty of shading to *homo securus* that involves noninstitutional elements of life wrapped up with aesthetics, culture, and affect. This identity at once scorns vulnerability as an unwelcome exposure to risk and embraces it as a necessary condition for preparedness. If, in traditional and masculinist terms, the political subject "establishes its agency by vanquishing vulnerability," as Judith Butler has suggested ("Rethinking" 24), it is also the case that feeling threatened and exposed can provide ongoing justifications for a continuous culture of security. Butler thus seeks a different rendering of vulnerability that discovers the possibility of resistance at moments "when we find ourselves radically unsupported under conditions of precarity or under explicit conditions of threat" (19). From Jefferson to David Walker, the American versions of *homo securus* that most concern me in the pages that follow exhibit deep affective attachments to the very insecurity that they seek to mitigate and control. This book is therefore not a study of the history of surveillance, wiretapping, security legislation, or the erosion of privacy and other constitutional rights, though many excellent books exist on these topics.[12] Nor does it pretend to lay out a step-by-step account of how national security has grown to become an indispensable multibillion-dollar undertaking. Instead, it offers a

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critical look that stretches to emotional and aesthetic zones beyond as well as below the state, which is where literature comes into play as both an object of study and an analytic tool for examining security.

If *homo securus* represents an abstraction and if security can seem an impersonal force, the project undertaken here demonstrates the critical work that cultural analysis, including literary and historical reading in combination with political theory and philosophy, can do in rendering this abstraction in material and embodied terms. Security secures nothing if not itself, which is to say that, as a political principle closely bound up with sovereignty and governance, security protects the order that justifies its existence. It does so not by eradicating vulnerability but by managing it, even prizing it at times. When Apollo in William Cowper's 1791 translation of *The Iliad* exhorts the Trojans to remember that the Greeks, "like yourselves, are vulnerable flesh" (I.605), the god's phrasing underscores how the state of vulnerability is almost always a passive one in which bodies or other matter await physical injury. Although notions of vulnerability later accrued figurative and psychological dimensions, its physical substrate remains in force, evident in the Latin *vulnerābilis* to signify wounding and the German *Verwundbarkeit*, which translates as "woundability."[13] Today, even the emotional virtue of "making oneself vulnerable" preserves the sense of passivity by syntactically implying the vulnerable self as the recipient of one's actions.

In kind, this book offers a vulnerable reading that is at once an examination of state-sponsored defenselessness and other forms of vulnerability and an encounter with texts that make us so fearful and uncertain that we beseech others to provide security and keep us safe. Yet, as a critical orientation, vulnerability can also facilitate a certain receptiveness to competing interpretations and discordant understandings. Feeling exposed means that one is potentially exposed to multiple readings, including new ways of seeing and making sense of a world that is structured by security. Collisions with the aesthetic help seed this attitude of openness and susceptibility to alternative meanings: as Marianne Hirsch has suggested, vulnerability prepares "a radical openness toward surprising possibilities" that enables creative and imaginative thinking (81). In contrast, striving for invulnerability requires "a defensiveness that shuts down debates and silences dissent" (81), effects that are toxic to the cultivation of democratic culture. "Vulnerability ought not to be identified exclusively with

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passivity," writes Butler (*Force* 192)—and, indeed, as a mode of reading, it has the potential to activate critique.

A vulnerable reading commits us to questioning forms of passivity that are hardwired into the relationship between *homo securus* and the state. It shares little with those who have a vested interest in using insecurity to maintain the normalcy and everydayness of the state of emergency. Contrast this view with Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld's take on "the emerging security environment" that he detailed in an essay for *Foreign Affairs* in 2002. He argued for massive increases in national defense spending by using the sort of asymmetrical comparison that is a staple of homespun rhetoric. "It's like dealing with burglars: You cannot possibly know who wants to break into your home or when," he explains. The cautious homeowner installs a deadbolt and then moves on to an alarm system. But that's not enough: you have stop crime before it gets to your home and so you "patrol the neighborhood and keep bad guys off the streets." He wraps up the analogy with a jokesy understatement: "And you know that a big German Shepherd doesn't hurt, either." Well, it's the same for national defense, he suggests, because the military's job is not to prepare to fight any one country but rather to be ready to battle them all and, even more importantly, to intercept threats from anywhere, including nonstate actors. "We need to examine our vulnerabilities," Rumsfeld concludes, not just so that we can be ready but so that we feel the motivation, the ontological need, to ramp up the security state like never before. Vulnerabilities thus prove strategic, an affective resource that is the precondition for all the other expenditures of military hardware, data collection, surveillance technologies, and predictive algorithms that get poured into security. In contrast, the vulnerable readings proposed here are devoted to interrogating the fictions and theories that established insecurity as a political raison d'être in the first place.

A fanciful but no less gritty or ironic example illustrates how vulnerable reading practices intersect with security. Department 17 of the Central Intelligence Agency, as imagined by James Grady in the spy thriller *Six Days of the Condor* (1974), is obviously a state intelligence agency, but its purview is culture and aesthetics. Working out of a nondescript front known as the American Literary Historical Society, Joe Turner and his fellow intelligence experts "keep track of all espionage and related acts recorded in literature" (16). But it would be a disservice to call the society a front since its activities really are historical and literary! Turner and his colleagues read literature in order to discover potential insights about insecurity, exercising formidable

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interdisciplinary vigilance over scenarios and ideas that affect Americans' feelings of safety and stability. The fact that the society's intellectual resources have been applied to "volumes dating as far back as James Fenimore Cooper" (16) provides a precedent for this project since *American Insecurity* turns to *The Pioneers* for its first extended vulnerable reading. This fortuitous coincidence aside, the conviction that cultural texts can illuminate the concept of security in new and surprising ways deepens the belief that both academic and everyday readers of books, images, and other forms of media have much to contribute to understanding how we think and feel about security. In the film version directed by Sydney Pollack and starring Robert Redford, *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), Joe Turner puzzles his superiors who cannot figure out how a low-level analyst with few tactical skills manages to evade attempts at assassination. Turner's modest self-assessment offers no insight either: "I'm not a field agent, I just read books." It turns out that reading books is an underappreciated analytical skill for understanding security and surveillance.

> CIVILIAN: Where did he learn evasive moves?
> CIA DEPUTY DIRECTOR: He . . . reads.
> CIVILIAN #2: What in the hell's <u>that</u> mean?
> CIA DEPUTY: No. You don't understand. He reads . . . everything. (50)

At this point the screenplay directs that "Civilian is about to protest again" but is cut off. What if he were not interrupted? What if the audience heard a provocation about the capacity of reading to destabilize security? Reading everything, like collecting all the data, as we will see in the following chapters, soon creates a security crisis of a different scale.

This book is an effort to break down the concept of security by investigating its American origins and the structures of state as well as the structures of feeling that flow from what philosophers posit as the impetus to form a political community in the first place. The question is not whether people need security since risk, as Ulrich Beck contends, represents a defining feature of modernity. Rather, the goal is to examine how security provides an organizing principle for collective life in ways that both enhance freedom and limit it. While admittedly reading less than "everything" but still endeavoring to be attentive to a range of novels, tracts, pamphlets, and newspapers, including the complete run of *Freedom's Journal*, in conjunction with contemporary critical theory about media, biopolitics, and affect, I look at how security's generative capacity to provide a foundation for art and culture, as Hobbes

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proposed in *Leviathan*, is matched only by its capacity to incite fear and promote terror.

This book is organized into two parts. Part 1, "Contradictions and Contours," provides a two-phase setup to the overall argument, first, by laying out in chapter 1 a series of axioms about security and insecurity and, second, by pulling together and examining a constellation of historical moments in chapter 2 that as a whole exemplify how those propositions have been put into practice. The diversity of these snapshots arrayed from 1755 to 1837 with respect to tone and scale does not lend itself to any single narrative. Accordingly, part 2, "Information, Aesthetics, Population," burrows into instances of fear and racial terror across different modes from the gothic to the arithmetical and statistical. The chapters in this section adhere to a rough chronological arc, beginning with Cooper's *The Pioneers*, set in 1793–94, moving to Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), and then concluding with two chapters on white nationalism and Black protest in newspapers and pamphlets during the 1820s–1830s. Although plenty of reason exists to critique unbroken temporal sequencing (more on that in a moment), the importance of telling a story about security should not be underestimated when private security experts, government officials, and information brokers so often try to write that story of security for others. "When you're living in fear, it's easy to let others make security decisions for you," writes the security technologist Bruce Schneier (*Beyond Fear* 8). Fear and security are not diametrically opposed, however: the justification of everything from national defense to password protection rests on an acute and at times exaggerated sense of vulnerability.

Security emerges as the original motivation behind human beings' desire for political community in the political fairy tale that philosophy tells of the social contract and sovereignty. If the concept of security takes shape as a story, it is crucial to examine the narratives that it sets in motion as well as those that it forecloses. The story's beginning usually runs something like this: "Once upon a time, individuals living in the state of nature got so fed up with unceasing predation and uncertainty that they banded together for protection and—." At this point the story takes any number of decisive turns to justify absolute sovereignty, limited monarchy, or rule by "we, the people" as the best guarantor of public safety. This book complicates the story by supplying a counternarrative that views security not as the remedy for fear and anxiety or even

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insecurity but as their source. I thus posit the "origins of vulnerability" as part of this book's title to imply a different set of political beginnings for security as "one of the paradigmatic 'great words' of the modern state" (Arends 263). But not only the state: in ways that precede as well as exceed official governmental structures, terror and similar forms of vulnerability appear as both the cause and effect of thinking about security. In the chapters that follow, then, security thus also becomes paradigmatic for thinking about the frontier, zones of racial interiority, sublime infoscapes, and other spaces where the concept is frayed and at times thoroughly unraveled by the contradictions it creates.

If the mode of analysis here is literary critical and historical, the interventions are philosophical, aesthetic, and political theoretical. Locke on human understanding, Kant and Schiller on the sublime, and Hannah Arendt on freedom are as important to these pages as are the novels of gothic terror and frontier romance by Brocken Brown and Fenimore Cooper. With this interdisciplinary mix, I join recent discussions of security and terror by Inderpal Grewal, Paul Amar, Andrew Lakoff, Joseph Masco, Jasbir Puar, and Erica Edwards, among others. Writing in the wake of the most significant security lapse since World War II, the "shocking display of American vulnerability" (Masco 10) of September 11, these critics suggest the importance of understanding the leviathan that is the modern security state. Its power became manifest, for Grewal, after 9/11 in the appearance of "security moms" and other neoliberal citizens who themselves take on the state's policing and surveillance functions. From the establishment of the national security state in 1947 described by Masco to military interventions in Iraq, as Edwards shows, the security apparatus enlisted—often literally so in the armed forces or cabinet positions—Black women to support the ideologies of counterterror. Along similar lines, Puar stresses how the incorporation of queer and minority subjects into the security state reinforces "the ascendancy of whiteness" (27). The imperative behind making "state of exception discourses" an ongoing feature of public and private life, after all, is to ensure "the preservation of a way of life and those privileged to live it" (9). While Amar's focus in *The Security Archipelago* is on the Global South and Masco's *Theater of Operations* contends that U.S. security has become planetary in scope, these and other studies of the topic concentrate on contemporary moments, especially in their arguments that late twentieth- and twenty-first-century configurations of security represent an unprecedented development and expansion, a "new psychic infrastructure . . . a new kind of security culture" (Masco 8), of leviathanic power. I do not disagree with these assessments: who could ignore the ubiquity of surveillance cameras or the

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everydayness of checkpoints, scans, and dual-factor authentication?[14] Nonetheless, the deliberate historical turn of *American Insecurity* to literary and cultural aspects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is driven by the contention that security has always named an unstable concept, no less at war with than enamored by the feelings of vulnerability and other effects it creates. The point is not simply that a security crisis has been around for a long time, at least since justifications for the social contract, but that recognizing the essential tension of in/security can provide openings for questioning its hold on political desires today. Looking at this fault line reminds us that the justifications for security are not set in stone.

While loosely knitted together by the linear sequencing of literary history, the chapters in part 2 can better be described as anachronic time loops.[15] Samuel Taylor Coleridge disparaged the "anachronic mixture" of Ben Johnson's *Sejanus His Fall* to describe how the dramatist's Roman characters strutted about with "James-and-Charles-the-First zeal" (181). But where Coleridge found the mismatch between first-century Rome and Renaissance England to be "amusing" (181), indicative in his view of Johnson's lesser status compared to Shakespeare, the looping approach at times adopted here sets up a critical conversation between past and present. It is a conjunction that does not always obey the niceties of chronology; instead, the goal is to conjoin different slices of literary and cultural history in an effort to defamiliarize contemporary understandings of security that have come to be accepted as so many faits accomplis. A penumbra of information surveillance, racial antagonism, and terror after 9/11 thus hangs over these examinations, as debates surrounding constitutional notions of privacy, the algorithmic sorting of data, and the paranoid notion of a "white genocide" give a presentist edge to this project. However, the approach here is not to look to earlier crises in order to explain how we got to the security society of the twenty-first century. At one level, it is only too obvious that the past is prologue; at another, it is dangerous to assume that earlier encounters with security and terror are somehow quainter, less sophisticated versions of the contemporary state of emergency.

The hardly seamless fit between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts and present-day formations instead serves as provocation for thinking aslant about the conceptual encrustations that surround security. If the anachronic moment unfolds as "a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural" (Nagel and Wood 9), it offers the possibility for thinking outside of "straight time" or strict senses of chronology that settle on a single conclusion. Such a counterchronological orientation disputes the maxim that "time is of the

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essence" in order to push back against essences, including the ones that see security as essential to both governance and human flourishing.[16] In this respect, then, this study relies less on the linearity of history that leads up to the present than on a series of time loops in which the origins of vulnerability overlap with the vulnerabilities of our contemporary moment. The two are hardly identical, and, indeed, the degree of similarity between emergency then and emergency now is not the point. Rather, it is the doubling and redoubling of vulnerability that makes security a constant need and desire. U.S. culture has always been in a state of emergency, and with each new threat—Indian raid, slave rebellion, epidemic, missile attack, catastrophic storm, hacked election, and so on—the feeling of vulnerability never gets old.

Temporal enjambments that, for instance, present the gothic as a commentary on twentieth-century information theory or posit debates over colonization as an anticipatory critique of algorithmic thinking may court charges of anachronism. Such an indictment, attributed to the Annales school of history, deems anachronism "the worst of all sins, the sin that cannot be forgiven" (qtd. in Rancière 21). The trespass occurs not simply when events are put out of sequence but rather "when a present way of thinking is imposed upon the past" (de Grazia 13).[17] Yet the accusation of anachronism itself betrays an ideological investment in the reigning temporal order, especially versions that are committed to the notion that history, along with things like human knowledge, democracy, and technology, is always progressing. "Perception of anachronism," writes Jeremy Tambling, "comes from a society comparatively confident about its present" (9). From this perspective, then, if thinking about contemporary security through perspectives offered by much earlier meditations on the topic seems to run afoul of temporal regularities, the advantage is that this orientation can make us less sure about the extent to which security sets the horizon for political, social, and intimate life.

Since chronology involves (more than) dates and numbers, it might be useful to turn to a mathematician-philosopher and then a poet for some guidance. Henri Poincaré put pressure on the strict ordinal logic that allows us to start with an expression like $x+1$ and reason that if we know the value of x, then we can figure out $x+2$, $x+3$, and so on. He called this "reasoning by recurrence," a process he associated with a certain amount of intellectual freedom "for it enables us to leap over as many stages as we wish" (11). Next, the poet: Paul Valéry found inspiration in this idea, and he hypothesized that reasoning by recurrence encourages unexpected conjunctions, new combinations and "violent contrasts" (39).[18] By encouraging these collisions, one can "attain the power of

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shaking oneself free of any thought that has lasted too long" (39). Reading for time loops can set us free from hidebound thinking; Valéry's passion for temporal leaps will not set us free from security, even if we were to be so heedless to wish such a thing, but it can change how we think about the concept.

Part 2 of *American Insecurity* comprises chapters that attempt to move in such a direction. In chapter 3, Cooper's 1823 novel provides an opportunity to examine how the twin origins of privacy and property provide something of a dubious legal and philosophical backstory to the collection of aggregate data by the National Security Agency (NSA) and other agencies. Chapter 4 extends this focus by using Brockden Brown's gothic tale to examine how the torrent of information scooped up by both humanistic and security endeavors intensifies doubt, uncertainty, and sensations of terror. In naming "Jeffersonian trembling" as a pathological national condition, chapter 5 seeks to diagnose the affective and biopolitical conditions that fuel feelings of white aggrievement. The final chapter explores the connections among data and national security by considering the accounting and enumeration of Black life by advocates of colonization as well as their fierce opponents, including James Forten and David Walker. A brief coda provides a conclusion by asking, with help from Herman Melville, what comes after security? New security measures are being implemented and updated all the time (your password must now contain at least one non-alphanumeric character, your laptop now stays in your bag at the TSA checkpoint, you no longer need show to proof of vaccination to enter), but the set of affects and attitudes created by insecurity continues to look familiar.

Becoming less comfortable with a value like privacy in debates over surveillance, as the looping and overlapping of Cooper and the NSA in chapter 3 suggest, may help enliven resistance to liberal models of governance. Or, to take a different example, becoming less assured about the insights and uses of political economy, as the temporal collisions in chapter 6 insinuate, can reveal how mortality functions as a security mechanism. In all, the anachronic approach here puts contemporary security in a different time in an effort "to think otherwise" (Rancière 38) about this indispensable element of modern existence. Bolstered by this approach, the readings and interpretation in *American Insecurity* introduce the potential for stepping outside one's time to contest the seemingly logical progression of history that got us to no other place than the present which we inhabit.

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