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Cultures of (In)Security in Comparison: From Comparative Literature to Critical Approaches to Security Studies

In this article, the authors attempt to show the relevance and roles of critical security studies in relation to the field of Comparative Studies taking into consideration new developments in this field and the need for critical and self-conscious approaches to national, international and transnational relations within comparative literature (*lato sensu*). Secondly, it is suggested that renewed examinations of the notion of hospitality are fundamental to shape new security approaches within Comparative Studies. The article considers the need for practical and updated revisions of ‘hospitality,’ attentive to heterogeneous (regional, national, international and transnational) articulations. Thirdly, the authors offer an overview of the articles collected in the themed cluster, in order to highlight how they can be understood within the debates about security in comparison. The different contributions, ranging from humanities to social sciences, provide a useful and broad disciplinary convergence that also demonstrates how they forge new, but necessarily ‘insecure,’ paths within comparative studies.

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**The Uncanny Return of American Exceptionalism:
Barack Obama v. The Tea Party Movement**

This article shows how the fantasy of American exceptionality – an idea that recent approaches to transnational American Studies have consciously tried to avoid – seems to be a well-grounded concept increasingly used within public and political domains especially related to Homeland Security strategies. In particular, this essay suggests that the idea of “exception” was a powerful metaphorical and operative notion that reinforced the so-called ‘War on Terror’ and the ‘State of Exception’ inaugurated by George W. Bush after 2001. More crucially however, Pease investigates the tensions that oppose Barack Obama and the Tea Party movements, by exposing how the Tea Party program rests on a deliberate disavowal of knowledge and on fostering new parasitic anxieties over Obama’s administration. By emphasizing how the Tea Party has struggled to convert what was perceived as Obama’s potential of transformation and change into a fetishistic narrative that places him as a new terrorist and enemy of the state, this article further discusses how homeland security discourses and counter-discourses are closely intertwined with issues of race and biopolitics.

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An Exploratory Study of Uses of “Urban Security” and “Urban Safety” in International Urban Studies Literature

This article sets out a systematic, albeit preliminary, exploration of the way the concepts of security and safety are employed in scholarly urban studies literature about crime (and the prevention of it). We employ network analysis on author keywords, complemented with text analysis of abstracts, over sets of bibliographic information retrieved from Web of Science. Using a critical interpretative analysis of findings, and looking at the geography of main scholarly communities in this field, the article highlights differences (especially at the operational level) and commonalities (especially at the conceptual level) in the way scholars understand urban security and urban safety. According to our findings, security is more commonly associated with a regulatory and repressive understanding of crime prevention, whereas safety is more commonly associated with perceptions of, and situational prevention of, crime. However, the use of the two words is not very differentiated as far as the deep understanding of crime is concerned – authors tend to look at security/safety as a goal to be pursued through action on the (rationally motivated) offender. The article thus advocates for a renewed critical engagement of scholarship in this field, through studies that would shift their attention from technical ‘solutions’ to the ‘problems’ that lead societies to demand security/safety.

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Art and the Discourse of Fear during the “War on Terror”

Since 2003, the formal rhetoric of the US government to denote their fight against terrorism has focused on an emotion, ‘terror.’ This has given shape to a discourse which describes life as unsafe and frightening. Visual signs of threats such as the ‘terror alert level,’ which was introduced in 2002 to assess the risk of terrorist attacks, or a MTA campaign on New York public transport, were disseminated in the public. This article examines artistic responses to the sense of overwhelming danger that has pervaded society through a political agenda dominated by fear. The artistic actions taken in response to the discourse of fear at the beginning of the 2000’s, for example by Susan Siltan and Fulana, mocked or subverted this discourse in the tradition of counterpropaganda. As the discourse of fear gradually emerged as a distinctive element of the many components of the war on terror, artists such as Antoni Muntadas, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle and Goshka Macuga highlighted how fear was constructed, in the political arena and in the media, through colour charts, slogans, and specific rhetoric developed by members of the government.

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Locating Human Agency in the Anthropocene. Environmental Universalism, Natural Catastrophes, and the Possibilities of Critique

This essay proposes a comparative analysis in which institutional critique is used as an illuminating lens through which the issues of security and risk can be addressed. It puts in evidence how, in the Anthropocene, human capacity to impact on the planet poses timely questions concerning security, agency and risk management. However, thoughtful critique is required to better understand the consequences of such actions and the topographies of the present geopolitical administration. Even though the Anthropocene model implies a sense of vicinity and proximity between members of a universal community, a re-evaluation of our position in such a global scale seems all the more necessary. The essay challenges us to see beyond the “neutral white cube” also in this context, as it moreover suggests that the idea of an imagined global landscape of shared responsibilities is somehow concealing the existence of inescapable inequalities that define different world cartographies, territories of insecurity and rather invisible ideological structures. By doing so, this text poses an ultimate question, interrogating who is, after all, the universal ‘we’ in the Anthropocene.

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Mexican Children Discussing “The Situation of Insecurity” in the City of Monterrey, Mexico

This article partly presents the results of a study of children’s social representations on insecurity and delinquency in Monterrey, Mexico, under the context of a criminal wave due to the increasing of violence between cartels and government. Forty-four children were interviewed, and during the sessions made drawings to describe their understanding of crime and delinquents. The main results show images that could be generalized in the description of criminals, but crimes are different and depend on the type of sources of information that children are usually exposed to. Four types of crimes could be found: minor crimes (which do not purposely try to attempt against the freedom, life or health of an individual), major crimes (that are contrary to the minor type), drug dealing related (organized crime events such as trafficking and shootings between cartels), and other (bullying, anxiety at home over insecurity events). The narratives of the drawings also show stigmas against determined neighborhoods of the city, which vary depending on the social class of the interviewees. While media was an important source of information, some children also explained their own testimonies while being witnesses, as well as mentioned discussions with parents and school.

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White Order: Racialization of Public Space in the Netherlands

In this essay we argue that urban planning and spatial ordering enact violence upon racialized populations in the Netherlands. We highlight the entanglement between security, coercion and care in Dutch contemporary public discourse and policy on structuring and regulating urban space. We posit that the ways in which Black people are addressed in public discourse and spatial policy contribute greatly to the construction of a nationalist, gendered, sexualized, socio-spatial framework of proper *White Native Dutchness*. Focusing on policy and legal instruments deployed in the city of Rotterdam, we sketch how the government rationalizes a politics of containment. We use the colonial archive to trace the genealogy of practices of incarceration of Black bodies in the metropolitan space. We then expound on colonial continuities in the workings of contemporary ‘White Order.’ We point to the role that architecture and urban planning play in the control of populations. Finally, we focus on how the language of care enables the State to stretch its realm of intervention into the private lives of Black populations. We stress the intersection between biopolitics and political economy, whereby ‘quality of life’ is already coded as white. Our aim is to reveal the sustained targeting of Black bodies, from Dutch colonial times until today, and recast spatial design and regulation as normalized and disavowed violence.

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The Original Confucianism and Establishment of Chinese Classical Aesthetics

Confucius' thought and philosophy inherited by both Mencius and Xunzi, but carried forward from different even opposite perspective, thus formed the rich connotation of the primitive Confucianism and embodied in Confucius' theory of benevolence, Mencius' theory of the good human nature, and Xunzi's theory of the evil human nature which are the main points of Confucianism. Focusing on the three figures of Confucianism over 2000 years ago, this paper will demonstrate that the primitive Confucianism had a great influence on Chinese traditional aesthetics. Some main concepts and ideas, such as harmony and the harmonious combination of the ideal of physical beauty and moral goodness, which serve as the central categories in Chinese traditional culture and aesthetics, are all stemmed from Confucianism. Different from the western aesthetics which emphasizes rational analysis, Chinese aesthetics results from the manifestation of intuitive patterns, revealing the characteristics of Chinese traditional aesthetics, which can also be traced back to the primitive Confucianism.

In the middle of Gadda's *Mess*: Shakespeare

The essay offers a study of the presence of Shakespeare's works in *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, a 1957 novel by the Italian writer Carlo Emilio Gadda (1893-1973). Considered by many Gadda's masterpiece, the *Pasticciaccio* is a detective story set in Rome in 1927 and revolving around the unresolved murder of a young woman, Liliana Balducci. The Shakespearean canon was for Gadda a fundamental literary work to which he returned on and on, because it expressed, as he repeatedly confessed in interviews and other works, his own apprehension of the complexity of reality.

After presenting briefly what this complexity consists of for Gadda, the essay explores the influence of Shakespeare's works in the *Pasticciaccio*. Shakespeare's presence in the text is unsystematic: it concerns characters, their relationships and functions, objects and themes of the novel. And it can be perceived at different levels: at times it is easily detectable, but more often it turns out to be subterranean and subtle. Threads are sometimes loose, and features of plays such as *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice* often operate at the deep level of the author's *Weltanschauung*, they betray his view of human relationships and of mankind's relationship to the world.