

Review Essay

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Marc Schuilenburg. *The Securitization of Society: Crime, Risk and Social Order* (trans. George Hall, intro. David Garland). New York: New York University Press. 2015. 978-1-4798-5421-9

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Marc Schuilenburg's book, *The Securitization of Society*, in a lucid translation by George Hall, from Jeff Ferrell's excellent *Alternative Criminology Series*, represents an important intervention in recent academic attempts to pin down the slippery phenomenon of security. Amid the discursive affects accompanying right-populist concerns about nation, borders and now, of course, migration, we discover something perhaps more profound: a disturbing sense of insecurity. Insecurity is a strange word whose etymology encloses a double negative: 'without-without-care'. Its dizzying logic is likely less important than its affective tone. In this vague field of sentiment, we are vulnerable to the siren calls for more security, a tightening of borders, a restriction of migration, a reduction of difference, calls that seem to have a worryingly greater appeal in our own time.

But how new is this? We might want to speculate about a post-truth politics, but the discourses of security have always been situated in a space in which knowledge is meaningless. Foucault (2009) struggled with the notion of security. For sure, it is an extra-panoptic, extra-disciplinary kind of force, which should be understood in its own terms, but, at the same time, it is a power that readily articulates with the technologies of surveillance and normalisation, on the one hand, and the sovereign politics of exception and violence, on the other. A discourse driven more by affect than knowledge, security has been in play as a political instrument at least since the rise of the Westphalian state, an order defined so acutely by Hobbes (2008) as founded on fear and enmity, constituting in fact not so much a reason-of-state as a sentiment-of-state. These affective politics are vague; they also flow, insinuate and can take us by surprise as recent referenda and elections have demonstrated. Such affects also seem peculiarly divisive: what Machiavellians or neo-conservatives might hope to unite obediently under strong leadership, leads instead to deep fissures of angry dissent.

This is why it is so important to interrogate the politics of security as explored in Schuilenburg's book. Schuilenburg has been working for a number of years at the interfaces between philosophy, social theory, cultural studies and criminology, in endeavours that have challenged and invigorated criminology and wider social science. The book represents an adaptation for an English-speaking audience of his published thesis, *Orde in veiligheid. Een dynamisch perspectief*, which won the Willem Nagel Price 2014, awarded by the Dutch Criminological Association for the best doctoral dissertation between 2010 and 2013. Combining empirical and theoretical work, *The Securitization of Society* is a study of how security unfolds in a variety of realms. It seeks to avoid reductionism and functionalism, both of which continue to haunt social sciences, especially criminology, today. Schuilenburg's work has several points of departure – more implicit than explicit – including the Copenhagen School's concept of securitization, the Paris School around Didier Bigo, which combines the insights of Foucault and Bourdieu considers the role of more quotidian social practice, as well as the conception of anti-Security elaborated by Neocleous and Rigakos (2011). As discussed elsewhere (Schuilenburg *et al.* 2014), he has sought to avoid both a dialectical notion of security and the fantasy of a space entirely *outside* the problem of security.

In *The Securitization of Society*, Schuilenburg takes the idea of securitization and reconceptualises it as a dynamic, molecular process – one of 'becoming' more than a state of being. This expanding

colonisation of society by a heterogeneous and inherently unstable array of techniques and agencies aiming to make the future more certain involves a number of distinctly modern practices of 'safety', 'security' and 'certainty'. Like a virus, this complex invades many organs, tissues and vessels of society, including planning regulations, housing developments, and welfare arrangements. In the face of these forces, his perspective goes beyond the established conceptualisations of actuarial and risk approaches, and seeks to develop a model based on continuity rather than rupture.

Relying on a combination of over 150 interviews and closely-conducted ethnographic work on four diverse cases of cannabis cultivation, road transport crime, urban intervention teams, and the collective shop ban, this study examines how security *works* on the ground in the intersection between the state and business. This approach avoids the limited perspective of research solely based on an analysis of policy documents. Furthermore, by going beyond classical oppositions between the micro and the macro, the subjective and the objective, the public and the private, the case studies serve to demonstrate the molecular and decentred nature of security.

Schuilenburg grounds his analysis in the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, incorporating the complementary methodologies of Tarde, Deleuze and Guattari in the concepts of interaction and the assemblage. In contrast to other texts dealing with these authors that often lose themselves in obscurantism or miss the point altogether in oversimplification, Schuilenburg's careful treatment of them explains the important complexities of their thought plainly without doing violence to their subtlety. Of particular benefit, Schuilenburg seeks to *organise* Foucault's (2009) unruly thoughts on security in a way that makes sense of them.

If we push his idea of *terroir* a bit further, we could also observe that *The Securitization of Society* is a highly fertile text allowing what Barthes called a 'writerly' approach, not in search of the essential meaning but in the elaboration of ways of using the text productively which is an approach also advocated by Deleuze and Foucault. A work, if it is good – and this one is very good -- becomes a stimulus for critique and further speculation. And it is in this spirit that I suggest such lines away from his text, which are, of course, dynamics in the text itself planted by the author.

Now, many lines are possible. If we had more space, we might consider the role of the supranational network of transnational security and military companies, the special, colonising *dispositifs* that are brought to bear on such mega-events as the World Cup or the Olympic Games, and the wider issue of the commodification of security which reaches down to quotidian governmental practice. We might also point to the way in which the liberal or neoliberal state is reconfiguring its practices as a security state, one in which a vertical macro-politics of exception, especially in the face of terrorism and migration, constitutes an increasingly important force and seems to permit hitherto inconceivable forms and scope of surveillance. In matters of security, one might also look at the crimes and harms of the state of exception, such as offshoring detention and torture, drone strikes and other forms of targeted assassination, the collection of data by security agencies, and so forth. Here one finds a centre of gravity in certain key sovereign decisions outside the law. How these issues link up with the molecular processes studied by Schuilenburg would follow a line away from his text. But there is a particular issue, which may allow us to forge a link between these important macro phenomena with the micro-level he so carefully dissects: the security assemblage.

In the book's Introduction, David Garland concurs with Schuilenburg that the assemblage is a key concept in the argument's architecture, and we find an engagement with the concept that does justice to the 'active' and 'processual' dimensions we find in the French concept of *agencement* (conventionally translated as 'assemblage'). We can in fact develop this concept of the assemblage in the direction given by its creators, Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they outline two main kinds. First, the collective assemblages of enunciation, discursive language in the broad sense. Second, there are the machinic assemblages of desire. For Deleuze and Guattari, in

any given situation, the two kinds of assemblage – discourse and desire – overlap and interact. To quote Deleuze and Guattari (1987):

Assemblages are passionate, they are compositions of desire. Desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination; there is no desire but assembling, assembled, desire. The rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 399)

Elsewhere, Haggerty and Ericson, in their path breaking article from 2000, 'The Surveillant Assemblage', broach but, like Schuilenburg, do not elaborate on a range of desires energizing surveillance, including desires for control, order, discipline, governance, security, profit and voyeuristic entertainment. Perhaps, in distancing himself to some extent from Haggerty and Ericson's approach to the assemblage, Schuilenburg is leaving to one side a more extended consideration of desire. It is something we should seek to pick up again. There are some tantalising hints such as the feminist critique of certain kinds of urban planning as expressions of masculine desire; the feelings and emotions of citizens about insecurity, risk and governance; or the populist rhetoric in law and order policy. He also mentions the affects of pride, shame and anger in one of his empirical studies but, again, only in passing.

He is clear in his criticism of Deleuze and Foucault for their lack of engagement with 'people and their emotions and feelings' (p.131). He sees the work of Gabriel Tarde as a corrective in this regard, dealing with imitation and invention as affective 'middle terms' in social relations. This is expressed abstractly and methodologically by Schuilenburg in terms of 'variation and movement' (p. 147) in the social. At another point he mentions 'affective association' (p.268) as a cement of the social (contrasted with Dawkins' 'selfish gene'), but again the implications for security are not unfolded, at least not explicitly.

Intriguingly, he also flirts briefly with Tarde's interest in somnambulism and hypnosis, and their use as concepts that could operate at the junction of the psychological and the social. We might add hysteria and panic as two other psychopathological phenomena theorised in the same period by Charcot, Breuer, Freud and others. But their role in a desiring, security assemblage is not analysed. Surely Tarde's idea of 'contagion without contact' enabled by the forms of media growing in his time can be applied to the affective flows of populist security discourse. Such an engagement has a lot of other potential in our present day, where security is indeed associated with panics and hysteria, where we seem to be sleep walking into the security state, and where we allow ourselves to be hypnotised by the blandishments of power-hungry politicians, security-service technocrats and the peddlars of corporate safety.

In short, at the level of the security assemblage, there is the possibility of an even greater engagement with these dimensions of affectivity, sentiment and desire such as we find in discourses of risk, protection, punitiveness, populism, and so forth. What is their genealogy, where do they go to, and, most important of all, how do they *work* as desiring machines? And, of course, the populist sentiments of fear and enmity, so important in Machiavellian statecraft and in the construction of the Hobbesian social order, are, perhaps more than ever before, the principal affects of a particular kind of state-centred security complex in our own time. They operate in what Hallsworth and Lea (2011) have called, drawing on J. G. Ballard's (2006) *Kingdom Come* and well as Deleuze and Guattari (1984, in the *Anti-Oedipus*), "'soft fascism" or the micro fascisms of everyday life' (Hallsworth and Lea, 2011: 153). This involves a 'shrill moralism' (*loc.cit.*), the affective intensities underpinning repressive, security measures. We should therefore remind ourselves of one of the first great panics in the modern age of security, the Dreyfus affair in France, when, in the context of the persisting financial crisis of the so-called long depression, as well as widening gaps between rich and poor – conditions so similar to today's credit crunch – we witnessed competitive militarisation, embryonic security and border forces, paranoid espionage, spectres of war, hatred of the foreigner, anti-

Semitism and populist revanchism, all swirling together in a toxic mix of bitterness and resentment that split a nation in two. History repeats itself in our own day as the theme music of security accompanies the revolt of the elites, xenophobia, renewed anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, the anxieties and hatreds associated with migration and refugees, no doubt to be intensified as a result of the Paris atrocities with the *Front National* waiting in the wings. If Schuilenburg leaves Machiavelli and Hobbes behind, they are lying in wait for him today.

And we must also consider the centering, vertical powers of the state apparatus, as well as that vacuole in the rule of law called the state of exception, the sovereign role of the conscious decision to suspend rights. Indeed, at the level of the sovereign exception, molar security becomes both the operation of power and its alibi. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 1987), this is embedded in a paranoid state deploying a power of 'overcoding', a state that also subsists in a chrysalis of subjectivity, a configuration of desire and power, a kind of potential for the play between domination and servility distributed across the social field. This is where macropolitics meet micropolitics or, in more accurate Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, the molar meets the molecular. If Schuilenburg speaks of distributed exceptions to rules in general, rather than the security exception's suspension of rights by the state, we can nonetheless use his work to think through the linkages between molar and molecular security, and the way in which state macropolitics can only function with the support of micropolitical networks operating at the affective level and at the level of desire.

All the time, thoughts such as these are permitted rather than foreclosed by Schuilenburg's book, which, like all great theoretical contributions, is a rich multiplicity and open to different interpretations and utilisations. This reader has benefitted from Schuilenburg's breath-taking command of a wide variety of conceptual resources, his own considerable, theoretical creativity, as well as the account of his own well-crafted empirical work. It is a great pleasure to read a brilliant, philosophically-expert mind at work in order, then, to play and experiment with the book. This review encourages many other readers to do the same.

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