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## OF MONSTERS

Biopower, terrorism and excess in  
genealogies of monstrosity

*Monsters gave birth to modernity: those unnamable figures of horror and fascination shadow civilization as its constitutive and abjected discontent. In Europe, from the late eighteenth century on, the term monstrosity mobilized a set of discursive practices that tied racial and sexual deviancy to an overall apparatus of discipline, and, later in the nineteenth century, to the emergence of biopolitics. This article draws a history of monstrosity through overlapping discourses, tying the contemporary figure of the monster-terrorist to the sexual and racial deviancy of what Michel Foucault termed the 'Abnormals.' Beginning with an engagement with Deleuze's and Foucault's notion of 'biopolitics,' this article follows the emergence of the monster-terrorist in that subfield of policy studies known as 'terrorism studies.' This article argues that specific and implicit conceptions of the civilized psyche, linked to norms of the heterosexual family, ground the figure of the Islamic terrorist in an older colonial discourse of the despotic and licentious Oriental male.*

**Keywords** oriental despotism; terrorism; excess; monstrosity; sexuality; race; biopolitics

If, in order to proclaim its humanity, the West needed to create its others as slaves and monsters (Yegenoglu 1998), what is the historical and philosophical relationship of such a doubled discourse to contemporary practices of counter-terrorism?

Take the Terror-Tali-Tubby. This was an image that was doing the email rounds during the war on Afghanistan. Grafted on to the already sexually ambiguous construction of the 'gay' teletubby, Tinky Winky (who sports a red handbag, gay pride purple and dances in the streets with balloons),<sup>1</sup> are three signs of a more recent monster – a flowing beard, an AK-47 and a turban. Such a graft of already pre-constituted signs tying cultural, religious and moral otherness to sexual deviancy manages a range of Western anxieties in the wake of 9/11. As if neutralizing the horror of that event, an

impossible figure, at once militant, ridiculous, violent and emasculated, becomes the node through which discourses of sexuality are articulated with counter-terrorism. All for another nervous laugh from 'dailyadultjoke.com'.<sup>2</sup>

This too is supposed to be funny: on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* (2002) a nightly talk show that spoofs the day's headlines, the language used by White House spokesperson, Ari Fleischer, to describe the Taliban is rendered visually.<sup>3</sup> The multi-tentacled, comic-book monster, spilling beyond its allotted frame, mocks Fleischer's self-assured words, while a burst of audience laughter registers the recognition of the unexpected. The visual language extends, and parodies the connections between terrorism and monstrosity, but perhaps the laughter that is its effect could be a kind of resource, perhaps a space of an enabling ambivalence?

Monsters gave birth to modernity: those unnameable figures of horror and fascination shadow civilization as its constitutive and abject discontent. In Europe, from the late eighteenth century on, the term monstrosity mobilized a set of discursive practices that tied racial and sexual deviancy to an overall apparatus of discipline, and, later in the nineteenth century, to the emergence of biopolitics. The figures of the Hottentot Venus, the sexual invert or the barbaric Oriental despot name specific strategies of that changing apparatus. Today, the monster has re-emerged at the centre of an 'axis of evil', as a masculine-effeminate 'subject' that embodies Western civilization's ultimate enemy: the Islamic terrorist. The figure produced through these practices – as both instrument and target of a diffuse power – has been taken as the ontological ground stabilizing the borders of nations, races, sexes, genders, classes and humanity. A genealogy of monstrosity, then, would be situated at the very intersections of these borders.

Such a 'border genealogy' would draw on that line of criticism emerging from feminist critics of science and literature such as Gill Kirkup (2000), Londa Schiebinger (1995, 2001), Nancy Leys Stepan (1996), Patricia Clough (2000), Barbara Creed (1986) and of course Donna Haraway (1989) Haraway (1997). These feminist critics have articulated a form of scholarship that seeks to denaturalize the distinctions founding modern sciences, as well as push the humanist assumptions of cultural studies and postcolonial studies. Yielding important insights into the construction, deployment and reimagining of contemporary science, these critics have sought to tap into the discourse of monstrosity, reproduction and gender normativity. In what follows, soliciting the force of this feminist deterritorialization, I analyse further the possibilities of a certain promise of monsters.

More specifically, in this paper I trace such a genealogy of monstrosity through overlapping discourses that tie the contemporary figure of the monster-terrorist to the sexual and racial deviancy of what Michel Foucault once termed the 'Abnormals'. Beginning with an engagement with Deleuze's and Foucault's notion of 'biopolitics', I follow the emergence of the monster-

terrorist in that subfield of policy studies known as ‘terrorism studies’. I attempt to show how specific and implicit conceptions of the civilized psyche, linked to norms of the heterosexual family, ground the figure of the Islamic terrorist in an older colonial discourse of the despotic and licentious Oriental male. In each case, I seek to draw out Michel Foucault’s insights on genealogy, biopower and sexuality through a strategic ‘assemblage’ of those very categories.<sup>4</sup> However, moving beyond this overarching Foucauldian framework of normality, I connect the contemporary experience of monstrosity to Romantic ideas of a kind of living excess that results from the reproductive processes of life itself. This very old notion of the monster finds its echo in Jacques Derrida’s figuration of monstrosity as the harbinger of an always risky future, as that which breaks with normality even as normalizing culture finds its legitimation in those very breaks. Drawing out the ethical possibilities of linking terrorism to monstrosity at this particular historical moment lies in the transformation of the cultural and historical experience of the unacceptable that today, here at ‘home’ and beyond the nation, is calling forth all the technologies of normalization, discipline and biopower. I end with a reading of the production of the monster in recent TV dramas on terrorism.

### **Monstrosity and biopolitics**

What is the relationship between monstrosity and that matrix of subjectivity and culture known today as ‘biopolitics’? In their recent analysis of ‘empire’, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001) both draw on and extend Michel Foucault’s and Gilles Deleuze’s arguments concerning modes of power and the production of docile/resistant bodies. Hardt and Negri mark an analytical and historical distinction between disciplinary societies and societies of control. The first names ‘that society in which social command is constructed through a diffuse network of dispositifs or apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits and productive practices’.

Putting this society to work and ensuring obedience to its rule and its mechanisms of inclusion and/or exclusion are accomplished through disciplinary institutions (the prison, the factory, the asylum, the hospital, the university, the school, and so forth) that structure the social terrain and present logics adequate to the ‘reason’ of discipline. Disciplinary power rules in effect by structuring the parameters and limits of thought and practice, sanctioning and prescribing normal and/or deviant behaviors.

The second, the society of control (‘which develops at the far edge of modernity and opens toward the postmodern’), deploys ‘mechanisms of

command' that take on the form and substance of ever more 'democratic' rule, and through which diffuse relations of power are rendered 'ever more immanent to the social field, distributed through the brains and bodies of citizens'.

The behaviors of social integration and exclusion proper to rule are thus increasingly interiorized within the subjects themselves. Power is now exercised through machines that directly organize the brains (in communication systems, information networks, etc.) and bodies (in welfare systems, monitored activities, etc.) toward a state of autonomous alienation from the sense of life and desire for creativity.

(2001, pp. 22–3)

For Hardt and Negri, biopower is only possible with the rise of this latter form of 'immanent' power. Biopower 'regulates social life from its interior, following it, interrupting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it. Power can achieve an effective command over the entire life of the population only when it becomes an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates of his or her own accord. As Foucault says, "Life has now become . . . an object of power". The highest function of this power is to invest life through and through, and its primary task is to administer life. Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself' (2001, pp. 23–4).

At first glance, then, it would seem that the cultural category and discursive practice of monstrosity in the West would require a genealogy whose trajectory would exhaust itself by the turn of the twentieth century. After all, if biopower invests life, administers life, directing its activities toward the production and reproduction of life, then perhaps figures of monstrosity belong to an older regime of normalization and discipline? My sense is that this is both historically correct, and theoretically limiting – an historicist limitation that precludes a fuller interrogation into the articulations, within regimes of biopower, of older colonial, racial and sexual tropes, discourses and constructs that are reanimated, as it were, in the service of 'life'.<sup>5</sup> The laughter that the Terror-Tali-Tubby calls forth is an echo of this articulation.

### **The terrorist monster, the abjected despot**

Pursuing the cultural and historical forms of such articulations, we could consider the racialized and sexualized group of monsters known as the 'abnormals'. Foucault (1997) ties the history of the monster to the overall discursive practice of abnormality in the West. He writes,

The group of abnormals was formed out of three elements whose own formation was not exactly synchronic. 1. The human monster. An Ancient notion whose frame of reference is law. A juridical notion, then, but in the broad sense, as it referred not only to social laws but to natural laws as well; the monster's field of appearance is a juridico-biological domain. The figures of the half-human, half-animal being . . . of double individualities . . . of hermaphrodites . . . in turn represented that double violation; what makes a human monster a monster is not just its exceptionality relative to the species form; it is the disturbance it brings to juridical regularities (whether it is a question of marriage laws, canons of baptism, or rules of inheritance). The human monster combines the impossible and the forbidden. . . . 2. The individual to be corrected. This is a more recent figure than the monster. It is the correlative not so much of the imperatives of the law as of training techniques with their own requirements. The emergence of the 'incurrigibles' is contemporaneous with the putting into place of disciplinary techniques during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the army, the schools, the workshops, then, a little later, in families themselves. The new procedures for training the body, behavior and aptitudes open up the problem of those who escape that normativity which is no longer the sovereignty of the law.

(1997, pp. 51–2)

We have here two figures in Foucault's genealogy of normality. Let us keep four points in mind – according to Foucault: (1) the monster contravenes the law, disturbing 'juridical regularities'; (2) the monster can be both half an animal as well as a hybrid gender (later in the text he will go on to position the onanist as the third of the abnormals); (3) the monster is both impossible and forbidden; and (4) he is to be differentiated from the individual to be corrected on the basis of whether power operates on it or through it (in other words, the sovereign, repressive power that produces and quarantines the monster finds its dispersal in discipline and normalization, and its further immanent-ization in biopolitics). For Foucault, this latter figure is the hinge that opens the history of monstrosity on to the elaboration of a power that touches, heals, corrects the body by inhabiting it.

3. The onanist. A completely new figure in the eighteenth century. It appears in connection with the new relations between sexuality and family organization, with the new position of the child at the center of the parental group, with the new importance given to the body and to health. The appearance of the sexual body of the child. . . . We can say, schematically, that the traditional control of forbidden relations (adultery, incest, sodomy, bestiality) was duplicated by the control of the 'flesh' in

the basic impulses of concupiscence. [The campaign against masturbation] places sexuality, or at least the sexual use of one's body, at the origin of an indefinite series of physical disorders that may make their effects felt in all forms and in all stages of life. . . . What emerges in this campaign is the imperative of a new parents-children relationship, and more broadly as a new economy of intrafamilial relations . . . . The crusade against masturbation reflects the setting-up of the restricted family (parents, children) as a new knowledge-power apparatus.

(1997, pp. 54–5)

This new apparatus of knowledge-power ties Foucault's abnormals to that dual history of a normalizing discipline (an anatomo-politics of the human body) and those internalized regulatory controls (a biopolitics of the population) that mark Western modernity (see Foucault 1990, p. 139). It allows us, I think, to limn the complex reticulations bodied forth in the figure of the terrorist-monster.

This, then, is the first aspect of monstrosity that I would like to consider: normality and the monster. Indeed, the racial and sexual monsters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were tied to the monstrosity of criminality in a common discourse of the other who keeps returning. Note, for instance, the language used by the dominant media in its interested depictions of Islamic militancy – we can see that the West's monsters have returned – with a vengeance, as it were: the Comedy Channel's Taliban as a multi-tentacled sea monster; as an article in the *New York Times* points out (Rutenberg 2001), 'Osama bin Laden, according to Fox News Channel anchors, analysts and correspondents, is "a dirtbag", "a monster" overseeing a "web of hate". His followers in Al Qaeda are 'terror goons'. Taliban fighters are 'diabolical' and 'henchmen', or in another web article, we read that

It is important to realize that the Taliban does not simply tolerate the presence of bin Laden and his terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. It is part and parcel of the same evil alliance. Al Qa'ida and the Taliban are two different heads of the same monster, and they share the same fanatical obsession: imposing a strict and distorted brand of Islam on all Muslims and bringing death to all who oppose him.

(Green 2001)<sup>6</sup>

A recent popular biography of Osama bin Laden asks on its very first page, 'How has a man declared *persona non grata* even by his own homeland remained at liberty? How has his doctrine infiltrated the hearts and minds of good men and turned them into monsters capable of flying themselves and innocent fellow human beings into the side of a building and certain oblivion?' (Robinson 2001, p. 7).

Another knowledge intersects and cohabits such popular media discourses: the strategic analysis of what in the intelligence community is known as ‘violent substate activism’ is at the moment a highly sought after form of knowledge production. And it has direct policy relevance – hence its uneven integration into the broader field of what Edward Said once named as the disciplinary home of Orientalism: ‘policy studies’.<sup>7,8</sup> So, for instance, in an article in the Rand Corporation-funded journal *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Richard Falkenrath notes:

The literature on terrorism is vast. Most of this work focuses on the practitioners of terrorism, that is, on the terrorists themselves. Different strands within terrorism studies consider, for example, the motivations or belief systems of individual terrorists; the external strategies or internal strategies or internal dynamics of particular terrorist organizations; or the interaction of terrorist movements with other entities, such as governments, the media, or social subgroups. . . . Terrorism studies aspires not just to scholastic respectability but to policy relevance. The sheer size of the terrorism studies literature can only be explained by the wider social importance of terrorism and, in particular, by the interest of governments in the subject. It has helped organize and inform governmental counter-terrorism practices.

(Falkenrath 2001, p. 162)<sup>9</sup>

A form of knowledge, but also now, an academic discipline that is quite explicitly tied to state (and increasingly multi-national capitalist) power.

This knowledge, moreover, takes the psyche as its privileged site of investigation. As another article in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* put it:

Models based on psychological concerns typically hold that ‘terrorist’ violence is not so much a political instrument as an end in itself; it is not contingent on rational agency but is the result of compulsion or psychopathology. Over the years scholars of this persuasion have suggested that ‘terrorists’ do what they do because of (variously and among other things) self-destructive urges, fantasies of cleanliness, disturbed emotions combined with problems with authority and the Self, and inconsistent mothering. Articulate attempts at presenting wider, vaguer, and (purportedly) generalizable psychological interpretations of terrorism have been made by, among others, Jerrold M. Post, who has proposed that ‘political terrorists are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequence of psychological forces, and . . . their special psychologic is constructed to rationalize acts they are psychologically compelled to commit’.

(Brannan *et al.* 2001, p. 6)

A very particular psyche undergirds such theories: a homogeneous, non-conscious, non-rational, non-intentional and uniformly violent field of forces. The lines that crisscross this field are themselves given through discourses of, for instance, normative heterosexual kinship – white mythologies such as ‘inconsistent mothering’ (and hence the bad family structure apparently common in the East) are presented as psychological compulsions that effectively determine and fix the mind of the terrorist.

In this way, psychologists working within terrorism studies have been able to determine and taxonomize the terrorist mind (Ruby 2002). In a recent article in the journal *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Charles L. Ruby has noted that there are two dominant frameworks in the interpretation of the terrorist ‘mindset’:

The first camp includes theories that portray terrorism as the result of defects or disorders in one’s personality structure. This first group of theories uses a broadly psychodynamic model. The second camp consists of theories that approach the phenomenon of terrorist behavior as a form of political violence perpetrated by people who do not have sufficient military resources to carry out conventional forms of political violence. (Ruby 2002, p. 16).

The personality defect model of terrorism holds that terrorists have fundamental and pathological defects in ‘their personality structure, usually related to a damaged sense of self’. Moreover, these defects result from ‘unconscious forces in the terrorist’s psyche’. Of course, the psyche is the site of a familiar family romance: ‘terrorism is a reflection of unconscious feelings of hostility toward parents and that this feeling is an outgrowth of childhood abuse or adolescent rebellion. The terrorist’s hostile focus is so great during childhood and adolescence that it continues into adulthood and becomes very narrow and extreme, ostensibly explaining the terrorist’s absolutist mindset and dedication’ (Ruby 2002, p. 16).

As a leading light in the constellation of ‘terrorism experts’, Jerrold Post has proposed that terrorists suffer from pathological personalities that emerge from early negative childhood experiences and a damaged sense of self. Post argues for two terrorist personality types, depending on the specific quality of those childhood experiences. First, Post suggested, there is the ‘anarchic-ideologue’. This is the terrorist who has experienced serious family dysfunction and maladjustment, which leads to rebellion against parents, especially against the father. Anarchic-ideologues fight ‘against the society of their parents . . . an act of dissent against parents loyal to the regime’ (quoted in Ruby 2002, p. 17). Second, there is the terrorist personality type known as the ‘nationalist-secessionist’ – apparently, the name indicates ‘a sense of loyalty to authority and rebellion against external enemies’. During childhood,



a terrorist of this personality type experienced a sense of compassion or loyalty toward his/her parents. According to Post, nationalist-secessionists have pathologically failed to differentiate between themselves and the other (parental object). Consequently, they rebel 'against society for the hurt done to their parents . . . an act of loyalty to parents damaged by the regime' (quoted in Ruby 2002, p. 17). Both the anarchic-ideologue and nationalist-secessionist find 'comfort in joining a terrorist group of rebels with similar experiences'.<sup>10</sup> The personality defect model views terrorists as suffering from personality defects that result from excessively negative childhood experiences, giving the individual a poor sense of self and resentment of authority. As Ruby notes, 'Its supporters differ in whether they propose one (Kaplan), two (Post and Jones & Fong) or three (Strentz) personality types' (2002, p. 18).

What all these models and theories aim to show is how an otherwise normal individual becomes a murderous terrorist, and that process time and again is tied to the failure of the normal(ized) psyche. Indeed, an implicit but foundational supposition structures this entire discourse: the very notion of the normal psyche, which is in fact part of the West's own heterosexual family romance — a narrative space centred on the biopolitical apparatus of normalized domestic desire and kinship supposedly common in the West. Robinson (2001), in his popular rendering of this discourse in his biography of bin Laden, translates it thus:

From the start, he was an outsider. The only son of a mother who immediately fell out of favor with his father; the urge to please, to impress, to be accepted were driving forces in his childhood. His father's death when he was ten years old seems to have unhinged him and, from then on, he swung crazily like an ever-more dangerous wrecker's ball from one obsessive attachment to another. At first, the only person he damaged was himself: living in the world of books, he cut himself off from the world that his brothers and sisters inhabited. Then he swung in the opposite direction, losing himself in hedonistic pleasures abroad as only one with unlimited funds can do.

(2001, p. 13)

For Robinson (and many other commentators), this 'unhinging' drew bin Laden, first, toward a hyper-heterosexuality (the book meticulously chronicles the wayward son's escapades with 'prostitutes' and 'blondes' in Beirut) and then toward his final, militant 'attachment'. Writing of bin Laden's meeting with 'Muslim activist' Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, Robinson opines:

. . . perhaps [the] most important outcome . . . was that Osama finally found the loving father figure he had so long pined for. The pair immediately bonded into a relationship that was part mentor/disciple,

part father/son. . . . For Osama, in Azzam he found the spiritual guide, father, teacher and perhaps even something of a homoerotic figure on which to focus.

(2001, pp. 91–2)

Terrorism, in this abstract machine, is a symptom for the deviant psyche, the psyche gone awry, or the failed psyche; the terrorist enters the stage as an absolute violation. Not surprisingly, then, coming out of this discourse, we find another very common way of trying to psychologize the monster-terrorist is by positing a kind of failed heterosexuality, or, as in the quote above, a crypto-homosexuality. Therefore, we hear often the idea that sexually frustrated Muslim men are promised the heavenly reward of 60, 67 or sometimes even 70 virgins if they are martyred in jihad. But as As'ad Abu Khalil (2001) has argued, 'In reality, political – not sexual – frustration constitutes the most important factor in motivating young men, or women, to engage in suicidal violence. The tendency to dwell on the sexual motives of the suicide bombers belittles these sociopolitical causes'. Now, of course, that is precisely what terrorism studies intends to do: to reduce complex social, historical and political dynamics to various psychic causes rooted in childhood family dynamics. As if the Palestinian intifada or the long, brutal war in Afghanistan can be simply boiled down to bad mothering or sexual frustration! Finally, all of these explanatory models and frameworks function to: (1) reduce complex histories of struggle, intervention, and (non)development to Western psychic models rooted in the bourgeois heterosexual family and its dynamics; (2) exclude systematically questions of political economy and the problems of cultural translation; (3) master the fear, anxiety and uncertainty of a form of violent political dissent by resorting to the banality of a taxonomy; and (4) consolidate the practical solidarity between abstract methods of psychological enquiry and modern apparatuses of power. On this last point, we should recall Deleuze's warning of the new role of psychoanalysis as a strategy of biopower.

There is no state which does not need an image of thought which will serve as its axiomatic system or abstract machine, and to which it gives in return the strength to function: hence the inadequacy of the concept of ideology, which in no way takes into account this relationship. This was the unhappy role of classical philosophy . . . – that of supplying . . . the apparatuses of power, Church and State, with the knowledge which suited them. Could we say that the human sciences have assumed this same role, that of providing by their own methods and abstract machine for modern apparatuses of power – receiving from them valuable endorsement in term? So psychoanalysis has submitted its tender, to become a major official language and knowledge in place of philosophy;

to provide an axiomatic system of man in place of mathematics; to invoke the Honestas and a mass function.

(Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 88)

We will return to the ‘mass function’ of counter-terrorism discourses in our conclusion, but we must pursue another line first: What are the specific racial and sexual genealogies of this taxonomizing ‘abstract machine’ of counter-terror? One answer: a specifically colonial genealogy, an aspect of which could be named ‘Oriental despotism’. Since at least the eighteenth century, the despots of the ‘East’ have been constructed as the quintessential enemies of (Western) civilization. Indeed British colonial justice, having secured order where previously only the ‘riot of the imagination’ (James Mill’s phrase) had reigned, was predicated on its radical difference from that recurring example of otherized oppression, Oriental despotism. Let us recall some of the key points in the construction of Oriental despotism as it appeared in hegemonic discourses in the nineteenth century. Developed in the wake of the Enlightenment (and later codified in the Utilitarian) critique of the *ancien régime*, the divine right of kings and aristocratic privilege, the discourse of Oriental despotism posited an essentially Western order as a civilizational corrective to Eastern irrationality. The representatives of this moderate and reasonable West would confront (and eventually dominate) their supposed opposite in the colonial mirror of nineteenth century discourse.<sup>11</sup> It was almost as if these inherent differences logically and naturally gave rise to two radically different traditions of political and economic organization. For Europe, a constitutional monarchy or republic would be the characteristic form of polity, while the capitalist mode of production its characteristic economic institution (Inden 2001, p. 53). For the East, despotism – the arbitrary or capricious rule by fear of an all-powerful autocrat over docile and servile masses – would be the normal and distinctive form of government; these peasant masses – distributed over innumerable, self-sufficient villages, engaging in a mixture of low-grade agriculture and handicrafts – make over to the despot the surplus of what it produces in the form of a tax, and subsist on the remainder – a mode of production that Marx termed ‘Asiatic’ (see Habib 1990).<sup>12</sup>

As a point of reference, let us take only one example from literally thousands. In his review essay of John Malcolm’s *Life of Clive* (1840), Thomas Babington Macaulay (1938) reconstructs the political and social contexts of an event that for centuries to come would stand out in the British imaginary as the apotheosis of colonial terror: the ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ (20 June 1756) – ‘that great crime, memorable for its singular atrocity’.<sup>13</sup> Macaulay, writing for a broader audience than only academic Orientalists and colonial administrators, situates the subjectivity of Nawab Siraj-ud-daullah somewhere between human and animal; he writes:

Oriental despots are perhaps the worst class of human beings; and this unhappy boy [Siraj] was one of the worst specimens of his class. His understanding was naturally feeble, and his temper naturally unamiable. His education had been such as would have enervated even a vigorous intellect, and perverted even a generous disposition. He was unreasonable, because nobody ever dared to reason with him, and selfish, because he had never been made to feel himself dependent on the goodwill of others. Early debauchery had unnerved his body and his mind. He indulged immoderately in the use of ardent spirits, which inflamed his weak brain almost to madness. His chosen companions were flatterers sprung from the dregs of the people, and recommended by nothing but buffoonery and servility. It is said that he had arrived at the last stage of human depravity, when cruelty becomes pleasing for its own sake, when the sight of pain as pain, where no advantage is to be gained, no offence punished, no danger averted, is an agreeable excitement. It had early been his amusement to torture beasts and birds; and when he grew up, he enjoyed with still keener relish the misery of his fellow-creatures.

(Macaulay 1938, p. 395, emphasis added)

We mark the re-markable here: for Macaulay, Siraj-ud-daullah represents a class of particularly depraved 'human beings': he is at the outer fringe of the outer fringe of humanity: 'A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing' (Kristeva 1982, p. 2). Macaulay figures Siraj-ud-daullah as that subject who simultaneously represents not only all Oriental despots (in his example is contains the general law of Oriental despotism), but is also a representative of another, partly related category of peoples: the innocent, passive, enslaved 'Orientals'. Macaulay's text provides us with the classic colonial representation of the Oriental despot: a master of unlimited wealth (or if not the master, at least one who desires, lusts after such riches), a jealous, vain and lascivious lover ('continually immersed in debauchery'), and an unjust, cruel and intemperate ruler (notice the seemingly natural linkage of tortured animals with a passive Oriental people).

Generally, then, the 'play of prescriptions' (implying exclusions and choices) that mark the regularity of the discursive practice of Oriental despotism can be plotted thus (see Foucault 1977): the quasi-subjectivity of the Oriental despot functions as the transparent sheet that separates and vainly shields Oriental madness from Western reason; his naturally feeble mind, uncultivated due to improper education, dissipated by drink, is the will-less author of nameless outrages. It seems as if the remarkable Oriental despot participates in the civilizational category of 'Oriental' without fully belonging

to that category; the signs that cluster around him – madness, cruelty, childishness, etc. – enable Macaulay (and this is true of every colonial discourse on Oriental despotism) to re-mark on the ‘Orient’, while at the same time to claim that the despot is not representative of that very ‘Orient’. In other words, the despot is at once that which is distinctive of the Orient – the trait(s), or differential mark, that distinguishes the East from the West – but that very same trait is somehow thoroughly supplementary to Oriental identity: the Oriental despot cannot be simply Oriental. This participating-while-not-belonging divides the identity of Oriental despotism as well as of the Orient itself (not to mention any discourse that would base its own stability on such an originary division).<sup>14</sup> That which allows the Orient to be identified defers indefinitely the closure of that very identity. Further, it is only on the basis of the differential mark of Oriental despotism that any identity of a passive, effeminate or langorous Oriental people becomes possible – Oriental identity is in fact an effect of the articulation of the abyssal structure of Oriental despotism. Historically, the supposedly pure category of Oriental despotism would assume scientific status in later Victorian political and anthropological discourses, but the inherent ambiguity that I have marked here traverses all colonial discourse on Oriental despotism, and continues to haunt the discourses of counter-terrorism as well (see Inden 2001, pp. 137–42).

In the discourse of counter-terrorism, the shared modernity of the monster, the despot, the delinquent, and the onanist come together in the knowledge of cultures, families, genders, nations, and races. Such knowledge – now more than ever – is at a premium. My contention is that today the knowledge and form of power that is mobilized to analyse, taxonomize, psychologize and defeat terrorism has a genealogical connection to Foucault’s abnormals, and specifically those pre-modern monsters (like the Oriental despot) that Western civilization had seemed to bury and lay to rest long ago.<sup>15</sup> Isn’t that why there is something terrifyingly uncanny in the terrorist-monster? As one specifically liberal article in the *Rand Journal* put it:

Members of such groups are not infrequently prepared to kill and die for their struggles and, as sociologists would attest, that presupposes a sort of conviction and mindset that has become uncommon in the modern age. Thus, not only the acts of ‘terrorism’ but also the driving forces behind them often appear incomprehensible and frightening to outsiders. Terrorism studies emerged as a subcategory within the social sciences in the early 1970s seeking to explain the resurgence of the seemingly inexplicable.

(Brannan *et al.* 2001, p. 4)

Through what critical practice can we at once account for the historical specificity of the will to knowledge that undergirds such a discourse, while

soliciting, even proliferating the uncanny effects of monstrosity itself in order to effect, in turn, a radical displacement of that very discourse?

### **The milieu of the monstrous event**

Through the haze of the ‘seemingly inexplicable’, we find ourselves in the uncanny milieu of the event – the monster and the monstrous re-enter this scene by posing the possibility of a complicitous resistance as a risk. For Hardt and Negri, civil society has been ‘absorbed in the state, but the consequence of this is an explosion of the elements that were previously co-ordinated and mediated in civil society. Resistances are no longer marginal but active in the centre of a society that opens up in networks, the individual points are singularized in a thousand plateaus. What Foucault constructed implicitly (and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) made explicit) is therefore the paradox of a power that, while it unifies and envelops within itself every element of social life (thus losing its capacity effectively to mediate different social forces), at that very moment reveals a new context, a new milieu of maximum plurality and uncountable singularization – a milieu of the event’ (1987, p. 25). The milieu of the event, as the contradictory and historically contingent site of uncountable singularization, is also, and for essential but strange reasons, the stage of monsters.

Foucault’s Enlightenment conception of monstrosity as abnormality is only one aspect of the monstrous figure in Western discourses of science, literature, and politics. For instance, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century physiologists, botanists, zoologists and philosophers, like the physiologist John Abernethy (1764–1831), had articulated a vitalist principle as the foundation of the very process of reproduction. In a recent analysis of romantic conceptions of monstrosity, Denise Gigante (2002) points out that scientific discourse between 1780 and 1830 was preoccupied with the idea of a ‘living principle’ that distinguished living matter from nonliving – the idea that life was something superadded to, or in excess of, physical organization (2002, p. 433).<sup>16</sup> Whereas the Enlightenment conceived of monstrosity as a static, ill assemblage of parts – in other words, according to a mechanistic Newtonian physiology – Romantic era physiologists and philosophers rethink monstrosity as an extension of the living principle. Rather than a deviation from uniformity, monstrosity now came to represent more of, or, too much of the same. The British physiologist John Hunter (1728–1793), for example, conceived of monstrosity as nothing other than the power of the animal to continue propagating itself or of its ‘first arrangements to go on expanding the animal according to the first principles arising out of them’ (Essays 239–40, quoted in Gigante 2002, p. 435). As Gigante notes: ‘This is not to say that Hunter completely dismisses the former concept of monstrosity as an irregular

assemblage of parts. But he observes that “[a] deficiency and a mal-conformation are much more easily conceived than the formation of an additional part”. And it is to the latter, unthinkable kind of monstrosity that he devotes most of his attention’ (2002, p. 435).

This theory of monstrosity as an unthinkable excess of the living principle, as something essential to but escaping from the process of reproduction, was central to European scientific thought throughout the nineteenth century: ‘For practitioners of the post-Hunterian science of life, monstrosity was not malformed but overexuberant living matter’ (Gigante 2002, p. 441).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this was the danger of evolutionary thought itself. For instance, the conservative George Cuvier rightly feared that experiments with chick monstrosities

would ultimately subordinate human beings to an autonomous law of nature. Indeed, the ground of modern evolutionary theory had already been prepared by Erasmus Darwin, who speaks in *Zoonomia* (1794) of ‘changes produced probably by the exuberance and nourishment supplied to the fetus, as in monstrous births with additional limbs; many of these enormities are propagated, and continued as a variety at least, if not as a new species of animal’.

(quoted in Gigante 2002, p. 437)

It is this theory of monstrous variation that Erasmus’s grandson would carry forward through his theories of natural and sexual selection.

This notion of the unthinkable excess of monstrosity is central to Jacques Derrida’s (1995) provocative suggestion that a monster is the result of a process of hybridization (even miscegenation) that disrupts proper boundaries, blurring identities through the experience of a certain liminality. ‘This in fact happens in certain kinds of writing’, noted Derrida. ‘At that moment, monstrosity may reveal or make one aware of what the norm is and when this norm has a history – which is the case with discursive norms, philosophical norms, socio-cultural norms, they have a history – any appearance of monstrosity in this domain allows an analysis of the history of the norms’. It is to show, in other words, how specifically monstrosity is tied to the history of norms. (Which is, of course, Foucault’s project as well.) However, adds Derrida, a monster is not just that, ‘it is not just this chimerical figure [that] in some way grafts one animal onto another, one living being onto another’. For Derrida a monster is not necessarily abnormal at all, it is only that we do not have a name for it. ‘Simply’, says Derrida,

it shows itself – that is what the word monster means – it shows itself in something that is not yet shown and that therefore looks like an hallucination, it strikes the eye, it frightens precisely because no anticipation had prepared one to identify this figure. . . . But as soon as

one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it, one begins, because of the 'as such' – it is a monster *as* monster – to compare it to the norms, to analyse it, consequently to master whatever could be terrifying in this figure of the monster. And the movement of accustoming oneself, but also of legitimation and, consequently, of normalization, has already begun. However monstrous events or texts may be, from the moment they enter into culture, the movement of acculturation, precisely, of domestication, of normalization has already begun. . . . This is the movement of culture.

So even as hegemony functions to domesticate monstrosity through the movement of a normalizing culture, we could, suggests Derrida, direct our gaze elsewhere, for instance at the impossible moment of its emergence, at that non-present but eventful moment where all names and categories of thought seem – if only for a moment – to fail.

Monsters that provoke 'at the outset reactions of rejection, that are denounced precisely as anomalies or monstrosities are often texts that, before being in turn appropriated, assimilated, acculturated, transform the nature of the field of reception, transform the nature of social and cultural experience, historical experience'. Curiously, Derrida then seems to be saying that the monster, rather than being a hybrid of already known parts, is something that is radically new, for which no cultural code had prepared one for at all. As soon as it finds a name, it has already been integrated into the circuit of normalization. We must be cautious here. Derrida's words brings to mind Judith Butler's warning of too quickly figuring resistance as the radically outside:

The bisexuality that is said to be 'outside' the Symbolic and that serves as the locus of subversion is, in fact, a construction within the terms of that constitutive discourse, the construction of an 'outside' that is nevertheless fully 'inside', not a possibility beyond culture, but a concrete cultural possibility that is refused and redescribed as impossible. What remains 'unthinkable' and 'unsayable' within the terms of an existing cultural form is not necessarily what is excluded from the matrix of intelligibility within that form; on the contrary, it is the marginalized, not the excluded, the cultural possibility that calls for dread, or minimally, the loss of sanctions.

(Butler 1990, p. 77)

Yet, at the same time, there is a certain possibility of transformation that will have been presented in the very emergence of monstrosity, a possibility that I would like to think is at once thoroughly within culture, even perhaps produced by it as a functioning of power, but one that it cannot ever fully contain. It is the non-present of the monster's emergence that Derrida calls an



event, which recalls one of Deleuze's favourite lines from Blanchot: to release 'the part of the event which its accomplishment cannot realise' (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, pp. 72–3). Derrida says, 'All history has shown that each time an event has been produced, for example in philosophy or in poetry, it took the form of the unacceptable, or even of the intolerable, of the incomprehensible, that is, of a certain monstrosity' (Derrida 1995, pp. 385–7). I believe the ethical possibility of linking terrorism to monstrosity at this particular historical moment lies in the transformation of the cultural and historical experience of the unacceptable, which calls forth all the technologies of normalization, discipline and biopower. If part of what is at stake today is the creation of normalized subjects of a global community arrayed against evil, a meditation on monstrosity enables us to imagine another kind of future by bringing back the trauma of history. Monstrosity, then, is an event that transforms both the idea and experience of culture and history.

It was toward such a monstrous event that Donna Haraway (1992) pushed the theory of reproduction with her concept of 'artifactualism'. The stories of hyper-productionism and enlightenment, she argued, have been about 'the reproduction of the sacred image of the same, of the one true copy, mediated by the luminous technologies of compulsory heterosexuality and masculinist self-birthing'. Against this tradition, the promise of the artifactual lay elsewhere for Haraway: 'Artifactualism is askew of productionism; the rays from my optical device diffract rather than reflect. These diffracting rays compose interference patterns, not reflecting images'. Any progeny of such generative processes, always 'the result of a monstrous pregnancy', bears a genealogical kinship to all those "inappropriate/d others" that I have been charting here (see also Minh-ha 1989). As Haraway puts it, 'to be an "inappropriate/d other" means to be in critical, deconstructive relationality, in a diffracting rather than reflecting (ratio)nality – as the means of making potent connection that exceeds domination' (Haraway 1992, p. 299). It is this excess that returns sometimes in the perplexity of a face – I will turn to a consideration of just such a monstrous excess in my concluding section.

Through this brief consideration of monstrosity and biopower, I have sought to highlight a few of the key elements in a genealogy of monstrosity in the West, as well as mark the resources within that discourse for a thoroughgoing displacement of its matrixes of intelligibility. The monster is tied to technologies of both discipline and biopower; it functions as an ongoing, always moving target of a normalizing, quarantining power; its discourse is at the same time an instrument of that power which touches the body by inhabiting it. In contemporary discourses of counter-terrorism, the monster-terrorist presents the Western gaze as that subject who is totally enclosed by power – an easy target – and radically outside it – a terrifying throwback that returns as an agent of the inexplicable. This terrifying, inexplicable monstrosity has specific effects that are at once effects of power,

and opportunities for displacement. What could such a doubling analytics of monster-effects teach us about the current 'war on terrorism'?

### **The monster within: TV and terrorism**

The agent of the inexplicably monstrous has become something of a reoccurring character in American TV shows that have aired or are going to air in response to 9/11. These sitcoms, serials, and dramas are slightly more ideologically diverse than the mainstream news media. As one *USA Today* article noted:

Producers have been rapidly churning out scripts for future episodes based on the aftermath of last month's attacks, following an Oct. 3 episode of NBC's *The West Wing* that attracted the White House drama's biggest audience yet. *Ally McBeal* will take an allegorical approach in a Christmas episode written by David E. Kelley in which a Massachusetts town official tries to block a holiday parade after a tragedy in which firefighters are lost, and the residents argue whether it's OK to be festive. *The Practice*'s law firm represents an Arab-American who argues that he is being unfairly held as a material witness in a fictional terrorist act in an episode of the ABC drama due later this fall. Popular new CBS series *The Guardian* plans a December storyline about a Middle Eastern family in Pittsburgh whose restaurant is vandalized by a white youth. 'There's a lot of knee-jerk rage', says series creator David Hollander. 'I want to touch on the reality that there's an incredible irrational fear'. CIA-blessed drama *The Agency* originally planned to air a fictional anthrax attack on Thursday, but pulled the episode Tuesday due to anti-terrorist sentiments. And CBS has been pitched a new romantic comedy about a couple who lost their spouses in the World Trade Center attacks, says network president Les Moonves, who hasn't ruled out the idea. The interest marks a stark departure from the days immediately after Sept. 11, when anxious censors rushed to excise any signs of the Trade Center or references to planes or terrorists from TV shows. Military drama *JAG* plans references to Afghanistan and an episode about covert operations there, but producer Don Bellisario is treading carefully.

(Levin 2001)

Consider, as the first of such takes on 9/11 to be aired, the 3 October 2001 episode of the enormously popular drama *The West Wing*. The episode, entitled 'Isaac and Ishmael', was written by the show's creator Aaron Sorkin (directed by Christopher Misiano), and was completed in less than three weeks. Crucially, the script makes no reference to the events that inspired its

creation. The storyline places the show's fictitious White House staff in a lockout crisis mode following a 'crash' (apparently there has been some kind of security break: 'No one in or out of the White House'; the Secret Service fears a suspected terrorist might actually be on the premises). We cut to an Arab-American man, a White House staff member, smoking a cigarette out a window in the Old Executive building; armed white secret service agents break down the door, and, with guns drawn, arrest him on suspicion of plotting some kind of terrorist activity (he is later found to be innocent). Meanwhile, Josh Lyman, the deputy chief of staff, finds himself trapped in a cafeteria with a group of visiting high-schoolers on a fieldtrip for 'Presidential Classroom'. According to one web review, 'They look to him for answers to questions similar to those asked by many Americans over the past few weeks'.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the episode takes place in one of two rooms. In the White House mess, these 'gifted' high-school students ask questions of various staff members. Simultaneously, the interrogation of the 'terrorist' goes on in a darkened room somewhere in the Old Executive Building. The rest of the show consists of intercutting between the interrogation of the man – whose name, Raqim Ali, matches one of the aliases used by a suspected terrorist who has just entered the United States – and 'the heavy-duty chat session in the mess'. Students ask such questions as 'What's the deal with everybody trying to kill you?'; Josh turns the conversation into an interrogation, or better, translation, of the 'nature' of the Taliban. He asks the students, 'Islamic extremists are to Islam as \_\_\_\_\_ is to Christianity'. After hearing from the students, Josh writes down his answer: 'KKK'. He says, 'It's the Klan gone medieval and global. It couldn't have less to do with Islamic men and women of faith of whom there are millions and millions. Muslims defend this country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, National Guard, Police and Fire Department'. When it seems he is running out of other things to say, other White House staff members join the question and answer session. Toby Zeigler (Richard Schiff), the president's speechwriter, champions freedom of religion and equates the people of Afghanistan with European Jews under Hitler:

there's nothing wrong with a religion whose laws say a man's got to wear a beard or cover his head or wear a collar. It's when violation of these laws become a crime against the state and not your parents that we're talking about lack of choice ... The Taliban isn't the recognized government of Afghanistan. The Taliban took over the recognized government of Afghanistan. ... When you think of Afghanistan, think of Poland. When you think of the Taliban, think of the Nazi's. When you think of the people of Afghanistan, think of Jews in concentration camps.

Toby then tells these very attentive students a story he once heard from a friend who had been in a Nazi concentration camp. ‘He said he once saw a guy at the camp kneeling and praying. He said “What are you doing?” The guy said he was thanking God. “What could you possibly be thanking God for?” “I’m thanking God for not making me like them”’. Inexplicably, Toby concludes, ‘Bad people can’t be recognized on sight. There’s no point in trying’.

At least one reviewer of the episode bristled at what he argued were un-American messages hidden in the dialogue of the episode. For this reviewer, the shows creator Alan Sorkin was entirely to blame. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Tom Shales lambasted the show for its ‘tone of moral superiority’:

Terrorism is definitely bad. That was established by the talk with the students. It was pointed out that . . . that Islamic extremists are to Islam what the Ku Klux Klan is to Christianity. But the main thrust of the episode was summarized in another line: ‘Bad people can’t be recognized on sight. There’s no point in trying’. What if they’re carrying guns and have bombs strapped to each limb? That wasn’t asked or answered. What was really on Sorkin’s mind was the mistreatment of the apparently guiltless American-born Muslim who, as played by Ajay Naidu, maintained a tone of suffering moral superiority throughout. Ali, it was revealed, had once been arrested for taking part in demonstrations against the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, but he was indignant – and Sorkin was indignant – that investigating such a thing might be considered appropriate for a person working in the same building as the president of the United States. How dare they?

For Shales, ‘discrimination against Arab Americans and against people who even just look Arabic has been a serious problem in the wake of the terrorist attacks’ – and is to be deplored and, one hopes, stopped. But the attention given that problem by the *West Wing* episode, as well as by some talk shows and newscasts, seems to suggest that it is the major issue arising out of the attacks. Viewers of MTV, for instance, have heard more condemnation of discrimination (‘Fight for your rights’) than of terrorism itself’. This passing nod to the massive suspension of constitutional rights for immigrants and non-citizens is overshadowed by Shales’s insistence that not only did Sorkin miss the central moral to be learnt from 9/11 (terrorism demands a new security state, and true patriots – even when they are the targets of that state – will stand by it, come what may), but that his is not a legitimate voice of morality in the first place. Shales concludes thus:

It is fair to note that in April, Sorkin was arrested at Burbank Airport and charged with two felony counts of drug possession when cocaine, hallucinogenic mushrooms and pot were found in his carry-on bag. This would seem to have some bearing on his status as moral arbiter for the

nation. . . . the implications are unsettling – that even in this moment of pain, trauma, heartbreak, destruction, assault and victimization, Hollywood liberals can still find some excuse to make America look guilty. For what it's worth, that's crap.

(Shales 2001)

Such responses oblige us to recognize that in a moment of what is termed an ongoing 'national crisis' even platitudinous dissent in beyond the pale of the proper. How does a drug charge disallow a subject from speaking from a space that is morally legitimate – how does any kind of impropriety disqualify a subject who would dissent from such norms of citizenship? But what this reviewer's diatribe points to are the subtle and not-so-subtle forms of normalization that the new patriotism demands of all us. Of course, this demand is never represented as such: Indeed, biopower, as it invests life, and as bodies come to being through its very modes, takes on the form and substance of ever more 'democratic' rule, and through which diffuse relations of power are rendered 'ever more immanent to the social field, distributed through the brains and bodies of citizens'. But what we see in discourses of American counter-terrorism is the very production of the citizen through strategies demanding cultural and national belonging, and sexual and gender normality – perhaps their greatest achievement is the construction of a common sense understanding of this historically contingent experience of normalization as 'democracy' in a time of monsters.

Consider, then, the doubled TV frame of this special 'Terrorist Episode' as itself a kind of abstract machinery of biopower that relays images and narratives, producing subject-effects as part of 'network imagination'. On the one hand, it would seem these TV relays arrest the attention of the viewer in ways that would be appropriate to a pluralistic America inviting us to repeat a certain pledge of allegiance. On the other, specific images seem to give themselves to undecidable lines of flight whose aporias draw us to another future.<sup>19</sup> Keep in mind: we see a double-framed reality. On the one side, brightly lit and close to the hearth (invoking the home and the family) is the 'Presidential' classroom, a racially and gender plural space, where the President as Father enters and says what we need right now are not suicide-martyrs but life-affirming heroes; where the First Lady as Mother tells the precocious, and sometimes troublesome, youngsters a kind of bedtime story of two once and future brothers, Isaac (the Jews) and Ishmael (the Arabs); where male experts regale them with fantastic facts concerning the first acts of terrorism committed back in the tenth century by drug frenzied Muslims; where one woman staff member (C.J. Cregg, played by Allison Janney) declares, 'We need spies. Human spies . . . It's time to give the intelligence agencies the money and the man power they need'; and where Josh finally advises the students to 'remember pluralism. You want to get these people? I

mean, you really want to reach in and kill them where they live? Keep accepting more than one idea. It makes them absolutely crazy’.

On the other side of the frame, a dimly lit room, an enclosed, monitored space, managed entirely by white, armed men, at the centre of which is a racially and sexually ambiguous figure, a subject who at one and the same time is a possible monster and a person to be corrected. A tiny, darkened stage where the ritual of the examination, of the interrogation is enacted on and through a subject who must perform both his racial and cultural difference, and his normality. A subject at once quarantined and so secluded, but whose testimony becomes a spectacle through which power will work. His interrogator, Chief of Staff Leo McGarry (John Spencer), asks him why he was protesting the presence of the US military in Saudi Arabia: he responds by saying that it is home to Islam’s holiest sites, and he adds that American servicewomen, by riding and driving in cars in a country where women are not allowed to learn how to drive, his interrogator cuts in: ‘We’ll teach them’. A suspect-subject whose greatest moment it seems comes when, after being terrorized at gun point, racially profiled and insulted, he dutifully goes back to work on the White House staff. Consider McGarry’s last words to Ali: after having stumbled through a kind of apology for his earlier racist remarks, he walks away, stops and looking back over his shoulder, he says, ‘Hey kid, way to be back at your desk’. This double frame stages the two forms of power that I have been marking here: to quarantine and to discipline. It is we who are the school children who must be taught why war means peace in Afghanistan (and Palestine, Columbia, Iran, North Korea, the Philippines, Iraq, Venezuela, etc.). I think we can see the ways in which sexuality, gender, deviancy, normality and power are knotted together in this TV drama: sometimes in explicit ways, as in the exchange between McGarry and Raquim Ali, or in Shales’s diatribe against the immorality of Sorkin. But what I am in fact suggesting is that the entire double frame comes out of racial and sexual genealogies that imbricate the production of the radical other, as monster, to the practice of producing subjects appropriate to a new regime of citizenship and security. Through this frame we see the discourse of the monster-terrorist come to assume both the contractual and statutory aspects of what Deleuze once called the ‘mass function’: ‘what defines a mass function is not necessarily a collective, class or group character; it is the juridical transition from contract to statute’ (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 85). Between the classroom contracts (democratic pluralism is the contract) and the interrogation statutes (proleptically figuring our new ‘PATRIOT’ Act), from the production of hegemony to the exercise of repression, two mutually reinforcing modes of a strategically multiplicitous power can be delineated. These practices, justified in the name of a Holy Crusade against Evil and legitimized through a knowledge of the psyche, follow a simple rule: ‘Know Thine Enemy’ (see *Foreign Policy* 2001, p. 2).

If in this analysis I have focused on the narrative closures that attempt to suture this text, it is because a certain effect of closure is itself a fundamental monster-effect. Monsters call out, as they call forth the management-strategies of power. But what of those other effects, produced through these matrixes of intelligibility, and these rituals of power – those effects that present themselves as other lines of flight? I end with a moment that I think could be such a line, a kind of lever of displacement, always keeping in mind that ignoring such moments is only slightly worse than over-reading them. Moreover, if, as I believe, it is impossible to identify such a moment outright, let us not forget that the monster-effect is registered in the non-presence of an event that can ‘transform the nature of the field of reception, transform the nature of social and cultural experience, historical experience’.

Sometimes such an effect can be read in the blurred misrecognition of a face. Let us turn to the decisive moment in this episode of identifying the monster within: A secret service agent is briefing Leo on the situation. He goes over the names of possible suspects, their location and occupations.

When he is informed that Raqim Ali is also the name of a White House staff worker, Leo stares blankly, uncomprehending, and for a moment looks away from his interlocutor. Pause, ominously low music rises. Turning back, ‘It was only a matter of time’. We read on the face of the White House Chief of Staff the terror of the inexplicable – the impossible thought that inside, through that very inside, an intolerable other lives and works. An uncanny feeling of the hint of another thought: that what was most inside – the White House staff – is infected, and that no amount of quarantining can provide an antidote to this essential porousness.

This uncanny feeling expands and rises throughout the interrogation scenes, where, in a perfectly accented New Jersey English, Raqim Ali insists again and again that all his supposed subversive activities (e.g. civil disobedience) are in fact protected by his constitutional rights as an American citizen. Finally, this tension explodes or, better, defuses as a Secret Service agent enters the room bearing the information that the ‘real’ terrorist has been apprehended. Raqim Ali is released, and he goes back to work. It is an ambivalent moment, one that seeks an impossible closure to the rupture of Leo’s incomprehension – no, not this time, the monster is yet to come (which legitimates the consistent, and ceaseless activity of policing), but one that suggests, at the same time, that the distinctions that produce him as other, as outsider, as an object to be quarantined are perhaps themselves less than trustworthy.

Isn’t this – the impossible trust in obsessively policed boundaries – precisely where we can locate the promise of monsters? Instead of asking what does Leo’s face mean, a monstrous analysis would pose the question of what such a perplexed face can do? Against Charles Darwin’s facial signifying

regime, Richard Rushton (2002) suggests the affective possibility of the Deleuzian face by posing another question:

what if we were to disembody the expression on the face from the one who expresses? If we do this, if we take the facial expression in-itself, then instead of finding a face that stands in for something else, instead of reading a perplexed face as that which stands for someone's perplexity, we encounter a pure quality or affect: perplexity. This is Deleuze's move . . . The perplexed face does not represent something other than itself that is perplexed; the face is perplexity itself. The question to be asked of a face is not 'what does a face represent?' but rather, 'what can a face do?'

(2002, pp. 224–5)

Rushton goes on to argue that the face is pure potential, presenting virtual possibilities upon which experience can be actualized, and notes that Deleuze and Guattari interpret the virtuality of the face in terms of our relations with others. Recall Michel Foucault's opening laughter in *The Order of Things*, when in the midst of the 'wonderment' of Borges's 'Chinese' taxonomy he asks, 'what kind of impossibility are we faced here?'<sup>20</sup>

The possibility of dangerous mixtures has been exorcized, heraldry and fable have been relegated to their own exalted peaks: no inconceivable amphibious maidens, no clawed wings, no disgusting, squamous epidermis, none of those polymorphous and demoniacal faces, no creatures breathing fire. The quality of monstrosity here does not affect any real body, nor does it produce modifications of any kind in the bestiary of the imagination. . . . It is not the 'fabulous' animals that are impossible, since they are designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating them from (and juxtaposing them to) the stray dogs, or the animals that from a long way off look like flies. What transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others.

(Foucault 1994, pp. xv–xvi)

The face that registers the effect of the (deferred) coming of the monster is a sign of this limitrophe ambivalence — arising from the always already transgressed boundaries linking monsters to humans, such effects deterritorialize the abstract machinery of the monster-terrorist. Unlike Borges' monstrous taxonomy, however, the impossible but very real taxonomy that produces the terrorist-monster does have effects at the level of the actual body, in the management of real populations, and the normalization of all forms of political deviancy. Bridging the historical and the philosophical critique of



monstrosity and its effects, such moments open the history of this figure to other strategies, to other possible futures.

## Notes

- 1 See <http://www.witchshaven.com/talitubby.html>. For the Falwell-Teletubby debate, see Bill Ghent (1999); Carolyn Gargaro (1999); Jonah Goldberg (1999). Gargaro notes in her article: 'On the 24th of December, 1997 CNN reported that Tinky Winky was gay. "The Teletubbies also have a following among the gay community. Tinky Winky, who carts around a red handbag but speaks with a male voice, has become something of a gay icon" [CNN, 12/24/97]'.
- 2 Although no longer available at the site [dailyadultjoke.com](http://dailyadultjoke.com) (probably for copyright infringement reasons – for more information contact the author directly [[arai@english.fsu.edu](mailto:arai@english.fsu.edu)]), other similarly digitally altered images are still available, such as 'Saddamized in San Francisco'
- 3 Originally aired on 9 April 2002.
- 4 I am following Gilles Deleuze in his elaboration of the concept of assemblage: 'What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a sympathy' (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 69). Much could be said here about Deleuze's tying sympathy, as symbiosis, to the 'unity' of relations he calls an assemblage. As a form of reading, my aim is to stage the confrontation, and the fraught confluence of 'different natures' of interpretative practices.
- 5 Or death: in his illuminating article on 'Necropolitics', Mbembe (2003) argues that counter-terrorism is a war machine that assembles on the same plane of immanence strategies and rationalities of discipline, biopolitics and now, once again, necropolitics. For a fuller consideration of this argument, see Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, 'Remaking a model minority', forthcoming in *Social Text*.
- 6 In a review of a recent art exhibition on the monstrous at the DeCordova Museum, Miles Unger glosses why a meditation on monstrosity is timely: 'having been thrust into a context never imagined by its organizers may perhaps work to the show's advantage, throwing into bold relief many aspects of the monstrous that might otherwise have remained harder to detect. Now, more than ever, it seems important not to neglect our fears and to inspect by daylight the demons that always hide in the recesses of the mind. Psychologists have often suggested a therapeutic role for tales of horror, which allow us to acknowledge real fears in a form made manageable through narrative conventions' (Unger 2001).
- 7 The analysis that follows is part of an on-going research agenda around questions of citizenship, the normalized psyche, globalization and counter-terrorism after 9/11. Part of this analysis has been produced through

conversations with Jasbir K. Puar (see Puar and Rai, 2002). Moreover, this analysis has a specific genealogy: it is informed by the pioneering work of scholars and activists such as Edward Said (1979, 1981), Cynthia Enloe (2000), Ann Tickner (1999), Noam Chomsky (1986), Shirin M. Rai (2000), Edward Herman (1989), Helen Caldicott (2002), Philip Agee (1975), Talal Asad (1971) and others. These writers have opened a space of critique that brings the epistemological and ethical claims of terrorism studies to crisis. Their rigorous and impassioned interrogation of US foreign policy has not only enabled subsequent writers to make connections to ongoing domestic wars against people of colour and the working poor, but crucially their critiques have also enabled the counter-memory of other genealogies, histories and modes of power – for example, sexuality, colonialism and normalization.

8 As Said put it in *Orientalism*, ‘modern Orientalists – or area experts, to give them their new name – have not passively sequestered themselves in language departments . . . Most of them today are indistinguishable from other “experts” and “advisers” in what Harold Lasswell has called the policy sciences’ (1971, p. 107). (See Lasswell 1951, Lasswell 1971, and also Lerner 1951.) Later in his critique of *Orientalism*, Said remarks on how monstrosity was used by such ‘biological speculators’ as Isidore and (his father) Etienne St. Hilaire in the first half of the nineteenth century in France: ‘Not only were Etienne and Isidore legatees of the tradition of “Romantic” biology, which included Goethe and Cuvier . . . but they were also specialists in the philosophy and anatomy of monstrosity – teratology, as Isidore called it – in which the most horrendous physical aberrations were considered a result of internal degradation within the species-life’. Such anomalies (whether physical or linguistic, let us keep in mind) ‘confirm the regular structure binding together all members of the same class’ (Said 1979, pp. 144–5). One can link monstrosity, therefore, to nineteenth-century projects of physical anthropology and comparative linguistics that integrated concerns for ‘regular’ structure within an overall framework of the intrinsic coherence of nature.

9 From Rand’s website:

Our job is to help improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis. We do that in many ways. Sometimes, we develop new knowledge to inform decision-makers without suggesting any specific course of action. Often, we go further by spelling out the range of available options and by analyzing their relative advantages and disadvantages. On many other occasions, we find the analysis so compelling that we advance specific policy recommendations. In all cases, we serve the public interest by widely disseminating our research findings. RAND (a contraction of the term research and development) is the first organization to be called a ‘think tank’. We earned this distinction soon after we were created in

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- 10 Ruby (2002, p. 18). Like Post, Strentz also has offered a personality grid for terrorist psychopathology. Strentz's first type of terrorist is the leader. Such a person has the overall vision and intellectual purpose of the terrorist group. He/she understands the theoretical underpinnings of the group's ideology. Strentz proposed that such a person has developed a sense of inadequacy but projects his/her sense of inadequacy onto society (thus, the belief that society is inadequate and in need of change). The leader is suspicious, 'irrationally dedicated', and uses 'perverted logic' (1981, p. 88). The narcissist and paranoid personality is attracted to this terrorist position. The second of Strentz's roles is that of the opportunist. Such a person has technical know-how and is the group's 'muscle'. Strentz suggested such a person has a criminal history that predates his/her involvement in the terrorist group. According to Strentz, the antisocial personality is drawn to the opportunist role. Lastly, there is the idealist. This is the young person who is never satisfied with the status quo and who has a naive view of social problems and social change. Strentz claims that an inadequate personality best describes the person who is attracted to this role.
- 11 This confrontation between Order and its Other would be predicated not only on the isolation of a discreet and clearly identifiable figure, that of the Oriental despot, but also on a certain geographical determinism. Inden depicts this famous confrontation in this way: 'Characterized by a salubrious mixture of topographic zones and a temperate climate, Western Europe is inhabited by temperate peoples of wide-ranging skills and organized into nations of a moderate to small size. Asia, with vast river valleys juxtaposed to its uplands and a climate either hot or cold, is inhabited by peoples of extreme temperament and organized into large empires' (2001, p. 52).
- 12 Of course, this construction of Oriental despotism went through a series of revisions and epistemic ruptures over the course of at least two centuries. From early Missionary deployment in the Clapham sect, through formalization in James Mill's utilitarianism, from scientification in the anthropological texts of Henry Maine and Alfred Lyall, to anti-national stereotyping of educated Babus in Rudyard Kipling's sociological fiction, the Oriental despot was never exactly the same character twice. As we shall see, this shifting figure, as the constitutive exclusion that enabled British discourses on civilization, sexuality and the nation, haunts a scene set beyond history or fiction. Consider for instance, Kipling's Wali Dad in 'On the City Wall' (1990, pp. 153–73) or the Bengali Babu in *Kim* (1983).
- 13 Macaulay writes

*Nothing in history or fiction*, not even the story which Ugolino told in the sea of everlasting ice, after he had wiped his bloody lips on the scalp of his murderer, approaches the horrors which were recounted by the few survivors of that night. They cried for mercy. They strove to burst the door. Holwell who, even in that extremity, retained some presence of mind, offered large bribes to the goalers. But the answer was that nothing could be done without the Nabob's orders, that the Nabob was asleep, and that he would be angry if anybody woke him. Then the prisoners went mad with despair. They trampled each other down, fought for the places at the windows, fought for the pittance of water with which the cruel mercy of the murderers mocked their agonies, raved, prayed, blasphemed, implored the guards to fire among them. The goalers in the meantime held lights to the bars, and shouted with laughter at the frantic struggles of their victims. At length the tumult died away in low gaspings and moanings. The day broke. The Nabob had slept off his *debauch*, and permitted the door to be opened.... *But these things – which, after the lapse of more than eighty years, cannot be told or read without horror – awakened neither remorse nor pity in the bosom of the savage Nabob.*

(Macaulay 1938, pp. 395–6, emphasis added)

- 14 See Derrida's analysis of the 'remarkable' trait as the law of the law of genre, where he writes: 'If I am not mistaken in saying that such a trait is remarkable in every aesthetic, poetic or literary corpus, then consider this paradox, consider the irony (which is not reducible to a consciousness or an attitude): this supplementary and distinctive trait, a mark of belonging or inclusion, does not properly pertain to any genre or class. The re-mark of belonging does not belong' (Derrida 1980, pp. 60–1).
- 15 The questions that are posed in this literature are:

Why does terrorism occur? What motivates terrorists? What strategies and tactics do terrorists employ to achieve their goals? How do terrorists perceive their external environment? Under what conditions will terrorists abandon their violent struggle? The success of the terrorism studies literature in answering these questions is uneven.... [T]he most powerful analyses of the origins of terrorism tend to be highly specific, applying only to a single terrorist movement of an individual terrorist, and rooted in particular social and psychological circumstances.

(Falkenrath 2001, pp. 159–81, p. 164).

I would also add that the recent articles that I have read in this journal

do not indicate a monovocal diatribe against the ‘terror from the East’ (see Chalk 2001, pp. 241–69, p. 242).

- 16 Gigante notes that during the same period ‘the physiologist John Abernethy (1764–1831), whom Keats knew from his medical training at Guy’s Hospital in London, was claiming that materialist practitioners of the “science of life” were destroying all the poetry of the living organism by reducing it to the sum of its functions. Just as the physical sciences had eliminated the life of the rainbow, in other words, radical physiologists, such as Abernethy’s rival William Lawrence (1783–1867), were threatening to dissolve the mystery of life itself. Scientific discourse between 1780 and 1830 was preoccupied with the idea of a “living principle” that distinguished living matter from nonliving. The focal point for the dispute between Abernethy and Lawrence over this possibility of a supervenient vital principle was the work of the British physiologist John Hunter (1728–1793). Although Hunter was not the first to renounce the mechanical application of Newtonian principles to the living organism, he lent the weight of extensive empirical experimentation to the idea that life was something superadded to-or in excess of-physical organization’. Against the materialism represented by Lawrence, vitalists in the wake of Hunter sought to define the science of life beyond the mechanistic sphere of Newtonian science that had dominated the physiology of the first half of the eighteenth century’ (Gigante 2002, p. 433).
- 17 As Gigante argues: ‘The French zoologist Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, building on the work of Georges Cuvier and Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, founded a school of philosophical anatomy on the concept of “unity of composition”. The concept allowed Geoffroy and his leading disciple, Etienne Serres, like Hunter, to define monstrosity as something gone awry during “recapitulation”, or self-repetition’ (437).
- 18 ‘West Wing airs attacks show’ (BBC News 2001); see also Shales (2001).
- 19 Drawing on Richard Dienst, Gilles Deleuze, and Stephen Heath, Patricia Clough has recently argued that television, whose unit of value is not narrative but rather the ‘image’,

aims primarily to capture attention and modulate affect through a logic of exposure, over- and underexposure; television works more directly than cinema in attaching the screen/image and the body. . . . this is because television is not ‘a subject-system’, that is, a technological system understood to be perfecting the human being, serving as an extension of the human body, while maintaining the intentional knowing subject at its center and as its agency. Instead, television makes the subject only one element in a ‘network imagination’ of teletechnology. As such, television points to and produces itself in a network of a vast number of machinic assemblages, crisscrossing bodies – not just human bodies –

producing surplus value, pleasure, and signs all on one plane.  
(Clough 2000, p. 99).

- 20 The taxonomy reads thus: “a certain Chinese encyclopedia” in which it is written that “animals are divided into: a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, I) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) *et cetera*, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies” (Foucault 1994, p. xv).

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