RETHINKING ASYMMETRICAL TRANSPARENCY

Risk Management, the Aesthetics of Transparency,
and the Global Politics of Mobility

A terrorist attack is a moment in space and time where none of us wants to be. But standing in line at an airport security checkpoint is also a moment in space and time. In public discourse about airport security and terrorism prevention in the post-9/11 era, these two moments are repeatedly set against one another. Not surprisingly, the threat of another terrorist attack eclipses matters of prevention. In comparisons drawn between these two "moments," the business of prevention frequently serves as a comic foil to the deadly threat of terrorism. The infamous "Don't touch my junk" discourse that erupted late in 2010 in response to the introduction of full-body scanners at airports across the United States is a case in point. While media professionals, privacy activists, and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) spokespersons publicly debated the merits and dangers of the full-body scanners and their old-school counterpart, the physical pat-down, the discussion remained safely within the comedic frame of Americans' puritanical obsession with hiding, revealing, and protecting private parts. The "Don't touch my junk" discourse articulated the only public challenge to full-body scanners and physical pat-downs as a matter of homophobic masculine pride on the order of defending one's

"junk" from the locker room assaults of other boys. A popular expression of misplaced heterosexual vanity enacted a comedic reversal of male genitalia as vulnerable to sexual attack by lusty TSA screeners, underwriting the treatment of airport security as a "joke" once again.

Perhaps critiques of airport security frequently take the form of sophomoric jokes because the instrumental frame delimiting public discussions of terrorism prevention shuts sober debate down before it can begin. In serious discussions of airport security, professionals and laypersons alike evaluate prevention techniques and technologies based on a single criterion: whether or not a particular measure protects us from another attack. The impossibility of disproving that prevention works leaves the door open for security professionals and casual observers to endlessly exploit the possibility that it does.[1] In the minds of agreeable air passengers, the logic goes something like this: "Well, if it makes us safer from another terrorist attack, then I am all for it." The discourse of terrorism prevention devalues the live moment at the checkpoint and downplays the impressions it leaves in favor of the outcome of arriving safely at one's destination. People need and want to fly for many different reasons, including work, education, health care, love, death, war, business, family, friendship, and tourism, which means that passengers will likely go along with whatever new security policy, technology, or procedure the TSA imposes. As long as the instrumental frame goes unchallenged, we remain willing to view what happens at the checkpoint as either necessary and therefore unchallengeable, or as lacking in gravity by comparison to the virtual threat of another terrorist attack and therefore not worthy of serious critique or public debate. In other words, the ends will always justify the means. But given the virtual possibility of another attack, the work of prevention is not so much a means to an end as a means-without-end.[2] If we acknowledge that the work of prevention is never done, then it may become possible to hold our attention at the airport security checkpoint long enough to reflect critically on what is happening there.

This book argues that airport security is a cultural performance of risk management.[3] That is not to say that I equate airport security with stagecraft. The analysis of airport security offered here departs from the angry and sometimes witty public discourse in which writers have regularly used theatrical metaphors to criticize or dismiss airport security. For example, consultant Doug Laird, a former Northwest Airlines security director, describes airport security as "nothing more than show."[4] Anna Quindlen de-

scribes the "hustle and bustle" at airport security checkpoints as "window dressing."[5] In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times,* Nicole Woo goes further, describing the government's policies and procedures as "empty gestures" designed to assuage an anxious public: "The government's air travel rules of the past five years—from confiscating tweezers to checking passengers' footwear to the recent obsession with liquids and gels—are just reactions intended to placate a nervous public, and are clearly not security measures that have been methodically and disinterestedly decided. We should not be distracted by such empty gestures."[6] Contrary to these critics, who employ theatrical metaphors in a manner implying that performance means faking it, I understand the performance of airport security as constitutive of a culture of risk management, which exercises an enduring influence far beyond the controlled zones of securitized airports.[7]

Scholars of risk management have also turned to theatrical metaphors in order to describe the changing aspect of risk societies in terms of a notion of performance as faking it. In his book *World at Risk*, Ulrich Beck urges us to take seriously the "staging of global risk," but his use of the theatrical metaphor indicates his interest in risk as a mediated spectacle, whereas I am interested in the production and maintenance of the culture of risk management via live performances of airport security. Beck understands the practical prevention measures taken and compelled in the name of risk management to be an effect of mediated representations of risk. Our analyses share a commitment to "take the role of staging seriously."[8] We also agree on the matter of risk management's amplification of terror: "It is not the terrorist attack, but the global staging of the act and the political anticipations, actions and reactions in response to the staging which are destroying the Western institutions of freedom and democracy."[9] Where we differ is that Beck's sociological individual is imagined as a visual consumer of illusory media content, whereas I am interested in air passengers as cocreators of a shared reality.

When individuals perform the rites of airport security, they participate in what Michel Foucault called *biopolitics*. According to Colin Gordon, biopolitics "designates forms of power exercised over persons specifically insofar as they are thought of as living beings: a politics concerned with subjects as members of a *population*, in which issues of sexual and reproductive conduct interconnect with issues of national policy and power."[10] Other scholars have analyzed homeland and airports security in terms of biopolitics. In his book, *Surveillance in the Time of Insecurity*, Torin Monahan

offers an analysis of how the concerns of national security have eclipsed issues of human security in the post-9/11 era. Citing Foucault's "Society Must Be Defended" lectures, Monahan writes that the nature of biopower rests in "making live and letting die."[11] In her recent book, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times,* Jasbir Puar includes terrorism prevention in the category of biopolitics because terrorism prevention leverages citizens' lives and their collective capacity for a shared future against the threat of death by terrorism. She argues that biopolitics is ultimately about the citizen's "capacity for capacity," where capacity is defined in terms of the citizen's ability to affirm life and futurity.[12]

This book provides a performance-based analysis of biopolitics, where performance is defined in Richard Schechner's terms as restored or "twice-behaved" behavior.[13] Puar makes passing reference to performance in her discussion of the pressure that citizens face to submit to screening by surveillance technologies: "Pivotal here is the notion of capacity, in other words the ability to thrive within and propagate the biopolitics of life by projecting potential as futurity, one indication of which is performed through the very submission to these technologies of surveillance that generate these data."[14] I argue that performance is not incidental to biopolitics; rather, performance is the mode in which the citizen's episodic affirmations of life and futurity are rehearsed, compelled, enacted, repeated, and confirmed. By definition, capacity is that which remains to be demonstrated or proven. In other words, the citizen's capacity for life and futurity has to be performed (over and over again) if it is to be believed.[15] Consequently, "the technical nature of innocence is changing."[16] The risk management approach to international terrorism compels air passengers to affirm life and futurity, but this affirmation takes the form of a negative assertion: the demonstration of (the absence of) the threat of death.

A national security program that defines innocence by negation raises a series of questions: How does one show (the absence of) the threat of terrorism? And what could such demonstrations possibly look like when bodies are infinitely variable? When air passengers are culturally diverse? When individuals are irreducibly singular in their proclivities, mannerisms, and manias? When the objects passengers carry are polysemic and multipurpose? When the space of the airport is already so charged with tension and anxiety that it is terribly difficult to sort out the emotions of one passenger from the next, or one passenger from the affective environment of the airport and the heightened energy that attends the event

of flying? Finally, who can never perform innocence in this system, based on racial difference, immigration and citizenship status, disability, age, and religion?

Even these cursory references to the complexity characterizing the flows of bodies, bags, objects, and affects through airports suggest that it would be nearly impossible to establish a universal set of conventions for performing (the absence of) the threat of terrorism. And yet for over a decade, the TSA and like-minded national security programs, US citizens, and visitors to the United States and other countries with securitized airports have been engaged in an ambitious, frenetic, far-reaching, self-contradictory, and multipronged experiment to do just that. The risk management approach to international terrorism assumes that once attempted or realized, the unwanted event is likely to occur again and, based on this assumption, treats the threat of additional attacks as imminent/immanent. In other words, a particular security crisis serves a national prevention strategy once it has been lassoed from the actual past (historical terrorist attacks) or the virtual past (failed attempts and close calls) and projected into the immediate futures of securitized airports.

The terrorist threat looms in what I call the *future interior*.[17] My concept of the future interior attempts to name and describe a risk management strategy that works on time by spatializing it: security experts imagine the components of the next terrorist attack to be (in)visibly enfolded into what Brian Massumi has called the "empty present" of prevention. In *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, Massumi observes that a mind set on avoiding an accident that has already taken place inhabits neither the future nor the past but the empty present in which the accident is about to have happened (again).[18] Indeed, security cultures developed to prevent terrorist attacks routinely shift participants away from the historical past into the suspended present, where the threat of terrorism remains hidden, enfolded, or tucked away.[19] Consequently, passengers and their belongings appear to the eyes of security experts, petty officials, surveillance technologies, and alert citizens as an endless and overlapping series of mobile interiors-in-crisis. The fantasy of controlling the threat of another terrorist attack by enfolding that risk into the bodies, bags, objects, and affects that inhabit the present moment of prevention as it is defined and redefined from the perspective of those looking for trouble corresponds to Gilles Deleuze's description of the societies of control that began to replace disciplinary societies in the postwar era. In place of the disciplinary society's "organi-

zation of vast spaces of enclosure," Deleuze writes, we now have a series of "interiors in crisis." If the enclosures characteristic of disciplinary power were *molds*, distinct castings, Deleuze writes, then "controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point."[20] Passengers and the things they carry transmute from threatening to innocent and back again. Enfolded with the threat of terrorism, security employees and technologies open up and flatten out passengers' bodies and bags in order to demonstrate (the absence of) the threat of terrorism. In these collaborative performances of risk management, passengers and their belongings perform the symbolic labor of embodying the threat of terrorism so that it can be demonstrably managed within securitized airports.

The Airport as Vital Place

In the mid-1990s, anthropologist Marc Augé described the airport as a utopic nonplace in which passengers enjoyed blissful anonymity or the brief experience of having been momentarily liberated from the mundane responsibilities and moral obligations of everyday life. The author writes about the experience of showing proof of identification at the checkpoint in exchange for access to the departure gates in terms of the contractual relations governing the airport as nonplace: "As soon as his passport or identity card has been checked, the passenger for the next flight, freed from the weight of his luggage and everyday responsibilities, rushes into the 'duty-free' space; not so much, perhaps, in order to buy at the best prices as to experience the reality of his momentary availability, his unchallengeable position as passenger in the process of departing."[21] But in the post-9/11 era, "unchallengeable" is no longer an accurate description of the departing passenger's position. Rather, the passenger remains suspect so long as she remains within or near a securitized airport, on an airplane, and on or near a tarmac. In place of the contractual exchange of a passport or ID card for admittance to the departure gates, we now have an elaborate, ongoing performance of passenger transparency. Like their fellow performers (TSA employees and other airport service persons), passengers endure the dull but continuous pressure of terrorism prevention as a performance-without-end. In the words of Lisa Parks, "Much more than a non-place, the airport has become a vital place where security, technology and capital

collide, and spur the U.S. social body to recognize its terrorizing interiority."[22] To assert that airports have become vital places is not to say that they have come to function more like anthropological places, which in Augé's terminology references bounded cultures and societies with rich local traditions and idiosyncratic unwritten rules for getting along. Rather, post-9/11 airports continue to feel like nonplaces insofar as they are relatively generic mixed-use spaces inhabited by corporate chains and networked security agencies.

What makes airports *vital* in the post-9/11 era is the symbolic work they perform. Security cultures of terrorism prevention invest tremendous energy and resources into producing docile global suspects, who willingly become transparent or turn themselves inside out in a manner that renders them readily and visibly distinct from terrorists (an expansive category that includes all of those people unfortunate enough to be suspected of or misrecognized as belonging to the group). In the visual culture of the war on terror as brought to US media consumers by US media corporations, terrorist embodiment appears as a problem of opacity. Performed by the US military and documented by US media corporations, *opacity effects* visualize bodies, geographies, buildings, or institutions as possessing interiors and thereby allude to realms beyond the visible. Opacity effects raise suspicion merely by daring to show something that it is not totally visually accessible and immediately comprehendible to the viewer or monitor. Perhaps most significantly, opacity effects communicate the military and security state's objection to physical and psychological interiority. They picture a desire to rid the warring world of pockets, caves, spider holes, and veils. They simultaneously communicate and invite a shared compulsion to ferret out all secrets and produce actionable intelligence from detainees by any means necessary.

Opacity effects indirectly nourish a political culture of compulsory transparency in the citizenry at large. In the United States and other "paranoid empires" in which the political leadership feels besieged by the threat of international terrorism, periodic media spectacles of terrorist embodiment remind publics what is at stake if "we" do not adopt and uniformly submit to airport security regulations and surveillance technologies.[23] By this I do not mean to suggest that media spectacles of opacity are intentional efforts by US media corporations to serve as agents of propaganda for the US military or security state. Rather, I am suggesting that some military, government, and media professionals share an aesthetic orientation, which

implies a global politics of mobility. If terrorist embodiment is a problem of opacity, then securitized airports treat all passengers as suspect (threateningly opaque) until they perform *voluntary transparency*, or demonstrate readiness-for-inspection. *Transparency effects* refer to attempts by the US security state to demonstrably exclude passengers from the presumptive status, terrorist, by "clearing" their opaque bodies, bags, and belongings for takeoff. Transparency effects reify the interior/exterior binary, only to perform operations of flattening upon passengers and their things, which render the interior as surface. Thus exteriorized, interiority may function as a screen for the projections of security technologies, TSA officers, and alert citizens.[24]

The colonial binary is subtly recast in the post-9/11 era. Instead of "the West and the Rest," we have docile and noncompliant suspects in the war on terror, or willing participants in the biopolitical project of risk management and those who have been excluded from that project. To be clear, I do not mean to equate or even establish a parallelism between the airport security apparatuses and prison camps established in the name of terrorism prevention and the war on terror, respectively. Rather, the project of this book is to show how these disparate security cultures are united by a common visual strategy. The extended analysis of the aesthetics of transparency offered here is meant to correct the rush by scholars in the humanities to compare airports to other exceptional spaces in the war on terror. Perhaps most provocatively, Gillian Fuller made the observation in her 2003 essay "Life in Transit: Between Airport and Camp" that the post-9/11 airport functioned as an exceptional space or a camp in Giorgio Agamben's terminology. For Agamben, she writes, "any zone where 'normal order' is suspended is a camp." After drawing the comparison between the post-9/11 airport and the camp, Fuller distinguishes the two sites based on the contrast between mobility and immobility: "If freedom of movement is, as Arendt claims, one of the most elemental of freedoms, then the camp provides the ultimate backdrop to the sublime feelings of placelessness that many experience as they wander through the airport. The camp, like the airport, is built for transit. Yet in the camp, no one moves. Both airport and camp constitute zones of exception, each are framed by a rhetoric of emergency, each are limit concepts of the other. One facilitates movement and the other denies it, yet both are zones of perpetual transit and futuristic promise."[25] Fuller and others argue that the creation or designation of exceptional spaces enables extralegal activities

to proliferate at those sites. For these scholars, part of what it means to render a space exceptional is to grant it liminal status or create a state of suspended reality in which practices that would otherwise inspire protest are allowed to develop without a fight.[26]

The airport security checkpoint lacks the immediate threat of physical violence present in the interrogation and torture scenarios of the war on terror in extralegal spaces like Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo).[27] Docile suspects' presumed capacity to perform voluntary transparency makes physical violence against their bodies seem both unnecessary and unacceptable.[28] By contrast, noncompliant suspects' presumed incapacity or unwillingness to perform voluntary transparency rationalizes the performance of forcible transparency upon their bodies by torturers and interrogators. I define *forcible transparency* as subjecting a noncompliant body presumed to be opaque to intensive questioning, duress, or torture in order to forcibly materialize the guilty party or bad intentions of the interior in the form of a verbal confession, actionable intelligence, or neutralization of the threat via the person's progressive mental degeneration. Noncompliant status need not be earned through demonstrated resistance to the US military and/or security state. Practices of racial, ethnic, religious, and risk profiling presume some groups to be noncompliant and categorically exclude them from participation in the collective, coercive project of risk management.

In this book, I make the case that the aesthetics of transparency allows citizens of paranoid empires to recognize themselves as fundamentally different from and somehow more innocent than the ordinary Iraqis, Afghanis, and other non-Westerners subjected to detention, torture, and abuse in the name of the war on terror—in many cases without probable cause. I argue that charged distinctions between populations presumed capable of performing voluntary transparency and those presumed to be irredeemably opaque have enabled paranoid empires and their citizens to make the unprecedented shift to preemptive law at home and preemptive warfare abroad without inspiring serious public debate or effective political protest.

There is another type of transparency that gets performed across the disparate sites of the detention centers of the war on terror, Israeli and US airports, and beyond, which complicates my neat recasting of the colonial binary in terms of docile and noncompliant suspects. While the general trend holds that docile suspects are presumed capable of performing

voluntary transparency and detainees in the war on terror are presumed incapable or unwilling, performances of involuntary transparency occur across these sites. *Involuntary transparency* refers to the practice of reading a person's exterior for involuntary signs or clues about intentions thought to reside in the interior. A covert layer of security, involuntary transparency assumes that people lack full control over the communicative signals their bodies and faces send out into the world. According to this security strategy, people's inability to exercise total control over their performances of self in everyday life leaves room for security agents trained in behavior detection to decipher passengers' guilt, despite their feigned innocence. Unlike the performances of forcible transparency enacted in the theaters of the war on terror, performances of involuntary transparency do not require physical contact or force. But there is a crucial similarity between these two types of transparency, which separates them from all of those included in the category voluntary transparency. In the case of voluntary transparency, the object of surveillance is granted some degree of agency in his performance of transparency, even if agency is limited to the choice of whether to submit to screening by surveillance technologies or a pat-down inspection. In the case of forcible transparency, the object of surveillance's agency is presumed and subdued through imprisonment, physical force, and mental duress. But in the case of involuntary transparency, the agency of the behavior detective cancels out the agency of the suspects she is reading.

A Political Culture of Compulsory Transparency

Under the pressure of strategies designed to unfold and reveal threats thought to be lurking within the interior of passengers and their things, select domains of performance have become opportunities for passengers to demonstrate their innocence. These include passengers' object relations, interactions with security technologies, facility with security protocol, physical gestures, styles of comportment, and ability to blend in to their surroundings, as well as the absence of physiological signs of nervousness or anxiety. Framing airport security as a collaborative cultural performance enables me to begin to describe, if not untangle, the knot of consent and coercion produced when passengers perform voluntary transparency. Airport security is consensual insofar as it is a cultural performance demanded by some passengers. This is what George Carlin was

getting at when he said, "Airport security is only there to make white people feel safe." Carlin's observation suggests that airport security is directed at a select audience of travelers, who imagine themselves as endangered and consequently want to see protections put in place. The reactive character of airport security proves his point. Terrorism prevention generates policies and adopts technological solutions that are made in the image of the last attack or near miss. Lessons learned from investigations of specific terrorist plots are applied to the traveling public at large. So, for instance, in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration quickly embraced the use of biometric technologies for the purpose of prescreening all international travelers wishing to enter or move through the United States. The infamous zip-top bag policy for regulating liquids, gels, and aerosols was tailored to the attempt to bring down as many as ten aircraft traveling from Britain to the United States using liquid explosives in 2006. The nearly successful attempt to blow up a plane headed for Detroit using plastic explosives in late 2009 prompted the TSA to begin replacing metal detectors with full-body scanners at the checkpoint. Finally, the TSA cites the 9/11 attacks, the shoe bomber incident of 2002, and the liquid explosives plot of 2006 in its rationales for the behavior detection officers stationed in US airports. This pattern can be understood as a reflection of the government's attempts to appease fearful members of the traveling public.

As the performance scholar Diana Taylor has noted, the Bush administration's performative declaration of a war on terror attempted to produce consent for its security policies. Once those policies are in place, she observes, people living in the United States shift from the Bush administration's saying-so-makes-it-so to the proliferation of domestic security policies, which hail ordinary people to embody that reality. Those whose consent was projected and retroactively conferred by the declaration of a war on terror gradually move from the performative construction of reality into what Taylor calls the animative performance of that reality in their everyday lives: "The way that human beings in the United States continue to live it on the ground. Albeit in different ways, we are all required to participate in the scenario, to undergo ritual acts of surveillance by showing our IDs, submitting to searches, taking off our shoes, reacting to color-coded alerts, and having our phones tapped. We perform terror every day; we incorporate it."[29]

The point is that whether or not a particular passenger agrees with the government's threat construction or genuinely fears another terrorist at-

tack, the security state requires that person to perform *as if* the threat construction and risk management measures adopted to address it were valid. The performative construction of the threat of terrorism comes full circle once it animates citizens and visitors to the United States to perform the symbolic labor of embodying the threat of terrorism. By participating in the rites of airport security, passengers publicly perform their consent to be monitored accordingly.

Airport security is coercive insofar as the US government pressures passengers in the United States and beyond to participate in these rituals of risk management by threatening to immediately restrict their mobility and holding the long-term virtual possibility of another terrorist attack over their heads. In the first case, coercion is direct, immediate, and based not in a threat of force but in a threat of immobilization: if you refuse to participate in the performance, then you will not be allowed to fly. In the second case, coercion is based on borrowed force: the security state and its officials and experts borrow the threat of force from the terrorists. Whether they believe the threat construction or not, air passengers are positioned as potential terrorists if they do not consent to surveillance and monitoring and are therefore treated as suspects without probable cause. Demonstrating consent becomes part of their performance of voluntary transparency. Such performances are crucial to passengers' achievement of the security status: "cleared for takeoff"—a telling phrase indicative of the passengers' default status of threatening opacity.

By participating in airport security passengers actively and publicly forfeit their right to be presumed innocent under the old legal system. They trade the presumption of their innocence for the presumption of their capacity to perform voluntary transparency. No mere inconvenience, this represents a profound change to the United States and potentially international legal system and our basic conception of citizenship. The old, idealized version of democratic citizenship and what rights it supposedly granted, chief among these being the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty and the right to be protected from unlawful search and seizure, has begun to erode. Like most of what's promised by the mythical, idealized America, these promises have applied historically only to some and not others. The developments described in this book are historically significant, granted what is novel about the situation is not so new to historically underprivileged US citizens or to citizens of other nations and noncitizens. Other populations, particularly men of color, poor, queer,

transgender, and mentally disabled people, have been categorically criminalized at different points in US history. What becomes significant within the United States and far beyond in the post-9/11 security context is that the possession of US citizenship and the appearance of whiteness and middle- or upper- class status are no longer enough to grant individuals the presumption of innocence. Nor is it enough for foreign visitors to the United States to be citizens of nations that America considers to be its allies or to possess the phenotypic features typically associated with the global North.

Crucial to this historic shift is a global politics of mobility, which celebrates and protects the mobility of some at the expense of others. The new idealized performance of voluntary transparency gives rise to a new form of mobile, global citizenship: the willing suspect. What I call performances of voluntary transparency—not performances of the global northerner or whiteness or normalcy or class status per se—earn formerly privileged populations the temporary attribution of innocence they used to enjoy on a more permanent basis. Likewise, successful performances of voluntary transparency can temporarily grant members of historically disadvantaged minority groups and those who deviate from normal in some way temporary access to innocence. Transparency is the new white, if you will. The presumption of innocence is a luxury no longer available to even privileged citizens; or, rather, it turns increasingly on whether those citizens are willing to routinely submit to physical or virtual search and disclose digitally captured information about their bodies.

Those accustomed to the presumption of their innocence have experienced the shift to a preemptive legal framework as an assault on their basic rights, especially their right to privacy. The newly disenfranchised have responded indignantly. While a few groups have staged protests, many more have reluctantly submitted to the new security policies. Some have expressed their discomfort and displeasure with the new policies by sharing in a sophomoric sense of humor about the situation, which targets the TSA and blames its employees for their troubles in a manner that is decidedly classist. This response misses the point of their former privilege and callously exercises that privilege anew by heaping scorn and resentment on the relatively low-paid work performed by TSA employees. In this book, I argue that TSA employees are members of a hybrid security-service industry that facilitates the securitized mobility of those privileged passengers who are so apt to resent them.

Rethinking Asymmetrical Transparency

In critical surveillance studies literature, scholars use the term *asymmetrical transparency* to refer to governments or corporations that know more about their citizens or customers than the other way around. The problems faced by surveillance societies unfold as dramatic contests between Big Brother and his victims. This way of conceptualizing asymmetrical transparency has produced divergent schools of thought regarding how citizens might respond to surveillance overreaches by government agencies, militaries, and private corporations.

The realist position, perhaps best exemplified by the sociologist David Lyon, calls for *more transparency* on the part of data collectors as a means of restoring accountability to government agencies and corporations, which currently practice asymmetrical transparency. The Snowden/PRISM scandal in 2013 drives home the continued importance of Lyon's arguments. He identifies the key problem of surveillance societies as the way in which technical, commercial, and administrative organizations and spaces "draw a veil (intentionally or otherwise) over how surveillance actually works."[30] Because data collection and aggregation is highly consequential for individuals and groups, Lyon argues, we ought to focus on "the problem of transparency," by which he means the public's lack of information about "the modes and purposes of surveillance."

"By transparency," Lyon writes, "I refer to a quality of 'seeing through.'"[31] In other words, Lyon defines transparency in functional terms as the ability to see the inner workings of the institution or corporation in question. His call for more transparency is informed, on a deeper level, by the Enlightenment proposition that transparency guarantees justice and supports the healthy functioning of institutions in democratic societies by making leaders accountable to the publics they are meant to serve. Lyon articulates three reasons that transparency is the most important issue for surveillance societies: the appetite for personal information has increased among marketers and those working on behalf of the security state; the politics of information has everything to do with what happens to data once it is collected; and personal data cannot and should not be abstracted out from real persons to the point where we forget that human freedom and dignity are at stake.[32] Lyon accepts that surveillance is an irreversible aspect of our lives and wants to take legal and administrative steps to reduce its abuse. Accordingly, his remedy is liberal, reformist,

and policy-oriented. The more-transparency approach calls for reciprocal or symmetrical exposure of states and corporations, on the one hand, and citizens or consumers, on the other. It assumes that voluntarily supplying information about oneself to a monitoring agency promotes symmetrical transparency by requiring citizens or consumers to give their consent to be monitored. As long as members of surveillance societies are aware of when and where and what types of information is being collected about them, then they are able to make informed decisions regarding whether or not to participate in commercial transactions or public forums that require such "tokens of trust."[33]

Indeed, one could argue that the Snowden/PRISM scandal has bothered US citizens because those citizens have agreed, more or less enthusiastically, to open themselves and their belongings up to unprecedented inspection and analysis in US airports for over a decade now. In this context, the revelation that the National Security Administration (NSA) has been covertly collecting data on US citizens makes what has been happening in US airports feel like security theater, in the sense of performance as faking it. It gives the impression that the US government was not getting the kinds of information it really wanted at airport security checkpoints or that the information collected there was somehow insufficient, making the NSA's additional, covert layers of security necessary. But NSA conduct may prove legal under the PATRIOT Act, even if that act is found to be unconstitutional in the long run. In other words, through their elected representatives, a majority of US citizens supported the PATRIOT Act. Given this, the Snowden/PRISM scandal exemplifies the knotted character of consent and coercion in post-9/11 security cultures.

In contrast to Lyon's call for more transparency, the antirealist position in critical surveillance studies calls for *less transparency* or strategic opacity on the part of individuals and social groups subjected to surveillance by states and corporations. According to these writers, performances of opacity protect human interiority from the registers of surveillance and strategically introduce the complexity of lived experience back into those registers. The antirealist position assumes that surveillance data is impoverished by comparison to the rich, inexhaustible, and unpredictable quality of lived experience, which includes the interior life of the imagination, creativity, memory, and desire. The performance studies scholar and theater practitioner John McGrath is perhaps the best spokesperson for strategic opacity: "The challenge of communication under surveillance,"

he writes, "is to develop a continual proliferation of codes, beyond any one authority's translation skills."[34]

Along these lines, the literary critic Amitava Kumar advocates a post-colonial approach to surveillance that embraces the impossibility of translation. In his poetic treatise *Passport Photos*, Kumar makes the case that in postcolonial experience subjectivity, culture, memory, and history far exceed an individual's immigration record. For Kumar, poetry and stories are the best means we have of practicing (and protecting) human freedom and dignity from the ravages of capitalism and the poverty of the information age.[35] Likewise, McGrath writes: "A key means of introducing the indeterminacy, the excess of lived space, into government and corporate surveillance spaces will be the use of code."[36]

The less-transparency position is informed by Foucault's critique of surveillance, which directly implicates Enlightenment philosophers in the development of modern surveillance societies.[37] In Foucault's interpretation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, mutual monitoring guarantees justice. Individuals are equal because equally trapped and reciprocally disciplined by the gaze of their others. In a related formulation, Foucault calls disciplinary power simply, "mutual and indefinite 'blackmail.'"[38] Accountability requires exposure, hence no individual may be permitted to escape visibility. As Foucault famously put it in *Discipline and Punish*, visibility *is* the trap.[39] The less-transparency approach promotes strategic opacity via the use of multiple codes, which one's surveyors cannot decrypt because they do not possess all of the necessary translation keys. This approach argues that one may continue to participate in commercial transactions and public forums without consenting to more intensive and extensive surveillance. A person performs dissent to the conditions of life in a surveillance society covertly, by cynically encrypting their performance of self for the cameras, machines, or human monitors on the lookout for trouble.

Artist Hassan Elahi's work exemplifies a third, artist-led movement, which argues that in the digital age, *more transparency is less*. After a neighbor falsely accused Elahi of hoarding gunpowder in a Florida storage space, an FBI agent stopped the artist at the Detroit airport in 2002 for questioning. Elahi learned that the FBI suspected him of involvement in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. He was mistakenly added to the terrorist watch list.[40] The artist was subjected to nine polygraph tests back-to-back. The questioning lasted for six months and left Elahi afraid to go anywhere or do anything without first notifying the FBI of his plans.[41] In response to these

FIGURE I.1 *Security & Comfort v.3.0*, Hasan Elahi (2007). Courtesy of the artist.

events, Elahi's ongoing project, *Tracking Transience*, is an elaborate online installation through which the artist tracks himself across the globe. Elahi constructs an exhaustive image archive, which consists of one alibi after another, accounting for how he spends each moment of his life-in-transit. Elahi posts about a hundred images each day of where he ate, where he used the bathroom, and which rooms he occupied (figure I.1). He also posts every debit card transaction he makes and wears a GPS device, which reports his real-time location on a map featured on his website.[42]

The artist collages the images he makes while in transit for exhibition in museum and art gallery spaces. In these works, opaque series of plates of food and toilets allude to the exhaustion of an ob-scene body that is never done proving its innocence. The food and waste montages make mocking allusion to the permeable boundaries and longed for transparency of his suspect body: what was once exterior to the body is incorporated and finally shat out again. Rather than implying a depth to be accessed, the photomontages display the surface accumulation of visual information, the exhaustive collection and display of evidence that only ever refers back to the passenger's mundane bodily functions carried out in a variety of locales. The artist's use of repetition and difference (i.e., same shit/shot,

different toilet) mocks the security state's desire for total control over a suspect who will prove reliably predictable. The artist pokes fun at the fantasy of the transparent body/environment "eliminated" of risk (waste) through ongoing, exhausting processes of self-surveillance.

In reference to *Security & Comfort v.3.0*, a reporter from CBS News asked the artist: "Isn't that a little too much information?" In an ironic move reminiscent of Andy Warhol's response to an interviewer, "If you want to know about me, look at the surface of my paintings," Elahi responded: "No, no, I'm all about full disclosure."[43] The artist points out that you can monitor yourself more accurately than the government can.[44] He and other artists critical of surveillance practices are part of a movement called "sousveillance," which means surveillance from below. Elahi's political strategy obeys the basic laws of economics: "I've discovered that the best way to protect your privacy is to give it away."[45] He is particularly interested in critiquing information as a commodity. According to the artist, it is secrecy that gives information value; therefore if you make your secrets public, you devalue covertly collected information about yourself. He speculates that if everyone tracked himself accordingly, the resultant information flood would make it impossible for any one person to be tracked by intelligence agencies. His site gets 160,000 hits each day.[46] In the more-transparency-is-less approach, one volunteers an excess of private information in order to sow confusion among one's monitors. Some of the artists working in this movement use transparency as a means of producing a protective layer of opacity via information overload. In other words, this school advocates a form of hyperconsent to the conditions of life in surveillance societies. Persons are encouraged to provide information far in excess of what state or corporate authorities would want or could use. Taken to the extreme, micro acts of consent become macro acts of dissent, which intentionally overload the information system to the point that the information collected becomes useless.

Each of the aforementioned schools of transparency within critical surveillance studies—more, less, more-is-less—adheres to the right-to-privacy argumentative framework. The limitation of this approach is that it tends to address the problems faced by what Paul Gilroy refers to as over-developed societies (or surveillance societies, as they are called by scholars of surveillance studies) in relative isolation or perhaps in comparison to one another. Insofar as perturbed passengers, as well as scholars and artists critical of the recent expansion of the surveillance state, frame the

problem as an issue of the right to privacy, they have not addressed the degree to which the performance of voluntary transparency has become a symbol of distinction within overdeveloped societies as against individuals and populations that are excluded from the biopolitical project of risk management.

I suggest that scholars and artists working in critical surveillance studies consider expanding the term *asymmetrical transparency* beyond the presumed domestic contexts of surveillance societies. What if *asymmetrical transparency* referenced the asymmetrical ascription of varying degrees of transparency and opacity to populations based on a biopolitical racial norm that is not narrowly phenotypical but refers instead to the current symbolic markers of one's capacity to affirm life and futurity (reflexivity, docility, ability, efficiency, savvy, and capital) versus those qualities that mark one out as excluded from that collective and coercive project? Moving in this direction is consistent with the broader, collaborative project initiated by feminist scholars of surveillance: to shift critical surveillance studies away from matters of privacy, security, and efficiency to a consideration of the political problem of combating new forms of discrimination that are practiced in relation to categories of privilege, access, and risk.[47]

When transparency is understood as the aesthetic form currently taken by cultural performances of risk management, the ground shifts from questions of more or less transparency, where transparency and/or strategic opacity appear to be answers to the problems plaguing surveillance societies, to the questions *What symbolic work does the aesthetics of transparency do in this performance? And to which other performances of transparency (or opacity) is it networked?* A revised conception of asymmetrical transparency demands a new critical practice, which proceeds by drawing connections between diverse security cultures according to a shared aesthetic of surveillance. Consequently, I adopt a transmedial method of analysis that ranges far and wide beyond the controlled spaces of securitized airports.

First, by attending to airport architecture, personal computing, and mobile consumer devices, I am able to describe, critique, and theorize the transparent traveler as the embodiment of a cultural ideal of slick submission to surveillance in the post-9/11 era. Attention to the architectures through which the transparent traveler moves and the mobile devices that she carries with her en route enables me to draw out the broader global fantasy of privileged, securitized mobility, enabled by airport security as we have come to know it in the post-9/11 era.

Second, I analyze photography and computer-generated imagery (CGI) in news coverage of the war on terror because when one pays attention to the content of the form (medium), these "old" and "new" visual technologies communicate stasis and mobility, respectively. It is only via transmedial analysis of photography and CGI, then, that it becomes possible to see how the look of these respective technologies moralizes a global politics in which the mobility of some is premised on the immobility of others. Consequently, I follow my comparative analysis of photography and CGI from war coverage by US media corporations to a government-run informational website about Guantanamo Bay, where CGI invites US media consumers' virtual tourism of the prison camp.

Also featured in my analysis of the aesthetics of transparency are reality television, social networking sites, and surveillance cameras. I attend to these media because reality television and social networking sites (not to mention the saturation of public space by permanently installed surveillance cameras and mobile consumers' phone cameras) have generated and continue to nourish popular cultures of disclosure and exhibitionism. I speculate that the performances of voluntary transparency enacted and consumed via reality television, webcams, smart phones, and social networking sites may prepare passengers to take the performance of voluntary transparency at the airport in stride.

Finally, training videos and advertisements play a key role in the book because they provide sites for the analysis of performance pedagogy and popular fantasies in circulation about airport security, respectively. The passenger must learn to embody the lessons communicated to her in training videos and placards posted near the checkpoint. Airport security pedagogy not only provides passengers information in how to perform voluntary transparency but also reinforces a political culture of compulsory transparency. Alternatively, television commercials, print advertisements, and billboards provide commentary on airport security that issues from somewhere outside the vital place and thereby offer glimpses at the global, gender, racial, and class politics implied by the aesthetics of transparency.

Overall, the analysis deconstructs the transparency/opacity binary by unpacking the cultural and historical specificity of the purportedly neutral aesthetics of transparency. In the first chapter of this book, "The Art of Performing Consumer and Suspect: Transparency Chic as a Model of Privileged, Securitized Mobility," I argue that post-9/11 security cultures cultivate transparency chic, or the artful performance of consumer and

suspect. In this chapter, I examine how the TSA's policies and procedures for monitoring the things passengers carry onto planes render suspect (and in some cases invert) consumer habits, object relations, and social relations among consumers as each of these is performed at other sites, such as the workplace, the mall, the street, or the gym. I describe the airport as akin to a maximum-security mall in which passengers shuttle between spaces of fantasy and scrutiny and are expected to shift rather effortlessly between the states of distraction desired of mobile consumers under capitalism and the state of high alert commanded from citizen-soldiers in the war on terror. I discuss the TSA's prohibition and confiscation of particular consumer items, the development of "airport-friendly" products, and the use of the airport security checkpoint as a trope of discipline and deprivation in advertising.

In chapter 2, "Opacity Effects: The Performance and Documentation of Terrorist Embodiment," I analyze the visual documentation and performance of terrorist embodiment by US state and commercial media for an audience of US consumers. If transparency effects make interiors into visible surfaces, opacity effects allude to interiors that remain inaccessible. I show how the producers of opacity effects use computer-generated imagery to reframe photography as the medium best suited to the work of documenting the opacity of enemies in the war on terror. The US government's public relations materials pertaining to the war on terror and major media corporations' coverage of the war repeatedly position US media consumers as the privileged visual subjects of the war on terror. Their virtual tourism of the war relies on the frozen stillness of the United States' enemies, captured within prisons and again within the frames of photography. Media consumers consent to the war by silently ignoring and/or virtually touring the clear-coated versions of the extralegal institutions established in the name of prosecuting the war on terror and visually consuming the war as game or intrigue.

In chapter 3, "Transparency Effects: The Implementation of Full-Body and Biometric Scanners at US Airports," I argue that submission to screening by full-body and biometric scanners provides US citizens and others traveling within the United States and select other nations the opportunity to distinguish themselves from would-be terrorists and thereby clear themselves of suspicion. The surveillance technologies adopted to address the threat of terrorism render passengers' three-dimensional bodies as flat visual patterns and/or flat outlines of human forms and eventually as a

generic image of the human form. Likewise, submission to biometric capture offers foreign visitors to the United States the opportunity to become transparent in the sense of the trusted traveler. I provide an overview of the myriad trusted traveler programs in effect today. I analyze a State Department video that introduces foreign visitors to mandatory biometric capture in which the trusted traveler is visualized as a rudimentary outline of a human figure. The implicit logic of the video's aesthetics of transparency is that the territory and citizens of the United States are already transparent. In order to achieve the status of trusted (i.e., transparent), foreign visitors to the United States must submit to biometric capture.

In chapter 4, "How to Perform Voluntary Transparency More Efficiently: Airport Security Pedagogy in the Post-9/11 Era," I demonstrate that transportation security pedagogy addresses people's capacities to be trained to perform voluntary transparency, unless limited by a medical condition or disability. In this chapter, I analyze two pedagogical campaigns designed to train the traveling public in the art of efficient submission to post-9/11 security protocols. I also examine two pedagogical campaigns addressed to TSA employees. The first trains agents to be sensitive when performing physical pat-down inspections on those passengers unable to be screened by machine because of a disability or medical condition, and the second teaches TSA employees how to provide security with a smile. Across these texts, one finds a range of contradictory social models, including egalitarian, ruthless individualism and market competition, government assistance for those unable to perform reflexive governance and the good-vibes security state. Despite the different models of social relations among passengers and between passengers and representatives of the security state on offer in these campaigns, the aesthetics of transparency provides consistency. If one shifts the unit of analysis from the individual passenger or TSA employee to the airport environment, then one can begin to see how each of these campaigns promotes a transparent airport environment.

Chapter 5, "Performing Involuntary Transparency: The TSA's Turn to Behavior Detection," demonstrates that performances of transparency extend to those aspects of appearance, behavior, and mannerism purportedly beyond the control of passengers. In this chapter, I explore the TSA's program in behavior detection: Screening Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT). Based on select Israeli security techniques, which have been modified according to a contested school of behavioral psychology in order to meet the efficiency requirements of US airports, the SPOT program

approaches the passenger/suspect as a discrete individual characterized by neurological, muscular, and skeletal processes understood to be bound up in the body. At the same time, the TSA has at least partially embraced what could be characterized as a more fluid understanding of affect as something that circulates between and among bodies, objects, the airport environment, and the event of flying or of getting through security. I argue that passengers' performances of affective transparency within the space of the airport potentially pose a threat to public participation beyond, insofar as the process simultaneously isolates members of the public, each of whom may be caught in a private experience of the terror of suspicion, and breeds conformity via the pressure to perform inconspicuousness. Finally, I draw on the resources of performance studies to offer a critique of the pseudoscience informing behavior detection.

In the book's conclusion, "Transparency beyond US Airports: International Airports, 'Flying' Checkpoints, Controlled-Tone Zones, and Lateral Behavior Detection," I demonstrate how the book's theoretical and analytical contributions are relevant beyond US airports. First, I provide an overview and analysis of how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has attempted to influence global aviation security policy and the degree to which it has encountered push back from international institutions and other national security programs. Second, I provide a conceptualization of the *deterritorialized checkpoint*, of which the securitized airport is merely one example. The term is useful for grouping together otherwise geographically dispersed and politically diverse contexts in which security officials and vigilantes employ the aesthetics of transparency. Third, I demonstrate how the aesthetics of transparency is at work in recent attempts to control affect in public spaces beyond airports. Fourth, I discuss how the latest version of community policing in the United States mobilizes citizens to engage in lateral behavior detection. Finally, I sketch an alternative vision of the politics of mobility to the one documented and analyzed in this book. In the process, I make pointed suggestions regarding areas for further research and new interdisciplinary collaborations that would enable the alternative vision proposed.