Bodies as Evidence

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“My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we’re giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence”—thus began Secretary of State Collin Powell his February 5, 2003, debriefing at the United Nations Security Council, with the tapestry reproduction of Picasso’s *Guernica* behind him covered up with a blue curtain (Powell 2003). He was about to provide evidence of Saddam Hussein’s possession of weapons of mass destruction before going to war with Iraq. At the outset Powell established the axiomatic nexus that should concern everyone; he had come, he said, “to share with you what the United States knows about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction as well as Iraq’s involvement in terrorism.” Then he immersed himself in enlisting a plethora of facts for what was, he insisted emphatically, irrefutable evidence. The information came from a variety of sources from various countries, including testimonies from various people, taped conversations among Iraqi officials
detailing their deceptive practices, maps and photos showing the hiding of chemicals from inspectors in dozens of sites. A teaspoon of anthrax was all that it took to create panic in Washington the week after 9/11, Powell stated matter-of-factly while raising with his right hand a vial of simulated anthrax; Hussein was in possession of twenty-five thousand liters of anthrax, plus a stockpile of several hundreds of tons of chemical agents. Hussein’s nuclear program included the development of ballistic missiles and drones. Previously, in his January 2003 State of the Union speech, President George W. Bush had left little doubt as to Hussein’s nuclear ambitions: “The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.” Powell’s conclusion as to Hussein’s possession of WMDs was definitive and undisputable. And there was more: “I cannot tell you everything that we know,” Powell added.

But possession of WMDs by Hussein was not in itself the worst. “Our concern is not just about these illicit weapons,” Powell went on to the heart of the matter. “It’s the way that these illicit weapons can be connected to terrorists and terrorist organizations that have no compunction about using such devices against innocent people around the world.” He linked Hussein to various terrorist organizations, including the “decades long experience with respect to ties between Iraq and Al Qaida,” an organization that “continues to have a deep interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction.” The conclusion was unavoidable: “Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option. Not in a post-September 11th world.”

The Real, the Bluff, and the Passion for Evidence

It was an impressive performance by the secretary of state while commanding the world’s attention. Powell had deployed to the fullest the “secrecy/threat matrix” at the core of the counterterror state (Masco 2014, 144). Soon the United States invaded Iraq; the expectations for finding the concealed weapons of mass destruction were high. Anyone reading a liberal newspaper such as the New York Times could only have an unmistakable sense that Hussein possessed or was about to possess a frightening arsenal of weapons of mass destructions. The paper was so convinced that a front page piece by Judith Miller was entitled “U.S. Experts Find Radioactive Material in Iraq.”

Except that there were no weapons of mass destruction to be found in
Iraq. The long list of facts brought by Powell, as well as all the media’s feeding into the imminent expectations of finding such weapons, amounted to no evidence whatsoever. The false narrative had all been based on fantasy. But by then the United States had committed itself to an “asymmetric warfare” in which for years it would spend in each single hour in Iraq the equivalent of the total of al Qaeda financial resources (Singer 2009, 271). If the investment in nuclear weapons since 1940 is estimated in $5.8 trillion (Masco 2006, 336), the tag for the War on Terror, according to Brown University’s Watson Institute, is $4.4 trillion.

The facts enlisted by Powell at the United Nations (the aluminum tubes, the vial of anthrax, testimonies by defectors, and so on) were real facts even if their value as evidence of WMDs was soon demolished. How was this “evidence” assembled and believed? One component that the intelligence services did not know at the time, and which was made known years later to the public on July 2, 2009, was that, based on CIA’s interviews with him, evidence had in fact been planted by Hussein himself to keep his regional enemies at bay. Thus, a critical “evidence” was that Hussein actually had been bluffing. Such a hall of mirrors between real and pretended intentions is central to the murky semantic space created between terrorism and counterterrorism. The inability to sort out real threat from bluff makes those espousing counterterrorism vulnerable to be fooled into a catastrophic course of events.

The logical status of Powell’s assertions about Hussein’s future acts is reminiscent for the anthropologist of the one displayed by the Azande oracular revelations: “Oracular revelations are not treated as hypothesis and, since their sense derives from the way they are treated in their context, they therefore are not hypotheses. They are not a matter of intellectual interest but the main way in which Azande decide how they should act. We might say that the revelation has the logical status of an unfulfilled hypothetical” (Winch 1977, 88). Nor does Powell consider his projections about Hussein’s future course of action hypotheticals but as about-to-happen unfulfilled certainties. In fact, a mantra constantly heard about nuclear terrorism is based on ruling out hypotheticals—“it is not if but when.” Only actual events can be perceived by the senses, yet fantasy or magical thinking provides the explanation for future events. Since knowledge of the future evil of witchcraft or terrorism is hard to come by, one needs arcane and secret means for obtaining it.

Powell’s evidence at the United Nations, and others we will examine below, in all their historic gravity, should be placed at the nexus of history and fiction. A model for such nexus can be found in Terry Castle’s discussion
of the famous ghost story *An Adventure* (1911), written by Charlotte Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain, two well-educated and proper women who recounted in great detail how they, while visiting Versailles as tourists, saw a lady who was none other than Marie Antoinette. She observes the following about the intense interest aroused by the book: “The prime symptom of Adventure-mania was a passion for invoking ‘evidence’” (Castle 1991, 30). It is enough of a problem to explain how someone might see a ghost, but the issue gets multiplied when two see the same delusion, which leads Castle to investigate the nature of collective hallucinations and invoke Sigmund Freud’s lament that we still possess “no explanation of the nature of suggestion” (quoted in Castle 1991, 12) and of ideological transference in general. Such “passion for invoking evidence,” when there was none, is also evident in Powell’s testimony and raises issues of how the “contagious folly” of a nonexistent threat could be shared by so many. Hence the deployment of the modern notion of fantasy becomes relevant to grasp counterterrorist culture and the risks it may entail to global security. In the opposition between dream and reality, fantasy is on the side of reality; in the way psychoanalysts understand it, fantasy is what gives consistency to what we call reality.

Sociologists and anthropologists have long studied the crucial role of the Durkheimian “collective representations”: ideas, beliefs, values, and emotions elaborated and held collectively by a society. Historians likewise are used to speak “of the realm of imaginary representations, a realm that also has a history, fed not by ‘facts’ alone but also by ‘interpretations’” (Vidal-Naquet 1991, 328). But while “representation” is the subjective mode of actual realities, imagination per se, in its inconstancy of form, may represent nothing and be just fantasy. This chapter’s approach to terrorism—that most factual and traumatically realistic discourse in the current political discourse—examines the phenomenon as a case of collective representation and views its evidence as filtered through the framework of fantasy.

**What Do You Want to Hear? Guantánamo Evidence**

“Is the story true?,” the torturer asks the Guantánamo inmate Mohamedou Ould Slahi about the confession extracted from him after months of torture. “I don’t care as long as you are pleased. So if you want to buy, I am selling,” Slahi replies (Slahi 2015, 292).

Slahi is one of the hundreds of people who were taken to Guantánamo with
no record of wrongdoing. A native of Mauritania and with an engineering degree from the University of Duisburg in Germany, Slahi proved to be one of the many instances of misplaced identity in which a supposedly big fish, after years of harrowing torture, provided no valuable information, his case ultimately dropped for lack of evidence. Lt. Col. Stuart Couch refused to prosecute him because his incriminating statements had been obtained through torture. Judge James Robertson granted Slahi habeas corpus and ordered his release in April 2010. The Department of Justice appealed the decision, and Slahi was kept in custody until October 17, 2016. In 2005 Slahi wrote a Dantesque document, *Guantánamo Diary*, the narration of his years of torture in the hands of the United States.

After a lawsuit filed by the Associated Press for his transcripts and the pressure of his attorneys, Slahi’s memoir was declassified by the U.S. government and finally published with many redactions in 2015. If the historian Carlo Ginzburg “learned to read witchcraft trials as texts, which provided direct evidence of the inquisitors and lay judges behind them, as well as some indirect and usually distorted evidence on the defendants” (1991, 321), similarly Slahi’s diary provides extraordinary proof of what type of evidence counterterrorist knowledge and policy is based upon, but most important evidence of the level of fantasy and delirium of the torturers themselves.

Central to Slahi’s experience is, in his own expression, the “endless catch-22” in which he is unbearably caught (214). His interrogators want information, which he does not possess. Frequently he is unable to open his mouth because of the swollen lips; he finds himself bleeding from his mouth, ankles, wrists, nose; at times the superior orders the torturer to stop because, Slahi said, the superior “was afraid of the paperwork that would result in case of my death” (214). At one point a team takes him into a high-speed boat through the sea to simulate some kind of execution. He will have to be willing to tell them what they want to hear, but he will have to build a narrative that becomes credible. Slahi is most lucid in showing how difficult such task is: “Had I done what they accused me of, I would have relieved myself on day one. But the problem is that you cannot just admit to something you haven’t done; you need to deliver the details, which you can’t when you hadn’t done anything. It’s not just, ‘Yes, I did!’ No, it doesn’t work that way: you have to make up a complete story that makes sense to the dumbest dummies. One of the hardest things to do is to tell an untruthful story and maintain it, and that is exactly where I was stuck” (232). It has to be a plausible lie that makes sense, and this requires an entire narrative, for “fantasy is the primordial form of *narrative*, which
serves to occult some original deadlock” (Žižek 1997, 11). In order to placate the torturers, he has to dress his lie in a story that must look plausible, otherwise the catch-22 gets transferred to the torturers themselves, who will end up realizing in anger that he is “lying” when he is confessing and is “telling the truth” when he admits to his making up the evidence. Believing Slahi’s tale was made more difficult because by then the interrogators knew that most of the Guantánamo inmates had no terrorist past.

The torturers were not getting the collaboration they wanted from Slahi, and at one point he was transferred to a special torture unit. This is how Slahi is providing his evidence: “I was literally in terror. For the next seventy days I wouldn’t know the sweetness of sleeping: interrogation 24 hours a day, three and sometimes four shifts a day. I rarely got a day off. I don’t remember sleeping one night quietly. ‘If you start to cooperate you’ll have some sleep and hot meals.’ xxxx used to tell me repeatedly” (218). The interrogators allege that another top terrorist confessed that he had been recruited by Slahi for the September attack. After the seventy days and nights of torture, Slahi is taken to a “far faraway secret place” (267) to continue the interrogation—a place where no sleep was allowed and where “all the guards were masked with Halloween-like masks, and so were the Medics” (271). The guards keep their names secret from the inmates. All Slahi wants is to die. He starts to hallucinate and hear voices day and night. Slahi’s “confession” will finally take place, and the torturers will be “happy” that they got the “evidence” they looked for.

“Confessions are like the beads of a necklace: if the first head bead falls, the rest follow” (275), Slahi notes in reference to the fact that an admission of culpability is the easy thing; what follows, establishing an entire detailed narrative that will satisfy the imagination of the torturer and incriminate people you don’t know, is the hard part: “I had no crimes to confess to, and that is exactly where I got stuck with my interrogators. . . . But through my conversations with the FBI and the DoD, I had a good idea as to what wild theories the government had over me” (275). Slahi has to admit that “obviously there is no way out with you guys.” The torturer replies: “I’m telling you how!” Slahi gives in: “Now, thanks to the unbearable pain I was suffering, I had nothing to lose, and I allowed myself to say anything to satisfy my assailants. Session followed session since I called xxxx” (278). The interrogators are “very happy” (). Slahi notes: “I answered all the questions he asked me with incriminating answers. I tried my best to make myself look as bad as I could, which is exactly the way you can make your interrogator happy. I made my mind up to spend the rest of my life in jail. You see most people can put up with being
imprisoned unjustly, but nobody can bear agony day in and day out for the rest of his life” (278).

The false information could all be easily checked out and disproved, but ignorance of facts becomes a condition for the fantasy narrative. The torturers imposed an actual taboo about admitting ignorance: “Whenever I thought about the words, ‘I don’t know,’ I got nauseous, because I remembered the words of xxxx, ‘All you have to say is, ‘I don’t know, I don’t remember, and we’ll fuck you!’ Or xxxx: ‘We don’t want to hear your denials anymore!’ And so I erased these words from my dictionary” (280). He is asked to write his answers, which deserve congratulatory comments: “You’re very generous in your written answers; you even wrote a whole bunch about xxxx, who you really don’t know,” xxxx accurately said, forgetting that he forbade me to use the words ‘I don’t know’” (280). There is no negative in the unconscious, Freud famously wrote. The difference between a factual narrative and a fantasy narrative is that there is no negative limit; everything is possible in the realm of fantasy. Demanding information, while forbidding the statement “I don’t know,” is the de facto ordering of a fantasy narrative.

The interrogators are happy with Slahi’s cooperation. But they want the whole truth, and such guarantee presents real problems of certification. “I think you have provided 85 percent of what you know, but I’m sure you’ve gonna provide the rest” (289). He is told his story about Canada doesn’t make sense:

“So what would make sense?” I asked.
“You know exactly what makes sense,” he said sardonically.
“You’re right, I was wrong about Canada. What I did exactly was . . .”
“I want you to write down what you’ve just said. It made perfect sense and I understood, but I want it on paper.”
“My pleasure, Sir!” I said. (290)

Slahi writes down exactly what they have voiced to him for years now. “I came to Canada with a plan to blow up the CN Tower in Toronto. . . .” (290) [a tower he had never heard about before Guantánamo]. The interrogator is happy:
“This statement makes perfect sense.”
“If you’re ready to buy, I am selling,” I said. (291)

But in the end Slahi’s catch-22 gets transferred to the torturers themselves: how can they know that the confessed evidence is anything but the blowback of their own fantasy? If the interrogators really wants to know the facts, it
should be relatively easy to prove that the fabricated narrative is false in many facts of substance and detail. Thus the process will require a further stage in which they will have to keep torturing Slahi to see if they can sort out when the man is lying and when not. “If we discover that you lied to us, you’ve gonna feel our wrath” (288), they tell him. After he gives false testimony against a Canadian, the torturer comes back to him: “I talked today with the Canadians and they told me they don’t believe your story about xxxx being involved in drug smuggling into the U.S.” (282) [Two years later he is relieved to learn that the man incriminated by him was in fact released].

Slahi is the incarnation of the famous Lacanian “Che vuoi?” (What Do You Want?). He provides them the tale they want to hear. But not everyone is happy with buying the confession extracted under torture; one of the torturers “doubted the truthfulness of the story” (291). He is asked whether the story he is telling is true: “if you want to buy, I am selling.” The torturers find this disconcerting: “But we have to check with the other agencies, and if the story is incorrect, they’re gonna find out.” At this point, since he has already “sold” them whatever information they wanted, and knowing his fate has been sealed, Slahi is even willing to sell them the truth: “‘If you want the truth, this story didn’t happen,’ I said sadly” (292). This provokes the fury of the torturers: “xxxx came back harassing me and threatening me with all kinds of suffering and agony.” Not only do the torturers have to believe the story they are hearing from Slahi; he himself has to pretend to believe it or else “the radically intersubjective character of fantasy” (Žižek 1997, 8) gets lost. Slahi and his tormentors had to come to some kind of agreement by which, while he plays the role of “the-one-who-knows,” the torturers have to be “the-ones-who-believe” his stories.

As if to reassure themselves they didn’t hear “the truth,” Slahi is ordered to write more about his Canadian plot. After all, “You know, nobody really knows what we’re doing here. Only a few people in the government know about it. . . . The President reads the files of some detainees. He reads your case” (318). The torturers want to believe that the confession reflecting their own fantasy will become a true narrative that can hold up for everyone, including the president. As to Slahi, in his answers to his torturers—Che vuoi?—making up the tales was not the hardest part; it was having to believe them himself in order not to ruin the intersubjective nature of the fantasy narrative.

Confronted with their doubts, at one point the torturers take the strategy of hypothesizing:
“Let’s talk hypothetically. You understand hypothetical?” xxxx said.
“Yes, I do.”
“Let’s assume you’ve done what you confessed to.”
“But I haven’t.”
“Just let’s assume.”
“Okay.” I said. . . .
“Between you and xxxx, who was in charge?”
[Slahi adopts the frame of “let’s assume this is true” and makes up a reply.] “It depends: in the mosque I was in charge, and outside he was in charge,” I answered. The question assumed that Hanachi and I are members of a gang, but I didn’t even know Mr. xxxx, let alone conspire with him as part of a corps that never existed. But anyway I could not tell something like that to xxxx. I had to tell him something that made me look bad.

“Have or haven’t you conspired with those individuals as you admitted?”
[Slahi shifts to the frame “this is true.”] “You want the truth?”
“Yes!”
“No, I haven’t,” I said. (294–95)

The torturers are enraged to be caught up in the schizophrenic mirror of made-up truth/lie Slahi offers them in reflection of their own fantasy. The torturers “tried to play all kinds of tricks on me. . . . They drove me into the infamous catch-22: If I lie to them, ‘You’ll feel our wrath.’ And if I tell the truth, it will make me look good, which would make them believe I am withholding information because in their eyes I AM A CRIMINAL and I wasn’t yet able to change that opinion” (295). Now that after years of torture he has agreed to tell them what they wanted to hear, they’d like their fantasy to be true. The search for truth reaches its surreal climax when they subject him to a lie detector test. Slahi’s lie is what the torturers wanted in order to confirm the truth of their own fantasy; Slahi’s truth (his total innocence) was the ultimate blow to the torturer’s fantasy framework. Could it be that a lie detector might get them out of their own catch-22 by proving beyond doubt that in fact Slahi did take part in all the terrorist plots he confessed to, that his confession is after all true, that he himself believes his own confession? The answers Slahi provided are erased in the book.

The interaction between Slahi and his torturers conforms to the semantical situation studied by Gregory Bateson in his seminal essay “A Theory of
Play and Fantasy.” His argument is that a paradoxical frame similar to Epimenides’s paradox (the Cretan who said “All Cretans lie”—if he was telling the truth he was lying, and vice versa) obtains in play and fantasy, situations that he diagrams as ruled by the premise “All statements within this frame are untrue” (Bateson 1973). The self-contradictory nature of the premise forces that if a statement is true, then it must be false, and if it false, then it must be true, which was Slahi’s predicament. Tyranny could be defined as a situation in which the tyrant is allowed to “play” with the laws while imposing his own fantasy over the objective facts.

The catch-22 in which Slahi is caught extends to his emotions; he suffers the Stockholm Syndrome regarding his own torturers. As one of them leaves Guantánamo, Slahi finds himself crying in the cell “as if I’d lost xxx, and not someone whose job was to hurt me and extract information in an end-justifies-the-means way. I both hated and felt sorry for myself for what was happening to me” (320). Such emotional attachment surprised the interrogators, who made sure to remind him, despite his emotions, that he is a “criminal” after all (320). Among the many redactions in each page of Guantánamo Diary, there is one that surprised its editor Larry Siems: the deletion by the army of the word “tears” in Slahi’s statement, tears provoked by the mention of his family (229). But deleting “tears” makes perfect sense, for such emotional expression humanizes Slahi in stark dissonance with the treatment they gave him as an animal. Slahi was repeatedly told: “Looks like a dog, walks like a dog, smells like a dog, barks like a dog, must be a dog” to which he adds the comment: “I know I am not a dog, but yet I must be one” (276). In a replica of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s Saló, the photos of tortured people at Abu Ghraib showed them on a leash and making them walk like dogs. And once you have turned the prisoner into a terrorist beast, not only are you free to torture him indefinitely but also, why not, practice bestiality with him, a caged and defenseless animal, while others watch the session from a monitoring room. Slahi narrates how two female officers take off their blouses and force him “to take part in a sexual threesome in the most degrading manner” (230), something that is “hurtful” to his sex. Once Slahi had been turned fully into an animal to be hunted, tortured, fucked, and executed, put a tear in his face and such evidence breaks the entire fantasy narrative based on his bestiality. The censor of the Diary is willing to allow the reader know that they abused the dog physically and sexually, but never that Slahi could feel pity and shed a tear. William Blake wrote: “A tear is an intellectual thing”;

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counterterrorism could be defined as the prohibition of the statement “A tear is a terrorist thing.”

In the end, as Morris D. Davis, a retired air force colonel and the chief prosecutor of the military commissions at Guantánamo from September 2005 to October 2007, put it in a piece entitled “Guantánamo’s Charade of Justice,” it is not just al Qaeda leaders but the American legal system that is on trial, his conclusion being that “Guantánamo has come to symbolize torture and indefinite detention, and its court system has been discredited” by the evidence of a “litany of failure” (Davis 2015). Eleven years passed by since Slahi wrote his Diary and six years since Judge Robertson ordered his release in April 2010. And yet Slahi was still in Guantánamo, still guilty of his torturers’ deliriums, until October of 2016. Slahi’s case shows the true body of evidence—the ultimate indictment of the counterterror state’s framework of delusional fantasy. As John le Carré put it with rigorous precision, “A vision of hell, beyond Orwell, beyond Kafka: perpetual torture prescribed by the mad doctors of Washington.”

Guantánamo as Counterterrorism’s Fundamental Fantasy

Secretary Powell’s chief of staff and the man who helped Powell prepare his speech at the United Nations, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, wrote in a sworn statement that, by the end of August 2002 President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and others knew that of the initial 742 inmates, “the vast majority of Guantánamo detainees were innocent . . . [and] that there was a lack of any useable evidence for the great majority of them” (Wilkerson 2010). A study by Seton Hall University Law professors profiling 517 Guantánamo inmates found that 8 percent of them were characterized as al Qaeda fighters and “that U.S. forces ‘purchased’ 95 percent of those in Guantánamo from Afghan warlords and others who turned in alleged al Qaeda and Taliban for a bounty” (Wright and Dixon 2008, 133).

How can we grasp the stark fact that the U.S. counterterrorist security state willingly subjected hundreds of innocent prisoners it knew were innocent to the harshest of tortures for a period of years while providing a charade of military justice? President Obama promised to close it as soon as he took office but was unable to do so in eight years as president. Why the necessity of Guantánamo? A key answer is: Guantánamo offered the fundamental
necessary to provide consistency to the U.S. counterterrorist culture and security state. It was proof that “the worst of the worst” were being kept under control and punished. The general public, impervious to news that by and large the inmates had been apprehended for bounty and were innocent, overwhelmingly approved of it and continues to do so. Dismantling Guantánamo as a tyrannical farce would imply that counterterrorism was left bereft of its enemy’s core fetish.

The obscenity of innocent inmates knowingly kept in Guantánamo while interrogators put on a show of searching for “evidence” of terrorism can be illustrated with another equally Dantesque Guantánamo diary, Murat Kurnaz’s *Five Years of My Life* (2007). Born in Bremen, Germany, Kurnaz married a Muslim woman from Turkey and decided to go for two months to the Masura Center in Lahore, Pakistan, to learn what he needed to be a good Muslim husband. As he was to return to Germany on December 1, 2001, he was arrested in Peshawar, Pakistan. He was taken first to Kandahar and then Guantánamo. Like most prisoners in Guantánamo, he had been sold for a bounty of three thousand dollars. Kurnaz writes of grisly images of inmates with legs and fingers amputated as well as people killed in Kandahar and Guantánamo as the result of torture; he describes in harrowing detail how close he came to death on several occasions. The hope for him was that he would find an interrogator who would listen to his evidence; in the end it should have been quite easy to check the facts of his life in Germany and verify he had conducted an ordinary life and was by no means a terrorist.

The stark fact was that, in the words of his attorney, “the U.S. government knew of his innocence as early as 2002 (just six months into his detention), even as it continued, cynically, to argue that Murat was an ‘enemy combatant’” (Azmy 2007, 240). For five years of interrogation the United States would pretend to be either in search or in possession of “evidence” to subject him to the most extreme, life-threatening forms of torture. Survival at all costs was Kurnaz’s goal, and for this he held on to his faith and to the hope that someone would check the bare facts of his life. One day he comes to the realization that “they had known everything about me from the very beginning. They weren’t interested in the fact that I had never been to Afghanistan and was innocent. I didn’t stand a chance” (Kurnaz 2007, 144).

But the pretense of the search for evidence has to continue in order to make sense of the torture, and the questions become more and more absurd: the color of his shoes in Bremen, what brand of shirt he preferred, confirmation of his birth certificate, the correct spelling of his name. German inter-
rogators, who must have known of his innocence, arrive in Guantánamo in search of “evidence they could use to accuse me of some crime” (173). The interrogators accuse him of lying; “you know everything about me,” he protests. “We have our own evidence,” they reply (175).

In September 2004, after almost three years of living literally in a cage of six feet by seven, and two years after U.S. officials knew he was innocent, Kurnaz was taken to a tribunal that is going to determine whether he is an enemy combatant. Two weeks later the judge read his ruling that he was a dangerous enemy combatant on the grounds that he belonged to al Qaeda, the evidence being his friendship with a friend from Bremen, Selçuk Bilgin, who allegedly became a suicide bomber; a second charge was that he belonged to Jama’at al-Tablighi because he had lived with that group (the Tablighi are an avowedly pacifist and apolitical group). As if the absurdity of blaming Kurnaz for his former friendship with a suicide bomber whose attack took place eighteen months after he was in Guantánamo was not enough, the reality was that Selçuk Bilgin lived in Bremen and had not immolated himself. A phone call would have been enough to check these facts. But that would imply the military tribunal had to give up their fantasy narrative that the man they had tortured to the extreme for years could be anything but a terrorist.

Later in 2005 and 2006 the Administrative Review Board would take another look at his case and conclude that “the defendant was captured in Tora Bora in Afghanistan where he was leading a group of Taliban guerrillas. He is considered an enemy combatant and will be kept in Guantánamo.” When he replied that they had known for five years that he was arrested in Pakistan, not Afghanistan, the head of the tribunal stood his ground: “That’s what we’ve concluded from the evidence” (217).

In January 2005 Judge Joyce Green ruled that the Guantánamo detainees were entitled to due process rights and could challenge their detention. She mentioned in particular Kurnaz’s case, her conclusion being that his detention was unlawful (Azmy 2007, 248). But the government appealed Judge Green’s decision, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court. In the meantime Kurnaz’s attorney, Baher Azmy, found himself in the position of having to go to Germany in March 2005 to shame the government into negotiating his release by publicizing his Guantánamo torture. Kurnaz, who though he was born and lived all his life in Germany was not technically a German citizen, would find out not only that the Americans had been willing to release him in 2002 when they decided he was innocent, but also that “the German government apparently didn’t want to let me reenter the country, and claimed
that my residency permit had expired” (234). It would take another fifteen months before the new Chancellor Angela Merkel would plead with President Bush and obtain his release.

Kurnaz’s innocence was a known fact that the U.S. officials and interrogators had to render into an unknown in order to continue with their search for evidence in their show of justice. The ultimate evidence was that to give consistency to their counterterrorist reality they had to stick to their fantasy regarding Guantánamo and the terroristic and beastly nature of their inmates. President George Bush released 532 detainees; Obama released 161, and of the 61 remaining in August of 2016, 20 were cleared for transfer if there were countries willing to take them. The prospect of closing Guantánamo created an alarm among the Republicans in the House, who in September passed a bill with 244 votes in support of representative Jackie Walorski’s view that “Americans are safer with these dangerous detainees securely locked up.”

The very prison that became internationally an emblem of American lawlessness and brutality, its orange jumpsuits adopted by the Islamic State while depicting the execution of Westerners, is also the emblem that is needed to sustain the fundamental fantasy of safety from terrorism.

“Like Sheer Fantasy”: Intentionality as Evidence

Terrorism is by now the most routine of news. Take the recurrent thwarted terrorist plot opening up the afternoon cable newscast. We have been informed about dozens of terrorism plots foiled in the United States and elsewhere since 9/11. No one can take lightly these frightening news; and yet, are these arrests evidence that reveal the existence of actual terrorism plots? Take the Washington Metro bombing plot, the New York subway plot, the plot to blow the Sears Tower, the one to bomb a Portland Christmas tree lighting: what they all have in common with dozens more across the nation is that they were in fact organized and led by the FBI—they were sting operations. What the frightened viewer doesn’t know is that in fact there was no real risk in the alleged plot, that it was essentially an elaborate ploy by the FBI to catch some al Qaeda sympathizer. Having examined all the high-profile terrorism plots of the decade from 2001 to 2011, Trevor Aaronson found that, “of the 508 defendants, 243 had been targeted through an FBI informant, 158 had been caught in an FBI terrorism sting, and 49 had encountered an agent provocateur” (Aaronson 2013, 15). With the exception of three cases, most of
them were small-time criminals, people who made some false statement (72 cases) or were prosecuted for immigration violations (121 cases). The Human Rights Watch report of 2014 observed that there was no single terrorist attack linked to Islamic organizations between 2001 and 2013, yet there were dozens of manufactured terrorist plots that resulted in hundreds of people going to jail. The report quotes the former FBI agent Michael Germano: “When the FBI undercover agent or informant is the only purported link to a real terrorist group, supplies the motive, designs the plot and provides all the weapons, one has to question whether they are combating terrorism or creating it” (Gessen 2015, 245–46). The report goes on to say that “the FBI may have created terrorists out of law-abiding individuals” and that the informants and agents “often chose targets who were particularly vulnerable—whether because of mental disability, or because they were indigent and needed money that the government offered them” (246). Leaders of Islamic organizations have denounced the fact that informers infiltrated in their mosques “have helped promote plots” (Vitello and Semple 2009). These informers are usually experienced criminals, such as Shaded Hussain, “an accused murderer and con artist who in less than ten years has become one of the Bureau’s most valuable terrorism informants” (Aaronson 2011, 223).

What body of evidence does the journalist present to support the scary news about foiled terrorist plots? He simply repeats the statements offered by the counterterror officials, unconcerned they are “creating crimes to solve crimes so they can claim a victory in the war on terror” (Aaronson 2011, 33). The news of the foiled plot, given as an unquestionable document that provides direct proof of terrorism, becomes the ultimate evidence of the ubiquitous terrorism threat. Aaronson shows in abundant detail the media’s lapdog approach since 9/11 in covering terrorism cases in the United States; they operate “in an information vacuum, as most, if not all, of the initial information comes from the police or prosecutors,” thus providing “the government with a public suspension of disbelief” (Aaronson 2011, 71); it will take weeks and months before they can interview the defendants and get a more nuanced view, but by then the story is old and no longer makes the front pages. The public will not find out that, case after case, “the only terrorist involved . . . was an imaginary one on the FBI payroll” (Aaronson 2011, 73). But, having abdicated any definition of terrorism to the counterterrorist state, the media goes along with the theater of sting operations rather than cast a critical eye as to who the real terrorists are (as opposed to the people on the margins entrapped by the FBI). Thus, “in sting after sting, from Miami to Seattle, the FBI
and its informants have provided the means for America’s would-be terrorists to carry out an attack, creating what a federal judge has called a ‘fantasy terror operation’” (Aaronson 2013, 234).

As several FBI and Justice Department agents admitted, “chasing terrorists is like chasing ghosts—you’ll only see them if you’re willing to let your eyes play tricks on you” (Aaronson 2013, 207). Which brings us back to the historic ghost story An Adventure with which we began and which aroused such public interest during the first decades of the twentieth century; “a passion for invoking ‘evidence,’” we were told, was “the prime symptom of Adventure-mania” (Castle 1991, 30). Such passion for evidence, when there was none, was also the hallmark of Powell’s testimony at the U.N. The “contagious folly” of a shared vision of Marie Antoinette, or the fear of terrorist “ghosts” by such a wide public, required that we deploy the notion of fantasy. Arthur Cummings, an ardent supporter of sting operations as a former assistant director of the FBI’s National Security Branch, put it best when he argued that one needed to understand that “the FBI’s true enemies weren’t so much Al Qaeda and Islamic terrorism but rather the idea of Al Qaeda and Islamic terrorism.” His emphatic assertion that “we’re at war with an idea” (Aaronson 2013, 226) should be stated as “we’re at war with a fantasy”—a fantasy of a fetish Terror that overpowers both terrorists and counterterrorists.

Sting operations are about the intentionality of potential terrorists for carrying out future acts. What type of evidence is this—about events that have not yet taken place? As law professor Mark Kelman put it, “answering questions about the ‘probability’ of a future event poses even more than typically difficult epistemological problems compared, for instance, to questions about whether a particular event in the past occurred” (1991, 171). It is not that there is lack of evidence that terrorism has a past and present replete with heinous violence. And yet, what seems most terrifying and defining of contemporary terrorism is what is yet to come—most critically, as prophesized by so many commentators, the specter of “it is not if but when” of nuclear terrorism.

Time is the defining axis that differentiates fantasy from historic reality. In the waiting for terror defined by the imminence of a threat, what could happen is actually the case now as collective representation and fear. What takes place in real time is a small part of terrorism; its future anticipation, its fantasy, is as a critical component of the counterterrorism culture. One could argue that the distortion of temporality implicit in such waiting and fearing of terror can become self-fulfilling (Zulaika 2009), that is, a false definition of reality provokes a behavior that later makes it true; in its perverse logic the
course of events becomes “proof” of the correctness of the prophecy (Merton 1968, 477).

Nothing has been more consequential in the War on Terror than the Bush administration’s doctrine of preemption that led the United States to the war in Iraq. By definition, “the logic of pre-emption entails action before the event, and relies upon an imaginary of extreme threats, which justify otherwise unthinkable actions” (Stampnitzky 2013, 168). Sting operations illustrate counterterrorism’s need to act before the crimes have been committed—its primary evidence is concerned with having clues about non-events that might reside in the intentionality of potential terrorists. Preemption continues to justify the imposition of a State of Exception on American politics, including the continuing existence of Guantánamo. The judges naturally partake of this same ideology of preemption against the ghosts of terrorism, and thus in case after case “these men, some broke, others with mental problems, couldn’t have committed even small-time offenses on their own, and yet the FBI and Justice Department have convinced courts and the public that they are terrorists, even though it was government informants and agents who provided the plans and weapons that allowed them to become terrorists in the first place” (Aaronson 2013, 235).

There is one sting operation that deserves particular attention because it preceded the first attack on the Twin Towers in February 1993. It took place against the group associated with the blind Sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman. The key figure to the operation was the informer Emad Salem, who received in compensation two million dollars. With Salem’s testimony, the Sheik was condemned to life in prison. What type of evidence did Salem have? Salem “began his testimony by admitting that he had lied to just about everybody he ever met,” the New York Times reported; that he was “always ready with another believe-or-not exploit”; and that his testimony sounded “like sheer fantasy” (MacFarquhar 1995, A9). An editorial added that the indictment of the Sheik “only required to prove the intention to wage a terror campaign” and concluded that “only the sketchiest connections [were] established between Sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman and the alleged mastermind of that crime, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef.” And yet it was evidence enough for counterterrorism to condemn the man, considered by many Muslims their supreme spiritual leader and legal authority, to life in prison. Two of those Muslims closest to him were Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

How is it that a mercenary’s “like sheer fantasy” testimony became key evidence to condemn Sheik Rahman to life in prison? The answer rests in good
part in Kelman’s observation that, “Questions of how we claim to know the
things that we know and whose claims to knowledge are treated as authorita-
tive are inescapable in reaching legal judgments” (1991, 169). Sheik Rahman’s
moral and judicial authority couldn’t have been higher for the Muslims (some
commentators have compared him with the status a pope has for the Catho-
lics); the CIA had used his high authority and his services for years when they
brought him to the United States to help recruit jihadists against the former
Soviets. But obviously the claims that mattered in his trial were those of the
informer Salem. The fact is that “we believe that the defendant we favor has
produced differentially convincing evidence to bolster a claim” (Kelman 1991,
170). Blind and frail, Sheik Rahman is a learned and holy man for his commu-
nity, but in the United States he is Muslim—in the eyes of the counterterror
state law, his moral authority was no match with the mercenary Salem, who
admitted “that he had lied to just about everybody he ever met.” In a culture
in which the figure of the Terrorist embodies absolute Evil, it was enough to
associate the blind Sheik with such a tabooed figure to condemn him. In the
framework of “like sheer fantasy” assumed by his counterterrorist handlers,
Salem’s fabrications were solid evidence.

Drones from Area 51

The drone program is the latest development in counterterrorism, “the only
game in town” in the words of ex-CIA director Leon Panetta. Drones are the
tragic proof that even under President Obama, terrorism continued to be the
fundamental fantasy of U.S. policy. Obama was critical of the rhetorics of the
War on Terror as candidate, but once in power he basically continued his pre-
decessor’s policies, vastly expanding drone warfare. Ten thousand feet above
in the sky, and seventy-five hundred miles away at Creech Air Force Base, the
drones are a further step in the sensorial distancing from the targeted enemy.
The enemy is no longer a real body but a mere image in the computer screen.
The belief is that the flying robots will soon be “in the position to take the
initiative against the enemy on a battlefield” and that “the pressure to let ro-
bots take the shot will be very hard to resist” (Caryl 2011, 58). The scenario is
a Nintendo-like war in which subject-less machines, praised for “their ability
to see and think” (Caryl 2011, 58), and while mimicking all sorts of animals,
will on their own identify and eliminate the terrorists. The drones can do all
the warring operations, they can program a target and follow it for days while
flying on their own, and they can make irrelevant the human participation. Such nonhuman component appears to be in fact the most marvelous aspect of the drones: the unmanned machines have no desires of their own, are not subjectively responsible for their killings, cannot commit war crimes or kill themselves.

The new robotic military industry has developed in close association with science fiction. The drones are operated to a large extent from Creech Air Force Base in the Nevada dessert, forty-five miles north of Las Vegas, known by the soldiers as “the home of the hunters.” It is close to other secretive and restricted places in the Nevada Test and Training Range such as Area 51, also known as Dreamland and Paradise Ranch. Given the secrecy around the facility, whose very existence was denied for decades, Area 51, while developing and testing new weapon systems, became also the site of intense fantasy, famed for all sorts of unidentified flying objects and conspiracies. Area 51 has been the setting for more than sixty movies, TV shows, and video games (Singer 2009, 138). There is a Science Fiction Channel with a TV series about Eureka, the town set up by the Pentagon for scientists to work and live in. In short, Area 51 conflated during the Cold War the development of the latest weapon systems with the fantasy supplement of extraterrestrial sightings and conspiracy theories.

If the atomic bomb tested mostly in Nevada’s desert became “the national fetish” (Masco 2006, 17) during the Cold War, the counterterror state has weaponized drones in the same test site with a similar fetishistic goal. The conspiracy epicenter is no longer populated with extraterrestrial aliens; they have been replaced with the terrorist aliens also seemingly belonging to an entirely strange world. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that drones have killed between six and eight thousand people. This is the Real of the drone effects. But, given that there is complete ignorance as to who the vast majority of these victims are, fantasy plays a key role in determining who they are and justifying why they should be killed. The estimates as to how many of them are combatants and how many civilians are starkly different depending on which sources you pay attention to. Cian Westmoreland, in a talk he gave at the University of Las Vegas Law School in March of 2016, claimed that as a drone technician he had directly participated in the killings of 359 innocent civilians just in the year 2009. In August 2011 the counterterrorism chief John Brennan stated that not a single noncombatant had been killed in a year of strikes; the Conflict Monitoring Center, a private organization that collects Pakistani and foreign news reports, estimated on their web page that
of the 609 killed in 2011, only four were al Qaeda leaders. According to the *Drone Papers*, in 2012 over a period of four months drones killed 155 people in the tribal areas of Afghanistan: nineteen were people they intended to kill; the rest were missed targets (Scahill 2016, 53). The stark contrast in numbers results ultimately from how you define “terrorist.” Potentially everyone is a terrorist if he/she conforms to the “signature strike” of a certain life pattern in a given territory observed from a drone ten thousand feet above. As an example, most adult males traditionally carry guns in Pakistan or Yemen, a “pattern of life” that makes them all potential targets. But guns might not be necessary as the ultimate evidence, for, as a CIA officer told Jane Mayer of the *New Yorker*, “no tall man with a beard is safe anywhere in Southwest Asia” (Ahmad 2011). This results in a method that “in effect counts military-age males in a strike zone as combatants, unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent” (Becker and Shane 2012). You must be a “terrorist” if you are in a zone where there are terrorists and if you conform to my fantasy framework by which you look like one.

The strategic fantasy about the unilateral combat conducted with drones is the belief in warfare without any risk for our side. From Achilles to Siegfried to Hercules to Ajax, “The great myths of invulnerability are almost all accounts of failure” (Chamayou 2015, 73). The ultimate instance of such intolerance to risk was Vice President Cheney’s famous 1 percent theory: if Saddam Hussein had a 1 percent chance of obtaining weapons of mass destruction, the United States had to act to prevent it (Suskind 2006). Ruling out chance from a terrorist scenario, a type of warfare in which deception is the sine qua non at all levels, is like ruling luck from poker: only a traumatized player would adopt such a self-defeating inflexibility.

In the opinion of many legal scholars (e.g., Cohn 2015), drones have removed all boundaries between legitimate combat and assassination. If we follow Michael Walzer and Grégoire Chamayou (Chamayou 2015, 13) in recalling the history of ethics of warfare—that you cannot kill if you are not ready to die—the drone, by ruling out real combat, “destroys the very possibility of any clear differentiation between combatants and noncombatants” (147). This is at the heart of the hotly debated issue of whether the victims are overwhelmingly combatants or civilians. If you completely ignore who the people you are killing are, as is the case in most instances, the need to claim a fantasy-based “evidence” that they are actually terrorists becomes imperative—the fantasy sustains the belief whether you are engaged in assassination or not.
Che vuoi? What do you want? What is bothering you? In psychoanalytic theory, “fantasy is an answer to this ‘Che vuoi?’; it is an attempt to fill out the gap of the question with an answer. In the case of anti-Semitism the answer to ‘What does the Jew want?’ is a fantasy of ‘Jewish conspiracy’: a mysterious power of Jews to manipulate events, to pull the strings behind the scenes” (Žižek 1989, 128). In the case of suspect Muslim migrants in a rich European country, the answer to “What do Muslims want?” is the fantasy of a terrorist plot, the fear that they are going to take over Western culture. This provokes reactions such as the one in Switzerland—a referendum to deny them permission to build two minarets. Or the more recent one of France’s prohibition of the burkini or full swimsuit because, as Prime Minister Manuel Valls put it, it symbolizes Islam’s “enslavement of women.” In Slavoj Žižek’s words, “The crucial point that must be made here on a theoretical level is that fantasy functions as a construction, as an imaginary scenario filling out the void, the opening of the desire of the Other: by giving us a definitive answer to the question ‘What does the Other want?’, it enables us to evade the unbearable deadlock in which the Other wants something from us, but we are at the same time incapable of translating this desire of the Other into a positive interpellation, into a mandate with which to identify” (Žižek 1989, 128). It is not only that the torturer answers to Slahi’s “What do you want?” with his own construction of a fantasy narrative; it is also that the coordinates of the counterterrorists’ desires are not simply satisfied but constituted by the fantasy-scene: “through fantasy, we learn ‘how to desire’” (Žižek 1989, 132). Something becomes the object of our desire “by entering the framework of fantasy, by being included in a fantasy-scene which gives consistency to the subject’s desire” (Žižek 1989, 133). The tabooed figure of the Terrorist is an individual in possession of that unknown quality that is “in it more than it,” an X that provokes for both followers and opponents intense fear and desire.

The U.S. defense budget has almost doubled since the Cold War when it emerged as the only superpower; it currently surpasses the budgets of most other countries combined. Such staggering military reality can hardly be understood unless we grasp as its indispensable supplement the figure of the Terrorist. The point is not to deny the existence of violence in many countries or that there are people who fit a standard definition of actual or potential terrorists; it is rather the imminent expectation of the terrorist with the wmds (a
possibility that security experts such as Robert Mueller [2006] have ruled out as extremely improbable). Such configuration of a worldwide terrorist threat operates much in the way that collective representations have worked in the past at the confluence of history and fiction.

The drone war has been described as “sheer fantasy, if not literally science fiction” (Sluka 2011, 72). Michael Ignatieff wrote that virtual war “as a surgical scalpel and not a bloodstained sword” is a seductive illusion, adding: “We need to stay away from such fables of self-righteous invulnerability” (2000, 214–15). These “fables,” turned into the current hegemonic culture, require a valid theory of fantasy, one that does not render it into the “not-real,” but considers that fantasy “constitutes a dimension of the real” (Butler 1990, 108). Reality is masked by fantasy and “the two become compellingly conflated” (Butler 1990, 107). But fantasy, in its semantic excess, can also interrogate and contest the claims of the real. Fantasy’s own power of fragmentations implies that the mastery the subject claims over it is already undone and that the very identity of the subject of fantasy is put into question by the multiple identifications available to the fantasy setting.

Journalists Dana Priest and William M. Arkin (2011) have described a new counterterrorism industry of thousands of government organizations and private companies with the mission of studying and catching subjects whom they have never met and whose primary cultural or subjective contexts they utterly ignore. The basic working premise for this staggering security industry with over a million private contractors and public officials with top-secret clearances would seem to be never to let us be in touch with a terrorist body or project ourselves into a terrorist subject; never to let us mess up our fantasy relationship with the tabooed Terrorist by actually having a really meaningful contact with the feared/desired Monster.

Whether it is Hussein’s bluffing or the FBI’s counterterrorist sting operations, deception and the planting of false evidence are crucial to terrorist warfare. In such a game the problem facing the counterterrorist is what type of evidence to accept as valid. This is reminiscent of classical detective fiction, a genre in which misinformation and lack of evidence are central to the plot. The detective is aware of his ignorance and knows that there is more to the evidence than meets the eye, that there is a gap between the evidence and what it hides. “There is a gap, a distance, between the evidence and that which the evidence establishes, which means that there is something that is not visible in the evidence: the principle by which the trail attaches itself to the criminal” (Copjec 1994, 176). In detective fiction, the detective’s skill for spotting
unsuspected evidence emerges typically in opposition to the figure that serves as his foil—the proverbially dumb policeman. Both the police and the detective are looking for evidence, but the detective knows that the evidence per se cannot account for the way it reveals itself. Both are in search of “evidence,” yet it is the Colombo-esque detective, irritating in his rumpled and apparently absentminded manners, who shrewdly resolves the case by binging the decisive evidence, while making a fool of the policeman. What was wrong with the policeman’s approach is that he ignores the criminal’s subjectivity in its complex interaction of cultural premises and unconscious desire. In his search for “objectivity,” the policeman will take seriously every piece of evidence, including those deliberately planted by the criminal to fool him. The detective’s knack, on the contrary, is his ability to read literally the murderer’s desire in the traces he left hidden or in the very evidence that is not there.

If “after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki [the Cold War] was fought incessantly at the level of imagination” (Masco 2014, 16), this is not less true of the current War on Terror. But if the framework of fantasy is a necessary supplement to the counterterror culture, such reliance may turn out to be its Achilles heel as well. Masco’s work provides a groundbreaking analysis of the cultural and imaginary continuities between the Cold War and the War on Terror—the recognition that the ‘new’ counterterror state in 2001 was actually a repetition, modeled in language and tone on the launch of the national security state in 1947” (2014, 5). From the beginning, the security state exploited nuclear fear to create a docile citizenship. “A key innovation of the counterterrorist state,” Masco adds, “is . . . [the] commitment to using the imaginary to locate danger” (2014, 11). Another way to state the transition is that the War on Terror rejects deterrence to embrace preemption. The shift entails a change in the imaginary from the symbolic fiction of world hegemony based on nuclear power (fantasy as stabilizing dream) to the spectral reality of a world disorder under the ubiquitous menace of terrorism (fantasy as unconquerable chaos). In deterrence the security state is engaged in securing defense systems never to be used—the threat is based on ritual display and symbolic meaning, including the dream that atomic weapons would make war obsolete. In preemption one has to endlessly fantasize future acts of war based on current nonevents. In deterrence the state uses collective fantasy to produce evidence—of an already existing state of terror, whereas in preemption the public is fed fantasy to sustain the evidence—for what does not yet exist but is to come. Careful analysis as to how “overblown” the threat posed by terrorists is will not diminish the assumption that they are in possession of
an apocalyptic power—something that can only be explained by their accessing the general public’s framework of fantasy. Nothing seems more critical for exorcising the media and the public from the terrors of the current post-9/11 security state than to unveil the evidentiary role of fantasy in underpinning it.

The psychoanalytic cure for the traumatized subject consists in awakening the subject from the spell of fantasy: “The final moment of the analysis is defined as ‘going through the fantasy’: not its symbolic interpretation but the experience of the fact that the fantasy-object, by its fascinating presence, is merely filling out a lack, a void in the Other. There is nothing ‘behind’ the fantasy; the fantasy is a construction whose function is to hide this void, this ‘nothing’—that is, the lack in the Other” (Žižek 1989, 133). Counterterrorist culture, we have argued in this chapter, in all its traumatic fear and trembling, is also dependent on a fantasy construction that serves as supplement to the real of violence. “Traversing the fantasy” regarding terrorism doesn’t mean confronting the reality as it is; it implies accepting the inconsistencies inherent to the figure of the Terrorist itself. How to gain a distance from this spectral framework, how to unhook enjoyment from the pursuit of the hunted terrorist—that becomes the critical issue.

Notes

2 Parenthetical citations to Slahi’s account refer to this edition throughout.
3 During this period the U.S. government lost thirty-four out of forty-six habeas corpus cases.
4 Slahi had been first arrested and interrogated in January 2000 as he returned to his home country Mauritania from Canada, where he felt watched by the U.S. intelligence services. Two months after 9/11, Slahi turned himself in to the Mauritanian authorities for questioning; he was arrested and rendered for eight months to a “black site” in Jordan, then taken to the infamous Bagram Base, and from there to Guantánamo in August 2002.
5 Back cover copy of Kurnaz’s book.
6 Parenthetical citations to Kurnaz’s book refer to this edition throughout.
8 According to Heritage Foundation, sixty plots have been foiled in the United States (see Zuckerman, Bucci, and Carafano 2013.) The home secretary for Great
Britain claimed on November 2014 that British security services had foiled forty terror plots since the London attacks of 2005 (Topping 2014).


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