Neoliberalism, Terror, and the Etiology of Neurotic Citizenship

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On 12 September 2015, the day that Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the British Labour Party, Conservative Defense Secretary Michael Fallon approached the cameras with a stern look and an even sterner warning: "This is a very serious moment for our country. This election shows that Labour is now a serious risk to our national security, to our economic security, and to the security of your family" (BBC News). In an unlikely echo of Tony Blair's chorus of the previous decade that played on the theme of Saddam Hussein posing a "risk to our security" (Blair 380), Fallon's statement parades Corbyn as the new public enemy. The reason why this rhetoric of vilification fails to register as an extraordinary speech act lies in the consensus surrounding the term *security*, which largely goes uncontested in contemporary Western societies. Where the security of the nation-state, the market, or the family appears at stake, any type of pre-emptive action tends to receive wide approval. The trend towards securitization permeates global, national, urban, neighborhood, and domestic domains in equal measure. Strategies of surveillance and the (mis)use of police powers have long been the subject of cultural analyses; since 9/11 and the inauguration of the global 'war on terror,' scholarship has paid particular attention to the spread of security culture and the concomitant curtailing of civic rights (see, for instance, Bhattacharyya 74-76). Many of these analyses foreground the extension of state authority and disciplinary power, framing civilians as targets of unchecked intervention and violence. Yet, even though it is important to point out how current security regimes are imposed on populations, one should not overlook the extent to which citizens willingly invest and participate in the project of securitization, especially those who are classified as 'low risk' and deemed worthy of protecting their privileged white middle-class identities (see Rygiel 146). By reporting abandoned items of luggage, avoiding peak-time travel and crowded locations, submitting to searches, packing toiletries into travel-sized

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plastic containers, or reacting to 'anything suspicious' by reporting it to a member of staff, we all, as performance scholar Diana Taylor puts it, "perform terror every day; we incorporate it" (1893).

This chapter analyzes the (pro)active participation of British citizens in the political project of attaining, increasing, and defending security through the frame of neurosis. While the notion of trauma, which is often applied in this context, highlights the incommensurability of shattering experiences, the structure of neurosis in fact guarantees the social functioning of the subject. The traumatized subject undergoes recurrent, involuntary returns to the repressed traumatic content in the form of flashbacks and nightmares; the neurotic subject, in contrast, holds its repressed unconscious material in check by carrying out a specific action or routine. It is not surprising that scholars have repeatedly drawn on trauma in order to make sense of the psychological impact of the seemingly unassimilable shock of terrorism, not least because the work pursued by Cathy Caruth, Roger Luckhurst, and others in trauma studies offers a terminology that is particularly appealing to those invested in poststructuralist modes of interpretation. Yet the radical rupture connoted by trauma cannot serve to account for the astonishing adaptability of (most) civilians in the face of terror. In British political discourse, this perseverance is frequently commended along the lines of Prince Charles's praise, expressed in relation to the 2005 London bombings, for "the incredible resilience of the British people who have set us all a fantastic example of how to react to these tragedies" (qtd. in Hopkins). Rather than grief and trauma, the normative ideals of stoicism and resilience have dominated public responses to terrorism in the UK. This is partly explicable by tracing the persistent appeal of the so-called Blitz spirit in current reactions to adversity, but this historical perspective does little to disclose the underlying psychosocial mechanism that is both nourished by and sustains contemporary counter-terrorism culture.

This essay draws on the psychoanalytical category of neurosis in order to illuminate the dense network of relations between citizenship, neoliberalism, and (counter-)terrorism discourses. It reworks the Freudian etiology of neurosis through a cultural studies focus on neoliberal governmentality in a critical attempt to amend the ahistorical and universalizing tendencies of psychoanalysis. At first sight, Freud's reductive reading of neurosis as a manifestation of sexual frustration might seem ill-equipped to illuminate the current political predicament. Yet, as will be shown, his explication of obsessional actions nevertheless helps to make sense of the behavior patterns, routines, and anxieties of citizens in view of the terror threat. My aim is to disclose the neurotic tendencies at work in citizens' incessant efforts to secure themselves, their homes, and their urban environments against any number of real or imagined dangers by means of CCTV, SUVs, gated

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communities, and by reporting their fellow urbanites' suspicious behavior and unattended items of luggage. The prototypical neurotic citizen that this chapter seeks to evoke occupies a privileged socioeconomic and racial position within the cultural mainstream. This citizen is a member of the Christian (or secularized) white middle class and has access to a number of symbolic and financial resources that enable him or her to take an active part in the project of securitization. As my case study of urban discourses and practices in the 'neurotic metropolis' London evinces, the neurotic subject participates in the fortification of the home, the militarization of urban space, and in counter-terrorist surveillance. Due to the neurotic structure that governs such seemingly innocuous (if sometimes costly) everyday activities as advertising a room, buying an SUV, or commuting on the Tube, this citizen is always already predisposed to interpellation into the ideology of securitization to which such statements as Fallon's or Blair's seek to bind them. This chapter aims to elucidate how, on the one hand, the neurotic citizen's subjectivity is 'terrorized' not so much by international terrorist networks or attacks; instead, I join Rustom Bharucha in asking how "terror actually gets implemented through the speech-acts of the state" (20). On the other hand, the reflections offered here try to go beyond linear, top-down accounts of state power by drawing on a psychoanalytically informed mode of cultural enquiry that traces shared affective atmospheres and collective investments in security culture.

The present moment that I am writing about can be productively theorized by drawing on Lauren Berlant's concept of the "situation," which she defines as "a genre of living" that exceeds the subject's control and understanding, yet requires perseverance and adjustment (195). For Berlant, the present presents itself as an impasse, a moment of extended, systemic crisis, or "crisis ordinariness" (10). The subject becomes caught in this impasse, as conventional genres of living – in particular, the fantasy of the 'good life' – have lost their validity, even though they retain their appeal. The impasse is a particularly suggestive trope to capture the neoliberal consensus that determines that citizens must live by the rules of the free market (competition, flexibility, short-term contracts), even if they are clearly not prospering in an era of austerity measures and pervasive precarity. Since neoliberalism effectively lacks "mainstream political opposition" (Tyler 7), there are, however, neither concrete political programs nor symbolic resources that enable the subject to visualize or realize a 'way out' of the impasse. This conception of the neoliberal present as an inscrutable "situation" in which the subject is stuck and pressed for adjustment has pertinent points of contact with the psychoanalytical account of neurosis. Before turning to the psychoanalytical definition, one further qualification may be necessary.

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Invoking neurosis to make sense of the psychic life of citizens in the 'war on terror' might seem surprising insofar as exacerbated responses to terror alerts recall the notion of paranoia, rather than neurosis. As Slavoj Žižek writes in his essay collection published in the wake of September 2001, Western societies' awareness of living in a digitalized, hyper-technological, "artificial universe" has engendered "the notion that some ominous agent is threatening us all the time with total destruction" (33). Žižek diagnoses "a new era of paranoiac warfare in which the greatest task will be to identify the enemy and his weapons" (37). The image of a spectral phantom enemy, whose elusiveness necessitates secretive state measures and pre-emptive warfare, can easily be seen to fuel paranoid suspicion. One essential element of paranoia, however, seems far less applicable in the 'war on terror' context, namely, the "delusions of grandeur" that typically accompany "delusions of persecution" (Laplanche and Pontalis 296). The paranoiac fantasy of omnipotence, in combination with a "pathological distrust of rulers" (Freud, "Mourning" 240), appears unhelpful when one seeks to theorize the local, everyday articulations of post-9/11 citizenship, which involve an open, 'trustful' responsiveness to terror alerts, rather than pathological suspicion of the government or the security services – leaving conspiracy theories aside. What the paranoid relation fails to account for, in my view, is the cooperative, compliant aspect of citizens' participation in counter-terrorism culture. Even if there is ground for paranoid suspicions in Blair's warning about Hussein or Fallon's warning about Corbyn, the protective and paternalistic relation these political figures seek to establish with the electorate invokes acquiescence regarding a shared notion of security. More often than not, there is nothing spectacular or grand about the measures undertaken by citizens in the joint project of securitization. Hence, rather than seeing 'terrorized' citizens in terms of a paranoid oscillation between moments of grandeur and despair, I would like to make the case for analyzing their subjectivity as quietly yet obsessively resigned to a security regime that requires perpetual adaptation, effort, and investment – which is where the notion of neurosis comes in.

FROM FREUD VIA JUNG TO "NEUROLIBERALISM"

In his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (first held in 1915-1917), Freud provides an etiology and symptomatology of neurosis. For the contemporary reader, it is particularly his definition of obsessional neurosis that resonates most strongly with colloquial usage of the term: "Obsessional neurosis is shown in the patient's being [...] aware of impulses in himself which appear very strange to him and in his being led to actions the performance of which give[s] him no enjoyment,

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but [...] is quite impossible for him to omit" (*Introductory Lectures* 297). Tics such as compulsive hand washing or checking repeatedly if the front door is locked come to mind here. This kind of repetitive behavior is nowadays classified as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which is evidently a pet theme in popular culture and television in the tradition of the American hit comedy *As Good as It Gets* (1997). According to Freud, the first step in the formation of neurosis is a sexual wish that cannot be satisfied because the ego either refuses the impulse or prohibits the desired object: "First there is the most general precondition – frustration" (*Introductory Lectures* 397). What happens next is that the libido becomes fixated, it loses its mobility, as the subject's satisfaction becomes dependent upon the attainment of this particular object or wish. Third, this results in "the tendency to conflict, arising from the development of the ego, which rejects these libidinal impulses" (397). This is why neurosis can most simply be explained as "a conflict between the ego and sexuality" (398), or – as Freud was later to specify in terms of the second topographical model – between the ego and the id. The formation of symptoms is the outcome of this conflict; it is the result of a compromise which is found as the ego forces the libido to find an outlet for the instinctual impulse. Importantly, this outlet reflects both the ego's opposition/defense and the original wish/desire; the symptom thus represents a distortion of and substitute for the unconscious sexual wish. Due to the reappearance of the repressed material in the form of a coded disguise, the symptom can resemble the original impulse quite closely, unless one is dealing with a case of reaction formation where an instinct is turned into its opposite. Moreover, as the outcome of a negotiation between the ego and the id, the neurotic mechanism is relatively stable and powerful, because it is, eventually, supported by both parts. These two aspects of substitutive representation and the stability of symptoms make the concept of neurosis particularly relevant to the present cultural moment.

Translating this model into the terms of contemporary critiques of neoliberalism and counter-terrorism culture would appear like a big conceptual leap, if it were not for C.G. Jung's proposed corrective to Freud's account. Jung's critique is essential insofar as he points out that a sexual etiology is too limited. Instead of considering the neurotic symptom purely as an expression of sexual fantasies – which, in Freud's examples, usually constitute infantile fixations – Jung suggests that the question of when and why the symptom occurs points us to the "aetiological secret of the neurosis" ("Psychoanalysis" 245). As Jung writes, "the moment of the outbreak of neurosis is [...] most critical. It is usually *the moment when a new psychological adjustment, that is, a new adaptation, is demanded*" (246; emphasis in the original). It is for this terminology of *adjustment* and *adaptation* that

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we need to turn to Jung's critique of Freud in order to be able to apply the psychoanalytical model to the impasse of the neoliberal present. Jung allows us to see the formation of the neurotic symptom as the outcome of a failed adaptation to the present, rather than the failure of repressing a sexual wish. There is something highly suggestive about his definition of neurotic mechanisms as "symptoms of maladjustment" ("Philosophical Tree" 345) when it comes to the neoliberal conditions under which the contemporary neurotic subject finds itself.

Engin Isin is among those scholars who still see validity in the original psychoanalytical account of neurosis. He sketches an update of the psychoanalytical model with a view to the current neoliberal context, arguing that the neurotic subject is integral to neoliberal modes of governmentality. Revising and complementing the rational, self-possessed subject implied by theories of the risk society, Isin proposes the figure of the "neurotic citizen who governs itself through responses to anxieties and uncertainties" (223). He goes so far as to "suggest a new concept, neuroliberalism – a rationality of government that takes its subject as the neurotic citizen" (223). For Isin, neoliberal discourses surrounding the security of the economy, the environment, or the border do not simply construct a neurotic subject, but speak to a subject that is always already constituted as neurotic. This subject calibrates its conduct on the basis of anxieties, rather than cognition; it is "anxious, under stress and increasingly insecure and is asked to manage its neurosis" (225). In acting on the wish to "seek freedom from anxiety" (227), however, the neurotic citizen only engages in a "displacement of one affect from one domain to another" (230). In other words, the neurotic subject thinks, as Sara Ahmed has characterized the cultural politics of anxiety, "of more and more 'things' to be anxious about"; in consequence, its "anxiety […] accumulate[s] through gathering more and more objects, until it overwhelms other possible affective relations to the world" (66). Ahmed's theorization of anxiety as the subject's predominant "mode of attachment to objects" (66) returns us to Freud, who identified in the neurotic "a kind of freely floating anxiety which is ready to attach itself to any idea that is in any way suitable" (*Introductory Lectures* 446). It bears reiterating here that, although potentially overwhelming, this pervasive anxiety is not to be confused with a paranoid relation to the external world. What characterizes current expressions of neurotic anxiety is the apparent existence of a state-citizen consensus surrounding the need to attain and defend security in all areas of social and political life. Rather than responding with a fundamental distrust and a suspicious detection of malevolence in the address from the 'big other' who interpellates the subject into the ideology of security, the neurotic citizen actively and optimistically cooperates in the neoliberal project.

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In the chain of displacement of anxious affects, the terrorist threat can be posited as the prime object, or master signifier. To rephrase this with the terms proposed by Ahmed, terrorism is a sign to which anxious affects 'stick' easily.[1] Even more so than the areas glossed by Isin (the economy, the environment, the border), counter-terrorism discourse addresses a subject whose anxieties are extremely heightened and disproportionate. While widespread disbelief in human-caused climate change might obstruct the environmental discourse's appeal to anxiety, anti-terror campaigns speak to a subject that is already on high alert. Counter-terrorism discourses and practices are therefore ideally suited to an analysis that wishes to move, as has been indicated, beyond top-down models of the state-citizen relationship and focus on the ways in which the neurotic subject manages its everyday life and routines in an ostensibly autonomous and self-sufficient manner. If the neurotic citizen subject is produced at the intersection of discourses on neoliberalism and terrorism, then perhaps nowhere is its presence more manifest than in London, a city at the forefront of both neoliberalization and the 'war on terror.' The way in which the neurotic subject is governed, and governs itself, through an injunction to eliminate insecurities is particularly evident in urban infrastructures and practices. I will illustrate this by discussing three cultural phenomena that exemplify the contemporary urban poetics of neurosis: the securitization of the home, the militarization of urban space, and citizens' participation in counter-terrorism culture.

LONDON AS A NEUROTIC METROPOLIS

When Londoners wish to search for or advertise rooms or flats, they often turn to *SpareRoom.co.uk*, a website run by the private company Flatshare Ltd. Even the most cursory overview of ads for flatshares in London shows that references to the security of properties abound. This emphasis appears particularly pronounced in adverts for rooms that are located in ethnically diverse boroughs. In these cases, signifiers like *safe* and *secure* are often placed strategically in the headlines. In the Finsbury Park area, for example, a "lovely room in a secure, landscaped development" was advertised in June 2015.[2] The person advertising the room was looking for "a clean and tidy sharer to enjoy this modern, minimalist flat in a lovely new

1 Ahmed uses the term *stickiness* in order to describe "how 'signs' become sticky or saturated with affect" (194-195), thus making particular emotions, figures, or bodies appear indissociable in the public imagination.

2 This and subsequent quotations are all taken from the website www.spareroom.co.uk.

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development with entry phone system, concierge service, CCTV and security." Next to minimalist design features, technologies of surveillance have evidently become an asset on the housing market. The emphasis placed on security is especially striking for its priority over ideas surrounding the type of person one would like to share a flat with or the kind of communal life one would like to lead. Another ad for a room in the same area, published in September 2015, lists among the amenities of the flat, besides it being located a "3 minute walk to banks, restaurants (incl. subway and KFC, other Turkish, Chinese, Mexican restaurants)," that it is "fully fitted with various security systems, fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, etc." The trend continues in September 2017, with an ad for a "Large Ensuite room in secure apartment building" specifying that said building "requires a fob at the entrance and has security doors on every floor. It also has secure parking."

Although the increasing fortification of private property is surely a widely observable phenomenon, I would like to suggest that the value placed on secure housing is not unrelated to the fear of terrorism. In these three examples, the inclusion of details on available security systems might be motivated by the particular location of the properties in the vicinity of Finsbury Park Mosque. The North London Central Mosque, as it is also called, has been in the headlines for more than a decade due to its reputation as a *Suicide Factory*, as a 2006 book by two *Times* journalists labelled it.[3] The mosque is indelibly associated with the radical imam Abu Hamza al Masri, who preached there until 2003, and symbolizes like few other spaces the 'failed integration' of British Muslims and their presumed fundamentalist inclinations. Despite al Masri's arrest for terrorism offences in 2004 and the appointment of chairman Mohammed Kozbar in 2005, who is widely lauded as a moderating influence, the public perception of the mosque as an icon of radical, unassimilable 'otherness' seems to persist. After a series of assaults on the site with cans of petrol and packages of rotten pork, a van was deliberately driven into a group of worshippers in front of the mosque in June 2017, killing one person and injuring several others. These acts of aggression and extreme violence aside, the place of Islamic worship seems to make for an environment that the neurotic citizen cannot inhabit without uneasiness. The fact that the enumeration of 'ethnic' food places in the second flatshare ad is immediately followed by

3 In *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque*, Daniel McGrory and Sean O'Neill investigate the indoctrination of worshippers that took place under Abu Hamza al Masri's leadership. The sensationalist title of the book clearly indicates the irrevocable associations with extremism that the Finsbury Park Mosque evokes in the public perception.

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a list of various security systems points to anxieties surrounding the supposed radicalization of religious minorities, which prompt a refashioning of the cosmopolitan city as a secure enclave. The 'exotic' restaurants and security systems are mutually dependent signifiers: multiculturalism comes with its perks and dangers.

As the nonchalant tone in which technologies of security are mentioned in such advertisements demonstrates, the flat-searching subject addressed by these texts is the prototypically white and middle-class neurotic citizen, who has been trained to observe and manage all kinds of insecurities. Anxieties about cohabitation with cultural and religious 'others' are silently accepted and taken for granted, rather than stemming from or being channeled into paranoid distrust. If paranoid narrative schemes work with suspicion and vilification, as seen in a number of TV series and films revolving around terrorist strikes targeting the 'homeland,' the poetics of neurosis relies on enumeration and repetition, on the accumulation of superfluous detail. The abbreviation "etc." that concludes the list of "various security systems, fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms" in the second flatshare ad encapsulates the nature of the security consensus as a social contract that need not be spelled out. It seems that security systems and alarms have become such essential accessories in real estate that their provision can almost be taken for granted, whereas their efficacy or necessity is not called into question. They make for essential yet inconspicuous details, shrouded by the etcetera, the ordinary stuff of urban living.

More evidence of the securitization of the home can be located in the incidence of gated housing schemes. Again, this phenomenon may not be immediately attributable to the 'war on terror' context, as, in Britain, the "classic gated development concept [was] introduced from the US in the 1980s" (Norwood), and the gating of certain sections of urban places and squares obviously goes even further back. But the demand for and popularity of "voluntary segregation" doubtlessly increased after 9/11, as reports on the rise in gated communities in the UK published after the 2001 attacks would suggest (see Kelbie). Prominent examples in London include the Lancasters, a luxurious gated development overlooking Hyde Park, or the Bow Quarter in East London, a walled-off complex comprising a gym, restaurant, bar, sun deck, and convenience store, all secured by infra-red surveillance cameras and 24/7 security guards (etc). Geographer Cindi Katz argues that 9/11 provided those urbanites that had secretly desired segregation with "a neat alibi" and calls the subsequent expansion of gated communities an expression of "spatial fetishism" (353). Similar to the libidinal investment in a fetishized object, the neurotic citizen becomes attached to the "fantasy of producing citadels of safety" (Katz 354). Following Peter Marcuse, Katz speaks of the practice of "cit-

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adelization," which – and this is a crucial point – "performs security, but so selectively that it reinforces the vulnerabilities it is staged to counter" (353). The injunction to eliminate insecurities engenders ever new safety measures, which paradoxically only serve to enhance the subject's sense of exposure. There is, accordingly, an obsessive element to the practices of fortressing, bunkering, and securing the home. Here, it is crucial to recall Freud's explanation that anxiety is only "screened by the obsessional action" and released immediately upon letting go of the compulsion or the project to which the neurotic subject is immediately dedicated (see *Introductory Lectures* 452). If the safety measures undertaken by the neurotic subject enhance, rather than alleviate, its anxiety, the subject's relationship to the 'neuroliberal' program testifies to Berlant's notion of "cruel optimism," which "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1). Even if, or precisely because, social life is increasingly structured by and experienced as precariousness, the neurotic subject holds on to its cruel attachments to 'citadels of safety.'

The second example that elucidates the neurotic structure underlying current modes of living and being in the metropolis revolves around the militarization of urban space. Gargi Bhattacharyya, who reviews developments that are indicative of urban militarization in the 'war on terror' context, such as the increase of police presence, argues that these serve to extend "the scope and discretion of state authority," resulting in "a shift in the relation between citizen and state" (77). Here, one could think of the enhanced police presence across the London transport network or the stationing of troops and tanks at Heathrow Airport in response to a heightened terror alert in 2003. Other instances are the increase in stop-and-search arrests, racial profiling, and high-profile raids. Imogen Tyler sees these developments as evidence of the creation of a "'home front,' a battle line behind which the civilian populace is mobilized as a supporting arm of the military" (59). The militarization of everyday life, she goes on to write, "presumes a popular consensus in favour of forgoing democratic freedoms" (59). Doubtlessly, the UK's various Terrorism Acts have curbed civil liberties by widening police powers to stop and search, arrest, and detain suspects – developments that have disproportionately affected ethnic minorities. While anti-terrorism discourses inevitably frame non-white citizens as liable to raise suspicion, the subject position provided to those located on the upper ends of racial and class hierarchies is infused with neurotic anxiety. Within the stark binaries inculcated by the idea of a 'war on terror,' the "(white) originary citizen is in sharp contradistinction to the (dark) naturalized citizen, the dark immigrant or even the dark citizen born of the dark immigrant whose (latent) 'loyalty' is perennially suspect" (Alexander 235).

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To reiterate Tyler's foregrounding of the popular consensus surrounding security culture, views of a top-down inculcation of fear and anxiety cannot serve to account for the neurotic subject's active cooperation in the scheme of militarization. Neither the state nor the citizen is engaged in a single-handed paranoid effort to fortify the borders of the home (front) against terrorist incursions from without or within; instead, there is a tacit agreement on the necessity of such measures, and a collective effort is dedicated to their realization. A pertinent example of the neurotic subject's enlistment on the home front is the palpable increase in SUVs (sports utility vehicles). Sales figures of these cars have gone up immensely, particularly in upmarket areas in London, as their nickname 'Chelsea tractors' indicates. This is not incidental. Zygmunt Bauman considers the spread of these "gas-guzzling military monsters" (12) as symptomatic of a politics of 'law and order,' which translates the idiom and practices of warfare into the Western metropolis. The unsuitability of 4x4 vehicles to navigate the narrow streets of London does not seem to deter a certain section of the (upper) middle classes from this increasingly popular purchase decision. This trend has been satirized, for instance, in the BBC's *Catherine Tate Show* (2004-2007), where upper-middle-class characters seem to invariably drive silver Land Rovers. One of the recurring characters in the sketch show, the Aga Saga Woman, memorably drives through 'Totten-ham' in her 4x4 after taking a wrong turn, with a look of panic on her face as if she were driving through mined territory. Indeed, the SUV is "always advertised as a vehicle of war, a machine of escape and velocity in and through the urban jungle" (Eduardo Mendieta qtd. in Gray and Wyly 339).

Providing armor to the civilian navigating the home front of the 'war on terror,' the SUV becomes an element of Mitchell Gray and Elvin Wyly's "Terror City Hypothesis." The urban geographers define the terror city as "a construct that redefines the urban by portraying all cities in terms of their *vulnerability to terrorism or their propensity to breed and harbor terrorists*" (331; emphasis in the original). In the terror city, the permanent sense of anxiety engendered by constructions of the terrorist threat finds an "iconographic and material expression in the urban landscape" (332); examples include "divisions, separations, walls, and checkpoints" (339) next to other practices of urban militarization, such as driving an SUV. As Gray and Wyly state, the (sub)urban "environment now provides a deep reservoir for intensified insecurities in the 'war on terror.' Private alarm and surveillance companies and automakers have been quick to revise their marketing campaigns to emphasize security" (339). Again, the subject's relation to these protective objects can be characterized as cruelly optimistic: rather than factually augmenting the security of neurotic citizens and their families, the SUV contributes to an increase in air pollution, invites rather than repels burglars, and potentially

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heightens the subject's sense of isolation, of fending for itself in an increasingly atomized social environment. Yet the neurotic mechanism is functioning and stable precisely because, by forming a socially acceptable symptom, it provides a legitimate outlet for the subject's anxious energies. If citizens were to let go of the obsessional action, i.e. the compulsion to secure their bodies, their cars, and their homes, they would have to face a deeper, underlying, existential anxiety that cannot be as easily addressed or redressed.

The example of the SUV throws into sharpest relief the classed nature of the image of the prototypical neurotic citizen evoked in this essay: this subject can only govern itself and be governed through an injunction to eliminate insecurities because it is a privileged participant in the neoliberal market economy, and one with a particular purchasing power. Simply put, the neurotic citizen can 'afford' to worry about assaults by terrorists or criminals. If the wealthy patients of Freud and Jung thus recur in the current shape of middle- and upper-middle-class urbanites, then the frequent critique of psychoanalysis as a bourgeois ideology still obtains. This makes it necessary to acknowledge the limitations of approaches such as the one proposed in this chapter, which inevitably reify middle-class subjectivity in terms of a normative 'citizen subject.' With private alarm systems and SUVs, this subject tends to manage and display its anxieties through high-end consumer products that are certainly not accessible to every inhabitant of the terror city. Those excluded from such practices are, to be sure, the very people against whom neurotic citizens wish to safeguard themselves.

This becomes evident as we move on to the third example, the neurotic citizen's participation in counter-terrorism culture. On Fellows Road, a street in North London that stretches from Swiss Cottage underground station to the fashionable Primrose Hill area, Victorian townhouses and social housing estates sit side by side. The four council high-rise buildings on the street exemplify this social density: as an outcome of the so-called Right to Buy scheme of the 1980s and ongoing processes of urban gentrification, affluent flat owners have come to cohabit with housing association tenants on the ethnically diverse estate. Upon entering Bray Tower, one of the high-rise blocks, visitors are greeted by a placard in a display cabinet that instructs residents on how to detect terrorists. Under the headline, "Terrorism: If You Suspect It, Report It," the poster issued by the Metropolitan Police as part of a nation-wide counter-terror campaign details five areas of suspicious activity: "Terrorists need information," "Terrorists need transport," "Ter-

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rorists need to travel," "Terrorists need communication," and "Terrorists use computers."[4] Iconic images of a camera, a silver van, a black trolley, a Nokia phone, and a desktop computer illustrate the plain instructions on identifying terrorist behavior (e.g. "Do you know someone who travels but is vague about where they are going?"). Where terrorist suspects and neurotic citizens mingle, the latter are encouraged to fixate their anxieties on the former and report their suspicious behavior directly to the police, via the confidential anti-terrorist hotline specified on the placard. Although one might detect the seeds of paranoid suspicion in the instruction to be wary of one's neighbors' use of cars, computers, or mobile phones, the explicit invitation to citizens to participate in the policing effort appears predicated on a neurotic mode. Again, the police here figures as a benevolent if paternalistic partner, the well-meaning 'big brother,' rather than the ill-disposed 'big other.' The "If You Suspect It, Report It" poster illustrates particularly well that neurotic anxieties are always already in circulation – otherwise, it could only be read as highly comical or entirely absurd.[5] As was seen in the texts of the flatshare ads, the poetics of neurosis derives from the use of repetition and the enumeration of superfluous details. The five parallel phrases that place 'terrorists' in the subject position converge in an appeal to neurotic anxieties, even though the overall tone of the placard is matter-of-fact and none of the descriptions of suspicious activities uses any signifiers (apart from *terrorists*) that might provoke alarm.

The fact that counter-terrorism discourses presuppose a neurotic subject as their recipient is especially evident on public transport. For instance, a leaflet that was issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers and handed out at busy Tube stations in late 2014 instructs commuters on how to "stay safe" in what is cautiously called a "firearms and weapons attack" (qtd. in Hartley-Parkinson). Again, the flyer works with excessive repetition: beyond reiterating the imperative "stay safe" twice, it urges readers to "leave the area safely" and "find a safe place" in the event of an attack. Keeping up the terror alert by means of these publicity campaigns is an essential practice to maintain neurotic anxiety. Alongside the permanent warnings to passengers to keep their belongings with them at all times and to report any suspicious behavior or unattended bags, such instructions can be read

4 The poster can be viewed via the following link: www.lbbd.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/If-you-suspect-it-report-it-Anti-Terrorism-Poster-pdf.pdf.

5 This is not to suggest that the poster cannot be read in such ways, as indeed the perspective taken here demonstrates. Unsurprisingly, the various posters issued as part of the counter-terror campaign have been highly controversial and triggered a number of spoofs on internet forums. However, as of 2017, the poster in question was still in place at the housing estate on Fellows Road and, doubtlessly, at similar sites.

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as articulations of what Katz labels "banal terrorism," that is, the "everyday, routinized, barely noticed reminders of terror or the threat of an always already presence of terrorism in our midst" (350). In response to the perpetually reiterated injunctions to be wary of other passengers, the citizens traversing the metropolis become caught in the state of "'expectant anxiety' or 'anxious expectation'" that Freud attributes to neurosis: "People who are tormented by this kind of anxiety always foresee the most frightful of all possibilities […] and exploit every uncertainty in a bad sense" (*Introductory Lectures* 446). This 'expectant anxiety' reveals itself in a number of neurotic routines, such as changing the carriage if an Asian-looking man carrying a rucksack gets on board, avoiding certain routes or modes of transport altogether, or getting cabin crews to remove suspicious passengers from airplanes – as happened in connection with growing fears of ISIS at various London airports in 2016.

Towards an Etiology of Neurotic Citizenship

If Tyler is right in claiming that "a major characteristic of neoliberal 'democracies' is that they function through the generation of consent via fear and anxiety, rather than fidelity to national identity" (8), this begs the question where the benefits in fixing anxieties onto the terrorist threat might lie. The reason why such emphasis is placed on terrorism both in the model of governmentality approached here and in the neurotic citizen's routines and behaviors can be explained by illuminating the precise logic of displacement that is at work in the joint project of securitization. The Londoners who mobilize substantial financial and psychological resources to fortify their homes, maintain their watchfulness during their travels, or cast a suspicious eye on fellow passengers and neighbors cannot, or at least not comprehensively, be characterized as rational subjects who make "strategic risk decisions," as Ulrich Beck might put it (6). Taking the psychoanalytical concept of neurosis into account helps clarify to what extent rational assessments are bypassed by neurotic anxiety and highlights the psycho-cultural and political function of acting (out) on that anxiety.

Based on a distinction drawn by Bauman, I argue that the neurotic citizen obsessively invests in safety (symptom), yet perpetually fails to achieve a sense of security (wish). As discussed above, the neurotic symptom can quite neatly reflect the original desire – Freud calls it "a representation, a repetition, of the significant scene" (*Introductory Lectures* 302) – which is doubtlessly the case in the project of securitization. Bauman helpfully differentiates between *security*, which he designates as a genuine feeling of being insured and protected by the (welfare) state,

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and the surrogate character of *safety*, which he relates to the personal management of potentially infinite threats (see 13). Adapting Freud's model to present manifestations of neurotic citizenship, one can hence determine the first step in the formation of this kind of neurosis: the subject's instinctual wish is not of a sexual nature, but stems from the desire for existential security. This wish cannot be satisfied, not so much because the ego intervenes, but because of obstacles in the present, where neoliberal capitalism has eroded the collective foundations on which the possibility of existential security rests. The original wish for the security that could be – or, according to Bauman, formerly has been – fulfilled if (or when) the subject was held by stable networks, social forms and conventions, a reliable workplace, the experience of social justice, and solid institutions cannot be realized due to the neoliberal exigencies of constant mobility, flexibility, and adjustment. Second, libidinal energies become fixated onto a particular object: the terrorist threat. This fixation provides an orientation for the subject's anxious affects, without fully suturing them, for terrorism, as an object of anxiety, is inherently ill-defined and elusive; there is no knowing if, when, how, where, and why an attack might occur. Third, the conflict between the subject's demand for security and the neoliberal obstacles that prevent this wish from being realized results in the compromise formation of obsessive symptoms, which consist in the series of safety measures that we have encountered across the terror city. In other words, the instinctual wish to be held and secured by social networks and the welfare state finds a thinly disguised expression in the subject's substitutive compulsion to shield itself from threats to itself, its property, and its family. In the chain of displacement from security to safety that sustains the governmental mode of ne(ur)oliberalism, the terrorist threat represents an inexhaustible source of anxiety: if anxiety sticks to objects, as Ahmed suggests, the notoriously slippery object that is terrorism offers its amplification, rather than stabilization. Put graphically, anxiety slips from and re-sticks to terrorism in an endlessly repeated mental effort. The stability of the neurotic symptom is hence guaranteed.

What is more, due to the strong social consensus around the need for securitization and the severity of the terrorist threat, the neurotic citizen's obsessional actions are not conventionally perceived as pathological. Just as Freud writes that the neurotic symptom is, as the outcome of a joint search for a compromise, supported by both the ego and the id, the everyday practices of securitization can be understood as a compromise between citizen and state. The neurotic mechanism, here, fulfils a crucial political function insofar as the citizen, while caught up in a constant displacement of anxiety, will not be able to identify the repressed wish for existential security and, in response, formulate concrete political demands. In

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turn, the obsessional action protects the subject from having to address its fundamental sense of insecurity and precariousness, i.e. the deep-seated and unconscious permanent anxiety that characterizes neoliberal culture. The subject's competent management of its more mundane anxieties provides the sort of cruel satisfaction, to slightly amend Berlant's concept, that can be experienced by the individual who follows the neoliberal path of self-optimization. Accordingly, the type of neurotic action that ensues is entirely compatible and complicit with the neoliberal paradigm, for it isolates citizens as individualistic consumers of 'safety products' and pits suspicious neighbors and commuters against each other. While the inhabitants of Bray Tower are visually cued to police each others' everyday activities whenever they leave or enter their tower block, they have been kept from scrutinizing the council's neglect of their security: after the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, residents had to be evacuated from the Fellows Road estates overnight, as it appeared that a similar cladding as the one that caught fire at Grenfell Tower had been used to make the high-rises more appealing from the perspective of the neighboring townhouses. As state institutions continue to outsource security – and, in particular, to neglect their responsibility to protect the most vulnerable sections of society – neurotic citizens are expected to take over as the personal managers of their own safety.

Perhaps surprisingly, I would like to conclude on a positive note, for I do not believe that the neurotic citizen is permanently stuck in a mode of anxiety or forced to endlessly carry out compulsive safety measures. Freud says of the healing of neurosis that, "[b]y carrying what is unconscious into what is conscious, we transform the pathogenic conflict into a normal one, for which it must be possible somehow to find a solution" (*Introductory Lectures* 486). The critical value of combining psychoanalytical insights into the structure of neurosis with cultural studies approaches to terrorism and neoliberalism might lie in this prospect of 'somehow' finding a solution. I am thinking here of what Mark Featherstone, Elizabeth Poole, and Siobhan Holohan refer to as "politicizing" the 'war on terror,' when they propose to enable Western "populations to understand that the real root of their undefined feelings of anxiety is not terror, but rather the generalized insecurity [they] have to endure in support of neo-liberal capitalism" (172-173). Hence, by dissecting the displacements that turn safety into the substitutive representations of security, a psychoanalytically informed cultural studies perspective may contribute to formulating resistance to the hegemonic projects of neoliberal

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privatization, securitization, militarization, and the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities.[6] As the continuing relevance of psychoanalytical models for seeking to explain cultural phenomena suggests, there may lie something in their "virtues of endurance" (Frosh 157) that can be mobilized to counter the surprising endurance of neoliberalism in the face of deepening inequalities (as well as financial and economic crises) and to oppose the tenacity of imperialist modes of violence that have been resuscitated in the 'war on terror.'

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6 In this vein, Mark Schmitt offers an excellent account of the work of such cultural critics as Mark Fisher and Franco Berardi, who propose "counter-strategies that usually entail the need to work with and through mental disorders in order to challenge the capitalist condition and its representational systems" (302).

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