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Book Reviews

Vida Bajc and Willem de Lint (eds.), *Security and Everyday Life*, Routledge: New York, 2011; 312 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-85344-6, \$48.95 (pbk)

Reviewed by: Christian Tagsold, *Department of Modern Japanese Studies, Heinrich Heine University, Dusseldorf, Germany*

More and more, security is permeating everyday life. Politicians and security advisors argue that the world is unsafe and needs to be policed to safeguard society from all sorts of threats. 9/11 and its aftermath have eased this task, convincing many of lingering dangers that require expanded policing and surveillance, even at the price of civil liberties. The edited volume, *Security and Everyday Life*, describes how the security apparatus, backed up by bureaucracy, evolves and secures its own existence by identifying ever new risks and dangers. But the analysis goes beyond this and shows how risk management through security has been transformed into an ideology.

In her foreword, Vida Bajc calls this process meta-framing, referring to Gregory Bateson's theory. Meta-framing is "expansive" and "totalizing." The modern nation state and its mode of governmentality, as pointed out by French philosopher Michel Foucault, is the driving force for translating the meta-frame of security into social action. Modern nation states have relied on security as one of their main tools for governing citizens since their very formation.

Bajc's concise but dense theoretical introduction sets the background for this volume. The 10 chapters that follow harmonize quite well in fitting various examples into a general theoretical framework that builds upon Foucault. It is certainly a strong point of the volume that the chapters tell a common story though dealing with different aspects of security. The editors have succeeded in presenting a coherent outlook on security to the reader – something rarely achieved in edited volumes. However, Bajc's theory of meta-framing is somewhat an exception here. Bajc develops an interesting and complex framework on security as a meta-value in the 21st century which, somewhat unfortunately, is not taken up in the other chapters. Even though it is a shared insight among the authors of the volume that security is an ideology to be criticized in its current social implementation and its all-encompassing character, the papers do not take up the notion of meta-framing explicitly.

Nevertheless, the contributions succeed in explaining the pervasive character of security throughout the volume. Salter's chapter, named for the "no joking" rule at security checks at airports, is a good example of this. Salter convincingly explains why this rule is implemented at airports. "No joking" rules were enacted even before 9/11, but have been applied more severely thereafter. Salter interprets security checks at airports as a confession to, and for the governmental notion of, security by citizens. Humor would foil this confession and compromise the security check, undermining security, and state

authority in general. Humor is all the more threatening because it reveals that state security cannot discriminate between joking and serious threats. Airport security checks must accept all statements at face value, even if humorous; laughter might cut through the carefully woven net of security and open up difficult vistas for social actors.

Salter's paper, together with Bajc's ethnography of Pope John Paul II's visit to Jerusalem in 2000, forms the first part of the volume on "Public Space and Collective Activities." The other parts focus on "Struggles and Resistance," "Law Citizenship, and the State," and "Global Agendas, Local Transformations." The papers thematically, methodologically, and geographically cover a broad range of topics and approaches. China, the EU, Canada, the US, Latin America, and Israel are analyzed. Examples span case studies of a woman resisting the state security apparatus in Israel to a discussion of general EU security policies. Thick ethnographical descriptions, media studies, and discourse analysis form the methodical repertoire. This diverse range of topics and approaches is well-threaded theoretically and thereby does not lead to a confusing and arbitrary melange. Quite the contrary, the broad scope of the volume is necessary to back up some of the main claims. If security and surveillance form the base of nation states and have turned into pervasive values overriding everything, one *has to* turn to media, case-studies, laws, and the like to prove its case.

However, the theoretical approach of the volume left me guessing about an important concept. Security and governmentality are linked to neoliberalism by one chapter (Nelson Arteaga Botello: Security Metamorphosis in Latin America), but I have asked myself why the connection is not scrutinized more closely. French sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2009) has written about the all-encompassing role of neoliberal ideology in the security complex in his book, *Punishing the Poor*. Wacquant argues that security is embedded in the approach to individualize risk and deny its social nature. Failure in life is ascribed to individual shortcomings rather than traced back to the social conditions which form the "individual." As a consequence, social conditions of crime are denied and offenders are solely judged according to their crimes. Neoliberals stress individual responsibility, cut funding of social programs, and channel resources into security instead. Even though Wacquant's far reaching conclusions might be debateable, they would have fit very well into the theoretical framework of Bajc and Lint and added to their treatment of governmentality.

Despite this theoretical blind spot, the volume is very useful for placing security into a broad social context. It sheds light on the ideological nature of security and identifies numerous examples of how security is defined and enacted globally. The strength of the volume is clearly its theoretical cohesiveness and wide scope of ethnographic "thick descriptions." However, this very strength comes at a cost. Some readers might find the theory hard to access and complex to understand. Familiarity with current trends in sociology or social anthropology is surely helpful to fully be able to appraise the overall high standard of this volume. One might even ask whether Bajc's invocation of Bateson's theory, though astute and interesting, is helpful in introducing chapters that do not employ an explicit meta-framing framework. All in all, the book is an important and much needed discussion of security as a pervasive concept restructuring everyday lives

globally. The reader gets a sense how this ideology spreads but is legitimized only perfunctionally. This volume might help to spark a new discussion about what role security *should* play in the life of each and every one of us.

Reference

Loïc, W. (2009). *Punishing the poor: The neoliberal government of social insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Don Weatherburn, *Arresting Incarceration: Pathways out of Indigenous Imprisonment*, Aboriginal Studies Press: Canberra, 2014; xvii + 198 pp. ISBN 9781922059550, \$39.95 (pbk)

Reviewed by: Hilde Tubex, *University of Western Australia, Australia*

The title of this book – *Arresting Incarceration* – is probably the most puzzling bit in this otherwise crystal-clear piece of writing. The subtitle, however, does not leave any room for doubt: Weatherburn's aim is to find pathways out of Indigenous over-representation in prison. He does that in his well-known straightforward, no-nonsense approach, based on evidence that he and others have collected over the years. This approach makes the book very readable and, consequently, well suited for a broad audience: people in the field might know his opinion, but here it is brought together in a solid, well-structured, and carefully constructed argument, for people less familiar with the topic; it is a recommendable introduction to one of Australia's most pressing penal problems. Let's have a closer look.

Chapter one takes us straight into the problem: the numbers show that, even from a comparative perspective, including other countries with first nations, Indigenous Australians are the most over-represented group in any national prison population: the national imprisonment rate for Indigenous people is 15 times higher than for non-Indigenous people (ABS, 2013). And the problem is getting worse. Weatherburn identifies six reasons why this should be of concern, but the last one alone is in our view sufficient: we have a moral obligation to care. We owe it to the Aboriginal people. This stems from the history of our colonisation, and the consequences of early settlement, as explained in Chapter two. Based on leading works in this area, Weatherburn summarises how and why Indigenous imprisonment started to rise in the 60s, which became apparent with the systematic publication of prison census data, which since 1967 included Indigenous status. More particularly, the high rate of Aboriginal deaths in prison, and the assumption that this was related to maltreatment or neglect, led to the establishment of the Royal Commission ('the Commission') into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1987. This is the actual starting point of Weatherburn's argument.

In the following chapters, he systematically discusses the Commission's findings, their reasoning and their recommendations. The Commission concluded that the high frequency of Aboriginal deaths was not explained by a higher death rate but by their over-representation in the prison population. This over-representation was explained not, as had been argued elsewhere, primarily by systemic bias throughout the criminal justice system, but by the social, economic and cultural disadvantages they faced.