

niques to detect and deflect pathogens that may be used as agents in biowarfare attacks.

How does the authors' 'second-order observation' function? Collier, Lakoff and Rabinow want to observe how observers – regulatory, policy-oriented and scientific – come into existence around biosecurity. This strategy demonstrates an epistemologically prudent analytic caution, but I am curious about what it means in terms of ethnographic presence and practice. How does second-order observation square with participant observation?

The question comes up because the authors tell us about ethnographic research that will site them in, at least, the Molecular Sciences Institute. The authors argue that a biosecurity apparatus is likely to be self-auditing, reflecting on the implications of its own expertise; the authors want to know 'how science becomes reflexive'. I am interested in the reflexivity of the anthropological observer here.

It may be that the authors are partially following Rabinow, who argued that 'participant observation' might be an outmoded tool:

This purposively oxymoronic term has probably served its time, done its historical duty in anthropology. For the practice I am seeking to characterize, the term 'participant observation' is misleading, as the observation pole implies more distance than is appropriate, as well as an exterior spatial location; the participation pole misleadingly implies that one engages in some mimicry of the natives' practices (2003: 84).

Might not second-order observation also produce 'more distance than is appropriate'? Of course, the real question here is: appropriate for what? This is where participation becomes germane. I do not agree with Rabinow that participation implies mimicry; participation is many-faceted, always invested in partially shared concerns. Such investments cannot, I think, be relegated to the level of 'first-order' affairs from which we need 'second-order' disengagement. While such parsing makes for an intriguing theoretical distinction, first- and second-order observation are not so easy to distinguish, disentangle or defend in practice. We might learn more about how Collier, Lakoff and Rabinow will manage their anthropological expertise during fieldwork. Will they really only observe? Are they confident anthropology itself might not be enlisted as a genre of expertise to be inserted into biosecurity apparatus?

Michael Fischer (2003) has written of 'ethical plateaus', zones of practice in which we find ourselves 'acting without grounds'. What 'ethical plateaus' are produced for an anthropology claiming biosecurity as an object? The authors argue that epochal pronouncements about bioterrorism 'move too fast', and so they seek a slower-paced enquiry. I wonder whether they risk sliding not into the 'exterior spatial location' Rabinow identifies with observation, but into an exterior *temporal* location, scripting a new anthropological *time and the*

other, in which others are produced not through assignation to the past, but through emplacement into a modern, accelerated present observed from the unhurried time of second-order observers.

The speedy present directs us to history. What is biosecurity's relation to earlier regimes of managing 'life'? What is biological 'life' these days that it has become a site to be secured? The authors put the question this way: 'What kind of "uncertainty" or "loss of familiarity" has been introduced by the threat of bioterrorism, and in what domains?' One place to begin would be with recognition that biosecurity may operate through conjunctures distinct from the classic biopolitical knot of individual and population. Rabinow has already coined the term 'biosociality' for the new nexi of the biological and social. Persistent biopolitical stratifications of battlefield engagements by class, race and gender – conditioned by such logics as the demographics of enlistment in the US military – may not necessarily be reproduced in the biosociality of biowarfare. Indeed, the word 'biowarfare', with its suggestion of populations in battle, is already being replaced by 'bioterrorism', where 'terror' directs us to a dread of indiscriminate violence. The potential of bioagents to cross demographic lines is one reason biowarfare is commonly understood to be so frightening: the microbiopolitics of anthrax or smallpox may undo the rituals and rules that solidify hierarchies of social risk. Of course, the question is: terrifying for whom? As Diane Nelson has argued, 'terror is not a thing but a relationship' (2003: 199). Diagnosis of the relations of dread, of terror, would benefit from theorizing our anthropological 'participation' in the emergent form of life the authors have so perceptively and provocatively detected in biosecurity, a matter for our first-order concern. ●

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BIOSECURITY

a response to Collier, Lakoff & Rabinow AT20[5]

Collier, Lakoff and Rabinow identify 'biosecurity' as an emergent social form but, like careful baggage screeners, want to examine it from a number of angles before pronouncing on its provenance, contents or destination. They advocate placing biosecurity under "second-order" observation', an analysis that steps away from quick diagnoses of biodefence as either (from the political right) a moral imperative in an ideologically fractured world or (from the left) an alibi for the extension of imperial power. They seek to inspect the formation of a biosecurity apparatus in three topographies: the diaspora of former Soviet biowarfare scientists tracked by US-based efforts to manage these researchers' economic opportunities and ethical predilections; venues of security policy and planning; and the Molecular Sciences Institute in Berkeley, California, where biologists work on tech-

Fischer, Michael M.J. 2003. *Emergent forms of life and the anthropological voice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Nelson, Diane 2003. Relating to terror: Gender, anthropology, law, and some September Eleventh. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* 10: 195-210.

Rabinow, Paul 2003. *Anthropos today: Reflections on modern equipment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.