

The background features a gradient from dark blue on the left to light blue on the right, with several bright white diagonal streaks crossing the frame.

Something smart going on: the apocalyptic aesthetics of surveillance

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Surveillance Centre Stage

- "The Brits have got something smart going. They have cameras all over London... I think it's just common sense to do that here much more widely."
 - U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman

Surveillance, the Apocalyptic and the Forensic

- a dialectical logic
- surveillance is seen as bringing both intrusion and protection;
- the apocalypse is harbinger of both destruction and a new world;
- the forensic revels in both discovery and horror.

The apocalyptic

- Apocalypse - Greek for revelation
- a highly symbolic end-time narrative of “blood-drenched scenes of nature gone deadly, war, and famine” (Quinby 1999:283).
- Four horseman of the apocalypse bring famine and plague
- Armageddon, the site of final conflict between the forces of good and evil

Apocalyptic and the Utopic

- But the apocalyptic story is not just catastrophic it is also freighted with utopic millenarian promise
- The thousand-year kingdom of the saints (Rev 20:1-7) and the restoration of the holy city of Jerusalem

Apocalyptic and Crisis

- Terrorism - War on Terror
- Environmental Crisis - Climate Change
- Epidemics - HIV SARS
- (At different times the US DOD has defined each of these within a National Security Brief)

Moment and Mission

- This is a conflict without battlefields or beachheads, a conflict with opponents who believe they are invisible. Yet, they are mistaken. They will be exposed, and they will discover what others in the past have learned: those who make war against the United States have chosen their own destruction.... We have much to do and much to ask of the American people. You will be asked for your patience, for the conflict will not be short. You will be asked for resolve, for the conflict will not be easy. You will be asked for your strength, because the course to victory may be long
 - G.W. Bush 15 September 2001

Patience of the saints

- I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers...I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. (Rev 2:2-3)

Secret worlds

- After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. (Rev 4:1-3)

Omniobservant eye of God

- As the readers travel with John to the heavenly throne room, where he unveils to them a vision of a slain lamb with seven horns and seven eyes,... the audience, already revealed to itself in the seven letters, knows that it has entered a world of perfect universal surveillance. It responds to John's unfolding visions as an observed audience. This depiction of an all-seeing God is a commonplace in both Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature.

■ Henry Maeir

3 Apocalyptic Modes

- the divine apocalypse: religious right; liberation theology
- the technological apocalypse: environmental destruction; life saving medtech
- the ironic apocalypse: absurdism; nihilism
 - (Quinby 1994: xv-xvi).

Left Behind

- “Prophecy novels” from evangelical leader Tim LaHaye and novelist Barry Jenkins.
- The first of twelve novels was published in 1995
- The events of September 11 boosted the sales of the 2001 instalment, *Desecration*, which became the best selling novel of that year.
- Presales of the final instalment published in 2004 reached 2 million
- All up the series has sold some 62 million copies.

The Beast System

- The success of the Tribulation Force depends on its ability to clone vital components of the network culture – the Beast system it seeks to resist. Operatives require flexibility, the latest technologies, ultra modern weapons, mobility and a decentralized organizational logic. They even understand image and the possible benefits of deception in a world characterized by confusion and uncertainty.
 - (Shuck 2005:110)

The Mark of the Beast

- Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six. (Rev13:13-18)

The Beast Chip

- First, it permits believers to participate in Antichrist's economy, using their implanted chips as debit cards which eliminate fraud and speed transactions. Second, the mark gives its bearer a sense of place, specifying one of ten regional kingdoms as the bearer's homeland. Third, it conveys a permanent identity which cannot be effaced. It instantly identifies one to authorities, and suggests where one belongs, allowing Antichrist's forces to track citizens and make his kingdom more secure. Fourth, every mark bears the name of Antichrist. Finally, Antichrist displays a remarkable knowledge of consumer preferences, making provision for those who want a customized, vanity design. (Shuck 54-55)

Surveillance and authenticity

- Being 'real' is a proof of honesty, and the persistent gaze of the camera provides one way of guaranteeing that 'realness'. Further, in a teeming society wherein one's actions often go unnoticed by others, the reality of those actions can be validated if they are recorded and broadcasted – they become more real to oneself to the extent they become real for others. Submission to comprehensive surveillance is a kind of institutionally ratified individuation: it provides the guarantee of the authenticity of one's individuality. (Mark Andrejevic 2002: 266)

Image Rhetorics

- We live in an environment where security – national, homeland, personal – must be configured in response to what Liotta (2005) calls “creeping vulnerabilities” as well as specific “threats”.
- And as Barkun notes it is also an environment in which “war” and “disaster” are conflated with very real policy consequences:

A zone of Ambiguous Events

- It implies that all forms of emergency response must be linked, whether civilian or military, national or local. This potential breaching of boundaries between types of response mirrors the breaching of conventional boundaries among types of threats. Thus there are no longer clear distinctions between war and peace, war and crime, war and disaster. Rather myriad forms of “low intensity” conflict inhabit a transnational zone of ambiguous events (Barkun 2002:31)