

Gendered Security/ National Security

Political Branding and Population Racism

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On 8 September 2002, a series of photographs and text advertising fashions by Kenneth Cole appeared as an insert in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*.¹ To the right of the insert's cover photo, a sentence appears: "Some statements are more fashionable than others. Kenneth Cole Fall 2002." The first photo appearing on the inside of the insert shows a young, seemingly heterosexual white couple. She wears a white coat and tan boots; he is wearing gray, brown, and black. They sit in front of a building on an extended stair in what feels to be lower Manhattan. The sentence to the right of them reads: "Wearing protection is the new black." On the next page there is a photo of a black woman standing with a bike. The sentence to her right states: "Not voting is so last season." The center photo of the insert is of a white man dressed fully in black, bent on one knee over a briefcase in which he is placing a newspaper. Just below the fold of the newspaper, one's eye catches the word "hopes." There is no sentence accompanying the photo, but there is one on the next page. It runs across the body of a white boy dressed as a soldier. The boy bends on one knee while aiming a gun at another boy, also white, dressed like a cowboy. The cowboy's arms are extended, held up under arrest. The two young women from earlier photos are also in the picture; the black woman has passed the boys and the white woman is just doing so. All four are pictured on a city street, again seemingly lower Manhattan. Across the soldier boy's body is the statement: "Gun safety . . . it's all the rage." On the next page, the two women are on either side of a security guard in front of a building with a wall sign: The United States

Federal Courthouse. Across the body of the black woman, who is dressed in black, is written: “Security . . . The Accessory for Fall.” Two more sentences appear on the next two photos. The first of these shows a young white man with a newspaper. The headline reads, “HOLY WAR,” and above it the word “bombers” can be glimpsed. To the right of the man is a white woman dressed in white at a newspaper stand eyeing with some suspicion another man dressed in black who is dark haired and bearded. The sentence just below this man and woman reads: “Mideast Peace is the must-have for Fall.” Finally there is a photo of the two women, showing the bottom of the leg of the black woman as she comes down the stairs of what appears to be a government building with the white woman to her right sitting on the stairs. Across the white woman’s body the sentence reads: “Choice . . . No woman should be without one.” And again: “Some statements are more fashionable than others. Kenneth Cole.”

Borrowing from the advertorial genre, the Kenneth Cole photos and text make the theme of security a matter of fashion, just a year after the attacks on the World Trade Center, and a few months before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.² Through the gendered codes of fashion, the photos and text link national security to personal security, proposing that the former is essential to the latter, and that the latter might be gendered in such a way as to concern women in particular and—in the visual treatment of the white woman and black woman as equivalent and interchangeable—all women in the same way. The photos and text both point to and all but erase a distinction proposed with the concept of *human security*, given that human security policy was promoted by international organizations such as the United Nations post-1989, when the end of the cold war was taken to signal an opportunity to shape policy that would ensure the security of persons, as distinct from a national security based on militarism and war. With the surge of U.S. militarism and the intensification of war after 2001, human security discourse and human security policy would not disappear; they would, however, increasingly be suspected of being unable to ensure a distinction between personal security and national security. Human security discourse and human security policy even came under suspicion for their complicity with militarism and war, a complicity that would be elaborated in debates among cultural critics.³

For example, antiracist and anticolonial feminist critics would become critical of those efforts to make human security policy sensitive to the specific needs of women rather than taking the opportunity to offer a more general critique of the concept of human security and human security policy. In outlining the specific human security needs of women, it was argued, a certain view of gender was promoted; a universal norm of behavior was offered that could be imposed on others as it was taken up by legislators, policy makers, advocates, and activists. This deployment

of gender is concerned not only, nor primarily, with the differential treatment of men and women. It also points to a “political branding” of policy and programming where brand does not so much signify as arouse or affectively activate.⁴ Here gender as a political branding arouses an interest in the protection and/or the liberation of women as modern, progressive, and civil, activating democratic action aimed at what, in the Kenneth Cole advertorial, is described as “ensuring choice”—the choice to be personally safe, to be nationally secure, to be invested in peace.

As such, gender is used not to distinguish human security from national security, militarism, and war. Rather, national security again is made necessary to human security, as war and counter-terrorism are promoted as the means to liberate women in certain designated parts of the world. Indeed, a number of scholars who helped shape the debate over the use of gender in the promotion of war and counter-terrorism addressed Islam and the historical figure of Muslim woman/women, pointing toward what the Kenneth Cole images and text evoked and affectively circulated with words like “holy war” along with their placement so close to the word “bombers” and at a distance from the word “choice.” Lila Abu-Lughod urged that “we should be wary of taking on the mantle of those 19th-century Christian missionary women who devoted their lives to saving their Muslim sisters. . . . One can hear uncanny echoes of their virtuous goals today, even though the language is secular, the appeals not to Jesus but to human rights or the liberal West.”⁵ Gender as political branding here rests on Orientalist and racialized histories at the same time that it folds memory into affective intensities, reductively absorbing the force of histories into preconscious bodily irritations or activations so to generate a *sense* of safety and fear without having to point explicitly to the source or location of those feelings.

In saying that gender “brands” war and counter-terrorism, therefore, we mean to point to a shift in the understanding of brand from its being a sign of subject status to its making objects things that exude and transmit affect or potentiality, the way we might think of the things that commodities have become in what Christine Harold treats as “aesthetic capitalism.”⁶ As another tag for grasping the changes in capitalist economy, aesthetic capitalism points to a shift in branding, moving branding from the auratics of the circulating sign to a matter of things functioning affectively to stir bodily propensities or initiate activation in mood shifts. Here branding seeks to produce a surplus value of “audience effect” or affect in a political economy that embeds what Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman have called the “mnemonic control” of a preemptive logic.⁷ For Parisi and Goodman the operation of preemption through branding seeks to remodel long-term memory through an occupation of or “parasiting” on the dynamics of short-term intuition, where past, present, and future coexist as affect, a

pre-individual preconscious incipience or potentiality, an intensity which repeatedly instigates activation in the neurophysiological plasticity of the body-brain. Branding's occupation of short-term intuitions is something like "a distribution of memory implants," which provides one with the bodily or affective sense of an experience one has not had or a memory one does not have, giving a base for future activation or repetition.

In what follows, we will trace political branding through two other media presentations—the first, a story about “cyber-farming” conducted by Chinese laborers, and the second a series of advertisements selling storage space. What brings these seemingly unrelated circulations together, we will argue, is the political branding operative in the Kenneth Cole advertorial. If those images and text gender human security toward reproducing a discourse of national security, these further cases point to the way political branding operates to make other characteristics, such as ethnoraciality and sexuality, less the effect of a gaze embedded in scenarios for disciplining of the individual subject and more a matter of modulating life capacities at population levels above and below the individual—a matter of biopolitics in terms of what Tiziana Terranova, following Maurizio Lazzarato, describes as “the ontological powers of time memory.”⁸ In other words, what has been understood as characteristics of identity, a personal property, such as ethnoraciality, sexuality, or gender, now can also function in terms of “audience effect” through a political branding that is a source of value where the economy is speculative, informational, or affective.⁹ It is in this light that we want to explore political branding and the way it is linked to the power of biopolitics. This necessitates revisiting the relationship between subject identity and populations to which Michel Foucault pointed when conceptualizing biopolitics. At the same time, this requires going beyond Foucault's treatment of state racism to a “population racism” that, we will argue, political branding circulates affectively.

Security . . . the Accessory for Fall

For Foucault, biopolitics is one trajectory of a form of power that he described as biopower, which, he argued, arose in eighteenth-century Europe when “the old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life.”¹⁰ The two trajectories of biopower—*anatomopolitics* (or discipline) and *biopolitics*—both bring life described as biological into political calculation. *Anatomopolitics* does so by fostering life and focusing on the disciplining of the subject within an ordered space such as the school or the prison. *Anatomopolitics* takes on the life of the individual in terms of “infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or

psychological examinations, an entire micro-power concerned with the body.”¹¹

In contrast, biopolitics turns to the life capacities of populations, or the regulation of the productive economic and biological capacities of human life at a mass scale. Biopolitical technologies are a matter of making live, but at the level of populations. As Foucault put it: “So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing, but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species.”¹² While Foucault’s remarks seem to suggest a linear progression from individual body to species, Foucault more often and more convincingly suggested that biopower always works as the governance of a constituted multiplicity that must also govern in depth, at the level of the fine points and details of the individual or the singular.¹³

Foucault’s history of sexuality demonstrates the relationships between the disciplinary and the biopolitical. He argued that the deployment of a technology of sex spread out between the disciplining of the individual subject and the biopolitics of populations, and so it offered “a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the object of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations.”¹⁴ Similarly, we are suggesting that there is a relationship between a biopolitics and a deployment of the political branding of what we will call a population racism.¹⁵ While Foucault argued that the biopolitical power over the species or life-itself is a matter of fostering life, such that the sovereign right over death is put at a distance, he also argued that “to improve life, to prolong its duration, to improve its chances, to avoid accidents and to compensate for failings,” it might be legitimate to kill, at least to let die.¹⁶ Foucault argues that it is a form of racism that allows for death in biopolitics, the death of some populations that are marked as inferior and harmful to the larger body of the nation. He refers to this racism as “state racism in its biologizing form.” But we prefer to use the term *population racism*, not only to emphasize the biopolitical register at which such racism operates more ordinarily, but also to attend to the ways that distributions of life chances and death probabilities operate transnationally, at a global scale not confined to state bureaucracies. The war on terror demonstrates forcibly that the kinds of life that are taken in service of a state may be located far outside the boundaries of that state.

As histories of racism are elided into programs and policies of a population racism, these populations are opened to becoming the stuff of a political branding, such that the histories of racism are subsumed into a circulation of affect, as when gender branding circulates insecurity and fear and thereby justifies an exceptional treatment of some populations as a matter of biopolitical manipulation. But as a political branding, gender

further “frees” the histories and identities of populations such that they too can be used in the process of political branding. Through political branding, extreme versions of a population racism—extermination, for example—can be let to resonate with the more ordinary biopolitics of branding policy and programming, or what might be referred to as the “technical solutions” of making live and letting die.

Wearing Protection Is the New Black

The more ordinary deployment of a population racism in neoliberalism functions in a field of many populations, all of which are differently targeted for manipulation through technical solutions. Technical solutions deploy a population racism not only as a matter of governance, but as a matter of economy as well. That is to say, population racism functions on behalf of a capital accumulation by enacting a fragmentation of the biological field, enabling differences to be cut into the biological, which, as life-itself, had been made abstract. The calculation of biological differences enables a process of value production in the differences of race, or in the differences of life capacities rendered as racial probabilities to be circulated as data. Not only do probability statistics activate a population, the probabilities draw future possibilities of life and death into the present, and in so doing generate and circulate value, or what might better be called the biovalue of risk or life-and-death chances.¹⁷ As Aihwa Ong suggests, here all populations, even those marked for the extreme violences of political exclusion, are included economically, as the excluded are made targets of calculation,¹⁸ or when there is, as Foucault describes it, “a sort of complete superimposition of market mechanisms, indexed to competition, and governmental policy.”¹⁹

Technical solutions have been made ordinary practice in neoliberalism, where economy and governance together have had as their primary function the evaluation and management of risk through processes of technically supported calculation, digitization especially. As Randy Martin has noted, twenty years ago the financialization of the economy concerned the opportunities of the market, while risk concerned the societal provision of damage control, especially for technological threats. Today, in neoliberalism, economy and society have been brought into “a grand, nonlinear matrix,” what Martin refers to as securitization.²⁰ Securitization, rather than reduce everything to economy, instead has enabled economy and governance to engage common techniques of management. Governance obtains its legitimacy from markets of information, including the financial market, such that indexes give shape to feelings of and capacity for well-being or the lack thereof. Fear, for example, is modulated not simply as a matter of national security but also as a matter of producing and sustain-

ing confidence in markets that in turn offer veridication of government decision. Here population racism also plays an important part in producing affect, as, for example, it circulates fear along with statistical profiles of populations, providing neoliberalism with a rhetoric of motive in the process of political branding.²¹

Populations, therefore, are not simply groupings of human beings or individual juridical subjects of right, but rather are statistically organized and manipulated as groupings of characteristics, features, or parts. As Foucault put it: “Population will henceforth be seen, not from the standpoint of the juridical-political notion of subject, but as a sort of technical political object of management and government . . . dependent on a series of variables.”²² The manipulation of populations through a population racism, therefore, is a manipulation of life capacities, of vitality, and is operated as well to produce sensation, affects, and somatic effects that are felt not only at the individual level but, more important, at the population level through political branding. These manipulations are not meant to produce behavior by individuals or groups so much as they are meant to produce affective states, states of attention or activation with indeterminate, albeit already to-be-sensed, future effects.

As such, population is not only a matter of biology, of the life of species. Population may also be grasped in terms of what Foucault referred to as “publics,” or populations under the guise of opinion, a milieu in which political branding might be said to operate best.²³ Tiziana Terranova describes these publics as “addresses of communicated affective states.”²⁴ To be sure, publics are not *the* public, imagined to be engaged in discourse about and argumentation over narrative knowledge with truth claims. Publics rather are engaged at the level of affect and sensation, being drawn into images and commentary that are full of passions and prejudices in order that affective states might take on a facticity without employing a logic of evidence. Constituted on the same ontological plane as populations, publics come and go in time and as such they “express a mobility of the socius that further deterritorializes the relation between individuals and collectivities.”²⁵ Terranova argues that there is no relationship of belongingness that characterizes the individual elements that constitute the public of a population. Belongingness or relationality is itself an effect of the mediated modulation of affectivity.

And not surprisingly, Terranova concludes that digitized technologies are fundamental to the deterritorialization of the relationship between individual and collectivity as well as to the constitution of the publics of populations. These technologies are not only able to bring all sorts of populations to calculation, but they also are able to produce publics through the provisional capture and dissemination of affect.²⁶ As the digitization of biopolitics allows for the calculation and distribution of life and death

capacities for a greater number of types of populations at increasingly greater speeds, value itself has been undergoing a transvaluation, such that populations and their publics can be brought together into the production of value in the circulation of affect. That is, populations and their publics labor together, in the circulation of the political branding of technical solutions in an affect economy. Here what has been called affective labor or immaterial labor encompasses the laboring of calculation for technical solutions and the production and consumption of politically branded opinion about population capacities for life and death. The latter even is put to work in producing a division of affective laborers or an affective division of laborers—a sensibility circulated about workers working around the world, as in our next case, where there is the “feminization” of laborers who are imagined to be male and who are working endlessly for little pay in those parts of the world that are characterized in public opinion to have dehumanizing labor practices.

Some Statements Are More Fashionable Than Others

As much for the style of reportage as for the story reported, a 2007 article in the *New York Times Magazine* seemed at the time as shocking as expected.²⁷ Its writer, Julian Dibbell, author of the book *Play Money*, tells of Chinese who work twelve hours a night, seven nights a week, for a wage of \$.30 an hour—more or less.²⁸ It is more or less \$.30 because just how much a farmer makes depends on how many gold coins he harvests. Gold coins? Yes, the farming that workers do takes place in cyberspace, where they participate in multiplayer online role-playing games, or MMOs, such as *World of Warcraft*. Millions of players participate in this fantasy world of combat and adventure, playing for months or even years using an avatar, a virtual stand-in for the computer user. The farmers play to gather the “gold coins” that buy the magic swords, enchanted breastplates, and the like that are needed to earn the points required for advancement through levels of the game. Gold coins worth about \$.30 to the laborer are sold online for about US\$3 and then to the final customer, usually an American or European player, for about US\$20. Dibbell suggests that gold farmers labor in ways imagined to be “typically” Chinese. The gold farmer usually works with others in one of the two rooms of a small commercial space. There are thousands of such places all over China, neither owned nor operated by owners of the games but part of a \$1.8 billion worldwide trade in virtual items.

Because “the grind,” or playing to get the virtual loot that is needed to get to higher levels of the game, is both time and patience consuming, some players choose instead to buy virtual loot with “real” money, a practice that has gone on for some time through auctioning on eBay. While

eBay recently has ended its operation of players auctioning their hard-won loot, there are now high-volume online specialty sites for selling virtual items like gold coins, where working players are replaced by retailers. But gold farming goes on, and game owners not surprisingly have responded to the underground market in gold coins. Yet, rather than crack down on buyers (otherwise good paying customers of games), they crack down on gold farmers by banning their accounts. Meanwhile, there is also legitimate auctioning within the game being developed by game owners, an official virtual economy that parrots and delegitimizes the underground economy in which Dibbell's workers labor.

But there is also a response like that of Donghua Networks, where players actually play for others who give over their account names and passwords and pay a fee. Inventiveness also has been displayed around the end game, where a customer is escorted by a team who plays for the most valuable rewards that cannot be bought, only won in rounds of playing near the very end of the game. Once the team has enabled the customer to get a valued item, they stand back so he can bag it—for a fee, of course. Developing a deep sense of cooperation, these teams forced the development of guilds for training in the skills of end gaming. Dibbell writes that when this market for end gaming proved less than lucrative, some team workers found it difficult to go back to farming on their own. It seemed boring to return to the repetitive rounds of playing for nothing but gold coins, even though gold farmers often play in their down time, not only as a matter of R&D but also for pleasure.

Perhaps it may still seem shocking that some play at work and still want to play when not working, or that there are players who don't want to play even though they are in the game, or that there has been a stratification of game-playing, defining some of it as boring, a grind, while some of it remains exciting, worth playing—or more generally, that play has begun to do real work, and that virtual loot makes real money. It seems a lot less surprising that the work of playing defined as boring is outsourced to groups of players-made-laborers, paid by the piece. And not surprising at all is that the gold farmers who make for a good story, at least in the *New York Times Magazine*, are those working in China.

The story of gold farmers points to conceptualizations of immaterial or affective labor, conceptualizations that by the 1990s were meant to register a change in work, production and consumption, ownership, and personal property. Laboring in “a realm of atomless digital products traded in frictionless digital environments for paperless digital cash,” gold farmers, as Dibbell would have it, do produce product: gold coins.²⁹ However, the value of their labor is based on their immaterial and affective capacities as players—not only those capacities they already exhibit but more those

that they are capable of developing in response to the sophistication of other players of the game and therefore to their own further development of the game itself through ongoing play. Gold farming is a continuous laboring that absorbs play and more, if not all of life.

As if it is another side—the underside—of playing and gaming in the *financial* market, gold farming is part of the laboring of an assemblage including scientific and technological advances, corporate resources, research and development of capitalist modes of producing desire, and complex sets of game-playing practices. And more, the gold farming story plays its part in this assemblage as it politically brands and, through branding, deploys population racism. It does so differently from the gender branding of the Kenneth Cole campaign, which draws from those senses of woman as vulnerable, in need of protection, and desiring choice in order to code national security in terms of individual safety and protection and therefore to invest affective energies in national security. With the gold farmers, political brand operates to evoke a Western capitalist fantasy that aligns feminization with a communist de-individualization of Chinese workers imagined to be male. The policing of farm work taking place among the Chinese gold farmers becomes then a way to realign proper divisions of work and play, or legitimate work and entitlements to play, with an American nationalist-capitalist masculinist imaginary. In asserting the illegality and illegitimacy of gold farming, here the protection of labor and play (rather than of woman) becomes a matter of racialized economic superiority felt to be a defense of proper capitalism. In the political branding of the gold farmers, there is an overlay of a population racism that functions to draw the productive assemblage of potential back to various population publics, through reference to past media coverage of a “dehumanizing labor typically Chinese,” thereby also shaping the meaning of humanness in human rights or human security discourse.

That is to say, just as the story of gold farming recapitulates some things already well known about labor, production, consumption, ownership, and personal property in contemporary capitalism, that this is a story set in China cannot be taken as incidental. After all, gold farming activities are not unique or confined to China. Thus, as Rey Chow would remind us, not just the gold coins but the story of their farming has to be understood as circulating in an economy in which “Chinese ethnicity” itself has been made valuable—serving as a political branding.³⁰ Although the specifics of the working conditions endured by laboring gold farmers is not news, their labor is nonetheless made surprising, or given a shock value, through its infusion with the contagious affectivity of population racism.

In 2007, when Dibbell’s piece was published, “China” was, and continues to be, of great interest to a United States characterized by economic insecurity and an apprehensive sense that the only thing more dangerous

than Chinese communism might be Chinese capitalism. This insecurity pointed to the way in which cold war ideologies that demarcated an ethical nationality against an easily identified foreign threat had disintegrated, and as the open field of capitalism comes to not just include but affectively circulate “the other,” the accompanying production of fear and insecurity is itself invested in and modulated. Thus, the case of Chinese gold farmers occasions not only the circulation of virtual currency in exchange for money (really, one system of credit interlocking with another), but also the circulation of a branded population racism, enjoined to the securitization of market confidence in the face of a “creeping Chinese” threat of capital takeover. None of this, however, merely stops or even is meant to stop the farming. Even when attacks on gold farmers’ play are mobilized by non-farming players, the players, who object to the labor of the Chinese farmers and who spend *their* play time working to contain the threats the Chinese gold farmers pose, will only intensify the value of play. That is, given the circulation of the affect of a population racism, the play to contain the threat of the Chinese farmers can only invest the gaming with affective force, with impetus for ongoing and competitive play, and thus the labor of farming is made more valuable.

As value undergoes a transvaluation, drawing the ethical to the economic and deploying the ethical to enable economic circulation, Chow reminds us too of the other but related interest in China and argues that the concern with China’s “human rights abuses” is not contrary to or even separable from economic circulation. Arguing that an economic circuit has been put into play with human rights demands concerning political prisoners, Chow reports that Chinese authorities respond by releasing “political prisoners” (from whom, she also reports, body parts are taken for exchange in the global market). The prisoners are released a few at a time, even as others are imprisoned, nonetheless compelling Western nations to soften their rhetoric so that China can gain more trading privileges and opportunities. The circuit, being dependent on the ongoing evaluation of human rights abuse, leads Chow to conclude that “human rights can no longer be understood purely on humanitarian grounds but rather must also be seen as an inherent part—entirely brutal yet also entirely logical—of transnational corporatism, under which anything, including human beings or parts of human beings, can become exchangeable for its negotiated equivalent value.”³¹ All this goes into a construction of “the Chinese,” into the use and further intensification of a population racism.

Far from a negotiation with a transcendental morality (for example, the rights of humans), ethical value in an affect economy is very much a material operation, an immanent force drawing attention or activation toward sites of investment for capital and neoliberal governance. It is this forceful attraction at play in neoliberal governance that has made possible

the deployment of political branding in the field of human rights and human security simultaneous with and embedded in a deployment of a population racism. Chow, as we have done with human security, takes her discussion of human rights and Chinese political prisoners to the history of feminist efforts to enter “woman” into representation in human rights policy, but she also implicates in her criticism the drive of all identity politics for representation. Chow argues that the claim to representation made for women could only be realized as a supplement to man in that it required the undoing of the erasure of woman in the construction of the “essential identity” of man. But by the time woman enters representation by unveiling the fictionality of man’s essential identity, the coupling of man-woman is “already obsolete.” This is “not so much because its twosomeness is heterosexist as because such twosomeness itself will have to be recognized as part of something else, something whose configuration—as class or race, for instance—becomes graspable exactly at the moment of the supplement’s materialization.”³²

This undoing of gender identity and other identities as well in the application of the logic of supplementation, or deconstruction, has behind it the ongoing transformation of the certain configuration of the separate social spheres of the state, the economy, the public, and the private domains that in Western modernity at least has provided the institutional arrangement for the regime of subject formation, the condition of possibility of the individual’s rights, freedoms, and obligations in relationship to a national collectivity. The shift of emphasis in neoliberalism from discipline aimed at the subject to the biopolitical manipulation of populations that we have been tracing turns to the ethical, producing the transvaluation of value in the context of a reconfiguration of social spheres, the private and public domains, the economy, and the state.

Choice . . . No Woman Should Be without One

In the summer of 2007, around the same time that Dibbell’s story was published, a far from high-end photo ad appeared on billboards and in train and bus stops, one in a series of advertisements for Manhattan Mini Storage, a storage facility in New York City. The ad showed a wire clothes hanger tilted slightly to the right. To the left of the hanger and crossing over the corner of the hanger the copy reads: “Your closet space is shrinking as fast as her right to choose.” The ad, with a flurry of response on the blogosphere, also instigated a rethinking of affect, gender as brand, and population racism. Though in a more pedestrian fashion, the Manhattan Mini Storage ad, like the Kenneth Cole advertorial, suggests there is a particularly gendered insecurity that requires this defense. Like the Kenneth Cole advertisements, this ad for storage space also links a gendered

personal security with consumer choice. But if Kenneth Cole gestures toward an external nonspecified threat that nonetheless recirculates the racialization and Orientalization of threat, these ads point to the internal threat of a spreading neoconservatism. In this case, Western society must be defended against itself.

If during the consumption boom of the mid-twentieth century U.S. corporations learned to tie a product to sexuality, producing advertisements that offered a layer of implicit and explicit suggestions that a particular commodity would improve a consumer's sex appeal or experiences of sexual pleasure, both of which would be normatively raced as well as gendered, affective advertising does not work in quite the same way. To connect with an affective register, advertisers must activate a circulation of moods, desires, impulses, pleasures, and attentions that pass through a brand but do not need to be directly tied to a product of that brand. Branding does not rely on the attachment of connotative associations to a commodity. The Kenneth Cole insert with which we began makes the selling of fashion the stuff of political commentary, but not by explicitly suggesting that there is national security or personal safety in wearing Kenneth Cole fashions. Rather, the commentary works along with the bright surface of the photographs—the sheen of bodies and buildings, the sense of movement captured yet still in motion—to elicit a mood that draws in a reader's attention, attention to be mixed with sentiments and affects that do not have to be sorted into cognitive thought or directly exchanged for a commodity. This is advertising and marketing that is easily the stuff of political branding.

In separating advertising from a product, branding like that of the Kenneth Cole fashion photos opens itself to more ready replication, as it moves in a pool of affect that cannot be contained by a product (if it were to solidify that way, it would not be working as affect). So it is not surprising that other corporations have followed Kenneth Cole's lead. Though perhaps less artful, the campaign of Manhattan Mini Storage is nonetheless quite effective/affective, and its lack of artiness may register as a populist lack of artifice, eliciting feelings of solidarity between the “common folk” reader and the corporation. The clothes-hanger ad is but one in a series. These ads, no high-end photography pictorial in the *New York Times Magazine*—indeed, more Comedy Central than NPR—are directed at city dwellers lacking space in small cramped quarters. They have taken equal aim at celebrity and political culture. One ad states, “Your closet is so narrow it makes Paris Hilton look deep,” while another attacks the reader's inadequate storage space by admonishing, “Your closet is so narrow it makes Cheney look liberal.” During the 2008 U.S. presidential campaigns, a photo of a woman, neck-down, dressed in an unmistakably Sarah Palin–esque jacket, accompanied the question, “What's more lim-

ited? Your closet or her experience?” There is something to note here about how an affect economy encourages the erasure of distinctions between some kinds of fame and others (for example, that of a media figure versus a politician) as fame is set not to produce meaningful aura, but to marshal the rapid movements of attention. This is politician as celebrity, and celebrity as political branding.

In fact, not only what a politician might be, but what politics itself might be is the question raised. Although the *New York Sun* reported on this advertising campaign in terms of how its liberal politics might dissuade conservative customers, the politics of this campaign, not to mention its effect on consumption patterns, might not be so clear.³³ To be “against” neoconservatism is not to subvert the circulations of political branding and population racism. Thus we might agree with a blogger who, writing in response to the ads, pointed out that they work simply to “get people emotionally moved.”³⁴ For example, “Your closet space is shrinking as fast as her right to choose” drew various responses. Commentators on one feminist blog were content to accept the ad as a pro-choice statement in defense of women’s reproductive health and freedom; a photo of the ad appeared on this blog under the headline “Yet another reason why I’m proud to be a New Yorker” and was captioned with the line, “We love you, Manhattan Mini Storage.”³⁵ The last bit is, of course, hyperlinked to the Manhattan Mini Storage Web site. Other bloggers remained skeptical—though of exactly what is not clear. Blogger Subway Fox also raised questions about the billboard under the headline, “Does this ad go a little too far?” followed by responses that include the suggestion that “it has crossed a line.” What line is not specified, and neither is the direction in which this might have gone too far. Responding bloggers commented that any defense of abortion goes too far; that a joke about abortion goes too far; that there is no “too far” in politics; and that it is images of aborted fetuses used by anti-abortion activists that have gone too far.³⁶

The openness to interpretation of this question signals the openness to interpretation of the ad and gives further evidence, if any was needed, that traditional models of a political spectrum that moves from left to right lose bearing in a context of affect economies and population racism. The Manhattan Mini Storage ad campaigns operate rather by mobilizing and intensifying attention, carrying the brand in the gone-too-far-ness or excess of affect produced by the ad and its distributed Internet-based reproductions and commentary. They also function to make a political ground for marketing, advertisement, or capitalist exchange such that the choice that the ad advocates, like the one advocated in human rights and human security policies, is a neoliberal choice, gender branded to fuse consumer options with freedom, producing an indifference between access to closet space and access to abortion. This is no misread of what freedom truly

is; it is rather a rearticulation of freedom exactly as it is mobilized by the occupying forces of democracy that open markets and liberate consumers, making available whole populations of occupied territories to affective investment: the life of the oppressed Other-woman offering a branding of legitimacy to military intervention.

If the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan never really were about the “liberation” of women, this ad also was not really about women, especially not those women whose bodies have undergone the torments of the clothes-hanger abortion. Nor was the ad about the history of the joining of reproductive technologies, including contraception, sterilization, and abortion, to eugenics programs of race population control, such that some women, poor women and especially women of color, have needed protection from those technologies at least as much as access to them. Even as this ad evokes woman — the “her” that is losing out (unlike the “you,” who can at least buy more storage space) — it makes abortion not about women, which is to say it disaggregates an identity or subject bound up with rights and redistributes gender, in the figure of woman, as brand. Here, woman is a set of feelings and senses about freedom and capitalism; woman is a way to think and feel about choice. In the gender branding of certain social and political policies and programs, a certain sheen of fashionable modernity and civility is given them, while populations are held in fear and terror of other populations in the gender deployment of a population racism. We nonetheless can see, although barely, the differential effects on each of us as we differently take up the risk and try to live the various lives cut out for us through these programs and policies of governance and economy.

Mideast Peace Is the Must-Have for Fall

If some hoped that the historic election of Barack Obama signaled a break from some forms of racism, the backlash that has risen in the first years of his administration suggests instead another affective configuration and circulation of population racism. In this round, population racism is bolstered by a political branding that connects populist white racial resentment with a conservative hostility to “big government” and any forms of social welfare democracy. While some public outrage followed, for example, the circulation through e-mail of an image depicting the White House lawn planted with watermelons, circulate it did, along with defenses of “free expression” which recalibrate democracy along familiar lines of racialized subordination, determining what kind of society (and what parts of it) must be defended.³⁷ In a context of Tea Party protests and an intensified terrorizing of (presumed) immigrant populations, the imagination of how government should respond to crises of the economy and health care is mired in the affective forces of a renewed and insecure

racialized nationalism. Defenses of racial profiling in the name of national security, panics of supposed nuclear threats posed by North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran, and the further deployment of U.S. military troops to Afghanistan—all these and more suggest that the political branding of population racism will remain at play, even as we have been invited to imagine that an economic neoliberalism is facing its demise and that racism has had a historic reversal in the election of an African American president. No doubt there is reason to wonder about the future, about the indeterminacy of the present affective background of hope and what it will yield. There is no doubt as well that this hope and what it yields will come in some form of governance of capitalism attached to projects of militarized securitization against internal and external threats.

As the economic crisis, unemployment, and foreclosure continue to expand, the populist backlash marshaled by entrenched economic and political powers both demands “something be done” and calls for governmental nonintervention. Much hangs in the balance as to how governance will respond to this double bind of demands for and against regulation, and what the relationship will be or can be between financial markets and an economy seeking again to enhance infrastructure and produce the jobs to do so. These questions open into the future, but we want to underscore the force of the past, especially in terms of its affective background of fear. As conservative neoliberal governance has found support in the manipulation of affect and gender as brand in the deployment of a population racism, future governance will continue to engage methods of manipulating affective potential. It is these methods that we must become more able to critique. Our engagement with the event of media circulations sought to be a model for such criticism.

Notes

1. *New York Times Magazine*, “Some Statements Are More Fashionable Than Others,” 8 September 2002.

2. In relation to advertising, marketing, and therefore spending, it is difficult not to think of then-President Bush, who immediately after 9/11 reminded Americans that they should keep on shopping as if to save American democracy by preventing an interruption of the economy.

3. The critiques of human security became part of the debates about the deployment of gender in human rights policy; there too cultural critics debated the universality of gender norms and of using the woman as “victim” in promoting policy and advocacy.

4. We will be drawing on Patricia Ticineto Clough’s development of political branding in “War by Other Means: What Difference Does the Graphic(s) Make?” (paper presented at the Society for Social Studies of Science, 28–31 October 2009).

5. Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 3

(2002): 789. Connecting contemporary calls to “save Muslim women” to nineteenth-century Christian missionary work, Abu-Lughod insists, “as feminists in or from the West, or simply as people who have concerns for women’s lives, we need to be wary of this response to events and aftermath of September 11, 2001” (783). Abu-Lughod extended this line of argument in a critique of the United Nations and discourse of “Muslim women’s rights” in Abu-Lughod, “Dialectics of Women’s Empowerment: The International Circuitry of the *Arab Human Development Report 2005*,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1 (2009): 83–103. Further critiques of the mobilization of “feminism” against “Islamic fundamentalism” are offered by Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, “Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, no. 2 (2002): 339–54; Jenny Sharpe and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “A Conversation with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Politics and the Imagination,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2 (2003): 609–24; Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); and Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). Rey Chow offers a critique of feminist human rights discourse in Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). And for a general discussion of relationships among feminism, militarism, and racism, see the essays collected in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Robin L. Riley, *Feminism and War* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

6. As in Clough’s essay, “War by Other Means,” we here are following Christine Harold’s term “aesthetic capitalism,” which she coins in relationship to Steven Shaviro’s discussion of the “age of aesthetics.” Harold argues that in an aesthetic capitalism “capital can no longer rely simply on an explosion of surface-level sign value; it must instead ‘go deep,’ developing commodities that are imbued with value not through their production but through the various models of their use.” Christine Harold, “On Target: Aura, Affect, and the Rhetoric of ‘Design Democracy,’” *Public Culture* 21 (2009): 611. We also have taken note of the idea of gender as brand in Lisa Adkins’s discussion of gender in terms of the information economy, what she calls the “new economy,” and what we discuss as an affect economy. Lisa Adkins, “The New Economy, Property, and Personhood,” *Theory, Culture and Society*, no. 1 (2005): 111–30. For Adkins, in the new economy the relationship of ownership, property, and person is changing. This change involves a “patenting” of things previously coded as natural and/or social—“a process, which has been described as type or kind becoming brand” (115). In the new economy, the value of processes is not determined by ownership so much as by “audience effect” (117). For a rich discussion of branding in relation to contemporary political discourse that favors attention and affect rather than logic, see Jakob Arnoldi, “Informational Ideas,” *Thesis Eleven* no. 1 (2007): 58–73.

7. Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman, “Mnemonic Control,” in *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Craig Willse (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming 2011).

8. Tiziana Terranova, “Another Life: The Limits of Sovereignty and the Nature of Political Economy in Foucault’s Genealogy of Biopolitics,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 26 (2009): 234–62.

9. In an affect economy, human attention is shifted away from the logics of the cinematic gaze, even from the logics of television that draw the subject into the production of value by watching capital-invested time images. In an affect economy,

digital logics are more about a tactile connectivity, the modulation through contact of the intensities of affective energies. See Clough's discussion of political economy, attention, and teletechnologies in *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). For a more detailed discussion of affect economy see also Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), and Patricia Ticineto Clough et al., "Notes towards a Theory of Affect-Itself," *Ephemera* 7 (2007): 60–77.

10. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1979), 138.

11. *Ibid.*, 145–46.

12. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 243.

13. Such a linear progression has also been critiqued by scholars who have emphasized the centrality of imperialism and colonialism to the rise of technologies of biopower. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

14. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 146.

15. The term *population racism* is introduced in Patricia Ticineto Clough, "The New Empiricism: Affect and Sociological Method," *European Journal of Social Theory*, no. 1 (2009): 43–61, and Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine, and Bodies," *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–22.

16. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 254.

17. The concept of biovalue is introduced in Catherine Waldby, *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2000). A further elaboration of the concept is offered by Kaushik Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

18. Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 5.

19. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France 1978–79*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 121.

20. Randy Martin, *An Empire of Indifference: American War and the Financial Logic of Risk Management* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 63.

21. Brian Massumi, "Future Birth of the Affective Fact," in *Conference Proceedings: Genealogies of Biopolitics*, 2005, www.radicalempricism.org (accessed 1 July 2010).

22. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78* (New York: Picador, 2007), 70.

23. *Ibid.*, 75.

24. Tiziana Terranova, "Futurepublic: On Information Warfare, Bio-racism and Hegemony as Noopolitics," *Theory, Culture and Society* 24 (2007): 135. Terranova is drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato, *La politica dell'evento* (Cosenza: Rubbettino, 2004).

25. Terranova, 139.

26. *Ibid.*, 140.

27. Julian Dibbell, "The Life of a Chinese Gold Farmer," *New York Times Magazine*, 17 June 2007, 36–41.

28. Julian Dibbell, *Play Money; or, How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

29. Dibbell, *Play Money*, 23.

30. Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 22.
31. *Ibid.*, 21.
32. *Ibid.*, 160.
33. Juliet Lapidus, "Storage Company Ads Too Political for Some Tastes," *New York Sun*, 30 March 2007, www.nysun.com/article/51510.
34. Reddit Report, "Manhattan Mini Storage Ad: Does This Cross over Too Far into Bad Taste?" reddit.com/info/20pfq/comments (accessed 14 May 2010).
35. Feministing.com, "Yet Another Reason Why I'm Proud to Be a New Yorker," 20 June 2007, www.feministing.com/archives/007226.html.
36. Subwayfox.net, "Does This Ad Go a Little Too Far?" subwayfox.net/index.php?q=node/297 (accessed 14 May 2010).
37. In February 2009, the mayor of Los Alamitos, California, came under criticism for sending out an e-mail with an image depicting the White House lawn planted with rows of watermelons, accompanied by the text, "No Easter egg hunt this year." He was eventually forced to resign as a result. Associated Press, "White House Watermelon Email from California Mayor Dean Grose Inspires Outrage," 25 February 2009, www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/25/white-house-watermelon-em_n_169933.html.