1. "We hold these truths to be self-evident": Performativity and Security in the U.S. American Cultural Archive

> Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther… And one fine morning –
>
> So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.
> *F. Scott Fitzgerald*

The concluding words of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel describe the American Dream Jay Gatsby is chasing in his quest for happiness using the symbol of the green light. It represents a source of optimism, a goal to aim for and to live and understand his life by; a dream which remains unreachable and deferred "reced[ing] before us" (ibid.). This American Dream is one of the most famous and persistent U.S. American narratives and an extraordinary generator of individual stories. Already the Declaration of Independence (US 1776) gave shape to and stands paradigmatically for this national narrative of the American Dream – so much so that Craig Calhoun has claimed that the nation "declared itself as a dream" (159). The Declaration defines the American creed of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and its promise of freedom has, as Eric Foner shows, "provided the most popular 'master narrative' for accounts of our past" (xiv). Though freedom and liberty are often understood as opposed to security (in its liberal and predominant understanding of control), they rely on the most iconic security narrative in American history, which established their understanding in the first place: The Declaration of Independence.[1] The document narrates the security of the future political society of the United States as well

1 As "the most absolute principle in eighteenth-century constitutional theory" (Reid 68) security and liberty were interdependent, especially in the context of constitutionally secured rights. John Phillip Reid even attests that "[l]iberty and security were so interconnected in eighteenth-century political thought that today it is almost impossible to untangle them" (70).

as the threats against which it establishes itself. The Declaration exemplifies not only the centrality of security in U.S. American culture as a way of self-understanding, but that this ur-security narrative of the United States represents a performative act of security that articulates a "cultural imaginary" (Fluck; Iser). Furthermore, the understanding of security established in the Declaration of Independence is pivotal for the meaning of biological security and the rise of medicine as its arbiter in the United States, and it has remained a main reference point for the articulation of individual biological security narratives. Using the Declaration I will emphasize the importance of narrative to impact and form a reality rather than describing it. I will then turn to the temporal characteristics of security as a distinct relation between past, present, and future, and how the changes of understanding security can be described as a form of "deferral" (Derrida) which is produced by shifting horizons of security.

Making it New: Security as Speech Act

In the initial conceptualization of Austin's speech act theory, performatives describe a category of utterances that are not descriptive or expressive of a certain meaning but rather produce a reality (Austin 32). This speech act is exemplified by the wedding ceremony and the sentence "I hereby pronounce you husband and wife." With this sentence Austin describes the "creative function of language" (Culler 506), meaning a language that does not describe an existing state, but produces the reality it is referring to. Though security is not a magical act conjured up by the proper words, the performative act of security is nonetheless of utmost importance. This seems especially obvious when one considers the long history of declaring war or peace, an emergency or state of exception, or an epidemic. In that sense, security narratives produce rather than describe an understanding of security. Though not a "speech act" as such, the Declaration of Independence as a text pronounces rather than declares the independence of the English colonies in North America, as Derrida puts it ("Declaration"). While the document was adopted and signed on July 4th 1776, it took many more years of war for independence to be legally settled in the Treaty of Paris on September 3rd 1783. Independence did therefore not exist prior to, or at the time of the act of signing. "[T]he Declaration had announced independence at a time when it had yet to be achieved and when it was still under vigorous assault by Britain" (Armitage 3). The performativity of this instituting act, which Derrida fixes on the signatures, thus, "performs, it accomplishes, it does what it says it does" ("Declaration" 8).

Understood as a speech act, the Declaration performatively shifted the rebellion into a struggle for independence. Though the Declaration of Independence is not "the event" of independence itself as a singular exceptional moment – as Carl Becker asserts in his seminal study – it represents the narrative "in which the event was proclaimed and justified to the world" (qtd. in Armitage 13). The Declaration thus allows for a new meaning that had to be anchored in reality through narratives. Studies show that Thomas Jefferson worked diligently to make this "new" security narrative understandable and pervasive. He wrote and revised the draft of the Declaration of Independence thoroughly, carefully crafting each word as Becker shows in his study of the writing process. Jefferson

was "chosen to draft the Declaration because he was known to possess a 'masterly pen'" (Becker 78). With editorial oversight from the Continental Congress he wrote a document that was to represent the legitimacy of separating from the governing power of the Crown of England. The carefully phrased security narrative shifted the rule of the Crown from security to threat by enumerating the tyrannies with which the English Crown had, according to the text, forfeited its God given right to rule. The Declaration thus most importantly affected a re-evaluation of who holds which rights and obligations. "Although occupying a subordinate place in the logical structure, the list of grievances is of the highest importance in respect to the total effect which the Declaration aims to produce" (ibid.). It created the legitimacy of the security practice, "[t]hat these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."

More generally, in Security Studies, speech acts are understood as crucial in constructing "security issues" (Burgess 2):

> According to the theory, a given object becomes securitized by virtue of the pronouncement of a securitizing actor, appropriately positioned, permitting it to be shifted from the order of ordinary politics to one kind or another of exceptional politics. (ibid.)

The Declaration accomplishes exactly such a performative act. It moves the rule of England from one order (of the ordinary) to another (the exceptional). To do so the narrative has to establish a new order that allows for this shift. The Declaration of Independence articulated a new understanding of security that was set against the former security narrative of the legitimacy of and loyalty to the Crown. In form of a declaration and a manifesto (Armitage 50) the document expressed and challenged the understanding of what security means. It legitimized overthrowing a government by force: "it is their [the people's] right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security." The security narrative defines the unjust tyranny in "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations" and provides a way to confront it. "It is a high literary merit of the Declaration that by subtle contrasts Jefferson contrives to conjure up for us a vision of the virtuous and long-suffering colonists standing like martyrs to receive on their defenseless heads the ceaseless blows of the tyrant's hand" (Becker 82). The text thus represents an example of what Sara Ahmed terms "narratives of injury" (Ahmed, *Politics* 32f) in which struggles for the public recognition of suffering are articulated. The "fears" and "suffering" associated with the rule of England in the Declaration of Independence are contrasted with the hopes invested in a new form of governance, a civil government, whose main object is the security of the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The narrative of security thus establishes a new order that removes the Crown as a source of security and defines it as the origin of threat, while revolution and independence replace it as the "new" source of security.

The security narrative, condensed in the iconic sentence of "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness", articulated the principles on which this new security is founded. It allowed

for a new political subject which is defined by equality and inalienable rights.[2] Though the principles of the Declaration might seem intrinsic to today's readers, the new security narrative was not clear and logical to everyone at its time. Jeremy Bentham, who had been commissioned by the English government to formulate a response to the Declaration, described the claims as follows: "they attempt to establish a theory of Government; a theory, as absurd and visionary, as the system of conduct in defense of which it is established, is nefarious" (16).

The success of the security narrative set forth in the Declaration thus hinged on the question of authority. In *How We Do Things with Words* Austin defines rules that constitute a successful performative act, which he distinguishes as "happy" and "unhappy" (inter alia 21).[3] He writes, that "the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways *appropriate*" (Austin 8). "Appropriate" in this context refers to the speech act itself and its context, but it also refers to the relation of speaker and listener, or authors and reader in the case of the Declaration. According to Austin a performative act can only be accomplished if the utterance is meant truthfully and honestly.[4] The truthfulness refers to both the veracity of the utterance as well as to its legitimacy. The performative act has to be imbued with the authority of the speaker to perform the given act. This authoritative voice is particularly crucial in security narratives, as they have to be pervasive and convince people of their truthfulness; they have to "appeal" as Foucault puts it (*Security* 21).

The ultimate legitimacy of the authoritative voice was of course contingent on the victorious outcome of the Revolutionary War. But the signatures on the Declaration of Independence represent the authority that Austin defines as a precondition for a successful performative act. In Derrida's elaborations the signatures take the place of the act of signing in the Austinean sense of a speech act. The signers – represented by their votes and later their signatures – provide the authority of the Declaration of Independence as "unanimous."[5] They personified the elite of the colonies. But more than the political and social standing of this American elite assembled in the Continental Congress, the authority was derived from its representative function. The security narrative represented in the Declaration of Independence is produced by a new narrative authority – the signers as the representatives of the people.

Understanding the Declaration as a speech act necessarily directs the attention to the interlocutor highlighting the relational characteristic of security. The concept of the performative does not only rely on the utterance but also crucially on its reception. Emphasizing the position of the listener, Austin defines performatives as co-created. This

2 There were many groups excluded from the promises of the nation and the concept of the "political subject." Equality in this foundational document is thus more a promise than a reality.

3 While "happy" describes a successful performative act, "unhappy" refers to an unsuccessful performative act.

4 With this restriction Austin excludes lies and theatrically staged acts from the "appropriate circumstances" that lead to the production of the reality the utterance refers to (21–2).

5 Notwithstanding the fact that it is disputed if the Declaration was signed on the 4th of July, the signatures represent a crucial constituent of the performative act, as the debates among the signers of the document and later among scholars show (Becker, Warren).

means that the listener has to partake in the performative act, even if just by recognizing it, for the performative act to be accomplished. The Declaration of Independence, as most security narratives, has multiple addressees. Though the official addressee of the Declaration should have been the King of England, the Declaration of Independence was never sent to England by Congress. It was first published in London newspapers in August 1776. Rather, the world is the Declaration's intended audience as the text refers to "the opinions of mankind" and not to the King of England. The "opinions of Mankind" were, according to David Armitage, the more relevant interlocutor since "[a]s a document that announced the transformation of thirteen united colonies into the 'United States of America,' the Declaration marked the entry of those states into what would now be called international society" (16). The performative act of security relies like any performance on the relation between actor and audience to create the meaning of the performance (Fischer-Lichte),[6] making it an inevitably relational act.

Looking at the publication history of the Declaration of Independence, however, suggests that the primary and most immediate "interlocutor" and audience was the "American" public. After Congressional approval on the 4th of July, the document was printed the next day, to be distributed and performed all over the colonies, addressing the people which it represents and to a certain extent invents, as Derrida puts it ("Declaration" 11). The security narrative is thus not only productive in articulating a new and changed understanding of security; at the same time it produces a new "group identity." Though the Declaration is signed in the name of "the people," this "we" – as independence itself – "does not exist, before this declaration, not as such" (Derrida, "Declaration" 10). However, Armitage asserts that for the public this was the primary effect: "a contemporary report in August 1776 noted that when the Declaration was first read out to the Continental troops at Ticonderoga, in western Pennsylvania, 'the language of every man's countenance was, Now we are a people! We have a name among the states of this world!'" (Armitage 17–18). Derrida asserts that "[t]he obscurity, this undecidability between, let's say, a performative structure and a constative structure is *required* in order to produce the sought-after effect" (Derrida, "Declaration" 1). Clearly, the identity of "Americans" was not born over night with the publications and performances of the Declaration of Independence, nonetheless the security narrative of independence "named into being" (Butler, *Bodies* 13) the nation and its people. It represents a performative shift that changed the understanding of security, to be found in independence and revolution instead of loyalty to the crown, and this re-defined the "new" American.

The group identity "inaugurated" in the Declaration shows that security narratives serve to align people. The Declaration defines the security of the "new" self "counterpunctually" (Said 52) in opposition to the other. In that sense the Declaration of Independence does not just express an "imagined community" in terms of Benedict Anderson's the-

6 In Fischer-Lichte the co-presence of actor and audience is the most important constituent of a performance (47), which is not given here. Nonetheless, the performative act also in its temporally and spatially distant form relies on such a form of interaction to produce its effect.

ory of nationalism.[7] The produced group affiliation would be more fittingly described as "imagined communities of (in)security" (Völz, "A Nation" n.p.). The security narrative represents a group defined by their common position toward the object of security: the equality of men and their inalienable right of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Promising Futures – Haunting Pasts: Security and Reiteration

The equality of men and their innate right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is an understanding of security which was revolutionary in itself, in addition to legitimating the political and military revolution. The preamble created the vision of a new subject that would be celebrated as the true revolutionary act soon after independence. In his Fourth of July oration "American Principles" in 1821, John Quincy Adams argues that the "'principles' in the preamble to the Declaration—rather than the particular charges against the King—were the proper objects of celebration on the Fourth of July" (qtd. in Dyer 30). And although the new political subject defined in the Declaration was unquestionably revolutionary, it was by no means a radically "new" idea.

Both Austin and Derrida stress the necessity of already established meanings for performative acts to work. However, Derrida goes one step further. He divorces the concept of performativity of language from its strict adherence to a certain category of words and speech acts and applies it to language in general. He asserts that all communication is performative, not just in constructing a reality but in its relation to the referent object. The security that the Declaration of Independence represents is in that sense not referring to an a priori existing "reality," but rather to a cultural construction through which security is comprehended. Understanding language as non-referential and incapable of communicating "a thing itself" without relying on previously established meaning defines all language as a form of "citation" (Derrida "Signature" 17). And this citation is only understandable because it is based on the iterability of signs and on already established meanings. Language might try to approximate an extra-linguistic thing but will never be able to supersede or outstrip the cultural constructiveness that is inevitably expressed when using language.[8] Security narratives are in that sense always referring to established understandings. Though undoubtedly a revolutionary act and narrative that stands at the beginning of a "new global genre" as David Armitage asserts, the Declaration does not represent an isolated performance but refers to already circulating narratives. Jefferson himself wrote that he aimed to express "the American mind" (Jefferson 19). Independence as well as the principles on which it could be established had been debated, circulated and prepared for in the years leading up to the Declaration, and its history of meaning reaches back several centuries. The claims expressed in the preamble of the Declaration relied on well-known traditions of thinking: Enlightenment and Natural Law.

7 In his study of nationalism Benedict Anderson famously defines "imagined communities" and their sense of belonging as "a deep horizontal comradeship" (*Imagined* 7), which is made possible by print capitalism.

8 Derrida explains that language does not and cannot refer to an "a priori or exterior state of things" ("Signature" 14).

The histories of meaning in the Declaration of Independence are not difficult to discern and have been studied extensively.[9] The iconic phrase, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" represents, according to most scholars, a direct reference to, or citation of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689). In fact, Jefferson was accused by Richard H. Lee of having produced merely a copy of said work. Lee had presented the preamble that led to the vote for the Declaration of Independence in Continental Congress on 2nd of July but was eclipsed by Jefferson's pre-eminence (Becker 15). Becker shows that the text was thus utterly dependent on English Philosophical tradition to articulate independence (34), and maybe even to conceive of it. First and foremost, the representation of a security narrative thus fixes a meaning or understanding by reiteration. And this meaning was, according to Becker, "commonly taken for granted" (15) by the contemporary American public.

The Declaration's assertion of the equality of men and their inalienable rights was an expression of natural law, which by the time of the Revolution had long surpassed ideas of eternal law (Becker 20). Most importantly, the Enlightenment thinking that is expressed in the Declaration gives the individual the power to rationally understand the truth that was expressed in nature. The world was understood as knowable, to be enlightened by rational discernment which "left men free to make their own laws with their reason" (Jayne 40). It reiterated the understanding that the values and rights of human existence were naturally given, which was seminal for demands of "human rights" formulated in the Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence (Brunner et al. 847).

The just government that is to be forged by independence is, according to the Declaration, responsible for the "Safety and Happiness" of its constituents. Safety of the governed as the main objective of the government had been a well-established part of political philosophy at the time of the revolution.[10] Also the inclusion of happiness as an objective of government is not surprising, considering the etymology of the term security. Already Cicero called security an "object of supreme desire," defining it as the "absence of anxiety upon which the happy life depends" (qtd. in Rothschild 61). Security was understood as a state of freedom from the natural drives, resulting in "happiness," or *beata vita* in Epicurean thought. Similarly, in Greek philosophy Aristotle defined the good life as eudaimonia, or happiness.[11] Happiness, according to the Enlightenment tradition, was not equitable with property as more modern inflections of the American Dream would have it. Rather happiness was understood in Epicurean or Aristotelian terms of eudaimonia,[12] reiterating the understanding of a good, virtuous and meaningful life that is

9 For a thorough study of the history of ideas see Carl Lotus Becker's paradigmatic study *Declaration of Independence: A Study on the History of Political Ideas.*

10 Already in Hobbes the *status civilis* established the legitimacy of the principalities (Fürstenstaat) in the relationality of (state) protection and (civil/subject's) security. This idea of protection, emblematically visualized on the title page of *Levianthan*'s publication, increasingly became the key element of governmental objective (Brunner et al. 845).

11 The conceptual shift to the *sine cura* as indicating the freedom from sorrow wasn't introduced until Cicero and Lucretius. Cicero wrote "securitatem nunc appello vacuitatem aegritudinis, in qua vita beata posita est" (engl. "I call security the absence of sorrow, which makes the good life") (qtd. in Ritter and Gründer 745).

12 Concept of a state of "felicitude" and "beatitude."

above all balanced (Schlesinger 326). And, according to the Declaration of Independence, the security of this "good life" is the purpose of the new civil government that the Declaration promises. Happiness of men becomes the highest goal of the governments that are to be "instituted among Men," as it is understood as the highest form of being.

While the reiterated meanings used to describe security are important, equally important is the future-directedness of the security narrative. Rather than using past ideas to describe a present moment only, the Jeffersonian security narrative established a vision and a promise for the future. Neither independence, nor the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which legally define the rules of the just government, existed. Jefferson himself called the Declaration "an instrument, pregnant with our own and the fate of the world" (qtd. in Armitage 1). The preamble that would be understood as an expression and testament of American exceptionalism, that "must forever stand alone, a beacon on the summit of the mountain, to which all the inhabitants of the earth may turn their eyes for a genial and saving light" (Adams 31) represented a promise, rather than describing a present reality.

As a promise the security narrative describes a future state that is made present performatively. The act of promising is itself a prime example Austin uses in the study of performative words/acts, which he returns to throughout his lectures. According to him, the act of promising is connected to an intentionality that "obliges me" (10) to truly follow up on what I promised. Promises and their obligating characteristics are widely conceptualized by many authors and philosophers (Gloyna n.p.). Rather than tracing the history of different conceptualizations I would like to focus briefly on the relation between promises and the promised object or event. The "futurity" of the promised event is a crucial constituent of the event itself. The promise creates the presence of a "reality" that is situated in the future. The promise of security establishes a future state of security *as if* it was present. It becomes an object of desire, which represents the aim and rationale behind processes, the motivation for action, such as the joint struggle for independence.

The particular promise of future security based on equality and freedom is a specific accomplishment of the Declaration. However, the promise is also a structural constituent when understanding security as performative. Derrida not only stresses the importance of past meanings in his theoretical considerations, he stresses that by creating the reality they describe, performatives appropriate a future. This temporal relation is compared by Derrida to the "future perfect" ("Declaration" 10), emphasizing the future-directedness of the performative act. Though the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not describe a de facto independence, the performative act creates a semblance of a present. Derrida describes this form of making present a state that is absent a "*simulacrum of the instant*" ("Declaration" 11; ital. orig.). The force of this "simulacrum of the instant" is part and parcel of how the performative act of security is understood.

Though the promises of the Declaration – independence, equality, pursuit of happiness – described a future, they also produced a semblance of the present in its different historic reiterations. For example, in his Gettysburg address, Abraham Lincoln declared: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (83). Thereby he "went so far as to identify the birth of the nation itself with the events of 1776" (Dyer xvii). This understanding is also reflected in the date chosen for the national

holiday "Independence Day," which is celebrated on July 4th and represents a ritualized reiteration of the security narrative of the Declaration of Independence and its promises.

The Declaration expressed an optimistic sense of future and a form of utopianism. It aimed at affecting a future that reached beyond the security of independence, formulating a promise to serve the happiness of the people. Thomas Jefferson wrote in his letter for the semi-centennial of the Declaration: "May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self government" ("Fifty Years" 34–5). And indeed it was seen as a signal to other oppressed groups around the globe to fight for their independence.[13] However, the Declaration of Independence did not only incite men to break their shackles in the sense Jefferson primarily implied, which is the political struggle of the politically oppressed, but also expressed a general sentiment of optimism, a belief in progress toward an imaginary of security.

This general sentiment of optimism and the belief in the possibility to "burst the chains" as a God given right extended beyond political security to other fields and new horizons. The political revolutionary act was crucial for the American understanding and conception of the possibilities of a medical revolution that would strike against the other tyrannies wrongfully determining human existence: the chains of disease and nature. Benjamin Rush had risen to great eminence for his role in the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia (Shryock "Significance" 84). He also was one of five medical professionals who signed the Declaration of Independence, which at the outset indicates how closely related the revolutionary act and thought of the Declaration is with that of the coming medical revolution.[14] Rush describes the sentiment as follows:

> All the doors and windows of the temple of nature have been thrown open by the convulsions of the late American revolution [sic]. This is the time, therefore, to press upon her altars. We have already drawn from the discoveries in morals, philosophy, and government; all of which have human happiness for their object. Let us preserve the unity of truth and happiness, by drawing from the same source, in the present critical moment, a knowledge of antidotes to those diseases which are supposed to be incurable. (Rush 556)

The optimistic sense of future serving the cause of happiness was extended to health and the security of the body. Scientific research represented another beacon of Enlightenment illuminating a further corner of human existence, and was tightly connected to the security expounded in the Declaration of Independence. Rush, as well as Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine believed that the health of the people "would flourish" and "was fostered by good social institutions" (Rosen 398), directly linking the political security promised in the Declaration with the biological security of the people and therefore the

13 Armitage elaborates on the many declarations of independence that followed the American one often citing the structure of the American Declaration of Independence.

14 "[T]wenty-six other doctors were members of the Continental Congress" (Starr 83).

nascent nation. And the medical revolution seemed to be following the political one. Benjamin Franklin marveled about the increasing possibilities of science: "The rapid progress true science now makes, occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born too soon. . . . all diseases may by sure means be prevented or cured, (not excepting even that of old age,) and our lives lengthened at pleasure, even beyond the antediluvian standard" ("Letter to Joseph Priestly"). But not only were both revolutions heir to the same school of thought and the hopes for a better future. The security narrative of the Declaration of Independence crucially influenced the development of medical knowledge, research, and practice in the U.S. and still does today, which I will explore further in the following chapters.

"What Happens to A Dream Deferred?":[15] Security and Deferral

In the time of the revolution the pursuit of happiness did not describe a dogmatic ideal imposed on individuals but represented the ability to practice one's individual definition of happiness. Security was framed in a private context and symbolized protection from interventions of the government, rather than a security that could be provided by governmental intervention. It hinged on "the conviction that good government is limited government" (K. Henry 16) and the ideal of the self-reliant individual. This personal freedom as "personal choice referred mainly to realms of democratic politics and religious affiliation" (Foner xviii). It guaranteed the right to live and represent one's individual ideas, as long as they did not infringe on others. The principle of small government has remained crucial throughout the centuries, significantly influencing also the history of medical practice and the way in which biological security has been understood and confronted in the United States.[16] However, rather than a fixed understanding, the imaginary of security established in the Declaration serves as a persistently shifting benchmark that the people and politics of the following centuries will try to catch up with. Understanding security as performative allows us to understand the changing meanings of security produced in the acts of reiteration, of actualizing and making present this historical concept in new and different specific historical moments.

These changes in the understanding of security mirror Derrida's concept of deferral. In his explanations of the non-referentiality of a word to an "outside" reality, Derrida elaborates on the temporality of deferral. In this temporality, the referent is always ahead of itself and similarly, security narratives such as the Declaration of Independence produce an imaginary of security that lies in the future. Derrida defines the failure of language to approximate the thing itself with his concept of *differance* (difference and deferral). In *Writing and Difference* as well as in the lecture "Différance" he defines this temporal relation as "the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporalizing that

15 The title is a quote from Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem," which reflects on the unfulfilled dream of equality and acceptance of African Americans throughout the centuries.

16 The most recent attempt to establish a general health care – the *Affordable Care Act* – and harsh critique as a fundamentally un-American program of an oppressive government, as well as its dismantling during the Trump Presidency, show the importance of this founding principle and its relation to biological security.

puts off until 'later' what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible" ("Différance" 278). Derrida establishes this temporality to describe the relation between word and referent object, which ends in an endless chain of constructions and approximations. I would suggest that security as a performative is fundamentally marked by this notion of constant deferral: on the one hand, it cannot approximate a presupposed real; on the other hand, the meaning of security is not static but ever-changing. Security as performative represents a moving target that is ahead of its realization, constantly retreating due to the shifting horizons of security. It is therefore marked by futurity and absence. While security narratives fix the meaning of security at least temporally, in the inevitable failure to approximate the referent it is deferred. Like Gatsby's green light, security "recedes before us" (Fitzgerald 115), remaining an elusive goal that motivates acts to meet the target which moves ever further away.

In a constant mode of "not yet," the promise that orients the people thus seems to violate the fundamental principal of promises and the act of promising ("Promises" n.p.). However, the futurity of the promised event is a crucial constituent of the event itself. The promised security as an object of desire represents the aim and rationale behind processes; the motivation for action despite (or precisely because of) its continual deferral. Laura Berlant describes a similar relationality of improbable accessibility in *Cruel Optimism*: "When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. This cluster of promises could be embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea – whatever" ("Cruel" 20). Her theory of "cruel optimism" seems in many instances fitting to describe the promise of security, and the hopes and fears invested in it. Security as "desired object" and a "cluster of promises" is marked by its perpetual absence. This perpetual absence is and has to be filled with promises that *make up* the object. Berlant makes clear that all "objects/scenes of desire are problematic" because they are projections rather than the thing themselves ("Cruel" 21). Understanding promised security as such a cluster of promises helps to understand the persistence of security narratives despite their continuous failure.

Over the centuries, minority and advocacy groups insisted on the founding principles of the nation in order to receive full citizen rights and gain equality. These groups often cited the Declaration of Independence, challenging and changing the understanding of security by rewriting the security narrative. "[A]ntislavery and women's rights activists in the nineteenth century routinely invoked the Declaration of Independence and the history of the nation's founding in their efforts to focus public attention on the plight of the disenfranchised" (K. Henry 25). The most famous and explicit examples for these narratives are probably the "Declaration of Sentiments" from the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, or Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?". It is not particularly surprising that these claims to full citizen rights were invoking the Declaration of Independence. More importantly, as Katherine Henry points out, many of these demands were articulated as security-based arguments. She argues that the struggle for citizenship was based on a "rhetoric of protection" (1–24) "– not a challenge to the structure of thought that marked women and slaves as unfit for citizenship in the classical republican sense" (K. Henry 3). Similarly, Johannes Völz highlights in this context that "the invocation of '(in)security' was used to initiate a progressive political mobilization"

(Völz, "A Nation" n.p.). As the Declaration itself, also these revisions of the security narrative thus rely on a "narrative of injury" (Ahmed, *Politics* 32f) which represents a claim in the public for recognition. At the same time they create a "community of (in)security" (Völz, "A Nation" n.p.) crucial for the advance of the claims to protection.

The claims to protection articulate a changed understanding of security to that promised in the Declaration of Independence. Security as a private space from government coercion (the freedom from) was rhetorically turned into "being under the threat" and "in need of defense" (K. Henry 12).[17] This shift can also be found in the literature of the time, such as Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, or Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. And as the protection of civil rights became a core element of security, also health was more and more perceived as a right that had to be protected by government (Tomes, "Merchants" 530).[18] These changes in understanding security exemplify the importance of narratives to establish the meaning of security and show that security is not fixed but has to be retold and re-contextualized in the different historic movements.

The promise of security envisioned in the struggle for citizenship and voting rights, however, did not represent equality and equal access to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The promised security represented by voting rights was deferred as for instance in the history of the African American "struggle for freedom." The promised security remained unattainable because of racist practices that undermined the established rights directly following the Fifteenth Amendment, such as literacy tests, grandfather-clauses, or poll-taxes.[19] Furthermore, voting rights, as the object of desire representing security, did not fully accomplish equality and equal access to the foundational promise. The rights to vote could not establish equality in a society and culture structured and saturated by racism and sexism, as the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality of the same groups today makes clear. In the iconic poem "Harlem" Langston Hughes expresses the frustrations of a people that sees their freedom and equality constantly deferred. But despite the continuous failure of the security narrative, the Declaration has remained a crucial reference in the African American civil rights movement. For instance in the iconic speech "I Have a Dream" Martin Luther King Jr. asserts that "we have come to cash a check" referring to the promise of the founding security narrative.[20] The American Dream and the Declaration of Independence have become an almost staple reference points of struggles for recognition and justice in the United States.

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17 The example of the Abolition Movement and Women's Right Movement are paradigmatic for the change of understanding of security. A similar "rhetoric of protection" can be found in the representation of workers' rights as Eric Foner points out (125).

18 Protection did not refer to a form of universal health care but to government regulation of medical practice. Yet early biopolitical interventions such as the first vaccination laws (relating to smallpox) in 1855 were already abrogating the individual rights and freedoms of the Constitution. For a thorough study of the changes from positive to negative liberty in the U.S. see K. Henry or Eric Foner.

19 Only in the 1960s "did American constitutional doctrine begin to treat the right to vote as a fundamental constitutional right" (Pildes and Smith n.p.).

20 In fact, he calls the Declaration "a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the 'unalienable rights' of 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness'" (King Jr.).

Many of these movements make the body and its health central to their cause. The Black Panthers set up a program for aging, and Martin Luther King Jr. asserted that, "[o]f all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." Similarly, the Women's Movement with its famous claim of "Our Bodies, Our Selves!" was centrally concerned with medical practice, campaigning for birth control and abortion rights. The Declaration of Independence represents one of the foundational cultural (and political) objects of the security narrative that came to define the nation. Its promises of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are foundational elements of the American national identity and the American Dream, which has come to include not only political sovereignty, equality and political participation, prosperity, and wealth, but also health. Though political and biological security seem to be vastly different fields of study at the first sight, I will argue in the next chapter that they are closely intertwined and structurally very similar. The political and biological security narratives are cut from the same cloth, both representing products of Enlightenment thinking and an adamant optimism in future progress. Furthermore, the principles and understandings of security formulated in the Declaration of Independence are central for the formation and understanding of the rise, expansion, and militarization of biological security.