Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Shoshana Amielle Magnet (Editors), **Feminist Surveillance Studies**, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015, 282 pp., $26.95 (paperback).

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Feminist Surveillance Studies is a welcomed contribution to the field of surveillance research. Founded in a critical feminist epistemology, the book encompasses eleven chapters covering a broad range of subjects and perspectives. Together, the various authors provide sound theoretical foundations to think of the values embedded in the design of surveillance infrastructures in general, by no means circumscribed to digital technologies.

The authors in this volume are predominantly women and come from a range of disciplines, including Africana studies, communication and media studies, criminology, cultural studies, law, literature, medicine, political science, and sociology. Its multidisciplinary scope makes the book appealing for a large audience, from surveillance and gender scholars to public policy practitioners and citizens in general, whom might be interested in understanding the unfolding of surveillance practices through the perspectives of one of the genders that have been historically most affected by them. The chapters are theoretically and conceptually grounded, concise, and informed by empirical research, which provides, without exception, an enjoyable reading despite the apparent grimness of the topic.

One of the main goals of the book is to explore surveillance as a multifarious phenomenon, manifested through the gaze on female, transgender, fetus, and male bodies using invasive and increasingly ubiquitous techniques and technologies. Government, private actors, the media, and individuals assume the lead on surveillance and make explicit persistent patterns of power imbalance in society. Rachel Finn's definition of surveillance as "an *active social process* that reinforces the differential structural positioning of its targets" (Finn, 2011, p. 424, emphasis in the original) is a fitting reference for the whole volume. The book not only deeply problematizes the incidence of surveillance as a result of patriarchal constraints. It complicates the "feminine" category in the context of the incidence of colonialism, racism, xenophobia, and other social injustices that have framed surveillance practices.

Feminist Surveillance Studies is divided into four parts. Part I sets the ground with theoretical and historical surveillance analyses. "Not-seeing" is key in this regard, making a compelling argument about the "gendered colonial history of surveillance" (p. 21). Andrea Smith denounces the inscription of patriarchy into the body of indigenous people as an approach of colonial domination that ignores native peoples' own cultural systems. She defends that the state is a surveillance strategy in itself and advocates for community mechanisms to face the consequences of these problems. Subsequently, Laura Hyun Yi Kang exposes the emergence of a "supranational regime of surveillance" (p. 41) to deal with women trafficking, and its failure to overcome persistent inequalities between white women and women of color. She explores the fragilities of the
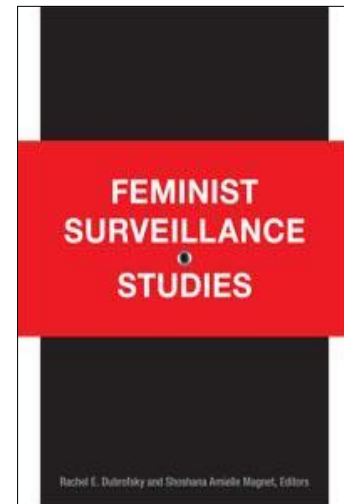
institutionalization of antitrafficking actions, adding an important feminist lens to the studies of international cooperation. "Legally Sexed" closes the first section with a focus on transgender individuals' changes in birth certificates—an identification document seen as state "surveillance apparatuses" (p. 60) and a Foucauldian "technology of control of modern systems of biopower" (p. 62). Lisa Jean Moore and Paisley Currah show how trans people clearly challenge the surveillance system through their nonbinary bodies and become a more intended target for policies that reinforce discrimination.

Part II broadens the discussion to look at agents of surveillance other than the state. Yasmin Jiwani defends that the media can be a surveillance system by guiding the attention to some bodies and framing news with specific narratives. The author highlights the racialization of Muslim bodies in Canada, and how race becomes fundamental to guide the mainstream media's panopticons in defining what people are, and the social media's synopticons—a concept that she borrows from Thomas Mathiesen to approach the surveillance of many people on few. The discussion on social media continues with a very timely debate regarding the women celebrities' bodies and their self-exposition on social media. Understanding Twitter as a "surveillance technology" (p. 99), and analyzing tabloid articles on female celebrities' tweets, Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Megan M. Wood argue against the "postfeminist" discourse where women's self-representation is reduced to a sign of empowerment. The authors emphasize not only the differences between the gaze upon female celebrities of color and white, but also how the postfeminist agency rhetoric implies that women invite the gaze, reproducing a patriarchal domination discourse. The following chapter explores the photography of women who have been battered in police databases as a form of "institutional gaze" (p. 110). Exploring a case of domestic abuse with a celebrity, Rihanna, and the characteristics of her images, Kelli D. Moore concludes that while she is a woman of color, the use of camera flash to photograph her face whitens her skin and "silences" her blackness, creating a kind of whiteness legitimacy acceptable to the state and society.

Part III is dedicated to biometric technologies and their uses for national security and reproduction surveillance. It starts with a critical piece on the use of body scanners in airports after 9/11. Naming it "aesthetics of transparency" (p. 127), Rachel Hall discusses the intentions of U.S. security submitting travelers to a "compulsory transparency" (p. 128), and the consequences of building a differentiation between transparent bodies and opaque bodies—the latter associated with terrorists. Continuing the debate on race, Sayantani Dasgupta and Shamita Das Dasgupta investigate with a sharp postcolonial lens blogs about gestational surrogacy. The authors analyze the publications of Western intended parents about Indian surrogates' pregnancies as processes of "fetishization" of the fetus, "flattening" of the mother, and expression of an "international surveillant assemblage" (p. 154). The section ends with further discussion on the tensions between reproduction and racism complicated by a neoliberal critique. Dorothy E. Roberts shows how reproductive technologies, especially the genetic screening to avoid the births of those who are considered as holding undesirable features, can be seen as means to eliminate state responsibility on both reproductive policies and inequality decrease, and to delegate such responsibility to women, in the private realm.

Part IV is reserved for a discussion on methods in feminist surveillance studies. While Ummni Khan problematizes social science research as a surveillance technique, Kevin Walby and Seantel Anaïs call for the consolidation of the field of surveillance studies based on the use of robust methods. It is worth noticing that this reflection in the last section may be understood as an expectation on the future of the nascent feminist surveillance studies and a response to an uneasiness surrounding the lack of methodological structure in the

surveillance research in general, as voiced by some authors in the book. Interestingly, *methods* are one of the variables that define the historical path of boundary objects, or their "origin, development and, sometimes, death and failure" (Star, 2010, p. 613). Boundary object is a concept characterized by interpretive flexibility, organic but nonconsensual collaborative work, and an appeal to be studied at an organizational level (Star, 2010). Considering theories as boundary objects, it is fruitful to reflect on the feminist surveillance studies using this framework.

Beyond *methods*, *standards*, and *residual categories* are other variables to reflect on boundary objects, according to Star (2010). The more a field is standardized, the more specific areas become incompatible, so they form new categories that may become new boundary objects. Remarkably, the *Feminist Surveillance Studies* contributors have convergent views on surveillance, which is noticeable not only through their narratives, but also through the solidarity expressed on the numerous endorsing citations to peers' articles within the book. If this convergence can be a methodological strategy for the foundation of a field, it can also be pointed as a limitation of the book: it relegates dissonant voices to targets to be criticized, preventing readers to interpret by themselves opposing feminist views, which are likely to become new residual categories.

In regard to standards, the book substantiates a feminist surveillance studies area recognizing as irreconcilable approaches that are uncritical about the consequences of massive data collection; defend a policy state; and work under a colonialist, imperialist, patriarchal, and neoliberal logic. This seems to be an *ethical standard* that delimitates this boundary object. And if ethics is considered "a set of prescriptions" while values "are tied to action" (Knobel & Bowker, 2011, p. 28), the materiality in the feminist surveillance studies formation, or the "architecture of the infrastructures involved" (Star, 2010, p. 614) deserve a final attention.

Surveillance is built on infrastructure. The examples of surveillance infrastructures abound in the book: the state and its apparatuses, including identification documents, biometric technologies, and police databases; photographs of pregnant bellies; ultrasounds; social science research; supranational organizations; the media system; and social media. Regarding Internet-based infrastructures specifically, scholars have discussed their governance, design, and uses as points of control (DeNardis, 2014; Galloway, 2004; Musiani et al., 2016), and have also called for the need to look at the values in design (Flanagan, Howe, & Nissenbaum, 2007; Knobel & Bowker, 2011). *Feminist Surveillance Studies* is a tool for inspiring substantive values to embed in feminist infrastructures that not only oppose the masculine and normalizing technologies that are currently predominant, but also contribute to the proliferation of more collaborative and culturally diverse environments.

References

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