

disseminated in the community. In these negotiations, the term *transgender* itself became “enmeshed in and defined by the very infrastructure through which trans users learn about themselves, severely limiting users’ agency to shape definitions or terminology” (28). Not only transforming young trans users’ everyday experience of the Internet, the datafication of language within the community fundamentally shaped what it meant to be trans.

While Dame-Griff insists that the development and dispersal of new technologies do not always carry with them the promise of linear progress for marginalized groups, the author expresses their hope, in the book’s conclusion, that the future can hold radically imaginative possibilities for something other than trans exclusion or exploitative inclusion in a corporate-owned Internet. Dame-Griff speculates about other futures for a trans Internet, including empowering trans individuals to “own the goddamned servers,” thereby placing the community at the center of both hosting and platform governance in a push toward “safe spaces we own” (209). Dame-Griff ends with this utopian provocation: that new technologies ought to be designed by and for trans people, wholly outside of existing capitalist frameworks. Pegged to the future, the book’s final argument is also a gesture of return to the early promise of analog publications that were fully owned and run by gender-community members.

While its conclusion leaves a lot to the imagination, perhaps too much, Dame-Griff’s book is overall a very welcome and necessary addition to the growing field of transgender studies as well as an important intervention into the archival history of the Internet for new media studies and the digital humanities more broadly. *The Two Revolutions* is ultimately a reminder that the development of the Internet is itself a pivotal part of recent transgender history.

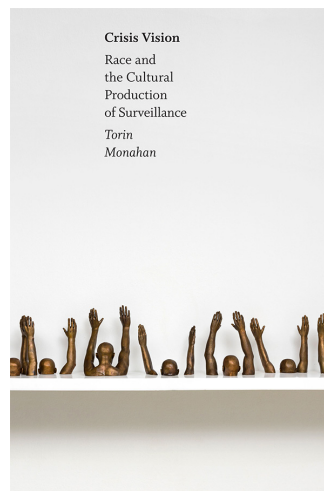
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BOOK DATA Avery Dame-Griff, *The Two Revolutions: A History of the Transgender Internet*. New York: New York University Press. 2023. \$30.00 paper. 265 pages.

HENRY NEIM OSMAN

***Crisis Vision: Race and the Cultural Production of Surveillance*, by Torin Monahan**

Mass surveillance takes place in streets and stores, on public transportation, in schools, and through doorbells and cell phones—to name a few common locations. The very ubiquity of both state and corporate surveillance would



seem to imply that it is a universal threat to which everyone is equally exposed, given that there are over a billion surveillance cameras deployed today. In *Crisis Vision: Race and the Cultural Production of Surveillance*, Torin Monahan asserts that artistic interventions based on an imagined “universal threat or individual responsibility ...

create blind spots to social inequality, racialization, and violence” (4–5). Put differently, a theory of surveillance in which all subjects are equally exposed to the eye of the state obscures surveillance’s constituent violence.

Monahan’s *Crisis Vision* offers an incisive critique not only of surveillance but of surveillance studies’ own methodological reliance on visibility, evident in its calls to reveal nefarious technologies or uncover previously hidden systems. In turning away from these often-perfunctory gestures, Monahan argues that crisis vision, a “destructive way of seeing” and an “an entire field of operation where visual logics structure social and cultural life,” produces a continuum of racialized threat (12). “Crisis” here speaks to a rupturing of the normal, while “vision” is defined as the seemingly “neutral mechanism” that restores and returns to the norm (13). The focus of the book is not a technological study of the apparatuses that produce the visual field, but rather how the visible is constituted under racial capitalism. For Monahan, vision as a paradigm renders neutral the racialization at the heart of crisis vision’s hierarchies and continuums of threat. Moreover, art destabilizes and makes crisis vision visible, producing, following Monahan’s reading of Rancière, new (re)distributions of the sensible. What Monahan terms “critical surveillance art” constitutes a field of aesthetic activity with which “the grammar, the unspoken rules and logics, of structural and symbolic violence” can be grappled (90).

Each chapter is structured around a different strategy used by critical surveillance—“Avoidance,” “Transparency,” “Complicity,” “Violence,” and “Disruption”—and draws together a broad range of works from the United States, South Africa, Pakistan, and Denmark, among other countries. The work of Chinese critical surveillance artists, such as Xu Bing or Deng Yufeng, isn’t mentioned, but would offer a window into different permutations of crisis vision.

The book's first chapter takes up the false binary between exposure and avoidance, underscoring how only some subjects can avoid surveillance and how avoidance for some requires the exposure of others, such as the divide between remote workers and essential workers during COVID-19. Avoidance as an artistic strategy risks sliding into an "aestheticization of resistance," such as in Adam Harvey's *CV Dazzle*, in which models were painted in dazzle paint, previously used to camouflage naval ships in World War I (26). Here, Monahan turns to the work of Simone Browne, whose influence is felt throughout the book, to parse the blind spots in Harvey's project that imagine a universal subject who can choose to disguise themselves. He claims that such a position flattens the differential exposures to surveillance's racializing gaze, exposures that cannot be obscured by a face of dazzle paint. This tension comes to the fore in the following chapter, on transparency, which explores artistic critiques of both visual transparency and archival certainty. Artists like Trevor Paglen highlight the sheer abundance and banality of government surveillance, while others—like Hasan Elahi, whose work is the subject of one of Monahan's most insightful readings—instead produce an archival oversaturation. Elahi, in response to being placed on the no-fly list, started sending the FBI records of all his daily activities, from small purchases to bathroom trips, to demonstrate the fundamental illogic of supposedly rational systems (62–63).

In chapter 3, "Complicity," Monahan moves beyond calls for or against transparency and toward trickier territory: the complicit subject of surveillance. Even as "artists, activists, and scholars can produce interventions that destabilize crisis vision," they are always already inside it (73). In works like Dries Depoorter's *Jaywalking*, viewers watch a live stream of an intersection and are given the option of reporting jaywalkers to local police. This project recalls Texas's Virtual Border Watch program, which allowed viewers to virtually police the US–Mexico border (83–84). Chapter 4, "Violence," explores complicity with enforcement, state violence, and police power because, as Monahan contends, "regimes of visibility provide the grammar, the unspoken rules and logics, of structural and symbolic violence" (90). This chapter critiques artistic strategies reliant on evidentiary techniques that, by prioritizing the visual uncovering of state violence, locate visibility and visual evidence as the horizon of political change.

The book's final chapter, "Disruption," underscores the racial violence and colonial hierarchies that scaffold crisis vision and surveillance at large. This chapter charts new modes of community and resilience that have emerged in

black expression and performance without reproducing spectacular violence or the logic of crisis vision. Drawing from Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, and Alexander Weheliye, among others, Monahan offers a reading of Dread Scott's 2008 installation *Blue Wall of Violence*, which consists of six police target-practice posters in front of a casket. The posters each depict a figure outlined in black from which a black arm is extended, holding an object like a candy bar or a set of keys. Each figure represents an unarmed individual killed by police who "mistook" these objects for weapons. Scott intervenes by demonstrating "the racist interpretive frames of the police," without reproducing scenes of violence in the name of evidence (127).

In *Crisis Vision*, Monahan highlights the ways that critical surveillance art is complicit with crisis vision while also developing new modalities of oppositional resistance. As such, the book will be of interest to scholars across the fields of black studies, film studies, surveillance studies, media studies, art history, cultural studies, and performance studies. Still, some might wonder about the stakes of focusing so deeply on the aesthetic production of crisis vision; if whiteness is the "pervasive background condition" of surveillance, it is also the pervasive background condition of the white cube (132). The viewer is not the only one complicit here; the conditions of production of contemporary art are as well. This extends from museums whose boards include CEOs of weapons manufacturers to the firing of David Velasco as editor in chief of *Artforum* due to public pushback from collectors and gallerists in reaction to an open letter that appeared in the magazine against the Israeli occupation of Gaza. What is the relation between the political economy of contemporary art and crisis vision? Put differently: what of institutional critique? I'm reminded of Cameron Rowland's *2015 MOCA Real Estate Acquisition* (2018), in which the artist installed a donor plaque that outlined how MOCA Los Angeles was built on, and had purchased at a significantly undervalued price, redlined land in Bunker Hill that had previously been home to a community of Mexican and Chinese immigrants. Who and what do museums make visible, not just in their exhibitions but in how they mark and produce the public sphere? The circulation of critical surveillance art, and not just artists and audiences, is complicit with and imbricated in crisis vision.

I bring this up not as a limitation, because a book, like "political art projects[,] cannot do everything," but it is "important nonetheless to flag" the ethical dimensions of these choices (97). Monahan incisively critiques crisis vision and offers a new framework for understanding how

not only surveillance technologies but also aesthetic modes of resistance are imbricated in the violence of visibility. I wonder what further tensions in the aesthetic realm can be pulled forth. What aesthetic strategies can happen outside of the museum or gallery? How can we secure “spaces for collective existence without being categorized and sorted” (146)? These are some of the critical and insightful questions and provocations that Monahan ends with—ones that,

following Monahan, I look forward to seeing scholars of the visual politics of racial capitalism trace.

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