Book Review

Review of Beauchamp, Toby. 2019. *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 208 pp. US\$23.95. Paper. ISBN: 9781478001577.

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There is an episode of the long running British TV show, *Silent Witness*, wherein the body of a person killed in a train accident produces all kinds of confusion among the coroners. The corpse is determined to be male on the basis of genetics and skeletal structure but there is a twist: evidence of facial reconstruction surgery leads investigators to assume the person took extreme measures to conceal their “real” identity by altering their appearance. Speculation includes the possibilities that they may be a criminal wanted on an international warrant, a former member of a powerful criminal network, or a spy. Ultimately, however, the body in question is revealed to be that of a transgender woman who has undergone facial feminization surgery. The “truth” of the woman’s physical body as unequivocally male via presumably unalterable genetic and skeletal markers is reinforced through the investigative scientific practices of the coroner, but her social identity is accepted via the episode’s critical portrayal of the prejudice trans women face in English society. I mention this episode because it touches on many of the themes Toby Beauchamp addresses in *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices*. As Beauchamp explains, “Those *living stealth* [my italics] are unknown as transgender to almost everyone in their lives. The term itself invokes a sense of going undercover, of willful secrecy and concealment, perhaps even of conscious deception” (34).

Beauchamp takes great pains to establish that the very capacity for going stealth, for being intelligible according to binary gender norms vis-à-vis various state and non-state surveillance practices, is a mark of the racial and economic privilege that underscores and is assumed by mainstream transgender movements that seek accommodation via assimilation into binary normative heteropatriarchal structures of citizenship grounded in whiteness and access to capital.

Beauchamp is intentional in his focus on “gender nonconformity” rather than transgender “subjects,” explaining that gender nonconforming is “a broader term encompassing many (though certainly not all) transgender subjects as well as those bodies and subjects that break from idealized gender binaries or are interpreted as breaking from them because of the way gender norms are read through mutually constitutive categories such as race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, and citizenship” (11). He goes on to note that “When taken up as an analytic rather than as a bounded identity category, transgender can also usefully intervene into the naturalization of race, disability, and citizenship. The term gender nonconforming proves especially productive for this work” (13).

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of Illinois. He completed his PhD in Cultural Studies at the University of California, Davis, with a Designated Emphasis in Feminist Theory. His capacity to draw on multiple historical and contemporary archives to situate debates about gendered structures of inclusion and exclusion within struggles for racial and economic justice more broadly makes *Going Stealth* a key text in critical trans/gender studies.

The book's stated purpose is to expose the links between "gender deviance, racial anxieties, and national security" (6), and it fully delivers on this promise. As Beauchamp is careful to stipulate, "The book challenges the very category of transgender and the scope of transgender studies" (7), explaining that he "seeks not to uncover particular information or truth about transgender subjects, but to understand how the subject, and the shifting category of transgender, are produced in concert with a range of nonconforming gender practices and made visible through modes of surveillance that may never even name transgender as a category of concern" (16). Beauchamp is highly successful in fulfilling the aim of the book and, as such, makes an important and powerful contribution to critical trans studies.

In *Going Stealth*, Beauchamp situates transgender politics within a thorough and chilling overview of the post-9/11 uptick in US surveillance, carefully contextualized within the long and oppressive history of the efforts by the US state and civil society to separate respectable and rights-bearing citizens from seemingly non-worthy/non-human "others." What Beauchamp does in this book that marks the work as leading edge is to analyze the ways that the marking of gender nonconformity is woven into the practices and processes that target racialized/impooverished/disabled bodies as unworthy of life-giving resources and inclusion in public spaces. This focus is in sharp contrast to mainstream trans rights campaigns that take borders and security for granted and seek to achieve accommodation for individuals for whom being transgender is the only obstacle to their full inclusion in society. As such, the book is an exemplar of critical trans scholarship that takes racial and economic justice as foundational for transgender politics by rendering visible the mobile assemblages of white supremacy, colonialism, global capital, heteropatriarchy, and the national security state "war on terror." As Beauchamp remarks, "I have at times wryly remarked that this is a transgender studies book that is not terribly interested in *transgender people* [my italics]; instead, it considers surveillance practices through a transgender critique to explore the category's edges and its complicated interactions with racialization, citizenship, disability, and militarism" (22-23).

In many ways this book picks up where Dean Spades' (2011) *Normal Life* leaves off, by decentering privileged transgender subjects and drawing attention instead to the long-standing assemblage of social structures of exclusion and surveillance to examine how "transgender and gender nonconforming populations [are] caught up in ongoing state surveillance practices that almost never explicitly name transgender as a category of concern" (Beauchamp: 6). *Going Stealth* draws on Spade and the work of critical trans scholars of colour, including Che Gossett; the queer and trans necropolitics of Jasbir Puar, C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, and others; the queer of colour critique of Roderick Ferguson; woman of colour feminism; and critical race studies more broadly to situate an analysis of transgender politics within movements for racial and economic justice. As a result of the author's explicit engagement with trans and queer of colour, black feminist, critical race, and critical disability scholarship, the book makes important contributions to trans and gender studies in general and to critical scholarship relating to citizenship and security in the United States specifically.

In a groundbreaking essay, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George," Canadian critical race scholar Sherene Razack (2000) introduces the concept of "unmapping" to describe the process of denaturalizing or systematically revealing the colonial practices that have produced and continue to produce racialized spaces and bodies in the city of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. By providing a meticulous analysis of the ways in which gender conformity is integral to naturalized structures and systems of citizenship and surveillance in the United States, *Going Stealth* contributes to this project of "unmapping," albeit without mentioning Razack's specific terminology. "A transgender critique, as I pursue it here," Beauchamp explains, "offers a way to read various anxieties about gender nonconformity with a particular focus on the relationship to racism, xenophobia, ableism, and securitization" (14). The author goes on to note that such a critique makes a contribution to transgender studies by investigating "a wide

range of regulatory mechanisms producing gender, even—or perhaps especially—if at first gender does not appear central to their workings” (14).

Going Stealth’s focus on surveillance, policing, and the boundaries of citizenship in the US is rich with history. For example, in Beauchamp’s discussion of bathrooms, the relationship between the provision of bathrooms and access to public space is centred. Beauchamp notes that public bathrooms in the US were first provided for white men only and that lack of access to bathrooms is a mechanism to limit access to public space and citizenship. Beauchamp explicitly documents the ways in which white supremacy and heteropatriarchy are mutually reinforcing via the history of public bathroom access in the US. To do this, the author draws on multiple archives (historical documents, government documents and public information, transcripts from the Chelsea Manning court martial, mass media, scholarly research, and material from social movement and advocacy organizations) to support an analysis of the ways in which normative gender and gender nonconformity work within overarching systems of racialized surveillance and security practices.

Going Stealth is a leading edge text relevant for a wide range of scholars in multiple fields: political science, sociology, security studies, citizenship studies, governmentality, and, of course, transgender studies. It is written for a primarily academic or highly educated readership of scholars and activists.

Going Stealth begins with an introduction that situates gender nonconformity within long-standing and post-9/11 reinvigorated practices of surveillance and exclusion that are unintelligible outside of the context of capital, colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. It then goes on to focus on issues relating to identity and space in chapters one through three, takes an interesting and provocative turn with an analysis of the Chelsea Manning case in chapter four, and addresses the possibilities for resistance in the post-Trump context with a final chapter entitled “On Endurance.”

In Chapter 1, “Deceptive Documents,” Beauchamp examines “identification documents in the broader context of national anxiety about race, gender, sexuality, and citizenship that form the impetus for state-regulated identity documents” (25). According to Beauchamp, “this chapter demonstrates how administrative processes make a single gender marker across all records difficult if not impossible for many transgender-identifying and gender-nonconforming people” (42). Beauchamp examines the *Real I.D. Act*, opportunities for legal change of gender, the hegemony of law and medicalized discourse for understanding and shaping transgender identity, all in the context of the historical emergence of identity documents in the United States and Canada for collecting information about and/or surveillance of and ultimately producing categories of people. Beauchamp draws on the work of Dean Spade to demonstrate how “medicine and law work together to correct individuals whose bodies or gender presentations fall outside of the expected norm, promoting the concealment of transgender status in order to re-establish that norm” (32) and the extent to which normative gender categories are racialized and so continue to function within racist and classed hierarchies: “Under this logic, marginalized gender identities can approximate the norm in part by clinging to ideals of whiteness and class status” (32). In focusing on the *Real I.D. Act* in 2005 and the *Social Security Act*’s practice of sending “no match” letters for employees, Beauchamp demonstrates their role “as significant administrative policies that link gender ambiguity to national security threats” (43).

In Chapter 2, “Flying Under the Radar,” Beauchamp focuses on the space of the airport (and the border) as a site of intense security screening. Here, Beauchamp positions “the medicalized technologies central to airport security debates in a broader cultural and political context to argue that efforts to objectively distinguish between bodies that are worthy of care and bodies that are inherently harmful displace the violence of state policies and practices onto individual bodies marked as threats” (51–52). Beauchamp situates his analysis of new technologies and practices of screening “good” versus “bad” people in a long history of racialized and economic hierarchy and oppression. In doing so he challenges transgender exceptionalism, noting that all human bodies are technologically mediated to varying degrees, and the mainstream transgender ability/desire to trade on binary gender conformity, whiteness, and class privilege is to be read as respectable rather than dangerous. A particularly compelling contribution of this chapter is

Beauchamp's demonstration that only some bodies have access to privacy and that bodily privacy is fundamentally tied to privilege. According to Beauchamp, "Privacy is unevenly dispersed through structures of race, gender, class, and disability" (68). People in prisons and detention camps, for example, have no access to privacy and the lack of access to privacy that marginalized people have underscores the right to privacy of the privileged: "The prison is understood to void bodily privacy for those bodies that are incarcerated ... Bodies that are compelled to be public sustain the concept of privacy for other bodies: because bodily privacy loses purchase within the prison, it appears natural (if it times in danger) outside of it" (67).

In Chapter 3, "Bathrooms, Borders, and Biometrics," Beauchamp centres the relationship between bathroom access and public space, noting that historically, public bathrooms in the US were provided for white men only and that this privileged access to public space continues to underscore hierarchies of citizenship. This chapter is, for me at least, the heart of the book because here Beauchamp builds an argument in detail about the ways in which supposedly neutral but actually racialized, classed, gendered, and abled bodily norms are used to regulate access to resources and public spaces and the ways in which these surveillance practices have become even more unassailable under the guise of the post-9/11 "war on terror." Good transgender citizens, Beauchamp observes, accept surveillance and experience pleasure at performing patriotic willingness to undergo scrutiny of their bodies, with the understanding that unspoken and unacknowledged race and class privilege will mark them as good citizens. The author focuses our attention on the "quotidian surveillance practices that hinder marginalized people's use of public spaces" (103) and mainstream transgender complicity in upholding these systems.

In analyzing government bills that relate to bathrooms, Beauchamp suggests "that public bathroom scrutiny (which increasingly names transgender people and their bodies as threats) is one component of the US government's investment in the physical body as proof of good citizenship and spatial belonging" (21) and emphasizes that mainstream transgender rights campaigns ignore the extent to which access to public space in general is racialized and gendered to privilege white men of economic means. The author notes the continued racial division of public space: "Because racial divisions of public space encompass public bathrooms, those bathrooms are informally racially segregated as part of larger patterns of raced spatial boundaries" (84).

The powerful intersectional analysis of the ways in which sex segregation and sex differentiation are constructed as a component of "civilization," that is, whiteness and class privilege, and the employment of white women and children as in need of protection from racialized others provided in this chapter is one of two major contributions made in this section. The second is the cogent analysis of bathroom bills Beauchamp provides to highlight the problematic logic of biometric surveillance programs that seek "to scientifically distinguish between safe and threatening bodies, or citizen and noncitizen bodies" because "these categories are already shaped by gendered and racialized viewing practices ... White and male prints can appear neutral, easily read, and therefore compliant" (95). Beauchamp provides evidence that biometric identification is profoundly racialized as it is "an approach to the body developed through anthropometry studies and eugenics programs of the 19th and early 20th centuries, eschews unreliable ID documents in favor of linking identity to unique aspects of the physical body, and it has a long history in medical and state surveillance programs" (93).

While Chapter 4, titled "Sensitive Information: In the Manning Case," seems to be a departure from the previous structure of the book, it is ultimately quite powerful because it demonstrates how embedded gender politics is in national security state policies and practices that deliver great harm to people both within and without its borders. Beauchamp provides a detailed chronology of Manning's leaking of top-secret military documents that reveal US war crimes against civilians. This chapter is certainly the most exhaustive overview and analysis I have come across to date within the field of transgender studies. According to Beauchamp, "Chelsea Manning departs significantly from the racialized, covert figures of the terrorist agent and the undocumented immigrant that US state policy and practices most commonly cite as threatening" (108). Manning's transgender status is used by prosecution and defence in her trial with the result being a

deflection of attention from the war crimes Manning risked so much to reveal to the public. Beauchamp deftly demonstrates the limits to a conservative transgender politics of inclusion via this case study.

Going Stealth concludes with a chapter titled “On Endurance” that emphasizes the situation of binary gender structures within the history of racialized surveillance practices in the US and troubles the potential of mainstream transgender politics for reinforcing these practices via eager and voluntary compliance. Beauchamp claims to focus not on transgender people but rather on state and civil society surveillance practices within which normative gender is structured. But it is accurate to say that this book is a powerful critique of mainstream transgender politics that centres whiteness, class privilege, US citizenship, and gender conformity, rather than the resistance to neoliberalism, white supremacy, the security state, colonialism, and heteropatriarchy that characterizes the radical transgender politics of many trans people of colour and allies (for example Haritaworn, Gosset, Snorton, and Spade).

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