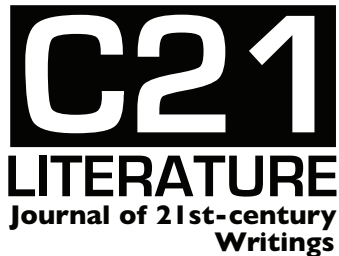




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Review

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REVIEW

Review of Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay, *Surveillance, Architecture and Control: Discourses on Spatial Culture*

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A review of Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay's (Eds) *Surveillance, Architecture and Control* (2019).

Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay, *Surveillance, Architecture and Control: Discourses on Spatial Culture*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, £89.99, 2019, ISBN: 978-3-030-00370-8.

Keywords: Architecture; Art; Cultural Studies; Film; Literature; Liquid Surveillance; Performance Studies; Spatial Studies; Surveillance Studies; Television; Urban Geography

Review

In *Surveillance, architecture and control: discourses on spatial culture* (2019), Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay (eds.) follow on from their previous edited collections—*Spaces of surveillance: states and selves* (2017) and *Surveillance, race, culture* (2018)—by providing a 'cultural studies approach to depictions of surveillance' (5). In the introduction to *Surveillance studies: a reader*, Torin Monahan and David Murakami Wood argue that the 'cultural turn in surveillance studies' (2018: xxxi) moves away from the traditional technological and scientific interpretations of surveillance in order to analyse cultural representations of surveillance (2018: xxxi) which is what this anthology does. Flynn and Mackay state that architecture is important to surveillance studies because 'the built environment speaks to us in ways which are often subliminal, buttressing notions of power, control, and organisation which underscore our communal existence' (1). Flynn and Mackay note that 'whilst recent work in the field of surveillance studies has demonstrated the potential for the gaze to transgress the lens of technology, few have considered the possibility of

the surveillant eye which resides within spatial and architectural systems relating to art, literature, film and the body' (5). This collection rectifies this gap in surveillance studies as it includes essays on surveillance and architecture by scholars from a variety of disciplines, such as: architecture, geography, urban planning, performance, film, art, photography and literature. This collection also widens its scope to encompass readings of surveillance and architecture, which do not always fit the traditional Foucauldian interpretations of discipline and surveillance or the panopticon model. Flynn and Mackay argue that this approach 'offers extensive and voluminous interpretations of the watching and watched paradigm, developing a vision of Lyon and Bauman's "liquid surveillance" which is capable of dripping into each area of modern life—into art, literature, film, lived spaces, and psychic worlds' (8). This collection, therefore, makes a significant contribution to surveillance studies by building on and going beyond the traditional interpretations, theories and academic disciplines associated with this field.

The anthology is divided into four parts and each part contains chapters by various authors which connect to the spatial theme of the section. Part one, 'Urban landscapes and spatial surveillance' opens with Alan Reeve's chapter entitled 'exercising control at the urban scale: towards a theory of spatial organisation and surveillance'. In his chapter, Reeve begins by discussing the blurring of the distinction between public and private spaces and then he goes on to explain the theory of social spatialisation, which concerns the 'relationship between or interdependence of space [...] and the social' (25). Throughout the chapter, Reeve gives examples of different types of surveillance in urban spaces and he explores the many spatial arrangements that allow for surveillance in urban spaces. Reeve concludes by stating that 'surveillance is an inevitable condition of public space' (54) and implies that it is up to us to all to question how surveillance is implemented and controlled so that our freedom is not compromised (54). In the next chapter, 'Staying awake in the psychetecture of the city: surveillance, architecture and control in *Miracleman* and *Mister X*', Kwasi D. Tembo analyses the role of surveillance in the city spaces portrayed in contemporary science fiction and gives example of television programmes, films and literary texts. Tembo specifically explores the two comics *Miracleman* by Neil Gaiman and *Mister*

X by Dean Motter and notes that analysis of the role of surveillance, with regards to architecture and city planning, in comics is an underdeveloped area of scholarship in surveillance studies (59). In the final chapter of this part, 'Surveillance and spatial performativity in the scenography of *Tower*', Lucy Thornett discusses a 'site-specific performance' (77) she created where 'two women appear in two windows of a high-rise building [...] [and] they go about their daily lives [...] [whilst] unseen by them, a small group of people stand on the street, watching them with binoculars, listening to their movements and conversations with headphones' (77). Thornett demonstrates, in this chapter, the value of scenography's role in performance to the field of surveillance studies, which is also an underdeveloped area in the field. In this section, Reeve, Tembo and Thornett make exciting contributions to underdeveloped areas of scholarship, by exploring surveillance in urban environments in three different contexts: urban planning, science fiction comics and scenography.

Part two, 'Domestic architecture and houses of horror', discusses domestic spaces which are traditionally thought of as safer and more private than the urban spaces discussed in the previous section. In Jaclyn Meloche's chapter, 'houses, homes, and the horrors of a suburban identity politic', she combines urban geography and surveillance studies. Meloche begins by claiming that space is performative and states that 'architecture and geography are dialogical in their inherent ability to construct selfhood' (103). She then goes on to discuss the gendering of space, by specifically looking at the way the domestic sphere and the home are viewed as feminine spaces. In the next chapter, 'One grey wall and one grey tower: the Bates world in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*', Subarna Mondal explores the ways in which the public/private binary is shattered in *Psycho* as the home becomes another space of surveillance. Mondal analyses the different levels of vertical and lateral surveillance that are shown throughout the film and argues that even though *Psycho* was released in 1960, the film is 'still relevant in this age of hypersurveillance' (135). Antonia Mackay turns to the horror genre in literature, film and television in the next chapter, 'Architecture and *American Horror Story*: reading "murder house" on murderous bodies' and she specifically examines the place of the home in *American Horror Story*. Mackay draws on Freudian and psychoanalytic notions of the uncanny

to explain the fascination with the home in the horror genre and she also uses Foucault's interpretation of the panopticon to explain the spatial arrangement of the home. Mackay claims that the 'murder house' in the narrative 'possesses the ability to transform bodies and manipulate [...] identit[ies]' (140) and she, like Meloche, discusses the embodiment of space. In the final chapter of this section, 'Surveillance, sousveillance, and the uncanny domestic architecture in *Black Mirror*', Luke Reid follows on from Mackay by discussing the way several episodes of *Black Mirror* 'allegorise the "unhomely" effects of surveillance' (155). Reid explores the relationship between the representation of surveillance technology and the presence of gothic horror tropes in the series, implying that surveillance technology is a contemporary psychological anxiety. In this chapter, all the authors discuss the way that surveillance erodes the notion of the home as a private space and they all explore the relationship between the home and the body. Each author provides interesting insights into the role of surveillance in the home and our anxieties about the invasion of privacy in this space through evaluating cultural representations of surveillance in art, television and film.

Part three, 'International spaces, performativity and identity', departs from the previous chapters by providing specific examples of surveillance in international spaces and exploring international surveillance cases. In his chapter, '*The Birds*: public art and a narrative of surveillance', Joel Hawkes uses the example of an art sculpture called *The Birds*, which features 'two giant sparrows [...] designed [...] to peer menacingly down at passers-by' (176) and is located in a residential housing area which was formerly the Olympic village of Vancouver (175), to demonstrate how art can draw our attention to the surveillance systems around us. In the next chapter, 'Ireland's Magdalene laundries and the psychological architecture of surveillance', Jennifer O'Mahoney, Lorraine Bowman Grieve and Alison Torne explore the Ireland's Magdalene asylums through a psychological lens which draws on the panopticon and disciplinary power in order to demonstrate the way the inmates self-disciplined themselves. In the final chapter, 'Performing the repentant lover in the courtroom: an analysis of Oscar Pistorius' recreation of hegemonic masculinity',

Alexandra Macht uses the example of the Oscar Pistorius trial to evaluate the issues of violence in private/domestic spaces in South Africa as this case 'serves as a canvas to explore the intersections of racial, gendered and class-based privilege in a specific setting' (211). The chapters in part three give us new insights into the role of surveillance in international spaces and in international cases, which are very informative and perceptive. This part, like the previous sections, would have benefited from a short introduction to explain the premise of the section and the connections between each section as the links between the first two parts are more obvious.

Finally, part four which is entitled— 'Technological cultures of surveillance'—explores the architecture of virtual, rather than physical, spaces. Nathaniel Zetter's chapter, 'In the drone-space: surveillance, spatial processing, and the video game as architectural problem', critiques the use of videogames in the military and the presence of war, strategy and surveillance in video games. In the next chapter, 'Sensurround: 4D theatre space and the pliable body', Stacy M. Jameson evaluates the sensory experience of 4D cinema, which changes the way that we usually watch films in a passive way where we are anonymous and in darkness. Jameson suggests that with 4D cinema, 'the space works directly on the bodies of the moviegoers' (256) and she uses the panopticon to illustrate how bodies are controlled through 4D cinema experiences. The next chapter moves on from gaming and virtual experiences to address the relationship between surveillance and social media. In his chapter, 'Surveillance and spectacle inside *The Circle*', Brian Jarvis analyses Dave Eggers' dystopian novel *The Circle* which portrays a company that encompasses and controls everything users do online. Jarvis uses the panopticon model to analyse three of the spaces in the novel: the Circle campus, which is designed so that everything is seen, the Circle's vision for the entire world to be seen at all times through their cameras, and the virtual space of social media. In the final chapter of the anthology, 'Wayfinding *re/dicto*', Graydon Wetzler explores the relationship between neuroscience and architecture and the investigations carried out by the 'Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture' (295) which seek to understand 'human responses

to the built environment' (295). This final section which discusses technological and virtual spaces of surveillance demonstrates the ways in which architecture and surveillance are not limited to physical spaces. This section shows that, although these virtual spaces can appear to offer freedom, these spaces can also be sites of alternative control.

Surveillance, architecture and control is a key text for all scholars who are researching surveillance regardless of their discipline. The different sections in this book show the wide variety of surveilled spaces and they reveal the potential for further analysis into the relationship between surveillance and architecture. This anthology demonstrates the value of an interdisciplinary approach to surveillance studies through the insights that each author contributes which connects to and builds upon previous work in the field. This collection, like Flynn and Mackay's previous surveillance anthologies, proves that a cultural studies approach to surveillance studies enriches the discussions and debates in this field and it demonstrates why a transdisciplinary approach to surveillance studies is necessary.

Competing Interests

The author declare that they have no competing interests.

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