“What activism can learn from poetry”: Lyric Opacity and Drone Warfare in Solmaz Sharif’s LOOK

The essay explores whether concealing humanness or emphasizing humanness is a more effective strategy for anti-drone activism that seeks to disrupt the conventional epistemologies of militarized surveillance. Building on Édouard Glissant’s decolonizing philosophy of relation and more recent theories of gender and surveillance such as Rachel Hall’s notion of “animal opacity,” the essay argues that poetry is one place we might find an answer to what seems like a binary problem of seeing versus unseeing humanity in technologically mediated aerial warfare. I illustrate that the 2016 poetry collection LOOK by Solmaz Sharif intervenes to suggest activism that steers readers away from the logics of recognition and toward the ethical potential of concealment. LOOK garners formal elements from lyric and experimental poetry traditions to employ a strategy of resistance-looking based in multiple valences of opacity.

Keywords: Solmaz Sharif, drones, poetry, opacity, lyric, surveillance, recognition

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**The Surveillance of Blackness in the Kardashians’ Wellness Empire**

*Keeping up with the Kardashians* depicts the lives of the Kardashian clan through reality television. The unparalleled success of five sisters managed by their mother has only continued to increase over time along with their participatory self-surveillance through their formidable use of social media. In recent years, a focus on health and wellbeing has led the sisters to endorse products for weight loss and health, using their bodies as spaces of commodification and advertisement online. The family’s interaction with the camera, and the aesthetics of their social media cross-promotions combine to present an open “honest” front promoting the replication of their success and beauty for their audiences. The sisters engage with blackness in a way that bolsters their claims of capacitating and beautifying white feminine subjects, engagements now commonly termed “blackfishing.” This article analyzes how the Kardashians have created an intense regime of self-surveillance, even dabbling self-consciously in the carceral state’s techniques for surveilling blackness, to construct themselves as both uncommonly, exotically sexual (‘baring all’) and respectable enough (white or white passing) to sell various remedies with dubious health value.

**Keywords:** reality television, surveillance, social media, The Kardashians, health and wellness

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**Anti(Hijab)Bodies: An Auto-Ethnography**

Using the metaphor of the biological organism fighting foreign invasion with its antibodies, I analyze some of the problems associated with the “scapegoating” of foreigners in sites of surveillance. In this essay, I assess the portability of this metaphor, not only in the sites associated with US security and surveillance like the airport and other ports of immigration, but also in sites of everyday interactions/transactions like the streets, stores, and classroom. My analysis and assessments are based on an auto-ethnographic study of my experiences with the sites of everyday surveillance. From my experiences as a foreigner in the US, I have realized that
the fact that I am a Black woman with hijab in the US/Mexico borderlands region has compounded my hypervisibility which in turn results in the hyper-surveillance of my body. In order to cope with the problem of surveillance, I catalog how I perform self-surveillance in order to evade surveillance antibodies.

**Keywords:** US security, surveillance, US-Mexico border, hypervisibility

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**The Monster Minority: John Yoo’s Multicultural Instruction and the “Torture Memos”**

In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States declared a war on terrorism that would come to rely on legal memoranda to justify the surveillance, detention, and torture of “terrorists” held at the Guantánamo Bay Military Prison. Analyzing the language of these 2002 “Torture Memos,” this article contends that the memos discursively produced not only the racial formation of the terrorist but also the emergent figure of the “monster minority,” embodied by then-Deputy Assistant Attorney General, John Yoo. Defined in this essay as a patriotic, individualistic, and exceptional racialized subject who works on behalf of counterterrorism, the monster minority plays a central role in the legal construction of the terrorist precisely because of his exemplary status within US society. While Asian American studies explains the formation of the model minority that accounts for Yoo as a beneficiary of elite multicultural education, and post-9/11 studies of US imperialism elucidate the formation of the terrorist-as-monster, this essay puts these fields in conversation to establish how Yoo’s particular brand of Asian American masculinity consolidates both the racialized enemy and the racialized agent of the US security state.

**Keywords:** Model minority, Asian American Studies, torture memos, John Yoo, war on terrorism

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Seeing Shadows: The FBI Surveillance of Louise Thompson Patterson

This article explores the ways gender and race influenced the FBI's surveillance of Black women activists. Previous scholarship has covered the role of surveillance in repressing revolutionary movements and neutralizing radical organizations. Historically, within many social movements, Black women have been marginalized, silenced, or reduced to only their gender because of patriarchal leadership. As a result, the persistence of sexism within these Black movements has affected Black women's visibility within movement organizations. This piece asks, how does gendered marginalization impact their surveillance by and visibility to the FBI? It seeks to understand the influence of race and gender on the FBI's surveillance of Louise Thompson Patterson. By examining the language and narrative components of her FBI file, the article provides an analysis across gender and across time to theorize the dynamics of surveillance, race, and gender. Based on a close analysis of Patterson's FBI file, I argue that the tension between hypervisibility and invisibility deriving from gendered stereotypes resulted in the Bureau's vague understanding of her personal life and political ideology.

Keywords: Black women's history, FBI surveillance, Black communism, Black women's activism

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Feminist Conspiracies, Security Aunties, and Other Surveillance State Fictions

This article investigates two recent fictional representations of the feminized US surveillance state and its “security feminists” (Grewal), with an eye towards limning what visions of social transformation and political life such representations make possible.
It first examines Gish Jen’s 2020 novel *The Resisters*, considering how the novel’s characterization of the US surveillance state as a snoopy suspicious Aunt maintains American liberal fantasies about the value of productive work and institutionally-sanctioned responses to state violence, even as the novel attempts to find grounds for reinvigorating a democratic commons. Jeff Vandermeer’s 2021 novel *Hummingbird Salamander*, in contrast, is suspicious of democratic visions of the social. Instead, the novel unravels the privatized figure of the “security mom” (Grewal) in order to experiment with how a queer antisocial orientation might confront environmental and institutional collapse and reimagine the idea of “security” itself.

**Keywords:** US surveillance state, feminism, Aunty work, antisocial theory, the commons

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**ABOUT THE GUEST-EDITORS OF THIS ISSUE**

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