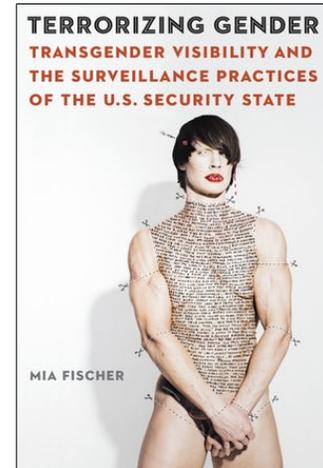Mia Fischer, **Terrorizing Gender: Transgender Visibility and the Surveillance Practices of the U.S. Security State**, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2019, 282 pp., $45.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by
Erique Zhang
Northwestern University, USA

In May 2014, Katy Steinmetz published a story in *TIME* titled, "The Transgender Tipping Point." The story, which extensively featured transgender actor Laverne Cox, lauded a new era of visibility and representation of transgender people in the media. Indeed, within the last decade, transgender people have perhaps attained more media representation than ever before, with television series such as *Orange Is the New Black*, *Transparent*, *Pose*, and *Euphoria* receiving praise for portraying transgender characters (played by transgender actors) with more care and nuance. At the same time, however, debates around other media productions such as *Dallas Buyers Club* and *The Danish Girl*, both of which cast cisgender male actors as transgender female characters, point to uneasy discourses about what "proper" transgender representation should look like.

However, as transgender activist Tourmaline (formerly known as Reina Gossett[1]) reminds us in her 2016 commencement address to Hampshire College: "Just because we're being seen, doesn't mean we're any safer. hypervisibility endangers us, representation is a trap [*sic*]" (para. 16). This pithy quote, referenced in the coda to Mia Fischer's 2019 book, **Terrorizing Gender: Transgender Visibility and the Surveillance Practices of the U.S. Security State**, calls attention to a seeming paradox: While we might be quick to celebrate the fact that transgender people have never been so openly represented in the public eye, so too must we contend with the fact that transgender people have also never been so openly targeted by acts of physical and political violence.

This paradox has not gone unnoticed. In 2017, Tourmaline, along with Eric A. Stanley and Johanna Burton, coedited a volume titled *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, which offered multiple critiques of visibility politics from scholars and activists alike, including Stonewall Riots veteran Miss Major. Most notably, Toby Beauchamp's book *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices*, also released in 2019, asks how U.S. surveillance practices disproportionately affect transgender and gender-nonconforming people, pointing to such political issues as identification documents, TSA body scanners, and bathroom bills.

At first glance, Mia Fischer's project has a surprisingly similar premise. In *Terrorizing Gender: Transgender Visibility and the Surveillance Practices of the U.S. Security State*, she also seeks to understand how surveillance and representation are in fact co-constitutive—two sides of the (hyper-)visibility coin. Using

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[1] I refer to Tourmaline as such in-text because this is the name she currently uses professionally. I use the name R. Gossett in citations because she is credited as such in these publications.

an interdisciplinary framework that draws upon transgender, queer, critical race, legal, and surveillance studies, Fischer's central argument is that "the popularity of *transgender* in the current moment is a contingent cultural and national belonging" (p. 5, emphasis in original), one that constructs a particular transnormative subject who is deemed worthy of inclusion into the nation, and whose inclusion relies on the exclusion of others deemed national threats. Fischer makes this argument by analyzing three case studies (and indeed, each is well chosen) that highlight different aspects of this argument.

The first two chapters look at the case of Chelsea Manning, a former U.S. soldier and whistleblower who was arrested and detained for leaking classified military documents, during which time she announced her desire to transition. In chapter 1, Fischer details the ways in which state and mainstream media discourses portrayed Manning as a terrorist, thus constructing her as an "alien enemy." Drawing on literature on bio- and necropolitics, Fischer argues that by excluding Manning from the nation, and thus revoking her cultural (if not necessarily her legal) citizenship, the U.S. state justified its inhumane treatment of Manning during her detainment. In chapter 2, Fischer introduces her book's major theoretical contribution, a concept that she terms "transpatriotism" (playing off Jasbir Puar's [2007] concept of homonationalism), which she defines as "a form of jingoism characterized by both an unwavering devotion to the state and a strict adherence to the gender binary" (p. 8). By this, Fischer refers to the ways in which other transgender service members such as Kristin Beck and Autumn Sandeen publicly disavowed Manning as a fellow transgender woman by questioning her motives for beginning her gender transition while in detainment. In doing so, Fischer argues, Beck and Sandeen secured their own inclusion by purposefully excluding Manning, thus ensuring their legitimation as proper transnormative subjects.

However, while Fischer effectively shows how Manning was constructed as an alien enemy, I am less convinced by her argument that this was through a process of racialization wherein Manning "both betrayed and failed to 'properly' enact whiteness" (p. 32). It is unclear from Fischer's analysis how Manning's treatment in the press and by the state relied on a construction of her as a traitor to Whiteness per se other than inasmuch as the state (and thus, state violence against Manning) is tied to normative White supremacy. I do not mean to imply here that Fischer argues that Manning was racialized as non-White—she does clarify that she wants to "differentiate Manning's racialization […] from other processes of racialization that trans people of color face" (p. 73). However, to characterize Manning's exclusion from the state as a process of racialization perhaps relies on uneasy conflations of race and (legal, cultural) citizenship that go largely unexamined.

The issue of race is more strongly addressed in the latter two case studies, both of which draw on intersectional feminist theory to center Black transgender women's experiences with racialized and gendered state violence. In chapter 3, Fischer introduces the case of CeCe McDonald, a Black transgender woman who was arrested for manslaughter when she killed a White man in self-defense after he launched a racist and transphobic attack on her outside a bar in Minneapolis. Here, Fischer convincingly argues that the justice system's professed colorblindness in fact failed McDonald when the court refused to acknowledge her attacker's swastika tattoo as a symbol of his aggression toward people of color. Instead, mainstream media discourses about the case portrayed the attacker as a victim, precluding McDonald from being able to argue self-defense; in this way, she was deliberately portrayed as "threatening and violent precisely because she was transgender"—and a Black transgender woman at that (p. 95). In chapter 4, Fischer examines the hashtag campaign #FreeCeCe, founded in support of McDonald. Here, she offers a cautiously optimistic reading of the

potential of social media spaces to produce counternarratives that challenge mainstream discourses, building support for McDonald in more grassroots ways (see also Jackson, Bailey, & Foucault Welles, 2018). Yet, Fischer again highlights the paradoxes of visibility, showing how McDonald's social media posts were used as evidence against her.

In the last chapter, Fischer explores the case of Monica Jones, a Black transgender woman arrested for "walking while trans," an alleged phenomenon whereby transgender women of color are assumed to be sex workers for simply walking around in public at night. While the arrest itself is certainly problematic and speaks to the intersections of anti-Blackness, transphobia, misogyny, and hostility toward sex workers, what is more pertinent to Fischer's argument is the ways in which Jones's public visibility as an advocate for sex workers later led to her heightened surveillance when she attempted to travel to Australia. The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) denied Jones entry into the country after classifying her as a potential threat to Australia. While it is still unclear why Jones was classified as such, Fischer argues that "it is likely that the DIBP targeted jones because of her existing criminal record in the United States" (p. 157). Thus, the Jones case effectively synthesizes the preceding two case studies by showing how the presumption that Black transgender women are violent and hypersexual puts them at greater risk of carceral violence by the prison industrial complex, and how that in turn renders them hypervisible to the U.S. surveillance apparatus.

At its strongest, *Terrorizing Gender* adeptly argues for a nuanced understanding of the politics of representation. Fischer's theory of transpatriotism is certainly useful in transgender studies as a facet of transnormativity that takes into consideration the linkages between transgender citizenship and the nation-state. But what is more broadly applicable is how Fischer addresses the paradoxes of greater media visibility vis-à-vis the surveillance of nonnormative subjects. Rather than treating these as two separate phenomena, Fischer shows how these two projects are closely entangled. In this way, *Terrorizing Gender* ultimately asks media scholars to move beyond reductive debates over "good" and "bad" representation, instead pointing to the more insidious ways in which visibility as a directive both obscures more entrenched struggles in marginalized communities as well as contributes directly to increased political violence toward those who are most at risk.

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