

# Madörin's Postcolonial Surveillance: Europe's Border Technologies Between Colony and Crisis

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## Book Review

Review of Madörin, Anouk. 2022. *Postcolonial Surveillance: Europe's Border Technologies Between Colony and Crisis*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

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In *Postcolonial Surveillance: Europe's Border Technologies between Colony and Crisis* (2022), Anouk Madörin presents a persuasive and unsettling analysis that unveils the underlying *emblem* of the ongoing migration crises and violence on European borders, along with the implications of the high-tech surveillance apparatuses intertwined with them. Through a meticulous examination of different contemporary cases, Madörin constructs her main argument by locating EU border and surveillance structures between former colonies and the current migration crises through a spatio-temporal framework. The author asserts that these crises and the surveillance techniques are not isolated occurrences but are deeply rooted in a persistent colonial episteme and rationality that perpetuates the creation of radicalized Others for the purpose of distinction and discrimination.

Madörin effectively bridges the divide between Europe's colonial past and its current landscape of surveillance technologies and migration crisis by employing the genealogical method. This methodological approach not only offers insights into past and current political events but also reveals the intricate threads that tie together seemingly disparate elements of colonization, contemporary surveillance apparatuses, border violence, and immigration crises. However, interpreting these crises through genealogy does not imply understanding them as a linear historical progression, as if they were simply replicating the same methods. Foucault cautioned that genealogy is a form of history that traces the constitution of certain knowledge, practices, and discourses. In this regard, genealogy can open our eyes to the necessity of a political critique of current practices and the potential to transform them. Madörin's caution is that border and surveillance technologies remain in a constant dynamic of mutation, and they derive legitimacy through these circulations.

Regarding the contributions of the work to the research field, *Postcolonial Surveillance* argues that one common mistake in surveillance studies is the misleading assumption that surveillance practices and technologies emerge in the Western time and place. While there exist scholarly accounts detailing the inherent role of technologies within colonies, Madörin points out that "the perspective still absent in discussions about the European border regime places race, empire, and the (post)colonial condition at the center of surveillance critique" (xiii). Employing colonization and the construction of racialization as a genealogical analytical framework serves as a means to render visible the intricate "racial-colonial complex"

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that continues to have enduring effects on shaping today's political landscape, all without falling into the trap of oversimplification.

Influential thinkers have explored alternative genealogies that position the emblem of modern governance and power technologies in the colonies. As cited in *Postcolonial Surveillance*, the elaboration of Aimé Césaire's (2001) concept of the "colonial boomerang effect" was crucial in this regard, revealing how the historical colonies served as laboratories for European late modernity. Fanon (2007) did the same by positioning the Nazi regime as the transformation of Europe into a colony. Also referenced by Madörin, Denise Ferreira da Silva's (2009) contrast to Agamben's state of exception theory illustrates how the exception becomes an inherent practice of internal violence, legitimized by law through the constructions of raciality and coloniality via the "arsenal of scientific reason" of the nineteenth century. *Postcolonial Surveillance* undertakes a similar endeavor, focusing on the EU border and the novel developments of surveillance and contained violence within it. The book addresses the gap in studies that emphasize colonization and processes of racialization as central within the surveillance context at the borders of the European Union. It implies comprehending the perpetuation of racialized violence as an ongoing colonial encounter with the world, rather than viewing it as an exceptional crisis.

*Postcolonial Surveillance* explores the role of visibility in EU border surveillance, introducing the concept of "postvisibility" to break down the boundaries between images, data, and numbers. This approach challenges linear-colonial time and highlights the ongoing impact of colonialism in contemporary society. The book offers a theoretical framework for understanding how modes of seeing, truth production, and colonial epistemology intersect in a technologically mediated world. The text also discusses the importance of politicizing visibility and using postvisibility to question the neutrality of certain modes of seeing. It emphasizes the role of post-visual governance in shaping racial subjects and enabling spatial segregation for capital accumulation. Simone Browne's work in *Dark Matters* (2015) was crucial to surveillance studies in this regard, as she conducted a genealogy of racial surveillance and slavery. Browne (2015) positioned the slave ship alongside Bentham's panopticon, drawing an analogy between their disciplinary techniques (architecture, surveillance, and arrangement of bodies) from a vertical perspective. Madörin contributes and enhances this critique by situating the continuity of the "colonial view from above" not only within migrant boats but also in contemporary surveillance technologies, especially drones, which are increasingly common at borders in the Mediterranean. The book also presents a feminist critique regarding the malleability and vulnerability of borders, conceptualized as a "contagious femininity" entity that can be violated and endangered at any moment by an invasive and dangerous Other. Madörin also reminds us that power is never absolute, shedding light on lines of flight and resistance embedded within immigration and border processes. If the ongoing state of crises is a necessary element for the expansion of capitalism and the colonial logic (124–126), particularly in the aftermath of the recent recession and the real estate crisis, then the time for resistance is now.

*Postcolonial Surveillance* is an eloquent and haunting exploration that unravels the intricate tapestry of migration crises, border technologies, and colonial echoes. As mentioned by Glasbeek (2022), the "trap of visibility" is becoming increasingly necessary to be understood in surveillance studies, placing us in an urgent position to create temporal and spatial methodologies and analyses capable of seeing the presences of colonialism, enslavement, and patriarchy. And *Postcolonial Surveillance* excels at accomplishing this.

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