SECTION 15

ART AND CULTURE

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The field of surveillance studies is perhaps influenced as much by literature and film as it is by social theory. It is no exaggeration to say that references to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the work of Franz Kafka are, for example, almost as prevalent as those to Michel Foucault or Karl Marx. Few articles about surveillance technology are complete without a nod to popular films from Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) through Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), to Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* (2002), and beyond. Most of these references are used as a route to critical analyses of surveillance because most of these works are themselves critical, dystopian, and even paranoid.

But, as far back as the late 1990s, when Tony Scott's film *Enemy of the State* (1998) was released, it was noticed that surveillance was not simply something that caused concern but something that also tapped into the pleasures of watching and being watched. As a notorious real-world advertisement for clothing brand Kenneth Cole asked, "You are on a video camera an average of 10 times a day. Are you dressed for it?" Quoted in Mark Boal's 1998 article for the *Village Voice*, this example of "Spycam Chic" captures the cultural transformation of surveillance that had been taking place over thirty years in the United States from fear to fashion.

Surveillance has always had a close relationship to desire, and the pleasures and intensities of emotion associated with it have inspired writers and artists of all kinds, along with advertisers whose business is, of course, to create, exploit, and monetize desire. As David Bell (2009) declared, "Surveillance is sexy," or, as John McGrath noted in *Loving Big Brother* (excerpted in Chapter 73), surveillance is driven, in part, by people's love for it, or at least by a recognition that it is important to one's social being and social relations.

Voyeurism is pervasive (Denzin 1995). We like to watch. Voyeurism, in its classic form, which involves viewers who are careful not to intrude on or alter the subject of their viewing pleasure, would not in itself meet most definitions of surveillance (see Introduction to Section 1). However, surveillance products are consumed increasingly in a voyeuristic manner and have become a component of a sociocultural phenomenon that has propelled voyeurism to being a premier form of popular entertainment, with the rise of celebrity culture and in particular the dominant genre of "Reality TV" (Dubrofsky 2011; Palmer 2003). This has gone far beyond the "synoptic" surveillance identified by Thomas Mathiesen (1997; excerpted in Section 2). There is a fascination to watching, even—and perhaps especially—watching

the absurd and the degrading, as sites like Chatroulette[1] have shown, and increasingly the disgusting and shocking, as the popularity of videos of killings and accidents shows. There are, of course, important political implications to increased transparency and, in particular, the prevalence of video that can hold officials and police accountable, but both the urge to record and to watch seem prior to these politics. This ambivalent relationship between desire and criticism can be seen in artworks from Agricola de Cologne's *Watch: Seconds Forever* (2001) to Mato Atom's drone fairytale, *Seagulls* (2014). And indeed, the opposite political impulse has also been significant: right from the beginning of the spread of police video surveillance in many countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s, footage was made available by operators to television shows as part of a deliberate process of normalizing visual surveillance by the state.

On the other side, as writers like Hille Koskela (2004) have noted (see Section 12), there has also been the widespread use of surveillance technologies as either narcissistic or empowering forms of display, expression, and exhibitionism. We like to be watched too. The pervasiveness of photography (Hand 2012) is also part of a culture of self-surveillance that extends into other forms of monitoring and sharing of the most intimate personal data, particularly in areas like health, where such data were previously thought of as the most private and safeguarded.

Until recently, cultural analysis within surveillance studies was limited to a focus on the kinds of watching and being watched noted above. Relatively little attention was paid to specific cultural products or how surveillance was portrayed and diffused through art and literature. David Rosen and Aaron Santesso (excerpted in Chapter 74) argue that the close relationship between literature, reading, and surveillance has been underestimated. They posit that novels from the eighteenth century onward both represented and informed the formation of "liberal personhood," which included the development of a complex relationship with surveillance.

In a different register, with a few notable exceptions, "surveillance art" was not seen as an area for sustained scholarly inquiry until relatively recently. One major exception was the huge volume *CTRL [Space]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (2002), which was produced by ZKM and edited by Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel. This book served as both a reader in surveillance theory and a catalog of a major exhibition curated by Levin. While artists of all types have continued to produce their own works, nothing has surpassed this magnum opus. The journal *Surveillance & Society*, through a special issue in 2010 on surveillance and new media art, sought to update the work of Levin and colleagues. From this issue, we excerpt a piece by the theorist of visibility Andrea Brighenti, which both provides a selected survey of contemporary visual and conceptual art that engages with surveillance and theorizes its importance.[2]

Like Rosen and Santesso, the excerpt by Mike Nellis interprets literature, but in the contemporary period, and argues that the "low culture" of genre fiction such as science fiction and thrillers is essential to understanding contemporary surveillance. Likewise, contemporary work on the cinema of surveillance celebrates arthouse and popular film. Several important articles and books on surveillance cinema have now been published, beginning with Peter Marks (2005) and including Sebastien Lefait (2012), Catherine Zimmer (2015), and J. Macgregor Wise (2016). We include an excerpt here from Zimmer's book, *Surveillance Cinema*.

Finally, games and gaming culture have become increasingly important, not just in themselves (for a survey, see the 2014

special issue of *Surveillance & Society* on Surveillance, Gaming, and Play), but also for the way in which "gamification" is increasingly affecting and shaping cultures of surveillance. For instance, an early example of gamification included the now defunct British company Internet Eyes, which provided a website where "players" could watch real security camera footage and were encouraged to spot crimes. Analyzing more contemporary developments, an excerpt from Jennifer Whitson concludes this section, where she notes how gamification entices users into surveillant relationships, including those of self-surveillance, but that attempts by employers to gamify tasks can create play/work dissonance that fosters cynicism and resistance.

NOTES

1. Chatroulette is a social networking site where users video-chat with complete strangers.
2. Vibrant explorations of art and performance are also now coming on the scene, with sophisticated books like those by James Harding (2018) and Elise Morrison (2016).

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