And the Camera Looked Back: Surveillance Art and Methods of Resistance Against Panoptic Watching

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Senior Honors Thesis
December 2019

ABSTRACT

Surveillance, and the data it produces, are nearly invisible agents of power and control in the modern societies which utilize it. However, its invisibility is fading away with advancements in visual and digital surveillance making headlines with concerns over data collection methods and ethics. Privacy, once assumed, is now negotiated between people and the power structures which oppress them through constant and unverifiable surveillance. This thesis, using Michel Foucault's theory of the panopticon, looks at three separate works of contemporary surveillance art — Arne Svenson's "The Neighbors," Hasan Elahi's "Thousand Little Brothers," and the Surveillance Camera Players — to analyze three main stages of resistance to surveillance: awareness, accommodation, and activism. Gaining awareness is vital to beginning processes of resistance, and activism, however sustained, is the final stage of overt subversion and resistance to any oppressive system. This thesis finds that resistance to surveillance is possible, and requires subversion of the panoptic gaze rather than avoidance of it. It also finds that resistance is possible on a small-scale, individual level but more effective when lateral coalitions can be formed while still under the gaze of a surveillant made visible.

Keywords: surveillance; surveillance art; watching; resistance; methods of resistance; activism; power structures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, thank you to my parents for giving me the ability to attend Boston College and for encouraging me to do what I love, a gift that I take for granted most days. And thank you to the rest of my family for supporting me in everything I do, even if they still don't fully understand what "surveillance art" is.

Thanks to my Communication Honors cohort for all the questions answered, frantic texts, and moral support over the last two years — I could not have done this alone. And thank you to my advisor, Brett Ingram, for all the advice and for fighting the good fight for MLA formatting.

To my friends and roommates, thank you for putting up with my constant paranoia and stress. Thank you to Delicate Steve, O'Neill Library (specifically the first floor water fountain), the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, George Orwell, Mac 103c, the Comm. Ave bus, Trader Joe's, and my brother for giving me those good headphones.

And to Big Brother, I'm watching you.

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INTRODUCTION

I rode the staff elevator from the third floor of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston down to the basement. Two security guards got on at the second floor and pointed at the ceiling, right in the corner. “That’s where it is, I think,” one of them said.

“You sure? I didn’t think they had ‘em in here,” the other said.

Her coworker reassured her that there was definitely a surveillance camera in the elevator — “Even the staff elevator?” “Especially the staff elevator!” — and they went on their way once we reached floor zero. I stepped out after them, glancing at the upper corner of the elevator. High corners are the usual suspects when scoping out surveillance cameras. Sitting in class, shopping, or even in my dorm room, I find my eyes darting up to conduct a quick corner check. I’m past paranoid. I’ve accepted that they’re there. But I like to keep my eye on them nevertheless.

We’re becoming used to surveillance. Society enables it, encourages it, and relies on it for policing, discipline, and hyper-targeted advertising. When most people think of surveillance, they picture cameras perched on corners of buildings and in department store ceilings — waiting for someone under its ever-watching eye to step out of line. But in reality, surveillance is extending far beyond what you see on television and in Banksy murals. As technology advances, surveillance becomes more and more prevalent in everyday life, to the point that those being surveilled—the “subjects”— begin to participate in their own surveillance. By carrying smartphones, mindlessly checking “agree” on terms and conditions, and enabling tracking services, we allow ourselves to be watched. More than that: we actively agree to it, either not understanding how closely we’re being watched or just not caring.

For how heavily surveilled the average citizen is today, we still come up with little ways to convince ourselves we can still have privacy. One of my coworkers covers the webcam on her computer with a piece of masking tape to theoretically avoid being spied on, and she's not alone. I see dozens of students in class with the same setup on their laptops every day. When you read an article on *Wired*'s paywall-protected website, you get a pop-up encouraging you to subscribe — and if you do, they'll mail you your very own plastic webcam cover, emblazoned with the *Wired* logo. If you don't want the magazine, you can buy a plain cover for about eight dollars on Amazon, which might know to suggest it for your cart before you even search.

The commodification of privacy, making it something that can be bought and sold rather than a right assumed by all citizens, has seeped into business and politics. Facebook made headlines in 2018 when a *New York Times* report revealed that it had been selling the "private" user data of more than 50 million people. The buyer was Cambridge Analytica, a political data company that used the information to analyze and potentially influence voters during the 2016 United States presidential election (Granville). The public, who agreed to have their data sold and shared openly for years, was shocked. People began looking at exactly what Facebook and other companies knew about them. Something about seeing your data enumerated — beyond just name, age, and gender — and analyzed so a mysterious "they" could tell your political beliefs, what you ate, what music you listened to, whether you lived in your hometown or not, or if you were in a long-distance relationship, gave the public the creeps and had people turning on higher privacy settings. However, just like taping over your webcam, this is a cosmetic fix for an institutional problem, if you see it as a problem at all. And it won't take you

"off the grid" or erase all your data from the great database in the sky. But Mark Zuckerberg's court proceedings after the Cambridge Analytica affair highlighted one very essential fact: it had all been completely legal, and more importantly, consensual.

But when news of other security breaches — some thanks to hackers, some to reckless management — broke, an entire generation just couldn't muster up the energy to care about it. Wells Fargo was found creating fake accounts using their customers' data. Equifax, a credit score reporting firm, had data for over 143 million people stolen online. Amazon's Alexa home virtual assistant came under fire for recording users even when they weren't using the device. Alphabet, Inc., Google's parent company, was testified in front of Congress about its privacy policies and location services. Over and over, Google and Amazon said the same thing as Facebook: they have this information about you because at some point, you agreed to give it to them.

For millennials and Generation Z, "digital natives" shaped by life online, privacy has never been assumed. While their parents expect privacy in most aspects of their lives, younger generations know their data is being shared, and adapt their lives — with tape, security settings, or paid privacy protection services like WHOIS — to accommodate it.

According to a 2016 Gallup poll, millennials trust corporations to guard their information more than older generations. Millennials also expect their into to be compromised more than their parents, but don't think it would have serious consequences (Fleming and Adkins).

Privacy is not necessarily the perfect end to all things. Privacy and visibility have always been exchanged for power and convenience, but this tradeoff has never been so visible until now. Because past generations assumed privacy as a right, it came to be

taken for granted. Now, a breach of privacy feels unjust and makes those of a certain age indignant over losing something they never actually had in the first place.

Wherever society goes, art follows quickly. Surveillance art is a relatively new subgenre of contemporary art, emerging first in the early 2000s as artists began to play upon heightened surveillance following the September 11 attacks in the United States. The genre deals with privacy, watching, and the power that comes with both. It also deals with the grittier side of surveillance: profiling made possible by algorithms and artificial intelligence that is getting smarter by the day. Works like "Sorting Daemon" by David Rokeby, which takes images of people walking outside a gallery and manipulates them on a screen inside, reveal the bias and profiling techniques increasingly employed by security cameras under the pretense of preventing terrorist attacks. "Sorting Daemon" looks for certain colors and movements in passerby, then rearranges them for the viewing pleasure of guests safely inside the gallery, away from the gaze of the camera. In a room equipped with one of these cameras, whoever is watching—a question which remains shrouded in mystery, only adding to their power—could theoretically tell the skin color of every person in the room and assume their race, religion, and intentions from there.

Surveillance is now so prevalent in the public sphere that you could theoretically shoot a feature-length film without so much as touching a camera, as long as you had access to a security feed. The Surveillance Camera Players take advantage of this, performing plays in full view of security cameras to demonstrate just how often you are being watched. More importantly, their performances reveal something often overlooked in surveillance: that the average passerby under the watch of surveillance cameras is *also* putting on a performance. It might not be *Waiting for Godot* or *The Masque of Red Death*

(or even *1984*, fittingly a standby in the Surveillance Camera Players' lineup), but simply living with the knowledge that you may be watched produces a constant state of performance and self-policing. Their shows — in train stations, on sidewalks, or in other highly surveilled public spaces — reveal the locations of surveillance cameras but also, according to their mission statement, entertain the poor law enforcement officers who spend hours looking at boring law-abiding citizens on surveillance feeds every day. Their aim is to show the public that it's not just criminals that are being watched: it's you, too.

There is power embedded in the act of watching. It creates an inherent hierarchy, with the watcher at the top looking down at their subjects. We know from Laura Mulvey's work in feminist film theory that "the gaze" makes subjects out of those it watches, empowering the watcher with knowledge behind a veil of anonymity (837). In a surveillance society, power is top-heavy, favoring those with the access and agency to watch and to avoid being watched. The identity of the watchers is left intentionally vague, usually assumed to be some variation of "the government," "the man," or just "them," with a furtive glance towards the corner of the ceiling.

Within surveillance art, a resistant sub-genre is emerging that questions the normalcy of surveillance. Artists participate in self-surveillance, turning the camera onto themselves. They document their own movements before it is done for them, regaining some agency over their own lives. Each artist surrenders possession of their image or others' to explore how surveillance has become normalized in our lives — making them easier, more fun, or a living hell. But is their surrender voluntary, or is it a submission to the fact that our lives have already been laid bare, with privacy a thing of the past?

To subvert the watchers' gaze, artists may use the same methods as those they aim to resist. They may be pushing back against the government and its law enforcement agents or against private individuals or corporate entities surveilling their private property for personal or corporate protection. But by trying to subvert the gaze, they participate in the process and mimic its hierarchical order by making themselves both the watcher and the subject, a reactionary and temporary solution for a permanent problem. In displaying the finished artwork, the artist also makes their viewers into watchers, sacrificing themselves as the subject so there is someone new at the top of the hierarchy.

When surveillance art allows viewers to take on the omniscient gaze of the surveillant, is it an empowering reversal or does it reinforce the idea that no individual is safe from the gaze? To suggest the latter means that this state of surveillance — which has been active for centuries, but which has been enhanced and made more visible by the world's move online — is unavoidable. However, the former would reinforce the hierarchy built by the practice of surveillance itself, in which the one who looks holds power over the ones they look at, even if the arrangement is temporary. The question is not whether it is possible to get outside of surveillance and its power; it is whether it is possible to subvert and resist surveillance to reclaim agency over your own image.

To analyze attempted subversions of surveillance, I will be examining three examples of contemporary surveillance art: "The Neighbors" by Arne Svenson, "Thousand Little Brothers" by Hasan Elahi, and the work of the Surveillance Camera Players. I will be performing a textual analysis of the art and looking at art criticism and theory in the area of surveillance art and within the larger context of contemporary audience participation art.

CHAPTER 1

THEORY: FOUCAULT AND THE PANOPTICON

Like many who have come before me, I realize it's nearly impossible to talk about surveillance and control without paying your dues to Michel Foucault. Foucault, who's written about everything from sexuality to the origins of knowledge itself, dedicated a volume to his thoughts on hegemonic control: *Discipline and Punish*, published in 1975.

Foucault argues that modern society has taken discipline to the highest level of efficiency, convincing people so steadfastly they are being monitored by some higher disciplinary body that their very bodies stop trying to resist or disobey. By becoming embodied subjects of surveillance, people are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy created by watching (Foucault, "Discipline and Punish" 182). They become so utterly used to blind obedience that it becomes the default setting. This process relies on the invisibility of the watcher, whomever they may be, and the constant visibility of those being watched. It also relies on the distribution of power from one common source — in a prison, a watchtower — and affecting every last member of society, even the guards, in a show of democracy that hides and protects those with all the hidden power at the top.

For fans of George Orwell, Foucault's ideas seem like they're lifted straight out of the opening chapters of *1984*, where the novel outlines the framework — both physical and ideological — of surveillance and control which keeps citizens obedient. Orwell's seminal work describes a dystopia where citizens are surveilled at all times, including in their own living rooms, by a man known only as "Big Brother." "Big Brother Is Watching You" signs remind everyone of their place. Even people's thoughts are

policed: those who commit “thoughtcrimes,” thinking bad things about the system even while sleeping, are taken away in the night.

But unlike Orwell, who tackled surveillance and privacy a good 25 years before Foucault got to it, Foucault’s not describing a future dystopian society. He’s examining modern society — modern in 1975, and even more applicable today — and revealing how institutions, like schools and hospitals, mimic the disciplinary functions of prison.

In explaining which kind of prison most resembles the modern surveillance state, even Foucault has to rely on a reference. He uses Jeremy Bentham, an eighteenth-century English philosopher who is better known for founding modern utilitarianism than for his architectural musings. Foucault draws on Bentham’s model of a prison, which he wrote about in a 1791 book complete with detailed illustrations. Its name, the “panopticon,” means that all (“pan”) can be watched (“optic,” as in optometry) at once.

Bentham designed a prison with several stories of cells arranged in a circle around a central watchtower. The cells face inward towards the tower, so that a guard standing at the top of the tower could theoretically see into every cell from their vantage point, but the prisoners cannot see into other cells. Foucault explains the prisoner “is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (200). The ones being watched and controlled are isolated by the shape of the building. All they can see is the watchtower, whereas the person in the tower has the inverse ability: they can see everything from the tower, “like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible” (200).

However, the true genius of this model, and what makes it such an apt tool for Foucault’s analysis of modern discipline (both inside prisons and out) is that the prisoners

can't tell whether the guard in the tower is watching them, or if there is even a guard in there at all. Shrouded by shadows, trick walls, distance, and paranoia, the guard is never visible. Even if a prisoner thinks they can see someone in the tower, they can't discern which way they're facing, leaving them with no clue whether they're being watched or not. Bentham calls this type of power "visible and unverifiable," meaning inmates can see from where they would be watched, but can't verify whether there is anyone actually watching at all (201). If the prisoners could make out where the guard's eyes were looking at any point, the guards would lose their power.

In a regime like this, privacy can never be assumed. The prisoners, as subjects, are forced to play it safe, acting like they're being watched at all times to avoid punishment. They are trained to police their own behavior, doing the job of the prison guard and ensuring peace in the prison by a massive, mutual, and tacit agreement to behave around the clock. Foucault calls this phenomenon the "automatic functioning of power," the result of power so inescapable that it literally embeds itself in its subjects' bodies (201).

Foucault is quick to point out that when you take the panopticon out of the prison and apply it to the rest of society, the role of the watcher becomes more blurry. He argues that even the guards are not exempt from being watched by some higher power, exposing surveillance as superficially democratic. In its perfect form, it looks like everyone is being watched, hailed and controlled as subjects. However, watching creates a hierarchy with the watcher above the watched; so if everyone you see is being watched, then it means that either there's some higher power watching everyone, invisible to all, or that there is no one at the top at all and we've all been duped into acting like there is. The tower can be empty, but the prisoners will still behave as though the warden is staring at

them directly. In this case, even the most powerful people we know must be subjected to the same level of surveillance as we are.

Of course, Foucault recognizes that the panopticon doesn't work unless punishment is enacted at some point, so the prisoners know there is actually a watcher in the tower at least sometimes. Punishment, Foucault argues, is most effective when constant and total rather than occasional and directed. Modern punishment, unlike the gallows or whipping post of days past, is internalized rather than externally performed. This produces a more efficient population, who polices itself and relieves the would-be punishers of the time-consuming act of actual punishment. Whereas punishment used to be visibly enacted upon "disfigured bodies," Foucault believes that it now takes its course on docile bodies of self-policing individuals, isolated from other subjects because they cannot see them receiving the same discipline. Once a body becomes "interpellated," he argues, it behaves at all times without needing to be reminded by the conscious brain. It is the most powerful form of control, since it is involuntary and constant. Foucault calls this system of control "ashamed," since there is no one outside of it.

Punishment, rendered unnecessary when initial discipline does its job, is also more effective when it doesn't occur at one specific moment (a la public executions for a certain crime). When people are disciplined more gently yet more frequently, the process of internalizing self-discipline happens much faster. This is viable only in a society where everything from public institutions to private interactions are molded and controlled.

Integration on this level, Foucault says, is thanks to the relationship between discipline, or, for my purposes, surveillance, and capitalism. "Each makes the other possible and necessary," Foucault writes: "Each provides and model for the other" (221).

Capitalism isn't viable unless backed up by surveillance, because it makes people docile enough to surrender their own exploited labor. Surveillance could not survive without capitalism motivating people to become more powerful than their peers by any means.

These models, based on a power hierarchy undetectable in day-to-day life, exercise their power on the masses who don't, can't, know enough to realize they're being exploited, let alone to think of rebelling and seeking alternative systems of coexistence. From the outside, the system must maintain the appearance of meritocracy, equal rights, and consensual power. John Locke is to thank for his philosophical framework of the social contract, in which people give up their freedom in exchange for protection from the government, lending a capitalist system that claims to be meritocratic some theoretical legitimacy. But Foucault argues that any growing capitalist society must also hope for a growing form — he calls it, in peak French fashion, a growing modality — of disciplinary power which represses any objections to capitalism's inherent exploitation. Socioeconomic class hides behind a veil of language. It's most beneficial for those in power to claim that they are interested in equality for all while actually working as hard as they can to maintain their position at the political, social, and economic top.

In a modern panoptic society, actual punishment generally comes from a police force or similar disciplinary body, depending on the arena. Bentham suggested it could be used in other institutions like schools, hospitals, and mental asylums, but Foucault applies it to the entire world. He says that these ideological state apparatuses, a concept borrowed from his teacher Louis Althusser, assure all of society lies within surveillance and control, infiltrating even the "private" sphere because its subjects have so internalized obedience that they take it home and reenact it with their own families and friends (216).

Children who are taught in school not to swear or pick their noses turn into parents who enforce the same rules for their children. The idea of work as success and leisure as failure originates in the workplace but leaks into daily life to the point that parents, consciously or subconsciously, see their own children as failures if they can't get a job.

Because the power of surveillance is derived from its ability to go undetected, drawing attention to surveillance is the easiest way to undermine its effects. Just as you can't shoot an enemy you can't see, you can't rebel against an invisible oppressive hierarchy. Surveillance is so indestructible simply because most people forget it's happening until it hits them in the face. In a prison, there is clearly a guard tower; but in modern society the tower is unseen save for a couple of cameras mounted in discreet corners. These visible reminders can be written off by the public as attempts to protect the masses, but in reality end up disciplining those it purports to protect.

So the first work of subverting this gaze and the power hierarchy it creates is to reveal it, Foucault says: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (203).

This means that power via surveillance requires only a one-time installation. After the power has been proven, through visible punishment and fear instilled in its subjects, it no longer needs to remind those it controls of its presence, and can fade into the realm of the subconscious confident in its effects. But, Foucault argues, once you are aware of power working on you, you take on the roles of both the surveillant and the surveilled, because only one who watches can truly understand the process. Foucault never says

there is a way out of this state of constant surveillance; even once you recognize it, he says above, you are not outside of it (nowhere near!). Instead, your subjection to control is compounded that much more by the knowledge of your own oppression, which rather than freeing you simply makes you actively complicit in it.

In the pages ahead, I will apply Foucault's theory of discipline and the panopticon to artistic critiques of surveillance. I will analyze how three cases of surveillance art attempt to subvert the panoptic gaze, and whether they are successful or demonstrate how inescapable it is. The panopticon provides a framework for discussing power structures, particularly relating to discipline, useful even though I am not discussing prison or physical infrastructure.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS: ART AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

In examining my chosen works of surveillance art, I aim to explore how power arranges itself in structures of surveillance and watching, and to see whether it is possible to subvert the hierarchy created by surveillance while working within the system. While I chose this project to examine the decline of expected privacy in modern societies and increasing performativity among subjects who assume they're always being watched, my question also brings up issues of subversion and ideology. Once one is conscious of the ideology that works on them constantly, can they ever hope to be liberated, or is oppression and control only compounded by knowledge of it, unaccompanied by the ability to do anything about it?

It may seem trivial to try to glean any meaning about the "real world" from art, which deals almost exclusively in the subjective. However, it is this interpretive quality that makes art the perfect site for analysis when talking about social constructs. Since all social practices are made by repetition and language, art acknowledges there is no such thing as objectivity or capital-T "Truth" since humans with imperfect motives, arbitrarily constructed power, and individual biases have made everything we take to be true.

Social constructionism says that while our world has been constructed by people with no more inherent importance than ourselves, that doesn't mean its conventions, rules, and ideologies don't have concrete effects. For example, although race has no real biological or geographical basis, racial identifiers, born from colonial labor practices and tax laws, have led to centuries of people of color being denied rights to education, housing, and opportunities. Social constructs become so deeply embedded into our lives

that we forget where they started. They determine so much — how we think about gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, power, and anything else you can think of but can't touch — so they become real to us because of their visible consequences.

Just accepting social constructionism as a concept isn't enough to understand the full picture. Popular discourse around hierarchies and power tends to center on politics, government, business, and other tangible power structures. But for more abstract concepts like ideology, it's harder to understand that it has been determined by those in power. Even the power enjoyed by those shaping ideology and discourse is derived from underlying systems that cannot be traced to a common center, in keeping with Foucault's idea that power has no true source but rather lives inside every individual. What we label as "objective" is never without bias. The very concept of objectivity becomes inseparable from the motivations of the powerful classes, which get to create and control the discourse — and therefore the reality — for the rest of the world.

So, the most important thing you can study must be the origin and maintenance of power, since it is the root of everything we know. Studying power as an abstract concept is a daunting task, made easier by examining examples of power exerting itself on society and working backwards from there. You wouldn't start to unravel string by attacking the whole thing. You can only hope to make sense of it by following one thread until you get to one of the ends, and from there you can see how it got so knotted up in the first place.

So much power comes with watching (and so much lost by being watched). Surveillance is a productive site to examine power structures that shape society. It's a tangible marker of the exercise of power, something you can point at when you see a camera or when you check the box on terms and conditions. Art is also helps get to the

meaning of popular discourse around surveillance, since it (at least in theory) is largely separate from capitalist pursuits and so is free to express criticism in its purest form, unhindered by the fear of being unprofitable.

The central inquiry of this paper is whether it is possible to resist the gaze of surveillance. Is there a space for agency over surveillance in contemporary society, which relies so heavily on the ingrained practice of watching and being watched to maintain its order? It also begs the question of the nature of agency itself — whether the definition of agency and personal power must change to fit the ever-evolving surveillance landscape.

I will be examining three works of contemporary art. They can all be classified as "surveillance art," an emerging subgenre with relatively few entries defined by themes of privacy, watching, and discipline. Most surveillance art is photography, videography, or digital art because they are closely related to the channels used by surveillance. It deals with awareness and subversion of surveillance, making us consider our roles as subjects in a surveillance society, critiquing the system, and proposing methods of resistance.

I will be performing a textual analysis on these works, looking for commentary on surveillance as a practice and suggestions for subverting or resisting it. Rather than performing a visual analysis on the works' aesthetic qualities, I will be examining their content and criticism and analysis from art theorists and critics. Of course, it is impossible to separate aesthetics from content, so I will address aspects like composition, framing, medium, and others, although they will not form the basis of my analysis.

Case studies

My first case is photographer Arne Svenson's series "The Neighbors." The photos, first shown in New York in 2013, were taken from the artist's Tribeca apartment.

They're clear views into apartments in the neighboring building, which has floor-to-ceiling glass windows allowing anyone with a good vantage point to see right in. And that's exactly what Svenson did: he took pictures of his "neighbors" living their lives, purposely obscuring their faces to abstract it enough that it could be taken as a general commentary on human private behavior and not as an exposé about specific subjects. Svenson has been sued by one of the subjects of the project, which includes images of people sleeping, sitting, searching on the ground, and a dog. He won the case, since the size of the windows allow anyone to see in. He wasn't invading their privacy — there wasn't any privacy to invade to begin with. "The Neighbors" calls the entire concept of privacy, and whether it can ever really exist even in our own homes, into question. "The Neighbors" represents the first step towards liberation from surveillance: awareness.

The second case is an example of voluntary self-surveillance as resistance. Hasan Elahi's "Thousand Little Brothers" focuses on surveillance and profiling as a form of discipline. Elahi was the subject of an unfounded tip that he was involved in terrorist activity on United States soil, and was investigated by the FBI for six months. Towards the end of the investigation, and through today, Elahi has taken hundreds of photos of his own daily activities, compiles them online, and sends them to the FBI. He overwhelms them with his own self-harvested data, while at the same time parodying how overzealous the agency was in surveilling him. "Thousand Little Brothers" is an example of accommodating surveillance, which requires awareness but does not yet reach activism.

My final case is not one specific work, but a performance troupe called the Surveillance Camera Players. The group was founded in 1996 by Bill Brown, an anti-government and anti-surveillance activist who gives tours of surveillance camera hot

spots around New York City. They stage adapted performances of plays in places with lots of surveillance cameras: train or bus stations, public squares, or busy sidewalks. They claim they are entertaining law enforcement officers stuck looking at boring old obedient citizens on surveillance feeds all day. However, their work is an example of activism against surveillance, because not only are they raising public awareness of just how prevalent surveillance cameras are, they are also pointing out how surveillance makes everyone into a performer, even if there is no audience.

In the pages ahead, I will outline the theories and readings that make up my theoretical lens and foundation for this analysis, and will explore how each has contributed to the general conversation around surveillance, privacy, and discipline.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature surrounding surveillance art is limited. It focuses on its themes of awareness and attempted resistance to surveillance and often refers to, as I have, Foucault's panopticon when discussing surveillance as control and discipline. However, there is a growing sector which looks at the panopticon critically, questioning whether Foucault's model is outdated or unfit for the current surveillance state.

Definitions of surveillance art

Andrea Mubi Brighenti coins the term "artveillance" in her article "Artveillance: At the Crossroads of Art and Surveillance," marking out a place in contemporary art theory and criticism for this very specific and rapidly developing field. She examines the effect of surveillance on artists and the creation of this new genre, but also flips the script and looks at how art and public discourse surrounding surveillance actually informs and shapes the ideoscape and collective perception of surveillance, privacy and control (Brighenti 137). While Brighenti chooses to focus on content rather than form, she points out that it makes a great deal of difference whether an artist chooses to use the same technology and methods as surveillants — working in their own medium in an attempt to subvert it — or to use another medium like painting or sculpture in an attempt to operate outside the bounds of surveillance. Brighenti talks about artveillance in terms of regimes of visibility, defined as the powers derived from being visible, invisible, or being the one doing the watching. She defines three dimensions of visibility: control, recognition, and spectacle (138). We often think of surveillance in terms of visibility of control, meaning the external ownership of our own images and activities which enable a surveillant to use

our data to exert power over us. However, the other two categories, recognition and spectacle, put surveillance in a more positive light, suggesting that by making the masses and the marginalized as visible as the privileged, and by making a spectacle out of the "average" human experience, we are elevated to subjects worthy of being watched — a loss of privacy, yes, but one that flatters us in the process (140). This supports the Surveillance Camera Players' (who she cites) message that it's not only street criminals who are being watched, it's everyone.

Panoptic empowerment and ownership

In keeping with Brighenti's idea of the subject as spectacle, Simon Hogue writes about the spectacle as empowerment. Not only does spectacle lend visibility to communities which often go overlooked — Hogue references drag queens to make his point — they also force the audience to interact with the spectacle (172). It is a form of subversion, because the existence and spectacle of those being watched are coercing another entity (human or automated) to come face-to-face with those they are trying to control, humanizing them. However, if there is no entity watching at all, like Foucault may suggest, the spectacle is for nothing and loses its power (179). The paradox in all of this is that there is no way of knowing whether there is a watcher or not, and so an individual's sense of empowerment derived from visibility may be unfounded; however, that does not make the feeling itself any lesser or invalid.

Setting aside the argument about how "empowering" surveillance images are, meaning how active the subjects are in their creation, the conversation turns to the ownership of these images. Legally or theoretically, the question of who owns an image

— subject or creator — is discussed in works like “Thousand Little Brothers” which blur the line between the two.

John Tehranian examines ownership of non-consensual surveillance images through the lens of Laura Mulvey. A legal scholar, he studies how the law awards ownership to the creator rather than the subject, in keeping with protections of free speech and artistic expression. He examines cases of celebrity sex tapes, revenge porn, and voyeuristic art like Arne Svenson’s “The Neighbors,” which I will examine in Chapter 4. Svenson has had legal action taken against him for his photo series of unsuspecting people in their Tribeca apartments, with subjects and parents of subjects claiming he was a pervert using their images for commercial gain. Tehranian argues that their cases should have focused on their role as “performers” if they wanted grounds for ownership (350). The legal definition of ownership, much disputed in cases like Erin Andrews’ leaked nude photos in recent years, has settled on the person who creates the work, except in situations of commission or employment.

According to Mulvey, men tend to look at women as subjects. Tehranian expands subjects to include non-white people, asserting the law contributes to systemic oppression by “fetishiz[ing] the work of the fixer at the expense of those in front of the camera” (357). Ownership is determined by operation of recording equipment, favoring men who tend to be richer and can produce more material than women, who are made subjects.

Svenson, whose case was dismissed, is quoted in a Daily Mail article saying, “"For my subjects, there is no question of privacy . . . They are performing behind a transparent scrim on a stage of their own creation with the curtain raised high” (2013).

The death of privacy

It's worth exploring whether privacy is actually declining thanks to modern technology, or whether we've never actually enjoyed total privacy at all. Foucault wrote on the panopticon in 1975, before the Internet, social media, or big data. However, these inventions may simply mean that we participate more actively in the harvesting of our own information than ever before, because we consent to these terms whenever we check a terms and conditions box or enter the public sphere.

Because "big data" and digitally harvested information are so new to the surveillance arsenal, much less art deals with it. Katherine and David Barnard-Wills use the term "dataveillance," coined by Roger Clarke in 1988, to talk about this mass collection of personal data for disciplinary or commercial use (205). This data, formatted homogeneously and universally applicable for the first time in the history of surveillance, will eventually form massive compiled profiles of individuals, groups, and populations denoted by any number of identity markers (207) . Dataveillance, the pair argues, will fundamentally change our identities, making us performers in our own lives.

John Edward Campbell and Matt Carlson use Foucault's theory of self-surveillance based on Jeremy Bentham's conceptual panopticon to explain the growing phenomenon of online surveillance and privacy commodification. Advertising firms are increasingly using voluntarily gathered data about consumers to tailor advertisements (Campbell and Carson 589). Volunteering this information, much of which is not directly related to transactions, mimics the same submission to power and self-discipline Foucault discussed in his panoptic model — where the idea that you could be watched at any time makes you regulate your own behavior preemptively, theoretically eliminating the need

for surveillance altogether. Big data reinforces the capitalist inequality of power, where corporations can ask anything of their consumers because they control a desired product. Consumers offer up their information because they believe it will make their lives more efficient (they are often correct), and they worry that if they don't share it, they will be somehow left out. Younger generations were more willing to offer their information than older ones, 54 percent versus 36 percent (594). This information helps corporations and government sort people into categories, much like the prisoners in the panopticon were classified by expected behavior based on previous actions.

In an article entitled "Digital Panopticon," Jesper Tække writes about the selective and therefore biased nature of digital surveillance. Because it only takes into account your activities online, enacted by your digital persona rather than your physical body, it can't record the complete picture. While most argue that it is better to not record everything a person does, this makes an incomplete database of each online person's actions. They are selected on the basis of disobedience, tracking rule violations and ignoring obedience. This subjects all action to the suspicion of criminality, because if only your wrongdoings are being recorded, then why are you always being watched (Tække 444)? The digital panopticon also has a reverse effect: it makes the actions of those in power, like law enforcement and politicians, more accessible to the public. Therefore, not all digital surveillance follows the trend of watching the disempowered. When used in a certain way, it can actually speak back to power and be used for activism.

Wilson and Serisier expand on Tække's hopeful vision of a more democratized surveillance state in the digital age. They argue that the advent of mobile phone photography and video recording put the power of surveillance in the hands of masses,

taking away some power from traditional surveillants because they are no longer the only ones with an omniscient eye (Wilson and Serisier 171). After a photo or video has been taken, the digital technology also provides a framework for the evidence's distribution and further democratization, getting it into as many hands as possible. This has proven to be a very effective method of resistance against those in power — such as in cases of cell phone videos condemning law enforcement officers abusing their power — and have developed as a reliable check on power. Wilson and Serisier call this practice "counter-surveillance," suggesting that there is hope for resistance within a surveillance society, but it may have to take the same form as the original oppression (178).

The panopticon in the digital age

Even though the panopticon is a convenient and well-tested metaphor for surveillance, modern theorists are questioning its relevance in an increasingly online world. The democratizing effect of the Internet, which lets anyone become a creator and does not excuse anyone from the gaze, blurs the lines between watcher and watched.

Jonah Bossewitch and Aram Sinnreich argue that new media technology has fundamentally changed dynamics of power and knowledge in society, how they are exchanged and negotiated, and who ends up with the most agency. With these changes, they say, the language we use to talk about power structures has to change as well (229). They state that Foucault's panopticon model, while once largely accurate and almost universally accepted, should be brought into question since now there is far more than one central body watching the periphery (228). Society has gone from being policed by one "Big Brother," the prison guard in Bentham and Foucault's theories, to being watched and controlled by many "little brothers," as the title of Hasan Elahi's "Thousand

Little Brothers" would suggest. Generation of and access to information has been democratized by the Internet, but the underlying power imbalance between the masses and those who generate the most information hasn't shifted much toward the masses, suggesting that having access to information is no longer as empowering as it once was. They sum up new forms of power structures via information sharing in three categories: " (a) positive flux − you are leaking information, and others have access to more than you do, (b) negative flux − you gather and retain more information than you emit, (c) neutral flux − everyone has equal access to everyone else's information, a situation one could describe as a form of perfect transparency" (232). While the perfect end of a surveillance-free state would be to achieve neutral flux, they argue that the power imbalance as it stands now and for the foreseeable future prevents perfect transparency.

Benoît Dupont also rejects the panoptic model for today's world. In "Hacking the Panopticon," he echoes Bossewitch and Sinnreich's conclusions that power cannot be traced to one center anymore (Dupont 260). Although Foucault recognized that there might not need to be anyone at the center, his model still relies on at least the illusion of a central power. Dupont says that modern scholars using Foucault's model are overlooking two big features of the Internet age. First, the democratizing forces of the Internet discussed above. Second, he adds an analysis of resistance strategies employed by Internet users who want to preserve their privacy online, or at least to complicate and delay attempts to destroy it. He examines users who use cryptography, pay for data blocking services, or funnel useless and random data into monitored feeds to confuse data collectors and render their collection useless. Dupont argues that this sector of Internet

users is often overlooked because they represent a minority in the population since most users are either unaware or unconcerned with their data being harvested (277).

However, these users may be misguided, according to Felix Stalder. In the inaugural issue of the journal *Surveillance and Society* (which would later become the most prolific publishers of articles to do with privacy, surveillance, and discipline), Stalder sets the tone with his article assertion: "Privacy is not the antidote to surveillance" (120). Today, we are split between our physical bodies and a separate "data" body which precedes us in transactions and interactions. He reminds readers that access to data is a direct means of social control because other people's data gives you the power to influence their behavior (122). According to Stalder, marketers and the government share the title as the biggest benefactors from big data. He says that the natural response to realizing how much data about you is out there being used to manipulate is to call for increased privacy, but that this is misplaced (123). The world relies more and more on digital communication in areas like fire safety and healthcare where you don't want to skimp on assurance. We want to control who knows what about us, but that would be impossible. The benefits we get in convenience and safety make the rest worth it, according to Stalder. He advocates for an accommodationist solution to the problem of surveillance, which he may not even see as a problem at all. Rather than resisting it using the methods that Dupont's users employ, users should just get used to their new state of being (124). Foucault would say this is a submission to power, antithetical to resistance.

Surveillance, art, and power

It didn't take long for fears about surveillance and resistant impulses to bleed over into the art world. Surveillance art has emerged since the start of the 21st century as a

genre of its own, a subset of contemporary art which subverts the gaze and makes the viewer simultaneously the subject of what they see. Anders Albrechtslund and Lynsey Dubbeld see surveillance art as a hopeful subversion of the unavoidable surveillance we now know we are subject to. While most people see surveillance as a threatening force, malicious both in nature and intent, Albrechtslund and Dubbeld want people to reconsider it as a site for entertainment and fun, a form of subversion in itself (217). By reversing its function and repurposing it for a less malicious use, subjects can take some form of agency over their own surveillance. They reference works like David Rokeby's "Sorting Daemon," a manipulation of discriminatory profiling software often employed by surveillance companies for crime and terrorism prevention, subverted for the pleasure and entertainment of people standing safely in a gallery, away from that gaze (220).

Art not only tells us where to look, but it also gives insight into where we were already looking, what has been capturing our attention. Besides the work of Albrechtslund and Dubbeld, the genre of surveillance art has mostly been examined as a pessimistic force which points out the detriments of surveillance. However, contemporary theorists have left gaps in their work when it comes to this relatively new genre. Andrea Brighenti uses "artveillance" to talk about works which interrogate the practice of surveillance and shape society and its norms to cooperate with constant watching. The journal *Surveillance & Society* publishes on the topic, but often focuses more on legal, commercial, and political implications of surveillance rather than artistic.

David Lyon describes surveillance studies as an "cross-disciplinary initiative" that aims to examine mechanisms of power, opportunities for resistance, and political implications of surveillance (2). He recognizes that surveillance can either be manual,

like someone watching from a tower or even behind a camera feed, or automated, like algorithms designed to rip your personal information from websites (3). Lyon hints at the move towards automation, which abstracts the watcher, in recent years. He argues that the rise of surveillance invading our homes and "private" lives through computers, phone lines, and the Internet has blurred the lines between public and private spheres and made it harder for individuals to seek out spaces of true privacy. A lot of this, Lyon says, is because we are constantly in a state of flow, moving from one place to another and therefore followed by some form of surveillance no matter where we go (4). Whereas before, surveillance itself was stationary yet enacted upon mobile bodies, today it can be just as mobile as those it is following around. But why is the watching so constant, even for those of us who aren't criminals or dangers to society? Lyon says surveillance, and the reason it begs to be studied as a serious cultural and ideological phenomenon, is to sort those it watches into more easily digestible categories (3). He calls it the "phenetic fix," meaning capturing "personal data triggered by human bodies and to use these abstractions to place people in new social classes of income, attributes, habits, preferences, or offences, in order to influence, manage, or control them" (3). Critiquing surveillance can decode these categories and get to the political applications that rely on them, evaluating what it means for justice and equality (6).

Torin Monahan examines the concept of interpellation underlying this new genre of art, but neglects to mention the artists' own participation in surveillance as a key subversion of surveillance itself. In "Ways of being seen," Monahan gives a brief history of surveillance art as it stands so far. After examining examples of surveillance art, he formulates four distinct, yet overlapping categories of interpretation and proposed

purpose for this genre: avoidance of surveillance, exposing surveillance to increase transparency, manipulating data collection and processing to disrupt profiling practices, and participatory projects which force the viewer to come to terms with their own complicity in the practice of surveillance (562). Monahan relies on Althusser to examine the interpellative properties of his selected works. Althusser's theory of interpellation, or subconscious physical incorporation of ideology, describes mechanics of power exerted on the bodies of citizens by those in positions of power (564). He argues that those who try to resist or avoid the gaze cannot escape being hailed by surveillance, meaning every person in a surveillance society is hailed as a subject whether they concede or not (565). Interpellation exercised by surveillance operates on the individual in a few dimensions; the citizen, the consumer, and the criminal as the most prevalent. Since ideology reproduced and reinforced by surveillance cannot be escaped by anyone living under it, art also (as a product of human endeavor) cannot operate outside of dominant ideology, but instead can subvert from within, using mechanisms of surveillance to critique it. Monahan argues that art which does this most effectively is that which decenters the artist and turns responsibility to the viewer (577).

Lauren Hardman's criticism discusses "The Neighbors" specifically, Arne Svenson's landmark work. She cites a review from Hili Pearson, a critique with Artnet News, who bestows upon it the title of "surveillance art" (148). Hardman says that in "The Neighbors," the subjects who Svenson photographed actually played a much larger role in killing their privacy than the artist did by suing him and entering the public eye, whereas before their faces were never seen by gallery guests (151). But they were disturbed enough by this unignorable proof of being watched, which at once revealed

their own subconscious habits to themselves and the world. However, Hardman asks, why should they care if they supposedly have nothing to hide (156)? In that same vein, why would any law-abiding citizen be concerned about surveillance, unless they are concerned that the only reason they abide by the law is because they are being watched.

In the chapters ahead, I will examine methods of awareness, accommodation, and activism in reaction to surveillance through art. I will draw on the many participants in the ongoing conversation about art's place in an increasingly surveilled society and contribute my own findings about art's role as resistance.

CHAPTER 4: AWARENESS

` They say the first step to making a change is acknowledging you have a problem. In this case, the problem is surveillance — hiding in plain sight, profiting off invisibility. The first task of surveillance art, then, is to create *awareness* of surveillance. One cannot be expected to try to avoid or resist something they don't even know is happening.

Arne Svenson's "The Neighbors" is a photo series, taken in 2012 from Svenson's own Manhattan apartment. The subjects are residents of a neighboring apartment building, fully visible through their large windows. The subjects' ignorance is the fulcrum of the project — captured by a professional artist while they go about their daily lives, unaware that anyone is watching them, let alone taking photos to later be displayed in a gallery. The photos aren't unflattering or unsavory portrayals of these strangers, although, can you call someone a stranger when you've seen inside their apartment? Perhaps Svenson's intention with this series was to point out that the concept of a "stranger" may be dead and gone in the modern surveillance state.

For the exhibition, Svenson chose photos of his neighbors doing mundane and largely unremarkable things in their own homes. There are no nudes or incriminating acts being committed. But this heightens the feelings of violation felt by some of the subjects and even some viewers once the show opened at Julie Saul Gallery in Manhattan in 2013. There is no reason for Svenson to be taking pictures of them, since nothing interesting is happening. But uninteresting and unfiltered is what Svenson aimed to capture.

The photos show people doing anything from leaning against a window, to playing with their hair, to sitting across the breakfast table from one another. Most are taken from behind, showing no faces or distinctive features. This choice on Svenson's

part performs two vital functions, one artistic and one legal. On an artistic level, the faceless figures suggest that "The Neighbors" could be anyone, making the subjects representations of all people rather than specific individuals. This breaks down the separation inherent in portrait photography — usually, a viewer can gaze at a photo of another person and feel detached, knowing they are separate from the one depicted. A process of othering occurs when looking at a face you don't recognize as your own, creating a layer of separation and reducing your identification with the image. Svenson addressed the choice in *It's Nice That*, a publication covering art and design news. "The subjects I photographed were unaware at the time but I was stringent about not revealing their identities," Svenson said. "I was not photographing these people as specific, identifiable personages, but more as representations of humankind" (Fulleylove).

Without faces, Svenson's neighbors lose their individuality, instead representing "people" as a general concept. There are caveats to this association: none of the people portrayed in the photos appear to be people of color, reducing the potential for identification for viewers of color.

The second function of this relative anonymity is more practical — a legal defense of the work shows that the subjects cannot be identified by their representations in the photos because of the strategic lack of identifying features.

Only one photo shows its subject's face: a shot of a Boston Terrier looking out of the window pensively. The series' arguably most pornographic shot is tame — a woman bending over on her knees, fully clothed but bottom towards the camera, faceless just like the rest of the subjects. Or is the one of the man reclining, odalisque-like, on a couch while a woman offers him a drink the most scandalous? The photo which became the

center of controversy and the subject of a lawsuit against Svenson portrays children wearing bathing suits. Even that, creepy or scandalous in a different context, does not shock the viewer when alongside these other faceless photos, since it too is just another motif of a familiar daily life. We, just like Svenson, have no real reason to be looking, then, since there is nothing out of the ordinary to be seen.

But look people did, and a lot of them. First in the gallery, then in papers and online once the lawsuit hit. Svenson defended his work both to the public and the court by saying his artistic intent — to capture human activity at its purest, least performative — would not have been fully realized had he used models given instructions or cues. The windows themselves even play a role in the work. Although they may seem at first like an obstruction of the image itself, they become natural frames for the humans that live within them, perhaps a nod to the artistry of daily life.

Arne Svenson's "The Neighbors" may not have intended to make awareness its primary task, but the work itself and the criticism that followed — from both the art world and the general public — have done much to spread awareness of surveillance. Outrage and a legal suit on the part of one of the subjects depicted in the series highlighted one thing: the people Svenson photographed from his window did not expect to be surveilled. While it's unreasonable for most people to assume they are being actively watched even in their own homes, and Svenson's work would have likely startled anyone it chose as its subject, the reception may have been the first time these people fully comprehended the severity and prevalence of surveillance.

Svenson won his case in the New York Supreme Court against Matthew and Martha G. Foster, the parents of the children depicted in Svenson's series. The judge's

decision cited the First Amendment free speech clause and the law's defense of artistic expression. When the couple appealed, claiming he forfeited the right to artistic expression when he sold prints of the photos and tickets to the exhibit, the appellate court of New York reaffirmed the lower court's decision (Visentin). The appellate court's decision added two key notes on the subject of surveillance and freedom to privacy: that literature, films, and theatre have long been protected by this reasoning; and that by suing the artist and revealing themselves to be the subjects of the work in question, the Fosters had already voluntarily forfeited their right to privacy and put themselves even more in the public eye than they had been as faceless subjects. These distinctions highlight how the law views "private individuals": private until proven public.

The Fosters, and maybe the other subjects of the series if they saw the photos reproduced, experienced the first step towards resisting surveillance: awareness. It is one of the largest leaps in the process to go from complete ignorance of surveillance to awareness based on personal experience. One may argue that awareness should take a less extreme incident to be realized: after all, don't we all notice security cameras and guards in nearly every public place? But when that becomes the base state of public life, little idiosyncrasies of the surveillance state fade into normalcy and only when you coming face to face with your own representation, reproduced by surveillance, can make you fully understand its implications. A common instance of this phenomenon is seeing yourself on a CCTV in a store or airport, becoming aware of the presence of cameras not by seeing the cameras themselves, but by seeing what they *produce*.

But what good does it do to know you're being watched if you don't think there's anything you can do about it? Jonathan Dollimore makes his case for awareness as a vital

step towards resistance, calling this initial stage of realization “dangerous knowledge.” While the effects of resistance, or even the process, may not come immediately, this awareness works gradually over time, like a seed in the resistant mind. Dollimore says that mainstream culture will try to repress and discount this knowledge as best it can, but once learned, dangerous knowledge cannot be fully forgotten. It sticks with those who’ve gained awareness, reminding them that their situation is not permanent. This knowledge is dangerous, in this context, not to those who’ve just gained it, but to those who operate freely thanks to the public’s assured ignorance — in our study, the surveillants.

In this first chapter, I will look at Arne Svenson’s “The Neighbors” and the critical and public response to it, as documented in news sources, in order to explore the importance of awareness in the process of seeking to avoid or resist surveillance. I will also draw on the theoretical works of Foucault, Dollimore, and others to build a more comprehensive framework for understanding agency in environments of oppression and the processes of building resistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In examining methods of resistance, I join a long conversation between some of the most well-known theorists of the twentieth century and beyond. Since my analysis of surveillance is rooted in Foucault’s writings on the panopticon, I begin with his thoughts on the role of awareness in resistance. Foucault focuses his analysis of awareness on its two functions: threatening the stability of the surveillance state in the short term and reinforcing the process of self-sustaining surveillance in the long term (Foucault, “Discipline and Punish” 201). In the first moment of awareness, the power structure created by surveillance is disrupted, since the subject becomes active in being watched.

Foucault says the first act of resistance in the panopticon is enabling lateral visibility, normally obstructed by the prison's circular form (210). Lateral visibility robs the central watcher of sole ownership of the surveillance gaze, briefly redistributing the ability to look to subjects. It enables those being watched to collaborate and potentially form coalitions against those in power. In the panopticon, the guards traditionally rely on separations between their subjects to maintain order, since they are the only ones who can see everything while everyone else is isolated in their being-watchedness (200-201).

Foucault says that the power of surveillance over its subjects is both permanent in possibility and discontinuous in action. This means prisoners know they are always susceptible to surveillance, but cannot know the exact moment when the guard is watching them thanks to the shadows cast strategically in the tower. The moment of awareness does not tell prisoners they are being watched — they already know. It tells them they are being watched *right now*, so be on your best behavior (or look right back). In "The Neighbors," Svenson gave a similar revelation to his subjects. We know there is a permanent possibility we are being watched, but it is intangible when we can only see the camera, our version of the silhouette of the guard in the tower. Power, Foucault says, is most easily maintained when it is visible yet unverified (214). When we come face-to-face with the product of surveillance — ourselves on the CCTV, or photos of us printed in the arts section of the newspaper — we realize we are being watched *right now*, or that we were being watched *right then*, in our own homes, without knowing it.

However, awareness is not fatal for the controllers of the panopticon. The ideal end of the panopticon, or any surveillance state, is self-sufficiency. Once all subjects know they may be watched at any moment, they internalize that performative state and

police their own behavior, eliminating the need for a police force or punishment in the perfect form. This is only possible after a period of enforced punishment based on surveillance. Once mechanisms of power weed out "abnormal" individuals, surveillance and discipline become easier, and the production of abnormal individuals will eventually cease. Foucault does not believe that awareness is a death knell for surveillance, but that it can contribute to its acceleration and eventual perfection (206).

Some critics, including leftist writer Jérôme E. Roos in "Foucault and the Revolutionary Self-Castration of the Left," have opposed Foucault's writings on activism and resistance, claiming they show no signs of hope for change. Roos says that Foucault's ideas "precludes the possibility for revolutionary action" by discounting any attempts at resistance (Roos). However, Foucault writes about resistance under the presumption that there *is* a space outside of power, if only we can get there. He concedes it may be impossible to eliminate all oppressive power, but that does not mean that some forms can't be eluded or subverted. Foucault doesn't advocate for complete liberation — that would be unattainable and unpleasant, since we wouldn't know what to do with all that freedom and have learned to rely on structure and authority in some capacity. But the mere fact that resistance persists, and that activists can envision freedom while living under oppression, conveys his radical belief that resistance should never cease.

Richard Sennett explores the daunting undertaking of resistance in his 1980 book *Authority*. He writes, much more pessimistic than Foucault, that subordinates will seek to resist authority to soothe their anxieties about being dependent on it. Sennett calls this "disobedient dependence," arguing transgressing against authority only brings you closer to the one you claim to resist (34). Disobedient dependence, Sennett says, is born of a

desire to appear independent of authority, to make a show of pushing it away. But since disobedience is a form of attention, giving more of it just tightens the power's grip on those who oppose it, passing a kind of test — the only ones fit to rule me, say the transgressors, are those who can effectively oppose and subdue me (35). The key difference between this "transgression" and textbook resistance is transgression seeks to struggle against power from within it, but never to win (43). The specific issue the transgressors choose doesn't matter as much as the act of transgression. Sennett uses the example of a woman dating Black men her parents don't approve of, I'm talking about surveillance, but we could focus on drug regulation, socioeconomic segregation, or any other social issue that lets the subordinates blame their higher powers. That point of tension between the subordinate and the oppressor is the engine for transgression. It runs out if the transgressors ever win, meaning they must at first struggle to be heard but eventually must struggle to maintain their position as the outraged victim of oppression. Winning would mean losing scapegoat status and becoming the power which others blame for all of their ills. Sennett argues that people engage in resistance or transgression to convince themselves that the power they resist is purely external, and hasn't permeated their interior lives yet. It's a tactic made to excuse subordinates from the role they inevitably play in their own oppression (131). In the discussion of surveillance, those with the knowledge of the oppressive structure of the panopticonic society are burdened with resisting it, at the risk of becoming complicit in their own surveillance.

Jonathan Dollimore, writing 15 years after Foucault and drawing on some of his ideas, says that it is exactly this knowledge of oppression that threatens its downfall. In "Politics of Containment," an essay in his landmark work *Sexual Dissidence*, Dollimore

introduces his idea of "dangerous knowledge" (88). According to containment theory, those in power contain, limit and confine resistance to their position, but Dollimore argues that true resistance cannot be fully contained. Autonomy from oppressive power may be the ideal end of resistance, but not a realistically attainable one, so instead resistance should seek to become subversion, which works within a system to resist it. Dangerous knowledge, Dollimore writes, is produced when counter-culture is contained within the dominant cultural sphere (93). For example, as Dollimore focuses on issues of sexuality and gender in *Sexual Dissidence*, the knowledge that gender is constructed and performed would be dangerous to the heteronormative dominant culture. Even though this dangerous knowledge about gender relies on the constraints of heterosexuality to oppose them, those with this awareness can carve out a space based on their knowledge. Its first job is to make the subject of oppression realize that their position is not permanent or unavoidable, that oppression should not be expected and accommodated.

The trick of unverifiable oppression is to convince those it oppresses that they should resign themselves to their position. Dollimore recognizes that dangerous knowledge may be incomplete or confused (someone can walk into the panopticon and understand how it works physically without understanding the underlying power structures), but that makes it no less dangerous (89). He recognizes that dangerous knowledge does not necessarily mean change is imminent. Although the awareness it brings is vital to the process of resistance and reform, it may lead not to revolution, but to repression from those in power trying to maintain their carefully balanced status quo. Dangerous knowledge never completely disappears, however. It may not inspire revolution, but over time it may influence the liberalization of the status quo, eventually

imposing transgressive ideas on dominant culture (92). In the case of sexuality and gender, dangerous knowledge is responsible for the integrating drag culture and increasing acceptance of queerness. While queer people once existed only on the fringes of society, agents of dominant culture including film, television, and advertising now make a point to represent queer people, incorporating a once-transgressive subculture in the quest for profit. Dollimore's argument is bleak in the short term, but history has shown that awareness is the only way to start the process of resistance.

Dick Hebdige also speaks to the value of disruption and deviation from the status quo. His 1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* discusses how resistant subcultures can be exploited and incorporated into dominant culture for commercial profit and to minimize their threat to the status quo. According to Hebdige, these subcultures are an agent of awareness even as they are being incorporated (93). By questioning and deviating from accepted codes of language and behavior, subcultures highlight how arbitrary those codes are and in turn brings the right of those in power to create and enforce them into question. Hebdige uses the punk movement in 1970's London to illustrate how breaking taboos — in his case, the Sex Pistols; in ours, Arne Svenson turning voyeurism into art — breaks down the "taken-for-grantedness" of culturally established meaning (11). Although dominant culture will eventually incorporate these subcultures, twisting their original intent for its own gain, Hebdige says this cannot erase the subculture altogether or undo the damage (which he calls "noise") done when the subculture's subversive ideas were first spread (88, 90). Although a dominant culture has the power to control the narrative about a subculture, part of the original transgression remains in its coverage, meaning the dominant will ironically incorporate self-attacking

sentiment. This subcultural "noise," like Dollimore's dangerous knowledge, can incite resistance by provoking and disturbing the general public.

In the pages ahead, I will join these theorists in the conversation on awareness in resistance. I will further explore the differences between the initial moment of awareness and the continued state of awareness that follows. I will use Arne Svenson's "The Neighbors" and the ensuing criticism to discuss attitudes and resistance both towards surveillance made visible and that visibility itself.

ANALYSIS: ARNE SVENSON'S "THE NEIGHBORS"

If we accept "The Neighbors" as an act of anti-surveillance resistance, we must explore how it subverts the surveillance gaze to make its subjects aware they are being watched. "The Neighbors" does not advocate for change, and the photo series itself does not have a voice to clearly articulate what it is about surveillance it is pointing at. But the physical form of Svenson's artistic surveillance — which took place over more than a year — feels familiar. Svenson's apartment, where he took photos from the shadows of his own curtained window, acts as the guard shack. From there, he can see all the individual cells, or apartments, in the building across the street thanks to their open windows. But the people in the cells cannot see laterally into the apartments of the other tenants (subjects), and they only see the shadows of Svenson's apartment, not his body or camera, if they bother to look towards it at all. In an interview, Svenson told *The New Yorker* that only dogs ever caught him looking (Khatchadourian).

One anonymous resident of the subjects' building is quoted in that article just as they are coming to that key realization, in their moment of awareness. "You always think that there's a chance that somebody will see you by coincidence, but to watch us for a

year and a half with a telephoto lens — that I don't expect" (Khatchadourian). This suggests the subject is aware of the continuous possibility of surveillance, but has not yet internalized or the performative state that comes when one realizes they are actually being watched at a certain time. Svenson's series brings this subject to that realization. He is quoted in the complaint filed against him for the photos, discussing his position as surveillant: "For my subjects there is no question of privacy… the neighbors don't know they are being photographed; I carefully shoot from the shadows of my home into theirs. I am not unlike the birder, quietly waiting for hours, watching for the flutter of a hand or the movement of a curtain as an indication that there is life within" (Menaker 4).

Subverting the surveillance hierarchy

Since Svenson is already aware of his own surveillance, he can become the surveillant for his subjects. Foucault may say this is proof of awareness leading to self-sustaining and -enforcing oppression, but Svenson is sabotaging the established order of watching, rather than assuming the responsibility himself. In gaining this awareness, Svenson has not turned the oppressive gaze upon himself — in fact, his gaze is not oppressive as a surveillant's, since he lacks the disciplinary apparatus to enforce obedience. Svenson is perverting the position of the watcher by making himself one, proving that it is not the position which bestows power, but the hierarchy that leads to it.

The difference between Svenson and those who surveil him lies in their visibility. Svenson is making himself visible as a surveillant — granted, not in the moment of looking, but after the act. Traditional surveillance is so powerful and permanent because of its invisibility, which allows it to operate without opposition. By showing "The Neighbors" in a gallery, promoting it in newspapers, television segments, and online,

Svenson freely shows the public (including his subjects) the product of his surveillance. This is more startling and effective at creating awareness than merely seeing a camera pointed at a neighboring apartment building. It also excuses Svenson from accusations of voyeurism or scopophilia that may detract from his art and resistance by labeling him a pervert who privately uses these photos for some unknown end.

By sharing the photos, Svenson spreads the awareness to all who see them that they are just as visible as the subjects of his photos. Svenson continuously defends his work against the law and critics who claim the photos are an invasion of privacy by insisting that the subjects are unidentifiable on purpose — to make them representative of all of humankind (Fulleylove). This helps break down any degree of separation experienced by someone viewing the work, allowing the viewer to identify with the subjects in the images and extend its warning to themselves: if that happened to these faceless people, who's to say it's not happening to me?

Resisting subversion

An odd dichotomy is created by the public's reception of "The Neighbors." It's clear that Svenson is doing resistance with his work, but we also see subjects respond with their own resistance to his surveillance, most clearly in the case of Martha and Matthew Foster, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the artist. Svenson obviously intended for the work to be seen by people other than his subjects. If he had intended only to shoot candid portraits of his neighbors, he could have gone next door and delivered them himself. But "The Neighbors" functions best as an agent of awareness when on display for all to see. After all, when we are being surveilled in our everyday lives, we cannot know who is looking at us, where they are, or what they're doing with that

information. That is, if anyone is looking at all. The subjects of "The Neighbors" have the unique luxury of seeing the result of their surveillance in person to activate awareness. Most subjects in a panoptic society cannot ever see this product, and so must rely on internalized feelings of being watched based on continuous possibility to inform their awareness, unless they encounter the product of their surveillance in some other capacity.

When the Fosters filed their complaint against Svenson for the use of their and their children's images, they likely did not think they were taking part in the same process of awareness and resistance that Svenson had begun. The Fosters began the impossible undertaking of fighting a system set up to protect surveillants and with little regard for individual privacy. By trying to get Svenson to take down the photos of themselves, more attention was ironically drawn to those photos (Neighbors #6 and #12) and the project as a whole thanks to the ensuing coverage of the controversy. Svenson understands and anticipates this reception to his work: "People get crazed by the concept and don't see the art" (Khatchadourian). By resisting surveillance, the Fosters actually forced themselves farther into the public eye than they would have been as mere faceless subjects of one photo series in a New York City gallery.

But their persistence is admirable as an act of resistance. Whereas Svenson already positioned himself as a public figure as a professional exhibiting artist, the Fosters have more to lose by publicly resisting the taking and distribution of their images — and they do lose more privacy in their attempt to maintain it.

They identify themselves and their young children as some of the subjects, making themselves literal and visible where they could have remained faceless representations. Identifying themselves as the subjects takes away some of the images'

power and ambiguity, derived from its intended anonymity. They also claim ownership of the piece, taking control away from Svenson and reclaiming their agency all in the moment of awareness. Their fight, taken to an appellate court after the original ruling in favor of Svenson, asks whether one has to voluntarily give up privacy to resist surveillance. Do you have to come to terms with losing your perception of privacy to accept that surveillance is indeed continuous both in possibility and action?

Oppositions to resistance

Just as Dollimore and other containment theorists predict, this instance of resistance did not go without repression from the dominant culture. The disgust expressed by Svenson's neighbors is not necessarily repression, because they are agreeing with Svenson in resisting surveillance itself. However, they also wish to enforce the status quo by repressing the images, which would take away their resistant power and prevent Svenson from spreading awareness. But more direct forms of repression against this form of resistance came from cultural critics and the art community. A review posted on photography news site *Fstoppers* in 2013 is titled "Someone Might Be Photographing You Through The Window and Selling The Images," highlighting the commercial aspect of the work while silencing its message (Dayley). An article on the same site about Svenson's case calls the artist a "creepy photog" and "flippant (if not glib)" for his work (Tam). It is ironic for a photography website to critique a photographer for using his gaze, but the criticisms are good indicators of the status quo being disrupted. By labeling Svenson as "creepy" and "flippant," his art is diminished as the work of a pervert, someone who has confused his own voyeurism for art. The legitimacy of his work's

message is therefore overshadowed by the spectacle around the controversy, diverting the public's attention away from what they are meant to be noticing for the first time.

The Fosters' resistance is tiered below Svenson's original intentions, reliant on his first act of resistance via spreading awareness. Had they never seen their photos in their local paper, Svenson's surveillance — itself an act of resistance against the larger surveillance society which encompasses both subject and artist — would have gone undetected by its subjects, just like all good surveillance. But since there was the initial subversion of the surveillance gaze, space for secondary resistance is created. This secondary resistance is not repression — that comes from other critics, since it was ruled that it could not come from the law. The Fosters are resisting surveillance, yes, but they are misplacing their attention on the one who actually managed to break them out of their ignorance in the first place. A more informed resistance effort would be aimed, as Svenson's is, at the system of surveillance as a whole.

One line in the Fosters' complaint gets to the crux of their resistance, and why it is slightly displaced: "Had Svenson sought plaintiffs' consent, plaintiffs would have refused" ("Foster v. Svenson" 2). The Fosters apparently believe they have a choice in the matter of their own surveillance, and that they wish to opt out. For my purposes, the Fosters represent the attitudes of a subject of the panopticon who has just met the gaze of the guard and realized they are being watched actively. In a panopticon, it is laughable to think of a subject being surprised by their being watched, and especially ridiculous to think they have the ability to reject or avoid it altogether. But in the case of Svenson's constructed New York panopticon, the cells and the guard tower are less recognizable, and the surveillants have done such a good job of going unnoticed that the subject does

not even consider they were being watched before they see the irrefutable evidence. The Fosters include in their complaint that they "did not know that they were being watched or photographed" (3).

The Fosters' resistance is ultimately hopeful for resistant processes, however. It shows they agree with Foucault that there is a space outside of power, and they are trying to get there. Their complaint argues they should not have to draw the blinds in their own homes; however, that is their easiest option for avoiding the surveillance gaze, at least the one from across the street. Once the right to privacy has been revealed as an illusion, awareness — like that created by Svenson and the Fosters — can spread and sow the seeds of active resistance. But in the meanwhile, there is value in drawing the blinds to create a space temporarily out of sight.

CONCLUSION

Awareness alone does not create change. However, it is a vital first step in the process of resistance against power which will eventually create change. There is no way to incite resistance to create change without first spreading awareness about injustice. The ability to resist and work for structural change is restricted to those who are aware of both their oppression and the impermanence of their position. Although this awareness is in danger of being repressed or discounted by dominant culture and authority, knowledge is resilient in the face of repression. In fact, repression validates the danger posed by awareness — a form of "dangerous knowledge" — to existing structures of power which rely on their invisibility to operate unopposed.

Awareness also breeds more widespread awareness, since an aware individual can make others aware of their oppression. Once one subject realizes they are being watched,

lateral visibility and communication between subjects opens up the possibility for spreading dangerous knowledge and in turn, spreading resistant sentiment and movement. In contrast to pessimistic containment theory, this spread of awareness is a productive way for resistant social movements to assert themselves within (or ideally, outside of) the dominant culture. While it may not be possible, at least in the short term, to escape the confines of dominant culture, awareness brings the initial realization that there even exists a space beyond the mainstream. It makes resistance seem less futile by giving countercultures hope that their efforts won't totally be swallowed up by those in power.

The ultimate outcome of awareness is to complicate the power relationship established between authority and its subjects. In the case of surveillance, awareness upsets the careful balance between an all-seeing and all-knowing authority and a population of subjects without agency by giving the subjects some power to see. This, robbing established authority of its monopoly on the gaze, reappropriates some power to newly aware subjects. In some cases, there may be resistance from other subjects towards the aware ones, in addition to repression by those in power. Because spreading awareness, as we have seen with "The Neighbors," can mimic the form of power used by the oppressor, it invites a second tier of resistance, misplaced until those resisting on that level also gain awareness and can direct their resistance to the oppressor.

Awareness is resistant in three main ways. First, it makes the subject of oppression realize their situation is not permanent or unavoidable. It opens up the possibility for a space outside of oppression, giving resistant subjects something to aim for in their struggle. Second, it plants a seed of knowledge in a subject that can grow into resistant action when bolstered by the presence of other aware individuals. Change

should not be expected quickly, but dangerous knowledge will embed itself into the subject and tug at them when their oppression seems too much to bear.

Finally, awareness places a burden of choice upon the subject. Once they gain knowledge of their oppression, before assumed to be inescapable, they are given agency to decide to comply with their oppressors or to resist their oppression. Agency to choose is an essential part of resistance, but oppressors assume that subjects will comply even after gaining awareness because they have internalized their position so thoroughly. The second line of defense, after invisibility, for an oppressor in a surveillance society is to make existing infinitely easier for those who accommodate their power.

In the chapter ahead, I will discuss the tendency for subjects to accommodate their oppressor even after gaining awareness of their oppression. The choice to comply is easy, a resignation to the current hierarchy. In accommodating power, the subject is participating in their own exploitation, aiding those in power more than an unaware subject who has no choice but to comply. It is a testament to the strength of established power that it may still be obeyed once its veil of invisibility is pulled back.

However, resistant energy is not squashed completely by accommodation. Thanks to the sticking power of awareness, resistance can surface as a movement for change long after the initial instance of awareness, perhaps even fueled by a period of accommodation. Resistance cannot exist without awareness; it can exist without accommodation, although it has to account for a period of accommodation as a sort of second tier resistance to the initial awareness. If change was immediately possible following awareness, it is unlikely any oppressor could assert themselves so completely.

CHAPTER 5: ACCOMMODATION

Thinking of resistance calls to mind images of riots, protests, and police unleashing dogs and tear gas on violent crowds. Overt uprising, outward revolution, and organized rebellion: recognizable as they may be, they leave little room for recognizing smaller, harder-to-see, individual acts of resistance which make larger movements possible in the first place. Resistance is not one loud, boisterous thing; rather, it is an attitude which speaks back to power, no matter what that looks like.

Resistance can be hard to recognize when it utilizes the same methods used by the oppressor to highlight injustice. While the initial instinct upon learning you may be watched at any time may be to seek out spaces away from the surveillance gaze, there may be more to be gained, and more awareness to be spread, by placing yourself as squarely in the gaze as possible. By replacing whatever disembodied authority you believe to be in the watchtower with your own self-surveillance, you may also reclaim some of your own agency — and perhaps take some of the invisible satisfaction of watching away from the surveillant in the process. That's exactly what digital artist Hasan Elahi set out to do with "Thousand Little Brothers."

Elahi got slapped across the face with awareness of his own surveillance in 2002, when stopped by the FBI in the Detroit airports after an international flight. They told him he was on a terrorist watchlist and interrogated him about his activities in the days leading up to the September 11 attacks.

Elahi isn't a terrorist, but he is an artist. After he returned home to Florida and was contacted by the FBI office in Tampa, he realized that they weren't going to stop watching him just because the polygraph said he was innocent. So he got ahead of them.

Starting with his flight records from birth to present, Elahi offered up his personal information to the FBI and anyone else on his website, TrackingTransience.net. To this day, in 2019, he tracks everything he does, every place he goes, even how much money he spends and where he spends it. Tens of thousands of photos of buildings, airports, street tacos, home-cooked meals, meeting rooms, and endless more mundane subject matter create an overwhelming volume of data about just one person. The FBI can access it all if they want to — and they have, as has the Pentagon, the President's Office, the NSA and more, according to the visitor log of his site.

But with over 72,000 photos (and growing) on the purposefully "user un-friendly" site, it's an information overload, nearly impossible to make any sense of or to learn anything about Elahi himself (Elahi, "Here You Go, F.B.I."). Sure, I can see that he's in a building at George Mason University this morning, October 21, 2019. But I don't know what class he's teaching, who he's with, or what he's talking about. He could be planning a conspiracy for all I, or the FBI, know. This irony — that you can track someone by the minute and see everything they see, but not ever fully know anything about them — highlights the flaws in the ambiguity of surveillance.

The ongoing project can now be found at Elahi's website, elahi.gmu.edu/track. He explains in a 2011 TED Talk that it didn't start as an art piece, it became one over time once he realized the greater message he was sending back to the FBI about the power of watching. Elahi compiles his documentations in his piece "Thousand Little Brothers," a multi-channel digital projection featuring thousands of his photos, timestamps, and coordinates. The information is sorted by different variables across the screens, some by time (pictures taken during a trip to Mexico City one summer), content (all the urinals the

artist has used since 2002), or by artificial groupings created by Elahi to construct huge collages, like one mimicking TV color bars.

Elahi accommodates his surveillants by taking control of the camera. This may look like some form of interpellation taking control over him as its subject, making the FBI's job at once easier and obsolete. But his accommodation is more resistant than it looks, since he now controls the narrative about his own life. Since Elahi is aware of the process of interpellation and its close relationship to surveillance, he is able to use art to resist full interpellation. "I've discovered that the best way to protect your privacy is to give it away," he told *Wired* magazine (Thompson). He turns surveillance into *sousveillance*, or surveillance done by an individual not in a position of power, showing their own point of view rather than feigning objectivity, as surveillance does.

He also robs the FBI of its valuable monopoly on information. As soon as he offers information about himself to anyone who wants it, his surveillant loses power derived from gathering and controlling data. Elahi explains it in economic terms: "I flood the market" (Thompson). By flooding the market for his data, the demand for it goes way down. Elahi has essentially found a way to overproduce data, which seems impossible but would have devastating effects on the strength of surveillance if we all did it.

Elahi hasn't been considered a threat to security by the United States Government for years now, but he keeps up the project. After being interrogated for the first time, being asked to remember minute details from days long past, he learned his lesson: document everything.

He's put in a unique position by knowing exactly who his surveillant is, a level of awareness not enjoyed by most. This makes his attempts at "looking back," or turning the

resistant gaze onto yourself and at your surveillant, easier since they can be directed at a tangible destination: in Hasan Elahi's case, at the federal government of the United States. Elahi also enjoys the satisfaction of knowing that his intended target has received the message, thanks to the visitor tracking capabilities that come with his chosen digital medium for this work. For most of us in the panopticon, our surveillant remains invisible or dubious, even after we gain the awareness that they exist. To catch your surveillant in the act of watching the performance you are putting on for them is invaluable.

"Thousand Little Brothers" is a good example of how resistance can mimic the form of the oppressor, using their own methods as a tool to dismantle them. It is an instance of accommodation, since behind all the irony and artistic intent Elahi applies to this project he is surveilling himself more thoroughly than the FBI would care to. Rather than trying to avoid the gaze or only directing it at his surveillant, Elahi still recognizes himself as the subject of surveillance, only he has transferred the reins of watching onto himself, making him the perfect, all-inclusive subject of surveillance. He is also likely self-policing in this process, assuming that he would not willingly send photos of himself doing crimes to the FBI. While the knowledge that you may be watched discourages people from breaking the law, taking on the *sousveillant* stance eliminates the fear of being caught, since you would be effectively catching yourself. Elahi precludes the possibility of breaking the law while he is documenting his activities. There is no evidence of criminal activity to be found in his visual presentation Tracking Transience project, and we cannot speculate what he is doing when the camera is off, during gaps in his documentation. We as viewers of art are rarely in the same position as the FBI, but here we find ourselves both subjected to Elahi's carefully constructed zones of visibility,

which convince us that he's abiding the law even when we can't see. If we all followed in Elahi's footsteps, surveilling ourselves even more deliberately than Foucault would argue we already are, the need for surveilling bodies, and eventually authority as a concept, would cease. But then who would look at all of our pictures of tacos?

In this chapter, I will use Hasan Elahi's Tracking Transience project, compiled in his art installation "Thousand Little Brothers," to examine how accommodating surveillance may actually lead to resistance. With attention to agency, control of information, and the physical act of looking, I will explore how resistance which takes the same form as its oppressor may eventually lead to activism towards social change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Michel Foucault anticipated the accommodation phase in *Discipline and Punish*. In fact, according to his writings, subjects accommodating their own surveillance is the ideal end of the panopticon, at least from the perspective of the wardens. Given the structure, which separates individuals from each other yet places them in full view of the guards, accommodation is made to seem like the only option, since collective action seems impossible. Inmates (or children, employees, or any subject of surveillance) are effectively changed from a collective, with potential to band together in revolt, into disconnected individuals all experiencing sequestered and observed solitude (Foucault, "Discipline and Punish" 199). Along with this separation comes the automated and disindividualized functioning of power, as the subjects of surveillance become the bearers of their own discipline, reducing the need for any external imposition of power. "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it," says Foucault, echoing the importance of awareness to prompt accommodation, "assumes responsibility for the

constraints of power… he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-203). Once awareness has been achieved, the subject bears responsibility to resist or accommodate the power exerted upon him; Foucault says accommodation is the natural choice. Once the power structure and the obedience it necessitates are internalized, inmates are induced into "a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power," meaning a panopticon doesn't need physical restrictions like bars, locks, or law enforcement to keep its inmates in line (201). This allows a panoptic society to reduce the number of people enforcing power and enacting discipline, which in turn increases the number of people upon whom power is exercised. If the process of resistance dies at this stage, Foucault would say that "the perfection of power" has been achieved, "render[ing] its actual exercise unnecessary" (202).

Conceptual artist Peter Weibel offers an explanation for the appeal of accommodation in his essay "Pleasure and the Panoptic Principle." He describes the familiar scene of passing through airport security, especially pertinent in the context of Elahi's piece. Weibel argues that there are multiple screens, or layers, of visibility that can combine to see everything, even that invisible to the naked eye. We all put up with this, he says, because we think "total visibility guarantees total security" (Weibel 213). These screens of visibility are enabled by advancements in technology — we are far past sole reliance on surveillance cameras, thanks to x-ray luggage and body scanners that can show everything (209). In this voyeuristic society, those who hold power to penetrate invisibility also hold the power to control and eliminate resistance: "Behind the mechanisms of surveillance lie the mechanisms of power" (208). When seeing becomes

the hottest commodity among the powerful, Weibel argues, human beings are devalued in favor of representations of people, images and imprints taking precedent over those they represent (210). This is the only way that the invisible can be made visible — the image of the inside of a suitcase on a TSA screen, footage of passengers moving through an airport, data in the place of firsthand observation. These mechanisms of security seem banal to us through repetitive subjection to their gaze, enforcing Foucault's conclusion that constant surveillance will eventually be internalized. Weibel also introduces the concept of pleasure into the panopticon, arguing that it is driven by coexisting voyeuristic and exhibitionist drives made legitimate through surveillance. Once these drives become social norms, subjects are obligated to comply (208).

We see physical manifestations of the panopticon in other environments, outside prisons and airport security. Alison Barnes studied the physical form of call centers which makes them so effective in controlling their employees in "The Construction of Control." The setup of call centers, in which management and supervisors can see all employees but employees cannot see each other over partitions between desks, makes management the warden and employees the inmates (Barnes 245). Pockets of resistance may form among the employees, Barnes says, but the center's layout allows management to identify these pockets and stomp them out — whether that means monitoring underperforming employees' calls or squashing rising union sentiment (246). In addition, the call center leaves no spaces, such as a break room or eating area, for employees to meet privately, hindering the employees' ability to organize collectively (255). Barnes observed that disgruntled call center employees direct their resistance towards the physical form of the office rather than at management, making the form the contested

ground rather than the power hierarchy. It is easier to target something tangible rather than the nebulous idea of power behind those in charge. This also protects bosses from direct criticism and appeases employees by giving them a scapegoat which may never actually change. When management of one center in Australia considered installing higher cubbies for callers to reduce noise in the office, they decided against it because it would make it harder to monitor "people who won't pull their weight" (254). The call center is constructed to allow the possibility and illusion of resistance, supposedly empowering employees with a voice in their own exploitation. But its structure assures that those in power have sole access to seeing, just as in the panopticon, encouraging accommodation of management since they hold the power to punish or fire their subjects. In one center, security camera footage of employees arriving at and leaving work are used to detect employees lying about how many hours they worked, and was even used to punish a supervisor (254). The cameras purport to provide accountability, but the exercise of it depends on who can access the footage. The watchers (in this case, management) excuse themselves from accountability by being the only ones with access to this all-seeing eye (252). Without access, subjects are forced to obey for fear of being caught. But since the environment allows controlled and easily eliminated resistance, this kind of accommodation Barnes defines as somewhere between consent and full resistance, not a full endorsement of management but far from revolt.

These theorists all agree that social norms, and the fear of disrupting them, are the most powerful agents forcing subjects of surveillance towards accommodation. Psychologist Stefano Passini adds that the role of authority in a power relationship is to either maintain or change these group norms, which means the role of resistance is to

oppose either maintenance or change according to individual or group held beliefs, separate from the norms of the dominant culture (96). Disobedience, according to Passini, means undermining or controlling the legitimacy of authority and its demands (94). Since legitimacy is supposedly bestowed upon those in power by their subjects, we can assume their power is natural and inevitable. However, just as we have seen with processes of awareness, "an autonomous and alternative view of reality is the most important step towards developing a critical view of authority's demands and eventually fostering disobedience" (101). Until you develop a critical view, surveillance is assumed to be the natural solution — if everyone policed themselves we wouldn't need it, but they don't, so we do, at least until the final Foucaultian form of power has been achieved. Authority enforces power through punishment at first, but then comes to rely on ingrained social norms to carry out its demands. Although there is a carefully constructed illusion that subjects depend on authority, Passini says that dependence is actually a very minor contributor to accommodation, secondary to habits formed by norms. However, with the dangerous knowledge that comes from awareness, Passini has an optimistic outlook for resistance, saying that once subjects reject "the status quo as the sole interpretation of reality," constructive disobedience towards social change can begin (100). Accommodation is the easy choice, but disobedience requires a conscious decision to not take the easier and less disruptive stance against authority.

In the pages ahead, I will apply these theories of accommodation to Hasan Elahi's "Thousand Little Brothers" and the Tracking Transience project, adding my own analysis of the role of obedience in resistance. I will explore the relationship between

accommodation and resistance and argue that they are not opposed or antithetical to one another, but rather play roles in each other's processes.

ANALYSIS: HASAN ELAHI'S "THOUSAND LITTLE BROTHERS"

It would be easy to dismiss Hasan Elahi's Tracking Transience project and its accompanying art piece, "Thousand Little Brothers," as an act of deference to surveillance. It seems like the artist is playing directly into the hands of those in power, enabling them to watch him more closely than they ever could on their own. But Elahi would call the practice "aggressive compliance," as he told *Hyperallergic*: "I've always been fascinated with Magellan and the concept of circumnavigation: going far enough in one direction to end up in the other" (Mallonee).

"Thousand Little Brothers" is Elahi's response to the stark and sudden realization of his own surveillance, more startling than the moment of awareness for the rest of us. While awareness comes differently for all subjects of surveillance, Elahi being flagged at an airport by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation is an instance of unavoidable awareness, and is much more personal because it is face-to-face. As discussed in Chapter 4, the most effective moments of awareness come when one sees the *product* of their surveillance because it is more tangible than seeing a security camera or motion detector without the resultant video or data. Although Elahi did not necessarily witness the *product* of his own surveillance when he landed at the airport that day in 2002, it was extremely tangible — told in person that he was being watched, and why. His awareness became even more unavoidable upon his second visit by the Tampa, Florida FBI office, confirming that his airport interrogation wasn't just a fluke. Six more

months of interrogation eliminated any remaining inkling of privacy and inspired Elahi's project, in which he takes the burden (and the agency) of surveillance upon himself.

After all that, resorting to accommodation would be understandable for Elahi. It may have been the end goal for the FBI, too — wear their subject down until he starts giving them information without having to ask. The problem with that, however, is the amount and kind of information Elahi responds with. Since Elahi is overloading the FBI with information about his life, he renders all of it practically useless, since the amount and (dis)organization of the Tracking Transience project are designed to overwhelm rather than inform. Conversely, the panoptic end of self-surveillance may have simultaneously been realized by Elahi's project, since he surveills himself more closely than any law enforcement agency ever could. Although his site visit records show his Tracking Transience project has been seen on computers at the Pentagon, the White House, and the FBI, they don't need to check up on him as long as they are assured of his continued self-surveillance. Assuming that Elahi would not post anything incriminating or suspicious on his own website out of the fear of punishment, law enforcement agencies can effectively cross Elahi off the list of citizens needing to be watched. "You want to watch me? Fine. But I can watch myself better than you can, and I can get a level of detail that you will never have," he told *The New York Times* (Elahi 2011).

Elahi first took on the burden of surveilling himself in the months directly following his prolonged interrogation, as he began calling the FBI to report his own whereabouts, flight plans, and activities before they could look into them. Soon after, he started emailing them images, detailed plans of his days, and writing code for a tracking device on his phone that would give the FBI virtually uninterrupted access to him. Once

Tracking Transience was up and running, providing location and photo updates multiple times a day, law enforcement agencies (or as Althusser would call them, repressive state apparatuses) no longer need to keep their eyes glued to this particular subject, assured that he is policing himself and staying out of trouble.

Images as evidence

Here we can see the power of the image in his surveillance, just as it holds power in traditional surveillance and power structures. We have seen in Foucault's panopticon theory that power belongs to those with access to images, but Elahi complicates this by liberating access. By providing ample evidence of his activities, Elahi precludes any objections to his transparency. This data is available to anyone, not just the FBI, democratizing surveillance and enabling people on the same lower power plane as Elahi to watch him alongside traditional surveillants. It also functions as a record of Elahi's life for his own purposes, a database like a long, continuous diary he can draw on as concrete evidence or, as with "Thousand Little Brothers," as art.

By providing his live location, Elahi is giving up a lot more privacy than most people would be willing to rescind, but he decides to further eliminate any suspicion by also including photos. Just as a subject cannot deny their own surveillance once they see their image shown back to them, the FBI cannot deny Elahi's innocence when provided with extensive evidence of his activities. Seeing, in this situation, leads to believing.

Agency in self-surveillance

Although Elahi takes on a never-ending and likely annoying task in meticulously surveilling himself, he gains agency in return. The idea of being watched bothers us so much because of the helplessness of it all. Just as in Foucault's panopticon, we as

subjects know we may always be watched but cannot know when or where it will happen, if at all. We are bound by constant possibility and unknowable reality. Turning the camera on himself, Elahi reclaims control of his own image: “By putting everything about me out there, I am simultaneously telling everything and nothing about my life. In an era in which everything is archived and tracked, the best way to maintain privacy may be to give it up” (“Here You Go, F.B.I.”).

Because we trust the veracity of images so readily, Elahi’s overload of images gives the impression of total transparency and innocence just by sheer volume. But thousands of toilets, tacos, university meeting rooms, and airport hallways don’t say much about a subject besides banal details we glaze over in our own lives. These images give the illusion of telling all while allowing him to enjoy relative privacy behind the camera. We do not see his face in photos, and cannot know his mind — for all we or the FBI know, he could be plotting something sinister as he’s plotting every point of his life. It would be the perfect example of hiding in plain sight.

Information confusion and overload

Since the FBI was not established solely to monitor the activities of Hasan Elahi, artist and professor, the amount of information he gives them is far beyond what is necessary to keep tabs. He has continued to track himself for years after the FBI stopped actively surveilling and interrogating him, bombarding them with information about a subject who’s no longer a suspect. On one hand, if every person in the United States took after Elahi’s practices, the FBI would theoretically have a much easier time tracking down criminals they are actively searching for — just check their website for updates on their location! However, Elahi’s art only functions as proof of his innocence and as a

testimony to the biases and flaws of the American intelligence system. The FBI could not count on active criminals or wanted persons to surveill themselves in the same way, since they would be essentially giving themselves up for punishment.

The physical organization of the Tracking Transience website also hinders exploration, both by common people and by potential law enforcement visitors. The user does not control the data, and is subjected to viewing the images and location tags in the order and combinations that Elahi has decided and written code for himself. The location feature shows an arrow pointing to a satellite image indicating where Elahi is (or was at his last check-in). At the time this section was written, I could see Elahi was at Somerset House in London, after seeing that he was at the Baltimore Airport the night before. A quick Google search corroborated this evidence, showing he was scheduled to appear on a panel for an exhibition at Somerset House featuring "Thousand Little Brothers."

The location tracking is not based on a live feed, like a GPS, but on a dropped-pin system which lets Elahi decide when to check in throughout the day, often hours apart. This asserts Elahi's agency over his data and the sharing of it. Since it is not live, he could feasibly travel somewhere in between check-ins and not log it, providing no evidence he was ever there. We take Tracking Transience at its word that it documents all of his movements and everything he sees, but total visibility is unattainable. So we settle for periodic updates and a selection of representative (and at times, boring) photos, trusting they come together for a complete picture of his life. The entry showing Elahi was at Somerset House was about three hours old by the time I saw it, plenty of time for him to be moving freely. Or it may mean he was in the same place for three hours. This ambiguity is where Elahi can carve out some privacy for himself while still documenting

many aspects of his life. That nagging gap, a reminder that we cannot know everything about someone, seems unfair when we expect Elahi to be traceable all the time; however, it brings up an important point — he doesn't owe us this surveillance, but we are still demanding it. In giving up his privacy, Elahi has set an expectation of total accommodation, which when unmet seems like a suspicious evasion of our gaze.

The website also shows visitors photos alongside the location tracker. Photos are shown first as collections of similar photos, collages of sunsets and views from plane windows. Single images from the collections then pop out on their own, often overlaid with the date and/or time they were taken. Users can switch between single images and the larger collection by clicking, and can choose which image to enlarge. The user cannot navigate to another collection of images, or to leave and go back to location at their will. If the user does nothing but passively observe, they will be shown his location from various distances, single images, and text detailing anything from flight information, transactions with amounts to timestamped coordinates indicating past locations.

While Tracking Transience, the original home for all of Elahi's data, uses its convoluted format to frustrate extraction and use of the data, "Thousand Little Brothers" is essentially useless as a surveillance tool. It functions as an art piece using the data collected as its medium, but scrambles the content according to so many overlapping variables that it becomes virtually impossible to interpret in a meaningful way. Tto behold the piece, a printed installation arranged as huge walls covered in a multicolored collage of images, is to be utterly overwhelmed at the number of images crammed into it. "Thousand Little Brothers" finalizes the point Tracking Transience is trying to make by rendering the data useless besides as an art piece. In Tracking Transience, images are

sorted by practical variables like subject matter (all home-cooked meals on one page) or by time frame (images from a trip to San Francisco). But “Thousand Little Brothers” abandons all semblance of order and has fun with the data, overlaying it with neon shades of pink, yellow, green, blue, and red to resemble the lost signal screen of televisions of yesteryear. The piece, presented on a one-dimensional canvas, printed with images stripped of their time and location stamps, loses its meaning as evidence and instead becomes a wall of seemingly random images, a simplification of years of self-surveillance. This arrangement is likely due to Elahi’s personal artistic style, which specializes in large scale collections of images, often digitally presented, with a focus on repetition and sensationalizing the mundane.

This is not the kind of accommodation the FBI, or any other traditional surveilling power, wants from its subjects. “Thousand Little Brothers” taunts those who try to glean any meaningful data from it, giving you all the pieces but none of the glue. Obviously, an FBI agent is not likely to seek out “Thousand Little Brothers” as a main source of data to track Elahi; the artist knows this and uses the piece to demonstrate how much information is obtained through surveillance. He is saying, “I documented all of this about *myself* — if you aren’t watching yourself, then someone else has all of this information about *you*.” This functions as an agent of awareness for critical viewers of the artwork, revealing the product of surveillance. On that level, it performs a similar purpose to Arne Svenson’s “The Neighbors,” as discussed in Chapter 4.

Elahi is doing resistance disguised as accommodation with Tracking Transience and “Thousand Little Brothers.” By overwhelming and complicating the data, he manages to surveill himself and effectively shrug off the watchful eye of the FBI which

inspired his project. He uses the surveilling gaze, usually reserved for those in positions of power, to create an illusion of transparency while drawing attention to the impossibility of total surveillance. Although I do not argue that accommodation is vital to resistant processes, we see through Elahi's work that it can be used to divert attention from resistant sentiment or activity, which supports resistance before it reaches a more explicit, visible activist stage. Accommodation of surveillance, Elahi's work points out, is a form of performance that tries to convince its surveillant of its authenticity.

CONCLUSION

Accommodation does not impede resistance, but can be an active part of the overall process of resistance to power. Since accommodation requires awareness of oppression (in our case, of surveillance), the subject is faced with a choice to either accommodate or to resist or avoid oppression. Agency is introduced in that moment of realization, since the subject is no longer an ignorant participant in their own oppression. Therefore, even those subjects who choose to accommodate rather than avoid surveillance are using their newly gained agency.

I define accommodation as informed compliance with the wants and needs of those in positions of power. The key term here is "informed" — blind or forced obedience are not forms of accommodation since the subject has no agency. We know from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* that he sees the final end of the surveillance state as one where each subject internalizes their own surveillance to the point of self-policing, eliminating the need for surveillance. But I would argue with Foucault, claiming that the dangerous knowledge produced by the moment of awareness cannot be erased by accommodation, and will manifest as resistant energy whether acted upon or not. This

energy may not immediately result in outright acts of resistance, which I will discuss in Chapter 6, but may be privately held until subjects can no longer endure oppression or until they form a lateral coalition with other subjects, allowing them to resist openly.

Hasan Elahi's self-surveillance, seen in his ongoing Tracking Transience project and in his installation "Thousand Little Brothers," brings attention to the inherently performative nature of accommodation. Since the accommodating subject knows they may be watched at any or all times, their behavior changes to account for the possibility of punishment or alienation for violating the status quo. After the moment of awareness, everything a subject does becomes a performance for an unknown audience — the surveillant. Elahi was lucky to know his surveillants' identities, and so could cater his performance to them. Most people cannot enjoy this same clarity, and so remain in a state of constant and unconfirmed being-watchedness, monitoring their behavior at first in public spaces and eventually also when they are supposedly "in private." For this too is a function of accommodation — to accommodate surveillance is to internalize the increasing reality that there are very few truly private spaces left, even at home.

However bleak this reality may seem, the performative nature of accommodation also makes it an effective resistant device. If performativity is understood as a conscious decision and not as an internalized state, it can be used by subjects to distract oppressors. Performance can substitute for the real, tampering with the results of surveillance by diverting the attention of the surveillants. By willingly complying with oppression, subjects may convince their oppressors that they need less monitoring than more overtly resistant subjects. This gives these subjects the freedom to operate outside of surveillance, since they have "proven" their obedience in full view. When

accommodating subjects give the oppressor the impression of total transparency and obedience, areas outside defined fields of visibility become breeding grounds for resistance. Lateral coalitions may be formed, non-compliant activities may be enacted, and oppressors may be openly critiqued in these spaces. A normally obedient child may get away with more mischief than a disobedient one, since the disobedient child is more likely to be watched by their caretaker with a close eye. The disobedient child, although more prone to causing trouble, has less opportunity to do so once they have been caught in the act. But the obedient child builds a relationship of trust with their caretaker, which convinces them that they need less surveillance. We can see this possibility in the gaps left in Hasan Elahi's work, where unaccounted hours and activity suggest the artist is doing things out of view from his surveillants. It seems like a paradox —showing creates a space to hide — but it relies on the idea that there are far fewer surveillants than there are subjects, and so those watching must prioritize where to look.

Although accommodation is not a vital step in resistant processes like awareness, it can serve a resistant purpose thanks to the agency it bestows upon its subjects. Accommodation can either come before outright activism against oppression, or can act as resistance in and of itself, through performance and diversion. However, accommodation cannot be permanent for those looking to resist or avoid oppression, but rather makes way for activism which actively challenges those in power.

CHAPTER 6: ACTIVISM

You're a security guard with the New York City MTA. You're tasked with watching a wall of screens all day hoping to catch someone jumping a turnstile . It's business as usual at the 14th St. and 7th Ave. station in Lower Manhattan until one of the feeds begins to show a production of George Orwell's *1984*. There are six actors, arranged in a particularly stage-like area of the connector leading to the L train. You may not know who they are, where they come from, or exactly what kind of point they're trying to make. You might also have no idea this is the first public performance of *1984* as a play. But you're definitely not paying attention to the other screens.

Those people performing to no one and everyone at the same time are the Surveillance Camera Players. The group is loosely defined, held together by a common interest in subverting surveillance through performance using Guy Debord's concept of *detournement*, or diversion. Their performances divert attention towards themselves and away from feeds of "normal" people going about their day. They also scramble and taint the intended product of surveillance by refusing to be watched passively. If you're going to watch, they say, we're putting on a show.

Hasan Elahi's Tracking Transience project shows how we may avoid surveillance by taking it upon ourselves. By illuminating parts of his life, Elahi may have carved out spaces in the shadows where he can avoid being surveilled, having convinced his watchers of his obedience during his time in the spotlight. The Surveillance Camera Players take a different approach: rather than creating spaces away from the gaze, they step fully and deliberately into the light and give a performance that subverts the intended purpose of surveillance. When the people in front of the camera admit and advertise the

fact that they're performing, surveillance becomes obsolete since it can no longer be an invisible observer. The product of surveillance has been tampered with, rendering it useless as a disciplinary tool but valuable as entertainment.

The Surveillance Camera Players take advantage of the often-overlooked human aspect of surveillance. When we see a camera or a CCTV, we don't think of the guards and officers paid hourly wages to monitor them. They exist in the invisible middle ground between the visible evidence of surveillance and the unknowable powers that control the surveillance state, but they ultimately control the entire system. They decide when to intervene and to enact punishment. But in such a powerful system, the most important cogs are also ironically the weakest link.

In November 1996, a group of artists associated with the Situationist art journal NOT BORED! formed the Surveillance Camera Players to protest surveillance cameras being installed around New York City, an action often unremarked upon. Their mission statement says they want "to explode the cynical myth that only those who are 'guilty of something' are opposed to being surveilled by unknown eyes" ("Completely Distrustful of All Government"). Their performances, like *1984*, are centered on themes of surveillance, power, and control. Their website features a quote from New York police commissioner Howard Safir: "Only someone completely distrustful of all government would be opposed to what we are doing with surveillance cameras" (1999). Their art is free, public, and disruptive, a perfect example of the activist stage.

The SCP will admit that the November 3 performance of *1984* is the group's most elaborate production in its approximately 10-year run. But their complete list of performances, includes almost 70 shows given in subway stations, Times Square,

Rockefeller Center, Washington Square Park, and other iconic New York locations. There's a few outliers, performed by loosely associated groups of actors in other cities — like a performance of *It's OK, Officer* in San Francisco or a two-show tour of *God's Eyes on Earth* in Boston and Leeds, England. The performances are frequent through the late 1990s, fewer in the early aughts, and completely stop in 2009 with a production of *Amnesia* in Montreal.

The SCP is more performance art than theater, with mostly anonymous players. Their performances are at once public and private: public to anyone walking by (and of course to the surveillant), private because the recorded footage from the camera they face cannot be accessed by the public. It's an ephemeral and spontaneous burst of resistance which hopes to make those who stumble upon it on their daily commute think about how often they are being watched. Not everyone would pay to see a production of *Animal Farm*, but any New Yorker could stick around for a few scenes on their way through Washington Square Park. Their message is directed at everyone, not just the artistic elite, and so their performances must be accessible by the masses.

I will be examining the Surveillance Camera Players — their manifesto, their performances, and other related works — to reveal how resistance culminates in activism. Their outright methods of resistance, in which they become both invisible as people and wholly visible as performers, show that the most effective resistance to surveillance acknowledges that you cannot avoid it completely. This acceptance of surveillance's inevitability is not to be confused with acceptance of its permanence. Ultimately, the goal of all resistance is change, and so even this final stage of activism without avoidance aims at the dismantling of the oppressive system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Michel Foucault has written extensively about activism and resistance, but the modes and methods described in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* are most pertinent when it comes to surveillance. He describes resistance neither as a monolith, nor as an isolated individual effort. As fixated as Foucault is on power, he believes in activism as an important and even inevitable path towards social change: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" ("History of Sexuality" 95). Power, rather than being all-encompassing and inescapable, is really more relational. Foucault describes it as a vast network of related points, forming relationships with subjects in order to exact control over them. The natural response is to form a corresponding "multiplicity of points of resistance" which allows resistance to permeate all aspects of a surveillance society (95). These points can only exist within the field of power relations, creating community within systems of power meant to marginalize and oppress through isolation. Resistance is opposed to power, but is also a product of it, using structures of power to mount opposition. Foucault is optimistic about the potential of resistance born of these points, even though there is no one "locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary" (96). Since each individual subject resists out of their own motivations, it is impossible to generate the "radical ruptures and binary divisions" that we associate with rebellion (95). Rather, resistance is "mobile and transitory" (96). This allows it to permeate every social strata and make use of individual motivation to fuel collective resistance. The goal, Foucault says, is to disrupt and create noise that destroys the silence that lets power operate undetected:

"Silence and secrecy are a shelter for power" (101). But for Foucault, the struggle for resistance isn't all pain — in keeping with his perceptions of power as a potential source of pleasure, he asserts that one can derive pleasure from attempting to evade power, or becoming the subject of a chase after being a passive subject for so long (45).

Gary Marx, who practices resistance to surveillance himself by opening credit cards under the names Groucho and Karl, also emphasizes the transition between passive and active that takes place when a subject decides to resist surveillance. Choosing not to resist may be out of fear of punishment or a fatalist resignation to the surveillance state that discourages even the beginnings of resistance (Marx 371). Surveillance, by Marx's definition, attempts to break through barriers of protection around individual privacy (369). Privacy nullifies power exacted by surveillance, at the same time that surveillance aims to eliminate privacy in order to exact compliance or influence the individual (370). Of course, no system of surveillance is perfect, so it's the task of resistance to find gaps and flaws to exploit as potential sites for avoidance and manipulation. We have seen with "Thousand Little Brothers" that surveillance creates blind spots where a subject can live freely, presumably unwatched; but Marx takes these gaps and exploits them further, finding a total of 11 techniques for neutralizing surveillance. Compiled from hundreds of interviews over several years, the list is intended for use by anyone from criminals to the average concerned citizen looking to preserve personal privacy. The techniques range from complete avoidance to counter-surveillance, but the method most applicable to the activist stage and the tactics used by the Surveillance Camera Players is dubbed "distorting moves" (378). Distortion, in which a subject manipulates the results of surveillance, scrambles the product so that it cannot be used as intended. They are

technically accurate — the actual footage or recording mechanism hasn't been damaged — but their meanings are diverted from the intent to record reality. The scrambled results can be manipulated to directly serve the resistant subjects or simply to create chaos. In its most subtle form, distorting moves may not be detected by the surveillants. The SCP does not try to go undetected, of course, but routine performances by individuals are unlikely to raise red flags on surveillance feeds. These performances rob the product of surveillance of its supposed objectivity, defeating its original purpose of observation.

Marx and the Surveillance Camera Players may have been inspired by the ideas of cultural theorist Guy Debord. His Situationist International writings on *détournement*, or culture-jamming, lay the groundwork for resistance through visual art and entertainment, advocating for intervention and disruption as a way to enact social change. Debord defines *détournement* as "the fluid language of anti-ideology," aiming to dismantle perceived truths by deconstructing what we accept as fact (Nicholson-Smith 146). Distance and time are key to the process of *détournement*, since it questions things that, like surveillance, have successfully been integrated into the cultural sphere as inevitable and irreversible (145). This is optimistic for prospects of resistance, since it means there is still hope even after a period of accommodation. *Détournement* is anti-essentialist and post-structuralist, seeking to destroy the idea that anything can be quoted directly without further interrogation or revision (144). Debord and Gil Wolman wrote an instruction manual for the use of *détournement*, outlining how to remix (or "correct") a work to change its meaning and intentionally falsify its original interpretation (Debord and Wolman). Since in modern society all agents of culture and power are aimed at creating the most productive populace, tampering with media (or propaganda, as they would say)

poses a threat to the stability of this system: “Both culturally and politically, the premises of the revolution are not only ripe, they have begun to rot” (Debord and Wolman). In their public performances, we can see the SCP culture-jamming, applied to the product of surveillance rather than to a work of art or propaganda. Their plays taint the intended product of surveillance with an unintended and unforeseen addition — overt performance that obscures real life lying behind it. Debord would say it’s a minor diversion, since the performance itself needs the context of surveillance and the public sphere to give it meaning, which can then be presented to a surveillant or a mindful subject passing by. This form of jamming requires awareness of passive or supposedly objective surveillance to contrast with this performative form, not a problem when the primary intended audience is someone whose job it is to monitor surveillance feeds.

If or when the Surveillance Camera Players effectively changed someone’s mind or increased awareness of surveillance through their *détournement*, they may have proved David Darts right about the power of art to educate. Darts argues in *Studies in Art Education* that visual art can generate and facilitate “awareness, understanding, and active participation in the sociocultural realm” (313). Art, particularly visual art, has been used by rulers and politicians throughout history to enforce and reinforce their power. Therefore, it has also been harnessed by the resistance groups to communicate their struggle — the most visceral example Darts gives is the images of Tank Man taking his stand in Tiananmen Square, circulated around the world (314). Darts recognizes the danger of reality and power being mediated through images — a danger foreseen by Debord: “Visual culture is no longer part of our daily lives, but is daily life” (Darts 315). When politics and entertainment can be confused, it’s not much of a reach to start

confusing surveillance and entertainment. The Surveillance Camera Players take advantage of this blurring line to educate under the guise of entertainment. On the other end of the spectrum, a United Kingdom service called Internet Eyes took advantage of it to sell memberships to people, who then could watch surveillance feeds remotely on their home computers and report criminal activity for a monetary reward (Humphries). Critical art, Darts argues, should commit to the democratization of society and seek to emancipate the masses by creating awareness of, revealing, and resisting hidden forms of power (316). Ideas otherwise difficult to articulate can be communicated through art that confuses, offends, or enrages audiences — particularly so when the audience is a crowd of commuters trying to transfer trains. This spirit of disorienting and discomforting to create change, utilized by groups like the Guerilla Girls, culture-jammers, and the Dada movement, reroutes images and events to reverse or subvert their meaning and reclaim them as the subject's. The SCP's performances are public art in its most basic sense, forcing their plays and ideas upon the public and the surveillants whether they want it or not, without a ticket or gallery to separate the masses from the artistic elite (321). They are part of a resistant culture that aims to reverse oppression by scrambling the order of culture production. Rather letting those in power determine the status quo which permeates the cultural sphere, culture-jammers and resistant artists take the construction of meaning into their own hands. The ultimate purpose of this brand of resistant art is "to move [subjects] beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more generative and thoughtful forms of cultural production" (325).

Applying these theories and my own analysis of the Surveillance Camera Players and their associated works, I will examine the final stage of resistance — activism. When

the camera is directly challenged, subject and surveillant are put into direct confrontation after a period of passive acceptance and awareness of the other. Ultimately, social change hopes to result from this confrontation, a product of the prior stages of resistance discussed in this paper, awareness and activism. I will discuss the relationship between these stages and the activist stage, relying on my analysis and interpretations of the SCP and previously covered works of surveillance art.

ANALYSIS: THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PLAYERS

The Surveillance Camera Players may look more like subway buskers than a subversive performance art group to the random passerby. But they aren't looking for dollars and coins, and they don't even position themselves towards an "audience" in the traditional sense. They aim their bodies and message towards an invisible surveillant, making them visible by directing an entire theatrical performance to them. Perhaps a passerby is annoyed at the obstacle to their commute, but if they take another look they may see a surveillance camera they hadn't noticed before. If they stick around to catch some of the play, they may learn even more from greats like Orwell or Poe, or even from one of the SCP's original theatrical works.

The SCP is dealing with an audience that does not necessarily want to see them. Unlike Arne Svenson, whose audience seeks out his work by entering a gallery or looking him up, and Hasan Elahi, whose piece can be viewed by anyone who navigates to a specific webpage, the SCP imposes itself on its audience without their consent. Their audience falls into two main groups, passerby and surveillant. While their physical positioning towards surveillance cameras suggests their message and resistance is directed at surveillants, the troupe would not be performing in such heavily trafficked

spaces if they weren't trying to spread their message to the general public as well. There are many surveillance cameras in New York City in places less busy than Washington Square Park or a subway station. In addition to enacting resistance, the Surveillance Camera Players are also spreading awareness to the public with their performances. They serve as a good example of how activism can also function on other levels of resistance, promoting awareness and mimicking accommodation to meet its goals.

The SCP also differs from Svenson's and Elahi's projects by relinquishing control over surveillance itself. While Svenson and Elahi both take control of the instruments and methods of surveillance to perform their resistance, the SCP limits itself to control of only the product. They do not, in fact *cannot,* control the instruments of surveillance — that is reserved for the audience. They deliberately perform ephemeral pieces for an audience they cannot see, unsure if anyone is watching. Their name and purpose suggests they have enough confidence in the presence of the surveillant to dedicate their body of work to entertaining them; however, the nature of remote camera surveillance (as opposed to manual, guarded surveillance as in the original iteration of the panopticon) makes it impossible to verify their being watched. However, they can be assured that even if no one is watching behind the camera's beady eye, their performances are still resisting surveillance by spreading awareness of it to civilian viewers.

1984

The content of the SCP's performances is just as important to their resistance as the form and method. Their early performances of *1984* were a logical starting point. What other work (of literature, performance, art, or other) is more frequently cited as

anti-surveillance, anti-government, and pro-liberation? And who else has carved out such a reputation for making subversive yet accessible resistant work than George Orwell?

Although the SCP's performances of *1984* (three consecutive in total) were not the troupe's first performances together, they come early in their history as the third through fifth shows by the original New York City contingent. The SCP first performed Orwell's work in a subway station on election day, November 3, 1998; then on the 60th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1998; then finally on April 15, 1999 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *1984* being published. The novel was adapted by Art Toad, a playwright associated with the SCP credited with many of their original plays (and whose name is a spoof of French playwright and theorist, Antonin Artaud).

The SCP's version of the plot is condensed into six short "acts," each with just one or two events or lines of dialogue. Dialogue, in the case of the Surveillance Camera Players, is not spoken out loud but rather displayed in large letters on placards held by the character "speaking." This accommodates the silence of a surveillance feed, which does not transmit audio with its visual images. If there was still any question of who these performances were meant for, it's dispelled by their specific elimination of any auditory element to their performance to cater to the surveillant who will be viewing them. Several placards take lines verbatim from the book: "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" and "WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH," which open Act 1. Several key and recognizable elements from Orwell's original book are also preserved, such as the torture that takes place in Room 101, including the scene in which O'Brien coerces Winston to say that 2+2=5. The performance ends with a broken Winston holding a placard that says "I LOVE BIG BROTHER" (Toad, "1984").

This performance was deliberately tailored to the SCP's resistant purposes, but since it occurs so early in their tenure it serves another purpose: to set expectations for the troupe and their work. They are essentially laying the groundwork for their brand of resistance, establishing their vision and mission as anti-surveillance in a time when many members of the public didn't even know they were being surveilled. The SCP cites news stories and reports of the proliferation of surveillance cameras around New York City in summaries of their early performances, and in their general mission statement ("Completely Distrustful of All Government"). By performing *1984* at some of their first public appearances, the SCP carefully establishes their positioning and makes it clear to whoever may be watching from behind the camera that they know they're watching, and are in fact trying very hard to be watched. They do not "LOVE BIG BROTHER." They are actively working to expose surveillance as a modern-day, very real Big Brother by making it impossible to ignore.

Headline News

After their final performance of *1984*, the SCP moved onto performing original content more frequently, much written by Art Toad. Their next performance after the Washington Square Park show in April 1999 was one of these originals — *Headline News* by Art Toad. After first being performed in Liberty Plaza, New York City in June 1999, *Headline News* became one of the troupe's standbys, performed 16 times total. The final performance took place on September 11, 2002, the one-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, in Times Square. All performances took place around New York City, besides one in Baltimore, MD.

Headline News can be performed by three actors or as a solo, and does not use characters in the traditional sense. The performers, rather than performing roles, simply hold up placards that mimic and parody the format of a news broadcast followed by a commercial break. The players display "World News," "NATO" accompanied by a drawing of a missile; "National News," a gun; "Local News," a horned and bearded Nazi; "Sports," a dollar sign; and "Weather," a skull and crossbones. The placards themselves are not polished, most of them simple drawings in black spray paint on a white poster board. More complex ones, like the Nazi or Big Brother in *1984* are photocopied images pasted on the board. The message of the performances, take precedence over set design. After the "news" is cast to the surveillant, the commercial break begins. A Nike placard declares them "proud sponsor" of "Chinese sweatshops;" Pepsi's logo encourages you to "get" and "stay addicted to junk;" Chase Bank says "we own you;" and the CBS logo proclaims: "we watch you watch" ("SCP Headline News").

While much of the social critique in *Headline News* is less specifically aimed at the concept and practice of surveillance (marking a departure in content from previous performances of *1984* and *Ubu Roi*), it is still doing the resistant work of spreading awareness. If a viewer is persuaded to think more critically of sweatshop-produced clothing or to consider the intersection of sports, media, and commercialism, the SCP has done their job. The CBS "commercial," the final placard in the performance, is the most relevant to surveillance as it asserts you are being watched in a place where you may assume you are the only one doing the watching — your own television. The commercial also highlights the connection between surveillance and capitalism: indeed, most private surveillance cameras are installed to protect property and capital, whether inside a store

or outside a home. The mere inclusion of a commercial break in a parody of a news broadcast also emphasizes this connection between watching and money, since we do not recognize the news without its accompanying corporate sponsors. And if you still didn't pick up on it, the spray painted dollar sign on the "Sports" segment should clue you in.

Performances of *Headline News* are preceded by a banner identifying the performers as the Surveillance Camera Players and announcing the title of the play. Identification is an important part of the resistant process for the SCP, since they must be fully visible by the surveillance gaze in order to acknowledge its presence. The players themselves, performance artists associated with the Situationist movement, are identified in documentation by their first names or by code names. This separates their identities as private citizens from their surveilled personas which deliberately subject themselves to watching for the purposes of art and activism. But as performers, nothing done in front of the cameras is meant to be hidden — that much is clear each time they hoist the sign bearing their troupe's name before a performance.

It's OK, Officer

The final SCP play I will discuss in detail is its most succinct and direct criticism of the surveillance state: *It's OK, Officer*. The original Art Toad work was first performed in front of NYPD cameras in Times Square in September 2000 and last performed in the same location in December 2006. One of the most notable performances took place on election night, 2000, outside Rockefeller Center. With NBC Studios inside the building broadcasting continuous live coverage of the election, the SCP was assured that there would be cameras rolling at all times, putting even more than the usual surveillance eyes on them in the plaza. Six people each carry a placard, walking from one surveillance

camera to another (the exact number of stops in front of surveillance cameras is not specified — presumably the performers could continue walking from one to the next throughout all of Manhattan) and showing the placards to the cameras one by one at each stop. In order, they read: "It's OK, Officer / Just going to work / Just getting something to eat / Just going shopping / Just sightseeing / Going home now" (Toad, "It's OK, Officer). They assure the surveillant they're following the rules, nothing to see here besides normal, compliant citizens. Of course, the nature of the performance makes it clear the Surveillance Camera Players are far from a group of compliant citizens going shopping or sightseeing, but their performance as such brings into question our own performance in front of the same cameras. We also put on a show of "normalcy" when we know we are being watched, but it's more likely we are doing it to avoid punishment than as art.

All of the SCP's performances are aimed at a surveillance camera, but *It's OK, Officer* actually engages the officer behind the camera's feed, talking to them directly. This is based off blind trust that there is a surveillant back there, that the cold glassy eye of the camera is broadcasting to someone. By engaging the officer, the first mention of the human element of surveillance in the SCP's body of work, they are playing with the relationship between watcher and watched. The watcher has more power — to see everything and to enact punishment — but in *It's OK, Officer*, the Surveillance Camera Players reclaim some of that power by calling out their surveillant and preempting their surveillance. Most people in a camera's field of vision are very likely doing such innocent, everyday tasks as going to work and getting something to eat, but surveillance exists for the other people, the ones who have something to hide.

The Surveillance Camera Players ironically become much more noticeable — and therefore suspicious — by claiming they are doing such benign and mundane activities.They are pointing out the performativity that surveillance injects into its subjects — if I'm being watched, I'm going to act obediently. This is the end goal of the perfect surveillance state, as discussed in previous chapters. The SCP plays with the competing ideas of performativity and interpellation as results of living under surveillance, suggesting that one may not be so different from the other.

Those who support surveillance as a law enforcement tool hope it will eventually interpellate its subjects into obedience so effectively that the need for surveillance will be eliminated. Those who oppose surveillance, including myself, argue that it is not true obedience that is interpellated in these subjects; but rather a quasi-permanent state of performativity that changes people's behavior when they are in front of a camera. It does not actually instill a mindset of obedience under the law in subjects of surveillance, but rather forces them to accommodate it as a limit on their behavior only while being watched, leaving them free to break laws or perform subversive acts once they perceive themselves to be out of the surveillance gaze. True interpellation changes people's thoughts to be obedient, while subjects merely performing obedience can maintain subversive or resistant sentiment privately, whether away from the gaze or simply in their thoughts, which remain private (we haven't yet reached the *1984* stage of persecuting people for thoughtcrimes).

However, for the purposes of surveillance, performative and interpellated subjects don't look any different from each other. They both guarantee outward obedience at least under the watchful eye of the surveillant, which is all that surveillance can hope for — it

is far more daunting to demand obedience in all aspects of life, even in what little privacy remains intact. The Surveillance Camera Players use overt performativity to show how easy it is to fool systems of surveillance by doing exactly what they do — putting on a show. Most of our shows are not as planned or elaborate as the SCP's. But they are performances nevertheless, a way of tampering with the results of surveillance by never allowing it to access raw, unfiltered footage of real people. As soon as we understand we are being watched, the possibility for small-scale *détournement* comes into play. A subject of surveillance is empowered to resist by this awareness, either by distracting, distorting, or obscuring the intended product of surveillance.

CONCLUSION

All activism is born out of resistance, although not all processes of resistance manifest in activism. When I talk about "activism" as a stage of resistance, I'm talking about an overt display of resistance aimed at making tangible change and the eventual dismantling of the system which it opposes. In this way, activism differs from the previously discussed stages of awareness and accommodation, which are precursors to this final, more active (hence the name) stage. Whereas awareness and accommodation are concerned with pointing out and working within systems of oppression, activism openly opposes them with the goal of restoring justice by eliminating oppression. Dozens of other theses can be written about whether that reversal is even possible, but I will preempt that discussion by saying that I, along with the Surveillance Camera Players and other activists engaged in resistance, am optimistic in the long run.

Activism is just one of many of the paths one can choose once they become aware of surveillance. I have discussed the choice between accommodation and resistance in

preceding chapters, but once one chooses to resist they are faced with even more options on how exactly to do it. Choosing activism means taking an active and open stance against surveillance. This essentially eliminates avoidance as an option for activists — avoiding surveillance is a form of accommodation, allowing surveillants to dictate spaces which you can and cannot enter, acts you can and cannot commit. When we think of resisting surveillance, avoidance may seem natural; however, it does nothing to combat oppression or advocate for change. The surveillant does not want its subjects to avoid its gaze, of course, but if that were to happen they would expand their gaze to continue eliminating private spaces. In the final stage of resistance, concessions like avoidance cannot be made if the hope for change is to remain alive.

So the resistant individual in a surveillance system is left with activism as their path towards reversing oppression. As we have seen with the work of the Surveillance Camera Players, there isn't just one way to resist the surveillant gaze through activism. The SCP themselves compound several methods of resistance in their performances: they jam or distort the product of surveillance, rendering it useless; they distract the surveillant from their intended watching; and they obscure parts of the camera's field of vision, allowing pockets of invisibility to form. They do not write the manual for resisting surveillance, nor do they claim to — they are merely offering a model of activism in the face of increasing surveillance and spread awareness to the public at the same time so that resistant processes may be sparked in others.

The Surveillance Camera Players also offer hope for the possibility of activism in any space, by anyone — an idea which extends beyond the bounds of surveillance and applies to those looking to resist any form of oppression. It must be acknowledged that

activism comes with risk of repression or retribution, and that not everyone is equipped or positioned to resist so overtly. But for those who are able and willing to take that risk, activism can be used to describe any sort of action taken with the intention of ending or altering systems of oppression for a more equal distribution of power. For the private individual under surveillance, that can be as simple as performing in front of a surveillance camera or as extreme as tampering with the devices of surveillance themselves. We can take comfort in the idea that you, as an individual private citizen, can commit acts of resistance to surveillance every day simply by putting on a show.

The Surveillance Camera Players also highlight the effectiveness of spectacle as a method for resistance and more general idea-spreading. Guy Debord may have lamented everything becoming a spectacle, but he likely would have applauded the SCP's attempts at breaking the screen separating the watcher and the watched. Indeed, they function to reveal the very existence of that screen, which is so spotless many people tend to look straight through it. The SCP is effective in spreading their message because their performances draw crowds, attention, and the eyes of the surveillant behind that very screen towards them and away from everything else. Because they incorporate elements of entertainment and spectacle in their activism, it is more accessible for both the public and their intended audience of surveillants to understand than something like a manifesto or even a protest or riot may be. They are not vicious to the public, so as not to alienate them from the cause and to get them on their side. They are derisive and flippant to surveillants, but their real target is the *system* of surveillance, in which the human surveillants are simply a cog. But although the surveillant is relatively invisible compared to subjects, it is easier to aim a performance at them (via cameras) than to address an

entire system — this is why the lowest-level enforcers of oppression, who often profess their own innocence on grounds of "following orders" are the first to be caught in the crossfire of resistance and repression. Whether they deserve retribution as messengers of an oppressive system is a greater question of the morality of compliance.

Unfortunately, activism does not usually lead to change immediately. As a stage of resistance, it is the landing point for those who choose to actively work towards change under an oppressive system; however, this work is not easy and often does not show tangible outcomes. It is discouraging to commit to activism and see nothing come of it — but this is the reality for most, since change and eventual elimination of oppression is a lengthy process, longer than the sum of the preceding stages of resistance. Power enjoys its position, and so is not inclined to change until its basis is threatened or dismantled. Often, power changes its face without changing its underlying structure to appease resistant sentiment — a corporation assuring the public through advertisements and software updates that it cares about customer privacy while continuing to mine and sell personal data to third parties is a relevant example. It is the job of the vigilant activist to recognize such maneuvers for what they are: distractions and cosmetic fixes for institutional problems. It is also the job of the activist to persist in their resistance through repression, threat of retribution, and hopelessness to continue the work started by those who came before them, and also to pave the path of resistance for those who come after.

CONCLUSION

For a process that relies so heavily on invisibility, surveillance is getting harder to ignore. As information technology advances and big data keeps getting bigger, we are constantly asked to hand over access to our information, movements, activities, and plans. Maybe Orwell was right — next, will we be asked to relinquish control over our own thoughts?

But long before "big data" became a household name, surveillance has been quietly patrolling and controlling all levels of society. It makes perfect sense to those in power to keep an eye on their subordinates, after all — you wouldn't want them misbehaving, staging a coup, or forming their own communities outside your dominion, would you? Therefore, as surveillance becomes more obvious, it must also become more pervasive, tightening its grip on the general population by eliminating spaces outside of its reach. Some of this is done manually, as with the increasingly unavoidable surrender of data that comes with using any website, computer, electronic device, or tricked-out fridge in the 21st century. But this process is helped along by the simultaneous process of interpellation working internally upon subjects of a surveillance state, like you or me. The more we get used to being surveilled, the more we internalize its control and adjust our behavior accordingly. Even subjects participating in resistance to surveillance are not immune to interpellation, manifesting in a state of constant performance that presents as obedience while under the surveillance gaze, while still searching for remaining private spaces and avenues towards dismantling the oppressive system as a whole.

One thing is clear: it is impossible to completely avoid surveillance, and it is not a productive use of resistant energy to try. Avoidance is just another form of submission,

accommodating a surveillant's presence by relinquishing access to surveilled spaces and being restricted to the unmonitored shadows of society. Those shadows used to exist within the home, in conversations between friends, or in private moments with oneself; but even those are now under threat of being watched. To attempt to avoid surveillance altogether is to exile yourself, admitting defeat at the hands of an anonymous surveillant who has effectively robbed you of freedom and control over your own movements.

Resistance to surveillance, therefore, must take a more active stance. I have discussed three distinct methods of resistance that also constitute phases of resistant processes, applicable to surveillance but also to more general modes of oppression. Arne Svenson's photo series "The Neighbors" demonstrated the importance of awareness to incite the process of resistance. Creating and spreading awareness undermines the structure of the panopticon by opening up the possibility for forming lateral coalitions between subjects of surveillance. The average citizen may not have a moment of awareness as jarring as seeing photographs of themselves in a gallery of newspaper, but however the moment of awareness comes, it has the power to break down the illusion of surveillance's permanence and open up avenues towards resistance. Awareness of surveillance is most effective when the subject realizes the possibility for spaces outside of surveillance, making the prospect for change more tangible once the false impression of surveillance as inevitable and permanent has been dismantled.

Hasan Elahi, in surveilling and tracking himself almost obsessively in his Tracking Transience project and compiling the results in "Thousand Little Brothers," represented the accommodation stage of resistance. While not vital to processes of enacting change, as awareness is, accommodation proves that resistant energy can exist

while the accommodating subject is still under the control of an oppressive system. Overloading information, complicating its extraction, and taunting law enforcement and other repressive state apparatuses, Elahi showed with his project that accommodation is not the same as blind, docile submission. By accommodating surveillance, the subject reclaims agency over their image — knowingly giving it on their terms, rather than having it stolen by an undetected surveillant. It is the element of choice which makes it possible for accommodation to contribute to resistance.

Finally, we reached the activist stage of resistance with the Surveillance Camera Players, the final and most overt phase. The performers scrambled results of surveillance in the tradition of *détournement*, rendering them useless for discipline by the surveillants but also serving a new, unintended purpose as entertainment. Of course, activism does not take just one form — the SCP represent one example of a lateral coalition of surveilled subjects taking advantage of their position and a captive audience to spread awareness and contaminate at least a small area of surveillance. Their performance is planned and elaborate, but it also highlights the performances we put on in front of the surveillance gaze every day — the performance of obedience. It's a small and accessible act of resistance that anyone who suspects they're being watched can participate in, even without their own lateral coalition. It proves Foucault's theory of power, resistant and otherwise: we are simply bound together by ever-shifting points of power that can be combined to mount a greater locus of refusal against oppression.

So although surveillance is daunting in its size and intangibility, it is not unconquerable. These instances of resistance against surveillance show that power is not a monolith, but can be manipulated, evaded, and subverted even while still within its

grasp. It is difficult to strip power away from the already-powerful, but not impossible, since power itself is socially constructed, assigned to whomever can manipulate its interrelated points to their advantage. This should provide hope to those seeking to resist oppression, since they possess the same potential for power as those who oppress them if only they can find a way to exploit it. It is the subject's duty in an oppressive society to consciously choose the path of resistance over avoidance, a choice that allows resistance to subvert and confront power directly, regardless of how long it may take to enact structural change. Although motivations and methods of resistance will inevitably vary between each individual, the ultimate goal should remain the same: increased equality.

Of course, there are many more instances and effects of surveillance I have not covered in the preceding chapters, most notably issues surrounding digital surveillance. As a rapidly developing and increasingly relevant agent of surveillance, and therefore oppression, the Internet must be examined with a highly critical eye to determine possibilities for resistance that do not necessitate complete avoidance of it. While I briefly discuss profiling as a function of surveillance in Chapter 5, there is more room for exploration into how data and human biases interact when it comes to surveillance. A more nuanced sociological analysis of practical applications of surveillance would also incorporate aspects of race, geography, socio-economic status, and other factors that combine with data to create and perpetuate marginalization. I encourage further research into possibilities and limitations on resistance to surveillance and how they may be applied to other systems of oppression.

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