Issues of surveillance and democracy are now ‘more unsettled than at any time in the recent past’ according to the editors of this important addition to the canon of Surveillance Studies. Whilst ‘authoritarianism’ (as an often unproblematised repository for all things anti-democratic) has occupied surveillance scholars for decades, emphasis on democracy remains surprisingly underdeveloped. How refreshing, then, is this addition that seeks to unpack and examine this relationship and afford it the attention it deserves. This is an important task and one in which the editors and contributors acquit themselves well. The collection is structured over three areas of discussion: theorizations of surveillance and democracy, surveillance policies and their relationship to practices of democratic governance, and a series of case studies of global consequence. ‘Surveillance’ is considered broadly and the state is characterised as complex, fragmented and contested, thus affording the book with considerable scope.

At the heart of this relationship are tensions and paradoxes. This debate has many elements. Echoing his classic (1994) characterization of protective and repressive ‘Janus faces’ of surveillance, Lyon reminds us that surveillance strategies may augment, as well as threaten, democratic processes. Minnaar’s focus on post-Apartheid South Africa highlights the absence of any public debate or genuine consultation prior to the establishment of (highly punitive) surveillance regimes, demonstrating that the lack of accountability does not only apply to the operation of surveillance, but also its installation.

A consistent theme of Surveillance and Democracy is how surveillance falls unevenly upon supposedly equal citizens. Lianos, for example, argues how much aspired to notions of privacy often benefit the already empowered. In his analysis of phone-tapping in Greece, Samatas documents how inverting the surveillance gaze onto powerful elites—even those charged with safeguarding privacy—becomes criminalized. Analysis of the deeper social costs of surveillance is a particular merit of this collection. Such costs adopt many forms and, as Lyon notes, combine and coagulate upon particular subjects and stereotypes, generating processes of ‘cumulative disadvantage’ (p.36). Elsewhere, Minnaar’s examination of South Africa’s urban ecologies of fear reminds us that these stereotypes are spatial as well as conceptual.

Another important theme concerns the context of surveillance. Here, numerous contributions demonstrate how aspirations for—and the planning of—surveillance mechanisms does not necessarily result in the assertion of control. As Lyon notes, many much-trumpeted identity management schemes never arrive. Others do, yet never develop beyond infancy. Other forms of surveillance are equally fallible. Ball and colleagues remark that particular automated techniques are ‘nearly always wrong’ and Samatas questions the accuracy (and ethics) of telephone tapping. Other contributors (particularly Los and Minnaar) illustrate the continued importance of low-tech human surveillance. This wider recognition of the labour behind the
lens, then, is key to understanding surveillance in its broadest sense and unpacking its relationship with democracy.

A particularly important aspect of this debate is addressed by Monahan’s examination of the selective assumptions embedded in the development of surveillance tools. Here, opaque esoteric knowledge erects barriers to accountability. In a broad sense, goals such as social progress (comprising *inter alia* personal satisfaction, educational achievement and environmental sustainability) are regularly ignored or reduced to issues of technical efficiency or economic gain; in Weberian terms, then, an articulation of the modernist transition from substantive to formal rationality. Here, Monahan does a good job of suggesting alternatives including citizen involvement during the design stages. Such developments could inform the growing discipline of ‘human factors’ and extend its current focus beyond narrow end-user requirements.

Perhaps the strongest feature of *Surveillance and Democracy* is its theoretical focus. Over a third of the book is dedicated towards this end with contributions from Johnson and Wayland, Lyon, Lianos and Brighenti. The latter’s chapter is particularly eclectic, musing on a raft of theoretical resources from Arendt to Virilio. Regarding the former, for example, Arendt’s treatise of democracy and, particularly the ‘world in common’ as a mechanism of political transparency, is explored. Such discussions contest the mythology of the protection that a retreat into the private sphere affords.

Foucault’s presence is evident throughout. Notable here is the shift from over-used panoptical metaphors. Brighenti, for example, reminds us of Foucault’s later, more nuanced musings that articulate more plural, rather than sequential (i.e. from sovereign to discipline) *modes* of control. Lianos picks up this point, criticizing what he sees as the over-deterministic way Foucauldian theory has been applied to the study of surveillance. Here, he argues that disciplinary control is neither an exclusive, nor representative form of control. Indeed, Lianos’ contribution to the collection is particularly impressive, being loaded with theoretical observations and novel conceptual critiques. In particular, he argues for Surveillance Studies to move beyond ‘well-trodden’ paths and ‘well-intended’ critiques and on to new ground. Here, Lianos argues that critiquing surveillance measures as ‘some post-industrial form of government policy is no longer a discovery, much less a critique … [i]t is a mere fact that no longer advances our understanding of contemporary control’ (p.71). Whether the sound and fury of this brand of surveillance scholarship actually signifies nothing, or whether its proponents recognize its characterization thus will no doubt be debated. Nevertheless, to the enormous credit of this collection, these critiques are complemented with genuine (and important) theoretical innovation.

Lianos achieves this via the idea of ‘periopitical’ surveillance. In short, this refers to the competing functions and aspirations of the varying domains in which the subject traverses. Whilst the means of control may (re)appear in different settings, their ends vary and application is fitful. For Lianos, then, periopitical control is specific to, and bounded by, the particular domains to which it is applied. Different institutions apply ‘competing utilitarian functions’ (p.85) upon the individuals that are situated within them. There are significant corollaries at play. Social control does not operate toward a coherent end and ‘is less and less social’ (p.74). In such circumstances, souls are neither trained nor moulded. Control may also be highly paradoxical; as Lianos rightly argues, it can be both uncoordinated and highly convergent. Such assertions, then, raise fundamental questions over what the subject is (or has become) in relation to both surveillance and democracy. Moreover, there is clearly much to be said for a theoretical approach that accounts for the inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions of surveillance applications.

In addressing the twin themes of *Surveillance and Democracy* a number of contributions appropriately draw from Habermas’ conceptualization of the ‘public sphere’. Haggerty and Samatas, for example, consider how surveillance practices obstruct the democratic public sphere, and its inherent congregations of actors and ideas. Brighenti, following Sennett (1978), offers another variant on this theme, arguing that the disappearance of the ‘public man corresponded with increasing fear of strangers’ (p.55).
Such preoccupations with the ‘public’ are mirrored nicely by analyses of ‘private’ surveillance industries. Ball and colleagues highlight numerous ways that private sector practices permeate into public sector processes. Interesting here is how private sector inspired modes of public governance invite further incursions from the former. This rationalized ‘new public management’ and its attendant emphasis on analyzing and auditing the quality of services is correctly attributed with developing the ‘internal market’ ‘for governmental services … outsourced to the private sector’ (p. 115). Market-based approaches invite market-based solutions. Here, the authors detail the centrality of citizen relationship management—a calibrated version of commercial ‘customer relationship management’ techniques—of surveillance societies. Such emphases on the opaque overlaps between the private and public realm are made more urgent by the current legislative and policy climates. In the UK, for example, the government’s much-trumpeted and self-reverential commitment to civil liberties—enshrined in the immodestly titled ‘Protection of Freedoms Bill’—curiously and entirely fails to address such (often more pernicious) incursions from the private realm.

Hayes’ chapter addresses some of these policy linkages in his analysis of EU-level security policy as a mechanism for generating ‘full spectrum dominance’ of a quasi-militaristic ‘NeoConOpticon’. Here, he makes a good job of outlining political and economic features of EU-level security research and policy endeavours, and their insulation from domestic democratic review, nicely capturing the sentiment with a memorable warning that we are ‘sleepwalking into a surveillance economy’ (p.165). Critics may find some reasons to be cheerful, however. Latent surveillance capabilities, despite any pernicious and opaque features, do not always translate into active deployment. Much publicized failures of lateral and vertical EU integration also commonly hobble coercive ambitions as do the contradictory features of EU legislature (as the regional response to Nicolas Sarkozy’s recent foray into the traditional political sport of persecuting minorities for electoral capital attests).

Deep questions over democratic governance are continually present throughout the volume. Here, Los’ analysis of the legacy of post-communist surveillance regimes is particularly notable. Los demonstrates how a number of democratised Eastern European states have retained the surveillance strategies of their forbearers, making it much harder to both identify and side with the angels. This is an important point on a number of levels: it explodes the myth, much-articulated in post 9/11 neoliberal discourse, that democracy necessarily equates to freedom; it also indicates that, despite appearances, many novel technological measures are continuations, or high-tech replications, of existing surveillance practices.

Overall, readers of Surveillance and Democracy will be rewarded with a wealth of informative essays that address an important, yet hitherto underdeveloped, area of the field. In addition to interrogating the relationship between these two phenomena, further value lies in its connection to the wider Surveillance Studies field and, importantly, the genuine conceptual and theoretical advancement that is provided.

References