Editorial

Surveillance Texts and Textualism: Truthtelling and Trustmaking in an Uncertain World

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The Primacy of Inner Textuality: Truthtelling and Trustmaking

Beyond their ends as supervisory overlays, surveillance technologies are a crucial means for *inscription*, *ascription* and *storytelling*. They provide a virtualised surface for etching personal narrations and bodily actions, whether volitionally (informally/aesthetically) or mandatorily (formally/procedurally), and for contrasting these against predefined taxonomies of normality for indicators of risk, deviance, exceptionalism, grandeur or profitability. That is to say, surveillance systems are text-making assembly lines, reproducing selected details procured from social intra-relationalities, encoding them for circulation before mediating them as compressed signals to a remote audience for diagnosis, calibration and calculation. And they do this principally via iterative processes of extraction, propagation and screening. They are contrivances in the (immensely profitable) business of fabricating and conveying de-contextualised biographies and life stories. They create duplicate textual versions or referential copies of an exposed protagonist's thoughts, motions, actions and biometrics. Such visualised simulacra can then be systematically exploited and put to work for divergent purposes.

Social rhythms and intimacies, in terms of leisure proclivities and work routines, have become objects of capture for multiple optic sensors—parasitic detectors that, literally and metaphorically, feed off discharges emanating from the exertions of exposed hosts. Minute transmitter technologies like the RFID microchip or magnetic resonance imaging scanner witness and co-produce social events in a fastidious resolution from a remote contact point. The principal parameters on which these adhesive implements fixate are 'identity-verification', 'truth-establishment' and 'certainty-rendering', key ordinates in grids of contemporary governance: in the accreting of knowledge, in the managing of resources, in the sharpening of decision making, in the distribution of authority, in the stimulating of spectators and in the production of surplus value. The wider systems of vision that they serve are believed to progressively slice through—and exceed—the contrived tonality of staged performance rituals (expressions of subjectivity and biography) and the fallibility of phenomenological experience (memory and perception) (Andrejevic 2010). Driven by an Enlightenment ethos, that within lines of visibility reside circuits of reformative truthfulness, these multiplex assemblages have the technical capabilities to magnify phenomena invisible

to the naked eye or to enhance the audibility of inaudible sounds: to access interiority and corporal processes in a manner that progressively bypasses embodied testimony and direct attestation—and thereby lived sensation (Ball 2009). They can pierce surface layers of consciousness and reveal, map and scrutinise concealed, but indisputable, molecular and affective realms; intrinsic dimensions of life that are adjudged to be positively ‘readable’ and ‘fixable’, and less contingent on pretence and manipulation (Andrejevic 2012). Neural and genetic substructures do not deliberately deceive (Abi-Rached and Rose 2010); nor do consumption habits, mobility trends, productivity patterns and subgroup affiliations. Within each vitalism—each expression of organic and cultural life—are objective markers of disposition, the textual discharges of which exhibit subjective dimensions and propensities: key indicators in the assessment of profile, the placing of it in a diagrammatic field of practice and the anticipation of its expected bearing. They provide mosaic contours on which the interiorities of persons are mapped, positioned and subsequently routed.

When aggregated as big data constellations, discrete character traits—be they cognitive states or expressive acts—and lifecourse trajectories, can be rendered legible and thereby susceptible to external intervention (Scott 1998). The increasing intersectionality of consumption conventions with biosecurity regimes (of the insurance, health and law enforcement sort) provides a good illustration. What you purchase symbolises present being *and* future becoming (Smith 2014). Reservoirs of personal information comprise pools of historical evidence (and, of course, phantom currents of misinformation), and when processed in accordance with sophisticated protocols and metrics, macro patterns regarding micro vibrations can be unmasked. It is for these, as well as for other, rationalities that surveillance systems have come to function as significant vehicles for truth-telling and trust-making, offering concrete narrational reliability and a source for expert diagnostics, in a global environ typified by mass motion (liquidity) of bodies, commodities and information and by atmospheric cultures of uncertainty, risk, scepticism, suspicion and distrust (insecurity) (Bauman and Lyon 2013).

If there was a single unifying feature common to all surveillance machineries it is their unique capacity to create (record) and screen (visualise) para-testimonies, mediated signifiers of phenomena and events that, as informatic mines, are readily exploited to inform and titillate, to jolt and jog, to arbitrate and convict, and to provide a given sequence or population with additional definition and tonality. They extend insight, they tender corroboration and they facilitate connectivity. But what gives surveillance systems such cogency and valorisation in today’s political and cultural economies is their intrinsic aptitude to manufacture an enduring textual emblem, either in the form of a meticulous remembrance or a prophetic anticipation of some future eventuality that, from an embodied and individualised perspective, can often seem like a dissolving or transitory actuality (Yurick 1985). Surveillance helps people organise, arrange, understand, narrate and validate their existence, in both formal and informal ways. That is to say, it enhances an agent’s wherewithal to tell and relay stories about her or his life—and to document, peruse and verify the claims of lateral others. As text-making resources and visualisation technologies, surveillant measures can be applied to address and resolve any number of socially induced problems: problems of population, problems of economy, problems of pestilence, problems of poverty, problems of isolation, problems of corruption, problems of disorder, problems of uncertainty, problems of expertise, problems of authority, problems of trust, problems of complexity, problems of scarcity, and problems of inequality. It is for these reasons that we have focused this special issue on the textual dimensions of surveillance—as a *means of text-making* and as a *textualised end*.

Surveillance Texts and Textualism: Towards Representative Authority and Specular Value

This special issue originated from the activities of ‘The Surveillance and Everyday Life Research Group’, a trans-disciplinary initiative predominantly affiliated to The University of Sydney, Australia, and interested in exploring, from multiple scholastic perspectives, the social resonances of surveillance machineries, circuitries and spatialities. The group ran a two-day international conference in Sydney in

February 2012 that featured a mix of eminent and new contributors to Surveillance Studies. The papers that follow were specially selected for their contribution to the issue's thematic, for their distinctiveness in terms of intellectual approach, and for their representation of both early career and established authors. Each article in this collection engages, from a unique disciplinary, geospatial and substantive angle, the entanglement of surveillance in processes of inscription, replication, rendition and translation.

Albeit from disparate perspectives and multiregional topographies, the papers in this collection engage the dimensions of what we have termed, 'surveillance textualism'. Surveillance systems act to co-produce textualities, to make duplicate and compressed versions of encountered—or envisaged—phenomena. But how are these texts fabricated, and according to whose criteria? How are they interpreted, ingested and utilised, and with what effects? How might the data bearer—or assumed data bearer—be positively profiled and/or negatively treated as a consequence of a valuation judgement? How might this be augmenting or transitioning with the mass availability of surveillance technologies in the consumer marketplace? Moreover, surveillance is an enculturated discourse that is ascribed with a plurality of social meanings depending on the portrayer and her or his political creed and occupational role. It is also a textualised point of study: a concrete sensory procedure to be observed and analysed, and a symbolic trope that embodies the interests—and agendas—of specific social groups. How then might we go about researching surveillance processes? How are subgroups policed through visibility, and with what social repercussions? How might accounts of surveillance converge and differ across a literary, organisational and industry spectrum? How can we relate the structuralised intentions of system overseers with the lived experiences of exposing projectors and exposed populations? How might culture educate populations on both the desirability and excesses of surveillant urges? That is to say, how does surveillance get represented ethically as a text in its own right and with what reverberations in terms of ideology, hegemony and dissent? These are the issues and questions that inform the papers comprising this special volume.

Taken as a whole, the compendium illuminates the interconnectedness of the projected gaze and received reflection with wills for 'truthtelling' and 'trustmaking' and with monitoring practices that progressively encounter the spectacle through the mediation of a screen. It elucidates the heterogeneous ends to which surveillance equipments are now routinely directed, and the rationalised and irrationalised compulsions that influence quotidian operationalisations, in public, private and civil arrangements. And it illustrates the multiplicity of functions and projects that surveillance systems presently serve—as expedients to chart and inscribe subjectivity, as techniques to reveal and display concealed social dynamics, as tools of social division and spatial apartheid, and as evidential vehicles for attributions of culpability and suspicion. Of further significance is how this anthology explicates the richness of Surveillance Studies as a multi-disciplinary field of inquiry, and the trans-continental thrust, but culturally mediated and situated experiences, of surveillant conveyances. It also depicts empirically and conceptually the messy incompleteness of surveillant interventions, the gaping fissures that exist between surveillant desires, surveillant fantasies, surveillant rhetorics, surveillant expressions and surveillant experiences.

Although the mass visualisation of social life is certainly not in question here, what emerges from this special issue is a profound sense of disconnect between how surveillance systems are originally conceived and how they come to be actually applied in unanticipated fashions in varying fields of praxis. It goes some way in uncovering the cracks and patches in the surveillant architecture—in other words, in challenging through evidential engagement the impression that visibility is a seemingly coherent, totalising and inevitable stratagem. Indeed, the issue exposes several of the many contingencies and suppositions (dependency chains, energies, assumptions and aspirations) that not only provide provision and fecundity for the expansion of visibility, but that also act in restrictive and frictional ways: at times unravelling what might initially appear to the uninformed observer as highly mechanised and sophisticated socio-technical enterprises. It shows surveillance textualism in its many guises—as an interpersonal strategy to inform an audience about the nature and legitimacy of a remotely witnessed presentation, as a

cultural stimulant to thrill a scopophilic (and geospatially dispersed) crowd, and as a performance interdependent on manifold social processes and technical attributes.

Peter Marks kickstarts the volume with a conceptual—and cultural—depiction of surveillance by locating it as a narrative device within China Miéville's (2009) novel, *The City & The City*. Marks's approach to surveillance textualism is dualised—he takes as his unit of analysis a surveillance text, and he reflects on how surveillance is textually represented—in empirical and ethical ways—in the story recounted. This involves him carefully dissecting and appraising 'unseeing' and 'unvisibility' as they are ideationally expressed and applied in Miéville's thought-provoking tale. Drawing on surveillance theorists such as Susanne Lace and Gary T. Marx, and detailing how each comprehends visibility, Marks asks us to contemplate the limits of seeing, and the possibilities and complexities that lie beyond culturally conventional apprehensions. In particular, he suggests how *The City & The City*, and other works of literary fiction, might productively complement our understanding of what we see, how we are trained to see, and what we might *unsee*—how perception might be programmed (corrupted) by socialisation initiatives that seek to divide the world into vistas that are strange and familiar, permissible and forbidden, and how this style of binary conditioning might relate to our positioning within social hierarchies. Marks's contribution expounds a need for surveillance scholars to be attentive to what is seen *and* unseen by a given system of vision, and to consider critically how lines of visibility/invisibility are drawn by particular suppositions.

Erin Kruger's paper regards the increasing extension of DNA profiles (or 'genetic images') from criminal-legal contexts to those of national security, defence, immigration, marketing and actuarial genetics. Drawing on examples of the electropherogram, the microarray, the lattice, and the cluster, Kruger offers a visual and descriptive account of the shift in application and utilisation of genetic information from an individualised focus to a broader population-based approach. This transition essentially implies a transformation—or 'creep'—in the social meaning and function of genetic materials. Kruger argues that what was previously construed as an item of evidence has increasingly become an *intelligence* resource in an array of social, investigative and emergency contexts. Technological innovations now permit rapid testing and screening in roving laboratories, for instance, at airport borders, in sports arenas or war zones. Yet Kruger shows how the 'truth' claims associated with genetic knowledge can be problematic, especially in these new, highly mobile sites. This is largely due to the many complexities contingent on scientific visualisation, which include: image selection (discretion); 'layering effects' imposed both by image production and the technical envisioning apparatus (composition); and, image displacement (de-contextualisation). The shift from a singular vision to a plurality of depictions raises important questions about the trustworthiness of what is seen. Further, Kruger argues that without standardised expertise and interpretation techniques, the use of such abstract imagery presents complex definitional challenges, produces risks in terms of miscarriages of justice, and gives rise to a pressing need for better public consultation.

In a related paper, concerned also with the risks of 'expert' mediation, Gary Edmond et al. consider the use of surveillance texts, primarily video surveillance images, within the criminal-legal trial. They show how these textualities, be they static images or video/voice recordings, are progressively translated for the fact-finder by designated 'expert witnesses', personnel the courts empower to tender an 'objective' and 'specialist' opinion about the meaning of a selected surveillance image, artefact or trace. They argue that common law courts, including those in Australia, the UK, Canada, and the US, have been remarkably accommodating with respect to hearing such evidence—allowing incriminating opinions to be presented by those with questionable or unsubstantiated 'expertise' and extending the qualification of 'expert' to law enforcement officers and others embedded in the investigation. In looking at the ways in which courts use CCTV images, voice recordings and other traces generated by surveillant assemblages, Edmond et al. focus attention on a legal site that hitherto has not featured prominently in the Surveillance Studies literature. They suggest that the state should be able to guarantee the basic trustworthiness and reliability

of the opinions it solicits before interpretations derived from surveillance assemblages are admitted to assist with proof of identity and guilt.

Mike Dee's article brings much needed scrutiny on a mode of surveillance that has been implemented by the Australian Federal Government to govern the lives and consumption practices of Indigenous people residing in the nation's Northern Territory. The 'Basics Card' program—first introduced in 2007—is documented by Dee to show how the Australian authorities acted, precipitously and without adequate empirical justification, to quarantine the spending capacities of welfare recipients. The Basics Card is a wallet sized plastic card (similar in appearance to a credit card) issued to individuals who are receiving welfare benefits. Social security payments are added to the card but the funds can only be withdrawn to purchase 'approved' items at specified points of sale. The income management policy, according to Dee, is a controversial, punitive and discriminatory intervention for several reasons. It facilitates the burgeoning gathering of personal data with the propensity for function creep, whereby data is used for purposes alternative to those for which it was originally collected. Moreover, the geo-demographic focus of the policy singles out Indigenous Australians in particular for excessive surveillance. It denies this already subjugated subpopulation autonomy rights over personal expenditure and it further perpetuates extant racialised stereotypes and pathologies. Further, the initiative seems to contradict the aim of encouraging welfare recipients to take responsibility for their lives, given the restrictions on spending that are an intrinsic part of this managerial system.

Ursula Rao and Graham Greenleaf in their paper describe the roll-out of the Unique Identification Project (UID) in India. The project aspires to provide a unique, biometrically derived, identifier (in Hindi, an 'aadhaar') for each of India's residents. Since its initiation in 2009, the UID project has enlisted and registered nearly a quarter of India's population, making it the largest biometric database initiative in the world. It exemplifies a shift in the use of such systems from predominantly criminal-legal to civil contexts. Rao and Greenleaf engage a multi-disciplinary approach to unpack the local and national issues influencing the project's implementation—the practicalities of which are, perhaps unsurprisingly, complex, fraught and messy. As Rao and Greenleaf convey, the UID is a scheme with a social conscience and progressive objectives—access for those in need to social benefits, financial services, even citizenship for those who have been traditionally excluded—but one operating in the absence of any clear legal framework. Thus, the project poses significant risks in terms of function creep, privacy protection, data management, and cost effectiveness. Yet the ethnographic evidence they provide concerning people's lived experience of the UID complicates conventional utopian and dystopian narratives, and confronts the project's claim of providing India's residents with a single, trustworthy identity notation. It highlights the difficulties encountered by some of the designated beneficiaries in enrolling in the UID, or in exercising their new found 'identity'. It also excavates several relational practices that emerge informally in response to the instituting of the formalised aadhaar. Rao and Greenleaf point to historical continuities underpinning the biometric identification project (specifically the post-colonial context), but emphasise the importance of perceiving the UID not as a 'truth statement about identity', but rather as a testing, and reworking, of relationships between citizen and state.

Shifting from the complexities of a large scale public project to an equally intricate private sphere, Melissa Gregg's article reviews the uptake of spyware technologies that are designed to ascertain whether or not a spouse has partaken (or is partaking) in adulterous behaviour. She argues that a need for adultery-proving technologies is symptomatic of an era in which some individuals see few options for intimate support—few visions or practices of community—other than the fulfilment to be gained from a dependent partner. She also shows how spouse-busting websites and accompanying devices are part of a booming commercial industry that renders marital disloyalty open to both amateur and professional surveillant interventions. Gregg suggests that anxieties about adultery are fuelled by a need for security and transparency in contemporary relationships, one that relates to dominant social ideals of commitment, care and trust. Accordingly, the notion of personal privacy between couples is receding, with partners fully

expecting to access and know intimate historical details about their loved ones. Spouse-monitoring software thereby offers a useful way of establishing (dis)loyalty. By way of example, Gregg analyses the gender assumptions underpinning *KareLog*, a GPS tracking service, marketed to anxious girlfriends wishing to monitor the movements of their boyfriends, and contrasts this with *iTrust*, a program designed to protect vendees from unwanted spousal scrutiny. In a cultural climate progressively typified by suspicion and mistrust, particular behaviours, such as deleting emails or spending excessive amounts of time online, become indicators of potential guilt. Gregg also contends that adultery apps evidence a modest ethics of erasure which may work to decouple the pact between surveillance, transparency and security.

Extending the theme of interpersonal monitoring, but from another frame of reference, Harriet Westcott and Stephen Owen employ empirical examples in their paper to investigate an important, but under researched, interactional feature of the social networking site Twitter. They explain how Twitter users engage in lateral surveillance techniques in the initiation and nurturing of friendships. Twitter provides a facilitative interface for the performance of friendship rituals, and a means to determine the suitability of prospective confidants. Drawing on social penetration theory, Westcott and Owen identify three consecutive phases of online surveillance: unidirectional ‘studied’ following, ‘reciprocal’ following, and fully-fledged offline friendship. The visibility of users via their Tweets creates personal information mines that others can access remotely to evaluate character in what might be considered a phase of pre-friendship ‘screening’ or ‘profiling’. This information also functions as a currency of trust and solidarity prior to an offline meeting occurring. Geographic proximity and certifiable reputation were additional factors that helped offline friendships to evolve. Ultimately, as the two authors contend, Twitter provides an illustrative instance of how citizens engage in their own surveillance projects—both to protect themselves and to rationalise their emotional and interpersonal investments in anonymous others.

Invoking the ‘surveillance as work’ and ‘affective surveillance’ themes, Kaima Negishi examines, in his contribution, how a Japanese railway operator, *Keikyu Corporation*, treats the face not merely as a decipherable sign of the emotional state of passengers, but as a means for controlling the atmosphere of urban transit spaces. While facial recognition in such spaces is an established method of risk assessment and pre-emptive action, Negishi elucidates the social ramifications of *Keikyu*’s introduction of ‘Smile Scan’ software, where employees were compelled as part of their occupational training to use a smile-measuring machine. The machine made employees sensitive to their own facial expressions, and to the external effects of such communicative mediums on proximate passengers. They were also trained to read the affective state of passengers via their facial expressions. Smiles were understood as means of modifying malevolent or disagreeable intentions, and Negishi shows how *Keikyu* employees were directed to project smiles in the defusing of commuter anger and anxiety, and to refigure the emotional state of passengers as they transited. Such action, for Negishi, has a flow-on effect, the transmission of affect creating a generalised positive environment that accords with commercial aspirations for improved customer service through client self-monitoring initiatives.

Carolyn McKay’s closing paper also deals with surveillance in the Japanese context, but from an entirely different perspective to the one advanced by Negishi. McKay reflects on a trip to Japan in 2011 where, as part of an artistic endeavour, she surreptitiously photographed nationals. These images would later form the basis for McKay’s Australian exhibition, *Covert*. Her article probingly considers both the exhibition itself, and the complex aesthetic and ethical questions it—and her artistic approach—raises. McKay situates her answers to these questions within the contexts of surveillance theory, artistic concerns with the gaze and the human form, and in relation to the controversial work of the artist Sophie Calle, whose exhibitions foreground questions of privacy and voyeurism. Similar queries attend McKay’s work, and as well as explaining and critically examining her exhibition, she scrutinises her method and its products, rather than merely defending—or celebrating—each. Can (or does) art that aims to critically scrutinise and possibly subvert the status quo, operate outside accepted ethical, and even legal, codes? What control does

the subject of the artist's gaze have over the work produced, especially if she or he is an unknowing participant in the artwork? What responsibility does the artist have to the subject of her gaze, especially if that person is unaware that he or she is the focus, and might in this case never realise that an image derived from an embodied action has been deployed in a publically displayed artwork in a different country? The fact that, as McKay acknowledges, no easy answers are available, registers the fascinating challenges created by art-surveillance intersectionalities.

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