Book Review

Review of Stewart, Garret. 2015. *Closed Circuits: Screening Narrative Surveillance*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

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Representations of surveillance in film and literature have featured prominently in the interdisciplinary field of Surveillance Studies. The imageries of the surveillance regimes that we find in, for instance, George Orwell's novel *1984* (1949) or Tony Scott's *Enemy of the State* (1998) are common reference points to the same degree as Bentham's Panopticon. Yet, it is only in recent years that the way in which surveillance is treated in these narratives—not only as a theme but in the *form* these narratives take—has come into focus. *The Watchman in Pieces: Surveillance, Literature, and Liberal Personhood* (2013) by David Rosen and Aaron Santesso is one such significant, recent study in the field of literary narratives. However, film studies are a special case insofar as the act of looking is engrained in the medium itself. Film theory is thus fundamentally an engagement with questions of watching and recording, and this makes film history itself a valuable resource for understanding the complexities of the mediated surveillance societies we inhabit today. As Garrett Stewart states in the opening of *Closed Circuits: Screening Narrative Surveillance*, "All montage is espionage. This is either too easy to be true or to true to be useful. Specifying each pole of the conjectural equation—rephrased, for starters, as the difference between film viewing and motivated surveillance in cinematic narrative—is one aspect of the coming task. Viewing invisibly vs. sighting unseen: watching versus spying" (pg. ix). It is this negotiation between watching and spying as it is presented through different technological affordances—from celluloid to digital film—and across different genres and narrative forms—from eyewitnessing to machine surveillance—that Stewart charts in this book.

Closed Circuits places itself in a theoretical discourse—entering into a dialogue with complex theories by Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Ranciere, Christian Metz, Jacques Lacan, Giorgio Agamben, to name a few, drawing in particular on suture theory and apparatus theory. This can, at times, make the book a difficult read for those unfamiliar with film theory—not least because of Stewart's own linguistic sophistication. However, if the reader makes the effort to penetrate this discourse, Stewart's book provides a compelling showcase of the valuable insights to be found by turning to film theory to understand the way in which surveillance is negotiated in contemporary culture. It looks not only at narratives of surveillance but at the techniques through which these narratives take shape. Thus, the book contends that media history, the editing techniques of cinema, and the way they are woven into a range of seminal films in different styles and genres give us an insight into the epistemological ramifications of surveillance practices in the long 20th century.

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Stewart stresses that he is not writing a history of surveillance in film. Rather, he is composing his own convincing montage of cinematic images drawn from key films that deal with surveillance in one form or another. This review cannot possibly list all the films that the book elegantly juggles. Over the course of the eight chapters of the book, he charts surveillance paranoia, voyeurism, eroticism and epistemophilia, working his way from Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) through the intertextual nexus of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966), Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), Brian De Palma's *Blow Out* (1981) and Tony Scott's *Enemy of the State* (1998). In a mapping of the surveillant psyche, he pairs Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) with Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others* (2006) with Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) before moving on to wired and videographed warfare in films such as *Body of Lies* (2008) and *The Hurt Locker* (2008)—only to end the book with a focus on cyborgian optics that extend the sensory perception of the human subject to the point of disembodiment in films such as *Déjà Vu* (2006) and *Source Code* (2011).

Suture theory in film draws attention to the way the film is composed—how its montage of images is stitched together—and so does Stewart by pointing to the seams (the choices made in the pairing and juxtaposition of the selected films) that stitch his own narrative together. In that way, the book itself becomes textual cinema—it weaves its narrative by drawing on the vast archive of film history that Stewart masters, letting its theoretical argument work from below—by showing as well as telling. A key element in this approach is the choice to eschew still images from the films discussed to illustrate his points. Rather, Stewart *reads* the films, working them into his own text and, by narrating them in the context of his analyses, reviving them before our eyes. In this process, he also revives suture theory and apparatus theory—extending them to include not only camerawork, but also spectatorship as well as the work that his own analyses in dialogue with film theory perform. These extensive close readings make the book a valuable resource for anyone interested in the cultural implications of surveillance, and should make the book reach far beyond film theory.

Stewart's book is important in that it tackles the significant task of bringing film theory's long tradition of meta-reflections on seeing and being seen into a surveillance discourse that often refers to the same films but rarely tackles the insights to be gained from formal analyses. Thomas Y. Levin's text "Rhetoric of the Temporal Index" (2002) is seminal in this respect, and significant work has come out in this field in recent years by scholars such as Catherine Zimmer, Dietmar Kammerer, Peter Marks and J. MacGregor Wise's recent book *Surveillance and Film* (2016). Although Stewart's book may feel less directly accessible for an interdisciplinary audience, it does essential work and, as such, is a relevant read for Surveillance Studies scholars in addition to film and media studies scholars, thanks to the persuasive way in which he situates cinema in the surveillance regimes of the long 20th century—from intelligence paranoia to sexualized scopophilia and disembodied machine oversight. The strength of Stewart's book lies in the way in which he moves eloquently between the analyses of the films and the narratological, compositional and epistemological insights uncovered as he weaves his reading of the films together with film and surveillance theory. The book is thus one long argument for *why* there are pertinent insights to be found by examining the technicalities of cinematic composition and narrative orchestration, what Stewart calls the "caving in of form upon content" (pg. 246).

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