

Loving Big Brother

Constant scrutiny by surveillance cameras is usually seen as, at best, a necessary invasion of privacy and, at worst, an infringement of human rights. But in this radical new account of the uses of surveillance in art, performance and popular culture, John E. McGrath sets out a surprising alternative: a world in which we have much to gain from the experience of being watched.

In *Loving Big Brother*, the author tackles head on the overstated claims of the crime-prevention and anti-terrorism lobbies. But he also argues that we can and do desire and enjoy surveillance, and that if we can understand why this is we may transform the effect it has on our lives.

Loving Big Brother looks at a wide range of performance and visual artists, at popular television shows and movies, and at our day-to-day encounters with surveillance. Rooting its arguments in an accessible reading of cultural theory, this iconoclastic book develops a notion of surveillance space – somewhere beyond the public and the private, somewhere we will all soon live. It's a place we're just beginning to understand.

John E. McGrath is Artistic Director of Manchester's groundbreaking Contact Theatre, which brings bold new performance to diverse young audiences. He has directed work by Lemn Sissay, Jeff Noon and others. In both theatre and theoretical work he focuses on the intersections of space, media and language. For Tom and Margaret McGrath, who have always watched over me!

JOHN E. McGRATH

Loving Big Brother

Performance, privacy and surveillance space



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Preface

A body throws itself out of a burning tower, diving through the air in the agonizing moments before the impact of concrete below will smash the life out of it. We are watching live on network television. There is nothing we can do.

A group of unremarkable people are locked in a house for two months, bored and bickering; cameras record their every mundane move. We watch in our millions, interrupting busy schedules to catch up on the ins and outs of lives restricted to the entirely inconsequential.

If two experiences have defined my relationship to the recorded image in recent years they are the footage of September 11, 2001 and an addictive viewing of the UK version of television show *Big Brother*. I am undoubtedly far from alone. These two events – and particularly the World Trade Center attacks of course - shocked in a wide variety of ways; but in a world in which the average city dweller is caught on camera hundreds of times a day, part of our response to these images related to the daily surveillance of ourselves. In both cases, we obsessively viewed footage when it was clear that, in the case of the World Trade Center, nothing new was about to emerge since we were watching the same shots, perhaps occasionally from a different angle, again and again, and in the case of Big Brother - well, nothing much new was going to emerge there either. Yet this obsessive viewing, I believe, revealed not that we had all suddenly taken leave of our senses, but rather that we were in the process of realizing, of taking in the fact, that our world had been changed forever, not just by terrorism or television, but by surveillance itself.

Not so long ago, the words 'Big Brother' conjured in the public mind not the image of annoying, lovable or devious day-to-day people suddenly elevated to stardom by a television game show, but *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the book by George Orwell, which, although perhaps not as widely read as it was referenced, had entered the popular consciousness as a representation of the repressive nature of an all-seeing state. It was pretty clear what everyone meant by the phrase 'Big Brother' – they meant invasion of privacy. Winston Smith's closing epiphany in the book – 'He loved Big Brother' – was interpreted, when it was remembered, as a chilling prophecy of the complete destruction of self by the surveying state. Now we find ourselves in a society in which watching ordinary people do not much on television has become a popular pastime, and in which there is significant public support for massive extension of state surveillance powers.

I have said that I was not alone in my intensive, regular viewings of both *Big Brother* and the events of September 11. However, I did bring a particular viewpoint and experience (as we each do) to my watching, in that for some time I had been developing the ideas on surveillance that form the backbone of this book. Within this work, two strands of thought had unexpectedly emerged as key: first, the idea that surveillance has proliferated not least because we desire it – we enjoy it, play with it, use it for comfort; and, secondly, more surprisingly, and initially perhaps seemingly contradictorily, the thought that, at root, all of our experiences of surveillance are structured by the expectation of death.

Spending many summer evenings watching the Big Brother housemates doing not much, and then, in September 2001, spending all night every night for days on end watching footage of the World Trade Center attacks (I had lived in New York for many years and found it difficult to be reconciled to my safety and distance from a place in which I had spent so much time and knew so many people), theories of why we want to watch and be watched by the surveillance machine were very much at the front of my mind. And yet, while ideas about the desire for surveillance, and about the structuring role of death in our experience of surveillance, were both justified and complexified by these two periods of watching, such understanding was of little help in freeing me from my obsessive viewing. In the end I had to reconcile myself to the fact that sometimes, in this surveyed, imaged, recorded world, we need not only to discuss and develop ideas about surveillance, but also to encounter the results of this recording again and again. Through repeated viewing we reposition ourselves, our psyches, in relation to what I have come to call in this study surveillance space.

Preface

My work on surveillance has involved the review of a great deal of, and the making of some, performance and art work which explores the issues, ideas and pleasures of this field of experience. It has also involved an analysis of the ways in which our encounters with surveillance are organized by, but exceed, ideologies based on concepts of crime prevention and of privacy. Out of these analyses I have developed ideas about the ways in which we experience surveillance, and ourselves within surveillance, that are quite different from the common ideological understandings. When I was first working on this study, the idea of surveillance as a new space – with different possibilities for communication and behaviour - became a very liberating one for me. And I continue to believe that our evolving relationship to space - our participation in the evolution of surveillance space - opens up new prospects for society. However, my hours watching the trivia of Big Brother and the horrors of the World Trade Center attack - my obsessive repetitive viewing of this footage - reminded me very viscerally of the fact that the products of surveillance in our society are largely not the questioning, productive art works which I have explored throughout this study, but instead the abandoned, unsatisfying, addictive bits of footage and data which the surveillance system routinely produces. While art and theatre work responding to surveillance society can help us exist productively in this world, it is still the banal experience of day-to-day footage and data that defines our encounter with surveillance. In my almost endless viewings of the World Trade Center images, death was not transcended in the way that theatre and poetry can promise. What I experienced instead was a repetition of the emptiness, the perpetually unsatisfying nature of any approach to death. I left my viewing, eventually, exhausted, not enlightened. However, the opportunity to view this footage again and again was perhaps more crucial than any other factor- any art, or commentary, or eventual visit back to New York - in allowing me to approach my most disturbed, disturbing feelings about the event. It was only in these addictive viewings that I could find something which expressed the dirty, useless, selfish, distant closeness that I felt to the World Trade Center deaths. Of course, my own adjustment to the events is of little use to anyone else, but my point is that the degraded, obscured, remnant relationship to death which surveillance-type footage can bring us towards is, in fact, an appropriate and sensitive way to understand death in our society.

Preface

As for *Big Brother*, it continues series by series, and I continue watching. A part of me hopes that this addiction, too, will eventually wear itself out, that I will come to see the dreary day-to-day activities and bickering as just the sort of thing I try to avoid in my own life and reach for the remote control. However, another part of me hopes that the series will run and run, and that I will always make time to watch these ordinary people being watched by cameras. Because.my viewing of *Big Brother* reminds me, on a felt rather than a theorizing plane, of the space in which I move and live. I would never want to be a contestant in the *Big Brother* house; there are too many other things that I want to do in my day (though I have a certain respect for those who take on this existential experiment). However, the trashiness, the repetitiveness and the occasional unexpectedness of this game show reminds us that, unlike Orwell's totalitarian eye, the many Big Brothers of our society can be submitted to partially and conditionally, can be played with and perverted. Unlike Winston Smith, we are not necessarily conceding defeat or loss of self when we admit to loving Big Brother.

Acknowledgements

This book began life as I balanced academic explorations at New York University's Department of Performance Studies with work for theatre company Mabou Mines. My thanks first and foremost go to my dissertation advisor, Peggy Phelan, who guided me in a way that was both supportive and challenging. Many of the ideas in this book arose in response to her thought and provocations during my time at NYU. At the same time, the mad, marvellous world of the Mabou family, and particularly the guidance of my friend and mentor, Ruth Maleczech, provided me with a confidence and inspiration that allowed me to think creatively and boldly. My friends and fellow students at NYU have been my source of strength and intellectual nourishment. In particular, Jennifer Fink, Richard Green and Ed Miller were (and are) my academic family. In New York, Frances Sorensen provided a second home and much support and laughter. And designer Paul Clay was, throughout, a constant source of questions and inspiration. In England, Mandy Colleran provided invaluable input on disability politics and always encouraged ideas, ideals and a sense of the ridiculous. Caroline Cowie and Richard Thomas provided a home when I was homeless and a retreat into peace on many occasions. Declan Buckley provided me with shelter, innumerable fine meals and much support as the book developed. Margaret McGrath scoured newspaper, television and radio for mention of surveillance; many of my examples and references were her discoveries. The enthusiasm and support of these friends and colleagues was and is invaluable.

Thinking surveillance

Surveillance – the word comes pre-loaded with imagery and emotions. George Orwell and Big Brother, the FBI and the KGB, private detectives and James Bond devices, real-life television and grainy images of criminals, a lone vulnerable human targeted by the resources of the state, a space-age future in which implanted chips monitor our thoughts – few of the connotations of surveillance are positive. And yet, in contemporary Western society we have largely embraced surveillance; while we worry about the limits of privacy and about things getting into 'the wrong hands', in general a burgeoning of electronic surveillance is accepted as a means of making our world safer.

In the academic world, the mention of surveillance almost always raises the ghost of Michel Foucault, whose equation of the practice of centralized surveillance with the emergence of the 'disciplined' individual in the eighteenth century forms an inevitable starting point for any subsequent study. In Foucault's terms, humanist society from the late eighteenth century on could be said to have been formed in relation to a culture of surveillance. Foucault's theories of surveillance, and his citation of the 'panopticon' prison designs of the English utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, have achieved a crossdisciplinary ubiquity, and are quoted as much by social scientists and journalists as they are by the cultural theorists who are the more usual audiences for Foucault's ideas. In fact, for a considerable period of time there seemed to be a consensus that Foucault had pretty much had the last word on surveillance in terms of academic critique.

For a field which has such a vast range of imagery and ideas associated with it, the practice of surveillance had, for several years until very recently, undergone profound and massive growth with relatively little critical engagement. While privacy campaigners have raised their arms in despair and politicians have chosen to believe

that there is nothing controversial to discuss, cameras and data banks have proliferated throughout the dimensional and virtual spaces in which we move and live.

Since the late 1990s, however, the subject of surveillance has been reinvigorated as an area of discussion. Social scientists, activists and cultural theorists have started to respond to the fact of comprehensive surveillance in a variety of surveys, studies and texts. While a range of disciplines and references are brought to these discussions, certain themes inevitably prevail. Specifically, discussion of surveillance is almost always framed in terms of issues of crime prevention (now very much extended to terrorism prevention) and privacy rights.

While this study addresses both of these questions in some depth, it does so without assuming that they are in fact the appropriate frameworks in which to view surveillance. Rather, I have taken as my starting point the belief that these ways of looking at surveillance are simply ideologies – means of addressing the issue that seem natural only because they are the conventional structures through which we have been encouraged to understand the profound changes that surveillance is making in our lives. Like all ideologies, the discourses of privacy and crime are as important for what they hide about our surveillance society as for what they reveal.

As a different way in to thinking about surveillance, I have developed the idea of 'surveillance space'. Drawing on a range of thinkers including Foucault, but as diverse as Kant, Lefebvre, Benjamin and Butler, I have focused on the lived experience of surveillance and the cultural products that reveal our lives under surveillance to us. I hope that this different approach to thinking about surveillance may help us to deal in new and complex ways with the fact that the relevant question about surveillance today is not whether we should live in a surveillance society, but how.

The absent eye

My interest in surveillance, and my instinct to analyse the phenomenon in spatial terms, grew out of my work as a theatre director. At a certain point several years ago I found myself incorporating video imagery into most shows that I directed, and live video into many. Increasingly, also, I would use microphones to amplify a mutter into

a roar, or to hear the breath of an actor resound across the playing space. Such use of technology was, by that time (the late 1980s and early 1990s), far from unusual; rather it was in danger of becoming a cliché of downtown New York theatre. Nonetheless, the urge remained for me – an obsessive tendency to think through the performed potentials of a script or idea in terms of the relations between audience, performers, the space of the event and the pervasion of that space by representational technologies.

At the same time, I was developing a debilitating horror at the role of the theatre director. Increasingly, it seemed to me that the link between the various forms of theatre that I loved was provided by a fetishization of the figure of an absent but despotically controlling eye. From the political energy of Brecht to the visual feasts of Robert Wilson, from the quasi-rituals of Grotowski, Kantor, Bogart to the sly confessionalism of The Wooster Group and Mabou Mines, engaged, enquiring theatre was judged a success, *felt like* a success, when it projected back to us the figure of an absolutely controlling director, masterminding every inch, every second, of the spectacle.

The dominant cultural fantasies of surveillance - the protecting eye or controlling Big Brother - equate in many ways with the fetishized figure of the twentieth-century theatre director, controlling events from which he or she is absent through the creation of a structure that necessitates and depends upon continued obedience. And yet the incorporation of representational technologies into the stage space does not necessarily support this fetishization of the director figure. At the simplest level, the failure of most theatrical uses of video, the tendency of the technology to negate the theatrical frame, to appear much like an ill-thought-out visual aid in a shoddily constructed lecture, tends to expose the inability of the director to control anything beyond the illusory movements of play acting. The directors most accomplished in the use of on-stage video are very aware of the destruction of stage illusion that video equipment can enact, and are often actively engaged in the exploration of how this destruction relates to and undermines the production of directorial control. The Wooster Group's Liz LeCompte has perhaps the longest and most consistent record in this area. While LeCompte certainly could not be described as a director who eschews the pleasures of creating and witnessing an almost impossibly well-controlled and

complex stage environment, her introduction of video teases and undercuts the fantasy of such control. When video monitors are used to introduce actors who cannot perform owing to illness or other commitments, LeCompte refers us out of the frame, away from the domain of the director's eye and towards the compromises and omissions involved in the actual making of a theatre work.

It seemed to me that, perhaps surprisingly, rather than replicating the fantasy of a controlling absent figure, the use of video in theatre - and particularly uses that incorporated either live feed of performance or audience, or, as in LeCompte's work, rough footage of absent figures – tended to emphasize the incompletions, the edges, the obscurities of the theatrical space. Introducing surveillance-like moments into theatre pieces myself - sequences in which the audience appeared, through video, on stage, or where the stage space itself was interrogated by its reappearance on screen - I found that the audience reaction was often quite gleeful, very different from the reluctant response that accompanies attempts to bring the audience bodily on stage, or to expose stage illusion through other means. Whereas these last strategies often intensify the fantasy of directorial control by seeming to undercut it, the incorporation of surveillance-like imagery into the theatre space, which might be expected to demonstrate the increasing reach of the controlling eye, in fact playfully exposed its entirely fantastical status. In one production, in which the audience was informed that it was under surveillance and instructed to 'act realistically', an extraordinary sense of improvisation took over among audience members, who used the opportunity of the instructions to play at acting.

The introduction of surveillance technology in theatrical space could, it seemed, re-enliven that space with a sense of agency and choice. Such agency and choice asserted themselves in the gap between two systems of seeming knowledge and control, between the surveillance representation and the theatrical space. I began to wonder whether the reverse proposition might not also be true, whether the introduction of theatrical understandings, above all of the spatiality that distinguishes theatre from film and video, might open up an equivalent agency in relation to surveillance.

For a director who had always been interested in the physical engagement of the audience with the theatre space, this subject

was inevitably interesting. Given that surveillance also seemed to reflect yet distort the idea that most worried me in theatre, the idea of the director's controlling eye, I could hardly fail to look into the subject more thoroughly. So, I started to research the phenomenon of surveillance technology in contemporary life, with the instinct that theatrical space was a strange but productive place to start.

And so, much of the key evidence in this study is theatrical, from the art of The Wooster Group to the performances of New York's gay go-go boys to the theoretical texts of Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud and Elin Diamond. Indeed, the key Brechtian idea of the self-aware spectator and the central Artaudian image of the 'double' were immediately relevant tools with which to start rethinking surveillance – ways to get outside of the seemingly self-evident ideologies via which surveillance was almost always seen and discussed. Theatre – and crucially the sense of space that it inevitably introduced – catapulted me into different ways of thinking about our experience of surveillance.

My approach to surveillance via theatre also had the benefit of keeping me away from an easy and lazy cliché of commentary on surveillance - the idea that surveillance is turning the whole of life into a public performance. In the case of my experiments with surveillance technology in theatrical space, it was the non-equivalence of surveillance and theatrical systems which had opened the theatre space to new possibilities, and disrupted the sense of total representational control. Equivalently, the elements of performance which can no doubt be introduced to surveillance systems do not so much theatricalize our lived experience under surveillance as open our understanding of surveillance to encompass a recognition of its productive omissions and contradictions. A sense of this interesting gap, this productive tension between theatre and surveillance made me cautious of any attempts to explain surveillance simply in terms of the way in which it puts life on show - in terms of specularization.

Space versus spectacle

However, theories of the spectacle have inevitably informed the discussion of surveillance. After Michel Foucault, the two theorists

who are probably most often referred to in analyses of surveillance are Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard. While these theorists pursue very different arguments, they both deal with the ways in which the image has become the predominant mode of experience in our society, and discussions of surveillance often blend these critiques into some version of a paranoid world in which surveillance technology has coercively devalued our lived experiences by converting them into imagery. The theorists invoked are more complex than the invocation, but an analysis of surveillance as spectacle can appear tautological: if contemporary culture has already become the realm of simulation, as Debord and Baudrillard argue, then the recirculation of our images again thorough surveillance hardly carries any loss or danger.

Moreover, the behaviour and use of the surveillance image in our society does not necessarily cohere with that of other images. For example, Debord argues that specularization involves the commodification of experience. Although there are undoubtedly examples of the surveillance image circulating as a commodity, and a highly fetishized one at that (examples are discussed throughout the following chapters), commodification is a process happening to the surveillance recording in a manner entirely at odds with Debord's assumption that specularization enacts commodification per se. Unlike the movie, television or magazine image, which has such a high value in our society, the surveillance image is almost a by-product, a trashy residue of the surveillance system.

Likewise, Baudrillard's hyper-real world of simulations provides few tools to explain the current eruption of surveillance in an already entirely mediated world. A Baudrillardian reading can see surveillance only as symptomatic of hyper-real society, of the need to repeat obsessively the mediation of our already mediated selves and experiences. While there is undoubtedly validity to this reading, it can find nothing unique, nothing different, in surveillance. I am interested not only in reading surveillance as yet another proof of the mediation of experience, but in exploring whether, within our mediated world, the current proliferation of surveillance practices provides any indications of new understandings and consciousnesses.¹

It seemed to me that it may be more useful to separate surveillance from spectacle, or perhaps to understand the practice of surveillance

as a surprisingly productive perversion of spectacle. Central to this reading is the analysis of surveillance as space.

Given the fact that surveillance technology routinely reduces dimensional space to flat imagery, the idea of space as the key paradigm in exploring contemporary surveillance might initially seem absurd. However, the process is initiated by Foucault in his seminal book Discipline and Punish. Foucault used the example of a prison design by philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) – the much-discussed panopticon - in which, from a central tower, a prison guard could look out at every movement of the prisoners arranged in a circle of cells surrounding him. This model of discipline, Foucault suggested, emblematized a key shift in consciousness in the Enlightenment - a shift from a view of morality that involved graphic punishments for wrongdoing, to a sense of a self that is always subject to viewing by authority - and which therefore must forever engage in the measuring, grading and censoring of behaviour. In Foucault's reading of Bentham, the panopticon symbolizes a society thoroughly pervaded by the disciplining view. As such, for many years Foucault was considered in the academic establishment to have said all that needed to be said about surveillance, and his work in the area, while very different, with its historical basis, from that of Debord and Baudrillard, was subsumed into a general understanding that surveillance was a symptom of the specularizaton of society. However, the panopticon is, of course, irreducibly three-dimensional, and Foucault is guite definite about the distinction between surveillance and spectacle: 'Our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth . . .' (Foucault, 1991: 217). The historical trajectory described by Foucault in Discipline and Punish in fact moves away from the effects of pre-humanist display - a world of public hangings and displays of the body - towards a naturalized discipline of the self – a world in which individuals police themselves. The inhabitants of the Foucauldian prison are imprisoned and watched precisely because they have failed adequately to internalize the process of self-discipline, or self-surveillance, which is demanded of humanist man. So, Foucault's vision of a disciplined society points us towards a view of surveillance according to which the all-seeing eye may cause many things to be repressed, hidden within - where depth and questions of space are the results of the very processes of specularization.

However, the contemporary eruption of surveillance also has features which contradict the progress and process of disciplinarity found in Foucault's history. While the much vaunted capabilities of surveillance systems to identify criminal bodies could be said to maintain and extend the Foucauldian policing of the insufficiently self-disciplining subject, the technology does little to instil the kinds of normalization centralized in Foucault's account. Instead, under contemporary surveillance, we see (and we will discuss throughout the upcoming chapters) a proliferation of excess – of crimes, deaths and sexual exhibitionism.

A spatial reading of surveillance addresses this contradictory return to excessive display by asking primarily not about the effects of images, but about the lived environments produced by our interactions with surveillance recordings. With Foucault I have followed the idea that the discourse of surveillance has bodily effects, bodily products. Reading one Foucault in response to another, however, I have not assumed that these effects are necessarily normalizing, but have looked also for the possibility of heterotopias (other, alternative worlds) produced in the excess of surveillance (Foucault, 1986: 25–7).

Today's cities are not panopticons; there is no single guard in a central tower spying upon urban populations. Yet many people continue to imagine and fear one. The popular version of this figure is the Orwellian 'Big Brother'. Some authors have argued that, although Big Brother has actually never appeared, a myriad of 'Little Brothers' actually make the Foucauldian dispersal of disciplinarity throughout our surveillance society all the more complete.² Throughout this study, however, I underline the restrictive, even destructive, nature of the 'Orwellian' critique of surveillance. To the extent that Foucault's historicized analysis can be equated with this popular fear, my approach, while very indebted to Foucault, is in some ways anti-Foucauldian.

Surveillance sociology

The other primary writers on the subject of surveillance are sociologists and social scientists, a growing band, among whom Gary T. Marx and David Lyon are perhaps the most influential and longstanding. It

was writers such as Marx and Lyon who first documented the actual reach of surveillance systems into Western society. For many years they were voices crying in the wilderness, alerting us to the escalation in surveillance capabilities during a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the humanities in general, having accepted that surveillance was universalized, assumed therefore that there was little more to say on the matter (particularly as Foucault's academic star waned). Books such as Marx's Undercover: Police Surveillance in America (1988) and Lyon's The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society (1994) detailed the extraordinary proliferation of surveillance technologies and documented the ways in which such new manifestations of surveillance in turn produced new effects. Perhaps inevitably, this prophetic role fell primarily to those social analysts who were deeply worried about surveillance - particularly about the implied threat to civil liberties. Newer sociological work has sometimes taken a more open attitude to the potential cultural consequences of surveillance proliferation (see Norris et al. (1998) for a variety of perspectives). However, a reinvigorated journalism of surveillance, which has emerged after years of very limited coverage, tends to draw on the established critical sociological voices, Gary T. Marx in particular, in asserting academic justification for its concerns - recirculating the civil liberties critique at a popular level.³ In recent years, both journalists such as John Parker (2000) and campaigners such as Simon Davies (1996) have produced books which have a lot of the factual depth of the sociological work, but develop fairly simple, urgent arguments of the 'wake up and smell the surveillance' kind.

My own starting point, my engagement with the spatial productivities of surveillance, has led me to avoid the value judgements about surveillance's threat to privacy that inform and drive much of this sociological and political work. Nonetheless, my analysis owes a considerable debt to the exhaustive work done by Marx, Lyon, Norris and Armstrong and others in documenting the growth of citizen surveillance by government, police and corporate bodies in the past twenty years, and to their insistence that such proliferation has consequences far beyond the rubric under which the systems have been initiated and justified.

Unlike the sociologists of surveillance, however, I do not deal

primarily with the statistics, or even the commercial/governmental/ policing uses of the new systems. I am interested primarily in studying the cultural effects of these systems, effects which may or may not equate with the intentions of surveying institutions. To this end, I make extensive use throughout my investigation of analyses of cultural artefacts (both 'popular' and 'artistic', and without subscribing to a hierarchy or strict delineation between these categories) which engage with the materials and meanings of surveillance. It is in the analysis of such products of surveyed society that the heart of my study lies – an attempt to understand the various developments of experience, understanding and consciousness within surveyed society as evidenced by cultural activity.

Surveying space

My spatial understanding of surveillance is developed from a reading of Kant. As the canonical philosopher who most centralized space as an organizing principle – 'Space is nothing other than the form of all appearances of the external sense, that is, the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone external intuition is possible' (Kant, 1993: 52) – Kant maintains a defining position in relation to both common sense and theoretical understandings of space and perception. Obviously, a theoretically informed study written at the start of the twenty-first century is not going to take Kant's categories of intuition as immutable laws; however, the proposition that space is the fundamental *subjective* condition of perception, of knowing and understanding the external world, underlies my thinking. I have consistently returned to the question of space in analysing our understanding and experience of surveillance phenomena that may at first seem to be non-spatial by definition.

However, to discuss sound recordings, data and two-dimensional imagery – the materials of surveillance – in terms of space necessitates a complex analysis of the very areas of perception most marginalized in Kant's system. At times, particularly with respect to the key question of surveillance sound and its relations to interiority, I have teased at the edges of Kant's thought, looking for ways in which a productive contradiction between his organization of perception and the experiences of surveillance may help us understand surveillance's unexpected effects. More often, I have used subsequent thinkers as guides to a post-Kantian understanding of space as a mode of experience and knowledge.

A key figure here is Henri Lefebvre, perhaps the theorist who most thoroughly, and most unmetaphorically, extends spatial analysis beyond its relegation to the specifics of the familiar three dimensions in the post-Hegelian philosophical environment. In his typology of space – perceived space, conceived space, lived space and a hoped-for differential space – Lefebvre refuses a hierarchy between the space through which we move and the understandings of space we carry. In fact, he asserts that a dichotomy between these ways of knowing space involves and propagates a fundamental misunderstanding of the ways in which space structures our lives. His three primary categories of space, also described as spatial practice (perceived), representations of space (conceived) and representational spaces (lived), reconfigure the ways in which representation functions in our experience of space. In Lefebvre's system, representation pervades all spatial experience. Extending Kant's proposition that space is a means of structuring perception rather than a quality of the realm of noumena, of things-in-themselves, Lefebvre proposes that the secondary representations of space, marginalized in Kant's system, are intrinsic to the form of space itself. The third type of space in Lefebvre's system - lived space - is particularly employed in this study to explore the idea that our experience of space is as involved in representation as it is in dimensions.

Lefebvre's grounding in economic and social theory, and his insistence that spatial organization is not a product of economic forces but a fundamental social principle, also contributes to my analysis of the spatial effects of surveillance and to an underlying expectation that practices and products arising from a spatial understanding of surveillance may in turn influence the socio-economic structures of today's surveillance society. A reading of Walter Benjamin which emphasizes the inter-relation of image reproduction and spatial experience in twentieth-century culture interacts productively with this use of Lefebvre: Benjamin's notion of an architectural, 'distracted' cultural experience (he examines the way in which we experience and appreciate the architecture of a building – wandering through it, not staring at it) adds a resonant psychological/behavioural dimension to Lefebvre's representational space.

However, the theoretical understanding of space upon which I have most relied is something I have described as 'performative space'. The ideas behind this notion are discussed in detail towards the end of Chapter 1, but it is important to introduce the background to this concept right away.

As I have described, my focus on surveillance grew out of my use of it in the inhabited, fantastical space of theatre. In beginning to think about surveillance as a space, I was able to draw upon thinkers, such as Foucault and Lefebvre, who explore the dynamic relation between psychological/representational structures and the world thorough which we move. However, my key experience of using surveillance technology in theatre was of the way in which the presence of the technology could – immediately it was switched on, revealed or noticed – alter the very feel, the mood, the dimensions even, of the space that we were in: our lived experience of space changed as soon as the space became surveyed. It was to explore and explain the active change in space brought about by surveillance that I turned to ideas of performativity.

It is important here to emphasize the difference between performativity and theatre performance. Although my interest in surveillance and my spatial understandings of it have their roots in theatre, the notion of performativity has its origins not in theatre but in language.

My use of the term 'performative' grows out of a now canonical sequence of work by J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Austin's theory of performativity examined how 'speech acts', e.g. phrases such as 'I bet you', 'I promise you', actually do the thing their words reference – they perform rather than just describe. In her groundbreaking studies, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler not only extended the notion of performativity to an understanding of how gender is constituted, but opened up the possibility that performativity could be a key tool in a wide variety of cultural analyses. In essence, Butler argued that the apparent fact of gender is created for the child in its articulation. The moment of announcement – 'It's a boy/girl' – is not the description but the enactment of gender. However, and this is crucial for an understanding of 'performative space', the speech act is not actually necessary to this enactment of gender: the socio-cultural environment can produce

performative effects without the intention of a 'speaker' and without the conscious understanding of an 'auditor'. Butler's analysis demonstrates that performativity is independent of a subject: 'gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed' (Butler, 1990, 25; see also Butler 1997, 24).

Butler's reading of Austin is, in turn, indebted to that of Derrida, and particularly his essay 'Signature/Event/Context' (1977). While Derrida's text does not open up a vista of cultural performativity in the way that Butler's does (not least because, in Derrida, the thinking of culture other than as language is nonsensical - a characteristic of Derrida's thinking of which Lefebvre is particularly critical - Lefebvre, 1991: 5), 'Signature/Event/Context' is extremely important for the way in which it thinks through Austin's position on language performativity. Austin's own argument develops from an initial description of the performative (as opposed to the constative or descriptive) utterance – 'in which *by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something' (Austin, 1976: 12) - to a point of view according to which performativity is discovered to be a defining aspect of all language - 'there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act' (ibid.: 139). Derrida develops this argument further, arguing that language does something regardless of the presence or absence of a speaker/writer, and that part of what it does is produce effects beyond any present intention:

What holds for the receiver also holds, for the same reasons, for the sender or the producer. To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and rewritten.

(Derrida, 1977: 8)

The coherence and reach of the insight into writing summarized by Derrida in this essay and developed throughout his work also allows other areas of his thought, notably his discussion of death in *Aporias* (1993), to be very usefully employed in thinking about the performative space of surveillance. The citation of Derrida's arguments always

draws us back to the notion of performativity, to the productivity of a system which is in no way pre-dated or produced by presence.

For an understanding of surveillance as something other than simple representation of an event and place, the concept of performativity is crucial. Whereas Lefebvre complicates our view of space, allowing us to see the degree to which space is representational, the theorists of performativity enable us to separate surveillance from representational self-evidence, and to understand the degree to which it is spatially productive.

It is a distance from performativity to performance. For some (Austin and Butler) there is an irreducible gap, even a dichotomy, between the two terms. However, while the distinction is important, the relations between performative space and theatrical space in a surveillance context are also significant. Eventually, in my analysis, these two understandings of space meet in a concept of 'weakness'. Whereas performativity is often seen as having the 'force' of a doing, the stage act is famously dismissed as 'etiolated' by Austin (1976: 22), a dismissal that Butler echoes in her rebuttal of readings of gender performativity as voluntaristic (Butler, 1993: x). However, in pursuing a theatrical analysis of surveillance space alongside the theoretical development of the concept of spatial performativity, we begin to see how the two can exist alongside each other productively, the 'weakness' of performative surveillance space.

From crime to agency

The first half of this book focuses on the ways in which surveillance technology developed and proliferated in British and US society in the past two decades, with an emphasis not on an exhaustive history or sociology, but on the ways of thinking about surveillance that allowed for and were encouraged by this growth. In Chapter 1, I examine the 'ideology of crime prevention' that has largely justified the proliferation of surveillance technology. I look at the ways in which this ideology is circulated via television shows that use surveillance footage, emphasizing the degree to which these programmes are constructed to compensate for the social unease caused by the experience of being repeatedly recorded. I suggest, however, that

this unease breaks out nonetheless, showing itself particularly in a discontinuity between the reception of sound and video recordings, in the concept of 'encodedness' and in the 'misuse' of surveillance footage. I examine the concept of 'surveillance space', and look at the ways in which this space could be described as performative, introducing ideas of uptake and suspense in relation to performativ-ity as tools for understanding our various experiences of and feelings about surveillance.

In Chapter 2, I specifically undertake a critique of privacy arguments in relation to surveillance, emphasizing the degree to which these concepts are based upon a public/private binary that prioritizes a very particular set of values. Using examples from gay popular culture, media interpretations of lesbianism and disabled people's art activism, I assess the ways in which groups excluded from the public/private binary are engaging in surveillance-related practices as a means to achieve sexual and political agency. Returning to the concept of surveillance space, I use these examples to help analyse its characteristics, finding that its borders, its temporal disruptions, its separation of image from sound are defining aspects of this space.

In Chapter 3, I use the extreme example of death recorded on surveillance to push further into an examination of the characteristics of surveillance space, particularly as regards its relation to performativity. Starting with the observation that surveillance allows death to be recorded 'accidentally', I explore the ways in which the ever-present expectation of the sight of death in surveillance society is radically altering our relation to what Derrida calls this 'possibility of impossibility' (Derrida, 1993: 72). Derrida's essay *Aporias* is used here as a theoretical context for a discussion of how the expectation of an encounter with imagery of death structures surveillance culture.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I move on to a more detailed discussion of art and performance works which deal with or refer to surveillance technology. These art works are used as means to help us understand the possibilities and complexities of surveillance space. In Chapter 4, I focus on art works which are to a degree self-contained, that is to say they do not rely upon the image of the audience member or viewer for completion. I introduce the terminology of Henri Lefebvre, particularly his concept of 'lived space', space that results from the representations, associations and bodily relations structuring