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Listening–Feeling–Becoming: Cinema Surveillance

Miguel Mera

Beyond the Panopticon

Surveillance, according to Lyon, Haggerty and Ball, is the dominant organizing practice of late modernity.¹ The gathering and processing of personal data for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data has been collected raises fears about control, state and corporate powers, civil liberties, the maintenance of democracy, and the place of citizens. In this chapter, I will highlight some of the central concerns within surveillance studies and outline how these have been extended and challenged by cinematic representations of surveillance with a particular focus on the role of sound in developing sensory and embodied modes of engagement.

Surveillance has predominantly been studied within three scholarly frameworks. The first strand is based on the writing of Michel Foucault who invoked Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a prison where inmates are controlled by the knowledge that they are always being watched by guards in a central tower.² In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault argued that surveillance is a form of institutionally-driven social control that is achieved through self-regulating subjects.³ If we know we are being watched, we alter our behavior. It is a centralized, architectural, and spatial form of control that Foucault called *discipline*.⁴ The second stream derives from Gilles Deleuze's *Postscript on the Societies of Control* where he argued that the regime of institutional discipline is collapsing but the ubiquitous spread of data by and about us is a constant form of social control.⁵ It is not regulated by a central agency but by the proliferation of digital technologies and the structures working across society. This is a networked and infrastructural theory of surveillance.⁶ Deleuze

described the development of an absolute surveillance culture as a transfer from *molds* to *modulation*, a slippery environment “like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other.”⁷ The third wave combines or filters these earlier conceptual frameworks and then radiates into areas such as social sorting, participation and resistance, and “sousveillance”, a form of monitoring in which citizens watch governments from below, as a counter-concept to surveillance.⁸

Just as these theoretical perspectives have characterized the role of surveillance in society, cinema has engaged with the same thorny conceptual, ethical, technological, and societal issues. Narratives about surveillance and their recurrent tropes have increasingly appeared in feature films from the end of the Second World War onwards. Several scholars have, of course, argued that the relationship between cinema and surveillance has a much longer and more complicated heritage.⁹ Indeed, the idea that the cinematic medium is inherently voyeuristic propelled the first wave of psychoanalytic film theory.¹⁰ Christian Metz, for example, suggested that the basic condition for voyeurism was distance between the spectator and the object, “distance of the look, distance of listening”, with both sight and hearing equally considered “senses at a distance.”¹¹ Yet, I argue that in terms of proximity cinematic representations of eavesdropping are not the same as those of visual surveillance, the former frequently highlighting intimacy, the latter frequently emphasizing distance. In fact, surveillant cinematic sound often attempts to fuse subject and object. It is aurally here but visually there.¹² This conceptual and physical gap between sight and sound in cinematic representations of surveillance has often resulted in sound playing a fundamental role in negotiating bodily significance. Recent surveillance narratives, I suggest, have tried to close this gap by moving towards more intense sensory and embodied modes of representation and spectatorship. These changing modes also

reflect broader shifts in technological listening conditions and modes of production.

For Thomas Levin, there has been an historical recasting of the cinematic medium reflecting a shift from spatial to temporal indexicality which has been made evident through increasing real-time surveillance representations. Levin described this as a proliferation of the “rhetorics of surveillance.”¹³ He carefully demonstrated how the functions of surveillance and the structures of cinematic narrative have mutually shaped each other over time. This aligns with Dietmar Kammerer’s notion of the “surveillant imaginary,” which describes how culture influences, and is influenced by, social and technological change through the presentation of surveillance to itself.¹⁴ What is largely missing from these various theoretical perspectives, however, is both sound and the body. What role, then, does listening play in the changing representational practices of cinematic surveillance? How is the body implicated in the rhetorics of surveillant listening?

The central claim I hope to advance is that screen representations of surveillance initially used sound to make ‘real’ their sensational, affective impact. While this has, to some extent, been a recurrent quality in the surveillance film, the progressively commonplace use of surveillance throughout society has led to a corresponding focus on sensory representation. This evolves from cinematic modes of surveillance that act on the body to become bodies that are, literally, embedded within the surveillant structures and apparatus. At the same time, the intensifying modes of embodied surveillance representation diminish the importance of discrete listening, which becomes subsumed within that same audiovisual/body amalgam. The differing representations of surveillant listening in film, therefore, have experimented with and increasingly moved beyond notions of the Panopticon, *discipline*, and *modulation*.

Through these increasingly affective strategies, film makes ‘real’ the corporeal (the corpo-‘real’, or perhaps the corporeel).

I will trace some of the ways in which surveillance—from Watergate to post-9/11 ubiquitous dataveillance—has shifted its attention from the audible (*The Conversation*, Francis Ford Coppola, 1974; *Blow Out*, Brian de Palma, 1981), and the sensory (*Strange Days*, Kathryn Bigelow, 1995; *Enemy of the State*, Tony Scott, 1998), to the embodied (*Minority Report*, Steven Spielberg, 2002; *Déjà vu*, Tony Scott, 2006; *Source Code*, Duncan Jones, 2011). As surveillance in society has expanded and intensified, film has attempted to grapple with challenging questions of interiority and exteriority through a journey from listening through feeling to becoming. This tells us about perceptions of surveillance in society as well as the values ascribed to cinematic notions of subjectivity and the relationship between sound and sight.

Listening

It is unsurprising that the American cultural climate of the 1970s and early 1980s resulted in films that centralized sound to create what are now considered canonical surveillance movies. The widespread perception of an increased threat to civil liberties found its apotheosis in the Watergate scandal and the shocking revelation of political surveillance audio recordings. Paul Cobley explained that establishment conspiracy became a feature of American cinema of the 1970s, because “paranoia was an understandable mindset with regard to the vicissitudes of governments and corporations.”¹⁵ Two influential films from this period centralize the importance of sound, *The Conversation* and *Blow Out*. As Elizabeth Weis explained, both films

question whether it is possible to trust the objective reliability of sound recordings, and, by extension, anything we hear.¹⁶

The Conversation features a professional surveillance recordist, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman), who is especially skilled at covert dialogue recording. He is hired by an unnamed company to listen to the conversation of a couple (Ann and Mark), which he records in San Francisco's Union Square. Caul gathers, filters, and clarifies the audio evidence to present to his client and, though he claims not to care what the couple are talking about ("All I want is a nice fat recording"), he becomes increasingly fixated on trying to understand the true meaning of their dialogue. Levin considers this dramatic foregrounding to be a concrete example of a move away from thematic to structural engagement with surveillance, but it is also a move away from thematic to structural engagement with *listening*.¹⁷ Indeed, both Caul and the audience do not simply hear, they are compelled to listen. The constant re-evaluation of the recorded conversation, which returns eight times during the film, replaces narrative exposition with repetitive, obsessive aural loops. Repetition is, therefore, the fundamental mode of investigation with new information contextualizing each iteration of audio analysis. At the start of the film, Caul is something of a dehumanized incarnation of the recording apparatus, but as he listens more deeply to understand what the characters are talking about and what the consequences might be if the recording is presented to the client, he becomes more personally engaged. The intimacy of listening has a moral consequence and the act of listening humanizes Caul. The audioviewer is caught up in this increasing paranoia, trying to listen closely even when the film deliberately obscures some of its dialogue and sound. The ultimate revelation hinges on correctly identifying and interpreting a single phrase, especially the meaning of one word, in order to determine whether the couple are

potential victims or plotters: “He’d kill *us* if he got the chance.” It is a fruitful narrative device, to be sure, in that it highlights the subjectivity of sound recording, but it also challenges one of the fundamental tenets of psychoanalytic cinema scholarship.

As I have been implying, surveillant listening has a primary and vital connection with the body. Yet, for Christian Metz, distance is fundamental to the condition of voyeurism, which he argued was central to the scopic regime of cinema. The voyeur *must* maintain “a gulf, an empty space, between the object and the eye, the object and his own body.”¹⁸ The voyeur, therefore, represents the very “fracture” which necessarily separates them from the object. “To fill in this distance would threaten to overwhelm the subject, to lead him to consume the object... mobilizing the sense of contact and putting an end to the scopic arrangement.”¹⁹ But scopic distance is not the same in the modalities of sound and sight. Sound moves through our deepest cavity when we breathe. It courses through our muscles, lungs, palate, tongue, teeth, and lips when we speak. Its embodied nature is foregrounded. Writing from an equally psychoanalytic perspective, Kaja Silverman tacitly acknowledged this and argued that *The Conversation* reveals the illusion of auditory control while simultaneously problematizing what I call the corpo-‘real’: “Far from being in a position of secure exteriority to the sounds he [Caul] manipulates, his subjectivity is complexly imbricated with them—so much so that it is often impossible to determine which originate from ‘outside’ of him, and which from ‘inside.’”²⁰

The play between interiority and exteriority persists throughout the film and is primarily articulated through sound. Although Caul is emotionally and socially cocooned, he finds some kind of satisfaction and release in playing the saxophone. he does not, however, play with other people, rather he plays along with his collection of

Jazz LPs in a form of performance imitation and simulation. But Caul is not a very good saxophonist. In a scene where he improvises over a 12-bar blues, Juan Chattah outlined how the entry of the solo is late and how the chord changes are not well articulated. This “serves to elucidate one of Caul’s flaws, namely, his incapacity to decode and interpret a recording.”²¹ He is undoubtedly listening, but his embodied performance falls some way short. At the end of the film, it is revealed that Caul is himself being spied on. A recording of his saxophone performance is played back to him as a threat: “We know that you know, Mr Caul, for your own sake don’t get involved any further. We’ll be listening to you.” Caul tears apart his apartment trying to find the bug but cannot locate it. At this point, David Shire’s solo piano score is routed through an ARP 2400 synthesiser creating increasingly ‘distorted’ ring-modulation effects. We then see a long-distance surveillance camera shot and Caul retreats to his saxophone which is heard alongside an untreated ‘pure’ piano recording. Chattah notes that the “non-diegetic piano and diegetic saxophone overlap but resist to fuse.”²² There are a series of unresolved oppositions at play here, then, the acoustic and electronically modified, diegetic and non-diegetic, subjective and objective, freedom and control. The body is implicated through listening, but the gap between listening and the body remains.

If *The Conversation* maintains parallel aspects of interiority and exteriority through its use of sound, linking but not resolving the embodied relationships between surveillance and listening, *Blow Out* (1981) takes a different approach through a focus on audiovisual *synchronization* and apparatus fetishization. The neo-noir political thriller is an homage to Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blowup* (1966) but replaces photography with audio recording. Jack (John Travolta) is a sound-recordist for low-budget exploitation movies and, late one night, while capturing sound effects for a

film, he witnesses a car career off the road and into a nearby river. Jack dives into the water to save the passenger, Sally (Nancy Allen), and later discovers that the drowned driver of the car was a leading presidential candidate. Jack listens to the audio tape he recorded and thinks he hears a gunshot before the tire blow out that caused the crash. Seemingly by coincidence, a photographer, Manny Karp (Dennis Franz), has also captured the incident, and when the images are sold to a magazine, Jack splices them together into a makeshift movie that he synchronizes with the recorded sound, becoming convinced that the accident was an assassination. As the movie progresses we learn that Jack was formerly a police officer who quit after one of his wiretap operations led to the death of an undercover cop. The increasingly complicated plot involves a series of murders designed to misdirect the police and hide the political conspiracy. In the belief that she is handing over evidence of the assassination to a journalist, Sally is tricked into encountering the murderer Burke (John Lithgow). Shadowing Sally from a distance while listening to her wiretap Jack is unable to reach her in time to prevent her murder. He records her struggle with Burke and her dying scream and then takes Burke by surprise stabbing him with his own knife. In an unexpectedly shocking final scene, Jack overdubs Sally's death scream into the shower scene of a sleazy slasher movie on which he has been working.

Throughout the film, numerous scenes depict the way in which sound and images are combined, how they are reedited and remixed to reveal the objective truth. In this sense, *Blow Out* arguably attempts to restore faith in the apparatus that *The Conversation* sought to undermine, and this focus could be understood as an act of rehabilitation following the legacy of mistrust that surrounded recording technology after Watergate. This restorative move would certainly align with Jay Beck's and Gianluca Sergi's 1970s crisis historiography where they highlight a period of sound

experimentation in which “the film industry underwent a massive change in industrial, technical, and aesthetic practices that were in keeping with a growing sense of discomfort in the public sphere.”²³ The subsequent widespread adoption of Dolby Stereo reasserts industrial confidence as well as a series of standardized practices with a classically-focused hierarchy of mixing practices that are, according to Sergi, “nothing less than a comprehensive, industry-wide transformation.”²⁴ It is certainly clear that *Blow Out* fixates on the apparatus. In one extraordinary sequence the camera performs six 360-degree spins around Jack’s sound studio as he realizes that the conspiring forces have erased all his recordings. We see a multitude of tape machines and we hear increasing white noise, regular unexplained beeping, a phone that will not stop ringing, and the multiple rotating mechanisms of ‘silenced’ reel-to-reel recorders, simultaneously resonant and empty. It is not simply the apparatus that is fetishized, though, as much as the act of synchronization itself. Only by bringing together audio and visual streams is Jack able to identify a visual flash and its synchronous gunshot sound in order to prove what he only suspected beforehand. This preoccupation with the veracity of synchrony recalls Kevin Donnelly’s discussion in *Occult Aesthetics*, where he characterized a lack of synchrony as potentially disturbing for the audioviewer, with points of synchronisation between sound and image acting like moments of comfort in otherwise messy audiovisual environments.²⁵ In *Blow Out* sound receives “retrospective motivation”²⁶ when we are allowed to see its origin. It is the synchrony between sound and vision that is key to establishing the truth and making the ambiguous comprehensible.

Blow Out frequently attempts to bring sight and sound together but, as I have already suggested, there is also significant physical distance in the film’s climactic sequence, which constitutes part of its extraordinary affect. Sally’s wiretap allows

Jack to hear every aspect of the unfolding events in his earpiece. The sound is filtered through his body but he does not know the physical location of Sally and Burke. In a race against time, he desperately tries to find them in the midst of a Liberty Day Parade, the intimacy of the clandestine listening contrasted with the bombast and commotion of the parade. It is at the precise moment of Sally's scream and her murder that Jack is finally able to locate her, a sequence of physical asynchrony leading to synchrony. The carnality of the scream generates an horrific embodied shock, a sensory overload, that is paired with a distressing inability to act. See Video Example 1 [insert weblink here].

According to Michel Chion this is a classic example of a structural device that he referred to as "the screaming point."²⁷ Highlighting the gendered issues relating to mastery and control and the structural placement of what is, disappointingly, always a female scream, Chion argued that it "must fall at an appointed spot, explode at a precise moment, at the crossroads of converging plot lines, at the end of an often convoluted trajectory, but calculated to give this point a maximum impact."²⁸ For Chion this is a significant structural moment rather than a particular embodied phenomenon, but it seems to me that different aspects of scopic distance in this scene powerfully highlight both the gaps and connections between listening and feeling. It simultaneously heightens and denies the corpo-'real'.

Jay Beck observed that the primary problem of both *The Conversation* and *Blow Out* "is how audio sensations are rendered in a primarily visual medium."²⁹ Both films struggle with the problem of sensory representation, addressing the conceptual and physical gaps in different ways. Both demonstrate a clear preoccupation with surveillant listening and productively and problematically attempt to grapple with the resulting embodied distance. *The Conversation*'s use of sound

supports parallel layers of interiority and exteriority and *Blow Out* actively plays with notions of audiovisual synchrony and asynchrony. Jumping forward fifteen years, however, there are increasing cinematic attempts to bridge these kinds of gaps.

Feeling

From the early-1990s onwards the phenomenological turn in screen studies began to challenge boundaries of externality and internality, to examine the ‘immersive’ audiovisual connection to the human body, and to describe the modes of perception through which the body is enacted.³⁰ The focus of this research has primarily been visual rather than aural, let alone truly audiovisual, but there has been an increasing shift towards the scholarly disintegration of the margins between listening and feeling. This is noteworthy because it parallels the trajectory in both surveillance studies and cinematic output. As Levin observed, the surveillance cinema of the 1990s marked a period of transition between analog and digital modes and it is where cinematic narration became increasingly interleaved with surveillant narration. Kerins also highlights the transition from analog to digital exhibition technologies as a period of standardization of multichannel surround-sound practices. By 1995, for example, the Major studios had adopted an all-digital release policy.³¹ Surveillance studies, more generally, realized that the Foucauldian notion of panopticism could not account for the myriad forms of surveillance that were developed in the 1990s,³² and cinema in turn imagined a variety of representational possibilities. Thus, there is a beguiling conflation of technological, aesthetic, cinematic, theoretical, and practical concerns during this period. It is in this context that Kathryn Bigelow’s tech-noir thriller *Strange Days* (1995) provides a fascinating example of an attempt to highlight the movement from listening to feeling.

Set on the eve of the year 2000 and bristling with pre-millennial tension, the film's central conceit is that outlawed FBI surveillance technology which reproduces exact first-person audiovisual-sensory experience forms the basis of an illicit and perverted underground trade. The Super-conducting Quantum Interference Device (SQUID) consists of a lightweight, flexible mesh of electrodes and a portable recorder, and it captures an individual's perceptual experience direct from the cerebral cortex. These experiences can then be replayed with the same technology, allowing users to experiment with multiple forms of subjectivity and identity. Former cop and black-marketeer, Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes), explains: "This is not like TV only better. This is life. It is a piece of somebody's life.... I mean, you are there, you're doing it, you're seeing it, you're hearing it, you're feeling it." The plot features three murders, each with broad social implications, that coalesce around Nero.

Several scholars have noted the clear references to the Rodney King incident of 1991,³³ and Kakoudaki suggests that the film creates an "allegory out of what most would consider a tragedy or disaster."³⁴ Indeed, the film's contradictory exploration of both racial and gender issues have made it a popular case study in screen studies.³⁵ However, the importance of sound to the film's sensory strategy has been routinely ignored. Zimmer, for example, argued that the film "proposes both the SQUID and its embodied users as mechanisms of surveillance,"³⁶ and though she highlights the role of the body while examining aspects of subjectivity in relation to the first-person Steadicam sequences, there is no discussion of the role of sound. This is an important omission, because the sonic portrayal forcefully enacts the sensory; sound-design actively works to develop feeling. In an early scene, for example, Nero gives his friend and double-amputee, Tex Arcana (Todd Graff), a custom-made SQUID clip of somebody running along a beach. The enhanced sound of the splash and squelch of

each footstep in the surf provide an exquisite sense of materiality, a sensual representation of wetness and texture. This is a mode of aural expression through which the body is enacted. Arcana is thus able to feel what it is to run with legs that he no longer has. The audience is invited to experience this as if they are him. The expanded and enriched soundscape, including dynamic and directional birdsong, is presented as if it is heard from the first-person perspective of the Steadicam, a simultaneous association of hearing the sound and the sound being heard by *both* of the first-person character(s), Arcana and his ‘avatar’. This is a strategy that could be described as hyper-corpo-‘real’, a dramatically enhanced sensuous experience articulated primarily through the textural qualities of the sound. The film was mixed for 1990s digital surround formats (including Dolby Digital and SDDS) and Kerins highlights the extensive use of 360-degree panning as part of the film’s ‘immersive’ method.³⁷

The play on audiovisual subjectivity is taken to an absolute extreme in one of the film’s most disturbing scenes. Nero receives an anonymous “blackjack” clip (the SQUID equivalent of snuff) showing a rapist and murderer breaking into an apartment, which he reviews. In an horrific development, the assailant places a second SQUID on his victim, blindfolds her, and then patches her directly into his SQUID experience while he attacks her. In addition to the appalling assault itself, there is the sickening destruction of subjectivity where the victim is forced to feel what the attacker feels at the same time as she is being raped and murdered. As Bolter and Grusin put it: “She perceives herself not only as being attacked *by* a male but also as the object of her own attack *as* a male subject.”³⁸ She is, therefore, forcefully made complicit in her own violation and eventually dies from the sensory overload. It is an ultimate exploitation of power through technology. Once she is dead, the murderer

removes her blindfold, opens her eyes, and frames the ‘shot’ with his hands as if to admire his workmanship.

In this sequence of disturbingly-blurred subjectivities (Nero, murderer, victim), it is striking that the sound-design consistently enhances the first-person perspective of the attacker. Furthermore, the Foley sounds, those most clearly associated with touch and the body, are foregrounded and enhanced. Lucy Fife Donaldson observed that Foley usually involves producing a range of subtle sounds and is the “layer of the soundtrack that announces itself the least.”³⁹ But in this sequence the practice is reversed and the Foley sounds are unnaturally close and foregrounded as a means of emphasizing a proprioceptive and kinaesthetic perspective. The sound of picking locks, the electric arcing of a stun gun, the slash of a T-Shirt with a retractable-blade knife, footsteps, clothes rustles, grunts, and especially the breathing of the attacker are prominent. This heightened reversal seems like a practical attempt to reconcile Michel Chion’s problematization of the point-of-audition. He argued that the omni-directional nature of sound means that spatial point-of-audition is not really a point at all, but more of a zone.⁴⁰ It is striking that the sound-design in this scene reduces the digital-spatial potential that is exploited elsewhere in the film and which, according to Whittington, is emblematic of filmmaking in this era.⁴¹ The Foley specifically aims to narrow the spatial, subjective, and tactile perspective. Though multiple bodies are implicated, only the murderer’s experience is seen and heard. The audience is, thus, equally forced into feeling an uncomfortable and restricted audiovisual position that emphasizes their embodied complicity.

Strange Days consistently heightens feeling through the use of sound in its representation and recreation of an advanced surveillant technology. This takes the

form of first-person point-of-view Steadicam imagery and enhanced Foley sound, generating heightened sensational affect as well as clearly focused spatial and subjective aural perspectives. Bolter and Grusin argued that the film highlights contradictory pre-millennial societal drives, where contemporary culture seeks to erase all signs of mediation in the very act of multiplying them. If this is true, the immediacy in this paradoxical desire, which they described as the double logic of remediation, is insistently articulated through the use of sound as a device for evoking tactile sensations.⁴²

Enemy of the State is in many ways a much more conventional example than *Strange Days*. Nonetheless, there are still ways in which sensation is centralized compared to earlier surveillant cinema paradigms, indicating a general shift within the mainstream. The film is also especially interesting in this context because it is clearly an homage to *The Conversation*. *Enemy of the State* features a Harry Caul-like figure (who is even played by Gene Hackman) as a former surveillance expert who has been forced off-grid, and there are numerous scenes that directly reference the earlier film. However, the surveillant environment has changed so drastically between these two films that the Foucauldian notion of panoptic discipline (or at least the threat of it), as well as an efficiently-networked surveillance infrastructure, has now firmly taken hold.

The film features lawyer Robert Clayton Dean (Will Smith), who inadvertently comes into possession of a video depicting the murder of a Congressman by a director at the National Security Agency. The narrative background noise is a new piece of counter-terrorism legislation that aims to expand the surveillance powers of intelligence agencies, and the film demonstrates the full and disturbing extent of these powers. Dean is constantly observed, overheard,

analyzed, and tracked, his digital data is manipulated, his reputation is deliberately tarnished, and he is continually chased by a rogue NSA unit who are seemingly able to reshape and destroy his life at will. Dean attempts to escape the machinery of control with the help of Brill, a reclusive ex-NSA operative. The sense of paranoia at the constant and immediate surveillance is palpable. Levin identifies this film, along with numerous others in this period, as representing a shift from the spatial to the temporal, where the 'truth' is confirmed by 'real-time' representation which is supposedly not susceptible to post-production manipulation. "The fundamentally *indexical rhetoric* of cinema's pre-digital photo-chemical past thus survives in the digital age, albeit now re-cast in the form of the *temporal indexicality* of the real-time surveillant image."⁴³ It is not only the image that is significant here, of course, the sound is fundamental to the sense of oppression and omniscience.

The opening titles feature a sharply-edited collection of grainy surveillance images. There are numerous aerial shots, CCTV images, footage of violent crimes, and chase scenes. The music, by Trevor Rabin and Harry Gregson-Williams, features extensive use of digital glitch. Indeed, the surveillance glitch (arguably heard for the first time as a recording artefact in *The Conversation*) is here taken to an aesthetic extreme far beyond its traditional function as a technical marker of fragmented audio recording. The glitch is, in fact, the fundamental structural musical ingredient, not simply a disruptive element, and it governs metrical dissonance first by establishing regular repetitive patterns and then dislocating them. This draws attention to the materiality of the sound, its grain, and challenges the simple aestheticization of failure that is the recurrent trope in scholarly discussions of glitch music.⁴⁴ Here ubiquitous digital data is made tangible through the use of sound. The oppressive sense of personal data being scoured and manipulated as a powerful tool of control is given an

aural, material quality. The ‘invisible’ 1s and 0s are made ‘real’. This representational approach is further enhanced through other data-sonification strategies. For example, there are recurrent digitally-engraved sonic intertitles, which subsequently became a cliché of the genre. A phrase such as “Silverberg & Blake. Attorneys at Law. 11:30 hrs” is not presented simply as a visual description of geographical location and time, each letter is aurally imprinted with its own digital, single-tone, high-pitched ‘bleep’. A morse-code-like sonic inscription that is made physical and real. Simultaneously an earcon and a marker, it is materially etched in time and space.

The audience experiences numerous other audiovisual instances of data travelling. In one scene, where Dean foolishly telephones a colleague and gives away his location, we see a glorious tunnel of light inside a fiber-optic cable and hear the glitched flow and fizz of the digital sound. This is a process that demonstrates the transformation of Dean’s voice into digital information, the body becoming data. See Video Example 2 [insert weblink here]. In this film, even the satellites have their own sounds. As Zimmer observed, the recurrent shots of satellites in an omniscient perspective over the Earth are used as a strategy to “visually establish an individual subject from a great distance, and to find a technological means *within* the narrative for motivating crosscutting between shots that construct elaborate plot connections between spaces, peoples, events, and actions.”⁴⁵ The shots of locative satellite technology, however, always have a hyperactive and multilayered sonic characteristic: bleeps, scratches, digital glitches, fast-forward scrubs, and so on. The satellites and the data flows are presented as a living organism. The whole world of information is available and the controlled data stream is enacted by the sound. The intangible image-sign of the object is given a tactile character, so that its surface can be sensed and its materiality described.

What does this approach to tactility tell us about cinema's representational strategies in relation to surveillance? The central idea of Foucault's panopticism concerns the systematic control of human populations through subtle and often unseen forces: "the object of information, never a subject in communication."⁴⁶ The threat of being observed is the guarantee of order. In the representational strategies of the cinema throughout the 1990s the threat in those unseen forces is often heard in order to be directly felt.

Becoming

If *Strange Days* suggested the potential for a more embodied surveillant experience and *Enemy of State* demonstrated the aural-tactile promise of data, in the 2000s a series of films moved even further towards the surveillant corpo-'real'. This was an attempt to satisfy a societal and technological drive towards posthuman subjectivity. The body is no longer distant, implicated, or even partially engaged. In the age of dataveillance, post-Deleuzian notions of modulation, and societies of control, it is no longer sufficient simply to feel the cinematic representation through sound, the body must now *become* the central feature of the surveillant mechanism. This recalls Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson's influential notion of "the surveillant assemblage."⁴⁷ In their post-panoptic and posthuman line of argumentation, Haggerty and Ericson suggest that there is greater convergence of formerly discrete surveillance systems, an exponential increase in surveillance for the purposes of control, governance, security, profit, and voyeuristic entertainment by both the state and non-state organisations, and, importantly, that human bodies are abstracted from their territorial settings and reassembled into a series of discrete data flows as virtual data doubles. They consider this a form of becoming which "transcends human corporeality and reduces the body

to pure information”.⁴⁸ Traditional notions of the body are challenged, the body is inscribed with technology, rupturing formerly impenetrable boundaries. It is unsurprising, then, that we encounter a number of films, typically in the science fiction genre, that focus on sophisticated surveillant technologies and which blur the boundaries between data and the body.

An effective representation of the surveillant assemblage can be found in *Minority Report* (2002) which depicts a dystopian world of ubiquitous surveillance. The film follows the narrative trope of the individual who believes in the purity of a system until they inevitably become its victim. The Pre-Crime Unit extends the Orwellian concept of thought crime, where the intention to commit future murder can be predicted by three Pre-Cogs (Pre-Cognitives), whose psychic ‘gift’ is the result of a botched series of scientific experiments. Crimes can be foreseen but this is also a society in which no crime can be concealed. Detective John Anderton (Tom Cruise) becomes a target of the system that he directs when the Pre-Cogs predict he will murder a man he does not yet know. Furthermore, in this society, corporations appear to have significant unregulated power to understand the movement of citizens and to control consumer habits. Omnipresent retinal scans identify, track, and validate individuals. Retailers analyze buying habits in order to tailor their real-time digital marketing. At one point a ‘smart’ billboard, that has biometrically scanned Anderton, tells him, “you look like you could use a Guinness.” This is a society that promotes the illusion of individuality but in which it is impossible to be anonymous, a society where the docile population that Foucault predicted blithely acquiesces to police authority and to marketing control.

The film superficially explores philosophical questions about whether it is possible to punish somebody for a crime they have not yet committed, but it raises

more challenging issues in relation to the displacement of the individual in favor of surveillance data. The Pre-Cogs are an embodied psychic-surveillance mechanism, their mental premonitions are captured and made available for audiovisual interpretation. Using wearable-technology gloves, Anderton gesturally controls the data flows on a giant user-interface display and he scans, disaggregates, scrubs, and reassembles the material. Indeed, he becomes the embodied owner and performer of the surveillance data, it fits him like a glove. Anderton also listens to extracts of classical music, such as Schubert's Unfinished Symphony or the 2nd Mvt of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, while he undertakes his interpretative tasks. The classical music here, unimaginatively, seems to be designed to evoke the humanistic values that ultimately prevail over the authoritarian systems in such films. But it is surely no coincidence that Anderton's gestures resemble those of an orchestra conductor as he controls the holographic audio-images through his prosthetic gloves. In one of the film's most powerful sequences, he reviews the Pre-Cogs premonition of the death of Leo Crow, but is confronted by a digital version of his future self as the murderer. Anderton hears himself utter the words, "Goodbye Crow," just before he sees himself firing the gun. This is a striking representation of Haggerty and Ericson's data double, the corporeal confronting the future corpo-'real', but here enfolded into a single flesh-information amalgam. See Video Example 3 [insert weblink here].

Clearly, Metz's idea of scopic separation collapses in a scene like this. Not only are time and space brought together, but the data double is also more trusted than the physically-present real person. We can no longer speak of the "distance of the look, distance of listening," because all has been subsumed within the data-body amalgam. At the same time, however, the practice of listening also appears to have been subsumed. Classical music is used purely as 'background' music for relaxation

while Anderton works, and his interpretative acts do not focus on listening or acknowledge sound as material for analysis. For all of its visual brilliance the use of sound and the aural representation of surveillance in *Minority Report* remains relatively conventional. The heightened point of becoming, however, structurally and forcefully emphasizes intimacy between the subject and the object, the organic and the digital, and the past and the present.

Issues of surveillant embodiment are further taken up in the time-travel thrillers *Déjà vu* (2006) and *Source Code* (2011), both focusing on the use of experimental digital methods to intercept terrorist attacks. In *Déjà vu* the individual dead are reborn through surveillant time travel which ultimately creates an alternate version of the present reality. In *Source Code*, conversely, the human avatar chooses to die in the ‘real world’ in order to be reborn into a surveillant simulation, thus fully completing and simultaneously denying data’s journey towards bodily becoming. As Garrett Stewart puts it, “the virtuality of image concerns the once-human body not just mediated but *mediatized*, made sheer means of electronic transfer.”⁴⁹ These films, therefore, further entwine surveillance and the body, through the conflation and genre manipulation of science-fiction and surveillance narratives.

Following a terrorist explosion on a ferry in New Orleans, *Déjà vu* features a freshly-formed government unit whose first case is to investigate the bombing. Special Agent Douglas Carlin (Denzel Washington) is invited to join the unit and is introduced to the Snow White system, which he is told triangulates multiple satellites and surveillance streams to create a 360-degree audiovisual simulation that always runs 4 days, 6 hours, 3 minutes, and 45 seconds behind the present time. Pointing to the obvious anomaly in the explanation he has been given Carlin asks, “but which one of the seven dwarves can explain to me how you get the audio?” It is gradually

revealed, through pseudo-scientific gibberish, that the team has inadvertently worked out (sharp intake of breath) how to fold space-time creating an Einstein-Rosen bridge (or a wormhole) and that they can, theoretically, send objects into the past.

The important point for our analysis is to note the shift in terms of the cinematic representation of the surveillant assemblage. Time travel has not only become synonymous with surveillance, but the technological and aesthetic possibilities command so much faith that we are not only able to see, listen, and feel, but also to transform the past in cathartic wish-fulfilment. The surveillant body and ‘reality’ are blurred to the point that they are indistinguishable. It is possible, in fact, to send a human being back through time to prevent a terrorist explosion. We can even bring the dead back to life. The ethos of re-vivification is most clearly represented in the character of Claire Kuchever (Paula Patton) who first appears in the film as a corpse that Carlin encounters at an autopsy. She is subsequently shown in photographs, then temporally re-animated as a kind-of past-surveillant hologram within the Snow White system, and finally she is born again from her erstwhile corpo-‘real’ becoming. At the end of the film Carlin also appears to be re-born in an unexplained parallel time strand, obviously to allow for the romantic coupling that the narrative has forcefully been pushing towards. It is hard to take this, given that Carlin’s connection with Kuchever has primarily been as a digital voyeur. The film tries to present it as love across time, but it really seems more like hyperreal stalking. In terms of the cinematic representational strategy, the data double, it seems, is no longer doubled at all. The surveilled is real and the real can also be transformed into the surveilled, they are one and the same. Data and flesh can be transferred, re-animated, or duplicated across time and space. *Déjà vu* may not be a great film but it does centralize some important questions about embodiment that are central to post-

Deleuzian surveillance studies. Garrett Stewart noted that the film shows how the “continuous optical becoming of cinema has found its full ontological correlative in the time-warp miracle of this screened past.”⁵⁰ But what has happened to the act of listening? Stewart argued that “*Déjà vu* has closed the distance between surveillance and spectacle, document and immersive environment.”⁵¹ This is true, but in doing so, it has also closed the gap between discrete listening and scopic visual distance. In the age of dataveillance sound has become less central.

Although there are numerous parallels with *Déjà vu*, *Source Code* goes even further into the blurred territories of the surveillant corpo-‘real’. Sean Cubitt classifies it within a subgenre that he calls “irreality films,” where characters no longer find themselves in a virtual reality but discover that the world is a data construct and that reality itself is unreal.⁵² The film features injured U.S. Army pilot Captain Colter Stevens (Jake Gyllenhaal) who is kept alive on a life-support system so that his cerebral cortex can be activated from the residual neural traces of a man who died in a commuter-train explosion. The “Source Code” allows Stevens to re-experience the eight minutes before the blast as the victim, Sean Fentress, and Stevens-as-Fentress is sent to learn the identity of the bomber in order to prevent a further disaster. Stewart argues that the film sets “the audio-optic sensorium of the human body itself as rewired transmission device.”⁵³ But whose body? The film’s constructed layers feature the comatose real Stevens, the avatar of the real Stevens, and the avatar of Stevens’ avatar, Fentress, who is technically dead but has been re-embodied as Stevens. These digital palimpsests exploit the liminal spaces between life and death, real and unreal, subjective and objective, and past and present. The repeated eight-minute simulations are obviously supposed to be slippery, but the digital layers are

not a representation of the data double as much as a post-surveillant invasion of the dead-body snatchers.

The influence of open-world video games is also evident in the film's recurrent exploration of the train environment in order to identify the bomber.⁵⁴ This allows the same sequence to be re-played with different conversations and interactions as new information is discovered and revealed. The biggest reveal, however, which could be described as an act of aural dematerialization, is what Stewart calls the "duped track."⁵⁵ Towards the end of the film we see Stevens' bodily remains in a tank with electrodes attached to his dismembered torso and decimated brain. Throughout the film we have heard him speaking to his handlers, but suddenly we are made to realize that his 'voice' has been transmitted, all along, purely as scrolling text on a computer screen. We have been manipulated into believing what we hear, an embodied vocal performance that never really existed.

This is one of the film's many ghostly strategies to generate deliberately blurred boundaries that fuse and confuse the surveilled simulation(s) with representations of reality. At the end of *Source Code*, Stevens identifies the bomber who is then captured in the real world before he is able to detonate a second dirty bomb in Chicago. Stevens then persuades his handler, Colleen Goodwin (Vera Farmiga), to send him back into the "Source Code" and in this final attempt he saves the passengers on the train by disarming the bomb and capturing the bomber, remaining in that supposedly virtual world. This means, in one bodysnatching reading, that Stevens deliberately overwrites Fentress with his own consciousness. Indeed, not only is Fentress killed, but his murderer carries on impersonating him in order to steal his girlfriend. She unknowingly seems to prefer her new man: "I always

knew he was a keeper.” Colter Stevens’ fairy tale ending is Sean Fentress’ unhappy premature synaptic death.

As this all appears to be a simulation, the moral and ethical consequences are perhaps somewhat less marked, but at the same time Stevens does seem to prevent the original train bombing in the real world. Or is that also a simulation? At the very end the disemboweled ‘real’ Stevens appears to be alive, or at least not totally brain dead, even though Goodwin has switched off his life support, and a voice-over from Stevens in the ‘real’ post-simulation world (but this cannot be an actual embodied voice, can it?) tells her to look after the ‘real’ Stevens. There are so many blurred levels working and networking here that it is impossible to determine what is virtual and what is real, and we cannot be sure whether it is simultaneously none or all of these things. At every level, however, surveillant data and the body are thoroughly imbricated.

The issues raised by these more recent film examples are challenging and engaging ones. *Minority Report*, *Déjà vu* and *Source Code* imagine new forms of surveillance and their associated moral problems, but they also frequently assemble and disassemble the body, intermingling various forms of data with a state of digital becoming. Going beyond Thomas Levin’s notion of the shift from spatial to temporal indexicality within surveillant cinematic representation, therefore, we have moved steadily towards bodily indexicality. These corpo-‘real’ aesthetics demonstrate the fluidity of surveillant data within and beyond our current societal structures. It is also clear that listening is no longer highlighted as a distinct sense. In earlier manifestations of the surveillance film the body was clearly implicated through the act of listening, but there was always a gap between listening and the body. As the

surveillant assemblage has increasingly taken hold, the body has been rebuilt in a series of virtual data doubles in which the act of listening has been subsumed.

Conclusions

This chapter began by invoking Jeremy Bentham's notion of the Panopticon. The ubiquity of surveillance mechanisms and their increasing convergence goes far beyond what Bentham could have imagined and raises numerous important questions about how we understand freedom and control. The 2013 exposure by Edward Snowden of clandestine global surveillance programs involving governments and telecommunications companies revealed several strands of secret surveillant activity, but we also see increasing evidence of meddling in national elections, hashtag poisoning, and the use of twitterbots to accentuate polarized identities and organise people into like-minded groups. These kinds of unseen and unheard practices can be made more evident through cinema's surveillant imaginary, not only as an anxious reflection on abuses of power but also as a remediation process that helps construct the world in which we live.

This chapter has attempted to rehabilitate the importance of both sound and the body within cinematic surveillance studies, and it has shown how representations of surveillant listening have changed over time. This has allowed us to reconsider some of the traditions and trajectories of both film and surveillance studies, as well as the practical and technical application of surveillance in culture and within cinematic representations of society. I have argued that there is distinct embodied intimacy generated through the act of listening within surveillance narratives which attempts to heighten affect and sensation and also challenges some of the notions of distance exemplified by classic psychoanalytic cinema theory. As if to wrestle with the

inconsistencies of supposed interiority and exteriority, as well as the conceptual and physical gap between sight and sound, cinematic representations of surveillance have shifted from tactile uses of sound acting on the body to eventually become bodies that are established within the digital apparatus of surveillance. As part of this progression discrete listening dissolves. The gaps between listening and feeling are closed in a process of becoming where digital surveillance and the body are indistinguishable. Surveillant sound and image are incorporated into the body and have become definitively corpo-‘real’.

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¹¹ Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 59.

¹² For example, as a function of the recording process and the modes of cinematic representation, eavesdropping is always heard 'close up', whereas visual surveillance is frequently associated with low-quality CCTV footage filmed from extreme angles to emphasize the disturbance caused by spying on and being spied upon. I am also mindful, here, of Jean-Luc Nancy writing. In *Listening* he argued that, "To be listening is to be *at the same time* outside and inside, to be open *from* without and *from* within, hence from one to the other and from one in the other." (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 14.

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