Introduction

Surveillance Cinema in Theory and Practice

In Paris, a video camera’s unblinking gaze fixes on the exterior of a bourgeois home and eventually leads to the disintegration of two families. An American labor attorney sprints through a Washington, D.C., high-rise hotel as he evades satellite surveillance and NSA assassins seeking to cover up the political murder of a congressman. A webcam in Portland documents the torture and death of kidnap victims, while each visitor to the host website hastens the death of the subject and each site “hit” thus becomes a literal act of violence. A terrorist attack in New Orleans is prevented by an experimental surveillance technology and a heroic federal agent—at the attack has already taken place. And in a series of basements, warehouses, hotel rooms, and remote cabins throughout the world, myriad individuals and organizations dedicate themselves to the development and use of complex video surveillance systems for elaborate torture scenarios.

The above film plots represent only a fraction of the narrative focus on surveillance technologies that has become increasingly common since the 1990s in a variety of cinematic arenas, in these examples ranging from European “art” cinema to American action-thrillers and the global reinvestment in horror. Works such as Enemy of the State, Rising Sun, The End of Violence, Closed Circuit, Vantage Point, The Bourne Ultimatum, Déjà vu, Surveillance, Minority Report, Sliver, Caché, The Wire, Homeland, and The Lives of Others all organize their narratives entirely around surveillance technologies and practices, while others such as the Saw series, District 9, Body of Lies, Lost Highway, Panic Room, Snake Eyes, and innumerable contemporary action-thrillers utilize surveillance technologies as a frequent narrative or stylistic device. Taking as a starting point the millennial surge in films and television series organized around and by surveillance technologies, in conjunction with the ever-
widenning role of surveillance in contemporary democratic state power, consumer economies, and daily social interactions, this book examines how technology and narrative have come together in cinematic form to play a functional role in the politics of surveillance.

Far more than just cultural symptoms of what is increasingly called a “surveillance society,” films about surveillance do both ideological and practical labor by joining the form and content of surveillance practice in a narrative structure. Surveillance techniques and technologies, from closed-circuit television to global positioning systems, and cinematic techniques and technologies, from continuity editing to camera movement, coalesce as narrative logic. What I call “surveillance cinema” is not simply the recurring tropes or iconographies of surveillance as films emerge alongside developments in surveillance politics, technologies, and social history, though that is certainly part of the history of surveillance in cinema. Rather this book addresses the multiple mediations that occur through the cinematic narration of surveillance, through which practices of surveillance become representational and representational practices become surveillant, and ultimately the distinctions between the two begin to fade away. “Cinema”—here broadly defined as the thematic and stylistic elements of individual films and the historical constitution of cinematic genre conventions, as well as the economic and industrial media complex surrounding any given film—is thus considered as a functional element of “surveillance,” also broadly defined. Cinematic narratives of surveillance have informed and been informed by multiple aspects of actual surveillance: technological instances range from satellite imaging to consumer video recording, while related political iterations range from contemporary counterterrorism and national security to the trial of LAPD officers for their “caught on tape” assault of Rodney King in 1991. As video surveillance has diversified and multiplied in form and use throughout personal and social worlds, its incorporation into film as trope and technique has become commonplace. Video imagery occupies cinematic space so prevalently that the ambiguous middle ground of a hypermediated, “reflexive” film begins to appear more as a rule than an exception. GPS, satellite imaging, consumer tracking and targeting, and peer-to-peer monitoring also merge with cinematic formations at numerous levels: from editing principles, camera angles, and character development to spectatorship
and global marketing. Analyses of the aesthetic and structural elements of surveillance narratives in historical terms demonstrate that the cinematic mediation of surveillance is part of a framework that organizes, in often reversible relations, subjective formations through technological, political formations through cultural, and functional formations through representational.

To say that these elements are organized and structural, however, is not to indicate that they are always seamless, effective, or logical. Thus, even with the ideological and practical labor that cinematic surveillance narratives perform, such narratives, in order to function as narratives, also frequently betray premises such as evidentiary truth, verifiable identity, and logical chronology upon which surveillance functions politically and socially. The simplest investigation stories demand miscues and ambiguities, evasions and misinterpretations. While the “truth” frequently emerges as narrative closure in a detective drama, such truths maintain a provisional status in the face of the narrative process that designs suspense—definitively—to resist such closure. Science fiction tales of fantasy surveillance technologies so powerful that they can monitor and alter both past and future encounter the paradoxes and circular logics of the time travel narrative: thus the fantasies of omniscience, preemption, and prevention that have rationalized much of U.S. surveillance and security practice, while mirrored in cinematic science fiction, are also exposed as fantasies built upon a structure that can do nothing else but fold in on itself. Time emerges as a force that defies the logic of power.

Despite the manner in which such surveillance narratives thus often exceed the terms that they set, the analytical frameworks by which cinema and surveillance have both been understood, particularly in relation to one another, have often been taken for granted. Psychoanalytic conceptions of voyeurism and Foucault’s account of panopticism have dominated explanations of a variety of disparate surveillance-themed narratives, even as discussions of surveillance in other arenas have developed profound engagements between these and other theoretical models. In discussions of cinema in particular, the voyeuristic model has been trenchant. A greater attention to the historical specificity of the surveillance/cinema relationship reveals that such accounts must themselves be historicized, and more importantly, that the manner in
which surveillance cinema has been narratively (and extranarratively) organized around issues ranging from temporality to online social networking, means that the forms and functions of such narratives exceed the bounds of any single explanatory structure. This book thus provides an account of the most significant trends in recent cinematic surveillance narratives, as well as a theoretical and historical reexamination of the relationship between cinema and surveillance that takes into consideration the formal elements of film narrative, the technological bases of both cinema and surveillance, and recent critical discussions of surveillance, particularly as related to the “war on terror,” racial projects, and contemporary digital economies.¹ Through these considerations, Surveillance Cinema connects film studies with the growing field of surveillance studies, which, though an extremely compelling model of interdisciplinary work, has at this point surprisingly little crossover with cinema studies arenas.

Cinema History, Surveillance History

Beyond the attention paid to surveillance in recent cinema, and the clear debt cinematic surveillance narratives owe to literary imaginings of surveillance cultures (most obviously represented by Orwell’s 1984), surveillance has been both a theme and practice of cinema from its origins and antecedents. The visual technologies associated with cinema are intimately connected with surveillance practice and the production of knowledge through visibility, even as “cinema” exceeds categorization as a purely visual medium. Alan Sekula and others have shown in their scholarly accounts that visual mediation, particularly photography, was central to the production of modern forms of identity and identification, both normative and deviant.² And, following Foucault and Weber, it is this emergence of identification and categorization that Christian Parenti, in his popular account of surveillance history in the United States, traces as the genealogy of contemporary surveillance culture. In combination with fingerprinting and Bertillonage (bodily measurement and typing), photography “extended and enhanced state power, operating at two levels: defining and constructing social types, and identifying individuals.”³ The production of the body as visible, measurable, and categorizable is one of the defining facets of both surveillance practice
and modern subjectification. And while it is important not to conflate cinematic practice with that of still photography, as an essential element of cinematic production the historical uses of the photograph weigh on those of moving images.

Most exemplary of the relationship between photography and cinema is the late-nineteenth-century “series photography” of Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, used in their respective studies of motion that are most often cited as the immediate precursors to cinema. As a middle ground between still photographs and motion pictures, these attempts to measure and record the movement of both animal and human bodies are a part of the biometric practices accumulating around the body in multiple discursive fields at that time. The motion studies of Muybridge and Marey have been the topic of many analyses emphasizing the scientific and epistemological origins of cinema, perhaps most famously in Hard Core, Linda Williams’s seminal account of pornography, in which she declares, “[T]he desire to see and know more of the human body—in this case to answer ‘academic questions’ of the mechanics of body movement—underlies the very invention of cinema.”

And as Lisa Cartwright has succinctly argued in her book on medicine and visual culture, “[T]he cinematic apparatus can be considered as a cultural technology for the discipline and management of the human body, and . . . the long history of bodily analysis in medicine and science is critically tied to the history of the development of the cinema as a popular cultural institution and a technological apparatus.”

Broader accounts of the cinematic apparatus, most famously those of Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean-Louis Baudry in the early 1970s, also emphasize the ideological underpinnings of the technological or scientific aspects of cinema. Comolli’s “Technique and Ideology” and “Machines of the Visible,” among other works, argue that the production of the world as visible was and is a part of the appropriative projects of colonialism and capitalism, and that even cinema’s most basic technologies are implicated in such projects. The discourse of indexical realism that has surrounded photography and cinema has served as a disavowal of the ideological elements of both the technologies and uses of those technologies. Such realist claims around cinematic representation are inevitably tied to the evidentiary value afforded photographic, filmic, and, more recently video imagery within the realm of surveillance. Viewed
alongside the discourse of realism, the biometric aspects of cinema’s technological history and their more direct relationships to histories of bodily identification and management are in some ways simply the most obvious instances of much broader ideological and technological relationships between cinema and modern surveillance. Though it is reductive to view cinema as performing any one role (or even referring to any one phenomenon), the accumulation of historical, technological, and discursive coincidences between cinema and surveillance emerges as less than coincidental. The inseparability of technology and ideology in both cinema and surveillance—and the fact that the technologies and ideologies of each have been coextensive from the beginning—demonstrates that the historical emergence of cinema is deeply implicated in the production of a visible world that is increasingly recognized as the emergence of a modern, “global” culture defined by mediation and surveillance.

Surveillance has also been thematically present in film from the beginning, in one way or another, even before narrative came to dominate cinematic production. As film scholar Thomas Levin has pointed out in his influential essay on surveillance in cinema, one of the first films ever made—the Lumière Brothers’ Sortie d’usine [Workers Leaving the Factory] (1895)—was a film of the Lumières’ own employees, and thus a form of workplace surveillance. The phenomenon was certainly not limited to this early experiment. In the United States in 1904, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company produced a series of films showcasing the operations of various factories of the Westinghouse Works. However benign in these early incarnations, the monitoring and control of the workplace has become one of the most predominant forms of surveillance. Even the documentary impulse behind the majority of the Lumière actualité productions is on a certain level logically inseparable from the evidentiary claims of the visual surveillance that were to follow. It is thus not surprising that Workers Leaving the Factory, a celebration of the Lumière industry both in front of the camera and in the medium itself, would find itself quoted by the video surveillance now ubiquitously positioned at the threshold of the vast majority of businesses, be they corporate, industrial, family-owned, urban or suburban, and so on.

While the early Lumière productions were exemplary of the documentary functions of the new cinematic technology, other early explo-
rations were more spectacular and performance driven, particularly in the United States. And as these performances assumed a narrative form, themes of surveillance soon followed. Early shorts such as Grandma’s Reading Glass (1900), As Seen through a Telescope (1900), and Photographing a Female Crook (1904) incorporate visual technologies onscreen and reflexively thematize the act of watching (in the case of Photographing a Female Crook, explicitly for the purposes of identification). Beyond these reflexive examples of voyeurism narratives and/or those focusing on visual apparatus as narrative devices (which remain a staple of surveillance cinema), the first ten years of cinema saw the Edison Company regularly churning out “caught in the act” stories, implicitly casting both the construction of cinematic narrative and cinematic technology as a revelatory device around crime and sexuality in particular. Such films as Interrupted Lovers (1896), Tenderloin at Night (1899), The Chicken Thieves (1896), Grandma and the Bad Boys (1900), Why Mrs. Jones Got a Divorce (1900), Subub Surprises the Burglar (1903), The Kleptomaniac (1905), The Burglar’s Slide for Life (1905), and numerous others show a variety of sexually and criminally illicit behaviors as accessible (and at times punishable) by the motion picture camera, in the service of effects ranging from “simple” spectacle to comedy, adventure, and, occasionally, social commentary. Tom Gunning has noted in his essay on photography, detective fiction, and early cinema that “[t]he camera recording the very act of malefaction appears in drama, literature, and early film before it was really an important process of criminal detection.”10 These early films laid the groundwork for cinematic genres to come, but they also mapped formations of both surveillance narrative and surveillance practice that are often considered more contemporary: “While the perfection of video has now made the recording of a crime a pervasive and effective form of surveillance (as well as a form of media entertainment), a fascination with photographic evidence of misdeeds seems to predate considerably its widespread application in reality.”11 Though Gunning is addressing cinematic and literary works that explicitly incorporated photography and motion picture cameras into their narratives, I would extend the point to include all those early films presenting an illicit act as their focus, and argue that both the nondiegetic motion picture camera and the drive toward narrative are also structured around the surveillant capacities of cinema.
The technical structure of these films is retroactively familiar in this light: the camera is placed in the scene before the actors appear and the crime takes place; it waits for them and captures the action that unfolds. What were then limitations on camera movement and editing practice appear in retrospect extremely similar to the look of a stationary surveillance video camera positioned to wait for something to occur in front of it. Even with the elaborate forms of editing and camerawork that have developed in narrative cinema since these “crude” early examples, it is still basic continuity practice to place the camera in a location and begin the shot so that it precedes and anticipates (if only by a second) the entry of characters or occurrence of action in that space. This is just one of numerous formal elements that tie cinematic representation to surveillant. As Dietmar Kammerer points out in “Video Surveillance in Hollywood Films”: “The techniques of editing and montage in cinema rely on the same principles that can be found in any surveillance system. Therefore, even if cinema and TV have in the last years started to incorporate CCTV into their formats, plots, storylines, the relation between these ‘texts’ of popular cultures and this technology of surveillance is not a simple one.” In many ways, the “caught on tape” forms of both surveillance practice and entertainment characteristic of later-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century televisual media, based on the increasing ubiquity of video, are forms that preceded video surveillance by over half a century.

The prescience of cinematic narrative formations around surveillance continued in ever more specific forms, perhaps culminating in the silent era with Fritz Lang’s representation of what appears to be closed-circuit television in *Metropolis* (1927), an image and narrative usage that precedes the emergence of the television apparatus by ten years (and of course it was even longer until televisual technologies would be deployed in such an explicitly surveillant capacity). Following Gunning, I would argue that the “caught on tape” phenomenon, a form that has had not just cultural but political and legal effects, is suggested by cinema history to be a narrative conceit of film, as well as a basic function of continuity practice, long before it was an operational mode of surveillance technology. However, it is also true that, as Kammerer states, “there is no simple cause-and-effect relation between these two [surveillance and cultural texts],” and thus even in reevalu-
ating chronological history we should not assume that one is merely reflecting the other. From the simplest narratives of early cinema to the most complex psychological, aesthetic, philosophical, and political explorations of contemporary film, narration and surveillance continued to intersect in dynamic and structurally significant ways. For instance, a number of these early crime films were also chase films, such as *Stop Thief* (1901), *A Desperate Poaching Affray* (1903), *Daring Daylight Burglary* (1903), and most famously *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Theorists and historians of early cinema such as Noël Burch have discussed how integral the chase film was to the development of the basic techniques of narrative cinema, with Burch going so far as to claim that “institutional continuity was born with the chase, or rather the latter came into being and proliferated so that continuity could be established.” Within this argument, the continuity editing that became definitional of narrative cinema as it allowed smooth and motivated transitions between spaces does not serve merely to promote the surveillant capacities of cinema; cinematic continuity—and thus narrative—is predicated on visualizable crime and discipline. These early films anticipate the way more recent action-thrillers like *Enemy of the State* (1998) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007) would incorporate surveillance into their continuity devices as a narrative technology in a manner that has now become standardized. What in the early unedited films is simply the capture (and production) of a crime and chase on film becomes in more recent examples the narrative inclusion of satellites, global positioning systems, and closed-circuit television in order to motivate, advance, and legitimate fast-paced cross-cutting that establishes complex narrative connectivity, as will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Three. Once again, the technologies of surveillance seem primarily to serve the devices of narrative as cinematically defined: the ability to visually track individuals over space and time was presented as the domain of cinematic narrative long before such a possibility would be offered by satellite and GPS, and such tracking would in turn be reincorporated into cinema as narrative style.

Despite their part in the development of lasting continuity systems, these early films simultaneously reveal that even as the camera might stage, expose, chase, and capture an illicit act or figure, the visual production of these moments and subjects hardly functions as a structure
of seamless disciplinary efficiency—in fact it is rife with contradictions and slippages, and these slippages are often produced by the same mechanisms that function as surveillant. The ambiguities that come to define even some of the simplest early surveillance narratives establish the field of cinematic visibility as a highly contested one, particularly around structures of identity. In *Photographing a Female Crook*, for instance, the moving image serves to humorously establish the failure of the still photograph to “capture” the criminal, as the subject contorts her face into unrecognizable form every time the police try to snap a mug shot. *The Old Maid Having Her Picture Taken* (1901) similarly builds its humor on the failure of photography to capture the image of a woman, presenting a number of mishaps in a photo shoot that culminate in the camera exploding in a puff of smoke. Because these cinematic texts poke fun at the work of still photography, they might seem to suggest that the moving image we are watching is more “in the know” than the photograph. However, they cannot help but also serve to humorously undermine the production of identity through visual technologies in general.16

In fact, while “caught in the act” and chase premises were frequent narrative tropes, misunderstanding and mistaken identity were equally as common. A variety of comedic situations in these early films are predicated on the play between visibility and knowledge (both for the films’ characters and the films’ spectators), particularly as related to gendered and racial identities and transgressions. The Edwin Porter film *The Unappreciated Joke* (1903), for instance, presents a man reading something comical on a streetcar who fails to notice that his companion has disembarked and has been replaced by a woman. She becomes scandalized and outraged when the man, not looking up, slaps her on the knee and otherwise physically molestes her in the belief that he is enjoying a joke with his male friend.

At times, the “caught in the act” films and the misunderstanding films become one and the same: the Edison Company produced, for instance, a series of “Bad Boys” films, in which the eponymous characters engage in a number of hijinks. In one such film described by the Edison catalog, *The Bad Boys’ Joke on the Nurse* (1901), a nurse sleeps while holding an infant. An old man sleeps across the room from her. As they slumber, the unblinking camera offers to the cinematic spectator what the characters are unaware of: the “bad boys” sneaking in and taking the infant from the
nurse and placing it in the sleeping old man’s arms. Upon awakening, the nurse attacks the older man for kidnapping and the police march them both off. The structure of the narration and the comedy are here predicated on the camera providing information to the spectator that exceeds that made available to the characters. In this case, and in *The Unappreciated Joke*, the surveillant capacities of the motion picture camera assure that, while the narrative may turn on misunderstanding, particularly as regards identity and social norms, the technology and the spectator know all, and the joke is only on the characters within the film.

But this is certainly not always the case, and the misunderstandings and mistaken identities soon developed to also make the visual mastery of the moving-image camera and cinematic spectatorship the crux of the joke. One of the most famous instances of this is Porter’s *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903), which couples a narrative of sexual impropriety with a racial punch line: in this film, a white woman on a train who is being sexually harassed replaces herself with her black maid as the train goes through a tunnel and the screen goes dark—the white male aggressor finds himself kissing the black woman as the scene becomes visible again to both the characters in the film and the spectators. In this case, racial visibility and cinematic technology become one and the same, and the joke is predicated on the failure and then reestablishment of both. The use of cinematic narrative and technology in this film symptomatically highlights the intersections of race, sexuality, and visibility, intersections that have been addressed in a number of contexts; within a discussion of surveillance it is clearly also salient insofar as race in particular has been historically produced as visual and visible through surveillance practices and technologies.¹⁷

The stakes of such production become clearer if we return to the “caught in the act” and chase films. In the context of the construction of blackness in early cinema, film scholar Jacqueline Najuma Stewart provides an in-depth analysis of the 1904 film *A Nigger in the Woodpile*, which establishes both narrativity and racialized criminality as part and parcel of the visible field offered by cinema. As Stewart describes it,

*A Nigger in the Woodpile* hinges upon the disguise and exposure of acts of Black transgression, as well as white retaliation, as seen by the camera, the viewer, and the characters in the film. When the film opens, two white
farmers know that Blacks have been stealing their wood, even though they, and the viewer, have not yet witnessed this act; Black criminality is the already understood subtext of the action before a single Black figure has appeared. . . . The film constructs a scenario around a common slang expression, “a nigger in the woodpile,” and takes it beyond its colloquial usage. The saying . . . refers to a situation involving something suspicious and/or concealed. In the film bearing this title, there are, literally, two niggers (Black men) sneaking into a woodpile; as such, there is no need to narratively motivate their criminal actions. The “niggers” presented in this film confirm the popular expression by embodying its literal and figurative meanings. These characters are not the only “niggers in the woodpile” operating in the film—there is also the sick of dynamite the white farmers have concealed inside one of the logs to expose the thieves. Thus, A Nigger in the Woodpile plays with the stereotype of Black criminality by multiplying the meaning of the title to signify the identity of the criminals, the scene of the crime, and the means of their exposure and punishment.18

In the context of “caught in the act” and chase plots, Stewart’s account of the signifying work of this film shows those tropes operating alongside and through the construction of race in the United States. Stewart’s description of the assumptions that go into an effective reading of the multiplied meanings within the film’s title is uncannily similar to a description of the historical surveillance and policing of the black population, which served to produce identifiable visual markers around black identity, establish surveillance around an assumption of black criminality, and use that surveillance to expose and discipline. In other words, the multiplication of meaning in the film, which becomes the narrative structure, is identical with the purposes and practices of surveillance, particularly in regard to racial projects and the construction of the black subject.

Christian Parenti’s history of surveillance in the United States has shown the project of identification, even before photography and cinema, to be a definitively and violently racial one, initially emerging to assist in the monitoring and capture of escaped slaves: “The Gazette . . . ran an average of 230 runaway notices a year during the eighteenth century, and all of them had one thing in common: they sought to identify people who, as slaves, supposedly had no identity. In other words, the
master class was forced to develop not just methods of terror but also a haphazard system of identification and surveillance. The result was in many ways the imprint of modern everyday surveillance. Citing slave patrols, the slave pass, and wanted posters as the three key methods of monitoring and enforcement, Parenti demonstrates that the lineage of police enforcement and the production of bodies as informationally and visually identifiable is directly traceable to the production and maintenance of a slave economy. Surveillance is thus, at its origins, designed to produce identity along racial lines, while at the same time disavowing identity in order to maintain the racialized subject as object.

As Stewart shows in her above analysis, cinematic narratives organized around race were engaged in a similar, even contiguous project, producing the black figure as an identity that is without identity: a signifier upon which the narrative can turn. However, the multiplicity of meanings that Stewart addresses in her analysis of _A Nigger in the Woodpile_ suggests that even in a film that explicitly seeks to establish and punish the black subject, the narrative production of criminality and discipline is predicated on meanings being multiplied, and thus, in many ways, rendered unstable. As the tropes of early cinema testify, the production of identity through surveillance narratives often betrays the ambiguity of surveillance-defined visibility, undermining the logic of both race and visual surveillance simultaneously. Close analysis of these narrative devices, themselves so intimately connected to the purposes and capacities of surveillance, can serve to expose the logic (both functional and failed) of surveillance practices, and their frequent, equally unstable, use as racial projects.

Cinema Studies, Surveillance Studies

With so many technological, political, historical, and structural intersections between cinematic form and surveillance practice, it should be clear that the history of “surveillance and cinema” is just beginning to be written, and will take many shapes. And as I will show in the chapters that follow, these intersections occur at multiple levels simultaneously, extending into technical experimentation, media marketing and consumption, and the cinematic writing of our own surveillance histories and futures, as evidenced by films from _The Conversation_ to _Zero Dark
Thirty, *Metropolis* to *Minority Report*, *Rear Window* to *Strange Days*. Whether one is referring to explicitly fact-based films that seek to recount the use of surveillance in specific historical moments, or films that are part of the technological and ideological fantasies accumulating around surveillance practice in different historical contexts, the history of “surveillance cinema” does not refer to a readily identifiable genre, trope, style, technology, or theme. Instead the history of surveillance and cinema must be understood as a dynamic formation through which representation and surveillance serve as mutually structuring.

Given the complexity involved in tracing such a history, one would imagine that the treatment of surveillance narratives on a critical and theoretical level would of necessity be diverse and dynamic. The surveillance narratives of the early years of film alone demand conceptual models that attend to, among many other aspects: the complexities of racial formations in the cinematic era, the technological variations of both surveillance practice and cinematic representation, and quite broadly, the political, philosophical, and scientific discourses that weave notions of “truth” in between phenomenal “reality” and aesthetic “realism.”

While a great deal of scholarship on surveillance in cinema has been hampered by a certain theoretical uniformity, there has been some notable work on surveillance from cinema studies scholars on the relations between cinematic form and surveillance. Thomas Levin in particular has urged a consideration of the increasing integration of film analysis and surveillance studies through his examination of how cinematic narrative has formed itself around what he terms “rhetorics of surveillance.”21 Going so far as to suggest that “cinematic narration could be said, in many cases, to have effectively become synonymous with surveillant enunciation as such,” Levin’s focus on the move in cinema from a “thematic to a structural engagement of surveillance” is foundational for my own study, even as the structural elements on which we focus diverge.22 Levin’s analysis of the use of “real time” surveillance structures within cinematic narrative to argue that “cinema has displaced an impoverished spatial rhetoric of photo-chemical indexicality with a thoroughly contemporary, and equally semiotically ‘motivated’ rhetoric of *temporal indexicality*” points to the way that the discourse of and about cinema is increasingly defined in reference to principles of surveillance.23
Other significant facets of surveillance and cinema have been highlighted by both surveillance and film scholars, whose work serves as scaffolding for this present study. Surveillance scholar Dietmar Kammerer’s essay “Video Surveillance in Hollywood Movies” reiterates some of Levin’s points and argues, as do I, that the study of the relations between representational media like film and surveillance is still in nascent form. He provides instructive analyses of several films that, despite the essay’s title, show how video appears in cinema as just one surveillance technology among many. The essay thus forwards an understanding of surveillance as a system not reducible to any one element, in which narratives of surveillance play a part. Even more recently, Sébastien Lefait’s book *Surveillance on Screen: Monitoring Contemporary Films and Television Programs* has taken up how surveillance films serve as an “experiment on contemporary surveillance societies,” “test tubes” for looking at developments and possibilities in surveillance on a broader level.

“Collapsing the Interior/Exterior Distinction: Surveillance, Spectacle, and Suspense in Popular Cinema,” an earlier essay by John Turner, also traces the intersection of surveillance and narrative structure in a number of promising ways. Building on Guy Debord’s account of spectacle, Turner looks at the elements that have increasingly come to comprise cinematic narratives of surveillance and highlights some of the attributes that tie cinematic representation to surveillance through the consumption of spectacle. In going on to argue that “spectacle and surveillance are collapsed onto one another as an effective disciplinary apparatus—a set of techniques for the management of bodies, the management of attention, and for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities,” Turner ultimately (if implicitly) forwards cinematic analysis as a way to explore how surveillance functions as mediation and mediation functions as surveillance.

With the above works as exceptions, most other accounts of surveillance in cinema often struggle between addressing specific historical and technical formations of surveillance and relying on an increasingly universalized concept of voyeurism. Much as surveillance studies has contended with the need to move beyond the conceptual framework of panopticism that has defined the field, the discussion of surveillance in cinema (in multiple contexts) has been significantly shaped by the psychoanalytic model of voyeurism. Surveillance has been addressed
as a constant in cinema over and over in critical explorations as well as in the narratives themselves, and yet there is a ubiquity of references to voyeurism that tends to obscure some of what are otherwise diverse accounts and symptomatize a certain intractability around voyeurism as a framework. Norman Denzin’s book *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur’s Gaze*, for instance, is explicitly a text about surveillance and cinema, and yet it is telling that not only are surveillance and voyeurism used somewhat interchangeably, but the discussion of what Denzin’s own text acknowledges as a structurally complex surveillant society is rhetorically reduced insistently not just to “voyeurism” or to “voyeurs,” but to a hunt for the singularized lone figure of “the voyeur”: “My goal is to unmask this voyeur.”

Despite the manner in which Denzin’s book is emblematic of the attention to voyeurism that has structured the majority of accounts of cinematic surveillance, it does important work in defining the voyeur (both cinematic and noncinematic) as a historically produced “social type,” and yet few other theorists seem to have taken up a historical account of the concept. Instead, voyeuristic desire often emerges in work on surveillance, especially as it appears in cinema, as a given element that underlies other more explicitly constructed political and social formations. The related concepts of voyeurism and scopophilia in critical discourse have grown from the radical use of such ideas by feminist psychoanalytic theorists in the 1970s into a naturalized version of voyeurism that has in many instances become problematically ahistorical and overly broad in its explanatory scope. This naturalization of voyeuristic pleasure crosses disciplinary boundaries in scholarship, and joins scholarly arenas to popular. Christian Parenti’s aforementioned history of surveillance in the United States, for example, is careful in its historical understanding of the construction of identity and identification as part of a surveillance project, but when the book turns to representation and entertainment, the account favors a universalized understanding of voyeuristic desire. The chapter on “Voyeurism and Security Culture” intriguingly ties together reality television shows, narrative cinema such as *Panic Room* (David Fincher, 2002), and the home security industry, but Parenti’s account of reality TV, in its simplistically judgmental approach, ends up constructing voyeurism at the level of instinct: “All pander to our voyeurism and other base appe-
Whether in scholarly or popular accounts, inside and outside cinema studies, it is frequent for voyeurism to emerge as a given—a “base” instinct or a “commonplace aspect” to be capitalized upon to further cement sociopolitical power formations, rather than itself a historical phenomenon. A more in-depth consideration of the relations between narrative cinema and surveillance practice—and also between cinema studies and surveillance studies—can offer up the material specificities of each to elucidate how, for instance, as Denzin’s work suggests, voyeurism does not just become a political tool, but may well have historically emerged as a political project.

While not dismissing voyeurism as concept, I do thus want to critique it as a framework, especially when used in a manner that provides little distinction between voyeurism and surveillance and between voyeurism and spectatorship. My approach in this book seeks instead to consider (primarily) American surveillance narratives in the light of historical specificity, technological change, and political philosophy. At the heart of my critique of voyeurism as a theoretical frame, beyond its attachment to a visual model that is no longer adequate to account for surveillance in a digital era, is that it makes certain structural assumptions about the existence of a clear subject/object relationship between watcher and watched, between spectator and representation. Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson’s assertion in their introduction to the volume *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility* that “[s]urveillance technologies do not monitor people *qua* individuals, but instead operate through processes of disassembling and reassembling,” is only one instance of how the subject/object relations implicit in the voyeuristic account of surveillance within film studies could be usefully complicated by thinking through how the very notion of the “subject” is being reformulated not only through surveillance practice but in surveillance narratives as well. And one need not necessarily turn to the Deleuzian model of assemblage to discuss the complexities of subject formation within surveillance culture—while assemblage theory is crucial to certain models of particularly informational surveillance or “dataveillance,” what is more consistent in diverse studies of surveillance than a unifying theoretical model is a historical and technological specificity that of necessity attends to the variation and intersections of subject formations emerging through surveillance practice.
Canonical Surveillance Cinema

Before turning to the more contemporary films at the center of this book, I thus want to briefly review the now canonical surveillance narrative, *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola). This 1974 film introduces a number of formations central to discussions of surveillance and to the cinematic surveillance issues raised thus far: the historical uses of technologies of surveillance, the political and social stagings of surveillance technique, the construction of subject positions through surveillance, and the narrative structures and themes attending the cinematic incorporation of surveillance.

*The Conversation* serves as somewhat of an *urtext* for the more contemporary films that occupy most of this book, which centralize surveillance technology in the stylistic and thematic construction of narrative. Francis Ford Coppola’s wiretapping tour de force is widely considered to reflect the explicit concerns of its historical moment around surveillance, in particular the Watergate break-ins and accompanying revelations around political surveillance within the United States. It has also been discussed in terms of how the subjectivity of its investigatory character, private detective Harry Caul (played by Gene Hackman), is structurally and politically related to surveillance practices. The film makes it difficult to separate its character-based story from a historical and technological context, and analyses contemporary to its release as well as more recent scholarship highlight this. It is thus in many ways the ground on which contemporary surveillance cinema stands, perhaps best evidenced by Hackman’s casting in the role of an almost identical character in *Enemy of the State* in 1998.

In its focus on the recording and interpretation of sound, and the way that both images and narrative organize themselves around sound-recording technology, *The Conversation* clearly offers a commentary on the wiretapping practices active in the politics and cultural imaginary of the 1960s and 1970s. But if we are to read the production of a visible field as a process of surveillant narration from the origins of cinema on, then *The Conversation* provides a representation of the part that sound recording also plays in the narrative conceits of cinema as they are organized around logics of surveillance. The film is structured, both formally and in its story, around Harry’s efforts to make sense out of
a recorded conversation by matching image and sound. It announces its own processes of narrative signification in relation to surveillance and investigation, thus suggesting the implicit relations between cinematic production and surveillance practice. In her detailed analysis of the collaboration between Coppola, sound editor Walter Murch, and composer David Shire, Carolyn Anderson writes that “sound in film is traditionally at the service of the images, usually supporting, often connecting, rarely contradicting them. . . . The Conversation reverses this pattern.” While many theorists of film sound have disputed (with good reason) the primacy of the image over the soundtrack, Anderson’s argument highlights the negotiation that the film offers between visual and aural signification, and suggests that this negotiation is not only exemplified by surveillance practice, but that surveillance is based on similar mediations (much as some of the constructions of cinematic narrative already discussed are operating along the same principles as the logic of surveillance).

What might initially seem to be a standard establishing shot in the film is pulled back from its seamless omniscience by a “problem” with sound: the eagle-eye view of San Francisco’s Union Square, to which we are drawn increasingly close by a slow zoom until it is interrupted by distortion in the audio recording of the street noise, is revealed by a reverse shot to be the diegetic perspective of a surveillance operator on top of a building. The following shots in the sequence also become associated through perspective or focus with various characters whose positions are revealed to be either that of a sound surveillance technician or an object of surveillance. Rather than a reversal of the “traditional” system in which sound plays a supporting role to the image, this scene (and the rest of the film) actually highlights the degree to which the smooth unfolding of the images is completely dependent on the sound engineering that The Conversation suggests is also the work of audio surveillance: the construction and reconstruction of sound from several sources to serve as a kind of architecture without which the narrative becomes structurally unsound.

This film also reflects how increasingly uniform the technologies of cinema and those of surveillance were becoming: the magnetic sound recording shown in the film as essential to surveillance practice had by that point eclipsed optical recording as a far more efficient and effective
means of cinematic sound production, as was the mixing of multiple tracks.\textsuperscript{35} And, as Mary Ann Doane has argued in her essay on “Ideology and the Practice of Sound Editing,” the privileging of the image within the discourse of (and about) film is indicative not of the lack of import of sound, but of the ideological work of sound: “In an industry whose major standard, in terms of production value, might be summarized as ‘the less perceivable a technique, the more successful it is,’ the invisibility of the work on sound is a measure of the strength of the sound track.”\textsuperscript{36} While the industry Doane describes is the cinematic one, the same description is apposite for the investigatory technologies and methodologies of surveillance, as The Conversation demonstrates. Even theories of surveillance building on Foucault’s account of Bentham’s panopticon have overwhelmingly focused on the visual aspects of the model, even though, as Dortë Zbikowski’s history of acoustic surveillance indicates, “Part of this system were bugging lines, which supported visual surveillance with complete acoustic monitoring.”\textsuperscript{37} The fact that, until recently, sound recording devices could be much more easily miniaturized and hidden away as “bugs” than could visual recording mechanisms is yet another measure of the possible invisibility of sound and another indication of how accounts of cinematic technologies are implicitly invested in the logics of surveillance technologies. The minimization of the visible work of sound recording practice, even as sound is produced as a defining element, is essential to both surveillance and cinematic narrative.

The rendering visible of sound surveillance technologies within the film, in such a way that the status of both image and sound is broken down and reconstructed, foregrounds how both the technical and ideological work of surveillance and cinematic narrative are functioning along similar premises. The deconstruction of a more expected narrative structure in the opening sequence reemerges as the construction of technological and narrative apparatuses through which the “truth” of the story comes out. The rest of the film follows this same trajectory: whether Harry is actively trying to engineer the sound on the tapes and the film invokes a flashback image to illustrate his engineering of the narrative that is “the conversation,” or the film is exploring the larger context of the characters and the investigation, The Conversation reflexively demonstrates that both cinematic narrative and surveillance practice are organized not just by the production of a visual and visible field, but also
by the seamless production of sound recordings and dynamic relations between sound and image. However, as the film progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that Harry's investigation and even his engineered recording of the conversation are constituted by misinterpretation of what he has heard, misrecognition of the subject positions of both his client and those under surveillance, and manipulation by forces neither Harry nor the film ever fully identify. Thus the same productions that constitute both the sound recording and the narrative eventually undermine Harry's investigative authority on multiple levels (technological, professional, and personal) and also undermine narrative coherence and psychological stability, ultimately problematizing the epistemological foundation supporting the use of surveillance in the first place.  

Dennis Turner's 1985 analysis of the film demonstrates *The Conversation*’s import to a discussion of surveillance cinema as a recognizable designation. Through an examination of the film’s “ongoing drive to constitute itself as narrative,” Turner shifts the discussion from how the film (both technically and thematically) produces a story through sound and image, to an argument that it is also constructing itself through intertextual relationships to earlier surveillance-themed films such as *Blow-up*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window.* Turner’s choice to read the film not merely as a reflection of its historical moment but as a reflection on the construction of prior cinematic narratives around investigation implies that films about surveillance are films about cinematic history as well, not just in terms of technology but also in terms of narrative formation, and that this in turn reflects back on surveillance practice. The argument that “the film’s reworking of material from earlier texts raises the problems of boundary and textual authority which are suggested within its own diegesis,” expands to suggest that the problems raised by narratives of investigation are problems that exceed issues of boundary and authority within narrative—in a broader sense, the narrative’s treatment of these textual issues both addresses and problematizes how boundary and authority function within actual surveillance practice. Put another way, if, as Turner argues, the film’s intertextual allusions to earlier surveillance narratives, as well as its numerous disruptions of narrative suture through both image and sound, enact a “drama of the disintegrating subject,” I would posit that this subject refers not only to the cinematic one, but to the subject of surveillance culture as well.
However, it is important to note that the disintegration of the viewing and speaking subject that Turner refers to is equally describable as the construction of a political subject. The film’s final sequence, which presents the increasingly distraught Harry in his own carefully guarded private space now apparently under surveillance by his former clients, demonstrates how this disintegration must be viewed in terms of subject position. Having realized that the couple whose conversation he had recorded were not in fact victims but murder conspirators, and that he has misunderstood the entire purpose and scenario of his surveillance operation, Harry receives a threatening phone call warning him not to take any action. The caller states, “We’ll be listening,” and a recording of the music Harry was just playing in his apartment is played back for him. Harry tears his apartment to pieces, literally, trying to locate a microphone. Unsuccessful even after ripping apart the walls and floorboards, he sits in the middle of his shredded apartment and plays his saxophone. The film ends as Harry’s diegetic saxophone music joins with the extradiegetic score in a kind of duet that shows that the disintegration has exceeded the space of the character and story and that even the narrative is no longer a delimited or coherent space. The camerawork in this final shot, a high-angle slow pan back and forth that imitates the automatic repetitive sweep of a video surveillance camera, also suggests that the surveillance apparatus is ultimately the film’s camera, rather than a technology within the film, further eliding any distinction between cinematic and surveillant technique and technology. For Thomas Levin, the final shot demonstrates a very self-conscious example of what he describes as the “synonymous” nature of cinematic and surveillant narration: “[I]Indeed, Harry will never find the surveillant device because it resides in a space that is epistemologically unavailable to him within the diegesis: surveillance has become the condition of the narration itself.”  

The ambiguities that surround this film—Who is the victim? Who is being watched, and why? Is this a film about the pathology of a character or a culture of surveillance?—in the final scene become visible (and audible) as the way narrative is (de)structured through surveillance into a kind of fundamental ambiguity, which recurs in numerous significant ways in films that follow it. This breakdown of boundaries between multiple spaces at the end of The Conversation—diegetic and extradiegetic sound intermingling,
surveillance camera and film camera becoming one and the same, the destroyed space of Harry’s apartment revealing the architecture within, the psychological space of reason versus insanity—is also an exposure of the tenuous boundaries between the private/individual/psychological and the public/social/political. The very rupturing of the narrative space demands that the psychological exploration of this principal character be viewed in relation to the context outside of the film—it is a formal demand of the narrative, as constructed through surveillance technologies and practices. But in exposing how impossible these boundaries are, the narrative also erects relations between those spheres: the possibility of intrusion on a private realm is what defines that space as private in the first place, and is one of the reasons why Norman Denzin posits the figure of “the voyeur” as central to the cinematic production of twentieth-century notions of privacy. The construction of Harrry Caul’s personal pathology is instructive in these terms—his obsession with his own privacy is not “ironic” given his job invading the privacy of others, as Andrew Sarris has suggested: it is a testament to the structural configurations of privacy as a contiguous production of surveillance, thus connecting their formations closely. In using the narrative relations between sound and image to explore these definitionally permeable boundaries, the film also highlights how surveillance practice merges with what in another context Giorgio Agamben calls “zones of indistinction,” which I explore in detail in Chapter One and Chapter Three, as I discuss the functional ambiguities and the political implications of the formations emerging from more recent surveillance narratives.

Arguably, audio surveillance is associated in particular with the 1970s and the Watergate break-ins, while the kind of information processing seen as typical of the digital era is a more common cultural reference today, but narrative formations show that these practices have developed in tandem, with intersecting structures that build on and inflect each other. The thematization of telephone surveillance in the HBO series The Wire (2002–2008) demonstrates that the task of audio surveillance is not simply to record all conversations and make sense of them, but to analyze patterns of who is calling whom, process times and lengths of calls, and interpret conversations specifically encoded to avoid providing evidence. Even in The Conversation, with its focus on
a single recording, audio surveillance and the aggregation of information are one and the same. And, as Zbikowski has noted, “The problem facing the listener when monitoring telephone calls is above all a legal one,” and thus such surveillance narratives are organized around the modes in which one gains appropriate authority to listen in, as well as the technological capability.46 The Wire’s narrative arcs of surveillance (though they are not always about surveillance in particular) are often structured by the play between technology and legality, surveillance and evasion.

Other televisual instances of surveillant narration have what would appear to be even stronger associations with surveillance than cinematic ones given that video technologies more so than cinematic constitute visual surveillance, and reality television in particular has become a central marker of popular surveillance culture. My focus on cinema (though I discuss several television series as well) does not intend to conflate television and cinema. Instead, this book contextualizes some of the narrative and technological trends around surveillance to show how the narrative codes of filmmaking that preceded television have become part of more contemporary media, while in turn techno-cultural developments in televisual representation, satellite imaging, GPS technologies, and internet mediation, among others, have become part of cinematic form.

Millennial Surveillance Cinema

In tracing several significant relationships between cinematic formations and surveillance, this book historicizes narrative trends around surveillance that popular film criticism often situates as “post-9/11,” even as numerous surveillance historians and theorists have noted that such designations represent a disavowal of the fact that many of the “post-9/11” surveillance practices and ideologies were put into place prior to September 11, 2001. Surveillance cinema demonstrates that surveillance reflects United States cultural production as much or more than it represents a response to attacks on that culture. The chapters of the book are organized to highlight significant instances or trends of this cultural production through reference to developments in technology (both cinematic and surveillant), racial formations, political and economic
structures, and ideological discourses around visibility, violence, information, space, and time.

The first chapter begins an in-depth analysis of these narrative trends by examining the emergence of the horror subgenre dubbed “torture porn” in the first decade of the twenty-first century and demonstrating that it is intimately related to the thematization of surveillance technologies. This chapter, titled “Video Surveillance, Torture Porn, and Zones of Indistinction,” examines how video technology as manifested in the cinematic narration of graphic torture reveals the interpenetrations of torture and surveillance in the exercise of contemporary biopolitical power. The chapter focuses on a number of American torture-horror films, primarily the exceptionally successful Saw series (multiple directors, 2004–2010), in combination with several films of Academy Award-winning director Michael Haneke: Caché (2005), his two versions of Funny Games (1997, 2007), and the lesser-known Benny’s Video (1992). I argue that these disparate works are joined through their narrative deployment of video surveillance technology and the violent production of visible bodies. My analysis of the films in this chapter demonstrates the interaction of torture fantasies with postcolonial politics and counterterrorist discourse in both the United States and Europe, and the central roles that surveillance and surveillant narration play in these interactions.

The chapter turns to Giorgio Agamben’s political philosophy, his biopolitical analysis of the figure of “bare life,” and the notion of “zones of indistinction” to show that video surveillance functions in these films as a space of narrative indeterminacy. Through close analysis of American torture-horror films and their relation to contemporary politics, I demonstrate that this indeterminacy is involved in both the narrative and political production of bodies for torture. The chapter’s second half elaborates why these American genre films are best understood through the films of Michael Haneke, which serve to reflexively identify surveillant mediation as essential to the ambiguous spaces of cinematic violence and the violent ambiguities defining modern politics.

Chapter Two, “Commodified Surveillance: First-Person Cameras, the Internet, and Compulsive Documentation,” turns to another central formation attending contemporary narratives and technologies of surveillance: the consumer-subject in the era of home video, online net-
working, and digital surveillance or “dataveillance.” Beginning with an introduction of Guy Debord’s account of the “spectacle” as a necessary element of surveillance in a consumer economy, the chapter examines consumer-level surveillance in cinema through what I call “compulsive documentation” films—films shot entirely in first-person-camera style and based on the premise that they are composed of “real” footage shot on consumer video equipment. Such films are also, significantly, often found in the horror genre, and serve as the corollary of the more obviously politically symptomatic torture and surveillance films. With the most notable instances including *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, 1999), *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), and the *Paranormal Activity* series (multiple directors, 2007–2014), I posit these films in relation to “self-surveillance,” or “peer-to-peer surveillance,” and use this relationship to demonstrate how commodification, consumption, and surveillance function alongside and through each other.

The chapter establishes these relationships by emphasizing both the explicit and implicit connections between the individualized and embodied structure of technological experience presented by the first-person-camera films through the video camera point-of-view shot, and the arguably hypermediated and diffuse structures of the internet and digital surveillance. Building on the work of Mark Andrejevic in *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era*, which puts forth interactivity and participatory culture as deeply implicated in surveillance culture, I argue that the first-person-camera films—even as they seek to present a direct, individual experience at a bodily level—are best understood as a phenomenon through their innovative and successful interactive online marketing campaigns and their expansion of the cinematic experience into the “virtual” space of internet communities and digital economies. By tracing the formal and structural contiguities between the narrative and technical elements of these films, their marketing campaigns, social networking, and internet consumption, this chapter shows that looking at consumer-level surveillance through such narrative formations is essential to understanding how codefining subjective experience and surveillance have become in a digital economy, and the part that video mediation plays in establishing that relation.

Chapter Three, “The Global Eye: Satellite, GPS, and the ‘Geopolitical Aesthetic,’” refocuses the discussions of the prior chapters to elaborate
more fully how individual subject positions within a surveillance culture have been produced in relation to discourses of globalization and geopolitics, and how developments in cinematic narrative are enmeshed in this project. Unlike the films discussed in earlier chapters, and their quite implicit formulation of political relationships between individuals and systems through narratives of surveillance, these films present direct lines from the focus on an individual body to the construction of a geopoliticized subject position. Building on Fredric Jameson's 1992 analysis of the “geopolitical aesthetic,” this chapter highlights the role of surveillance technologies and practices in the construction of narrative that “conflates ontology with geography and endlessly processes images of the unmappable [world] system.” The chapter examines the incorporation of satellite imaging and GPS into cinematic continuity systems, exemplified by films like *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Paul Greengrass, 2007), and *Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol* (Brad Bird, 2011). Such films employ surveillance technology that visualizes “location” in such a way that it serves as a narrative and stylistic pivot upon which the relationships among individual bodies, transnational spaces, and broad global systems are constructed through economies of violence. Through close analysis of how what has been called “geosurveillance” has increasingly come to characterize the aesthetic of establishing shots, chase scenes, and narrative denouements within these films, I suggest that cinematic narrative has been integral to the ways that technology has participated in the production of individuals as visual and visualizable subjects of a world system increasingly characterized by various forms of targeting. I trace this production back to a very different cinematic depiction of surveillance and globalization, the 1993 film *Rising Sun* (Philip Kaufman), which presents the police investigation of a murder caught on security cameras at a Japanese corporation in Los Angeles. The earlier film situates surveillance as part of a global economic structure functioning as an increasingly orientalized threat, thus positioning it as both historically and generically contiguous with the rhetoric of “global terrorism” that is central to today’s surveillance politics and cinematic surveillance narratives. This contiguity demonstrates how the generic development of the action-thriller since the 1990s gives insight into the shared logic between the global market economy and the violence enacted on singular bodies in contemporary geopolitical warfare.
Many of these action-thrillers address terrorism as either the centerpiece of the story or as part of their broader geopolitical milieu. Those focused entirely on a single instance of terrorism tend to become narrative explorations of the functional logics of surveillance and counterterrorism, in primarily symptomatic forms. For instance, *Déjà vu* (Tony Scott, 2006) and *Vantage Point* (Pete Travis, 2008) organize their narratives around the fantasy of preventing a terrorist attack that has already happened, and so quite tellingly exhibit a formulation of surveillance methodology and technology as both retroactive and circular—and at times devoted to past objects of threat and loss with a force that I characterize as a form of political melancholia.

The fourth chapter, “Temporality and Surveillance I: Terrorism Narratives and the Melancholic Security State,” explores this narrative production of a temporal system through surveillance technology. The issue of temporality has certainly been raised in discussions of surveillance practice, most obviously in regards to the preemptive agendas of the “war on terror.” Gary Genosko and Scott Thompson have usefully outlined some of the complexity of the temporalities of surveillance: a discussion of the narrative formations around surveillance in films such as *Déjà vu* offers more insight into the vicissitudes of these practices, providing an almost uncanny representation of the modes of time that Genosko and Thompson outline as “a (troubled) past,” “a (fragmented) present,” and “a (future) past.”

Focusing in particular on how manipulations of narrative time are predicated on the machinations of surveillance within those narratives, the chapter shows how narrative structure, surveillance practice, and recent rhetorics of national security have become coimmersed in a construction of historical time as subject to the laws of desire and disavowal, turning politics into pure pathology. I argue that this temporal production becomes a central part of the surveillance structures explored in the earlier chapters. The chapter goes on to examine how such films—and the politics they reflect—contain the seeds of their own critique within them, as demonstrated by the more recent *Source Code* (Duncan Jones, 2011), the narrative formation of which exposes how retroactive security practice and counterterrorist fantasies are built upon a scaffolding of necropolitics.

The final chapter, “Temporality and Surveillance II: Surveillance, Remediation, and Social Memory in *Strange Days*,” joins the discussion of
time in *Déjà vu*, *Vantage Point*, and *Source Code* to a consideration of the earlier *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), which allows a historically grounded reframing of both the temporality and critique suggested by *Source Code*. *Strange Days*, released in 1995 as a near-future science fiction, threads its narrative through the entangled racial tensions and media landscape of the 1990s, most fully represented by its visual and narrative references to the videotaped police assault on Rodney King. The film joins together this mise-en-scène of historicized racial violence and a millennial countdown with the mediation of a science-fictional device that can record human perceptual experience. In its historical positioning and pseudo-virtual reality fantasy, *Strange Days* represents a media and surveillance culture on the cusp of digitization, with its fictional technology multiply deployed in the narrative as memory, surveillance, legal evidence, pornography, and even weaponry. What emerges is an overdetermined narrative that weaves together individual subjectivity, social histories, and political interventions by way of a temporality of repetition and a form of what Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin call “remediation.”

As the “double logic” by which new media culture can be understood through its seemingly paradoxical drives for simultaneous “hypermediacy” and “immediacy,” remediation serves to reframe how surveillance and cinema work through each other, structurally, politically, and temporally. I suggest that it is through such remediation that a resistant politics might be located in the cinematic narration of surveillance, in part by redefining the circularity and repetition of the political melancholia described in Chapter Four. The chapter concludes with the point that “surveillance cinema” necessarily makes clear not just the contiguities but also the *inconsistencies* between the ideological premises of surveillance and the demands of narrative form, and thus cinema can be seen, even as it functions alongside other surveillance formations, as a point of access to the often failed performances of surveillant power.