# LYRIC EYE: THE POETICS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY SURVEILLANCE

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# Abstract

*Lyric Eye: The Poetics of Twentieth-Century Surveillance* presents the first detailed study of the relationship between lyric poetry and twentieth-century American surveillance culture. It examines the work of modern American poets who responded to the knowledge that they and other writers were being closely monitored by United States surveillance agencies from the 1920s to the 1960s. Combining close textual analysis and archival study with a range of critical theory, *Lyric Eye* argues that so pervasive was the spectre of surveillance in twentieth-century America that even poets who were not directly surveilled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation made it one of their poetic themes. By analysing twentieth-century American lyric poetry and its various ideas about the self across a forty-year period, *Lyric Eye* also establishes a new mode of interdisciplinary research, whose aim is to demonstrate the extent to which poetry and the discourses of surveillance employ similar styles of information gathering, such as observation, overhearing, imitation, abstraction, repurposing of language, keywords, subversion, fragmentation and symbolism. One of the central arguments of *Lyric Eye* is that the impositions placed upon individual autonomy by an American surveillance state were most incisively explored in lyric poetry of the period because of its ability to negotiate between the public and private spheres and to be both aesthetic and political at the same time. Thus, contrary to many prior literary histories of the lyric, the new theorisation of lyric poetry argued for in this study positions it as a complex public discourse that uses the very structures of politics, culture and technology to bring about its commentary. The first half of the thesis explores the technical, political and conceptual overlaps that lyric poetry and surveillance share, as well as the reasons behind and consequences of the FBI's surveillance of modern American poets. The second half of the thesis develops close readings of lyric poems and moments of twentieth-century American culture and politics, organised around the concepts of nationalism, expatriation, modernism, domesticity, overhearing and confession. Key poets examined include Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Claude McKay, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell.

# Declaration

I certify that:

1. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD
2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
3. the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliographies and appendices

Tyne Daile Sumner, 2018

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Observed of all Observers

watcher,
Eternal watcher of things,
Of things, of men, of passions.
Eyes floating in dry, dark air,[1]

EZRA POUND

Poets have always been professional observers. In the introduction to *Privacy Policy: The Anthology of Surveillance Poetics* (2014), the collection's editor Andrew Ridker writes that an "interest in minutiae, the data of our daily lives, is the poet's business" (i). Presenting the voices of over fifty contemporary poets, *Privacy Policy* reveals that, for poets of the twenty-first century, this poetic business is a response to our present techno-political crisis: a culture characterised by drones, phone taps, NSA leaks and mass Internet tracking. Ridker concedes that in reaction to the recent emergence of a global culture of surveillance, "it seemed as if the people and institutions charged with giving explanations—pundits, politicians, and the justice system—were coming up heartbreakingly short" (i). "I began reaching out to poets," he writes, "wondering if some sense could be made of all this" (i). One contribution to the collection is literary critic and poet Stephen Burt's unsettling lyric "Dear Digital Camera," which links the private world of the domestic to a broader critique of the ubiquitous influence of digital photographic technologies that track the intimate aspects of everyday life. Citing a private conversation between parent and son, the poem begins:

> Last week he kept pointing out
> security cameras in grocery stores.
> "Why are they spying on us?" he asked. But now

[1] *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 27.

> he spies on us: the milk cup not yet spilled
> then spilled, the tumbler on its side,
> on crumbs, on inescapable abstraction,
>
> that is, extreme close-ups of window-glass and carpet—
> all are his and therefore ours. They make
> a sort of second universe,
>
> which he can show me how to understand,
> one that stands still while ours moves. (86)

The camera lens, which captures the "inescapable abstraction" of "extreme close-ups" and spilt milk, invokes the keen eye of the perceiving poet who speaks out about being watched by using the very methodologies employed by the observer. Later in the poem Burt writes, "When you are a camera, nobody can see who you are; / you get to see them. You get to decide what they see" (87). The camera sees all:

> duplicative pictures, time-lapse pictures, dazzled blurred or pinpoint
> still life pictures, portraits, and stop-motion
> animation, applied
> to anything and everything. (86)

In the contemporary digital world of Burt's poem, surveillance is virtually everywhere. Many of the other poems that comprise the collection reflect not only the disturbing variety of surveillance technologies in today's context but also the extent to which surveillance culture is effectively sewn into the very fabric of our day to day existence. Poems such as Kent Shaw's "How the Database is Powering the New World Economy," Victoria Chang's "The Boss Looks Over Us," Harmony Holiday's "Can you read my mind" and David Clewell's "What If All Along We've Been Wrong About Tinfoil Hats" communicate, at the level of title alone, a sense of the paranoia and fear-inducing ubiquity of surveillance today. Dara Weir's intriguing poem "Reverse Surveillance" captures the predominant tone of *Privacy Policy* most accurately in its opening lines:

> It isn't so much that you do it, it's how you do it
> and that you do it on purpose
> while pretending you're not doing anything.
> It's not so much that you spy on me it's that your intention
> has always been to erase me.

> It's always been difficult
> to understand how your knowledge of me
> increases my invisibility.
> The more you see of me the less I'm there. (101)

The profound difficulty of tracing the effects of surveillance on human subjects is the theme of both Weir's poem and, to a large extent, the collection as a whole. Yet poems such as "Reverse Surveillance" also work to counter the very tribulations they describe by articulating, through either deeply personal or political themes, the processes of watching and listening (or, to be more accurate, eavesdropping) that comprise the surveillance matrix. This curious inversion of the surveillance system, wherein the poet does the recording or professional observation, is central to the rationale of both *Privacy Policy* and this thesis. Despite borrowing from Ridker's collection for my title, I take the concept of a surveillance poetics much further. While for the contemporary poets who appear in the collection, surveillance poetics can be defined as a timely response to the knowledge that the "Age of Surveillance" has well and truly arrived, for poets writing in the twentieth century the status of both surveillance and poetry was in considerable flux. Acknowledging that American poets have always been concerned with being watched, my purpose in moving back to the twentieth century in this study is to make a new contribution to the fields of surveillance studies and poetry by considering how a prior mode of surveillance poetics informs our present situation. For this reason primarily, along with several others which the thesis addresses in turn, I define surveillance poetics as first, a process by which lyric poets in twentieth-century America responded to and shaped a culture of surveillance; and second, as a new way of theorising lyric poetry through an examination of the characteristics it shares with surveillance.

Using this definition as its starting point, *Lyric Eye* argues for the significance of modern American lyric poetry as a site for exposing, resisting and shaping the pervasive culture of surveillance that emerged in the twentieth century in America and continues, greatly intensified, through to the present day. Examining the writing of numerous poets from early to roughly mid-twentieth century who have addressed the topic of surveillance, this thesis explores writers whose lyrics, in previously overlooked ways, shaped a complex and frequently subversive poetics of twentieth-century surveillance. From poets of the Harlem Renaissance, through modernist

poetry and mid-century confessional lyrics, this study traces an unexplored terrain of poetics that strikes directly to the core of some of the twentieth century's most disturbing and liberating revolutions. The poems under discussion describe the experience of surveillance from a multiplicity of angles. Some poems are intensely political while some are deeply personal; others operate in the provocative space between the two.

As well as writing lyric poems on the topic of surveillance, many of the poets examined in this study were implicated in a complex system of modern American information gathering, crafted and executed by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Indeed, when T.S. Eliot pondered in "Choruses from 'The Rock'" (1934), "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? / Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?," he not only vividly captured the fraught, empty soul of modern work life, he also ushered in a critique of what would later become known as the Information Age (*CP* 161). This thesis takes up questions such as Eliot's in its argument that many twentieth-century American poems are about much more than the broad ideological concepts of watching and overhearing. Rather, numerous twentieth-century American poets were literally investigated, followed and harassed by the FBI, marking a political and social culture obsessed with and characterised by a belief in the organisational power of secret intelligence gathering. I explore the work of poets about whom the FBI had stockpiled enormous amounts of information and whose files were frequently used to harass, blackmail and intimidate their subjects. This and other recent studies highlight that the FBI, and its director J. Edgar Hoover in particular, had an inordinate obsession with modern poets and the content and consequences of their work. So intense was this interest that the Bureau collected large quantities of information about poets of the period frequently by using illegal and almost always invasive measures. Most important of all, this study reveals that the FBI's interest in modern American writers, especially poets, is far more complex and problematic than has usually been thought. In fact, the reading methodologies of FBI agents extended well beyond widely accepted conceptions of detective work, venturing instead into the realm of biographical and historical reading. This study shows how, unlike the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who strove to practise a strictly objective, New Critical approach to literary texts, the FBI's methods of reading texts were characterised by a close emphasis on the relationship between

poets' lives and their artistic output. This critical approach reveals something about not only the FBI's understanding of poetry but also the general effect of the lyric in the twentieth century: that is, that the particular style of American poetry that emerged out of modernism and after World War I had the capacity to suffuse political commentary with personal detail and vice versa. By mapping the FBI's surveillant reading alongside poetic and critical reading during this period, the current study reveals the extent to which the FBI conceived of poetry as a code to be broken. It also shows that frequently the key to unlocking the meaning of suspicious poetic works was contrived by the Bureau in order to suit specific political and ideological agendas.

There were three main reasons why the FBI was preoccupied with modern American poets. The first is that a great deal of modern American poetry was far more politically subversive than was commonly understood at the time. Moreover, the characteristic obscurity of many modern lyric poems, especially those produced by the high modernist faction, set off alarm bells for Bureau investigators. The idea of poetry as a puzzle or code to be unlocked was axiomatic for New Criticism and taken seriously in the American academy throughout the mid-twentieth century. The Bureau, however, perceived the puzzling nature of lyric poetry as dangerous and in need of suppressing. Second, the changing and highly charged relationship between art and politics in the early to middle decades of the twentieth century produced poets whose political motives, whether they were articulated through verse or not, aroused the attention of Hoover and his staff. The Bureau's fears were not entirely without basis since many of the more prolific leftist political movements and parties at the time originated in progressive magazines with numerous literary figures working behind the scenes. By the end of the 1920s, for example, the John Reed Clubs, founded in October 1929 by staff members of *The New Masses Magazine*, were brandishing the Communist Party USA slogan "Art is a Class Weapon," and already likening the influence of literature to "paper bullets" (Culleton and Leick 6). So intense was the FBI's fear that even poets whose politics leaned to the right could arouse the Bureau's suspicions. Simply *being* a poet, it seemed, was enough to warrant becoming a target.

The third and most important reason has to do with the specific mode of reading that the lyric poem has generated in the twentieth century and which it continues to generate up to the present moment. "Lyric reading," a phrase coined by

Virginia Jackson, separates out the poem and the imagined consciousness behind it from the author's literal body and thus from the biographical facts of his or her life. As Jackson notes of this modern trend, "a great deal of lyric reading in the twentieth century attempted to restore lyrics to the social or historical resonance that the circulation of lyric as such tends to suppress" (*Dickinson's Misery* 70). It is now clear that twentieth-century literary criticism reinvented the lyric, first as a representation of an utterance in the first person and then, by extension, as an expression of personal feeling. These two classifications, which work together to form the concept of the modern lyric as a genre of personal expression, are assumed whenever we talk about "the lyric I." Of course, this model of modern lyric reading diverges significantly from the way poems were read and performed in antiquity as well as from the Romantic lyric, in relation to which (ironically) the modern lyric is constructed. "Lyric reading," as Stephen Burt rightly points out in a recent article, "has roots in the Romantic period, but it came to dominate Anglo-American practices only during the early twentieth century, as the theories and pedagogies of the group now commonly called New Critics spread through universities" (423). My argument is that the FBI, whether they were conscious of it or not, became increasingly paranoid about the revelatory capacity of lyric poems, especially when these poems used the personal as a means to explore contentious political themes. A poem that could, by turns, appear to be personal and also incisively political came to be seen by Bureau agents as a puzzling and threatening medium, resulting in increased surveillance of its author.

My aim in delineating these three points is to trace historical developments in lyric theory as a way of providing a context for the emergence of a twentieth-century surveillance poetics. Of even greater concern is the need to consider the ways in which the social, cultural and political dimensions of modern American culture can be read together with the lyric as it evolved over the course of the twentieth century. How is it, for example, that over a century after the subjectivity-oriented classifications of lyric theorised by Mill and Hegel and many decades after the self-enclosed lyric paradigms enforced by the New Critics, in 1957 Northrop Frye could (re)define the lyric as "pre-eminently the utterance that is overheard" (249)? Critical vicissitudes such as this point not only to the fact that Anglo-American literary criticism is still to this day resistant to a concrete definition of the lyric, but also show that in the twentieth century the lyric came under more ideological pressure than ever

before. With the restoration of the first person "I" to the centre of the poem and the unprecedented tension between the public and private spheres, poetry became, once again, "not a flight from personality" but instead a "dramatization, a reinvention of the personal" (Gray 257). The consequence of these shifts for the conceptual meaning of observation and overhearing is a central preoccupation of this study.

Further to these three points, not only do the FBI's many interviews, case files, telephone records and reports on modern American poets—disturbingly and ironically—far exceed the literary output of those poets themselves, the neurotic surveillance of many twentieth-century American authors actually becomes the impetus or inspiration for the writing of many lyrics in the first place. To take just three examples from across the period of this study: William Carlos Williams's "The Young Housewife" (1916), Richard Wright's "The FB Eye Blues" (1949) and Sylvia Plath's "The Detective" (1965). These all have as their focus the spy-like, investigative gaze of an information-collecting, surveilling "other." While there is not necessarily a consistent approach to surveillance taken by each and every one of the poets investigated throughout this study, they are all clearly preoccupied with the topic. In part, of course, this is because American writers came under intensified surveillance by government agencies during the early to middle decades of the twentieth century, but it is also to do with the unique relationship (and history) that literature and surveillance share. Indeed, the question of why, precisely, American poets would want to write about surveillance is also a question about the inherent usefulness of poetry (or literature more broadly) to ongoing discussions in the field of surveillance studies. While today it is possible to locate numerous contributions to this rapidly growing field from a wide range of disciplines within the Humanities, the distinctive and indispensable contribution made by literary studies to surveillance studies is still largely unacknowledged. As I have already noted, a significant focus of my study is the relationship between observation, overhearing and subjectivity, an intersection that is directly relevant to both lyric poetry and surveillance. The unique point at which literature is able to further develop our understanding of the means and effects of surveillance culture, however, is in relation to selfhood and character, both central aspects of lyric poetry. Rosen and Santesso develop this idea in their useful comment that:

> In ways unanticipated by [a] neuroscientist, any account of surveillance must also consider the ultimate target of all surveillance activity: the individual self. Any *history* of surveillance, it follows, must consider the ways that conceptions of selfhood have changed over time: as definitions of the Human have shifted over the centuries, so too have ideas about how to uncover (or dictate) that inner human essence … The complex dialectical struggle between surveillance and selfhood is one that the study of literature, with its close interrogation of character [is] well positioned to tackle. (*Watchman* 3-4)

Literature's method of tackling the relationship between surveillance and selfhood is more often than not abstracted from real life. What this means is that the fictions generated by literature present abstract models of personhood, which can (or at times cannot) be mapped onto the inner lives of real people. In the case of lyric poetry, the poem's self-conscious engagement with the public and private worlds of individuals, along with its enduring focus on the concepts of intimacy, sincerity, persona, confession, overhearing and authenticity make it an even more valuable genre for addressing the intellectual and imaginative dimensions of surveillance in the twentieth century.

Surveillance, as both a physical practice and a philosophical concept, is of course an important disciplinary field in its own right. The English noun "surveillance" derives from the verb *surveillir*, a term that fuses the French *sur* ("over") and *veiller* ("to watch"). Thus while contemporary understandings of surveillance have come to encompass a broad set of related activities and terms—observe, watch, examine, control, screen, inspect, monitor, track, guard, follow, spy, scope, test—the historical roots of the term attest to the idea that visibility is the concept most central to its meaning. Yet surveillance also has its linguistic origins in the Latin term, *vigilare*, which suggests that the mode of observation taking place in an act of surveillance is something threatening: an act about which we should be vigilant. Numerous scholars of contemporary surveillance studies, such as Gary Marx and David Lyon, have noted with interest that it is this ancient meaning of surveillance as a sinister act that is reflected most conspicuously in the negative connotations of the kinds of surveillance that involve mass data collecting, the National Security Agency, the police and, increasingly, advertisers and social media organisations. It is without question that both the field of surveillance studies and the intensification of negative public perception of surveillant technologies came under increased focus in the United States

of America following the terrorism events of 9/11. The field of surveillance studies has evolved over the years as a consequence of comprehensive and sustained discussion on the part of critical theorists, political scientists, lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, historians, journalists and public intellectuals. However, as Marx points out, the topic of surveillance in its contemporary form has been of interest to writers and academics at least since the 1950s. "This is related," he goes on to suggest, "to greater awareness of the human rights abuses of colonialism, fascism, and communism and anti-democratic behaviour within democratic societies" ("Surveillance Studies" 734).

A very early example of surveillance can be seen in the watchful (at times menacing, at other times protective) eye of the Old Testament's Biblical God while, later, the figure of the "spymaster" could be witnessed in Sir Francis Walsingham who was the principal secretary to Queen Elizabeth I of England from 1573 until his death in 1590. Subsequent authors, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Frederick Taylor and Max Weber have written the history of particular forms of surveillance as they developed throughout Western political thought. In the twentieth century, Michel Foucault paved the way for contemporary surveillance studies as we know it today: a disciplinary mode whose focus extends well beyond the concepts of truth, intimacy, and visualisation to encompass the study of power structures and discourses surrounding discipline, torture, confession, punishment and sexuality. Many of these discourses have been intensified and reimagined, usually to dystopian effect, by novelists, film and documentary makers, artists, and more recently, reality television. From the well-known examples of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) through to the 2014 documentary film *Citizenfour* directed by Laura Poitras (which charts Edward Snowden's initiation of global surveillance disclosures in 2013) and the very recent American biographical political thriller *Snowden* (2016), artists and writers have always been interested in the idea of the private sphere and, more recently, in determining whether or not it endures or is by now wholly dissolved.

This thesis takes the contemporary field of surveillance studies as its starting point and works back to the twentieth century to formulate new ways to think about our present techno-political crisis, which is the context I turn to at the study's end. In

this respect, *Lyric Eye* focuses on American lyric poetry of the twentieth century in ways that are only possible through familiarity with the late twentieth-century birth and subsequent twenty-first-century proliferation of electronic security, what surveillance studies scholar David Lyon has referred to as the "electronic panopticon" ("An Electronic Panopticon?" 653). This condition characterises the contemporary western context in which the so-called "wired city" we live in "renders consumers visible to unverifiable observers by means of their purchases, preferences and credit ratings" (Lyon, *Electronic Eye* 70-71). Here, the complicit role of mass consumption contributes to what is effectively a politically motivated effort to control citizens' information. Further to this, *Lyric Eye* seeks to bring twentieth-century lyric poetry to light in the context of radically shifting relations of information to power. A central focus of this study, therefore, is the way in which twentieth-century poets participated in and shaped a culture in which information was transformed from a social good to an economic one. The contemporary manifestation of this shift has meant that, to borrow again from Lyon, "the technology-led capacity to supply huge amounts of information in digital form has coincided with the discovery that such information often has a high market value" (*Electronic Eye* 151). In other words, I am interested in the ways that poets responded to a world in which information first began to command a price as a commodity.

In this regard, the methodologies employed throughout this study have much in common with scholarly studies that have characterised twentieth-century American poetry as radical and militant: poetry that both confronts and is confronted by cultural and political forces. In thinking about poetry's important relationship with the social and the political, as well as with broader contemporary discourses, I borrow from and build on the work of Edward Brunner, Deborah Nelson, Jo Gill, Adam Beardsworth, Greg Barnhisel, John Wrighton, William Maxwell, David Rosen, Aaron Santesso, Claire Culleton, Erin Carlston, Gillian White and a number of other scholars working at the crossroads of twentieth-century poetics and cultural history. Maxwell's recent scholarship in *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature* (2015) intersects with my study in several important ways: first, by positioning Hoover at the crossroads of twentieth-century African American literature and the FBI's surveillance practices; and second, by considering the literary underpinnings of the FBI's archival arrangements. Although Maxwell's research

provides a crucial backdrop to the current study, I add to this scholarship by articulating the centrality of lyric poetry to the Bureau's preoccupation with the supposedly puzzling nature of modern American writing. Moreover, while Maxwell's focus is entirely on African American writers and their work as a target of FBI harassment, my research reveals the extent to which surveillance culture was far more pervasive than the targeting of only black or evidently communist writers.

Another influential study for my research is Jo Gill's *The Poetics of the American Suburbs* (2013), which brings together literary studies with the insights of a wide array of other fields including architecture, cultural and gender studies, sociology, advertising and medicine. As the title of Gill's book signifies, her broad scholarly aim is to evaluate poetry that emerged from and reflects the growth of the American suburbs, poetries that are products of and respond critically to the post-World-War-II American domestic context. In working through the relationship between twentieth-century American poetry and surveillance, I share a number of Gill's interests, especially those that take up larger ideological questions surrounding twentieth-century American identity and nationhood. David Rosen and Aaron Santesso's study, *The Watchman in Pieces: Surveillance, Literature, and Liberal Personhood* (2013), is an equally important text for some of the central ideas discussed throughout this thesis. Gathering nearly five hundred years of cultural and social history, Rosen and Santesso examine the ways in which surveillance and literature have developed together, resulting in a two-way structure in which, as they write in the book's blurb, "the habits of mind cultivated by literature make rational and self-aware participation in contemporary surveillance environments possible." While this work is groundbreaking for the complexity and breadth of its historical reading and the extent to which it connects changes in surveillant observation strategies with innovations in literature, it nevertheless treats literature as one broad category, thus relying mostly on the thematic, rather than formal or technical, resonances of surveillance discourse. In ways similar to both these studies, I explore poetry's role in national debates about race, class, gender and privacy by recuperating the work of a number of American writers through close comparative readings and detailed contextualisation. While I apply similar interdisciplinary methodologies throughout this study, my aim is less to problematise surveillance in the American context than it is to use the received history of twentieth-century poetry to shed new light on and clarify some of the more

excessively theorised aspects of surveillance such as privacy, subjectivity and confession.

My methodology could be said to rail openly against long-established ideas regarding the lyric's inherent solitariness and essential disjunction from the social realm. This debate in literary studies is best summed up by Theodor Adorno in "On Lyric Poetry and Society" (1957), where he describes how one may come to fear that, in the sociological analysis of a lyric poem, formal analysis falls by the wayside:

> The most delicate, the most fragile thing that exists is to be encroached upon and brought into conjunction with bustle and commotion, when part of the ideal of lyric poetry, at least in its traditional sense, it to remain unaffected by bustle and commotion. A sphere of expression whose very essence lies in either not acknowledging the power of socialization or overcoming it through the pathos of detachment … is to be arrogantly turned into the opposite of what it conceives itself to be through the way it is examined. (37)

What Adorno describes here is the kind of acrimony that pervades, albeit obliquely, much work on the lyric since the decline of New Criticism. To bring the "fragile" lyric into conversation with the "bustle and commotion" of a debased, disordered society is, for some readers and critics, to rob the work of its formal and aesthetic qualities; it is to bring the lyric back down to earth. Yet the substance of a lyric poem, for both Adorno and many other critics trying to think their way out of the Anglo-American New Critical tradition, is much more than an expression of individual experiences. He goes on to say that the above-mentioned fears may be allayed "only if lyric works are not abused by being made objects with which to demonstrate sociological theses but if instead the social element in them is shown to reveal something essential about the basis of their quality" (37-38). Thus for Adorno (as well as for fellow Frankfurt School thinker Walter Benjamin), lyric theory is always already and primarily social theory. Adorno's statement ultimately demonstrates a conviction that art, in particular lyric poetry, could act upon "structural, socioeconomic dynamics" and is capable of being "the means through which certain aspects of sociohistorical development could become apprehensible in the first place" (Kaufman 518). This does not mean, of course, that Practical Critics and New Critics, or indeed Structuralists or Post-Structuralists, did not locate theories of sociality inside theories of lyric, but rather that, as Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins have argued, "in

Frankfurt School thought the social theory implicit in all modern theories of the lyric became the explicit focus" (*Lyric Theory Reader* 320). Thus Adorno's appreciation—one that I share—is of the lyric as an essentially public form capable of reflexively engineering its formal properties towards a particular position or political comment. "The universality of the lyric's substance," Adorno writes, "is social in nature" (38). One of the main aims of *Lyric Eye* in championing this viewpoint and others like it is to restore to critical attention the tensions that have pervaded the reception of the lyric from the start. In doing so I aim to trace the ways in which cultural and political values have been at some points ascribed to the lyric while at others they have been damagingly stripped from it.

The poetry selected for this study spans the early 1920s through to the mid-1960s, with a particular emphasis on the interwar periods comprising the Harlem Renaissance, the height of Modernism and, later, the post-World War II lyrics of the confessional poets. In determining a beginning and end point for a poetics of surveillance within the twentieth century, I have used both the poets themselves and specific historical markers to draw a line underneath particular literary trends. The significance of several key historical events cannot be overlooked in terms of the extent to which they galvanised American surveillance policy and shaped the American cultural and political landscape with regards to notions of privacy, technology and citizenship. Although many of its central ideas have well outlived the temporal parameters placed around it by historians, the Harlem Renaissance is generally considered to have lasted from roughly 1918 until the mid-1930s. J. Edgar Hoover's first year at the FBI was 1919, at the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance and at the end of World War I; thus I start my poetics of surveillance in the twentieth century with the FBI's first surveillance of African-American writers in the 1920s. As for my endpoint, while it would be rewarding to consider the entirety of the Cold War up until roughly the 1990s, it is beyond the scope of this project insofar as it warrants a different methodological register altogether on account of the arrival of the Internet (and with it, radical changes in electronic surveillance technology) in the 1990s. Furthermore, by the middle years of the 1960s, the very notion of privacy itself had come to mean something altogether different. Deborah Nelson describes this shift in terms of a widespread cultural "nostalgia" for privacy that had fully developed in America by the 1960s, observing that "what got 'lost' at the end of the 1950s was a

certain fantasy of privacy as a stable and self-evident concept: privacy as we have always known it," in the common parlance of the era (*Pursuing Privacy* xiii). Other historical markers that close this study off near the mid-1960s are the death of Sylvia Plath in 1963 and the significant signing into law of the United States Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 1966.

While I use this timeframe to inform my selection of poets and poetry, my goal is nevertheless to extend my analysis outwards, beyond the mid-1960s, as a means of considering the ideological aftermath of an unprecedentedly problematic period in America's surveillance history, ethically and politically. Moreover, I suggest that American poetry between the 1920s and the 1960s and the political context in which it existed were together responsible for the creation of a new understanding of the notion of privacy in America: privacy as simultaneously too pervasive and too limited. In fact, the dual nature of privacy throughout this period has been articulated by much recent Cold War scholarship, a great deal of which has sought to understand the ways that *containment* operated as both a political strategy and an ideological position, beginning in the privacy debates in America in the late 1950s. In thinking about the tools—ideological tools, language tools, technological tools—that lyric poetry and surveillance share, I too am very much interested in the paradoxical nature of ideas about twentieth-century privacy. As Nelson observes: "if privacy was supposed to symbolise the autonomy, freedom, self-determination, and repose that the citizen of democracy most valued," it became increasingly evident that "privacy would also represent isolation, loneliness, domination, and routine" (*Pursuing Privacy* xiii).[2]

Each of the poets I read makes a significant contribution to the development of a poetics of surveillance, but each is also intensely caught-up in the particular privacy politics of their time. From Richard Wright's polemical "The FB Eye Blues" ("Everywhere I look, Lord / I see FB eyes / I'm getting sick and tired of gover'ment spies") to Robert Lowell's prosecution for draft evasion in 1943,[3] the poets in this

[2] While Nelson refers specifically to confessional poetry, I consider this explication to be relevantto the changing nature of privacy in America from the 1920s onwards.
[3] In recognition of the pervasive public concerns with American cold-war containment culture and in direct opposition to unprecedented levels of state surveillance, Lowell's statement of refusal to serve criticised fundamental contradictions in America's strategic politics, asserting:

study are never far from a personal, as well as a poetic, investment in the politics of the day, particularly when it comes to the dissemination by governments of imprecise and consequently damaging public messages (*Richard Wright Reader* 249). Even Sylvia Plath, whose poetry has been all too often read as pure psychobiography, maintained a keen awareness of the rhetoric of McCarthyism and its political and sociocultural consequences. This is why her poetry explores themes of espionage, paranoia, invasion and disguise. In a journal entry taken from her early years at Smith College in the 1950s, for example, she prefigures the infiltrating effect that the dominant political rhetoric of the era would have over the collective American consciousness, writing: "school children will sigh to learn the names of Truman and Senator McCarthy. Oh it is hard for me to reconcile myself to this" (*Journals* 32). Later, in the 1962 poem "A Secret," for example, Plath fuses a critique of female subjectivity with a complex treatment of the interrogative techniques employed within large surveillance structures:

> I have one eye, you have two
> The secret is stamped on you,
> Faint, undulant, watermark.
> Will it show in the black detector?
> Will it come out
> Wavery, indelible, true (*CP* 219)

While this poem is commonly read as addressing the affair between Plath's husband Ted Hughes and Assia Wevill, "A Secret" also clearly illustrates Plath's complex attention to surveillance and questions of truth and authenticity. Even when read along purely biographical lines, Plath poems such as "A Secret," "Eavesdropper" or "The Courage of Shutting-Up" reveal the extent to which she was enmeshed in the rhetorical language of surveillance as it became an all-consuming aspect of twentieth-century American life.

Because of the different ways in which poets experience and relate to surveillance, as well as the variety of ways in which they express this relationship, this study is presented through a thematic as well as approximately chronological chapter structure, demarcating the various racial, domestic, gendered and political concerns

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"wars are won not by irrational valor but through the exercise of moral responsibility." See Lowell, *Collected Prose*, 367-368.

expressed by poets in either their poems or in other forms. In addressing these concerns through an attention to lyric poetry, I interweave close readings of modern American poems, a detailed analysis of twentieth-century and contemporary surveillance discourses and a comprehensive focus on the material and ideological aspects of twentieth-century American culture. My methodology is therefore one that brings poetry into relationship with both politics and cultural studies in ways that, as Rei Terada writes in "After the Critique of Lyric," let "'lyric' dissolve into literature and 'literature' into culture, using a minimalist definition of 'culture' from which no production of everyday experience can be excluded" (199). This approach demonstrates the inextricability of poetry and culture at the same time that it exemplifies the exceptionality of lyric poetry as a medium that is capable of rendering subjectivity and identity in highly reflexive ways. My concurrent reading along cultural and poetic lines should also remind us of the lyric's fraught history when it comes to the relationship between art and politics. This troubled past is perhaps summarised most succinctly by Rachel Blau Duplessis in the opening lines of her important essay "Social Texts and Poetic Texts: Poetry and Cultural Studies" (2012), where she argues that "[c]ritical intersections between cultural studies questions and the poetic text have often been considered suspect. This gets structured as a debate between the historical and the aesthetic, as if cultural studies lined up on one side, and poetry on the other" (53). I do not aim to do away with this tension as a means of locating the political or cultural motivations for the various American lyric poems examined here. In this sense, my aim is to retrieve from lyric poems their until-now uncharted cultural and political dimensions but always with an eye towards the lyric's formal and aesthetic qualities.

This tactical approach to lyric and politics necessitates a reformulation of the definition of lyric within the context of surveillance discourse. Moreover, in the act of bringing together twentieth-century verse and contemporary surveillance theory, I update lyric theory in anticipation of the new directions in which it might head next. This objective is in line with that which Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker develop in their seminal collection *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism* (1985), a volume of essays that grew out of a symposium at the University of Toronto in 1982. The collection declared its aims as introducing "varieties of criticism and theory which have transformed literary interpretation in recent years" and explaining the "assumptions

and strategies" of recent critical thought "on New Criticism's chosen ground, the analysis of poetic texts" (7). Parker notes that the question "What would enable future work on the lyric?" remains as open as ever at the culmination of their project and that "alternative directions" still remain to be explored (16). Meanwhile, Jonathan Arac, in his somewhat subdued "Afterword," points out that many of the essays "do not so much surpass New Criticism as renovate it through revision: less "Beyond the New Criticism" than a "New New Criticism"' (346). It is clear now that Hošek and Parker's ambitious attempt to move beyond New Criticism in theorising the lyric was, in the end, partially a process of returning to it. The conceptual paradox underpinning this canonical collection of late-twentieth-century essays was conspicuously revived two decades later by a series of presentations at the 2006 MLA convention which, under the guidance of Marjorie Perloff, looked once again at the lyric and its problematic associations. Later published in 2008 in a "Theories and Methodologies" section of *PMLA*, these papers, whether they intended it or not, galvanised a phrase that has perhaps by now done a certain amount of critical damage. The "New Lyric Studies" was the label that came to summarise this early-twenty-first century undertaking in lyric theory, a label Stephen Burt has recently described as seeming "so disturbing and so hard to avoid, so misleading, so important" and yet "so useful" (422). Burt makes this claim in the opening lines of his 2016 review essay of Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins's impressive *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology* (2014), which could be considered as the most recent major recapitulation of the wholesale approaches towards defining the lyric begun by Hošek and Parker in the 1980s and continued by the MLA convention roughly a decade ago. Jackson and Prins's anthology traces, they claim, "a critical genealogy of the modern idea of the lyric as it has emerged in Anglo-American literary criticism of the past century" (1).[4] In so doing, the essays show how the idea of the lyric has been, at best, confusingly defined and redefined throughout its development. But in comprising essays that date no further back than the twentieth century (the oldest essays in the

[4] Jackson and Prins position their anthology as a companion to Michael McKeon's *Theory of the Novel* (2000). This is especially apparent in their argument that the emergence of the lyric as a modern critical canon is consistent with "the movement to replace historical poetic genres by a transhistorical theory of the lyric" (*The Lyric Theory Reader* 7). Thus, for Jackson and Prins, late twentieth-century attempts to derive general statements about the lyric's essential character detract from critical discussions about the particularity of specific poetic genres such as the sonnet or the ballad.

collection, I.A. Richards's "The Analysis of a Poem" and "The Definition of a Poem" are from 1924), *The Lyric Theory Reader* makes an implicit statement about the restrictive conceptual parameters of the New Lyric Studies. Thus, the very term "New Lyric Studies" is frustratingly less about an historically inclusive, comprehensive approach to the lyric than it is about intentionally holding at bay certain prior approaches to the lyric. The crucial reason for this tactic is to do with the term "lyricization," which for Jackson and Prins does away with many of the categories and ways of reading prior to the late-nineteenth century. To borrow again from Burt: "Lyricization is largely irreversible: we cannot get all the way out of the habit of recognizing, or misrecognizing, lyric in many short poems (it is something like the fall into experience). But this mode of lyric reading is modern: either the poets of the past (before 1880, or 1780, or some other point) did not have 'lyric' in our modern sense, or (thanks to lyricization) we cannot know whether they did" (423-424). To demonstrate this point, Burt quotes from Jackson's well-known *Dickinson's Misery* (2005), where Jackson suggests that "Dickinson may only have become a lyric poet through the posthumous transmission and reception of her writing as lyric" (212). In many ways, Jackson's pithy proposition about Dickinson's writing serves as a correlative to the overarching argument made in *The Lyric Theory Reader*. For Jackson and Prins, the lyric as it is currently conceived—"the essence of poetry, a poem at its most poetic"—is a category that was formulated only in the late eighteenth century (1). As the nineteenth century wore on, changes in the nature of poetic criticism, production, dissemination and consumption led to the eventual "lyricization" of all poetry. What this evolution essentially meant, especially for readers, was a "gradual broadening of the term *lyric* until it became essentially synonymous with poetry at large" (Palmer 233).

Nevertheless, the three major studies I have just outlined sit alongside many other works that examine the lyric and its various stages of development from a variety of angles and critical schools and perhaps provide in specificity and difference what is lacking from the more ambitious attempts at defining the lyric. A few of these are, for example, the much earlier and influential collection of essays on lyric, *Forms of Lyric* (1970), as well as the later discussions put forward in Mutlu Blasing's *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and Pleasure of Words (*2007), Robert Von Hallberg's *Lyric Powers* (2008), Gillian White's *Lyric Shame: The "Lyric" Subject of American Poetry* (2014) and Jonathan

Culler's much anticipated *Theory of the Lyric* (2015). This last study rebuts many of the historicist claims of Jackson and Prins by reinstating the transhistorical nature of the lyric tradition. If it does not succeed in coming any closer to a definitive approach to the lyric, Culler's collection does at least show that even as recently as 2015 certain lyric scholars are as committed as ever to demonstrating that "twentieth-century criticism remains alert to the lyric as material object and not simply idealized quality" (Palmer 234). In Culler's thinking, unlike the suggestions put forward by Jackson and Prins, the twentieth century did not necessarily inherit the "ambitions for the lyric" put forward by a nineteenth-century attempt to distinguish a "transcendent version of the lyric" (*The Lyric Theory Reader* 4). Instead, the twentieth century reinstated the specific generic qualities of the lyric towards an understanding of poems that realign the lyric's aims and effects with society, politics and culture. Thus, for Culler, if the twentieth-century lyric seems at any point to be an intense expression of subjective experience, this is probably because the kind of intimacy made possible by its rhythmical structures and generically-specific personal content are cleverly geared towards an expression of public discourse. In the end, Culler is less interested in what counts or does not count as a lyric than in determining the lyric's fundamental nature as a social text.

All of these critical tensions cannot be sidelined for the purposes of focusing on a socio-political analysis of lyric poetry in the twentieth century. Nor can my study even begin to provide anything like the kinds of comprehensive approach taken by Hošek and Parker or Jackson and Prins. Instead, my critical approach focuses less on engineering yet another attempt at defining the lyric than it does on the characteristics that essentially make the lyric incompatible with other discourses. How these features produce highly particular critiques of and responses to privacy, observation, subjectivity and, therefore, surveillance are of special interest. Deriving impetus from Rei Terada's timely comment, "Lyric studies has been new before," my aim is to be methodologically wary of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century tendency to renew the lyric by simply placing it somewhere within the multiplicity of contemporary theories and critical schools (195). Given this, I reformulate the wider coordinates of subjectivity and lyric voice around notions of visualisation and overhearing as well as the binaries of looking that characterise the lyric's complex treatment of subject-object relations. In this regard, I argue that both lyric poetry and

American surveillance practices dating from the very early twentieth century through to the concluding events of the Cold War were characterised by archetypal poetic tropes of codification, metaphor, subversion and symbolism, among many others. Moreover, the confessional American lyric with which this thesis concludes is a crucial site of study for any scholarly investment in surveillance in so far as it is a poetic form that reflexively acknowledges the complicity that exists between the private speaking voice of the poet and the outside world of mediated ideological messages. That the confessional poets reinvented the lyric as a site upon which fictional constructions came to be presented as seemingly authentic poetic confession says a great deal about the changing nature of privacy towards the later decades of the twentieth century, as well as the way in which the lyric changed under the pressures of surveillance culture.

By comparing lyric poetry with the scope, complexity and sophistication of the surveillance matrix, I draw attention to the fact that both have as their central modus operandi the subject. That is, both surveillance agents and the creators of lyric poetry are interested in observing the individual human citizen. To take this even further, surveillance and poetry in the twentieth century are both obsessed by questions and assumptions about what a subject *can be*; to this end they document and track historical lives for material that can be organised and articulated into a record. Thus, by considering the ways in which, for example, the FBI and a mid-century poet might share some elements of discourse, it is possible to redraw the conceptual possibilities of poetic practice itself. However, the analysis of any poetic witnessing, whether it involves surveillance or otherwise, requires us to ask the indispensable question of whether or not there can be poetry without politics. Consequently, my examination of the poems selected for this thesis is always attentive to the question of whether the poems are acutely anti-surveillance and even anti-the American government, or whether they are simply mocking the idea of surveillance itself.

The thesis is structured in two complementary parts, each comprising two chapters. Part One establishes the conditions within which a poetics concerned with surveillance can be said to have emerged, surveys the history of surveillance in the United States and evaluates the distinctive discourses that have characterised its growth. More broadly, it also sets out an argument for the relationship between lyric poetry and surveillance through the overlapping of art and politics in the twentieth century, but also at the more abstract level of the intersecting formal or technical

characteristics shared by poetry and surveillance. Part Two moves into a more detailed discussion of the poetry itself, focusing on key themes that characterise the relationship between lyric poetry and surveillance in the twentieth century.

Chapter 1, "Lyric Poetry and Surveillance in Twentieth-Century America," lays the historical and theoretical foundation for the thesis as a whole by providing a history of the lyric and surveillance over the period from the 1920s to the 1960s. In doing so, this chapter sets out an argument for the relevance and significance of lyric poetry to surveillance discourse by highlighting a cluster of shared and interdependent characteristics and motivations. This argument includes an examination of the lyric's formal features as well as a discussion of its particular treatment of subjectivity as compared to other literary genres. The first section establishes three key points necessary for understanding the technical and conceptual overlapping of lyric poetry and surveillance: both simultaneously centre on visualisation, intensify subjectivity and resist direct identification. Above all else, this section—and, by extension, the thesis as a whole—posits the lyric as a formal practice concerned with the linguistic codes underpinning all of the ways in which humans interact with and use language. The second section provides two distinct yet interdependent histories: first, a history of the relationship between surveillance and subjectivity from the early modern period through to the present; and second, a history of the technological, administrative and ideological development of American surveillance from the end of World War I through to the mid-1960s. By outlining the history of surveillance in America as a process caught up with evolving definitions of subjectivity and personhood, this section argues for the significance of the mid-twentieth century in America as the site upon which seething tensions between public and private life finally become teased out via politics, technology, culture and literature.

Chapter 2, "Bureau Reading and Impractical Criticism," identifies the political and literary developments and abstract ideals that helped to nurture particular reading practices in the United States during this period, first in American universities and then at the CIA and the FBI. The chapter explores FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover's intense interest in modern American poetry and the writers who produced it. By connecting Hoover's educational background and library-intensive work history with the FBI's later interest in American writing, this section argues that the connection between modern American poetry and surveillance also has roots in

Hoover's early years working closely with literary texts. Moreover, by establishing the FBI's Hoover-centric literary reading practices as those which prioritise historical fact and biographical information, this chapter sets up a contrast between the New Critically inflected reading methods advanced at the CIA and the Bureau's rejection of the "practical criticism of ambiguity" as one too liable to allow literary subversives to slip through the surveillance cracks. The chapter also draws on a range of historical and poetic resources in tracing the emergence of modern surveillance culture in the US, looking in particular at the role played by poetry in negotiating key aspects of twentieth-century literary culture, along with nationwide tensions over privacy and governmental surveillance. In addition to charting these overlaps, the chapter discusses several important distinctions between American poets and the agencies that sought to monitor them. The chapter then moves to discuss the relationship between modern American poetry, literary criticism, and surveillant code breaking, particularly with regards to the work of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. Pound represents the expatriation and internationalism of American modernism, while Williams's lyric is highly expressive of and concerned with American vernacular, speech and rhythms. In essence, the poetry and life stories of Pound and Williams sit at the crossroads of the lyric and surveillance tensions that this thesis examines.

Chapter 3, "Surveillance Poetics Abroad," reads a range of lyric poems with a view to their distinctive representations of American national character in the early decades of the twentieth century alongside the attempted evasion of surveillance by many poets who left America and travelled overseas. The chapter begins with the question of what, precisely, American literary nationalism looked like in the twentieth century. In answering this question, I explore the pressure felt by American poets to formulate a distinctively modern American poetic voice in the wake of Walt Whitman's influential model of ostensible universality. I argue that the refusal of many modern American poets to comply with the standard of Whitman's universalising lyric marks the starting point for an artistic revolt against unified, inward-looking nationalism and the subsequent surveillance of those poets and their work by the FBI. By writing into this culture, many American poets also entered into an experiment that sought to reconcile the private world of the lyric poem with the fragmented, public world of twentieth-century American life. I locate the tensions underpinning this shift through the register of the masculinised travelling abroad that

comes to be associated with American modernism. I read this travel as an index to a particular kind of American subjectivity that develops inside lyric poetry of the period. The chapter takes the work of Langston Hughes and James Baldwin as examples of the possibility of a subversive poetics written whilst abroad. In considering the relationship between modernism, poetry and observation, I also examine the poetry of W.H. Auden, a central figure of the period who moved from England *to* America and who had a very particular sense of what the modern American lyric should be. My close readings of Auden's surveillance poetics reveal his obsessive embrace of American life along with his investment in a lyric with a persistent monitoring perspective, which comes to reflect modernism's relationship with observation and subjectivity. While Hughes and Baldwin are essentially forced overseas by racism, intensive FBI surveillance and harassment, Auden travels to and from America for personal and artistic reasons. The chapter traces the effect that this difference has on the respective surveillance poetics of these writers. It argues that while for Hughes and Baldwin, surveillance-driven expatriation results in a universalising, politically consistent lyric, for Auden the move to America works to intensify an interest in the processes and techniques of surveillance as articulated through lyric poetry.

Chapter 4, "Surveillance Poetics at Home," takes as its focus the architecture of the suburbs and technology. This provides the context within which to consider the domestic resonances of a poetics of surveillance. The policing of national ideology and US containment culture comes to the fore, as do emerging debates about gender, family life and technology. The chapter opens with an examination of post-war containment culture in America and the impact of this on the possibilities of lyric poetry during the period. A United States policy used during the Cold War to prevent Soviet expansion, US diplomat George Frost Kennan first articulated "containment" in a 1946 foreign policy directive. Reading containment as both a historical fact as well as a metaphorical structure, I argue that containment's explicit equation of the body politic with the human body shares a significant theoretical overlap with lyric poetry as a literary form, which restores the first person "I" to the centre of the poem in order to look outwards, from the privileged view of the self, to the wider audience of citizens. The chapter focuses on the poetry of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath and concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the surveillance technology of wiretapping to notions of confession, subjectivity and overhearing. A key argument of

the chapter is that, although the telephone and overhearing pervade American life from the very early-twentieth-century onwards, the concept of eavesdropping becomes a cause for increased paranoia at precisely the moment when confessional poetry appears as the final turn in the lyric. Thus the suffusion of poetry during this period with questions and anxieties relating to confessing and confession comes to reflect and influence responses to wiretapping.

The conclusion asks timely questions about the poetic resonances of surveillance culture today by placing the work already discussed in the context of our own deep concerns about the continuing erosion of privacy over the last twenty years. I examine the consequences that Big Data (vis-à-vis Edward Snowden's 2013 revelations of the NSA's activities) has for subjectivity in the twenty-first century and therefore the future of lyric poetry. By concluding the thesis with an extrapolative, forward-looking approach, I argue explicitly for the uniqueness of the twentieth century to the history of the lyric and my literary critical reading of it. In other words, the particular formulations of observation, overhearing and subjectivity that I outline are traceable to a specific context and time. Today's total breakdown of the link between visualisation, hearing and lyric subjectivity occurs because, in the process of becoming fragmented via Big Data, surveillance loses its ideological and technological centre. Surveillance today is both everywhere and nowhere. It cannot be read alongside the lyric in the same way that my study establishes for an earlier period. Therefore, in my concluding remarks, the thesis turns towards the contemporary lyric in order to discuss its discursiveness and self-reflexivity alongside its continuing political influence, even in a new world where our understanding of subjectivity, privacy and poetry are fundamentally altered.

# PART ONE

## CHAPTER 1: LYRIC POETRY AND SURVEILLANCE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

> I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all;
> the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.[5]
>
> RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"Surveillance is about seeing things, and more particularly, about seeing people," writes David Lyon in the opening sentence of *Surveillance Studies: An Overview* (1). While this claim holds true to the fact that surveillance practices have, since the beginning, been based upon models of regimented visibility, it goes one step further in designating a major point of focus for the surveillant gaze: other human beings. Poets have always been aware of this step. Long before the appearance of what has recently been nominated "Surveillance Studies," lyric poets worked to problematise the linguistic and formal codes that govern the language and processes underpinning surveillance, such as representation, expression, narrativisation, symbolism, communication, imitation and characterisation. In addition to this complex set of concepts, both lyric poetry and surveillance are interested in the question of truth. While the need to seek out the truth undeniably involves an inherent surveillance apparatus, poetry reflexively complicates its own truth claims by ensuring a "constant alternation or pulse of sense and nonsense" (Blasing 3). To put this simply, poetry generates its own unique 'truth' claims by using language that blurs the distinction between appearance and reality.

In a recent *PMLA* collection of essays that responded to the advent of the "New Lyric Studies," Rei Terada problematises this paradigm by suggesting that drawing attention to the associations between lyric and "other phenomena" would be an

[5] *Nature*, 9.

interesting exercise "only if we normally believed that lyric was closed" (196). Jumping ahead to the present day, she notes:

> Now the associations justify themselves, as they should, in particular conceptual conclusions about nationalism, humanness, media culture, and other socio-political and philosophical problems. If "lyric" is a concept that will help us think, it's because it helps us think about something besides lyric. (196)

In stressing the conceptual and formal overlaps of lyric poetry and surveillance, as well as the cultural and political impact of these overlaps on American poets in the twentieth century, I am fully implicated in the postmodern project Terada describes. Moreover, in thinking about the ways that specifically modern lyric discourses can be extrapolated into re-theorising not only twentieth but also twenty-first surveillance practices, I am also countering the kinds of transhistorical readings of the lyric developed by Jonathan Culler and others. Where this study differs from both Terada's and many recent accounts of lyric poetry's social significance, however, is in its argument for a specific kind of lyric development with specific socio-political and cultural effects during a particular historical period in America. Thus my reading of American lyric poetry during the period from the 1920s through to the 1960s diverges from Terada's subsequent submission that "[t]he lyric zone of electrification is dissipating along with belief in the autonomy of the lyric object and in the specialness of the lyric mode" (196). As this chapter argues, it is precisely the specialness of the modern American lyric mode that allows it to express and reflect the tumultuous mood of the times. The lyric is, in turn, shaped over the course of the 1920s to 1960s by the cultural and political forces that came to dominate twentieth-century life in America. I argue that these factors are also highly contingent on the FBI's unprecedented surveillance of American poets in this particular period. The unique properties of the lyric during these decades contribute, therefore, both to the lyric's capacity to comment upon surveillance as well as to the (often unwarranted) attention given to it and its creators by an increasingly powerful American surveillance state.

As the following dissection of lyric demonstrates, I want to move beyond a mere diagramming of the relationship between poetry and surveillance as one of "the-observed-poet-becomes-observer." Rather, I aim to consider more complexly the reflexive psychological processes enacted by the twentieth-century lyric poem in order

to establish an argument about the ways in which the voice of this poetry is capable of occupying the binary positions of being both intimate and public at the same time. Stemming from this, an overarching question that this thesis addresses is: What can a voice which is both personal and public, acknowledged and anonymous, tangible and disembodied, human and artificially constructed, tell us about the practices of surveillance in the twentieth century and, in particular, the effects of these practices upon the American psyche, both at the level of the individual citizen and for the collective American consciousness? Overall, the chapter asks how the concept of surveillance came to pervade people's private lives in America during the early to middle decades of the twentieth century and the role lyric poetry played in turning the gaze back upon the surveillance machine, the mechanism Richard Wright dubbed the "FB Eyes."

## Why Lyric?

> Cicero said that even if his lifetime were to be doubled he would still not have time to waste on reading the lyric poets.[6]
>
> SENECA

E.E. Cummings, the eccentric poet who has come to be associated with the lower case "i," deviates from the standard modern American lyric in his satirical poem "Ballad of an Intellectual." Written in 1932, the poems begins:

> Listen, you morons great and small
> to the tale of an intellectuall
> (and if you don't profit by his career
> don't ever say Hoover gave nobody beer).
>
> 'Tis frequently stated out where he was born
> that a rose is as weak as its shortest thorn:
> they spit like quarters and sleep in their boots
> and anyone dies when somebody shoots (951)

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[6] *Epistles* 49.5.

In peculiar dactylic/anapestic tetrameter rhyming couplets, Cummings lambasts everyone from Ezra Pound ("and many's the heiress who's up and swooned / after one canto by Ezra Pooned") to the American nation itself ("Not I am a fake, but America's phoney!"). The poem also presents several double entendres, aural and visual rhymes, and amusing intentional misspellings, all carefully positioned for satiric effect. The poem's "puny" intellectual protagonist "hated the girls and mistrusted the boise" before, "encouraged by desperation," his parents "gave him a classical education." Cummings then writes:

> You know the rest: a critic of note,
> a serious thinker, a lyrical pote,
> lectured on Art from west to east
> - did sass-seyeity fall for it? Cheast! (951)

Here we have the characteristic linguistic irregularity of Cummings infused with an exaggerated humour uncommon for poems of the period. In the above stanza, these techniques are used to mock the seriousness of the "lyrical pote," a figure "sass-sayeity" has foolishly taken to be the arbiter of high culture and taste. Yet there is something far more significant at stake in the poem's clever arrangement of wordplay and finger poking. In using an uncommon rhyme scheme while at the same time making fun of the very figures that are best positioned to notice that scheme's atypical nature (he begins the poem by rhyming "small" and "intellectuall," for example), Cummings draws attention to the very mode from which he dramatically deviates. Simply put, "Ballad of an Intellectual," while still technically a lyric poem, reflexively estranges itself from the archetypal modern American lyric in order to highlight the primacy of particular critical distinctions. In doing so it exploits the stance and structure it mocks. The poem reveals the way in which the lyric that emerges in the middle decades of twentieth-century America "appraises its own possibilities, if in the very act of having them questioned and even, sometimes, sadly denied" (Oberg 4). Cummings thus uses an irregular form of lyric, and one whose central theme is intellectualism, to question what a lyric might be. This may seem like a radical manoeuvre, but the definition of lyric poetry was as contested during Cummings' time as it continues to be today. Moreover, the effects and possibilities of the lyric poem—political, cultural, or aesthetic—often depend upon the particular formal characteristics that are emphasised at any given moment.

James Longenbach puts the definitional contestation over the lyric and, by extension, the contemporary "resistance to poetry" into perspective by reminding us that "poets have been on the defensive at least since the time of Plato, and rightly so, since philosophers and literary critics have distrusted poetry" (*The Resistance to Poetry* 1). This is of course true but it is also true that lyric poetry has not only had to defend its usefulness since the beginning, but its very meaning has been repeatedly challenged by those who revere it most. "We take it for granted that we know what a lyric is," write Jackson and Prins, yet the dauntingly large number of different definitions of the genre—extending from J.S. Mill, Theodor Adorno and Northrop Frye, to Helen Vendler, Barbara Johnson and Jonathan Culler—suggest a very different situation (*Lyric Theory Reader* 1). Before examining the particular qualities and socio-cultural effects of the modern American lyric and its associated surveillance poetics, it will be useful to consider the broader definition of lyric poetry and some of the conceptual tensions that have shaped it from the start.

Derived from the ancient Greek *lurikos* (for the lyre), the term lyric has come to be associated with a performance that exists today in the popular form of "song lyrics" with musical accompaniment. As Robert Von Hallberg has noted, "lyric authority is inextricable from its sister act, music" (7). He goes on to observe, "Euterpe, the muse of lyric poetry, needs a flute; Terpsichore, the muse of choral poetry, a lyre. Diverse forms of musicality are attractive to poets, but no poet can afford to tap only lightly the musical resources of language" (7). This is in part because lyric also equally denotes a short poem that expresses a poet's own thoughts and feelings; in essence, a literary production that is read, not sung. Yet while it may carry a traditional relation to melody, the lyric—a linguistic arrangement that has no actual sound—is not music. Susan Stewart's position with regard to the lyric's auditory effects highlights the significance of recalling the original moment (or moments) of a lyric's composition. Thus for Stewart, unless we are literally listening to a lyric poet spontaneously compose a poem, we are always recalling sound "with only some regard to an originating auditory experience" or perhaps we are simply imagining what we would have heard if we had been there (*Fate of the Senses* 29). Of course, whatever sound or sounds we recall, they are those that are human. The sounds of lyric are not abstract, "not a succession of tones without prior referents," rather, what we are most likely to—instinctively—imagine is the sound of human speech (29). Recognising this is

central to recognising the importance of brevity to the lyric's classification but it is also an influential factor in tracing the relationship between lyric poetry, confession and surveillance, a crossover to which I turn in detail in Chapter 4. Even at the level of title alone, though, we can see the lyric's longstanding correlation with the sound of human speech, evident in Plath's "Word Heard, By Accident, Over the Phone," W.D. Snodgrass's "Nightwatchman's Song" or John Berryman's "Eleven Addresses to the Lord."

Each of these titles positions us to not only overhear some kind of poetic voice but also to imagine a poetic scenario. Plath's poem prompts the image of a domestic scene perhaps while "Nightwatchman's Song" suggests an evening scene, perhaps played out in complete privacy. Ultimately, what we automatically do when we encounter a poem is imaginatively "reconstruct a context"; this might involve identifying a tone of voice in the lyric speaker but it almost always involves the process of inferring the "posture, situation, intention, concerns and attitudes of a speaker" (Culler, "The Modern Lyric" 295). Some lyrics give us a great deal of information from which to establish these conditions, as in Robert Lowell's "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid" which opens with the epigraph: "An old man in Concord forgets to go to morning service. He falls asleep, while reading Vergil, and dreams that he is Aeneas at the funeral of Pallas, an Italian prince" (*Selected Poems* 22). The speakers in other lyrics are harder to ascribe "intention, concerns and attitudes to" as in Pound's "Fragment" which in its entirety reads: "I have felt the lithe wind / blowing / under one's fingers / sinuous" (*Poetry* 74). Whatever the case, the *auditory effect* created by lyric poems compels us to imagine a speaking human voice, even if we can only gather the bare minimum from the poem about who that human is, where they are, and why they are speaking.

The concept of phenomenalisation is useful in thinking about the lyric's oral effects. For Paul de Man, for example, "our claim to understand a lyric text coincides with the actualisation of a speaking voice, be it (monologically) that of the poet or (dialogically) that of the exchange that takes place between author and reader in the process of comprehension" (55). The kind of intelligibility that comes about therefore is the sensation of phenomenalising a poetic voice even though that voice is not actually heard by the senses. This also explains how and why de Man advocates prosopopoeia as the central trope of poetic texts. That is, in reading a lyric we give it

a voice and in giving it a voice we also give that voice a face. Although de Man is concerned, in ways comparable to Barbara Herrnstein Smith for instance,[7] with the linguistic pyrotechnics required to create the illusion of poetic voice, he nevertheless prioritises the aesthetic strategies employed by all lyric poets. "No matter what approach is taken," he states, "it is essential that the status of the voice not be reduced to a mere figure of speech or play of letter, for this would deprive it of the attribute of aesthetic presence that determines the hermeneutics of the lyric" (56).

Thus a central tension pervading all lyric theory is that between the ultimate persuasiveness of the phenomenalised poetic voice and the need to appreciate a poem's formal and aesthetic qualities in order to address its hermeneutics adequately. But while the so-called 'romantic model' of the lyric as an intense expression of subjective experience has been rejected by a major strain of twentieth-century North American poetics, the element of voice cannot, it seems, be discarded. Culler's reluctance to annul voice is one of the more persuasive positions, insofar as he accounts for the twentieth-century lyric's predilection for multiple voices. His key point is that many twentieth-century lyrics still urge us to sound their multi-voiced phrases "even as they undercut the possibility of making sense of the poem by hearing a coherent voice" (*Theory of the Lyric* 86). The crafty destabilising of poetic voice described by Culler is undoubtedly a product of twentieth-century modernity, epitomised in a poem such as "The Waste Land" and taken to its extreme conclusion in some of the Imagist poems of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. Yet even when we cannot easily locate a coherent voice in a lyric poem, the mode is still suggestive of a verbal exchange because we are provoked to speak it. Lyric features such as scansion, meter, repetition and rhyme are inescapable reminders of the poem's need for verbal utterance.

A further complication in the various attempts to theorise voice in relation to the lyric is its historical instability when it comes to genre. Western literary genre theory is grounded in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which divides literary genres into the epic, dramatic, and lyric, albeit with very little direct reference to the lyric. Yet despite the

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[7] Herrnstein Smith coined the term "natural discourse" to encapsulate "all utterances—trivial or sublime, ill-wrought or eloquent, true or false, scientific or passionate—that can be taken as someone's saying something, somewhere, sometime, that is, as the verbal acts of real persons on particular occasions in response to particular sets of circumstances." See *On the Margins of Discourse,* 15.

fact that lyric poetry has been the most consistently practiced of all the poetic modes throughout Western literary history, it is still to this day marginalised by the traditional Aristotelian theory of genres (Grossman 211). Tracing the lyric's long history back to Aristotle we can see that its uncertain generic status stems in large part from the fact that the *Poetics* does not treat the lyric as a major strand of poetry. The logical yet somewhat peculiar explanation for this is that, although Aristotle was thoroughly familiar with ancient Greek lyric, citing many examples in his *Rhetoric*, in *Poetics* "he does not discuss lyric because he was writing a treatise on mimetic poetry, poetry as an imitation of action" (Culler, "Afterword" 237). Aristotle, Culler writes, "recognized – if only he had bothered to say this explicitly! – that lyric is fundamentally epideictic rather than mimetic (hence more suitable for a treatment in a treatise on rhetoric)" ("Afterword" 238). Thus *Poetics*, arguably foundational to Western accounts of genre, has, since the beginning, sullied most logical attempts to ascribe lyric poetry a generic category of its own. This problem is intensified by the fact that Aristotle's tripartite division of literary genres into epic, dramatic and lyric is really only taken up fully in the eighteenth century, by which time it seems as though criticism had begun (either intentionally or unconsciously) to neglect the fact that in the *Poetics* itself lyric poetry is only noted under the heading of melopoeia (the sung components of tragedy), and not as a specific genre of its own. This confusion of categories resulted in further problems relating to the relationship between lyric and 'mode.'

I am using the terms "mode" and "form" interchangeably to refer to the lyric, in so far as both refer broadly to the cluster of key characteristics by which a lyric can be defined. The problem with Aristotle's three-way division, however, is that it problematically conflates *mode* (a linguistic classification that describes the process of enunciation) with *genre* (a literary category that refers to formal and thematic features) (Genette 60-72). As Scott Brewster rightly points out, "[m]any modern theories of genre are founded on this conflation or confusion of categories, and neither of these systems of classification assigns lyric a proper place" (3). To modern readers the division developed by Aristotle is by no means as familiar as the more recent demarcation of genres into lyric, dramatic and narrative. So, while the dramatic and

the narrative (e.g. the stageplay and the novel) have a clearly defined generic structure, the generic classification of lyric remains a significant problem for modern theory.[8]

The various definitions of lyric can also be read as reflections of its various stages of cultural and political evolution. Deborah Nelson, for instance, argues that the lyric's principal transformation came in the "epistemological and ontological shift that occurred after the revolutions in France and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century" (*Pursuing Privacy* xvi). The product of this revolution prevails today, consisting almost exclusively of an emphasis on the meditative form of lyric, which has come to be synonymous with the lyric as a whole. Committed to the ultimate privacy of lyric poetic expression, John Stuart Mill famously defines the nature of this meditative utterance by distinguishing between poetry and eloquence in "What is Poetry?" (1833):

> Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or uttering forth of feeling. But … we should say that eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard … the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude. (12-13)

For Mill, lyric poetry's "unconsciousness of a listener" only exists as it "appears to us"; he is careful to keep the poet's dexterity in creating the illusion of an overheard utterance a safe distance from our interpretation of it as overheard. This, in essence, is the allure of lyric: its shape-shifting awareness of its own linguistic effects. Moreover, it is this idea of the lyric as private-utterance-made-public that is of significance to the processes of surveillance. Unlike the novel, which is polyvocal and fragmented, or an epic poem, which is allegorical and narratively structured, a lyric poem creates the effect of having been intruded upon. It is therefore the 'meditative' illusion created by the lyric which allows it to mimic, interrogate, expose or mock the invasive observational prying or 'listening in' of twentieth-century surveillance techniques. Yet in the very act of constructing a scene of seemingly private contemplation, lyric poems also work to throw into question the very notion of privacy. The solitary figure evoked by Percy Bysshe Shelley's depiction of the 'passerine' poet in "A Defence of Poetry" (1840) sheds some light on this:

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[8] See Fowler, *Kinds of Literature,* 236.

> A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. (512)

Although this passage supports Nelson's notion of the lyric poet's introspection, Shelley's anthropomorphised nightingale nevertheless reveals one of lyric poetry's most puzzling definitional problems. The description of a speaker who is paradoxically both unaccompanied *and* perceived by an entranced group of "auditors" begs some inescapable questions: is the compositional activity of lyric poetry inherently private, or is it public? Does the poet, either in direct address or apostrophe, *intend* to be heard? And, most importantly for surveillance, does the lyric speaker's introspection align her more closely with the role of observer or the observed? These are questions that I return to in various ways through close readings in Chapters 3 and 4. However, the very incitement of such questions out of a Romantic-era passage should tell us something very particular about the way that lyric changed from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. That is, it transformed from being a genre primarily about culture and literary tradition to one that came to be focused on particular observation: a poem that focused on a subject's perceptions of the self and the surrounding world.

So while the idea of the lyric poet as an unseen musician is perhaps an over-extended analogy in the eyes of twenty-first-century readers and critics, the sense of internality evoked by the lyric poem is nevertheless a common feature of almost all post-Romantic theorisations of the lyric. What, then, does this formulation tell us about the lyric's potential for truthfulness? And does the existence of introspection or internality imply an inherent authenticity? From the early nineteenth century onwards, lyric came to represent the very essence of poetry itself, since its inward, personal structure was capable of producing the most intense and therefore seemingly authentic poetic mode. For instance, following Mill's now famous declaration that "eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard," Charles Whitmore in "A Definition of the Lyric" (1918) saw lyric as poetry at its most intense, an elevated form that can arise only out of spontaneity. "[I]n the pure lyric," he writes, "the imagination is wholly unhampered, wholly unalloyed … the lyric is the union of concision and amplitude in a highly developed and recurrent metrical form" (595). In some literary contexts,

spontaneity implies truthfulness; we perhaps find it hard to image a poet extemporaneously composing an elaborate lie. In the intervening period between (to give the most obvious example) Wordsworth's description of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" to the present still-contested status of the lyric, the critical arc has moved increasingly towards the constructedness of authenticity in lyric poems (791). Echoing post-Romantic descriptions, a significant trend in recent scholarship has been to understand lyric poetry as that which communicates the voice of a fictional subject who expresses private thoughts and feelings, either to herself or to an unacknowledged "other." The influence of this position can be seen in the work of Sharon Cameron, for example, who maintains that lyric poems present an imaginary speaker who "plots" out a series of "concerns" without connection to action or other people (22). This speaker's voice is "solitary and generally speaks out of a single moment in time" (Cameron 23). Positions such as Cameron's are reflected in later contemporary theories of the lyric, in particular those that position the lyric as talking to "itself or nobody in particular" and "not primarily concerned with narrating a story or dramatizing an action" (Blasing 2). Or there is Northrop Frye's claim that the "lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else" (249). To be sure, few readers are actually interested in finding a definitive answer to the question of whether or not a lyric is authentic. This is not just because the task is fruitless and pedantic but because it ruins the illusion of immediacy upon which lyric reading is built.

Ultimately, because we can never fully reconstruct the acoustic conditions of a poem's creation, our recalling of it (whether we intend it or not) will always incorporate some element of imagination. It is thus the lyric's inextricable remnants of song, along with its conspicuous speaker and its inclination towards performance, that necessitate, in almost all accounts of lyric poetry, an insistence on the presence of a listening, observing "other." Yet as Donald Justice, the American poet famously devoted to traditional short poems, reminds us in his metalyrical work "Poem," even if we accept the premise of the lyric's overhearing "other," he or she may not be the intended audience of the poem:

> This poem is not addressed to you.
> You may come into it briefly,
> But no one will find you here, no one.

You will have changed before the poem will.

Even while you sit there, unmovable,
You have begun to vanish. And it does not matter.
The poem will go on without you.
It has the spurious glamor of certain voids.

It is not sad, really, only empty.
Once perhaps it was sad, no one knows why.
It prefers to remember nothing.
Nostalgias were peeled from it long ago.

…

O bleached mirrors! Oceans of the drowned!
Nor is one silence equal to another.
And it does not matter what you think.
This poem is not addressed to you. (160)

A poem described by one reviewer as "both practical and morally unnerving," Justice's "Poem" employs negation in almost every line to deliver a powerfully ironic invective against the notion of poetic apostrophe (McGann 245). The poem's addressee is ultimately required to read the poem so diligently, so enthusiastically, that she is able to defeat its relentless attempts to erase the reader. Twice the poem tells us, "this poem is not addressed to you," and yet, as the lyric reveals to us repeatedly, the poem is addressed to anyone who happens to read it.

While lyrics such as this are interested in questions of interpretation and, especially given its early 1970s publication date, the particulars of late twentieth-century Reception theory, contestation over the definitional aspects of the lyric has for the most part been directed towards questions surrounding the speaker: the lyric "I." Moreover, rather than devoting energy to arguing for what a lyric is *not*, scholars have instead achieved some consensus on four features appearing consistently in almost all definitions of the lyric: it is characterised by brevity; it utilises a first person speaker or persona; it promotes the essence of performance; and it is an outlet for personal emotion. But despite such consensus, we need not delve far into the depths of twentieth-century literary criticism to find convincing arguments against treating the lyric too generally.

The first task in ascribing to the twentieth-century Anglo-American lyric a particular set of qualities, specific to a particular period of time, is to separate it from

the long history of lyric and, in particular, the well-known categorisations that arise out of the poetry of the Romantic period. After all, my suggestion that twentieth-century Anglo-American literary criticism had a particular role to play in intensifying lyric subjectivity cannot, if it is to have any validity, underestimate the significance of the Romantic period in reifying the lyric into one of Western literature's three fundamental genres by producing the persona *inside* the poem. Or, to borrow Culler's explication, "during the romantic period … a more vigorous and highly developed conception of the individual subject made it possible to conceive of lyric as mimetic: an imitation of the experience of the subject" (*Theory of the Lyric* 1). Of course, the poetic and descriptive conventions of Romantic-era rhetoric direct our attention to the concepts of feeling and emotion, a model inside which the lyric is seen to be an intense expression of subjective experience. If this no longer characterises the lyric in the twentieth-century, however, then what did the lyric become?

We might begin with the very basic point that the lyric became less about subjective feeling and more about things. Terada utilises the perspective afforded by contemporary writing to shed light on this point. She comments:

> The close reading associated with twentieth-century lyric studies, brought to bear on entities called "lyric" today, moves the reader more explicitly into a larger network, a dialogue with "another" genre, or a discussion of a unit of language that has no lyric specificity and so bares the prosaic infrastructure of the lyric. (195)

The move described by Terada, away from a so-called heightened lyric experience towards a quotidian, prosaic expression, is an evolution that has brought the lyric's persona further and further into the critical spotlight, allowing for the more direct treatment of daily phenomena. When Terada notes that the twentieth-century lyric comes to be seen as "made of the same substance as other media and continuous with the fibre of society," she refers to the normalising during this period of what I would call lyric contextualisation: by the turn of the twenty-first century, it was no longer remarkable to read a lyric poem politically (195). As the fantasy of lyric's solitude came hard up against the late nineteenth-century realisation that a concept of absolute privacy was no longer possible, the only solution was a turn in which the lyric subject's autonomy became defined by the object upon which its attention focused, and vice versa. The sincerity, or authenticity, of the speaking "I" was now less a focus

for readers and critics than the person behind the persona and the social or political commentary the poet was making. Deborah Forbes finds a way out of this seemingly endless circularity by accepting the premise of "the necessary failure of any poet to write with perfect sincerity, and any critic to identify unimpeachable sincerity" (5). Thus, instead of sending us out in search of "extra-poetic information," sincerity can be made to operate as "a useful term within the ontological boundaries of poetry itself" (Forbes 5). This does not mean that twentieth-century (and, indeed twenty-first century) poetic criticism did not invest serious scholarly effort in reading for the poet inside the poem. Rather, the lyric during this period was assumed to be a fictional utterance by a real person, unless, as became apparent in the case of the confessional poets, a poet deliberately inserted biographical material into the poem in order to blur the boundaries between fiction and truth. Even for the confessionals, though, the direct insertion of personal material into a lyric poem does not guarantee complete biographical accuracy, since many of the confessionals were more interested in the formal achievement of the illusion of true confession than they were in divulging secrets via the medium of the lyric.

It could be argued that the modern conception of the lyric as "the fictive speech of a specifiable persona," as Culler describes it on the cover of *Theory of the Lyric*, is a concept unique not only to the twentieth century but to American Anglophone poetics as well. Indeed, as Jackson and Prins acknowledge of this modern hypothesis, perhaps the "general definition of the lyric (whether valued or devalued) now seems to us a given only because twentieth-century criticism made it up" (2). So why, then, is the lyric poem the form through which twentieth-century surveillance culture can be most incisively explored and contested? And what pressures, specifically, did the Anglo-American lyric undergo in the twentieth century as it evolved into the contemporary lyrics from Ridker's *Privacy Policy* with which I opened this study?

Taking into account this clarification of the modern American lyric, I argue that three key points are necessary to establish the conceptual overlapping of lyric poetry and surveillance. Despite approaching the lyric from different angles, all three points arise out of the ways in which both surveillance and lyric poetry intensify subjectivity but resist direct identification at the same time. To put these arguments succinctly before explaining them in more detail, both modern lyric poetry and surveillance

1. communicate a particular consciousness;

2. are abstracted from real life; and,

3. invert the relationship between privacy and observation through their paradoxical treatment of the speaking (observed) "I."

All these modes of operation shed light on the idea that surveillance and lyric poetry, as associated (if different) practices, are ultimately invested in grappling with the concept of reality. The kind of grappling that I refer to here is illuminated in W.S. Merwin's "Invisible Reality," in which the lyric's speaker is concerned with the desire to fix and control objects and experiences. The poem in its entirety reads:

> One does not see the water.
> But in its dark presence
> bathes
> the eternal nakedness
> for which man is blind.
>
> And this not seeing that I feel, fixed
> in the night that runs already to greenness
> — inner night, night of the world? —
> is more than seeing, is not knowing
> whether in the world or in my soul
> bathes the eternal nakedness—the woman
> alone—,
> for which man is blind. (190)

The speaker of this poem does not necessarily "see the water," but the lyric's explication of reality depends on a far more complex set of interdependent phenomena. The line, "And this not seeing that I feel," implies the poet's internal eye, which becomes the "invisible reality" upon which perception and observation depend. "The irony," if it could be located in this lyric, is that the poet's innate observational mechanism "is more real and necessary than any eye-centred image or visual representation" (Nelson and Folsom 60).

The lyric poet's deep consideration of reality is also a theme in James Merrill's "The Cosmological Eye" (1946), one of three poems published in what Kimon Friar has termed Merrill's early "series on the eye and vision" (qtd. in Bauer, *The Composite Voice* 214). Merrill's lyric presents a conceptual contest between the objective, tangible and immediate substance of poetry and abstraction, imagination and the elusive. It opens with the following stanza:

> Vivid to the myopic is the blue
> Bewilderment prismed in his looking-glass.
> He muses on glassed vistas imprecise
> And asks his vision why blurred things should be
> Still blurred, why on the clear ideal surface
> An inch away a parallel vagueness lies. (*CP* 681)

The poem then moves to contrast the apparent realness of the sky and its flawless blue with the tangible yet less enchanting objects found upon the beach, which the poet can confirm having seen: birds, foam, smoke, a sail and blue shells:

> The sky is the realest: the sky cannot
> Be touched and in the mirror it cannot
> Be touched. He is enchanted. The rare *azure*
> Is flawless; happily blurred blue so no whit
> Less exquisite than blue unblurred. And what
> He misses he would never know was there.
>
> The mirror and the rare azure alas
> Are not the same. The keen-eyed have seen this
> And tell of birds, foam, subtleties of blue,
> Smoke, bone, a sail, blue shells that are of less
> Being to him than ideal blues. (*CP* 681)

The poem's speaker establishes an affinity with the realness of the thing that cannot be touched, all of which suggests an urge to know a reality that is something more than merely objects. "Merrill … knows," writes von der Heydt, "that the reading of such objects offers all the fulfilment we can expect. The poem must therefore locate incommensurate types of vision, myopia and presbyopia, in the same eye" (187). As the lyric reaches its end it achieves this resolution. In order to report the true reality of the world the poem's speaker "rejects both abstraction and mute appreciation of nature" (Von der Heydt 188). The poem's final lines read: "How shall / We know him, then? By the light in his blue eye." The intriguing "him" in these lines is a sign that the poet himself is now part of the catalogue of objects washed up on the beach, each available for observation and assessment. There is, of course, an echo in these final lines of the Emersonian quest for knowledge through experience, summed up in the lines with which I prefaced this section: "I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all; currents of the Universal Being circulate through me" (Emerson 9). Thus the lyric, while still the site of ongoing disagreement when it comes to questions

about the role of the speaking subject, authenticity, form and even content, is nevertheless always concerned with the exploration of what can be meant by and what can be achieved in verse when it comes to the staging of reality. Beyond this, though, how can a still-largely disputed mode be said to have clear overlaps with material and cultural phenomena?

First, the lyric is the mode most useful to an examination of surveillance culture and its effects because of the ways in which its formal characteristics conjure a sense (ultimately an illusion) of a particular, authentic human consciousness. In the lyric, more so than any other literary genre, we are accustomed to believe that the subject speaking is not necessarily detached from the experiences that bear on the poem's content and meaning. Anne Williams defines lyric according to this principle, albeit with a specific emphasis on the formation of *perspective*, by suggesting that lyric can be distinguished from other genres because of the "unique angle of vision it permits its audience" (15). That angle, if we consider a contrast with the omniscient narrator of a novel, is "from the inside rather than the outside of its characters" (5). Williams writes:

> The lyric perspective is akin to one from which we all experience "reality"; the peculiarity of the lyric poem is that it allows us to assume the perspective of another individual consciousness. (15)

Thus, unlike drama in which characters' lives are presented, or the novel where characters' lives are described, the lyric is the genre in which life is intimately shared; that is, where the exploration or disclosure of human subjectivity is the primary goal. This does not necessarily detract from the potential social or political commentary a lyric poem is capable of communicating but it does mean that what we get when we read a lyric poem is only ever one angle—one particular viewpoint—of interior experience or reflection. Epic and drama create fictive subjects; the lyric provides us with an ostensibly real subject who, paradoxically, is still not reducible to a direct equation with the poet behind the poem. What the lyric lacks therefore in its narrow narrative scope it makes up for with its construction of internality and private experience. As Culler stresses: "The poetic persona is a construct, a function of the language of the poem, but it nonetheless fulfils the unifying role of the individual subject, and even poems which make it difficult to construct a poetic voice rely for their effects on the fact that the reader will try to construct an enunciative posture"

(*Structuralist Poetics* 170). Ultimately, because we determine the subject in the lyric poem to be real, the statements made by that subject can be correlated to actual objects and authentic events, and are usually assumed to have existed in a particular moment in time. Käte Hamburger, in *The Logic of Literature* (1973), supports this idea by distinguishing lyric from fiction and drama because lyric amounts to the statement of a subject about an object, rather than to the construction and description of fictional subjects. Thus, in being a "statement-subject," the lyric's speaker is a character whose utterances we can determine to have come from a lived experience (234). This perhaps means that it is possible to conceive of lyric as both expressive *and* imitative in its nature. To use a metaphor from M.H. Abrams, the lyric can be a mirror and a lamp at the same time.

The question of whether the particular life shared by the lyric poem should, or indeed can, be traced to a particular human subject or moment in time is still at the centre of enduring critical debate.[9] For many, the lyric is "the most autobiographical of all poetry … undividedly the expression of elemental emotions," while for others the lyric self is regarded as the exemplary model of elaborate literary construction, the ultimate act of poetic trickery (Schelling 245). The most recent of these critical contests is that between scholars such as Jonathan Culler and Multu Blasing, for example, and others such as Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins. Culler and Blasing argue for lyric's transhistorical capacity and universality while the latter believe that such readings are a modern construction applied retroactively, and therefore "a retroprojection of modernity, a new concept artificially treated to appear old" (Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery* 8). While these critical positions appear to be entirely at odds with one another, they nevertheless share an appreciation of the lyric perspective as one analogous with a common understanding of human reality (Williams, *The Greater Lyric* 17). The reality principle that underpins the lyric poem is that in which both its formal structure and content position us to infer that the "I" present in the poem derives from a real internal consciousness, whoever or wherever that "I" is. The following definition from Williams supports this concept:

[9] These debates were hugely intensified with the emergence of confessional poetry following Robert Lowell's 1959 *Life Studies*.

> [T]he lyric mode exists in literature when the author induces the reader to know, from within, the virtual experience of a more or less particularized consciousness. When this aim constitutes the predominant organizing principle of a poem, we say that the poem is a lyric. (*The Greater Lyric 15)*

While Williams is interested primarily in the move of the lyric outward into epistles, satires and other forms of "generic appropriation" which constitute "the distinctive mark of the eighteenth-century greater lyric," her theories regarding the lyric's construction of a particular kind of consciousness and of a "unique angle of vision" are nevertheless crucial to my argument for the relationship between the lyric and surveillance (*The Greater Lyric* 35). Bringing together Williams's concept of lyric perspective with Mill's long-standing formulation of a speaker who performs interiority to an overhearing "other," it is possible to see how the lyric uses self-enclosure to reflect the self back onto itself. In fact, this is the very psychological structure outlined by Jeremy Bentham in his ambitious description of the panopticon as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example" (440). Put simply, the seemingly unintended exchange of lyric with its addressee is the means by which heightened subjectivity is made possible. Thus the lyric, like surveillance, becomes the chief technology for shaping and communicating liberal subjectivity; the very structure of surveillance requires in its subjects the internalisation of the surveillant gaze. In addition to this, the lyric, in ways similar to the apparatus of surveillance, requires a public space in which to perform and thus affirm the subject's self-directed enclosure.

My second point, a further complicating feature that can be seen to align poetry and surveillance even more closely, is abstraction. I noted above that the particular life presented by the lyric poem generally differs from that in the novel and drama because the lyric observes an individual consciousness rather than describing characters' lives. While this point holds true, it is not true that the lyric reveals more detail about its particular voice than other genres. As Helen Vendler has rightly pointed out, "the range of things one would normally know about a voice in a novel one does not know about a voice in a lyric" (3). This is precisely because in lyric poetry, voice is made abstract. Vender writes of the lyric:

> It may tell you one specific thing about itself – that it is black, or that it is old, or that it is female, or that it is celibate. But it will not usually tell you,

> if it is black, that it grew up in Atlanta rather than Boston; or if it is old, how old it is; or if it is female, whether it is married; or, if it is celibate, when it took its vows. (3)

Thus, what one does know or is able to deduce from a lyric poem, if it can be socially identified at all, is almost entirely circumscribed. Considering the lyric's character and content in this way may lead us erroneously into thinking that lyric poems are only useful to us for what can, without difficulty, be mined from them in the form of personal feeling. But while Vendler is justified in taking issue with the reductive "quest for a socially specified self," her account of lyric poetry as abstraction is more useful for the things it tells us about how subjectivity is formally *constructed* in lyric than it is for describing lyric's social and political content (2). The lyric's methods of subjectivity-construction, or "virtues" as Vendler calls them, include such things as "extreme compression, the appearance of spontaneity, an intense and expressive rhythm, a binding of sense and sound, a structure which enacts the experience represented, an abstraction from the heterogeneity of life, [and] a dynamic play of semiotic and rhythmic 'destiny'" (6). This list of lyric virtues is an elaboration of the widely-accepted model developed and critiqued by figures such as Mill and Whitmore, whose classification of lyric simply requires that a lyric poem involves a first-person speaker, reveal personal feeling, and be brief. Yet this list also accurately describes many of the ways in which surveillance structures rely upon methods of abstraction in order to produce their required outcomes and effects. In particular, the "extreme compression" of subjects' lives into FBI records and the "appearance of spontaneity" in the observation of subjects (constructed by agents who have always already arrived at their conclusions long before any surveillance is actually conducted), reveal the extent to which the surveillant gaze presents the appearance of a genuine, authentic narrative even though it derives from a formula already prescribed (Vendler 6).

So surveillance, like lyric poetry, is concerned with the question of how the abstract model of personhood produced through the surveillance paradigm can be related to the inner life of the person under observation. Thus, when we either consciously or unconsciously read for the poet in the poem, we enact one of the central qualities shared by both poetry and surveillance: we observe in order to determine what it means to be a person. Indeed, if we had to accept the challenge of reducing every lyric and surveillant quality hitherto theorised into one overarching

maxim, perhaps the best approach would be to revive Hegel's straightforward formulation in *The Philosophy of History* (1837) that lyric poetry is "the expression of subjectivity" (Bergstrom 12). Embedded within Hegel's concept are the overlaps—and paradoxes—I have just identified: both lyric poetry and surveillance express subjectivity but that expression is always already problematic. Therefore, even if such a truncation were to be agreed upon, the inexorable question still remains: what is the nature of that subjective expression?

The third and final point has to do with the way in which both the lyric and surveillance complicate the status of the speaking (observed) "I" when it comes to the relationship between privacy and observation. In both we witness the appearance of sincerity while at the same time we are held at a distance from an authentic subjective experience. The restoration of the first person "I" to the centre of the poem in the Anglo-American tradition became fully fledged after the early 1950s, when American poets began to reject formalism and the mythologising tendency in much popular verse. In this manoeuvre, American poets "went in search of other gods, new ways of turning the world into words" (Gray 257). Recovering the major impulse in the American tradition, made famous by Whitman's "Song of Myself," the lyric in the twentieth century became once again an intimate address, designed to reveal the growth of the poet's mind.

The placement of the speaking "I" at the core of the poem means that, first, the poet's private self becomes both the speaker and the subject; second, that the poem begins to address the reader directly; and finally, that the persona developed by the poem becomes involved in an act of intimacy, as if the reader is known to the speaking "I." The following lines, taken from a range of lyric poems, illustrate both the change enacted by lyric poets over the course of the twentieth century and the influence of the dominant and ultimately illusory first person "I":

> I will put Chaos into fourteen lines
> And keep him there; and let him thence escape
> If he be lucky; let him twist, and ape
> Flood, fire, and demon – his adroit designs (Millay 728)

> Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
> And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
> Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth. (McKay 153)

I myself am hell,
- nobody's here (Lowell, *Selected Poems* 53)

It is more natural to me, lying down.
Then the sky and I are in open conversation
And I shall be useful when I lie down finally:
Then the trees may touch me for once, and the flowers have
time for me. (Plath, *CP* 162)

As I walked out one evening,
Walking down Bristol Street,
The crowds upon the pavement
Were fields of harvest wheat. (Auden, *CP* 133)

In these poems, the textual presence on the page of the speaking "I" commands our attention. Peppered through the lines of verse above, it stands out and demands an attentive auditor. From Millay's metaliterary placement of Chaos inside the metaphorical cage of a sonnet in order to tame him, through to Auden's mid-1930s literary ballad (which, in its entirety, actually contains three distinct speakers), each of the lyric segments above induces us to connect the experiences described with the life, ideological disposition and politics of a real person or persons at its centre. Yet, the "I" we encounter here is never fully recuperative of the intense emotional authenticity once assumed in the Romantic lyric. Moreover, American poets writing in the twentieth century, after the catastrophic impact of World War I, the formation of a new mass society, and the erosion of the private sphere, are more reflexive than ever in presenting an "I" that is capable of representing both everyone and no one. Elizabeth Bishop captures this duplicity in her personal narrative lyric "In the Waiting Room," which dramatises the moment in which an autobiographical "I" inhabits multiple realms:

I said to myself: three days
and you'll be seven years old.
I was saying it to stop
the sensation of falling off
the round, turning world
into cold, blue-black space.

> But I felt: you are an *I*,
> you are an *Elizabeth*,
> you are one of *them*. (160)

The poem's speaker speaks to herself, an unnamed other, and possibly a universal listener: "one of *them*." Yet it is the reference to "an *Elizabeth*" as well as the personal yet quotidian account of being in a waiting room that complicates the poem's subjective impulse. We are told that the "Elizabeth" inside the lyric is not yet seven years old: likely too young to produce the ninety-nine line, five stanza, elaborately figurative poem in which she is the protagonist. Something therefore is amiss, even when we are given an explicit place, narrative, and name. Characterising this formal lyric construction in relation to post-war literary criticism, Terada notes that "lyric studies in the United States is the story of coming to understand that lyricism's specialness and its emptiness are the same. It seems special to the extent that no particular condition attends its effects of specialness, although each case can be explained in dense historical terms" (197). While this may be an accurate summary of the culmination of the lyric's history in the twentieth century, it is also true that the extent to which the return to personalism through a renewed focus on the centrality of the lyric "I" had effects that were not altogether helpful. The true nature of these effects was not fully known until some time after the period that I am examining, when confessional poetry came to be a formally designated category of its own and when the belief that the complete erosion of the private sphere had occurred was no longer hotly debated.

Gillian White's recent and aptly titled *Lyric Shame* (2014) imbricates all of these tensions with the long history of lyric poetry in order to explain why, by the 1970s, the "lyric I" had become *persona non grata* in literary circles, particularly in America. "Lyric shame," White tells us, is "primarily shame experienced in identifications with modes of reading and writing understood to be lyric, especially as these have been determined by a diffuse 'New Critical' discourse by now so thoroughly absorbed as to seem natural" (3). White's argument is that, largely as a result of the New Critical theories established by American universities in the late 1930s and taught in the 1940s and 1950s, the term "lyric" has come to refer less to a specific literary genre than to an abstract way of projecting subjectivity onto poems. This is the project of the confessional expressivity strongly associated with the shifts of the lyric from the 1950s

onwards, but (to return to my third major point) it is also the product of the way in which lyric continually works to problematise the status of the speaking "I." To be sure, many modern American poets work in accordance with the conventions of the lyric even as they push the boundaries of those conventions. Marjorie Perloff's contention that the confessional poet "begins with one established convention—the projection of the romantic lyrical 'I'—and fuses the romantic 'poetry of experience' with the metonymic mode perfected by the great novelists of the late nineteenth century," explains to a large extent the mechanisms behind the paradox of reality laid bare by the twentieth-century lyric poem (487). Perloff's remarks about the undertaking of the mid-century confessional poet might therefore be usefully extended to the role of the lyric poet. Poetry that operates under this guise performs the ideological function of creating a gap between the private perspective promised by the lyric (a mode that, ultimately, proposes to offer us the personal insight of an individuated speaker) and what Jo Gill has termed "the realities of the subject/speaker's position" (14). For Gill, "such a gap becomes the site of uncertainty for speaker and reader alike" (14).

So although the lyric seems to hold the potential for genuine intimacy of communication between the private voice of the poet and the listening, observing, "other," it is, in ways that are consistent with the mechanisms of surveillance, an ultimately isolating form. Deborah Nelson's summary of this idea is worth noting in full:

> The lyric is the form in which we witness the exhilaration—and perhaps also the terror—of autonomy and self-sovereignty. Unlike the novel, which is polyvocal and social, the lyric is the aesthetic and ideological form in which a speaker conveys the experience and/or the fantasy of his or her own privacy and unfettered self-creation. (1)

Thus the mode produces what could be described as an unstable sincerity effect. Focusing on both the limits and possibilities that this capricious quality of self-consciousness brings about, it is possible to find a space to consider a productive mapping of surveillance's complex speaking positions alongside those developed in temporally adjacent lyric poetry. The lyric invites and generates the opportunity for a productive self-reflexivity with regard to its own speaking position. The authenticity

produced in each poem examined in this study is as much a product of the traditional conventions of the lyric as it is of the experience of the poet at its centre.

The following section examines the context of surveillance in which the modern American lyric developed by considering, first, the current situation of surveillance in the United States followed by an analysis of how the concept and practice of subjectivity evolved until there was a total breakdown of privacy in the post-World War II period in the United States.

## Big Blue Eye: The New Surveillance Normal

For some must watch, while some must sleep
So runs the world away.[10]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

There is no question that today we live in what can be described as a "surveillance society." Gary T. Marx first used the concept in 1985 to refer to a situation where, "with computer technology, one of the final barriers to total control is crumbling" ("The Surveillance Society" 21). At its core, this is a situation in which the collection of mass data by governments and corporations about the everyday movements, purchases, communications and preferences of citizens is not only ubiquitous but also accepted by society at large. Previously discrete spheres of data—bank account data, medical records, criminal records—now constitute a single, traceable, informational profile that is tracked and updated daily (or, to be more accurate, continuously) by government and big business. Ironically, despite the fact that we are surveilled more today than ever before, most people do not register the material impact of surveillance and are therefore complicit in its pervasive reach.

In the suggestively titled *CTRL [Space]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (2002), Thomas Levin correctly anticipated this widespread tolerance of mass surveillance, writing that "[i]n forms ranging from the more obvious closed-circuit

[10] *Hamlet*, 3.2.70-75.

television (CCTV) observation to the more insidious (because largely unrecognised) digital information tracking known as 'dataveillance' (which covers everything from supermarket purchases to cell-phone usage and internet surfing patterns) – surveillance has become an issue that is not only an increasing part of everyone's daily life, but it is even embraced as such" (578-579). This is also a situation, as Rosen and Santesso rightly point out, that is "conductive to hysteria" (*Watchman* 1). Among the writers who attempt to deal with the topic of surveillance in the twenty-first century, both the mass media and scholars have tended to draw on a common cluster of exaggerated, alarmist imagery. One tangible consequence of this apprehension about surveillance today is perhaps the fact that surveillance studies as an academic discipline is now a rapidly growing, global, interdisciplinary field which is also oddly narrow in focus. Nevertheless, the outpouring of publications in the field of surveillance studies has, in recent years, firmly established the topic as an academic discipline in its own right.[11]

Over the past several decades, scholarly writing on the topic of surveillance has been marked by a growth in interdisciplinary attempts to explain twenty-first century surveillance culture. This development can be seen in the creation of influential scholarly periodicals such as the online journal *Surveillance and Society* in 2002 and the Surveillance Studies Network, a registered database dedicated to the study of surveillance. Moreover, the very fact that today's surveillance society comprises the state, the private sector and the everyday interpersonal relations of its citizens has meant that the number of published texts that share overlaps with or have implications for surveillance exceeds counting. The objective of all this work seems to be less a wholesale attempt to delineate every instance of surveillance in the Western context than it is to describe the effects and consequences of surveillance, particularly when it comes to the ways in which human beings interact with one another. As Marx has pointed out in a recent essay about the growing scholarly influence of surveillance

[11] A bibliography of recent surveillance scholarship includes the following texts: David Brin, *The Transparent Society* (1998); John Gilliom, *Overseers of the Poor* (2001); Jeremy Crampton, *The Political Mapping of Cyberspace* (2003); Amitai Etzioni, *The Limits of Privacy* (1999); Richard Hunter, *World Without Secrets* (2002); David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye* (1994); Richard Blum, *Surveillance and Espionage in a Free Society* (1972); John Parker, *Total Surveillance* (2000); Charles Sykes, *The End of Privacy* (1999); and Reg Whitaker, *The End of Privacy* (1999). Texts that lean towards the humanities include: Ann Gaylin's *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust* (2002) and John McGrath's *Loving Big Brother* (2004).

studies: "In a world where surveillance is seen as both a response to threats and a threat, before asking 'Is surveillance good or bad?' we need to ask, 'What concepts are needed to capture its basic structures and processes?'" ("Surveillance Studies" 733). Together with numb submission to the overarching structures of surveillance culture, American citizens have embraced their loss of privacy with a "patriotic vigour and pop-culture nonchalance" unmatched by the rest of the world (Parenti 7). The extent to which Americans have accepted their loss of privacy is bound up with the growth of increasingly insidious surveillance practices, a perplexing phenomenon that is increasingly the site of ongoing social and political critique. It is clear, however, that the naturalisation of particular political technologies is a direct offshoot of our increasing acclimatisation to surveillance. Christian Parenti offers just one example of this in the case of "surveillance-as-challenge, 'reality'-based television shows" which "anesthetize us to the new superintendence and in so doing treat it as another natural element, like heat or cold with which we must live and against which we test our wits" (7). The all too frequent riposte to attempts to protect privacy employs a consistent, convincing logic: if you have nothing to hide then why be concerned? Yet, as Parenti also usefully points out, "[t]his common-sense argument is rarely engaged because it is, in fact, quite hard to counter at the level of everyday experience" (8). This is an ideological preoccupation that overlaps with the concerns of the lyric poet who speaks out publicly about personal, intimate issues and in so doing makes an implicit statement about the value of privacy. Deliberations about this tension can be witnessed in, for example, Randall Jarrell's intriguing poem "The Face" which appeals to the divide between what the inside mind *knows* and what the outside world *sees*:

> I'll point to myself and say: I'm not like this.
> I'm the same as always inside.
> — And even that's not so.
>
> I thought: If nothing happens …
> And nothing happened.
> Here I am.
> But it's not *right*. (23)

Or, more famously perhaps in Plath's invocation of the fact-hungry biographer in "Lady Lazarus":

> I turn and burn.
> Do not think I underestimate your great concern.
>
> Ash, ash—
> You poke and stir.
> Flesh, bone, there is nothing there. (*CP* 246)

In their acts of revelation these lyrics foreground the complicity of the speaking "I." Yet, they also explore the other side of the confessional coin, so to speak, in their reflexive acknowledgment of the expectant overseeing or overhearing reader. Randall's frank admission, "I'm the same as always inside," draws attention to the disjunction between one's private feelings and the information made available to the reading public via poetry. This public-private paradigm also applies to the surveilled citizen whose actions and words are tracked and recorded, although not necessarily an indication of their internal thoughts. My point here is that the concept of privacy is always already inextricably bound up with the social, political and technological dimensions of surveillance, just as it is in lyric poetry.

Whatever the overarching aim of each new text in the rapidly growing field of surveillance studies, the culture of modern surveillance has been extensively critiqued by scholars such as Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson in *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility* (2005), Benjamin Goold and Daniel Neyland in *New Directions in Surveillance and Privacy* (2009) and more recently Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon in *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation* (2013). Other notable books that examine America's intelligence agencies and its global surveillance networks more broadly are Parenti's *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slavery to the War on Terror* (2003), journalist Shane Harris's *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* (2010) and Torin Monahan's ground-breaking book *Surveillance in the Time of Insecurity* (2010), in which he diligently combines theoretical accounts of state power and neoliberalism with a critique of the social settings in which insecurity dynamics have been played out in the twenty-first century. Monahan's study, perhaps the most incisive account of the dystopian aspects of technological surveillance today, reveals the ways in which public fear and insecurity are stealthily inculcated by political figures and the media and subsequently sustained by both economic vulnerability and urban fortification. All these factors fuel acquiescence to technological surveillance. Investigations by

those such as Monahan establish the need to confront the mythic dimensions of contemporary surveillance in order to break free from the pervasive forces of "diplomatic manipulation," as Edward Snowden has called it ("Open Letter to the People of Brazil").

In addition to these varied works, surveillance studies' pioneers Gary T. Marx and David Lyon have written the most discerning, interdisciplinary accounts of contemporary surveillance culture to date, proving the extent to which the study of surveillance is more urgent than ever before. Marx has applied a lifetime's analysis to support his contention that "surveillance by itself is neither good nor bad, but context and comportment make it so" (*Windows* 10). His most recent work *Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology* (2016) is the most comprehensive and up-to-date text in the field, summing up issues of surveillance and social control through attention to areas as diverse as psychology, popular music and the monitoring of children through ID chips. While Lyon and Marx are both (perhaps predictably) sociologists, their work as leaders in the field of surveillance studies is nevertheless applicable to many of the complex political and social questions raised by the lyric. Marx's primary goal in *Windows into the Soul* is to study "interaction — whether face-to-face or remote involving agents and subjects of surveillance" (8). He outlines a methodological approach to the study of surveillance that clearly touches upon the interpretive strategies and broader hermeneutic politics surrounding the lyric:

> A central task of the sociological tradition of symbolic interaction and dramaturgy is to understand how individuals and organizations present themselves through the control and release of personal information, and how others respond to this. Of equal interest are efforts to discover information that is not presented (or to avoid knowing information that is). This approach emphasizes the dynamic, interactive quality of social life and attends to how individuals interpret their own and others' situations. (x)

The "release of personal information" and the ways in which others respond to and interpret that information are concepts pertinent to any theory of the lyric. The extent to which we read a given lyric poem as written by a real person, writing from a real place and time, involves an interpretive practice that moves beyond the particular formal techniques employed in and by the poem, or even the knowledge that we may

have about the poem's author. Rather, our engagement with a lyric along the lines of Marx's "efforts to discover information that is not presented" suggests that, even when we consider a lyric poem to be about a fictional world, we are still interested in determining the factual context out of which that fiction is constructed. In a recent interview with Francesco Giusti for the *LA Review of Books,* Jonathan Culler mirrors this idea:

> [I]f we say literary utterances are performative, in that they bring into being the characters and worlds to which they purport to refer, then this way of being performative would, in my view, apply to fiction and not to lyric, which I consider not to be fiction (most lyrics make claims about our world, not about some fictional world), though lyric poems may certainly contain fictional elements.

Surveillance, like the construction of lyric poetry, is ultimately about the extraction of information from the "ubiquitous flow of distinct data points" in order to produce a coherent narrative, often about a person or group of people (Marx, *Windows* 1). For surveillance and the lyric, this is also a two-way structure. To *observe* is to collect information and seek to arrange it into a record, while to be *observed* (either knowingly or otherwise) is to offer up discrete fragments of information—'snap shots' of a personal life—for compilation and assembling by whichever surveillance structure is being used to conduct the observation. Within this framework, particularly for American poets of the twentieth century, the lyric poet occupies by turns the role of the surveiller and the surveilled: poets were not only watched more closely by government organisations than ever before, their work also received unprecedented critical attention when it came to questions of authenticity, fiction, subjectivity and truth. Poetic reading and poetic criticism suffuse this already complex overlap with a third dimension: interpretation. To borrow from Marx again: "[T]he data may create new organizational identities for the person based on abstract categorizations whose meaning emerges only from combining bits of data about the person and the setting into composites. The composite is then evaluated in relation to broad statistical models" (*Windows* 1). What could be more indicative of modern (and particularly postmodern) literary criticism than the isolated interpretation of a lyric poem subsequently read alongside and reflexively produced out of other "broad … models"?

Marx makes another germane point in stating that "[t]he data revealed may have a self-evident factual quality, such as what time a person was at a given location" (*Windows* 1). This is, of course, also true of the lyric poem. Take, for example, W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939," which begins:

> I sit in one of the dives
> On Fifty-second Street
> Uncertain and afraid
> As the clever hopes expire
> Of a low dishonest decade:
> Waves of anger and fear
> Circulate over the bright
> And darkened lands of the earth,
> Obsessing our private lives;
> The unmentionable odour or death
> Offends the September night. (*Another Time* 98)

The figure in this poem, sitting in "one of the dives / On Fifty-second Street" on the eve of World War II, develops inside the lyric in ways that eerily parallel the watchful eye of a surveillance operation. An FBI agent, looking in from the street or from a camera angled into Auden's bar from the rooftop of a nearby building, would probably accumulate data about the ruminating subject consistent with what Auden presents to us in this poem.[12] The poem owes its subjective authenticity to both the lyric "I's" heightened feeling and perception ("Uncertain and afraid" and "Obsessing our private lives") as well as to the disclosure of information that can be traced to a factual record. Of course, we do not know specifically in which dive bar the poem's speaker sits, but it is not in the end relevant, so long as it can be verified that Fifty-second Street is home to a number of these kinds of bar. The technology of the poem, in other words, offers possibilities for 'windows into the soul' as new and discrete versions of subjects are manufactured out of the synthesis of data and interpretation. The peering in effect of Auden's poem also resonates with Plath's "Eavesdropper," where the suburban home becomes a site of acute surveillance. In Plath's lyric, "the

[12] I use "camera" and not CCTV in this analogy because the first commercial closed circuit television system became available in 1949, called Vericon. Very little is known about Vericon except that it was advertised as not requiring a government permit. Auden's poem is dated before this.

big blue eye" peers across the street and watches "like God" as everyday Americans go about their daily business. A section of the poem reads:

> the electric milker, the wifey, the big blue eye
> That watches, like God, or the sky
> The ciphers that watch it.
>
> I called.
> You crawled out,
> A weather figure, boggling,
> Belge troll, the low
> Church smile
> Spreading itself, like butter.
> This is what I am in for —
> Flea body!
> Eyes like mice
>
> Flicking over my property… (*CP* 261)

Like the CCTV camera that swivels to take in a panoramic view, the eyes in Plath's poem are "like mice," flicking and scanning over the speaker's property. The programmatic, probing effect of the poem mimics that of surveillance devices, tracking and recording the movement and activity at fixed locations. Yet in ways similar to the revelatory first-person speakers of "Face" and "Lady Lazarus," the speaker in this poem also gets caught up in the very structures of the surveillance regime: "This is what I am in for."

The phenomenon that I am outlining here is something that Robert Lowell knew well, particularly when it came to the tension between the formal and aesthetic qualities of the mid-century American lyric, and the controversy surrounding the apparently personal information disclosed by poets writing in the confessional mode. Lowell's "Epilogue" looks back at a poetic moment in America when artistic integrity was, for many, impinged upon by a culture of paranoia and the ruthless quest for private information by everyone from critics and government officials to the media and general readers of poetry. He laments:

> Yet why not say what happened?
> Pray for the grace of accuracy
> Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination
> stealing like the tide across a map
> to his girl solid with yearning.

> We are poor passing facts,
> warned by that to give
> each figure in the photograph
> his living name. (*Day by Day*127)

Lowell's commentary in these closing lines of the poem figures humanity as the "girl solid with yearning" who, like the figures that surround her, deserves to be remembered by her "living name." The agency in this closing resolution is aesthetic as much as it is ethical. The poem's very title is shot through with irony regarding the poet's freedom to create. As the piece which concludes his last volume *Day by Day* (1977), "Epilogue" represents Lowell's final attempt to act out the very desire that has been ostensibly held back from the collection's earlier poems: "[T]o make / something imagined, not recalled." Yet even in the act of unfettered creation, the poet nevertheless ends by moving towards the "grace of accuracy" in that making. On this point, Sastri notes that "readers have emphasized the distinction in the opening lines between imagination and memory, aligning it with a choice between the aesthetics of painting and of photography and placing that choice at the poem's center" (488). Thus the poem's central theme, that truth should exist not in reportorial but only ever in aesthetic terms—"The painter's vision is not a lens"—challenges the poetic artifice detectable in all verse that claims to present an authentic subjective experience. That Lowell saw the role of the reader as bound up with the question of poetry's function is suggested by the intersubjective impulse of the poem, or rather its metapoetic element. But what, then, are the political possibilities of Lowell's critique of poetic agency? Further, as Sastri asks, "[w]hat enables the poet's agency, and what is its end?" (489).

Perhaps we can ask the same question of the surveilled citizen who, in the act of being either watched, interviewed or interrogated becomes a literal version of Lowell's figure: "heightened from life, / yet paralyzed by fact." Thus, lyric poems that deal with surveillance, confession or privacy more broadly almost always exhibit an interest in the principles and politics of authenticity, the question of how 'real' is the experience at the heart of the poem. That the subject of confession was of deep concern for those living in the years between the 1920s and the 1960s suggests that the long-term reverberations of such concerns are only now beginning to materialise. Moreover, while some anxieties were unprecedented during the twentieth century and have therefore been somewhat remedied and subsequently absorbed into twenty-

first-century life, others have only intensified. So amplified has the interest in the commodity value of confession been that "twenty-first century American culture is now shot-through with confessional anxieties and is hyper-attuned to the political stakes of labelling texts as confessions" (Tell 2). Through lyric poetry it is possible to see the ways in which the *communication* of personal information (or data) is just as integral to the processes of surveillance as the *visualisation* of that information, which has too often come to stand in for the concept of surveillance itself. David Lyon summarises this dual-function compellingly:

> The Panopticon, like the Enlightenment, gave priority to vision. But surveillance, despite its literal meaning, also refers metaphorically to verbal communication. What we say is used as evidence. Or rather, under certain circumstances – such as in a police statement – our words will be used to "see" us in a fresh light, or maybe to trap and constrain us … As with the visual, the verbal element in surveillance is also context-specific. The paradoxes of surveillance return to haunt us in the realm of communication. (*Electronic Eye* 208)

Of course, the kind of information collected about individuals varies depending upon the tools used to collect it. In the case of language, however, even information that is voluntarily disclosed can nevertheless be manipulated towards a desired outcome. It can be used, as Lyon suggests here, to "see" a subject "in a fresh light." Moreover, the paradox of communication when it comes to surveillance is such that the individual offering the information is able to retract communication and say, as Eliot has most famously phrased it, "'that is not it at all, / That is not what I meant, at all'" (*CP* 17).

Take, for example Anne Sexton's comments in 1967 when she amused interviewers with the story of critic and poet Ralph Mills' misunderstanding of her 'dead brother.' Recalling her encounter with Mills, Sexton remarked how, upon meeting him, she had declared: "Ralph, I had no brother, but then didn't we all have brothers who died in that war?" She continued:

> But I write my brother, and of course he believes it. I mean, why not? Why shouldn't he? But I was just telling him, incidentally, there was no brother. So that kind of … I should say "Excuse me, folks, but no brother," but that would kind of ruin the poem. (*No Evil Star* 136)

In another poem entitled "Said the Poet to the Analyst," Sexton insists once again on the capacity of the lyric poem to reveal all and nothing at the same time. Returning to

the subject of "words," she writes: "My business is words / Words are like labels, or coins, or better, like swarming bees." The poem continues:

> I confess I am only broken by the sources of things;
> as if words were counted like dead bees in the attic,
> unbuckled from their yellow eyes and their dry wings.
> I must always forget how one word is able to pick
> out another, to manner another, until I have got
> something I might have said …
> but did not. (*To Bedlam* 17)

The closing lines of this stanza, animated by a mischievous ellipsis, alert us to the reader's supposed naiveté before the poem is cut off abruptly. The following lines of the poem not only reinforce the perplexing games that lyric poems play with language, but position the reader directly at the mercy of the linguistic façade:

> Your business is watching my words. But I
> admit nothing. (*To Bedlam* 17)

Sexton's remarks—in both her poetry and interviews—defy any critical response to her work that attempts to define and categorise the persona behind the poem. While the American government did not watch Sexton as closely as it did other poets, she is nevertheless a lyric poet who was intensely caught up in issues of privacy, authenticity, confession and personalism. Yet even while she admits to having her words watched, Sexton is nevertheless capable of playing a psychosocial game with her observers by simultaneously "admit[ting] nothing." This game of poetic cat and mouse is consistent with Marx's insightful suggestion that "what surveillance takes from the individual can be joined with a reverse flow of communication imposed upon the individual" (*Windows* 31). The manipulative telescreen in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, for Marx, an illustration of this: "It transmitted the person's image and words to Big Brother, while simultaneously broadcasting propaganda" (*Windows* 31). In the case of Sexton, her poetry disrupts the flow of confession or communication by intentionally infusing it with unreliable information.

Coterminous with Marx's research, David Lyon has defined and redefined the field of surveillance studies from the later decades of the twentieth century through to the present. Lyon's edited collection *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond* (2006) updates his pioneering *Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society* (1994), which

is still one of the best discussions of the influence of computer surveillance on modern society. A canonical figure in the discipline of surveillance studies, Lyon has recently admitted that he is nevertheless still caught up in "the ongoing quest for surveillance theory" (*Theorizing Surveillance* 12). In borrowing from the collection in my theorisation of twentieth-century surveillance, I take up Lyon's view that while surveillance theory cannot ignore its many core principles, such as the long-standing metaphor of the panopticon, "it can surely move beyond it" (*Theorizing Surveillance* 12). Kevin Haggerty's contribution to *Theorizing Surveillance*, aptly entitled "Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon," articulates a critique of the oppressive effects of the Foucauldian panopticon by suggesting that "the panopticon now stands in for surveillance itself" (26). While Haggerty does not aim to replace the metaphor of the panopticon with an alternative theory of surveillance, he nevertheless argues that emerging perspectives on surveillance might provide useful insights beyond its totalising influence, including the concepts of social sorting, hypercontrol and models of assemblage. Haggerty's essay works to examine the purposes, targets, and hierarchies of our current surveillance assemblage and argues that this offers "a path forward for explaining many of the silences and omissions of the panoptic model" (42). Or, as he more bluntly states: "Foucault continues to reign supreme in surveillance studies and it is perhaps time to cut off the head of the king" ("Tear Down the Walls" 27).[13]

In order to appreciate why this might be the case, it is important to follow the trajectory of surveillance as it developed from the early to mid-twentieth century in America as well as the socio-political narrative of surveillance that came before. This is a necessary precursor to considering the concept of selfhood or subjectivity in the poetry of the period, and also to understanding the sociological concepts determining a context in which poetry and surveillance became conceptually (and literally) intertwined. Perhaps most importantly, though, the history of surveillance tells us that processes of observation, information gathering and control have always been tethered to changing ideas of privacy, democracy, citizenship, sexuality, and confession, just as they have also been a product of advancements in the technologies of observation and overhearing.

[13] For other work on this point see Mathiesen, "The Viewer Society" and Lianos, "Social Control after Foucault."

In the fifteenth century in Europe, for example, surveillance was almost entirely organised around religious imperatives. The all-seeing eye that would later come to be represented by Bentham's central prison guard was embodied in the providential omniscience of a Biblical God. Surveillance in this context involved the policing of religious consciousness and sexual behaviour as well as the suppression of figures seen to deviate from political or religious norms: citizens categorised as devils, witches or heretics, for example. While these kinds of regulation allowed officials to keep basic records of citizens' births, baptisms, marriages and deaths, every piece of information gathered was collected under an inflexible system that did not differentiate between political and religious surveillance. While religious surveillance gradually weakened towards the end of the century, and the state became the primary amasser of the records of citizens' lives, the implicit prejudices formulated via religious thinking were still acted out in the close monitoring of non-normative behaviour. With the advent of the European printing press, the administrative capabilities of the state widened, along with advancements in the dissemination and storage of information that "enabled shifts in the scale and form of surveillance that both enabled and constrained people's lives" (Heir and Greenberg 11). During this period, the growth of administrative systems of description and recording resulted in an increased focus on the identification of individual citizens, often seen as a counter to the rise of the imposter as a generic literary figure (Groebner 218). What were essentially records-based surveillance systems were used not only to verify real citizens on paper, but also to duplicate them through a paper chain of the same material. In an account that eerily foreshadows the obsessive paper-collecting habits of the twentieth-century FBI, Valentin Groebner describes the efficiency paradox that underpinned state surveillance regimes of the fifteenth century:

> [T]he rise of the impressive administrative institutions in early modern Europe that were to become the basis for modern statehood was not necessarily due to their efficiency in adjusting themselves to existing realities. On the contrary, these institutions became what they were because they boldly exaggerated their own efficacy. Creating the fiction of a world registered on and allegedly controlled through paper, they imposed their own criteria on reality, thereby altering it. (218)

Because it was tied to people's compulsion to authenticate their identities, surveillance in this period could overstate its own importance merely through the production of

more and more paper. Ironically, however, as paper-style identikits proliferated, so did the opportunities available to produce counterfeit versions of citizens' identities. As Groebner goes on to claim of this period of thriving citizenry metadata, "surveillance achieves its effects not through administrative perfection, but through arbitrariness" (249). Thus, roughly six centuries ago, there already existed a version of the identity saturation we see today in the form of social media and the twenty-four hour news cycle in which the handing over of one's personal information appears benign because everyone else is also prolifically releasing data about themselves.

Following this, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the appearance and growth of what Gary Marx has called "the embryonic nation-state," which was able to gather and use information in far more complex ways than in previous periods (*Windows* 40). Under these new conditions, political surveillance began to replace religious surveillance, which came to be seen as the governing mechanism of an increasingly individualised form of personal expression. This shift marked the beginning of the first centralised state surveillance, which appeared in England early in the sixteenth century. While much of this new surveillance was local—recording births, marriages, deaths, crime, and administering the Poor Law, for example—political and military surveillance were intensified and centralised early on. Lyon notes, for example, how the first census, taken during the Napoleonic wars, was not necessarily designed to monitor demographics but rather to obtain information about how many men were available to fight (*Surveillance after September 11* 24). These were information-collecting enterprises that were designed less to keep tabs on the populace than to "publicise the vitality of the nation as part of a campaign to win support for the state at a time of political unrest" (Higgs 71). However, as these fell under the shadow of a reformed political authority, an obsessive and suspicious political culture emerged. Suspicion around political loyalty replaced religious witch-hunts, creating new fears of being watched and monitored. As many scholars have pointed out, the centrality of paranoia to the emergence of modernity can be seen in the many recorded instance of fearfulness of others and extreme caution among influential figures of the period. "Among the commanding figures of modern culture since the sixteenth-century," writes John Farrell, "paranoid psychology appears with remarkable frequency. In some cases the tendency is only one dimension of a many-sided personality" (2). The paranoid surveillance of this period even extended as far as

one of England's most powerful Queens. As Stephen Alford's *The Watchers* reveals, members of the "grandest gentry and noble families in England were held under suspicion by the authorities and were sometimes under active surveillance" (43). Thus while Elizabeth's reign was a so-called golden one, the anxious surveillance surrounding it is also the mark of an intensely paranoid and precarious turn in political and social history, one in which the centralisation of power produced wider political surveillance aimed at keeping both subjects and their rulers in check. Nowhere else is this more apparent than in the literary texts of the period, which attempted to divulge the intensely anxious culture of spying and covert activity through indirect though nevertheless obvious narratives of sabotage and calculating surveillance. *Hamlet*, for instance, is full of signals about the empowering yet potentially destructive capacities of surveillance. Early in the play, the surveillance commanded by Claudius—in directing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him—proves his power and authority as a figure capable of controlling the state. Later, however, after suspecting foul play, Hamlet becomes the play's watchman, instructing Horatio to observe Claudius closely in order to ascertain his guilt. Hamlet instructs:

> There is a play tonight before the King.
> One scene of it comes near the circumstance
> Which I have told thee of my father's death.
> I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
> Even with the very comment of thy soul
> Observe my uncle. (Shakespeare 3.2.70-75)

Such lines from *Hamlet*, where spying is used not just to monitor but to verify particular suspicions about human nature, reflect a cultural crisis in the meaning of selfhood during this period, a crisis that can be summed up in Iago's statement that "I am not what I am" (*Othello* 1.1.71). If, after the loss of a transcendental authenticator (God's omniscient eye, expressed through the eye of the monarch), inner personhood was recognised to be at odds with a person's social role, then both the state and the individual faced an enormous challenge: a citizen's outward demeanour could no longer be taken as an index of his or her loyalty to the state or his or her political stance. As Rosen and Santesso write of this tumultuous period, a "crisis was fomenting on the level of self. Granted the human interior was fundamentally

different from social façade, but then what was it, precisely?" (*Watchman* 46). This is a question that was pertinent to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and it still occupies scholars and literary critics today. Moreover, the apparent personalism of the lyric in the twentieth century can perhaps be seen as a project designed to counter the assumed split between self and representation that was crucial to personal autonomy in earlier periods. These are issues relating to the nature of human authenticity but they also reveal the theoretical and practical outcomes of surveillance when subject to the evolution of different technologies. Charting the development of privacy-making and privacy-invading technologies dating from the early modern period through to the twentieth-century, Rosen and Santesso observe:

> As new apparatuses from indoor plumbing, to I-beam construction, to the radio, made for increased solitude, new methods had to be devised to penetrate it; contrarily, each new physical incursion was met by new means of escape. The threat of constant assault was itself conducive to the creation of a modern sense of self; the idea of privacy, as we now think of it, as a basic human right, as a condition of the soul, could not have come about without an unremitting social pressure perceived as hostile and dangerous. (*Watchman* 46)

The transformation of surveillance into something that could both protect and invade had direct consequences for the development of ideas of self throughout this period and beyond. If the process of expressing oneself via "external" definitional processes, as Rosen and Santesso call them, changed, then this would naturally have follow-on consequences for the other "internal concern with self-creation," as we see expressed via lyric poetry (*Watchman* 46).

To put the next phase in the history of surveillance in the simplest possible terms: the following several centuries saw the emergence and concretisation of what is now widely known as the "policed society." In Europe and then America the disciplining and punishment of citizens became an increasingly centralised practice, which was also rigorously bureaucratised. In America during the nineteenth century, the move towards bureaucratised, urban policing was born out of a now disputed claim of widespread social disorganisation, for which little supporting data was ever presented. Of this, Liebman and Polen suggest that little sense can be garnered since its proponents must have had in mind some threshold of disorder that was sufficient to spark police reform (347). In a study from 1975 (the same year, it is worth pointing

out, in which Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* was published in French), Allan Levett put forward a critique of the social disorganisation explanation for the centralisation of police in nineteenth-century America. Criticising this perspective for its failure to distinguish between types of crime and collective violence, Levett writes that in creating a distinction, "scholars would need to consider the specific purposes behind policing, whose interests are served and what elements in a population the police are most directed to move against or control. It is in this way that policing is political" (18). *Discipline and Punish* emphasises the "policing is political" mantra, drawing attention to the processing and organisation of people that became increasingly visible over the final decades of the eighteenth century. While Foucault is still synonymous with surveillance studies today, both his work and nearly all contemporary philosophical discussions of surveillance lead us back, in one way or another, to the organising principles behind Jeremy Bentham's infamous invention: the panopticon. Because the panopticon is the concept through which Foucault formulates his most insightful arguments in *Discipline and Punish*, and because it is through the panopticon that we can explore some of the more complex questions around the relationship between surveillance, poetry and subjectivity, I want to revisit Bentham (and Foucault's response to him) for a moment in order to highlight several important points.

The overarching principle of Bentham's architectural concept is that the prisoners must never know if they are being watched, resulting in the following scenario:

> The more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person should actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that, at every instance, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should *conceive* himself to be so … The essence [of the panopticon] consists, then, in the *centrality* of the inspector's situation, combined with the … contrivances of seeing without being seen. (40)

The aspect of this paradigm to which Foucault and many later readers have been most responsive is the way in which it outlines a psychology of internalisation. As Bentham writes, "[t]he greater chance there is, of a given person's being at a given time actually under inspection, the more strong will be the persuasion – the more

*intense*, if I may say so, the *feeling*, he has of being so" (44). Thus the intensification of a subjectified, psychological mode of surveillance, as opposed to a physical, external one, creates a scenario in which the inmate of a panopticon gradually internalises the rules of the prison and self-regulates his or her behaviour accordingly. The most significant outcome of this process is not, however, necessarily the fact that prisoners (citizens) conform to the rules of their surveiller. Rather, the *feeling* of being watched, as Bentham describes it, works to restructure an inmate's identity. Over time, the sensation of being watched, and the assumed behaviour expected of the subject in a policed society, become part of his or her psychological makeup.

The feature of Bentham's invention that Foucault takes up most directly in *Discipline and Punish* is the move away from a disciplinary system aimed at punishing the body towards a new range of institutions aimed at controlling the mind. In Foucault's terms, the minds of surveilled citizens become conceived of as "a surface for the inscription of power" (102). Moreover, while Bentham's project was conceived as early as 1787, Foucault's central focus in *Discipline and Punish* is the emergence of a specifically modern, "disciplinary" state over the course of the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. This later structure of societal regulation is the product of a move away from older, sovereign forms of government in which control had been directed downwards from the monarch towards a dispersion of control among the populace that effectively invisibilised both surveillance and punishment. "This work of dispersion," observe Rosen and Santesso, "was driven by the spread of human sciences developed or perfected during the Enlightenment—medicine, psychology, criminology (and legal theory more broadly), theology, education theory, and so on—each of which had the effect of defining the individual more precisely" (*Watchman* 6). As these various disciplines were gradually developed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the categorisation of the human became further bureaucratised, corporatised and eventually internalised among citizens as a normative outcome of technological advancement. This was a situation in which "the solitary person had once been part of an undifferentiated mass, and thus, relatively invisible to the government, he or she could now be precisely categorised – as say, "male, homosexual, Catholic, working class, with an I.Q. of 90, etc."" (Rosen and Santesso, *Watchman*). The organisation of first, discipline (via surveillance) and second, human categorisation thus become inverted: as processes of surveillance become

increasingly invisible, the data about human beings under that surveillance becomes increasingly exposed. Ultimately, the categorisation of people into different kinds of citizen works to justify different treatment that can be publicly acknowledged as fair, "since equivalent cases are treated in the same way and the results can be scientifically sanctified" (Marx, *Windows* 41). Possible threats to the overall populace, brought about by aberrant behaviour of individuals, can be curtailed due to the fact that individuals can be located, controlled and better understood through the monitoring and measurement of their behaviours, characters and predispositions.

The auspicious timing of Foucault's entry into the scholarly study of surveillance is perhaps one explanation for his permeation of the field. We must, after all, remind ourselves that until the 1980s, surveillance "occupied no distinct place in the sociological lexicon" (Lyon, *Electronic Eye* 6). It is as though the many complex surveillance structures already at work in America and elsewhere were not determined to be such simply because Foucault had not yet come along to point them out. As Lyon rightly stresses, despite the fact that James Rule's ground-breaking *Private Lives and Public Surveillance* (1974)[14] had achieved canonical status by the mid-1970s, "it was not until Michel Foucault's celebrated, and contentious, historical studies of surveillance and discipline had appeared that mainstream social theorists began to take surveillance seriously in its own right" (*Electronic Eye* 6). The opportune timing of Foucault's role in surveillance studies is made all the more apparent when we consider the many significant prior sociological studies that, despite being closely related to what today we describe as surveillance, were not labelled as such at the time. Earlier modern theorists such as Rousseau, Hobbes, Bentham, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber and Taylor had examined in detail the sociological and political implications of surveillance for social behaviour, organisation, communication and society in general, even if they didn't explicitly label their findings as such. Lyon draws attention to the prominence of the work carried out in two major traditions – the Marxian and the Weberian. For Marx, surveillance was constructed out of the tension between labour and capital where the strict monitoring of workers was conceived as a means of "maintaining managerial control on behalf of capital" (Lyon, *Electronic Eye* 7). Weber, on the other hand, represents an early formulation of what is today called Big Data

[14] This important work reveals the operations of five information systems in the United States and the United Kingdom that collect and dispense personal data.

wherein "modern organizations develop means of storing and retrieving data in the form of files as part of the question of efficient practices within bureaucracy" (Lyon, *Electronic Eye* 7). My point here is not to suggest that the forms of surveillance we experience today existed unknown to us in prior centuries. Nor am I arguing that surveillance studies can or should ever move completely away from an appreciation of the important links drawn by Foucault between traditional disciplinary practices, such as brutal public punishment, and the invisiblised and routinised surveillant modes of control practiced in modern institutions such as schools and prisons. Rather, my aim is to extend surveillance studies beyond the small number of disciplines—law, philosophy, political science and sociology—that have previously limited its dimensions and theoretical potential. It is in doing this that I am able to draw explicit attention to the overlooked role of literature, and in particular poetry, as a crucial contribution to the topic of surveillance as both a field of scholarly study and an everyday phenomenon. Indeed, "so long as the effects of scientific or technological advance are taken to be preordained, invariable, or self explanatory," the questions raised by humanists about surveillance and its effects will go unasked (Rosen and Santesso, *Watchman* 3).

Yet there is a paradox that underpins the modern shift towards intensified, invisiblised surveillance and the detailed categorisation of citizens. As more and more people are placed into each category, those very categories become increasingly useless as a way of telling people apart from one another. Marx summarises this paradox in the following way:

> Relative to earlier time periods, this system requires attention to the characteristics of the unique individual and the creation of detailed personal records. The individual becomes a distinctive object to be scrutinized, understood, and improved upon through measurements offered by the newly emerging sciences of the person. But at the same time the person is deindividualized in being assigned to generic categories of classification. (*Windows* 42)

The emergence of a situation in which individual citizens are ultimately both somebody yet nobody presents an interesting problem for identity politics. Ironically, as more and more is known (and known to be known) about people by their governments, it is perhaps even harder than ever to assert individuality. It is in the context of this subjectivity crisis, particularly with the emergence of more

sophisticated surveillance technologies during and after World War I, that a new form of poetic expression in America had to grapple with a new meaning of individual expression. The two key aspects of the Bentham-Foucault paradigm that I have highlighted above with regards to this—the internalisation of surveillance by citizens and the paradoxical creation of a society in which citizens are both comprehensively categorised yet deprived of individuation—can also be seen as explanations for the kinds of surveillance poetics that I am investigating. The first point, for example, about the shift from a surveillance of the body to a surveillance of the mind, goes towards explaining the interest in surveillance by poets who were not directly surveilled by the FBI. Moreover, the increasing paranoia associated with the intensification of this kind of surveillance in America in the twentieth century can be traced alongside the development of a poetics invested in the value and effects of confession, whether that confession be rhetorical, poetic, coerced or performed. The intense interest by American poets in questions of self-presentation, social control and information-gathering can also be linked to the developing culture of surveillance in which citizens became aware, perhaps for the first time in history, that they had both limited and even no control over the ways in which they were being watched. Thus, the new culture that developed in America in the final stages of the narrative I have just sketched was one in which the lyric emerged as a genre that could direct poets (and readers) in the art of self-making while at the same time the political, economic, technological and social forces influenced the self-shaped lyric expression.

So where, then, does the FBI fit in all of this? And more importantly, what are the distinctive features of the surveillance culture that emerged in America in the early decades of the twentieth century that worked, both implicitly and explicitly, to produce the poetry that I am examining? As the above account makes clear, the history of surveillance is as much a story about America as it is about the development of particular technologies of looking and hearing in western democracies in the twentieth century. Indeed, as Marx has pointed out, "given its history and organization, American society may have a particular (or at least distinctive) fascination with surveillance – both the need for it and curiosity about its results" (*Windows* xiii). Domestic surveillance designed to protect American citizens has been part of the fabric of American life for well over a hundred years. Yet the way in which that surveillance has evolved, and the various targets at which it has been directed, tell

us as much about the social and cultural makeup of American life as they do about the numerous surveillance technologies that have been developed over time.

Long before the United States came to be absorbed by the fear of Islamic terrorism, the nation was fighting a domestic battle against political anarchists of another kind. Contrary to many political histories of the United States, these battles extend back much further than the Cold War, reflecting a history of American intolerance that is as complex as it is contested. Indeed, as Regin Schmidt argues in his account of the FBI's role in the origins of anticommunism in the United States, "the big Red Scare of 1919-20, a short-lived but intense period of intolerance and repression of Communists, radicals and other non-conformists, was not an isolated incident but part of a larger American tradition" (24). This tradition began as early as 1798 with the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts by the Federalists, which equipped the American government with the power to deport aliens suspected of treason and to prosecute any anti-government writing or activity. Similarly, the Haymarket riot[15] in 1886 was a catalyst for the intensification and professionalisation of processes aimed at hunting down and prosecuting anarchists, a trajectory which continued uninterrupted through to World War I where assumed anarchists, socialists, pacifists, and alleged German sympathisers were also persecuted. "All through the 19th century and until the New Deal in the 1930s," writes Schmidt, "unions were regarded as criminal conspiracies by the courts and ruthlessly fought by the employers, while the black minority was oppressed and forced to live in a subjugated position in the South" (24).

Perhaps the pivotal event in the ultimate formation of the FBI, though, was the assassination in September 1901 of US President William McKinley by American anarchist and former steel worker Leon Czolgosz, an event which led to the appointment of Theodore Roosevelt as McKinley's replacement and, eventually, an appeal by Roosevelt for an investigative service within the Department of Justice. It was in response to this assassination that Robert Pinkerton, one of the heads of the well-known Pinkerton National Detective Agency, called for the federalisation of surveillance in America. He promoted the "organization of a perfect system of police

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[15] The Haymarket riot occurred in the aftermath of a bombing at a Labor demonstration in May 1886 at Haymarket Square in Chicago. The bomb blast and subsequent gunfire resulted in at least ten deaths.

control" of political anarchists and others advocating the overthrow of the government (617). One of the central characteristics of Pinkerton's plan was an official system of informers who would infiltrate and report on the activities of the "Reds." In the opening to his essay on the proposal for the "detective surveillance of anarchists," Pinkerton writes: "The police control of anarchists, while by no means a simple matter, may yet be accomplished. To make it effective, however, several fundamental conditions must be observed. The matter must be undertaken in a clean-cut, businesslike manner and the system kept absolutely free from the taint of political influence" (609). Roosevelt did not act immediately on Pinkerton's frank advice, instead waiting several years before instructing the Attorney General, Charles Bonaparte, to set up an investigative service within the Department of Justice. Less than a decade later, in December 1908, the Bureau of Investigation (as it was then called) was established in response to the supposed threat of escalating anarchy and the demand for more rigid federal regulations. One of the more intriguing aspects of this formative moment in the FBI's history is the extent to which much of the rhetoric designed to justify the creation of a new surveillance body focused on the need for, as Pinkerton puts it, a "clean-cut, businesslike" agency which would counter the "lack of efficiency and discipline" that supposedly existed in the National Government Detective Service at the time (609). Indeed, as I demonstrate at various points in the next chapter, these were the very faults and shortcomings that would come to be amplified in and ultimately define J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, which was shot through with political influence, inefficiency and corruption.

Shortly after, as the United States was drawn into World War I, the young bureau quickly expanded to meet the growing demand for robust domestic security, often posited as a necessary corrective to the perceived threat of Germans living in the United States. The Espionage Act, signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on June 15, 1917, was a symbolic marker of the United States' firm approach to tackling domestic dissent during this period as well as its goal of tracking down spies and subversives.[16] Across the Atlantic in France, Gertrude Stein, volunteering for the American Fund for the French troops, wrote of America's vexed position in the war in her poem "The Work":

[16] The Sedition Act, passed a year later in 1918, was designed to stifle dissent and anti-war protests from both citizens and non-citizens.

> Hurrah for America.
> Here we met a Captain and take him part way.
> A day's sun.
> Is this Miss.
> Yes indeed our mat.
> We meant by this that we were always meeting people and that it was pleasant.
> We can thank you.
> We thank you.
> Soldiers of course spoke to us.
> Come together.
> Come to me there now.
> They read on our van American Committee in aid of French wounded.
> All of it is a bit.
> Bitter.
> This is the way they saw we do help.
> In the meaning of bright.
> Bright not light.
> This comforts them when they speak to me. I often discuss America with them and what
> we do hope to do. They listen well and say we hope so too.
> We all do. ("The Work")[17]

As an American living and working in Paris, Stein would not have experienced so acutely the increased surveillance developing in the United States at this time. The tone of this poem nevertheless registers a hesitance about the new and dominant role America would come to play in global politics. The speaker of the poem is at once jubilant about the country, declaring, "Hurrah for America," while at the same time somewhat wary about "what we do hope to do." The hint of caution detectable in this lyric is perhaps also a reflection of the unclear bureaucratic agenda America set for itself around this time. Avoiding euphemism of any kind, Sulick describes this scenario: "The United States entered World War I with a hodgepodge of federal agencies thrashing about to find enemy spies. The State Department, Justice Department, the Secret Service, and the military services at various times all assumed counterspy responsibilities and bickered with each other over jurisdiction" (6).

After the war, with the Bolshevik uprising in Russia led by Lenin and headed by Trotsky, Russia came to replace Germany as the focus of the developing American

[17] Originally published in the American Fund for French Wounded (AFFW) *Weekly Bulletin*, published in Paris and founded in 1915 by American women living abroad.

intelligence community. A series of anarchist bomb attacks on American government targets in 1919 were a catalyst for the Red Scare of 1919-20 and the subsequent raids around the country launched by then Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. The Palmer Raids, as they came to be known, involved the arrest and deportation of over five hundred suspected radical leftists from the United States. This signalled the beginning of America's paranoid combat against the real (and imagined) threat of the communist other. To accelerate the tirade against communists and subversives, Palmer created the Radical Division of the Bureau of Investigation and chose J. Edgar Hoover (then only twenty four) to lead it. By 1935, the bureau was renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hoover was promoted to director, and the word "communist," particularly in the eyes of the FBI, became synonymous with almost anyone or anything associated with the political left.

Domestic surveillance further intensified throughout the 1930s, spurred on by the case of *Olmstead v. United States* in 1928, in which the Supreme Court of the United States deemed that the use of wiretapped private telephone conversations as evidence (obtained by federal agents without judicial approval) did not constitute a violation of citizen's rights under either the Fourth or Fifth Amendments, a decision that was not overturned until 1967 by *Katz v. United States*. Moreover, as World War II appeared increasingly likely, Roosevelt applied further pressure not only on the FBI but also on the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Military Intelligence Division, urging increased efforts in tracking radicals and subversives within the United States. A section of an internal review document written during this period stresses both the inefficiency of the Bureau's many small one-man field offices as well as the culture of overhearing and eavesdropping from which the *Olmstead v. United States* verdict likely emerged:

> The agent in charge, with little real administrative work to do, seems to enjoy spending time in his office listening to trivial complaints, with many of which we have no proper concern … Particularly if he is located in one of the smaller cities, the agent in charge is likely to have a crowd of inmates and hangers-on who cost vastly more in the time they take than they will ever give. The whole tendency is toward making the Bureau a petty eaves-dropping detective agency. (Whitehead 145-149)

These reflections are very much a product of the pressures implicitly imposed by the so-called Progressive Era, in which organisations all over America enacted processes

of modernisation that strove towards "professionalization, standardization, and objectivity" (Schmidt 48). Schmidt, for instance, has even argued that the creation of the Bureau of Investigation was a "direct product of the search for order through rationality and efficiency during the Progressive Era" (48). Whatever the accuracy of this claim, it is clear that the formative administrative procedures of the Bureau at this time were the prototype for a powerful machine that sat at the centre of the "emerging bureaucratic system" that came to define and structure American society around the time of World War I (Wiebe 293). Moreover, as John Braeman reflected in the 1960s, "the first and most striking conclusion" from the World War I experience in America was "the weakness of constitutional guarantees in a time of hysteria" (110). Long before the war, "the courts had left the alien at the mercy of administrative fiat – a plight responsible in large part for the popularity of deportation as the panacea for the nation's ills" (Braeman110).

Unrelenting centralisation continued well into the 1940s. By World War II, America had created the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which, like the FBI, was charged with the seemingly straightforward but problematically vague task of "counter-intelligence." The formation of the OSS signifies the beginning in earnest of America's long-term focus on "national security." This was a goal that would be realised in the form of a chaotic and complicated network of organisations, all with overlapping yet apparently discrete intelligence responsibilities. One outcome of this bureaucratic disorder was that different organisations, each with different agendas and histories, were able to adapt the conceptual meaning of national security to suit their own surveillance agendas. This is in large part the reason why innocuous groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Women's League for Peace found themselves the target of scrutiny and surveillance having been identified, frequently in obscure ways, as national security threats. Several American poets writing at this time conveyed the feeling of unease over the increased surveillance, both domestically and overseas, that constituted a significant aspect of America's World War II strategy. Chicago poet Marion Strobel's 1939 poem "Involuntary Spies" opens with an account of the vexed position occupied by those back at home in America with a family history connected to the surveilled enemy:

> We with divided heritage see either side,
> Involuntary spies who are upheld by pride,
>
> Tasting the bitter powder, under fire,
> Who work, along with soldiers, who, as they,
> Though overhead the rockets turn the night to day,
> Ram down the iron stake, spool off the wire. (195)

The poem goes on to explore the psychological effects of being isolated and confined to the domestic realm whilst American soldiers fight in the war abroad. Comparing the daily chores of household upkeep with the physical brutality of the battleground, the poem employs the traditional site of the body to investigate the difference between a symbolic, straightforward loyalty in the form of physical warfare and the far more complex (and not as easily measured) loyalty implicitly required of American citizens in the form of patriotic thinking and a necessary cautiousness towards the "other":

> Not by the body is our heart betrayed –
> Our tired backs will press to earth like theirs,
> Our aching eyes seek sleep or watch the flares,
> Close to our fingers is the hand-grenade –
>
> Not by the loyal body as it tries to sleep
> But by the treacherous brain. Our thoughts like gases
> creep: (196)

The reference to thoughts that "like gases creep" evokes the rhetoric of American Cold War containment policies, which sought to constrain subversive thinking by keeping Americans *in* and the Soviet enemy *out*. As the poem's seemingly loyal speaker lies in bed at night, her thoughts become a chemical weapon, though importantly, it is not clear against which side the creeping gas might be used. Moreover, Strobel's mention of the "treacherous brain" is undoubtedly related to the processes of internalisation that I have noted earlier with reference to Bentham, Foucault and others. The poem's focus here is not only the psychological underpinning of surveillance but also the extent to which war is largely fought on mental terms: the more time the poem's speaker has to think about the culture of spying and secrecy in which she involuntarily became enmeshed, the more time she has to consider the negative consequences that America's regime has on its own citizens.

Written in the same year as "Involuntary Spies," Ridgeley Torrence's "The Watcher" uses the metaphor of spying on a somewhat grander scale, casting the concept of war itself as a knife-like dagger that inflicts hourly incisions upon the earth. The poem reads:

> The gemlike eyes for sight,
> The vision that lights the being,
> The glories of day and night
> That wait the glory of seeing,
>
> All these will not avail
> Against that blinding power
> Before whose glare grow pale
> All hues of flesh and flower.
>
> Against the doom to which
> The nations rush, divided,
> And leave the furrows rich,
> Fear-fevered, folly-guided,
>
> To that which waits to grind
> The reaping with the reaper,
> Which looks upon the blind
> And strikes their darkness deeper,
>
> Which ever, from our birth,
> Leads down the deathward dances,
> For hourly on the earth
> War casts its bayonet glances. (61)

Torrence, who was part of a circle of poets that included Robert Frost and E.A. Robinson, uses a traditional quatrain form to encapsulate a radical intertwining of the American war effort with concepts of brainwashing, blindness and surveillance. The "fear-fevered" and "folly-guided" countries at war with one another are blinded by their own nationalism, a curse that makes the world grow darker. Most intriguing perhaps is the poem's title, for the designated "watcher" is war itself. Here, the ultimate surveiller, in the form of the overarching concept of global war, becomes a "blinding power" against which no form of night vision or "gemlike eyes" are capable of recovering. Both Torrence's poem and Strobel's account of the involuntary nature of wartime spying suggest a deep suspicion of the efficacy of America's surveillance routine at the turn of World War II. These two poems, both written at the outbreak

of the war, reveal the full complexity of the American experience when it came to the nation developing a nascent global surveillance network.

As World War II came to a close and the United States entered into the Cold War, domestic security became the country's top priority. The overarching post-war American project was anticommunism, an undertaking that took the form of attacks against communist organisations within America and the close surveillance of communist-affiliated groups overseas. Douglas Stuart has commented of this transitional phase in American thinking that "the lessons that the American people took away from World War II regarding the institutional prerequisites for national security were in striking contrast to the lessons that they learned regarding the planning and administration of the domestic economy" (70). In other words, the collective experience of Pearl Harbor had convinced Americans, from the level of government down to everyday citizens, that the United States had been vulnerable to attack because it did not have adequately sophisticated institutions and procedures for "permanently monitoring, evaluating, and defending against threats from abroad" (Stuart 71). As noted earlier, the absence of any serious threat from foreign aggressors over the course of almost the entire nineteenth to early twentieth centuries had reinforced America's disbelief that it could either be invaded or that its citizens would spy for another nation (Sulick 2). In the words of former CIA counterintelligence chief Paul Redmond, this disbelief spawned a "national capacity for naiveté," which came about as early as the American Revolution. Out of the fear of a repeat of Pearl Harbor or something similar came the push for far more centralised, proactive management of America's security operations (18). Stuart notes how this fear "helped to concentrate" the minds of leaders "regarding the need to get it right, but it also helped to establish an impossibly high standard for efficiency" (72).

This new "high standard" took the form of the Central Intelligence Agency, established in 1947 by the National Security act out of the remnants of the Office of Strategic Services, which ceased operations in September 1945. When Congress established the Agency, however, many Americans feared that the ambitious pursuit of national security had overextended the authority of the federal government and created conditions ripe for the birth of an "American Gestapo." In order to address the tension between citizens' fears and expectations as well as to safeguard democracy, Congress restructured CIA jurisdiction to foreign intelligence only, leaving the FBI in

control of domestic matters. As is well known, this demarcation between the FBI's and the CIA's respective roles created serious quarrels, especially when it came to the CIA's attempts to conduct domestic counterintelligence. "Another, and much graver consequence of the foreign-domestic split," writes Jeffreys-Jones, "was that CIA analysts came under fire for estimated Soviet capabilities and intentions in isolation from U.S. strength and policy options" (5). Further, Sulick outlines another, far more problematic, outcome of the creation of two discrete surveillance bodies in America at this time. In the attempt to maintain the delicate balance between security and freedom, "American efforts to counter espionage by hostile intelligence services were often crippled, not only by the disbelievers who refused to see spies anywhere, but also misguided zealots who saw spies everywhere. These zealots, unfortunately, only increased the country's suspicion of counterespionage by committing the very excesses Americans feared" (5).

That the targets of CIA and FBI surveillance at this time were chosen as the result of corrupt political motives is already well known. Just how well known the corruption was, and how much Americans reviled the increasingly powerful role of the country's top two surveillance agencies, is still emerging through, among other things, personal accounts and gradually declassified documentation. A poem such as Allen Ginsberg's "CIA Dope Calypso," however, renders this aversion explicit. The poem exposes and satirises the CIA's alliance during the 1950s with Thai chief of police Phao Sriyanon, a collusion which brought Sriyanon enormous wealth from the opium trade in exchange for the suppression of political opponents designated by the CIA. Ginsberg writes:

> The policeman's name was Mr. Phao
> He peddled dope grand scale and how
> Chief of border customs paid
> By Central Intelligence's U.S. aid
>
> The whole operation, Newspapers say
> Supported by the CIA
>
> He got so sloppy and peddled so loose
> He busted himself and cooked his own goose
> Took the reward for the opium load
> Seizing his own haul which same he resold
>
> Big time pusher for a decade turned grey

Working for the CIA (*Cosmopolitan Greetings* 89)

These direct and scathing lines first appeared in a March 1972 issue of the radical *Earth* magazine, which was devoted entirely to the CIA's corrupt involvement in the international drug trade. Jeremy Kuzmarov describes how "an idealist at heart, Ginsberg travelled to the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, in 1972 after the publication of "CIA Dope Calypso" to confront Director Richard Helms and to try to influence a change in policy" (81). Ginsberg made an ambitious bet with Helms, who apparently agreed to "sit down for an hour of meditation per day for the rest of his life" if the charges against him could be proved (Kuzmarov 81). While Ginsberg's poem is clearly intended as a severe antiwar indictment, its central aim is to demystify the complex and obscure international politics of the CIA, exposing its work for what it truly was: anticommunist propaganda. Drugs become merely a metaphor for the ways in which the vast surveillance reach of the agency was able to poison the minds of Americans (and non-Americans) abroad. The poem goes on to proclaim:

> Communists came and chased the French away
> So Touby took a job with the CIA
>
> The whole operation fell in to chaos
> Till U.S. intelligence came in to Laos
>
> Mary Azarian/Matt Wuerker
>
> I'll tell you no lie I'm a true American
> Our big pusher there was Phoumi Nosavan
>
> All them Princes in a power play
> But Phoumi was the man for the CIA
>
> And his best friend General Vang Pao
> Ran the Meo army like a sacred cow
> Helicopter smugglers filled Long Cheng's bars
> In Xieng Quang province on the Plain of Jars
>
> In started in secret they were fighting yesterday
> Clandestine secret army of the CIA (*Cosmopolitan Greetings* 89)

Ginsberg traces a complex web of overlapping CIA, drug trade, and anticommunist interests, played out on a foreign stage at an enormous cost to the Vietnamese people. The above lines describe the recruitment by the CIA of the Hmong as an

anticommunist force in northern Laos, only four years after the French withdrew in 1954. Rather than dealing exclusively with Touby Lyfuong as the French had done, the CIA recruited a new leader in Vang Pao, "then an obscure Hmong officer in the Royal Lao Army who compensated for his lack of traditional status with an extraordinary enthusiasm for combat" (Young and Buzzanco 290). What Ginsberg essentially outlines here is the way in which, by the mid 1960s, Vang Pao had employed the CIA's arms, air support and finance to develop a Secret Army of Hmong villages that numbered somewhere near 30,000 tribal guerrillas, eventually, as Ginsberg tells us, running "the Meo army like a sacred cow."

Back in America, the national security apparatus continued to expand, with the founding of the National Security Agency in October 1952, five years after the establishment of the CIA. A series of investigations had apparently uncovered intelligence failures in the attack at Pearl Harbor and the North Korean invasion, ushering in the need for a new body committed to code-making and code-breaking. The NSA was directed, in precisely the same ways as the CIA, not to spy domestically and instead focus on guarding US electronic communications and signals intelligence. However, unlike the CIA, the NSA was able to remain almost entirely under the radar. In a 1983 article for the *Harvard International Review* entitled "NSA: Washington's Best Kept Secret," Paul Choi summarised the NSA's peculiar evasion tactics: "As the most secretive agency in the U.S. government, few details are actually known about its daily operations. For years, the NSA was referred to as 'Never Say Anything' or 'No Such Agency.' Even the NSA's official existence was not disclosed until 1957" (28). When ex-NSA contractor Edward Snowden leaked explosive information about the United States National Security Agency and its international partners in 2013, many of the agencies' long-term surveillance strategies (against foreign nationals and US citizens) were finally exposed. In particular, the exposure of mass collection of telephone records of tens of millions of Americans and the agency's global mail interception efforts stunned many Americans who had previously been entirely unaware of the reach of the country's surveillance capacity. "It may be more appropriate to dub the NSA 'Not Secret Anymore,'" writes Kristie Macrakis (300). However, in contrast to the treatment of the CIA in the 1960s and 1970s, there has been "no Frank Church to grill NSA leaders, nor has a congressional committee put

the brakes on illegal actions, including all-encompassing mail interception and reading" (Macrakis 300).

As the proliferation and incoherence of many of these mid-century agencies suggest, the rapid growth of the US national security regime was largely a product of insecurity, fear and uncertainty within the American collective consciousness. While the CIA and NSA continued to expand, however, it was ultimately the FBI that would prove the most aggressive and clandestine against the perceived communist threat. In 1956, under the orders of J. Edgar Hoover and William Sullivan, the chief of research and analysis within the FBI's Intelligence Division, the FBI launched its first Counter Intelligence Program; otherwise known as COINTELPRO. By far the most hostile stage in the evolution of the FBI's long-term anti-communist agenda, COINTELPRO moved beyond simple surveillance. Instead, the program sought to penetrate the daily lives of targets by spreading false information amongst surveilled groups. The FBI's counterintelligence operations during this period expanded to include the civil rights moment and the New Left, with Hoover finding model targets in W.E.B. DuBois and, eventually, Martin Luther King. Thus the surveillance and harassment of those the FBI would come to consider radical figures is part of a much longer and much more complex trajectory than is often stated. Schmidt summaries this history incisively:

> Most accounts of the origins of the FBI's political surveillance suffer from a failure to put the Bureau's activities in proper perspective and to see them as an integrated part of the growth of the modern, centralized bureaucratic state and its increasing control and regulation of all aspects of society. Thus, the Bureau's political role must be understood basically as the product of long-term institutional and structural changes within the political system rather than as the result of short-term aberrations in the political culture brought about by the eruptions of irrational public hysteria. (40)

As both these remarks and the timeline that I have sketched make clear, the narrative of surveillance in America during the twentieth century is one that unquestionably centres on the ambitions and undertakings of the FBI. Despite the fact that most FBI files from 1922 until today are still classified and only made public via Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, it is nevertheless clear that the FBI is largely responsible for the development, professionalisation and institutionalisation of

political surveillance in America. Indeed, as Ellen Schrecker has suggested of recently opened FBI files from the Cold War period, McCarthyism should be renamed "Hooverism" because of the absolutely central role the Bureau played in creating the anti-communist consensus (203).

By the second half of the twentieth century, government surveillance in America had intensified with the growth of electronic surveillance technologies such as closed-circuit television and other telecommunications. At the same time, the act of writing about surveillance and in defence of privacy had become widespread. The more popular literature of the period insisted on the limitation of surveillance and posited the autonomy of the self as a regulator of privacy; the individual should confess only on his or her terms. Prior to 1960, almost no academic literature existed about the invasion of privacy and inordinate surveillance levels. This changed when Samuel Dash's *The Eavesdroppers* (1959) appeared, triggering an outpouring of literature that sought to address surveillance, containment and privacy in sociological terms. Some of the most important texts that followed were: Robert Kennedy's *The Enemy Within* (1960); Morris Ernst and Alan Schwartz's *Privacy: The Right to Be Let Alone* (1962); Myron Brenton's *The Privacy Invaders* (1964); Fred Cook's *The FBI Nobody Knows* (1964); Alan Westin's *Privacy and Freedom* (1967); and Robert Ellis Smith's *Privacy: How to Protect What's Left of It* (1979). Many of these texts, whilst aiming for an objective assessment of privacy, tend to frame the subject in terms of either good or evil forms of privacy breaches, with the recommended spectrum of surveillance ranging from reduction to expansion. Westin's *Privacy and Freedom* (1967) is one of the more renowned texts on individual privacy, with detailed analyses of privacy breaches in the United States. In assessing the various social control efforts regarding privacy, Westin's scholarship is focused on the diminishment of privacy, linking the waning of individual autonomy to a distrust of government and business and fears about technology abuses. Similar to Westin's work, Brenton's *The Privacy Invaders* (1964) and Ellis Smith's *Privacy: How to Protect What's Left of It* (1979) were forerunners of a burgeoning movement that would continue to focus on the psychosocial and political dangers of privacy's erosion.

This catalogue of scholarship spans the course of only two decades, exemplifying America's sudden and intense focus on the nature of the country's unprecedented surveillance culture. As critics such as Debbie Kasper have later noted

of the sudden proliferation of mid-1960s literature on surveillance, these texts represent the development of a general and frightening consensus that "the loss of privacy necessarily implies the surrender of freedom" (74). The most prominent critic of twentieth-century American Cold War internal security was Vance Packard, whose collection of popular texts reveals a focus upon the ostensible invasions that much literature had begun to link inexorably to Cold War anticommunism. Packard's key texts, which appeared at precisely the same time as confessional poetry, include *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957); *The Status Seekers* (1959); *The Waste Makers* (1960); and *The Naked Society* (1962). Packard's pioneering first work, *The Hidden Persuaders,* reveals the psychological methods used by advertisers to tap into consumers' unconscious desires. In examining how businesses, governments, and media persuade us to buy their products through the manipulation of our thoughts and emotions, Packard's text was a groundbreaking, prophetic glance towards America's (and the world's) corporate-driven future. In addition to irrevocably changing understandings of the world of advertising, *The Hidden Persuaders* set the tone for an outpouring of further texts, by various authors, that were at once high-pitched cautionary tales, pre-apocalyptic warnings and socio-political commentaries, all digested as part of popular culture. As the technological and intellectual means of surveillance grew more precise, literature on the topic became heightened, both academically and imaginatively. This intensification was fuelled by the shocking material chronicled by Packard in *The Naked Society*, the first text to discuss how new technologies such as the polygraph and hidden microphones could be used by governments, security bureaus and other institutions to invade people's privacy. While not all of Packard's scholarship deals specifically with privacy and surveillance, the overarching objective of his work was to educate citizens about the dangers of Cold War anticommunism through the production of a comprehensive catalogue of the tyrannical invasion of privacy experienced by the average American. Across his four most prominent texts, Packard's detailed case studies and statistics explore surveillance situations as diverse as the wiretapping of private homes and electronic surveillance of public bathrooms, to the monitoring of students and teachers in universities and secondary schools. The sheer volume of material produced by Packard and others on the topic of surveillance culminated in a widely acknowledged and anxiety-fuelled contention (and later, resignation) that privacy was indeed on the verge of extinction.

Fuelling such debates over widespread surveillance, and linking invasions of privacy (both at a personal and national level) to Cold War anticommunism, was Fred J. Cook's *The FBI Nobody Knows* (1964). Cook's text arrived at the end of an almost fourteen year gap in scholarship and criticism on the FBI's powerful director, J. Edgar Hoover. Cook's commentary fractured deep-seated public ignorance of surveillance of civil rights activists and sympathisers, linking a general public aversion to governmental surveillance with a tangible and factually documented example. Indeed, it remains far too easy to think of surveillance as separate to or apart from the political struggles of American culture, just as it is necessary that we see American culture as inextricably bound up with its national poetry. Moreover, as Tell has stressed, "it remains far too easy to think that the confession is an autonomous genre, its boundaries marked off by a secluded professoriate" (4). Further, in the same ways that privacy, confession and authenticity have had their boundaries revised throughout history, so too has surveillance been subject to revision by activists, politicians, journalists and writers whose focus has been on cultural politics.

This chapter has brought a short history of the lyric together with the history of American surveillance, arguing for the key overlaps that comprise a new interdisciplinary site of study. Although a focus of this thesis is the formal analysis of lyric poetry as a means of establishing its interconnectedness with surveillance as both concept and material practice, it is also necessary to consider the literalisation of these overlaps in the form of FBI surveillance of poets and their work. The next chapter turns away from the abstract ideas that I have been discussing by examining another possible site upon which to read lyric poetry and surveillance: that is, in the FBI's attempt to "crack the code" of poetry by surveilling the figures who wrote it.

# CHAPTER 2: BUREAU READING AND IMPRACTICAL CRITICISM

> There is hardly a problem of literary criticism in which the critic's approach will not be qualified by his view of "intention."[18]
>
> WIMSATT AND BEARDSLEY

In August 1949 J. Edgar Hoover appeared on the front page of *TIME* magazine as the star of an article entitled "Boards & Bureaus: The Watchful Eye." The article describes the FBI tour that sightseers could do, an initiative designed to make it clear that "murder, mayhem and treason were not the only business of the FBI":

> This year a quarter of a million U.S. tourists will descend on the FBI's impressive, air-conditioned Washington headquarters to see for themselves how the FBI has grown. Not many will leave without the firm conviction that Director Hoover's G-man is still the scourge of the underworld, the snap-brimmed symbol of dauntless justice in a covert-cloth topcoat. (14)

As visitors perused the bureau's file of "112,500,000 fingerprints" and walked through its 85,000-volume law library, missing from view would have been the investigative files containing information about thousands of ordinary US citizens. The author of the *TIME* article ultimately concedes that "[i]t was the existence of those files—important strands in the nation's gigantic net to catch a few disloyal citizens—which gave even the most ardent admirer of the FBI a slightly uneasy feeling" (14). It was not that Americans objected to the surveillance and expulsion of Communists and other traitors, rather "it was a suspicion that any such collection was bound to damn the most innocent as well as the guilty" (14).

This scenario was the reality of mid-century American surveillance: a powerful figure atop a disordered and chaotic bureaucratic agency that stopped at nothing to control politics, ideas and, ultimately, poetry. As has been recently shown

[18] "The Intentional Fallacy," 468.

through the release of thousands of pages of writers' FBI files, the FBI was obsessed with American literature, in particular American poetry, deemed subversive, puzzling, politically incendiary, or a combination of the three. This scenario informs the key ideas of this chapter, which focuses on the complex relationship between American literary criticism, surveillant reading practices and poetic code making and code breaking in the period between 1920 and 1960. The chapter examines the covert reading practices of the FBI (and, by extension, the CIA) by mapping particular developments in the American literary academy at the time onto the bureau's fixation with the supposedly cryptic and dangerous nature of modern American lyrics. It begins with a close examination of J. Edgar Hoover's biographical background and his focus on literary-based investigative practices, drawing connections between the FBI's surveillance of poets and the increased attention given throughout Hoover's tenure to the connection between poetry and biography. This same background informs the second part of the chapter, which examines in more detail the particular methods by which surveillance agents sought to interpret modern American poetry, in particular using the US academy's own methods of close reading of literary texts.

By inverting the surveillance hierarchy and exploring poetry that explicitly critiques the surveillant gaze, this section also shows that in the process of writing about deception, spies, suburban containment and government censorship, twentieth-century American poets were inextricably bound up with a complex poetics that addresses the relationship between reading, meaning, and surveilling. The chapter overall focuses on the FBI's paranoia about poetic texts that they thought might contain subversive coded messages.

## Every American Is Innocent: Hoover, The FBI and American Literature

J. Edgar Hoover, history's most highly paid (and most utterly useless) voyeur.[19]

JAMES BALDWIN

Throughout most of the twentieth century, the FBI was profoundly attentive to modern American poetry and the writers who produced it. This fact is now well-known thanks to a wealth of declassified Bureau materials, many of which reveal that J. Edgar Hoover and his G-Men surveilled American poets, read their work and paid disorganised and frequently awkward visits to the homes of some of their families and friends. As Culleton and Leick argue in the introduction to *Modernism on File*, "FBI files released to scholars under the FOIA reveal that the bureau aggressively targeted individuals whose political views threatened the strictly defined limits of post-war 'Americanism'" and that under "Hoover's 50-year directorship, the bureau grew to control, manipulate, and shape American experience" (8). What has not been fully explored, however, is the extent to which the surveillance of poets by the FBI during this period was also a consequence of the literary analyses undertaken by the Bureau itself, in particular those developed by Hoover. Given the surveillant intent of this work, there is a strong case to be made for seeing the critical file-reading work conducted by the FBI and the academic literary criticism of the period as two sides of the same coin. The 1920s through to the 1960s in America are the point at which these two sides— surveillance and the reading of poetry—intersect.

The key catalyst in this development was Hoover, the FBI's longest serving chief, who added the "Federal" to the Bureau's name while controlling and symbolising American governmental power for a period exceeding that of any previous US president. It is to Hoover that the FBI's obsessive habits of note taking, literary reading, marginalia and filing can be attributed. As I noted in Chapter 1, the history of surveillance is in many ways tied to the history of bureaucratic paper collecting. The proliferation of documentation about individual citizens by

[19] *Collected Essays*, 544.

surveillance organisations works in paradoxical ways to instil fear and accountability in people. Or, to return to Groebner's useful description, "surveillance achieves its effects not through administrative perfection, but through arbitrariness" (249). William Epstein refers to this surveillant strategy as the "controlling [of] the emotive import of words," which he explains in the following useful account of Bureau practice:

> The free world's most extensive effort to control emotive import, the FBI's surveillance program consists primarily of a huge catalogue of words, file after file describing individuals' affiliations, associations, and beliefs, each dossier organized on an evaluative scale of patriotism and betrayal signified by a security-risk ranking. The FBI's surveillance program, it is generally agreed, hardly ever catches anybody doing anything subversive. But that … is not really the purpose of the files: it is enough that they are *known* to exist. (77)

Thus during this period, the FBI worked to professionalise the gathering and processing of vast quantities of literary-critical information, most of which was collected not with specific outcomes in mind but rather to create the illusion of power via the acquisition of vast amounts of information. Maxwell calls this obsessive collecting of written materials "lit-cop federalism," a form of state surveillance founded upon a "cluster of text-cantered desires and activities ranging from the archival to the editorial, the interpretive to the authorial" (43). The early FBI's focus on texts as the most potent surveillance instrument was not accidental. For example, when Hoover commenced working at the Bureau in 1919, there were no nationwide radio broadcasts in America and so print formed the vast majority of not only surveillance work but also the Bureau's day-to-day public relations. Beyond this, however, the FBI's modernisation of literary surveillance can be traced to the text-centric philosophy and biography of Hoover himself. A brief account of this background reveals the extent to which Hoover drove the FBI's quest to become a "very real and very ambitious library, publisher [and] critic" (Maxwell 43).

Achieving a dazzling scholastic record from an early age and voted 1930's "Bachelor of the Year," Hoover was later eulogised by Richard Nixon as "one of the giants … a national symbol of courage, patriotism, and granite-like honesty and integrity" (Summers 3). However, his sudden death in 1972, just weeks before the Watergate break-in, sparked other kinds of reflections. Attorney General Laurence

Silberman, the first person to comb through Hoover's secret files after his death, likened the ex-director of the FBI to a "sewer that collected dirt," commenting, "I now believe he was the worst public servant in our history" (qtd. in Summers 193); while influential paediatrician and anti-Vietnam War activist Benjamin Spock remarked at news of Hoover's death: "It was a relief to have this man silenced who had no understanding of the underlying philosophy of our government or of our Bill of Rights, a man who had such enormous power, and used it to harass individuals with whom he disagreed politically and who had done as much as anyone to intimidate millions of Americans out of their right to hear and judge for themselves all political opinions" (qtd. in Summers 13). In his important, richly anecdotal biography of the director, Anthony Summers writes at length about Hoover's apparent hero status. To millions of Americans, the FBI chief was a crime-fighting champion who "had virtually created the FBI" (3). Moreover, as Herbert Mitgang points out in *Dangerous Dossiers* (1988), the full story of surveillance of more than fifty American authors, dramatists, artists, historians and others by the FBI during the middle decades of the twentieth century, "what has been undeniable—according to the memoirs of some of [Hoover's] own former colleagues in the bureau—is that the FBI was shaped in the image of one individual" (21-22). Mitgang further elaborates on Hoover's interests, writing that "he was recognized as a fanatic on the subject of radicals, Communists, leftists and liberals, drawing hardly any distinction among them" (22). Hoover's meticulous method for the surveillance of American poets was matched by an equally forceful approach to the intellectual community in general. In *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It*, an influential text Hoover published at the height of the Cold War, he advocates a broad ideological position that the intellectual community should take in combatting communism:

> The FBI knows that the bigger job lies with the free world's intellectuals– the philosophers, the thinkers wherever they may be, the professors and scientists and scholars and students. These people who think, the intellectuals if you please, are the ones who can and must convince men that communism is evil. The world's intellectuals themselves must see that communism is the deadliest enemy that intellectualism and liberalism ever had. They must be as willing to dedicate themselves to this cause as the communists have been to dedicate themselves to their cause. (316)

While there is no explicit mention of poets in this philosophical call-to-arms, there is clear evidence of the extent to which Hoover appreciated the power to be found in America's "thinkers." Moreover, this passage reveals that Hoover knew and understood the influence the intelligentsia was capable of exerting should they choose to invest their energies in the correct way. It was not enough, it seems, to watch and record the activities and correspondence of the nation's intellectuals, they needed to be ideologically controlled as well.

Any assumption that Hoover's tremendous hunger for efficiency and control stemmed exclusively from his appointment at the Bureau is undermined by an assessment of his life prior to 1924. Nicknamed "Speed" as a boy, the young Hoover developed a reputation—amusing to some, disconcerting to others—as an inordinately fast talker. Powerless to interject throughout conversation, some of his interlocutors would even come to use such perspicuous expressions as "machine gun", "staccato," and "like a teamster's whip when aroused," to describe the extraordinary rapidity with which Hoover spoke (Summers 15). Not only did Hoover's impenetrable mode of speaking come to be one of his hallmarks as an adult investigator, it was also the basis for numerous complaints by both Bureau members and journalists worldwide. Summers recalls a striking remark lifted from White House tape transcripts of 1971 in which William Sullivan, an FBI Assistant Director who served Hoover for thirty years, remarked: "He didn't want a man to ask him any questions, so he'd keep talking right up until the last and then all of a sudden break off the interview and shake hands with the fellow and send him on his way" (21). These remarks, accurate as they are, go little way towards capturing the true essence of Hoover's obstinate work ethic. Hoover's assiduous attitude to almost everything would later be captured by the American poet Ai Ogawa in her poem "The Director: Hoover, Edgar J." in which the poem's persona (Hoover) laments:

> Sometimes my whole body aches
> and I lie down on the floor,
> just staring at the ceiling,
> until I am feeling in control again,
> my old confidence surging back through me like electricity
> and I get up, Frankenstein, revived
>   by the weakness of others
> and as unstoppable as a handful of pills
> that might kill you on a night like this

like the night when Marilyn kissed it all good-bye. (38)

It was the constant control and "confidence surging back through [him] like electricity" that came to characterise Hoover's management of the FBI. Indeed, this inscrutable modus operandi often meant that normal human communication was not part and parcel of Hoover's administration; as Summers writes, "Edgar the FBI Director did not talk with people. He talked at them" (21).

Further explanation for Hoover's insatiable desire to regulate and categorise can be traced to the occupations and interests of his immediate family. In his book, *On the Lam: Narratives of Flight in J. Edgar Hoover's America*, William Beverly argues that "Hoover's upbringing in a family of cartographers is … a most suggestive influence upon the man and administrator he would become" (30). Following a formative exposure to this meticulous craft, Hoover went on to accept an entry-level position in 1913 as a junior messenger in the orders department at the Library of Congress. Throughout the period of his employment Hoover's pay rose steadily and by the time he left in 1917, he was taking home twice his initial salary. "His ambitious drive," writes Gentry, "coupled with his willingness to take on any job, whether large or small, did not go unnoticed" (67). Of Hoover's zest for filing and categorisation, a fellow Library of Congress clerk later remarked, "I'm sure he would be the Chief Librarian if he'd stayed with us" (qtd. in Gentry 67).

Several critics have observed that what Hoover learned at his early job at the Library of Congress had a lasting impact on the socio-politics of American society for the next half century.[20] Working on the library's card index, the twenty-year-old Hoover became captivated by the library's archival system. Moreover, in the background to this budding fascination was an enormous increase in the library's holdings. Herbert Putnam, the library's superintendent "bureaucratic empire builder" responsible for appointing the first poet to assist the Library of Congress, helped push the library "past the million-volume mark and into the front rank of American research collections" (Powers 36; Maxwell 45).[21] Rejecting the Dewey decimal system

[20] For example see Gil Reavill, *Mafia Summit,* 132.
[21] For more about the Library of Congress's poet in residence program see D'Ooge and Spryos. They note: "the prestige of the position reached its lowest ebb during the McCarthy era, when the appointment of William Carlos Williams was stalled by an FBI investigation into his alleged

due to its arbitrary division of subjects, Putnam also led the development of an entirely new classification system at the library, which came to be intended as a national standard (Maxwell 45). Maxwell points out that one of the central parts of Hoover's job at the Library of Congress was to master Putnam's indexing creation, "which replaced irregular, handwritten catalogues with mechanically reproducible printed cards, their finely differentiated headings bent on anatomizing the whole of human knowledge" (45). This was the very file structure that would later become the model for the FBI's Central Files and General Indices. Thus, the card index model developed by Putnam and later adopted and revised by Hoover at the Bureau borrowed heavily from the practices of the human sciences in order to produce the most advantageous outcome for police. Within Hoover's archival arrangement, "crimes, actual and potential, were logged and interlogged like the library's books, and more than a few books like crimes" (Maxwell 45). Hoover argued for and eventually justified the size and centrality of the Bureau's police directory system, a national register able to "ascertain in a few minutes the numerous ramifications" of suspicious persons, places, and texts (United States, Congress 166).

There is no question that the experience Hoover gained through this initial job influenced his later private methodologies for the organisation of Bureau knowledge, specifically, the knowledge management system of the FBI files. The ability to index large quantities of data, synthesise complex information and structure archival material was key to Hoover's success in this role and his attainment of subsequent important positions. Five years later, on July 25, 1917, he left the Library and accepted a job as a clerk in the Department of Justice, where his career as a "Government man" truly began.

Although the FBI file arrangement system devised by Hoover has by now become globally recognised for its efficient storage of data, in addition to providing subject matter for numerous books, films and editorials, little has been said about the system's literary dimensions, specifically those woven into its design by Hoover himself. While numerous scholars—some of whom have been accused of the dissemination of conspiracy theories, others simply with flawed historiography—have sought to exaggerate the size and scope of the files at various points throughout their

communist past. As a result of the delay, and health problems, Williams was appointed, but he never served. The post then lay vacant for four years" (50).

troubled history, what cannot be denied is the existence of extensive cross-referencing within the card indices that reveal the serious crypto-literary aspirations of the Bureau. Two examples of this can be traced in the files of James Baldwin and James Joyce. In *All Those Strangers* (2015), his study of the art and life of Baldwin, Douglas Field examines closely the FBI's surveillance of the African-American poet to reveal the particularly literary character of the bureau's analysis of prominent twentieth-century American writers. "The FBI's role as the guardian of morality and decency," he writes, "raises important concerns about civil liberties and censorship, as well as illustrating how Hoover's power and influence extended well beyond his role as the enforcer of federal law" (58). For Field, Baldwin's files lay bare not only a great deal about the ways in which the FBI followed, critiqued, recorded and analysed the popular poet, they also reveal the procedural intricacies of how this government-led surveillance manifested itself textually. The files themselves, according to Field, "are encoded, blanked-out, and catalogued in a complex organisational system, resembl[ing] difficult modernist texts that frequently resist close reading" (58).

Claire Culleton encountered similar file censorship and cross-referencing practices, which directed her away from her primary target of Joyce and instead towards Joyce's relatives, editors, and Pound. After more than three years of waiting, followed by her initial euphoria upon the FBI's granting of her request for the Joyce file, Culleton recounts:

> What I received from the FBI numbered only 20 pages and was a collection of cross-referenced pages taken from the files of others … Ezra Pound, Whittaker Chambers, and others. Most of the 20 pages I received were almost entirely blacked out with the exception of words like "Irish" or "Finnegan's [sic] Wake" or some other set of words that were little help to my project. I remember thinking that Yossarian Yossarian of Catch-22 must be the bureau censor, since only inconsequential words were left for review. (5)

While these kinds of experience repeat themselves across investigations into FBI files by a wide range of researchers, Culleton's Catch-22 seems peculiarly common among the accounts of those seeking to analyse the bureau's surveillance of twentieth-century American writers. The interpretive paradox underpinning the FBI's literary problem, as we might call it, is summed up in a page Culleton received from the file of "Dr. Ezra Pound" that appears in Joyce's file, which reads: "he has also done a similar

thing with notes he has made on 'Finnegan's [sic] Wake.' It is my understanding that 'Finnegan's [sic] Wake' is a book written by J. Joyce, the author of 'Ulysses.' This book has created quite a controversy, inasmuch as, many books have been written by other individuals trying to explain what it means" (qtd. in Culleton 5). The investigative methodology revealed by this curious piece of commentary connects the role of the FBI agent to that of the literary critic, both of whom seek to uncover meaning through elaborate decoding processes. Further, as Field has also noted, Hoover's hostile insistence on overseeing the reading practices of countless writers conflates legal and textual interpretation, frequently in unlawful and consequently damaging ways.

As these accounts reveal, for Hoover words and actions were virtually indistinguishable and "literary knowledge was a weapon of both terrorism and its governing foe" (Maxwell 49). In fact, the very proliferation of influential texts that Hoover feared most essentially comprised his own personal strategy of written communication. Culleton reveals the lengths to which Hoover went to disseminate copies of his own articles, speeches and pamphlets by craftily inserting them into otherwise unrelated correspondence. "To those 'good' Americans who would write to the FBI to supply information or to ask a question," Culleton writes, "Hoover responded by distributing reprinted copies of his essays, speeches, and articles" (107). Langston Hughes's FBI file contains a letter sent by Hoover to the Springfield Urban League in response to their request for the Bureau's approval of Hughes as a visiting speaker for their group as well as their request for relevant material from the Hughes file. Hoover's response is as follows:

> Your letter dated December 23, 1947, has been received. The information contained in the files of the Bureau is confidential and available for official use only. I am sure you will draw no inference whatsoever from my inability to comply with your request. I am enclosing some material I thought you might enjoy reading.
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> John Edgar Hoover,
> Director.
>
> Enclosure
>
> Secularism – Breeder of Crime

Questions and Answers on Loyalty Program
Red Fascism
How to Fight Communism
Dir. Testimony. (FBI, "Langston Hughes Part 01 of 04" 105)

Perhaps most revealingly, Hoover expanded the above letter with a handwritten note at the bottom that foregrounds Hughes's poetic writing, above all else. Unable to resist an opportunity to incriminate the influential Harlem Renaissance poet, Hoover scrawls: "Note: Bureau files contain numerous references reflecting Hughes to be a Communist. He is author of the sacrilegious poem which was utilised in the speech, "Secularism – Breeder of Crime"" (FBI, "Langston Hughes Part 01 of 04" 105). The poem to which Hoover refers here is Hughes's "Goodbye Christ," a polemic lyric written in 1932 during his most radical period. This was the poem about which Hoover wrote of Hughes several years earlier in another letter from the file, "This person is an 'alleged' poet, reader, etc., but in reality he is a Communist Party propagandist delivering his lectures in negro YMCA's and under the auspices of intellectuals" (FBI, "Langston Hughes Part 01 of 04" 8). These marginalia reveal Hoover's attempt to doubly-circulate his pamphlets in order to proliferate Bureau doctrine as well as his complex interlacing of modern American poetry into this varied propaganda. By inserting Hughes's poem, first, into his original speech, and second, into a re-distributed version of the speech text, Hoover treats the poetic text like a secret code, which can be passed from person to person, accruing subversive value as it circulates. This approach to modern American poetry overtly characterises it as dangerous, like a weapon of war passed between soldiers. So while a cursory assessment of Hoover's attempt to eliminate poetic texts from American culture may at first seem to suggest a disavowal of their significance, the opposite is more the case. By repeatedly drawing attention to poetry, both in his correspondence with citizen Americans and Bureau agents as well as in the FBI files themselves, Hoover instead reveals the extent to which he took poetic texts extremely seriously.

This paradigm of text-centric surveillance is also apparent in Hoover's effort to ascertain for the Bureau a large collection of published literary texts. Ultimately, Hoover's personal conviction that literary texts contained subversive, coded messages necessitated the stockpiling of those texts for immediate and ongoing access. Coming to the conclusion that "literary language in and of itself performed political action"

required a system in which that very language was treated like a political prisoner. In order to do this, Hoover demanded that the Bureau promptly obtain the "nucleus for an excellent working library" (Maxwell 50-51). Maxwell draws attention to the significant point that Hoover's cataloguing of literary texts at the FBI "called on the imperial scope of the Library of Congress classification, calculated to allow specification within great volume, and acutely attentive to literary distinctions" (51). Numerous historians have outlined evidence for this, in particular in the 1961 publication *American Library Classification*, which provides details about the "monumental class P," a category in the Library of Congress devoted to Language and Literature. "With the publication in 1948 of the last subclass, covering Russian literature," by 1960 Class P contained "2,550 pages of schedules and tables – over one-third of the pages in the entire Library of Congress Classifications" (LaMontagne 246). In Hoover's revision of 'class P' for the FBI, the subjects of the "grouping enjoyed comparably close attention" (Maxwell 51).

The reverberations of Hoover's endeavour to keep the tightest possible tabs on American literature (those who wrote it and those who read it) would be felt as late as the early 1980s with the creation of the Bureau's controversial 'Library Awareness Program.' An operation which involved an effort by the FBI to recruit librarians to report on library patrons, the program was formulated without consultation with American librarians and only made known to the public after the finer details were revealed in an article published in the *New York Times* in September 1987. As the timing of its introduction suggests, the program can be largely attributed to the Bureau's anxiety over how they were to respond to the information revolution ushered in by computers and modern technology. However, this did nothing to quell the hostility of librarians towards the program as well as general public outrage at the FBI's clandestine operations. Adverse public sentiment about the secret program was reflected in an editorial which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on 25 April 1988 stating that "the idea that the FBI is asking librarians to watch and report what people read is intolerable. The Library Association, normally a quiet group, is right to be outraged … What people read is no business of the government. No fishing expeditions in libraries please" (qtd. in Fitch 106). In the same year, a librarian from the Temple Israel Library in Boston took to rhyming couplets to express her disdain

at the Bureau's attempt to monitor public reading in a poem called "'Library Awareness Program' Blues":

*(To tune of "I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No")*

I'm just a simple librarian
I'm in a terrible fix
The FBI's recruiting me
Should I say "yes" or say "nix"?

All they want is that I make a list
Of books that "foreign-looking" people borrow
'Cause their reading of those books today
Could threaten our democracy tomorrow!

But I thought that a democracy
Meant working to create a free society
But it seems that when we get too free
The FBI is filled with great anxiety!

Oh, I'm just a simple librarian
I'm not a detective or spy
But there is one thing I'd like to say:
"Just say no" to the FBI! (Abrams 857)

As the librarian-poet in this short lyric makes clear, the FBI's obsession with monitoring the reading habits of its citizens represented a serious disruption to the "free society" that democracy was meant to uphold. As the author of the revelatory *New York Times* article wrote, "[t]he initiative has upset library officials, who fear intrusions into the privacy and academic freedom of library users and object to what they called an effort to turn librarians into Government informers" (McFadden). While many librarians did as their poet-colleague here writes and 'just said no,' the FBI managed to eventually shrug off a 1988 Congressional enquiry by lobbying Congress to pass a new *Privacy Protection Act* that allowed no consideration for library protection (Matz 70).

The FBI's Library Awareness Program is just one among a large number of programs, cases, investigations and initiatives that are vestigial reminders of the almost fifty years during which the Bureau was under Hoover's control. Moreover, the vast number of studies devoted solely to Hoover's surveillant strategy and reading practices illustrate the extent of his influence on twentieth-century American literature.

While I have said little of the extensively discussed repressed history of Hoover's sexual and racial background, his attempt to restrain and contain American writing can also be seen as a corollary to his complex personal past. This is perhaps attested to most explicitly by the frequency with which the word "secret" has been used in the titles of Hoover's many biographies: Richard Gid Powers' *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (1987); Curt Gentry's *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (1991); Anthony Summers' *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (1993); and Richard Hack's *Puppetmaster: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (2004). What these biographies do not do—but many very recent critical works have done—is to connect the particular details of Hoover's life with the landscape of American writing in the twentieth century. Studies such as Arthur Redding's *Turncoats, Traitors, and Fellow Travelers: Culture and Politics of the Early Cold War* (2008) and Erin Carlston's *Double Agents: Espionage, Literature, and Liminal Citizens* (2013), for example, establish the overlaps between Hoover's political aspirations and the work that American writers produced in response. Redding calls this "the nexus of emergent social technologies of ideological coercion and philosophies of consent within cultural production" (5). Carlston, on the other hand, articulates this tension by investigating the "associations drawn between male homosexuals, Jews, and Communists as iconic threats to national security" and the ways in which the surveillance of these figures by Hoover's FBI inspired surprising imaginative responses (*Double Agents* 1). William Maxwell's *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature* goes one step further by putting Hoover directly at the crossroads of twentieth-century American politics and African American literature. A central theme of *F.B. Eyes* is similar to the argument made in not only Redding and Carlston's books, but many of the other works detailed in this study: that politically engaged American literature and literary criticism from the 1920s onwards has been frustrated and subdued by the cultural politics of the early years of the Cold War. Redding stresses the witch-hunt element integral to this, noting how in the early years of the Cold War "the radical Left was put on the run, and cultural and intellectual production was increasingly enlisted in the cause of manufacturing new social subjects: individuated, anxious, self-policing, consumerist, and therefore 'free'" (148). Moreover, as Redding has also written, "though the excesses of McCarthyism have been amply documented, just as the geopolitical ramifications of the Cold War continue to be spun out and refined at

length by historians and other scholars of varying disciplines, methodologies, and ideological allegiances, the long-term effects of McCarthyism on American culture have only been scantily theorized" (150).

Emerging out of these studies is a sense that what has come to be known as archetypal modern American literature may be, essentially, that which has survived the bureau, works whose makeup reflects what Culleton and Leick have called the "militancy of modernism" (8). Or, to expand on this idea:

> Without bureau prying, without the bureau's ponderous reliance on tactics, strategies, policies, and institutional brawn (not to mention Hoover's own obsessive preoccupation with modern and avant-garde writers and artists), creative work produced in America from 1920s through the 1950s could certainly have developed differently, harnessing the masses and producing the kind of revolutionary social action the bureau feared. (Culleton and Leick 17)

There is now no doubt that Hoover was obsessed with modern writers; but what I have also drawn attention to here and will explain in more detail in the following section is the extent to which Hoover's very identity was bound up with the FBI files themselves, even though (as we now know) there were copious files with little to no valuable information in them at all. Or, to return once again to Ai Ogawa's insightful lyric about the director:

> I'm the man behind the man
> behind the man
> and I have got my hands
> in everybody's pockets.
> I know who's been sticking his plug
> In Marilyn Monroe's socket.
>
> …
>
> I have files on everyone who counts,
> yet they would amount to nothing,
> if I did not have the will to use them. (40)

From the outset, Hoover sought to project an image of the FBI as passionate, devoted, heroic crime fighters and of himself as the irreplaceable man behind the towering surveillant pillar. However, as the Bureau grew relentlessly after the 1920s and became even more persistent in its pursuit of radicals, writers, and "the left," it

expanded to a size far beyond what Hoover could control. The eventual evolution of the FBI into an enormous organisation dedicated to *process* meant that although Hoover's original influence would always be felt, the ripples of text-centric surveillance were increasingly seen further down the line, in the offices and stations of the Bureau's expanding reach. As Ogawa writes of Hoover's likely position by this point: "my solution is to sabotage discreetly, / to let someone else take the blame" (40).

## Codes for Everything and Nothing: American Criticism and Surveillance

There are two ways of interpreting all but a very few utterances.[22]

I.A. RICHARDS

In his recent work on the close surveillance of African American writers by Hoover's FBI, William Maxwell asks an essential question: "What were the habits, convictions, and effects of the Bureau critic-spies whose observation of texts was enabled by decryption, identity theft, and hermeneutics of suspicion—techniques academic critics often share with intelligence agents—but also by systematic FBI surveillance?" (130). Recognising the overlaps of bureau reading and poetic reading in America during this period provides some inroads to answering this question. This section goes one step further, however, by investigating how the structures of lyric poetry as a literary form can be read alongside this paradigm of Bureau reading. The close entanglement of American academic criticism and American surveillance throughout the early decades of the twentieth century can be traced down several interconnecting paths. First, as I examined in the preceding section, the FBI's intense interest in and suspicion of American literature, spurred on by the habits and background of J. Edgar Hoover, initiated a culture of Bureau close-reading that foregrounded poetry and complex literary texts as necessary sites of surveillant focus. Second, agency-endorsed

[22] *Practical Criticism*, 6.

formalism, which was shaped by the direct influence of the New Criticism on the counterintelligence branch of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), made its way into the practices and processes of the FBI, especially owing to the direction of Hoover. Third, influential modern American poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, were not only closely surveilled by the FBI but were also enmeshed in its internal politics through their interactions with and influence over lesser-known poets and critics, each with their own occupational ties to American surveillance agencies. Alongside these three points, other scholarship has recently drawn attention to the predominant culture of the FBI during the twentieth century as one that was greatly inflected by the American academy. FBI ghost-readers in fact "cobbled together a distinct mode of FBI reading decades before the CIA's creation," a process Maxwell calls a "didactic yet meticulous biohistoricism in sympathy with academic schools of the late 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s" (131). Similarly, Epstein observes that the overlapping of surveillance communities and academic communities in America during the twentieth century "induced individuals who moved in and between these communities to participate in cultural discourse in mutually reciprocal ways" (73). Recently revealed activities of the FBI show that this overlapping represents "a pattern of cultural behaviour that characterizes the secretive and suppressive centrism of American society during the first phase of the Cold War" (Epstein 73).

So what kind of reading practices did American surveillance agents actually conduct? And, if we are able to attribute a reading method to those who meticulously surveilled American poets, then what effect did this practice have on not only the reception of poetic works, but also the creation of those works in the first place? The most obvious initial conclusion that can be drawn is that the FBI's examination of many twentieth-century American poets was fundamentally characterised by the linking of Bureau-literary reading with biographical reading; which is to say that the daily operations of the FBI throughout this period highlighted the practice of reading literary texts for supposedly factual biographical information. As any literary critic or biographer would understand only too well, reading literary texts biographically allowed the FBI, often in ways too vague or unsubstantiated to be disproved, to connect the content of a given poem with the life of the poet. For the most part, and somewhat ironically, Bureau commentary and criticism about poetic and other literary works of the period reveal more about the FBI's assumptions than it does

about the poets behind the work, "exposing insights about the FBI's modus operandi," as Douglas Field has written, "and turning the gaze back to the voyeuristic reach of the Bureau's surveillance" (62). One need only glance at the paratextual comments jotted throughout James Baldwin's FBI file, for instance, to see how Hoover's supposedly off-the-record marginalia essentially prescribed (or rather, pre-ascribed) meaning to the poet's literary work. In 1964, only two years before the signing into law of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which would require the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased documents and information controlled by the United States government, Hoover scrawled the decidedly derogatory remark, "Isn't Baldwin a well known pervert?" into the margin of a typed memorandum in Baldwin's file (qtd. in Field 61). While it is one thing to have the department's top G-Man pepper the files of poets and novelists with his personal, rhetorical musings, it is quite another for those comments to become part of a larger, ongoing dialogue. As Field remarks in his explication of the FBI's intense interest in Baldwin's sexual activity, Hoover's comment was not just a "personal note"; rather, "the barely legible question in fact precipitated a measured response, which illustrates how Hoover's marginalia acted as a central component of the files" (61).[23] Although Baldwin spoke out publicly on matters of sexual freedom and against homophobia, he would later explore the problematic interconnectedness of his role as a writer and spokesman in his fourth novel *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968) and in several interviews where he was frequently positioned to defend his dual-advocacy as a member of both the gay rights and the civil rights movements. For example, when questioned in an interview for *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1969 about his so-called 'escape' to Europe at the age of 24, Baldwin emphatically responded:

> All I can do is work out the terms on which I can work, and for me that means being a transatlantic commuter. What's most difficult is that you are penalized for trying to remain in touch with yourself. I have a public life – and I know that, O.K. I have a private life, something which I know a good deal less. And the temptation is to avoid the private life because you can hide in the public one … But it's not my life, and if I pretend it is, I'll die. I am not a public speaker. I am an artist. (*Conversations with James Baldwin* 80)

[23] Field writes: "The official report responding to Hoover's question asserts, 'it is not possible to state that he is a pervert,' but notes that 'he has expressed a sympathetic viewpoint about homosexuality." See *All Those Strangers,* 61.

While Baldwin here insists that he is first and foremost a writer, rumours surrounding his sexuality essentially guaranteed his exclusion from participation in the civil rights movement. Moreover the FBI, constantly on the lookout for any excuse to stifle African-American activism, was keen to conflate Baldwin's homosexuality with his race and his poetic output by placing all three under the broad category of "perversity." As Morris Dickstein outlines in *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties*, the crucial affliction faced by Baldwin had little to do with his politics, his literary craftsmanship or even his position on race questions. "The argument," writes Dickstein, "was that Baldwin's homosexuality, his unconfident masculinity, is the hidden root of all his writing and completely disqualifies him as a representative spokesman" (168). The fact that this kind of discourse would turn up in Baldwin's FBI file demonstrates the close biohistorical reading conducted by bureau agents, eager to conflate whenever possible the life with the work. Similarly, Claude McKay's FBI file contains a meticulously detailed, chronologically organised and heavily annotated bibliography of a substantial portion of the poet's literary output, spanning the June 1921 article "How Black Sees Green and Red" to McKay's 1923 poem "May Day – 1923" (Maxwell 144). The bureau-crafted memo contains the exact transcriptions of four poems first printed in radical magazines. "The FBI," Maxwell comments, "would unleash its networked counterliterature only against the 'correct texts' of the enemy" and "getting a 'closing stanza' just right seemed no less pressing than reproducing the red meat of a captured letter from the African Blood Brotherhood, Harlem's groundbreaking Black Marxist sect" (144). In the case of McKay's file, like that of other poets the FBI deemed radical, the effort to construct definite, detailed chronology was invariably structured around the trajectory of the given poet's literary output.

The confessional poets were of course acutely aware of the disjunction between biography and poetics. Robert Lowell's defiance of being drafted to the US army brought him to the FBI's attention, with the first entry of his 36-page file dated 17 September 1943. Surveilled almost continually thereafter, especially on account of his frequent visits to the Yaddo Writers Colony (a frequent target of FBI surveillance), by the early 1960s he had become an outspoken critic of US involvement in the Vietnam War, thus giving Bureau spies further grounds for suspicion. By the time

Lowell won his third and final Pulitzer in 1974, the FBI was interested less in the content of his poetry than in keeping track of his foreign travels, noting each time he used or renewed his passport. Such is the public interest in Lowell's political positions that several decades after his death, "pages of his Bureau dossier remain classified 'in the interest of national defence or foreign policy'" (Newton 201). As one of the leading figures of the confessional school of poetry, Lowell was greatly attentive to the post-war outpouring in confessional texts and the somewhat turbulent critical discourse that ran alongside them. On the 26 March 1949, the same day on which he was officially reprimanded for involvement in a riotous crusade against a supposed FBI informant at the Yaddo Colony, Lowell attended the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at the Waldorf-Astoria. Paul Mariani notes how the conference was supposed to promote goodwill between the US and the USSR, "but in the light of the Cold War, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, loyalty oaths, lists of subversives, and the anti-Stalinism of the fragmented American left," it was doomed from the outset (181). Armed with an umbrella, to be used to pound the floor if he was not recognised from the podium, Lowell and others representing the *Partisan Review* were each given two minutes in which to speak. When his turn came, he stood up and made a point of introducing himself as "'a poet and a Roman Catholic,' and, of course, a strong anti-Communist" (qtd. in Mariani 181). Perhaps the best way to read an anecdote such as this one is to situate Lowell's surveillance poetics within the same category as his privileged position as a white middle-class male. Thus while a poet such as Lowell felt able to publicly mock the kind of bio-poetic conflation championed by the FBI, Baldwin or McKay had significantly more at stake in broadcasting their biographical details, even if satirically.

There is also the question of the surveillant consequences for published poetic works in contrast to other unpublished materials. An FBI-intercepted letter of Ezra Pound's, for instance, reads: "The value of philosophy (or a specific philosophy) is that it strengthens courage. Confucius is material which should be taken into the trenches" (qtd. in Feldman 91). Lowell, who was known for transposing passages directly from letters into his poetry, famously wrote: "Everything is real until it's published" (*The Dolphin* 72). Conveying the same attentiveness to the tyranny of biographical reading, Lowell's fellow confessional poet Anne Sexton remarked in a 1968 interview with Barbara Kevles:

> Many of my poems are true, line by line, altering a few facts to get the story at its heart … Each poem has its own truth … But then, poetic truth is not necessarily autobiographical. It is truth that goes beyond the immediate self, another life. I don't adhere to literal facts all the time; I make them up whenever needed. Concrete examples give a verisimilitude. (*No Evil Star* 103)

Yet despite the prevalence of deliberately equivocal positions such as these, studies of lyric poetry continue to be plagued by reductive readings of the relation between a poet and that poet's fictional utterances. Alongside academic criticism of the period, the FBI developed its own stockpile of literary-critical documents, to which Bureau readers gave meticulous attention. "It is not too much to propose," comments Maxwell, "that the FBI's reading-intensive files qualify as works of literary commentary, state-subsidized explications debating informal curricula and obliquely bidding for interpretive dominance" (130). Bureau reading went much further than the mining of poetry for biographical details. It is therefore no exaggeration to assert that bureau readers working for Hoover during these decades to populate and mark up poets' files with literary, critical and biographical notes were conducting the work of a hybrid critic-spy.

The point at which formal academic textual practice came to influence Bureau reading was through the complex overlapping of the FBI with the CIA, a connection that brought about more rivalry and conflict than it did efficiency. In fact, Hoover worked to delay the establishment of the CIA (formerly the Office of Strategic Services) for as long as possible until the passage of President Harry Truman's National Security Act in 1947. Upon the establishment of the CIA, a wedge was effectively driven between foreign and domestic spying, with the central-intelligence agency working against enemy spies overseas and Hoover's FBI continuing to handle them at home (Riebling 14). Riebling has observed how "it would later become an article of faith, even among intelligence professionals, that this schism was effective because Roosevelt wanted to protect Americans' civil rights" (14). The real reason behind the split, though, was essentially to placate Hoover. Thus counterespionage had to be divided geographically with the White House announcing that the CIA's powers were to be restricted to overseas surveillance so that the agency would not "supersede or duplicate … the Federal Bureau of Investigation" (qtd. in Riebling 14).

With this division in place, the CIA was forbidden from assuming "police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers or internal security functions" whilst gathering intelligence on domestic soil ("National Intelligence"). Given this restraint and others, a good part of the FBI-CIA rivalry was generated around the making and breaking of laws about what each group could and supposedly could not do. "The CIA's gung-ho tackling of covert actions in which the pretence of fair play was consciously abandoned" only worked to increase the divide between the two agencies (Maxwell 133).

In the years leading up to and shortly after its formation, the CIA was most unlike the FBI when it came to the connection between America's universities and its surveillance elite. Credited with having a significant influence on the production of high culture in America, the early CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia was an exclusive stomping ground full of writers, poets, and intellectuals, fresh from the ranks of some of America's top Humanities departments. "Spying and writing have always gone together," narrates Hugh Wilford, "the 'man of letters' was, if anything, even more conspicuous a figure in the upper echelons of the American secret service than in M16" (99). Indeed, if the 'man of letters' was the product of the early twentieth-century American English department, then the CIA's most distinguished disciplinary branch (if it had committed to establishing one) would have been that of Literature. In the influential *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (1999), Frances Stonor Saunders notes how by the mid-1960s, it was the CIA's "boast that it could staff any college from its analysts, 50 per cent of whom held advanced degrees, 30 per cent of which were doctorates, prompting a State Department official to say that 'there are more liberal intellectuals per square inch at the CIA than anywhere else in government'" (198-99). Although several American creative writers—William F. Buckley, Edward Hunter, John Hunt, Robie Macauley, Peter Matthiessen, Jack Thompson—worked furtively amongst the CIA's ranks, the agency's primary embrace of literature was less literary fiction than it was poetry.

A BA graduate in English Literature from Yale University, Norman Holmes Pearson exemplified the role of the poet-spy-critic when he joined the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) immediately following his formative university education in textual analysis. In fact, from Yale's 1943 graduating class alone, at least forty-two young new BAs entered intelligence work, "largely in the OSS, many to remain on after the war to form the core of the new CIA" (Winks 35). Drawing an explicit link

between the kind of textual code-breaking work done in universities and that conducted by the professional spy, Robin Winks astutely reminds us that universities, after all, "justify and reward the digging out, writing up, and possessing of arcane knowledge as an end in itself" (12). Pearson, who received his PhD from Yale in 1941 on the annotation of Hawthorne's *Italian Notebooks*, would go on to become the lead recruiter of a number of ex-Yale spies into the "X-2" division of the OSS's counterintelligence division, a branch that "had the task of spying on the spies likely to spy on you" (Maxwell 135). Pearson's strong poetic impulses were apparent throughout his time at Yale. In 1937, while still a graduate student, he published the two-volume *Oxford Anthology of American Literature* (1938) with Pulitzer Prize winning poet William Rose Benet, and later co-edited the renowned five-volume collection *Poets of the English Language* (1950) with W.H. Auden. Winks notes how Pearson was "a collector of people as some collect experiences, not in any pejorative sense, but because he wanted to understand twentieth-century American prose and particularly poetry, and he rather thought he would understand it better if he knew those who produced it" (310). Of Pearson's positions as academic, poet, editor, critic, counterintelligence specialist and archivist, Winks goes on to write: "Throughout his life he played the role of the man of letters, encouraging poets, writers, painters, and scholars, whether émigré Estonian poets such as Aleksis Rannit, who obtained his post-war position at Yale largely through Pearson's intervention, or young translators and poets like Alastair Reid, who would make the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda known to a generation imprisoned in the language of their tongue" (310).[24] Perhaps the clearest indication of his later tendency towards formalist critique was Pearson's habit of collecting Ezra Pound manuscripts and his close relationship with Hilda Doolittle, which culminated in his role as the literary executor of H.D.'s work.

The point at which government intelligence work and New Critical practice became most explicitly conflated, however, was in the enlistment of yet another Yale

[24] By 1943 Pearson was working under James R. Murphy as a member of the new X-2 Counterintelligence branch that functioned as the link between the OSS and 'Ultra,' the British military signals intelligence program based in nearby Bletchley Park. By 1945 he was Chief of the London branch of X-2 as well as a major member of the XX Committee, a body William Epstein describes as "the Anglo-American inter-agency unit that made the crucial policy decisions on the use of Ultra material, the top-secret decryptings of high-level German codes that were considered the major intelligence coup of World War II" (81).

English graduate to the US intelligence services in 1944. Maxwell describes how this recruitment played out:

> To supplement an intelligence brain trust brimming with Yale librarians (e.g. Harman W. Leibert) and textual critics (e.g. W.S. Lewis, the editor of Horace Walpole's many letters), [Pearson] recruited an entrepreneurial English major whose familiarity with the New Critics surpassed that of his professors. Pearson's student James Jesus Angleton … evolved into one of the most fictionalized spies in American history. (136)

James Angleton, who would later become the CIA's most renowned spymaster, received his BA in English from Yale in 1941, the same year in which John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism* appeared, launching the movement of the same name. For Angleton, though, the real inspiration for a new method of literary-bureau reading came from the work of influential literary critic I.A. Richards and Richards' student, English literary critic and poet William Empson. In his compelling essay on the critical juncture between Cold War rhetoric and Eighteenth-Century Studies, Epstein offers an anecdote that attests to Angleton's formalist dedication. "While still an undergraduate," writes Epstein, "Angleton sought out William Empson and I.A. Richards when they were visiting Harvard, and, subsequently, against opposition from Dean William Clyde DeVane … arranged the British critics' first public lecture at Yale" (84). Epstein goes on to write, "[t]hus, in a sense, Angleton can be literally credited with helping to bring formalist criticism to New Haven" (84).

It is under these conditions that the New Critical spirit of ambiguity would come to dominate the thinking and practice of Angleton and his spy-critic peers. Nowhere was this spirit reflected more directly than in the contents and politics of *Furioso*, a magazine founded by Angleton and E. Reed Whittemore, Jr. which, with Ezra Pound's encouragement, appeared first in June of 1939 and lasted through until the Spring of 1953. The magazine's intent was to "ignore, furiously, the apprentice narcissism of the college literary magazine, and to create instead what Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish described without condescension as a 'new magazine of Poetry' on *Furioso's* first ever page" (Maxwell 137). The first volume of *Furioso* is a complex matrix of literary-political history, with contributors including E. E. Cummings, Horace Gregory, John Peale Bishop, Richard Eberhart, James Laughlin and Ezra Pound. Pound had met Angleton in Italy in the summer of the previous year

and by the beginning of 1939 was writing animated letters of advice in anticipation of the forthcoming magazine.

The apparent fellowship that comprised the magazine's formative print-run, however, belies deeper and discordant tensions at the centre of politics and poetry in the years leading up to World War II. For example, while MacLeish—whose letter of encouragement opens the magazine's first issue—would go on to help the CIA coordinate its spy-craft under the direction of Franklin Roosevelt, fellow contributor William Carlos Williams, also a friend of Pound's, went on to write for *The New Republic*, whose early years were marked by liberal and highly progressive writing. Perhaps the best summation of this critical tension can be found in *Furioso's* second issue, which included Cleanth Brooks's "Review of Modern Poetry and the Tradition" and "A Primer for Modern Poetry" by Andrews Wanning (Angleton's favourite Yale teacher), in which Wanning narrates that "we hear a lot these days about the modern critical revolution; but we hear few definitions. I will risk offering a simple one: the essence of that revolt lies in the discovery that it is possible and proper for a poet to mean two differing, or even opposing things at the same time" (23). Holzman notes how Angleton himself appeared in the same issue as an "advertiser," placing a classified ad on the magazine's inside back cover that reads:

> Will anyone with information concerning obscure 'works' or mss. of EZRA POUND, please help a frantic bibliographer. Communications to J. J. Angleton, 1456 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. (qtd. in Holzman 326).

*Furioso* appeared twice more in 1940 and once in 1941, publishing further works by those who featured in its opening edition along with others including Dylan Thomas, John Wheelwright, Theodore Spencer, Mary Barnard, Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens. A note enclosed in the fourth pre-war issue informed subscribers that "at least half our editorial board (one of us) is to be drafted. Just how much poetry will be … accepted, rejected in Camp So-and-So is a bitter question with a doubtful question mark" ("Guide to the Furioso Papers"). By the time the final issue of the magazine appeared in the spring of 1953, James Angleton was almost ready to step into the role of chief of the CIA's investigative staff, where he stayed from 1954 to 1975, defining counterintelligence along the way as "the practical criticism of ambiguity" (Epstein 83). This telling idiom, which cleverly marries the titles of two of

the most influential texts of formalist criticism, Richards's *Practical Criticism* and Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, can be seen to ultimately summarise the method of formalist spy-reading adopted by the CIA.

Yet despite the ostensibly coherent agenda developed by the Agency's top critic-spies, the profoundly impractical nature of these reading practices is difficult to overlook. As Epstein more succinctly writes, "indeed, *counter*-intelligence is an apt term with which to describe this situation" (84). Such is the inept nature of these interpretive exercises that counterintelligence becomes, in Epstein's terms, "a form of political action that is successful only when hidden, that problematizes truth and distorts reality in the name of loyalty and the defense of the homeland, and that, having no final answers, contains the seeds of its own contradiction, [thus] counter-intelligence appropriately characterizes a mode of critical discourse that suppresses its political engagement under the cover of the assumed identities of contradictory and deceptively 'objective' criticisms" (84). The interpretive dimensions of Angletonian spy-reading, then, in many ways render counterintelligence an act of paradox, a complex system Maxwell has described as less a procedure of palpable double-crosses than a "prismatic reflection of self and doubled-self, other and doubled-other, all identities subject to confusion with their opposite numbers" (139). Thus the irony that underpins Angleton's explicit drafting of New Critical ideas and techniques into CIA service is, in many ways, the kind of irony that makes close reading seem almost redundant. If, as William Empson notes in the opening pages of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, "a grammatical structure is effective in several ways at once," then what makes the interpretive strategies employed by one agent to the analysis of the file of American poet X any less valid than the techniques employed by subsequent bureau readers and their colleagues? (2). The inherent problem with the application of New Criticism's intensive application of verbal analysis to the files, anecdotes and correspondences of many closely examined American poets may be more clearly illuminated through attention to the opening section of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, which reads:

> In a sufficiently extended sense any prose statement could be called ambiguous. In the first place it can be analysed. Thus, 'The brown cat sat on the red mat' may be split into a series: 'This is a statement about a cat. That cat the statement is about is brown,' and so forth. Each such simple statement may be translated into a complicated statement which employs

> other terms; thus you are now faced with the task of explaining what a 'cat' is; and each such complexity may again be analysed into a simple series; thus each of the things that go to make up a 'cat' will stand in some spatial relation to the 'mat.' (1)

What Empson encourages here is a system in which poetic analysis, or explanation, may be carried in any direction the explainer wishes, whether or not that means finding out anything fundamental about the sentence or not. It follows then, that the literary critic—or spy—comes to view the author's words much like a puzzle, so that, as Empson posits, "alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading" (x). Importantly, in the circles around which early twentieth-century American poetic philosophy revolved, Empson's pursuit of ambiguity was generally well received. Ultimately, the "creation of a new language" succinctly describes the process adopted in numerous acts of surveillant reading, where CIA agents trained at Yale in the processes and procedures of English literary studies, "put paradoxical language into paradoxical action" (Maxwell 138). In the case of most of these agents, pre-existing literary-critical orientation served to accommodate anticommunism as the language of multiple, contradictory meanings, which naturally found itself on the same side of the coin as specialised counterintelligence. Thus, the CIA's adoption of New Critical practice, as I read it in these terms, hinges on a formula whereby one simply generates that which one sets out to find.

For the most part, too, the skills and techniques employed in acts of analytical government undercover work were themselves far from secret. William R. Johnson, yet another product of the Yale English department, published a primer for students of counterintelligence that has since accrued a cult following among aspiring intelligence staff and FBI aficionados. Johnson's *Thwarting Enemies at Home and Abroad: How to Be a Counterintelligence Officer* (1987) details the principles, strategy and tradecraft of counterintelligence, in which "sensitivity to pattern is essential in detecting deception" (9). "It is no accident," writes Johnson, that some of the best counterintelligence officers in "World War II were drafted into that war from positions as critics of English Literature" (10). In a section of the book entitled "CI Traits: Do You Have Them?" Johnson employs literary anecdote towards instructions for determining the difference between what one "want[s] to believe" and "what is logical and probable":

> Samson wanted to believe that Delilah loved him, when simple logic and knowledge of the Philistine pattern of behavior would have told him that she was after his scalp. Too late he found himself eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves. Which shows that the history of CI goes back a long way, and that principles do not change. At first glance, catching spies and studying English poetry do not seem to be closely related, but they have one thing in common: both, when competently done, are based on recognizing patterns. (9)

Johnson attributes the successful identification of spies to the capacity to look for multiple meanings, a strategy that hinges upon an agent's ability to examine in detail the assumptions concealed within words and phrases. Much like the New Critic's appeal to the whole structure of a poem or play, rather than merely the "superficial plot or statement," the surveillance agent must be on the lookout for larger patterns that emerge within texts. "I do not expect my young CI officers to be able to discuss the complexities of a Shakespeare play," advises Johnson, "but if I catch them studying Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry*, I do not instantly send them off to the firing range. I tell them to go read Cleanth Brooks on 'the language of paradox,' because CI is the act of paradox" (10). The ostensibly rational and instrumental language of analysis used by Johnson here designates what appears to be a productive and consistent method by which counterintelligence work might be accomplished. Thus, as Maxwell astutely narrates, "[p]ostwar English majors, soaked in *Understanding Poetry* but itching to do something with their grasp of poetic irony, needed only to apply to Langley" (138).

What passed for effective spy-criticism at Langley, however, was not necessarily embraced as such at Hoover's headquarters in Washington, DC. While James Angleton eventually became Hoover's closest source and liaison at the CIA, thanks largely to their shared anticommunism and intense interest in modern American writers, the seemingly sophisticated New Critical swerve of CIA reading did little to influence the Bureau's longstanding obsession with the connection between texts, facts, biography and the importance of classification and cataloguing, both of which can be traced to Hoover's library background. In fact, a close comparison of CIA reading with FBI reading reveals the extent to which the reading practices conducted at the two major surveillance organisations in America during the twentieth century very much reflect the critical division which can be seen in literary

criticism in the American academy during this period: that is, a division between a formalist reading of literary texts in isolation as codes to be broken and a contextualist reading of literary texts alongside a range of other texts (interview transcripts, medical records, letters, or radio broadcasts) in order to determine their hidden messages and ultimate meaning. Indeed the ideological distinction between the focus on historical-biographical reading conducted at the FBI and New Critical close reading developed at the CIA can be seen as a direct reflection of the class and educational differences between the surveillance agents who worked for each. As Gid Powers relates of the ideological rivalry between the two organisations, CIA agents insisted that the initials FBI stood for "Fordham Bronx Irish," while "FBI agents retaliated by insulting OSS analysts as WASPy 'Oh, So Socials' hired straight from Ivy League eating clubs" (365; Maxwell 133).

In fact, even when both organisations insisted that they were conducting objective and neutral surveillance work, they were still never fully free from the intentional and affective fallacies they so adamantly purported to avoid. The overarching problem, of course, is that in order to end up engaged in the assessment of any given author's literary works, biographical materials, letters, or personal narratives, an agent must have known something (no matter how trivial) about the target and second, been given directives as to what, specifically, to look for. Indeed, as Herbert Mitgang reveals in the introductory remarks of *Dangerous Dossiers* (1988), his important chronicle of the secret war against America's greatest authors, many writers came under FBI suspicion merely because of the themes they chose for their work. "Thousands of pages of government records in my possession," writes Mitgang, "and official files that I have been allowed to read without disclosing their origin, reveal that these authors often came under suspicion because of the themes—fiction as well as fact—they chose for their books; professional writers' guilds they belonged to and writers' meetings they attended; petitions they signed and publications they subscribed to; and the places where they lived in their own country and abroad" (27-28). While it is one thing to single out a professional writer because of the apparent dubiousness of their travel plans within America or their association with particular boards or committees, it is quite another to closely surveil them because of the content of their fiction. Indeed, the very act of associating a writer with the themes they adopt for their fiction violates one of the foundational principles of New Criticism. W.K.

Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley articulate this in "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), still the most influential essay written on the subject of authorial intent: "A poem can be only through its meaning—since its medium is words—yet it is, simply is, in the sense that we have no excuse for inquiring what part is intended or meant. Poetry is a feat of style by which a complex of meaning is handled all at once. Poetry succeeds because all or most of what is said or implied is relevant; what is irrelevant has been excluded, like lumps from pudding and 'bugs' from machinery" (469). Of course, if we agree with this interpretive convention, we are to read all poems as dramatic monologues that explicitly mark the speaker of the poem as separate from the poet. Further, any reader attentive to the tyranny of self-consciousness—the acknowledged gap between the self observed and the self observing—inherent in studies of lyric poetry must also be aware that the situational context created by a poem is always, to some extent, fictional. E.R. Harty provides a succinct account of this reading convention:

> [A] poem is always, in principle, impersonal, inasmuch as the voice which utters it is a fictional construct, a literary creation distinct from the poet. Even poems which seem intensely personal expressions are subject to this interpretive convention … It follows that even in those cases where the poet intends to speak in his own voice, to express his own thoughts and feelings, by employing a poetic genre he automatically abdicates his right to be so construed. (14)

In other words, any potential misreading of the dramatic action in a poem, by a CIA agent, FBI agent or otherwise, should not become the basis of excessive surveillance and potentially damaging harassment: the poem simply is. In figuring the deployment of particular themes by American poets as reflective of their personal commentary on political or governmental undertakings, the FBI has succeeded therefore in redrawing the very boundaries of what may or may not be considered subversive. These anxieties about which texts could or could not be read, or what kinds of reading were more effective than others manifested itself in Bureau practices and ideology. As many poems written throughout the period reveal, the specifically twentieth-century American preoccupation with the multiplicity of textual meaning was also a site of focus for American writers, both in their poems and in other discourses.

The attempt by Bureau agents to "crack the code" of William Carlos Williams's work, for instance, is ironically countered via the focus in his poetry on

themes of spying, subversion, language games and code breaking. Bureau agents first took notice of Williams in 1930 and then later tightened their surveillance of him in September 1942 after an anonymous source provided the FBI with "seventeen sheets bearing typewriting of a suspicious nature" (Newton 370). Suspecting that Williams's poems might contain subversive coded messages, one FBI critic noted how "they appear to have been written by a person who is very queer or possibly a mental case" and that Williams's work necessitates increased surveillance of the poet on account of its "expressionistic style which might be interpreted as being 'code'" (Newton 370). These kinds of comments by the Bureau reveal the extent to which the formal characteristics of poetry during this period set off alarm bells and that these kinds of lyric poems were perceived as being potentially dangerous and in need of monitoring. The extent to which modern American poets self-consciously participated in and contributed to the Bureau's obsession with subversive language and code breaking is registered in Williams's work. The poem "To Have Done Nothing," for example, creates a cryptic language matrix by using the lyric to stage an elaborate grammatical deception. The poem in its entirety reads:

> No that is not it
> nothing that I have done
> nothing
> I have done
>
> is made up of
> nothing
> and the diphthong
>
> ae
>
> together with
> the first person
> singular
> indicative
>
> of the auxiliary
> verb
> to have
>
> everything
> I have done
> is the same

if to do
is capable
of an
infinity of
combinations
involving the
moral
physical
and religious

codes

for everything
and nothing
are synonymous
when

energy *in vacuo*
has the power
of confusion

which only to
have done nothing
can make
perfect (*CP1* 192)

The multiple enactments of interpretation in this poem create the effect of an unstable, impenetrable language game. We are forced to listen, more closely with each line, in order to locate the poem's focus. Even the poem's first line, "No that is not it," works to destabilise context and content straightaway by ensuring that the deictic pronouns "that" and "it" find no referent in the subsequent lines of the opening stanza: "nothing that I have done / nothing / I have done." As the lyric continues, we're further adrift as rough enjambment dislocates meaning. Indeed, as Seth Forrest rightly observes of this peculiar poem, "[w]ithout lineation, this might have been written by Gertrude Stein" (71). Williams uses synchysis, a bewildering disruption or scattering of the expected ordering of words, to estrange commonplace terms from their expected meaning. Meaning shifts from line to line, depending on how we choose to connect particular words. In the lines, "I have done // is made up of / nothing / and the diphthong // ae // together with / the first person / singular / indicative," we are at once thrown into a discursive mode of didacticism, while at the same time the lines create the effect of a seemingly infinite loop of double-negatives.

The effect of this is to leave interpretation almost entirely up to listening. We are positioned to combine words and sentences ourselves in an act akin to detective work; piecing together a scattered puzzle. Several critics have read the social and political underpinnings of this poem as an interrogation of a particular American vernacular, an undertaking that could be described as the tackling of a "European hegemonic hold on American writing at the time" (Käck 84). This is very much in line with Williams's views on art, and in particular poetry, as media that have their own kind of agency built in and thus are capable of "doing." In fact, the poem's title in one of its earlier formulations, as can be witnessed in Williams's drafts, was "The Verb to Do" (Baldwin and Meyers 88). This original working title tells us something about the central focus of the poem: its rhetorical and linguistic interest in the potential of the infinitive "to do." While an explication of the multiplicity of words and an investigation of the poem as "doing" are an indispensable part of what makes this poem pertinent to the structures of surveillance, I am more interested in the negative things the poem says about language. This is in line with a view put forward by Barry Ahern who views "To Have Done Nothing" as "a syntactical and grammatical analysis of the flawed tool – the English language" (133). The poem's likening of "everything" to "nothing" ("for everything / and nothing / are synonymous") uses the complex energy of lyric to critique the very processes of poetic reading that would set out to try to solve it. An attempt to ascribe meaning to everything results in everything meaning nothing. This is indeed the process that I have described in relation to the probing Bureau reader, whose brand of "impractical criticism" is unintentionally built out of an overzealous attempt to conduct detailed practical critique, which, because unclear and discursive, only works to generate mystery around the poem it sets out to decipher. In many ways this is a form of political poetics, "not in the sense of direct action in political actuality," as Christina Oltmann has described it, but in the sense that Williams's poetics generate "a politically subversive force that seeks to reactivate and therefore liberate the human imagination" (46).

Williams establishes an obsession with cryptic forms of watching and information gathering in US culture and politics, albeit in an entirely different register, in his early poem "The Young Housewife":

> At ten A.M. the young housewife
> moves about in negligee behind
> the wooden walls of her husband's house.
> I pass solitary in my car.
>
> Then again she comes to the curb
> to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands
> shy, uncorseted, tucking in
> stray ends of hair, and I compare her
> to a fallen leaf.
>
> The noiseless wheels of my car
> rush with a crackling sound over
> dried leaves as I bow and pass smiling. (*CP1* 57)

Using a familiar indoor/outdoor dynamic, the speaker in this poem not only admits to driving past the housewife's house but seems to know precisely what is going on inside the "wooden walls." With no reference to windows—that is, the method of suburban spying that comes to haunt later mid-century poems about the American suburbs—it is clear that something far more invasive is going on. Or rather, that the form of invasion being performed in this poem is shot through with a critique of what it even means to observe or spy. I am by no means the first to point out the strangeness of the mode of spying in this poem, nor am I treading new ground in drawing attention to the obvious connection between Williams's role as a doctor making house calls at the time of its publication and the account of suburban visiting enacted in these lines. Rather, I want to use this poem as an example of the ways in which the modernist lyric works to critique reflexively both a culture of obsessive surveillant reading and criticism but also the very expectations placed upon poetry of the period. In essence, as Williams himself tells us in stating "no ideas but in things," the modernist perspective *should not* be able to see through walls (*Paterson* 6). The modernist poet is expected to render in poetry the object or objects that are in front of her. In telling us about something which, it is almost certain he has not literally seen, the speaker in "The Young Housewife" therefore makes a comment about the apparent gap between seeing, reading and meaning. This lyric is less an original and striking account of things seen than it is a commentary on the poet's outright prerogative to be able to see anything and ascribe some kind of meaning to it. The jarring, almost throw away comparison at the poem's centre ("and I compare her / to a fallen leaf") is both a forecast of the later possessing or destruction of the housewife,

as we see in the final stanza's image of a car rushing over dried leaves, but also a comment on the poem's task of assigning a correlative, even when all of the facts are not necessarily available.

The FBI's interaction with Williams and his poetry is worth reading for a moment alongside that of his lifelong friend Ezra Pound. More so than any other modern poet involved in politics, Pound's social interests and personal convictions were all driven by a concern for art. The effect that this attitude had, particularly when it came to Pound's enormous involvement in the careers and work of other poets of the period, is inextricable from America's national literary history. As the figure most obviously associated with surveillance and government intervention due to his controversial political views and infamous anti-American radio broadcasts in Italy during World War II, Pound's enormous FBI file numbers 1,513 pages, second in size only to that of James Baldwin among literary figures of the period.

Despite having a sizable file held in his name, the vast majority of documents compiled by bureau agents on Pound derive from conversations and interviews with other people (some Pound knew; some he had never met at all), since the Bureau was searching for individuals who would identify his voice from recordings of his pro-Mussolini broadcasts.[25] Several scholars have noted how FBI agents conducting interviews in attempts to gather more information about Pound were not actually cognisant of the details of his poetry, actions, or indeed who he even was. The American novelist and political activist Kay Boyle reports the following, for example, of an FBI agent who appeared at her home on 20 February 1943 asking questions about Pound:

> The agent stayed about an hour. Well, at the end of the hour he said to me, "By the way, um, who is Ezra Pound?" I said, "You don't know who he is?" "No," he said. "I have no idea." I said, "Well, he's a poet and he's a great admirer of Mussolini and Hitler, and he's broadcasting for the Axis." (qtd. in Robins 201)

Reports such as this one reveal the extent to which the paranoia Pound himself felt during this period was clearly reflected in, if not exceeded by, the fragmentation,

[25] For a more detailed discussion see Leick, "Madness, Paranoia, and Ezra Pound's FBI File," 105-126.

confusion and incoherence of the agencies that set out to restrain him. Moreover, even when the FBI approached human targets who were unequivocally associated with or knew Pound, the evidence gathered was still remarkably unreliable. Some of Pound's closest friends, like William Carlos Williams, downplayed his offences, while others, such as E.E. Cummings, accentuated his faults, "possibly to create distance between his views and their own" (Leick 106). Even though several of the agents seeking him hardly knew who he was, Pound was nevertheless preoccupied with being surveilled. Psychiatrists thought his obsessive fear of being watched was delusional, yet, as Culleton and Leick rightly point out, "as constant surveillance was a new part of everyday life in the modernist period, Pound's symptoms more than likely reflect and reinforce the culture of paranoia promoted by the FBI" (13). However, despite the blatancy of the FBI's surveillance of Pound and his eventual incarceration in a prison camp in Pisa in 1945 on charges of treason, Pound's surveillance poetics are not so easily traceable; they are frequently paradoxical and consistently elusive. In fact, despite his intense political meddling and subsequent arrest overseas, Pound doesn't ever write explicitly in his verse about the surveillance conducted by Hoover's bureau. Instead, in ways similar to Williams, he employs the lyric (especially Imagistically) to formally mimic the systematic processes of surveillance, particularly when it comes to the observational link between subject and object.

Pound's early Imagist writing constituted the emergence of a new poetry that was at once genuinely modern and distinctively American. This poetry also transformed the way in which American lyric poets framed the relationship between the subjective and objective substance of poetry by establishing new syntax for the lyric in the twentieth century. From close reading of some of Pound's Imagist poems, we can see that he was first and foremost interested in breaking from prior methods of establishing "truth," a concept I have previously highlighted as an overlapping constituent of the lyric and surveillance. By showing how poetry "could be a substantial form of inquiry in its own right," Pound's lyric offers us a crucial site of surveillance poetics (Altieri 11). A key shift in the approach to the lyric which can be attributed to Pound was, to use his own words, an appreciation of the fact that "one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective" (*Selected Prose* 89). Such a development signifies a break from conventional nineteenth-century poetry,

particularly for the speaking "I" of the poem, which cannot be so easily located in Pound's poems as it is in other lyrics.

One such poem in which the observational tension between subject and object is transformed is "Fan-Piece, For Her Imperial Lord," a poem based on the subject matter of a Chinese poem translated by H.A. Giles into ten lines of English iambic pentameter. Pound's poem, less than one-fifth of the lines in Giles' translation, reads:

> O fan of white silk,
> Clear as the frost on the grass-blade,
> You also are laid aside. (*Personae* 111)

The poem is composed, to borrow Longenbach's analogy, "as if by feeding the translation into a computer programmed with Imagist principles" ("Poetic Compression"165). Moreover, even if we did not know that Pound had condensed a previous version of the poem, it does not matter: so long as there is the impression of it having been compressed. The subtle way in which the poem relates its two key images (the fan and the frost on the grass-blade) to each other provokes intense thought and emotion in the reader. This contrast also extends beyond the imagistic (or that of colour) to incorporate a sense of temporality. "The point," notes Milner, "is that the clear frost melts quickly in the morning sun, that beautiful fans are used by imperial princes for only a short time, and that even a woman's beauty will serve as an attraction for only a season" (580). Yet, there is also a very human element folded up inside this binary. The word "also" is carefully chosen so as to conflate the speaker of the poem with the seemingly objective observation at its centre. As Longenbach has observed, the word "also" suggests that "the speaker of the poem shares the fate of the fan, and, more than that, the word acknowledges a more general sense of human ephemerality, a woeful recognition that everyone will one day be laid aside" ("Poetic Compression" 165). More importantly, though, "Fan-Piece" is a poem about the mechanics of human observation. When Pound tells us that the fan is as "clear as the frost on the grass-blade" he makes a very particular point about the lyric's capacity to interrogate the possibilities of looking. Drawing attention to Pound's choice of the expression "grass-blade" over the perhaps obvious choice of "grass-blades," Richard Eugene Smith provides a useful account of the poem's exploration of the processes of observation:

> The human eye is not usually accustomed to observing … minute details. Do we not first visualize a phenomenon in the way in which it is most familiar to us, before we are able to picture it in a manner in which we are not usually accustomed to seeing it? Do we not first see the familiar expanse of grass covered with frost, before we try to imagine what one blade covered with frost looks like? How many people have observed the latter phenomenon closely enough—and frequently enough—to visualise it with much confidence? (525)

This is the aspect of Pound's early poetry that is most interesting in relation to a reading of surveillance: the extent to which his poems enact a theatrical yet scientific treatment of observation that seeks to throw into question the very status of poetry as a medium through which truth (either objective or subjective) can be achieved.

Now consider a quite different use of the image in Pound's early work in the poem "The Bath Tub," where a psychological drama is played out inside the framework of a simile that ends in an outlandish satirical lament by the poem's speaker:

> As a bathtub lined with white porcelain,
> When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
> So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
> O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady. (*Personae* 101)

And finally here is "April," a poem that offers yet another complex intersection of aesthetics and politics:

> Three spirits came to me
> And drew me apart
> To where the olive boughs
> Lay stripped upon the ground:
>
> Pale carnage beneath bright mist. (*Personae* 92-93)

These poems exhort us to regard the primary, central object above and before all else. While "The Bath Tub," with its humorous ending, differs somewhat from the apocalyptic tone established in "April," both poems are nevertheless examples of Pound's attempt to problematise the subject-object formula that had gone before him. The closing line of each poem illustrates how central the notions of object and otherness are to Pound's aesthetic: the lady of "The Bath Tub" is both known to the

speaker but also unreachable, while the potentially tangible image of "carnage" at the end of "April" is rendered abstract through its description as "pale" — an unexpected and incongruous word to associate with wreckage. As Altieri has written of the strangely superimposed "carnage" in this poem, "[i]t becomes impossible to tell where sensation ends and interpretation or intellection begins: everything becomes detail, yet the last line hovers over the poem in a way that almost subsumes the event into an idea of 'pale carnage,' building the slight details into something evoking recurrent devastation" (22).

The subject-object problem that characterises these three poems has a principal question at its centre: what is the relationship between the (observing) subject and the (perceived or observed) object? In addressing this question, Pound (and the modernists who followed his example) treated poetic expression as an ideal based "not on the character of the writer but on the constructive activity giving the object a distinctive play of forces that is impossible to summarize in any discursive practice" (Altieri 5). "The most important psychological feature of this new constructivism," writes Altieri, "is its impersonality, its reliance on the expressive power of the work rather than the expressive power of the artist's meditative presence" (6). In removing from his poetry every trace of a romantic meditative presence, Pound ushered in a new realism that reorganised the classical subject-object problem. With personality gone, however, there still remained the issue of how a modernist poem should treat the object (or objects) at its centre. This was ultimately the question of whether, and to what extent, the subject exerts an influence on the object through the process of perception. Or, to put this question simply: does the subject alter the object in the act of observing it? While Pound was committed, as we are told in his principles for Imagist poetry, to the "direct treatment of the 'thing'", he did not mind if this treatment was "subjective or objective," so long as there was discernable treatment of one kind or another.[26]

Pound achieved this by erecting a barrier between the unreliable speaking person and the intense psychic experience expressed by the poem. This barrier took

[26] Pound offered three practical precepts: "direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective"; the use of "absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation"; and composition "in the sequence of the musical phrase not in the sequence of the metronome." See *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound,* 4.

the form of a mask or persona from behind which the poet was able to speak. The poet, he argued, cannot relate a powerful experience by speaking out directly in first person and must instead "screen himself" and speak indirectly through "an impersonal and objective story," hence the need for personae and masks (Witemeyer 24). As Gray has suggested, the reasons for this return us to the heart of Pound's beliefs insofar as he saw the poem as "an objective verbal equation for an emotional, and basically incommunicable, experience" (*A History of American Poetry 129*). Imagism was one obvious way of arriving at such an equation; the use of persona was another.

Ultimately, the message that many modernist poets took away from all this was the need for a distinction between representation and presentation. Mere representation, it seemed, was far too simple a response to the artistic and political turmoil of the time. Yet while Pound's early Imagist poems can clearly be read as examples of subject and object merging, there is a far more serious message in these works about the difficulty and complexity of observation. For Pound, any form of poetic presentation cannot rely exclusively on the mind's objective observational powers. Thus, what begins as an attempt to counter an outdated nineteenth-century mode of pure representation through the impersonal detachment of Imagism comes full circle and turns out to be a justification for the radical individualism of an observing poet. As these readings show, despite the FBI's substantial observation of Pound and the fact that he rarely wrote poetry that was explicitly about surveillance, he nevertheless used the lyric in a distinctive way to illuminate a culture of secrecy and corruption in twentieth-century America as well as to bring about a radical reformulation of the relationship between observation and subjectivity in poetry. As I noted at the outset of this chapter, the essentially impractical nature of the Bureau's attempts to surveil poetic texts meant that lyric poets were always one step ahead. Williams and Pound serve as clear case studies of the ways in which the lyric is capable of evading detection and yet subversively critiquing surveillance at the same time. In doing this, Imagist poetry often extracts itself from the material and political fabric of everyday life. The next two chapters explore lyric poetry that does the opposite. By engaging closely with the structural, technological and political dimensions of surveillance, the lyric engages with observation, overhearing and subjectivity in other ways.

# PART TWO

## CHAPTER 3:
## SURVEILLANCE POETICS ABROAD

Continent, city, country, society:
the choice is never wide and never free.[27]

ELIZABETH BISHOP

"It occurs to me that I am America, / I am talking to myself again" (*CP* 147). This realisation, partway through Allen Ginsberg's 1956 poem "America," exemplifies in two short lines the centrality of the idea of the self in American thinking and writing. The self depicted in this declaration is, after all, a distant echo of the earlier expansive "I" of Walt Whitman ("I celebrate myself, and sing myself") and the scrutinising, doubting self in Emily Dickinson ("I'm Nobody! / Who are you?") (25; 206). More broadly, the self in American poetry is one that is largely solitary and yet implicated in local, national and global culture. Part I has involved a discussion of the broad dimensions of surveillance poetics and the particular reading practices conducted by surveillance agents in the twentieth century. In this chapter I now look away from America and across the seas in order to answer the question of what is behind the desire to put the self at the centre of American lyric verse during the mid-twentieth century.

To address this essential question in the framework of a surveillance poetics abroad is to address several other literary and theoretical concerns at the same time. First, an analysis of poetry written by Americans who travelled abroad from the 1920s to the 1960s, either to escape the prying eyes of Bureau surveillance or in self-imposed political exile, ushers in a reconsideration of the role of the speaker in American lyric poems about surveillance. In this reformulation, it becomes clear that the position of the speaker, the *voice* of the poem, is both deeply American but also peculiarly

[27] "Questions of Travel," *Selected Poems*, 73.

withdrawn. The lyric speaker in this poetry is also often intensely caught up in questions about citizenship and American national identity. Within this international structure of poetics, the identity of the "I" is located not just by the metaphorical "eye" of the poem, but also by what that eye sees: the structures of surveillance within America are finally seen from the outside. Second, a surveillance poetics abroad provides a framework within which to consider poets and poems that stress the (often fraught) particulars of American nationalism and the ways in which twentieth-century American surveillance functioned to regulate and control a sense of what was and what was not considered authentically American. Poems that address this political context frequently draw attention to the constructed nature of America and its anxieties about being a cultural artefact. The twentieth-century philosopher Ernest Gellner puts this matter succinctly when he writes that: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist" (165). Thus the status of the American poet in the twentieth century comes under significant literary and ideological pressure as the transnational forces of modernism take hold. "To call a poet American," writes Richard Gray, "is not to say that he or she is either the same or has precisely the same origins, aims or interests as any other poet who is called American" (17). The term "American," therefore, "allows for multiple significations; it is fluid, a distillation of a complex crossing of discrete historical forces" (Gray 17).

While the "discrete historical forces" that produced twentieth-century American lyric poetry are a central concern throughout this study, my primary focus in this chapter is on the impact that travel to and from America, political exile overseas and surveillance by the Bureau whilst abroad had on the lyric subjectivity constructed in and by American poems. Indeed, the very fact that the FBI surveilled a number of American poets, even after they left for overseas, is significant in terms of characterising the power and scope of US surveillance structures, structures that had tangible consequences for identity politics, privacy and national consciousness. The chapter begins with an outline of American literary nationalism in the context of internationalist modernism in the early decades of the twentieth century. The analysis conducted here poses questions about the very concept of "Americanness" during the period and the perhaps more pressing question of what, specifically, characterises the modern American lyric. Following this is an analysis of the broader ideological

anxieties that were responsible for the global expansion of this surveillance regime, including America's obsession with not only the "enemy within" but also the "other" against whom American citizens were told they required protection. Important here, too, are questions regarding the extent to which the transcontinental spread of modernism shaped surveillance culture within the United States. A key consideration is whether or not American modernism facilitated what would later become a form of counter-surveillance, in which citizens with no previous direct contact with non-American intellectuals, ideas and writing swiftly adopted an anti-establishment modernist outlook. The focus then moves to the surveillance of poets who sought to escape from American authorities by travelling overseas, in particular Langston Hughes and James Baldwin, who were surveilled within America for racial and political reasons and then surveilled while abroad. The discussion of these poets and others like them considers the effects of a subversive poetics written from abroad, in which poets employ the lyric to turn the gaze back on America from a vantage point of being outside the immediate regime of looking. The discussion then considers W.H. Auden in the context of American nationalism and surveillance culture. Here the focus is on what constitutes the specific "Americanness" of lyric subjectivity in the period under examination. As a central figure of the period who moved from England to America, Auden offers us an important case study in the doubleness of the gaze and the relationship between modernism, poetry, nationalism and observation. Auden's poetics are particularly interesting when contrasted with Eliot's, for instance, whose rejection of America in favour of Europe—an inverted version of Auden's transnational relocation—results in an oeuvre less preoccupied with subversion, spying and paranoia than Auden's.

These demarcations aside, it is important to note that, despite their travels to and from the American mainland, their status as expatriates, or their ideological or financially-motivated insistence on remaining in the United States, almost all American literary modernists demonstrate a preoccupation with the concept of American national identity. American modernists who stayed mostly in America—William Carlos Williams, William Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Hart Crane, John Dos Passos, Marianne Moore—were greatly interested in classifying and exploring the idea of an American national identity and the distinctions between regional identities within the United States. Similarly, expatriate writers such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot,

Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and H.D. shared a preoccupation with exploring American identity, even while busy with literary pursuits overseas.

This chapter argues, above all else, that for American lyric poetry of the twentieth century, self and other, American and foreigner, domestic and international are key counterparts in the formation of a restructured mode of lyric address. These binaries, caught up in the politics of subjectivity and identity, inform the very paradoxes from which a poetics of twentieth-century surveillance emerges. This seemingly contradictory approach to poetic subjectivity is, in part, a consequence of a contradictory approach to the very concept of Americanness itself. As Gray has written in his quest to define "the American poem," "the American poet embrace[s] the idea of being a part of America by being apart from it; he, or she, identifie[s] themselves as a member of the poetic community by insisting on their uniqueness, their difference; they honor the aesthetic project they share with other American poets in and through a declaration of independence" (27). Thus, as much as modernism was an aesthetic project, it was also an undeniably political one, in which lyric poets were able to manipulate the structural, or technological, organisation of the lyric in order to make a statement about the pervasive surveillance culture in which the modern American poem existed.

## Seeing Over Seas: American Literary Nationalism, Modernism and Surveillance

It is a poetry that could have been written only in this country and in this age.[28]

ALLEN TATE

Foreseeing an American renaissance, Ezra Pound wrote in 1913, "there is more artistic impulse in America than in any country in Europe" (*Selected Prose* 112). The observation is from *Patria Mia*, Pound's manifesto about the future of American arts

[28] Crane, *The Letters of Hart Crane*, 87.

and letters, which appeared in instalments in *The New Age* after his return to England in 1912 and was eventually published in its entirety in 1950. From his vantage point as an American expatriate living in London, Pound was uniquely positioned to express frustration with what he saw as the underdeveloped artistic potential of the American people. He captures the promising future of American art with even greater intensity in an earlier excerpt in *The New Age*:

> I see … a sign in the surging crowd on Seventh Avenue (New York). A crowd pagan as ever imperial Rome was, eager, careless, with an animal vigor unlike that of any European crowd that I have ever looked at. There is none of the melancholy, the sullenness, the unhealth of the London mass, none of the worn vivacity of Paris. I do not believe it is the temper of Vienna. (*Patria Mia* 26-27)

Pound describes a scene in which America, young and inexperienced, bursts forth towards an artistic and intellectual awakening. In this scene, the apparent newness of America ("none of the melancholy, the sullenness, the unhealth") becomes one of its most appealing features. For this reason above all others, the "worn vivacity" with which Pound paints Paris can be seen as a warning to the new America about the dangers of clinging too firmly to a European past. This vision of a genuine, original, and "nationally representative artistic expression" dominated American cultural commentary in the years stretching from 1900 up until the World War II, a preoccupation for critics, historians and others just as much as it was for Pound (Alexander xii).

Indeed, the "animal vigour" with which Pound associates the Seventh Avenue throng stands in for a vast number of characterisations of American culture that had been built up by the writers of the preceding decade. Such triumphalism was invoked in the poetry of Joaquin Miller, for example, whose 1897 poem "Westward Ho!" opens with the jubilantly nationalistic lines, "What strength! what strife! what rude unrest! / What shocks! what half-shaped armies met! / A mighty nation moving west, / With all its steely sinews set" (187-188). Or, American poet Richard Hovey's remark in an interview for the *Boston Sunday Herald* in 1898: "English poetry compares with American as the song of a caged bird with that of a free one" (qtd. in Dennis 95). In his assessment of the curious parallels between the careers and the poetic trajectories of Pound and Hovey, Leon Surette notes that they belonged to the same

"interpretive community" (93). According to Surette, "Pound's youth – like Hovey's – was imbued with the American correlate of the Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism and Symbolisme that informed contemporary European literatures" (93). He goes on to observe that "not much had changed in the eighteen years between 1889 and 1907. The modernist revolution in poetry … was still around the corner" (93). While the comparison between Pound and Hovey is certainly enlightening (Hovey, like Pound, was interested in producing the "American Epic" and is one of several poets who attempted to write a sequel to Byron's *Don Juan*), Surette's "interpretive community" (recalling Stanley Fish) is far more useful here. The intellectual and cultural community in America before World War I saw not only a radical shift in the institutions of canonisation but also the formation of a new brand of literary nationalism within the context of what Mark Morrison has accurately described as the "stridently international aesthetic revolution of modernism" (14).

Well before World War I's catalytic effect in intensifying America's surveillance culture and federalising the Bureau of Investigation, the interrogative power of the lyric poem to explore the meaning of American national identity had already put it in the Bureau's spotlight. Pound's well-known poem "A Pact," first published in the April 1913 issue of *Poetry*, registers this effect powerfully. The tension surrounding the necessity to produce identifiably American works is expressed through the metaphor of a woodcarving in which Pound and his father-poet Whitman produce the American lyric out of "one sap" and "one root." The short poem reads:

> I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman –
> I have detested you long enough.
> I come to you as a grown child
> Who has had a pig-headed father;
> I am old enough now to make friends.
> It was you that broke the new wood,
> Now is a time for carving.
> We have one sap and one root –
> Let there be commerce between us. (*Personae* 90)

A poem that in nine short lines encapsulates Bloom's thesis of the "anxiety of influence," "A Pact" considers the pressure felt by the modernists to create a distinctively modern American voice in the wake of Whitman's achievement of

ostensible universality. In suggesting that Whitman "broke the new wood" prior to the "time for carving," however, Pound shows that his own project ultimately differs from Whitman's. Whereas Whitman, the "pig-headed father," democratises pronouns in order to make room for the entirety of the American psyche in his "I" and "you," Pound, as a poet of both home and abroad, fascism and anti-Americanism, cannot conceive of poetry that is not implicated in a transnational agenda. The literalising of this literary project is most explicit in his well-known 1909 essay "What I Feel About Walt Whitman," in which he writes:

> From this side of the Atlantic I am for the first time able to read Whitman, and from the vantage of my education—if it be permitted a man of my scant years—my world citizenship: I see him as America's poet. The only Poet before the artists of the Carmen-Hovey [sic] period, or better, the only one of the conventionally recognized "American Poets" who is worth reading. He is America. His crudity is an exceeding great stench, but it is America. He is the hollow place in the rock that echoes with his time. He does "chant the crucial stage" and he is the "voice triumphant." He is disgusting. He is an exceedingly nauseating pill, but he accomplishes his mission. (qtd. in Bergman 59)

"World citizenship," for Pound, is a new and necessary framework within which to truly read America's national poet. Furthermore, for Pound, in ways similar to many of the American modernists, a new poetic correlative to the modern American political project cannot exist without first opening its eyes to Europe. The great paradox here is one that can be simply summarised in one line: Pound's famous intoxicating battle cry "Make it new." Thus while Whitman's influence on modern American poetry necessitates that the American poet look back to Whitman, the modern American poem does not strive to look like a Whitman poem. The American tradition of newness is, then, a tradition about the flexibility afforded to the American poet. Or, as Gray has put it: "Announcing his intention of talking with and talking back to his illustrious poetic predecessor, Pound also insists on his right not to talk like him" (23).

Pound's refusal to measure up to the standard of the universalising lyric—(Whitman's concept of the poet as less a man and more a national technology)—was the starting point for a revolt against a form of unified, inward-looking nationalism. Moreover, it is precisely Whitman's universalism, his multitudinousness, which made it possible for poets like Pound to embrace and reject him at the same time.

Importantly, however, the Whitman project has never been fully realised in history. As Ben Lerner has correctly observed in a recent work *The Hatred of Poetry* (2016), "Whitman comes to stand for the contradictions of a democratic personhood that cannot become actual without becoming exclusive" (49). Any goal for the completion of the American experiment commenced by Whitman is one that hopes to reconcile the private with the public or the individual with the social.

At the turn of the century, then, there was a proliferation of competing models that attempted to define American national culture and the kinds of quintessentially American poems that could be expected to emerge out of it. Moreover, in both practice and rhetoric, resolving the question of what constituted the Americanness of modernism in poetry and literature more broadly was a task fraught with contradiction. On the one hand, the formal influence of Whitman had numerous poets conducting their own, particular experiments in language, rhythm and syntax. Such an effect can be seen in Marianne Moore who, in stating, "We must have the courage of our peculiarities," makes a claim for eccentricity and craftsmanship as a measure of poetic accomplishment (398). On the other hand, William Carlos Williams called for a nativist approach that would ground American modernism in the local conditions of the nation's environment. This approach, concerned with the particular and the local over the European or universal, and stressing allegiance with those who stayed in America instead of venturing abroad, is exemplified in Williams's reflection in his autobiography on the apparent threat to American writing posed by Eliot's *The Waste Land* when it first appeared:

> These were the years [that is, the years leading up to 1922] just before the great catastrophe to our letters – the appearance of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There was a heat in us, a core and a drive that was gathering headway upon the theme of a rediscovery of a primary impetus, the elementary principle of all art, in the local condition. Our work staggered to a halt for a moment under the blast of Eliot's genius, which gave the poem back to academics. We did not know how to answer him … I felt that we were on the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself – rooted in the locality which should give it fruit. (146)

The seemingly destructive force that Williams calls the "blast of Eliot's genius" is effectively an alternative description for the paranoia-inducing blast of the European influence on America. Put simply, Williams's point might be that the conflict, both

literary and cultural, at the heart of American modernism was between the creation of a new form of poetic expression and the maintenance of American independence. This conflict can be seen as the tension between inherited artistic tradition and the unstoppable changes enacted by modernist thinking. Another indication of the socio-political anxiety aroused by the modernist lyric's engagement with non-American culture can be seen in Williams's comment that, "I had to watch [Eliot] carry off my world with him, to the fool, to the enemy. If with his skill he could have been kept here to be employed by our slowly shaping drive, what strides might we not have taken!" (*Autobiography* 174). Here, Williams's complaint turns to questions of poetic technique as well as expatriation. While Eliot's betrayal of his American origins, both in his writing and by means of his literal change of citizenship, has him "turn[ing] his back" on the modernism envisioned by Williams, it is the transportation of the poet's "accomplished craftsman[ship]" across the seas to Europe, "to the enemy," that seems to vex Williams the most (*Autobiography* 174). Behind Williams's allegation of defection is not just a general sense of American isolationism but also the suggestion that there is and must be a distinctively American way of speaking and that the specifically American vernacular must remain at home. To be sure, Eliot had a Euro-centred view of almost everything, but even still Williams seems to suggest that his assimilation of British English into the American poem has wiped out the authentic Whitmanesque American poetic tradition: "an atom bomb had been dropped upon it" (*Autobiography* 174).

Ultimately, what has become known as American modernism is founded in the contestation over the attempt to define an American cultural identity in the early decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, to borrow a useful metaphor from Celena Kusch's essay on the apparent threat to US modernism posed by Hilda Doolittle's use of Greek mythology in her verse, "anxiety over US cultural integrity remains in the concern that America's clanging cymbals may be more often iron than gold" (54). The modernist attempt to categorise the American poem, among other national concerns, remains "complicated by the persistent view of American culture as underdeveloped, despite its increasing globalization" (Kusch 54). Or, to borrow another expression from Carlos Williams: "To Americans the effort to appraise the real through the maze of a cut-off and imposed culture from Europe has been a vivid task, if very often too great for their realizations" (*Selected Essays* 143). Given these

tensions, it is no surprise that the literary-critical conversation of the first few decades of the twentieth century in America was consumed by essential (and often obsessive) definitional problems: What does an American poem look like? What do Americans need to do to get considered as poets? Does American poetry even exist? What do the Europeans think of it? Can American poetry be written in Europe? This final question, a concern bound up not just with ideology but also geography, strikes to the core of the political and social ramifications of modernism for America as well as for the core of surveillance poetics abroad. Above all, the question is: What generated disquiet about the status of American poetry in the early to middle decades of the twentieth century? There is, in the end, no simple way of eschewing the tensions within American nationalism: the international American modernists and, by turns, expatriates who attempted to cross international borders (both ideologically and literally) were only ever made more intensely aware of the national culture from which they were attempting to escape.

In highlighting the FBI's hostility to black protest and African American literature from roughly 1919 through until the early 1970s, Maxwell considers the political and governmental side to the American modernism I have just been commenting on. Asking, "What, beyond a flag and a prayer, binds the nation-state together? When its boundaries are broken, just what is escaped?" he implies that the question of what it means to have escaped America in the twentieth century is also a question about what America was trying to keep out (180). The concept of isolationism is of course central to theorising America's place in the world order in the middle decades of the twentieth century, but it is also necessary in order to explain the nation's desire to keep itself safe from infiltration by foreign objects and ideas. This intense desire was, for United States government agencies, bureau agents, politicians and officials, continually conceived in pragmatic terms even though the very rhetoric that it relied upon was almost always hyperbolic.

The ideological impulses of American isolationism and resistance to Communist infiltration are also reflected in the immigration patterns of the United States in the twentieth century. In her discussion of the significance of the "gatekeeper" metaphor for American politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Erika Lee argues that so persuasive were Americans in calling on the federal government to "close the door" on Asian and, later, European and Mexican

immigrants, that by the end of the twentieth century the gatekeeping metaphor "had become embedded in academic and public discourses on immigration, reflecting a renewed restrictionist mood" (119). The most intensified period of ideological gatekeeping and immigration control in American history maps directly onto the four decades that sit at the centre of this study. Summarising data from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (USINS), Lee notes how scholars have traditionally divided twentieth-century American immigration into three main periods: "the period of 'open immigration' from the 1880s to the 1920s, when over 22 million immigrants arrived on America's shores; the period of restriction from the 1920s to the 1960s; and the period of liberalisation in the post-1965 era, during which time 27 million immigrants entered the country" (119).

Although this national narrative, both implicitly and explicitly, informs the strategy behind the American Cold War, the ideological basis for isolationist rhetoric dates back much further than the official end of World War II, when the Cold War began in earnest. A significant indicator of the earlier burgeoning of US containment ideology was the creation of The House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) as early as 1938, designed to investigate subversive activities and assumed disloyalty on the part of private citizens, public employees and any organisation suspected of having Communist connections. By 2 December 1954 the US Senate had voted 65 to 22 to condemn McCarthy for conduct "contrary to senatorial traditions," but not before Edwin Rolfe, the once poet laureate of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, released his scathing anti-witch-hunt poem "Little Ballad for Americans – 1954" ("Transcript of Senate Resolution 301"). In this poem, structured through references to the various citizens who comprise America, Rolfe highlights the difference between "the idealized image of America and its reality during the inquisition" (311). The poem reads:

> Brother, brother, best avoid your workmate –
> Words planted in affection can spout a field of hate.
>
> Housewife, housewife, never trust your neighbor –
> A chance remark may boomerang to five years at hard labor.
>
> Student, student, keep mouth shut and brain spry –
> Your best friend Dick Merriwell's employed by the F.B.I.

Lady, lady, make your phone calls frugal –
The chief of all Inquisitors has ruled the wire-tap legal.

Daughter, daughter, learn soon your heart to harden –
They've planted stoolies[29] everywhere; why not in kindergarten?

Lovers, lovers, be careful when you're wed –
The wire-tap grows in living-room, in auto, and in bed.

Give full allegiance only to circuses and bread;
No person's really trustworthy until he's dead. (260)

The jaunty rhythms of Rolfe's poem, along with its formal rhyme scheme and wide-ranging character references, are deployed towards a subversion of the traditional expectations placed upon poetics of political protest during the 1950s. Writing at a time when the poetic formalism of New Criticism was still being employed to neutralise socially committed lyric verse, "Little Ballad for Americans – 1954" appropriates formalist conventions in order to capture, with disconcerting clarity, the paranoia of the Red Scare. Moreover, as Walter Kalaidjian has astutely written, "in … savvy formalist measures, Rolfe masterfully marks the break between the passionate thirties and the paralyzed fifties: between the organicism of international socialist commitment and the paranoia of state surveillance" (67). Not only does Rolfe's poem emphasise the domestic terrors enacted by McCarthyism ("Housewife, housewife, never trust your neighbor") it also engages an apocalyptic tone that pushed the logic of surveillance to its ultimate conclusion: "No person's really trustworthy until he's dead." Such a line would have had particular personal significance for Rolfe who, lying in bed only weeks from his own death, worked on this poem while an FBI car was parked outside his house, keeping him and his wife Mary under close surveillance.[30]

Yet while the highly constrained circumstances under which Rolfe lived the final years of his life exemplify the effects of House of UnAmerican Activities blacklisting and the damaging consequences of the left-wing fight against McCarthyism, he nevertheless was responsible for one of the largest and most influential bodies of anti-McCarthy poems of any American poet, many of which

[29] Slang for a person employed or acting as a decoy or informer, especially for the police.
[30] See Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory,* 136.

were written during a time when, as American veteran of the Spanish Civil War Milton Wolff told Rolfe, "strange characters call at night, and wage a war of nerves" (Carroll 289). As a member of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, a unit that fought for the left-wing Popular Front during the Spanish Civil War, Rolfe travelled to Spain in 1937, arriving back in the United States in January 1939. It was during this period, and extending throughout most of World War II, that the FBI placed many Lincoln members on a list of "individuals deemed most dangerous" to the national security, all of whom could be arrested in the event of a national emergency (qtd. in Carroll 289). In *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (*1994), a comprehensive account of the Lincoln Battalion members' time in Spain and their experiences upon returning to the United States, Peter Carroll relates the problems of surviving volunteers such as Rolfe. He contends that "as the anti-Communist campaign intensified, so did the FBI's scrutiny of the VALB leadership" (289). So direct was this scrutiny, writes Carroll, that "sometimes federal investigators sought specific information: they approached veterans in the streets, at their homes, or in their places of employment. Often, however, the FBI simply endeavored to intimidate radicals, harassing them with late-night visits and telephone calls" (289).

Rolfe's unreserved effort at poetically subverting bureau surveillance can be gathered from the titles of a number of his other poems, all of which sought to satirise the paranoid rhetorical formulations of the McCarthy era. Poems such as "Letter," "Are You Now or Have You Ever Been," and "Letter to the Denouncers" all have at their centre a critique of what Kalaidjian has described as the "Cold War cultural logic that placed communal ethics and social commitment at odds with domestic conformity, self-reliance, possessive individualism, and traditional, family values" (64). In stressing the prolificacy of Rolfe's politically subversive modernist experiments in lyric poetry, alongside his closely surveilled travel to and from America during this period, my aim is to foreground him as just one example among the great number of modern American poets whose displacement overseas may be read as not simply a surveillance poetics abroad but also a mode of counter-surveillance.

Implicit in the poetry of Rolfe, Langston Hughes, W.H. Auden, Ezra Pound, and others who travelled abroad while under the vigilant gaze of the 'FB eyes' is a form of poetic manoeuvrability that works by inverting the observation regime instigated by the surveiller. In "A Tack in the Shoe: Neutralizing and Resisting the

New Surveillance" (2003), Gary Marx writes that "surveillance targets often have space to maneuver and can use counter-technologies" (372). Marx goes on to list and analyse a number of these methods, distinguishing between moves that subjects can and do use to destabilise or counteract surveillance, "all of which entail some subverting of visibility" (85). Although such modes of surveillance are bound up with particular contemporary privacy-invading information technologies, such as those generated via the Internet or, more recently, wearable technologies, Marx's theorisation of the relations between targets and surveillance systems, and the subsequent shifts and changes between the visible and the invisible, nevertheless provides a useful set of concepts alongside which to consider the complex relationship between twentieth-century American surveillance structures and the poets enmeshed in those structures, even after they escaped across the seas. Following a description of ten prominent types of response to surveillance, such as "discovery moves," "avoidance moves" and "blocking moves," Marx moves to discuss what he calls a final "different order" maneuver in the form of "counter-surveillance moves." For Marx, "counter surveillance" involves "turning the tables and surveilling those who are doing the surveillance" ("A Tack" 374). He goes on:

> Knowing that targets of surveillance may respond in kind … can be a factor limiting or inhibiting the initial use of surveillance. The extent to which there has been a "democratization of surveillance" is an important topic … If counter-measures uncover questionable practices, which are then publicized, it also may lead to their moderation or cessation … The results of counter-surveillance, if incriminating, may be used to compromise those doing the initial surveillance. Those controlling surveillance systems may be seduced, blackmailed or otherwise coerced into cooperation in return for the silence of those they originally watched. ("A Tack" 384)

Here, the "tack in the shoe" has the potential to advance the interests of those being surveilled, even though participation in the surveillance network by surveilled subjects has the possibility of further increasing the extent to which he or she is already under scrutiny. By all accounts this is how counter-surveillance worked out for many of the American poets under the gaze of Hoover's bureau, the G-men who were responsible for such targeted and unpredictable attacks on the American populace as the arrest without warrant of some ten thousand "'subversives' nationwide in one simultaneous action" or such broad and pervasive work as the ardent gathering of "general"

information about any writer deemed suspicious by Hoover (Culleton 19; 25). Nevertheless, Marx's conceptualisation of counter-surveillance is useful for considering the ways in which subversive counter-attacks through lyric verse have an effect on the shades of visibility within the broader surveillance framework. As Marx contends, "the strategic actions of both watchers and the watched can be thought of as moves in a game, although unlike traditional games, the rules may not be equally binding on all players" ("A Tack" 374). It follows then that visibility, as central as it is to surveillance studies, can also be illusory.

## Escaping the FB Eyes: Langston Hughes and James Baldwin

> I was not one of the radicals abroad, important to the Soviet government;
> and I was not a member of the Communist Party. All I had was
> the dominant urge to go, and that discovered the way.[31]
>
> CLAUDE MCKAY

"The problem of the Twentieth Century," W.E.B. Du Bois famously wrote on the launch of his groundbreaking treatise *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), "is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (3). Presciently, Du Bois's remark encapsulates the centrality of questions of racial justice to the domestic arena of the United States in the twentieth century. Du Bois's need to show his reader the particularly "strange meaning of being black … in the dawning of the Twentieth Century" was shared by all black American poets in their search for their own reformulated "Song of Myself" (3). Unlike the vast array of other songs in the modern American poetic canon, the assertion of identity through lyric by the African-American poet achieves a greater intensity. The primary reason for this is that the use of poetry as an agent not only for self-discovery but also social change is, in the case of African-American lyric poets, a use geared towards overcoming exploitation. One

[31] *A Long Way from Home*, 121.

explanation for this, argues Richard Gray, is that "the problems confronting every American poet have been exacerbated in the case of black poets" (217-218). Gray goes on to write that "like other American poets, the black poet has been caught between his private self and his public role, isolation and community; the crucial difference is that, in his case, the sense of himself is that much more indefinite, the roles attributed to him are that much more fixed and restrictive, and the language available to him is often peculiarly 'foreign' – that is, the product of an exceptionally alien literary tradition" (218). The cultural and political bifurcations suggested here are of course those which Du Bois termed "double consciousness" ("two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body") (8). Yet they are also binaries that are implicated in an American national political project, one with important literary roots for African American poets. Missouri-born Langston Hughes (1902-1967), one of the most recognisable names in African American poetry, speaks directly to this project in the opening line to one of his finest and most well-known poems, "I, Too," in which he writes "I, too, sing America." The poem continues:

> I am the darker brother.
> They send me to eat in the kitchen
> When company comes,
> But I laugh,
> And eat well,
> And grow strong.
>
> Tomorrow,
> I'll be at the table
> When company comes.
> Nobody'll dare
> Say to me,
> "Eat in the kitchen,"
> Then.
>
> Besides,
> They'll see how beautiful I am
> And be ashamed–
>
> I, too, am America. (*CP* 46)

The peculiar power of this poem results largely from Hughes's treatment of two separate though not unrelated themes. On one level, the lyric is clearly about

segregation and dispossession. "They send me to eat in the kitchen," reveals the banished "darker brother" who, despite being excluded, "eat[s] well" and "grow[s] strong." Although the speaker foregrounds himself as an I-subject, he moves beyond a collective consciousness. Rather than striving like Whitman towards a universalising consciousness within the I-subject, Hughes employs the "I" in this poem to speak on behalf of oppressed or marginalised identities. The kind of poetics enacted here could be said to have already existed in Whitman's attempt to speak for marginalised voices as we see in the illuminating lines of "Song of Myself" in which he writes:

> Through me many long dumb voices,
> Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
> Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
> Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion, (87)

Yet while these lines speak of the multitude they are ultimately an attempt to provide a single voice that speaks for all: a celebration of diversity through the individual. Certainly, Hughes was inspired by and admired Whitman. A supporter of Whitman's politics as well as his poetry, Hughes once referred to him as "one of the greatest 'I' poets of all time," where the "I" is a "cosmic 'I' of all the people who seek freedom, decency, and dignity, friendship and equality between individuals and races all over the world" ("Whitman Celebrates All Americans" 198). As Michael Shapiro has argued, however, the difference between Whitman's and Hughes's respective "I's" is that "Hughes's poetry, although Whitman-inspired, has a singularity owed to the African American blues aesthetic" (203). Hughes, therefore, develops a different political impetus from Whitman's social commitment to multiplicity. In this sense, the blues genre comprises "both an epistemic and political reaction to the racist oppression of the 'plantation bloc,' which is to be understood as not only an economic system but also a hegemonic mode of social interpretation" (Shapiro 203). Philip Fisher's insight in "Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency" (1988) is also useful in discriminating between Whitman's and Hughes's projects. Whitman's "aesthetics," according to Fisher, "imposes the requirement that the common be expanded until it fills out the real" (67). In contrast, Hughes's poetics swerve towards the separating out from nationalism of a distinctive identity of the black American.

This emphasis on the black poet as a voice that has both a private self and a public role informs the second theme in "I, Too": the poet as a representative of his culture, a protest poet. This is the aspect of African-American poetry that is most recent and most explicitly invokes a poetics of surveillance. Hughes tops the list of black American writers who were surveilled and harassed by the FBI in the first half of the twentieth century. Hoover's G-Men, who referred frequently to Hughes as a "Negro pornographer poet," created his file in 1925 by noting his membership in the All America Anti-Imperialist League. Five years later they branded the Nation Negro Congress of which he became president "an official Communist subsidiary" (Newton 157). Having charges of Soviet espionage levelled against him in the 1930s and later summoned before McCarthy's subcommittee (the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation), Hughes found himself the focus of intense American government surveillance for over forty years, especially when overseas. In a chapter entitled "Spies and Spiders" from his 1956 memoir *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hughes recounts his feelings about the experience of being surveilled while travelling through Japan in the 1930s. He writes, "I, a colored man, had lately been all around the world, but only in Japan, a colored country, had I been subjected to police interrogation and told to go home and not return again. The word 'Fascist' was just coming into general usage then. When I got to Honolulu, I said in a newspaper interview that in my opinion Japan was a Fascist country" (277). Two decades later, the extensive reach of American surveillance networks made clear to Hughes the extent to which his harassment while in Japan before World War II was actually precipitated by a ruinous combination of anti-communist fervour and racial discrimination back in the United States.

In his meticulously researched account of the particulars of Hughes's travels that were omitted from *I Wonder*, Etsuko Taketani details a pivotal event in the larger dragnet that facilitated the US-led surveillance of citizens while abroad. Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Taketani notes, "J. Edgar Hoover was informed that during the visit of Hughes to Japan, [Hughes] talked of 'the alleged ill-treatment of the negroes' and predicted that 'there would one day come a war in which all the colored races, black, yellow, and red, would join in the subjugation of the whites'" (123). The account continues:

> The (female) informant who reported on the speech (who may or may not have been the wife of the American consular official – her name was

> blacked out in the released FBI file) claimed to have heard Hughes say that "there was a natural bond between these colored races and that their opposition to the white race should be expressed in combat." Obviously, she attributed to Hughes these statements that she thought he would have made. She concluded, as quoted in a 1942 report, that "possibly HUGHES is presently engaged in subversive activities" in the United States. (qtd. in Taketani 123)

Hughes spent a year in the Soviet Union before arriving in East Asia in 1933; yet the restriction of his travels in Asia by anti-Soviet Japanese police was not due to his time spent in the Soviet Union alone. Hughes's travel in Asia was, from the very beginning, delimited by Japanese police services. Taketani notes that, almost as soon as he crossed the Soviet border into Japanese-ruled Korea, "Hughes found himself trailed by Japanese agents, 'always a dozen or so yards behind,' everywhere he went. Soon after he arrived in port in Japan proper, the police visited to inspect his papers, asking 'why [he] had been in Russia, how long, and for what good reason'" (121). Hughes was enthusiastic about the Soviet Union, yet there is no evidence to suggest that he ever joined or indeed considered joining the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the FBI file-keepers pursued him from that point onwards, building a 559-page dossier and maintaining scrutiny of him into World War II (Newton 157). Claire Culleton suggests the extent to which the FBI's surveillance of the poet likely influenced his work. Culleton remarks of Hughes's FBI file: "[It] is one of the largest I have received in the course of my many requests on modern writers, and Hoover's resolve to discredit the poet has seemed the most insistent. His unrelenting efforts worked to limit quite seriously Hughes's opportunities to publish his work and to make public appearances, thereby preventing him and 'people like him' from practicing their livelihoods, or, more dangerous, 'sharpening their craft'" (103). The magnitude of the Bureau practices directed at Hughes was in fact so great that Hoover even sought to instruct new agents on what to put into Hughes's file and, as Culleton also observes, "how to write up their reports to best criminalize him" (101).

Whether it was Hughes's sharpening of his craft or his reflections on the racial politics of early twentieth-century America that intimidated Bureau agents the most, his poetics is also largely implicated in a divorcing of American identity and black American identity, a philosophy that guided his belief that creative individualism should be the principal guiding value for the black poet. This idea is made most

explicit in Hughes's 1926 essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,"[32] in which he writes that "the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America" is the "urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible" (32). "To my mind," Hughes maintained:

> It is the duty of the younger Negro artist, if he accepts any duties at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering "I want to be white," hidden in the aspirations of his people, to "Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro – and beautiful!" So I am ashamed for the black poet who says, "I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet," as though his own racial world were not as interesting as any other world … An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he must choose. (35)

These powerful sentiments reverberate throughout most of Hughes's poetry, which works to shake off the shackles of oppressive white culture and free black lyric verse from what he called "a world of subway trains and work, work, work." Both his commentary and his verse, in this sense, offer up a "revolt against weariness in a white world" ("The Negro Artist" 35). Hughes is, above all, a dramatic, socially committed poet whose lyrics are devoted to celebrating the spirit and power of African-American traditions. Combined with his intercontinental travel, however, Hughes's aspirational radicalism engendered in the FBI an equally radical approach to transnational policing. The FBI file on Hughes repeatedly quotes his claim that "Negros are growing in international consciousness," an observation that was uplifting for Hughes, but in the minds of G-Men it constituted a direct threat to their attempted immobilisation of black modernist literature (qtd. in Maxwell 20).

It was during the years he spent trapped in this anxious climate that Hughes wrote his 1940 "Ballad of the Landlord," a poem structured like an old-style blues song that links domestic affliction with national politics. A poem about police surveillance, brutality and discrimination, "Ballad of the Landlord" also grew out of Hughes's experience in New York City's Harlem in the 1930s. With its incantatory rhythm and language ("Landlord, landlord, / My roof has sprung a leak. / Don't you 'member I told you about it / Way last week?"), the poem mimics the rhythms of

[32] Originally published in *The Nation* on 23 June 1926.

everyday speech, heightening the intensity of the interaction between its various speakers. However, the tone of “Ballad of the Landlord” is also dark and menacing insofar as its critique of government surveillance transforms the private abode into a symbol not just of national containment but also of racial oppression. Like many of the American lyric poets I have already explored, Hughes habitually uses the symbol of the home to dramatise connections between the national and the domestic. In the poem, private concerns become the broader concerns of the African-American public. The dramatic final two stanzas read:

> Police! Police!
> Come and get this man!
> He’s trying to ruin the government
> And overturn the land!
>
> Copper’s whistle!
> Patrol bell!
> Arrest.
> Precinct Station.
> Iron cell.
> Headlines in press:
> MAN THREATENS LANDLORD
> TENANT HELD NO BAIL
> JUDGE GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTY JAIL! (*CP* 402)

As these lines indicate, the racism faced by the poem’s speaker is bound up with the assumed communist threat, and therefore legitimised in the eyes of the police. The landlord need only infer the tenant’s connection to communism (“He’s trying to ruin the government / And overturn the land!”) for the judge to jail him for ninety days. As Cary Nelson has astutely written, the allusions in the poem both “provide an undertone of lamentation for the lost alliances of the left” and at the same time suggest that “McCarthyism renews earlier oppressions based on race and class” (135). So while the landlord-tenant conflict in this narrative truthfully depicts a particular and recurrent feature of the lives of justly aggrieved African-American citizens, the dramatisation of these everyday frustrations through lyric poems such as “Ballad of the Landlord” transfigures the singular into the national. Or, as Hughes himself comments of this process: “The major aims of my work have been to interpret and comment upon Negro life, and its relations to the problem of democracy” (“Some Practical Observations” 307).

As these poems reveal, in the domestic arena of the United States in the twentieth century, intersections of race and democracy almost always involved the apparent political imperative of combating communism. Mary Dudziak connects these threads in her study *Cold War Civil Rights* (2000) where she contends that from the late 1940s through to the 1960s, US administrators were preoccupied with the "Negro problem" and that "race discrimination, in particular, was America's 'Achilles heel'" (29). Of all the African American poets of the twentieth century who became victim to these sentiments, perhaps none expressed their rebellion more powerfully and explicitly than James Baldwin, whose poetry and commentary frequently articulate the meaning of blackness in America through powerful imagery of geographical and social location. "In a way," wrote Baldwin, "the Negro tells us where the bottom is: because he is there, and where he is, beneath us, we know where the limits are and how far we must not fall. We must not fall beneath him. We must never allow ourselves to fall that low" (*Nobody Knows My Name* 133). As a poet who often perceived the world in complex, symbolic terms Baldwin likely meant several things at once by this comment. On the one hand he makes a political statement about the subordination of blackness to whiteness within United States racial paradigms, while on the other hand he appears to advocate that a critical distance be kept between the mind of the black artist and the stigmatised black body: "We must not fall beneath him." As Mimi Sheller also points out, however, the "bottom" of which Baldwin speaks is "both a racial location and a spatial location inasmuch as racial distinctions become symbolically marked in spatial forms such as segregated housing, schools, and neighborhoods or racially demarcated national identities, intuitions, and borders" (39). In the context of this study, and particularly in relation to Afro-modernism, I am most interested in the expression of these kinds of racial demarcations as articulated through Sheller's final term, "borders."

Baldwin is an example of a poet whose travel through international borders only worked to strengthen and affirm his identity as an American citizen. Moreover, in contrast to many other African-American poets of the period, he boldly expressed a keen interest in the FBI in not only his poetry but other discourses as well. Born in Harlem in 1924, Baldwin left New York for Paris at the age of twenty-four, writing later of this departure in "No Name in the Street" (1972) that the move to Europe was born out of a kind of "madness": "If I had not gone mad, I could not have left"

(*The Price of the Ticket* 460). Baldwin relates the intense necessity of his escape overseas in later writing too, such as his essay "Every Good-bye Ain't Gone," published in *New York Magazine* in 1977 almost three decades after his first departure from America. In the essay, where Baldwin truthfully sets out the reasons for why his "Goodbye" to America for France was not a permanent departure, he again returns to the themes of demarcation and displacement which appear in most of his work, writing that he fled America to try to discover the "demarcation line" between the things that "had happened to me because I was black" and the "things that happened to me because I was me" (64). "Being black," he wrote,

> affected one's life span, insurance rates, blood pressure, lovers, children, every dangerous hour of every dangerous day. There was absolutely no way not to be black without ceasing to exist. But it frequently seemed that there was no way to be black, either, without ceasing to exist. (64)

In many ways, lines like these differ from Hughes's visionary, celebratory impulse. And much like his poetry, Baldwin's many reflections upon America, in essays, interviews and other sources, tend towards scepticism, critique and wryness. As he scathingly writes later in the essay, "I have been in and out of my country, in and out of various cauldrons, for a very long time, long enough to see the doctrine of white supremacy return, like a plague, to the continent which spawned it" (72). Having grown up in early twentieth-century Harlem, the conditions of a ruined post-war Paris were probably less confronting for Baldwin than they would have been for many other American expatriates. Nevertheless, the reflections in many of these retrospective essays reveal that Baldwin saw himself as negotiating an entirely different world. As James Miller has written of the dialectics of self-discovery in Baldwin's Paris, the essays reveal how "Baldwin presents himself as trying to discover the extent to which his individuality could be separate from his racial identity. In contrast, his earlier essays place greater emphasis on the urgency of his escape" (52). The distance that Baldwin put between himself and the racially oppressive, surveillance-oriented political and social structures of modern America served, in this sense, a dual purpose. Not only was he able to physically escape the harassment of home, he was also well positioned to develop a poetics that turned its gaze back on America. Miller's observations of Baldwin's poetics suggest a similar strategy insofar as he argues that what remains distinct about Baldwin's contribution to "the literature

of American expatriate experience" is the extent to which that experience "enabled him to affirm – in a way impossible back home – his identity as an American" (52).

Despite publishing his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* to critical acclaim in 1953, along with other well-known books and plays, the bureau expressed little interest in Baldwin until 1960, when he returned to the United States and joined the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Communist activist group established in New York City in April of the same year. As one of his biographers, James Campbell, notes: "Baldwin was never interested in conventional party politics, but anyone who demanded 'fair play' for Cuba was likely to be seen by J. Edgar Hoover as a subversive" (11). The veracity of this can be found in any one of a number of later Bureau memoranda on Baldwin, one of which describes him as a "dangerous individual who could be expected to commit acts inimical to the national defense of the United States" (qtd. in Field 54). A year later, FBI note takers wrote that Baldwin "supported organizations that supported integration" and that he had called for the abolition of the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) (Newton 25). By 1963 Baldwin's name was added to the Security Index,[33] a list of citizens who would be arrested first in the event of a state of emergency, and in 1964 he was one of eight persons targeted for particular harassment as per the protocol of Hoover's COINTELPRO[34] campaign against the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Amidst all of the spying and harassment, the FBI even went so far as to write its own poetry. William Maxwell describes a crude FBI-authored poem contained in the James Baldwin file. Designed as a piece of radical character assassination, the poem was an attempt to create a divide between the (largely white) Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and supporters of Robert Franklin Williams, an American civil rights leader and author as well as the president of the Monroe, North Carolina branch of the NAACP in the 1950s and early 1960s. In the anonymously distributed poem, the FBI defame an SWP member who is depicted as a frightened thief:

> Georgie-Porgie, down in Monroe,
> Found himself along with the dough,

---

[33] James Campbell notes: "When Hoover added Baldwin's name to the Security Index, it was with a note that Attorney General Robert Kennedy considered him 'a nut'" (11).
[34] COINTELPRO stands for the Bureau's Counter Intelligence Program, which was a series of covert projects aimed at surveilling and disrupting domestic political organisations.

> Called the cops, and what did he say?
> "Bad guys came and took it away." (qtd. in Maxwell 300)

The quasi-blackmail fictional literary construction evident in this short poem was not confined to Baldwin. Indeed the kind of perverted mimicry evident in the FBI's 'Georgie-Porgie' lyric was dispersed to a vast number of African-American modernist poets, intensifying anxieties about not only African-American citizenship but also the status and consequences of the production of modernist poetry by racially marginalised figures. "The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the most storied name in U.S. law enforcement," Maxwell remarks, "capped its long struggle against African American protest with a homemade imitation of black prose" (1). As part and parcel of its regime of literary intimidation, the Bureau naturally extended its reach to African Americans of not just poetic but also political stature. Maxwell details the events of 20 November 1964 when FBI assistant director William C. Sullivan, a former English teacher, produced on unwatermarked paper via an untraceable typewriter an anonymous "history-making poison-pen letter" to Martin Luther King Jr. (1). Like a man transfixed, Sullivan—the FBI's ambitious and eloquent racial policeman—transmuted into letter J. Edgar Hoover's outrage at the news that Luther King Jr. had won the Nobel Peace Prize. The Bureau's judiciously crafted document, which warrants an appraisal in full, reads:

> King, look into your heart. You know you are a complete fraud and a great liability to all us Negroes. White people in this country have enough frauds of their own but I am sure they don't have one at this time that is any where [sic] near your equal. You are no clergyman and you know it. I repeat that you are a colossal fraud and an evil, vicious one at that. You could not believe in God and act as you do. Clearly you don't believe in any personal moral principles.
>
> King, like all frauds your end is approaching. You could have been our greatest leader … We will now have to depend on our older leaders like [Roy] Wilkins a man of character and thank God we have others like him. But you are done. Your "honorary" degrees, your Nobel Prize (what a grim farce) and other awards will not save you. King, I repeat you are done…
> The American public, the church organizations that have been helping—Protestants, Catholics and Jews will know you for what you are—an evil beast. So will others who have backed you. You are done.

> King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do [it] (this exact number has been selected for a specific reason, it has definite practical significant [sic]). You are done. This is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal, fraudulent self is bared to the nation.
> (qtd. in Theoharis 102-3).

Sullivan's letter, though riddled with typographical errors and patently bizarre in content and structure, reveals an instance of significant epistolary counterintelligence practiced by America's central surveillance body. While upon a first reading it projects a sense of linguistic juvenilia with its seemingly artless repetition and hyperbolic intimidations, the letter nevertheless represents a heightened piece of literary artifice, insidiously wrapped up inside the FBI's influential surveillance machinations. The letter's unnamed black speaker is meticulously crafted and speaks from a place which seems to signal genuine distress. As Maxwell writes, "Sullivan's insider paints himself as a biblically based movement ally called to brutality only by knowledge of a preacher's hypocrisy" (4). Indeed, the imaginative fiction developed here by Sullivan treads a fine line between a collective African-American poeticism summed up in the carefully-placed remark "all us Negroes," and a militant liberal protest. These examples of mimicry reveal the extent to which the FBI, even when they reviled particular political figures or writers, still evinced close familiarity with and imitation of their writing.

While these years stand out in Baldwin's life as those in which the Bureau's presence would have been acutely felt, he remained an object of FBI interest until almost the end of his life with a file of 1,884 pages documenting such diverse topics as his international travels, his literary output, his political affinities and his personal relations. As late as 1972, the FBI maintained the necessity of surveilling Baldwin, concluding: "It is believed that the subject, due to his position as an author, is likely to furnish aid or other assistance to revolutionary elements because of his sympathy and/or ideology" (qtd. in Field 194). In the end, so vigilant was the FBI's surveillance of Baldwin—along with his knowledge of that surveillance—that he alarmed Hoover by threatening to write a book about the FBI that would expose its malevolent role in the Civil Rights movement. The book, entitled *The Blood Counters*, was never written but nevertheless appears in countless memos produced by the Bureau. All this aside, it was Baldwin's signature on the petition of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee which,

according to James Campbell, "was invoked every time information concerning Baldwin was requested" over the ten year period stretching from the mid 60s through to the closing of Baldwin's file in 1974 (11). The signature, Campbell argues, "enabled the FBI to mark Baldwin's card 'communist,' confirming its notorious inability to distinguish among communist, radical, and liberal" (11).

Baldwin's longest poem, "Staggerlee wonders," infuses the nineteenth-century popular American folk song Stagolee[35] with powerful, first-person immediacy in order to rage against the hypocrisy of white America's culture of violence as inflicted upon African Americans under the guise of anti-communism. The poem's opening lines read:

> I always wonder
> what they think the niggers are doing
> while they, the pink and alabaster pragmatists,
> are containing
> Russia
> and defining and re-defining and re-aligning
> China,
> nobly restraining themselves, meanwhile,
> from blowing up that earth
> which they have already
> blasphemed into dung (*Jimmy's Blues* 7)

These lines, and the poem as a whole, provide a corrective to the seemingly coherent narrative that underpinned America's twentieth-century superpower status. "The pink and alabaster pragmatists" are seen for what they truly are: irrational victims of the age of anxiety, characterised by collective fear of the atomic bomb. Simultaneously, while "Staggerlee wonders" uses the persona of the murderous Staggerlee (a black gunfighter who shoots his friend Billy Lyons) to condemn the racism of America, it is a poem deeply concerned with the borders that are erected throughout institutional power. "The walls of their cities," he writes, "are as foul as their children," lines which produce a powerful meditation on the culminating effects of containment ideology on America of the 1980s. Yet Baldwin's experience of American containment culture differs somewhat from the commonly understood narrative of protection from external threat. In the case of Baldwin and his fellow

[35] See Cecil Brown's *Stagolee Shot Billy* for the history of Stagolee.

African-American writers and artists, it was expatriation that caused the American government untold worry.

Scholars have now thoroughly explored the dual valence of containment, officially denoting a policy of keeping the United States, its allies and its satellites insulated from Communism, but also implying that the external threat is "always already inside, contained within national boundaries/bodies" (Carlston, *Double Agents* 200). Erin Carlston expresses this psychological tension through an apt conundrum: "We are afraid of not containing the Russians; we are afraid of containing the Russians" (*Double Agents* 200). Global politics aside, at a purely figurative level the very mention of containment invariably conjures either one or many of the term's ominous antonyms. To not contain is, inevitably, to allow for leakage, seeping, spilling or bleeding into (or out of) a formerly secure space. As Carlston rhetorically posits: "How would the Russians get inside us, if not through the orifices represented by the nation's points of contact with the foreign outside?" (*Double Agents* 200). It was by manipulating imagery like this that George F. Keenan, the US diplomat upon whose writings the US foreign policy of "containing" the Soviet Union is based, was able to so convincingly formulate the doctrine of containment that figured Soviet power as "a source of essential fluids and Soviet aggression [as] a form of incontinence" (Nadel 16). More explicitly, as Keenan wrote of the assumed Soviet threat: "Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts these philosophically and accommodates itself to them" ("The Sources of Soviet Conduct" 575). As Alan Nadel argues, Keenan's proposal was not necessarily to change the "essential nature of the fluid, but rather to limit its flow" (16).

While this kind of language makes clear its target in the Soviet Union, it was nevertheless used as a smokescreen for the extensive surveillance of African-American expatriation in Europe. For this reason it is also the language of Baldwin's "pink and alabaster pragmatists" in "Staggerlee wonders," where Staggerlee ridicules the power structures and ideology that underpin the racist doctrine that used national security as a cover for racial discrimination. In a later section of the poem, Beulah, the African American slave, "sucks her teeth and rolls her eyes" in the direction of her "lady's back, and / keeps on keeping on" as:

> they are containing
> Russia
> and entering onto the quicksand of
> China
> and patronizing
> Africa,
> and calculating
> the Caribbean plunder, and
> the South China Sea booty,
> the niggers are aware that no one has discussed
> anything at all with the niggers. (*Jimmy's Blues* 16)

And then later Baldwin writes:

> And, anyway, none of this changes the reality,
> which is, for example, that I do not want my son
> to die in Guantanamo,
> or anywhere else, for that matter,
> serving the Stars and Stripes.
> (I've *seen* some stars.
> I got some stripes.) (*Jimmy's Blues* 16)

Here, as in so much of Baldwin's work, the oppressed are given a new direction, a vision defined by difference. Baldwin's biographer David Lemming makes a similar point in his suggestion that the poem "assumes an African-American understanding of reality to which racism makes the oppressor essentially blind" through "the voice of the black tell-tale trickster character, Staggerlee" (359). Perhaps most importantly, though, "Staggerlee wonders" refuses a nationalist narrative of unity as the solvent to the tensions brought about by the Cold War. This is revealed most explicitly in the hero's refusal to have his son "serving the Stars and Stripes." In doing so, the poem has important implications for looking back over the relationship between structural racism and US government spying in the early decades of the twentieth century. Lloyd Kramer puts the poem's refusal to surrender to a standardised approach to postwar global tension in the context of the complex multiculturalism of American history, arguing that it was Baldwin's sojourn in Paris that helped him see beyond the American Cold War narrative "which argued for an essential American unity, coherence and consensus in the struggle against communism and un-American activities" (29). Moreover, as Kramer has observed, in stark contrast to the prevailing national narrative of this time, "Baldwin was already arguing in the 1950s (much like

postcolonial theorists in the 1990s) for the multiple voices of a national culture and for the mixtures rather than the purities of a national identity" (29). So while Baldwin's first departure overseas and subsequent rejection of America was hardly voluntary, his later writing reveals a complex and deeply considered approach to the relationship between his poetry and United States politics. Several decades before the publication of "Staggerlee wonders," he had already offered up his thoughts on American foreign policy in a 1961 interview with Studs Terkel in Chicago, commenting:

> When I was living in Europe, it occurred to me that what Americans in Europe did not know about Europeans is precisely what they did not know about me; and what Americans today don't know about the rest of the world, like Cuba or Africa, is what they don't know about me. The incoherent, totally incoherent foreign policy of this country is a reflection of the incoherence of private lives here. (*Conversations with James Baldwin* 17)

Above all else, this comment reveals the extent to which Baldwin believed in the inextricability of the personal and the political; for Baldwin, the best possible order for the present and the future is a personal one. Moreover, these lines are useful in clarifying the ideological backdrop to Baldwin's anarchic individualism, his insistence on keeping sacrosanct that which the government does not know about him. Perhaps most telling, though, is the observation about foreign policy. In suggesting that the "incoherent" private lives of American citizens have the capacity to influence foreign policy, Baldwin also makes a comment about the detrimental effects brought about by a national populace in possession of an inconsistent national narrative. James Miller describes this in terms of the connection between "social and emotional dishonesty and ignorance at home" and "a treacherous foreign policy abroad" (57). According to Miller, Baldwin's work and commentary suggest that "every white American, through their refusal to affirm the common national heritage they share with the African American, perpetuates a structure of repression and denial" (57).

## The Secret Agent:
## W.H. Auden Writes American Poems

> You know there are no secrets in America. It's quite different in England, where people think of a secret as a shared relation between two people.[36]
>
> W.H. AUDEN

Of all the modern poets engrossed in questions of American identity, one of the most prominent figures is W.H. Auden. For Auden, however, being American meant being deeply sceptical of the many national and ideological categories thrown up by the long and complex history of Anglo-American poetic relations. Indeed, national narratives that define American and British poetic traditions do not fit Auden as neatly as they do many other twentieth-century English-speaking poets. For this reason, among others, he reinforces the conceptual structure of modernism as a movement characterised by resistance, transnationalism and changeability. Auden's curious adoption of America can be read alongside Eliot's departure for Europe in 1914 at the age of twenty-six as opposite sides of the same coin. And indeed their radically different approaches to surveillance can be seen to reflect Auden's taking-up of American ideals and culture while Eliot insisted on distancing himself from it. While some scholars have observed that modernism, and the work of Eliot in particular, "comprises the first sustained examination of the moral and intellectual consequences of a surveillant temporality," it is Auden's lyrics that come to focus most explicitly on the techniques, effects, and spectre of surveillance (Rosen and Santesso, *Watchman* 263).

Addressing an audience at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri in 1953 on the subject of "American Literature and the American Language," Eliot amusingly compared himself to Auden, stating: "I do not know whether Auden is to be considered as an English or as an American poet: his career has been useful to me in providing me with an answer to the same question when asked about myself, for I can say: 'whichever Auden is, I suppose I must be the other'" (*To Criticize the Critic* 60).

[36] *The Table Talk of W.H. Auden*, 34.

By the time Eliot voiced this remark he had been living in England for almost forty years, having taken up British citizenship in 1927.

By the time of W.B. Yeats's death in January 1939 Eliot had become without question the leading poet writing in the English language. In the opening lines of Section V of "East Coker," the second of his *Four Quartets*, he weighs up his poetic accomplishments in the roughly twenty years between his arrival in England and Yeats's passing, years bookmarked by the Treaty of Versailles and Hitler's invasion of Poland:

> So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
> Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—
> Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
> Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
> Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
> For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
> One is no longer disposed to say it. (*CP* 202-203)

But while these lines intimate that the new America discovered by Eliot in a culturally superior and ostensibly more inspiring Europe did not, to his mind, produce "another intensity," these two decades can hardly be said to have been "largely wasted." Rather, like Auden, Eliot saw poetry as "action." "And so each venture," he continues in "East Coker," "Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate" (*CP* 203).

The year in which Yeats died was an important one for W.H. Auden also. He had first visited America in 1938 with Christopher Isherwood when the two travelled by train from the West Coast and stayed in New York for several weeks over summer. Auden then moved from England to New York in January 1939 and by 1946 had become an American citizen. When he finally came to live in New York he was almost 32 years old and was, by all accounts, the leading British writer of his generation, having authored several plays, five well-received collections of poetry and edited two important poetical anthologies: *The Poet's Tongue*, with John Garrett (1935) and *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* (1938). While Auden's decision to settle in New York in 1939 caused "outrage and dismay in his home country," his taking up residence in the US should not necessarily have been startling to either British or American

readers (Clark and Ford 4).[37] Having travelled to Berlin in the late twenties and then to Iceland and China in the thirties, Auden had already demonstrated commitment to a travel agenda that was as innovative as his poetry. In more ways than one, Auden was American in mind before he gained American citizenship and "the first reference to [him] as an American poet actually predates his permanent settlement in the United States" (Firchow 171). Auden presents an important site of consideration for a surveillance poetics abroad insofar as his artistic, political and poetic process of Americanisation had already begun while he was in England. "He had been reading American writers," Edmund Wilson remarks, "had tried his hand at American ballads, and had shown, in these and in 'The Dance of Death,' published in 1933, that he had already—in a rather surprising way—got the hang over the American vernacular" (658). Auden, in other words, though raised English, had "become Americanised before he became American" (Firchow 171).

Going to the US was for Auden a necessary and inevitable step in fulfilling his longing for innovation. Decades later he would reflect in a 1967 interview with Polly Platt for *The American Scholar* on the differing attitudes that Europeans and Americans had about money, ambition and newness, remarking that "[i]n Europe, having money means doing as you like. You want to have as much as you can and the others should have as little as possible. In America, money is symbolic, a sign, for one thing, of manhood" (269-270). Adding to this, Auden commented:

> It is every European's dream to be a rentier, to inherit enough to do as he pleases. But the American rentier goes out and works even harder than before, or takes to drink, or visits a psychiatrist. I find Americans marvelous. Perhaps a bit anxious about being popular, a bit worried about their status, but admirable in many ways, in particular in how they get on together. (270)

For Auden, the American is never quite satisfied; he or she consciously seeks out the attainment of capital even at the cost of physical or mental wellbeing. This observation about the American's near-crazed pursuit of prosperity was by no means unique to Auden. The true cost of American progress in the early twentieth century

[37] Auden's decision to settle in New York in 1939 caused such outrage and dismay in his home country that the matter was even raised the following year in the House of Commons. See Carpenter, *W.H. Auden: A Biography,* 291.

was a preoccupation for many American writers, not just poets. From Ginsberg's "Howl" ("What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls / and ate up their brains and imagination?") to John Dos Passos' celebrated USA trilogy ("One bed is not enough, one job is not enough, one life is not enough. At night, head swimming with wants, he walks by himself alone"), everyone from poets and novelists to cultural critics and sociologists have examined the darker side to the American dream (*CP* 131; xiii). For many young British artists and intellectuals of the 1930s, however, America glittered with the allure of action, innovation and money, attracting such figures as composer Benjamin Britten, Aldous Huxley, Dorothy "Dodie" Smith and Louis MacNeice.

More than any of these writers, Auden presented himself as openly, almost excessively, American. But while there is no question that he took any and every opportunity to stress his Americanness, in his writing Auden does something quite different by questioning the authenticity of any claim to the national-ness of poetry. Any mention of Auden's arrival in the US in the late 1930s, and for that matter of his view of poetry's role during this period, is bound to bring to mind "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," the poem in which he famously declared: "poetry makes nothing happen." Written soon after his arrival in New York, Auden's elegy for Yeats ascribes a universalising, decentring effect to the poet's death. For Yeats at the moment of his death, Auden writes,

> it was the last afternoon as himself,
> An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
> The provinces of his body revolted,
> The squares of his mind were empty,
> Silence invaded the suburbs,
> The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers. (*CP* 247)

The effects of Yeats's death are felt "Far from his illness" and so, much like Auden's own transnational life, "Now he is scattered among a hundred cities / And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections." Warning against the corrupting consequence of too rigidly tethering a poet's work to his nation-state, Auden rejoices in the distance reserved between Yeats's passing and his works' future reception: "The death of the poet was kept from his poems." Quite apart from its individual importance as a poem about the generative power of Yeats's poetry during a time of national calamity, the

elegy was and remains an important critique of the malicious nationalism against which Auden stood both personally and politically. This distaste would continue well into his later years as evinced in a poem such as "Prologue at Sixty," where he writes of his "unenglish tract" which, "after ten years / into my love has looked itself." He continues:

> Who am I now?
> An American? No, a New Yorker,
> who opens his Times at the obit page,
>
> whose dream images date him already,
> awake among lasers, electric brains,
> do-it-yourself sex manuals,
> bugged phones, sophisticated
> weapon-systems and jokes. (*CP* 828)

As these lines make clear, even after several decades as an American citizen and despite his love for America, Auden resisted the label of a unitary citizenship. In *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), a work that examines the circuits of poetic connection and dialogue across political and geographic borders in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Jahan Ramazani aptly summarises what he calls the "intermappings" of English, Austrian, German, Icelandic, French and other landscapes in poems such as "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" and "Prologue at Sixty" (34). These instances, he writes, "of dislocation and hybridization, or creolized genres and idioms, of shared intercultural precursors and forms, of postnational skepticisms and sedimented geographies, reveal the holes in nationalist disciplinary partitions" (34). American poetry for Auden, then, was designed to look less nationalistic and more cosmopolitan. It is a poetic which, as Nicholas Jenkins has written, is not "Eliotically rooted in or authenticated by reference to the culture of a single country or place" (76). Auden's resolve to place his writing outside the American national frame of reference, combined with his transnational conversion in '39, has mixed results for an assessment of his poetry's politics. As a poet claimed on both sides of the ocean, Auden is a significant figure for the tracing of the tensions classifying the surveillance of writers in America as they intensified throughout the twentieth century.

Unlike Langston Hughes, James Baldwin and other African-American poets, Auden (like Eliot) was only moderately surveilled by the FBI. Shortly after his arrival

in New York, he attracted attention from the FBI for a contribution he had made several months earlier to the leftist magazine *New Masses*, which appeared on 16 August 1938. The article, entitled "Meeting the Japanese," was a collaboration between Auden and Isherwood, which they wrote while traveling between Shanghai and Japan in June that year. Auden's biographer Edward Mendelson writes in his essay "The Auden-Isherwood Collaboration" that "the Communist background of the magazine was an embarrassment later, but they had never even heard of the magazine until it asked them for an article" (282). Nevertheless, "Meeting the Japanese" was impetus enough for the Bureau's 28-page file on Auden, which contains one memo in particular that notes his membership in a "group of young poets who were all strongly oriented to the Left, some of them being orthodox Communists" (Newton 24). Two other factors contributed to the FBI's interest in Auden as a figure seemingly worth investigating, both of which were the result of complex personal motives rather than overt affiliation with any anti-nationalist or anti-America group.

In 1936 Auden had agreed to marry Erika Mann, the daughter of another FBI target, Thomas Mann, the German novelist and social critic known principally for his contributions to the Exilliteratur (exile literature), a group of texts written in German by anti-Nazi writers who fled Germany and its nearby occupied territories between 1933 and 1945. Contrary to the picture it seemed to paint, Auden's marriage to Mann was ultimately a favour between friends since the arrangement provided Mann with a British passport and therefore immunity from possible Nazi harassment. Second, and far more provocative was his decision a year later to volunteer for the besieged Spanish Republic by famously offering his services as an ambulance driver for the Spanish Medical Committee, a small British unit consisting of nurses and physicians in the Spanish Civil War. This decision, while unquestionably born out of Auden's interest in fighting the scourge of Fascism in Europe, was also deliberately designed to afford him the kind of first-hand experience out of which poetry of the highest order could potentially emerge. Writing to explain his decision in a December 1936 letter to E.R. Dodds he commented:

> It is possible in some periods, the poet can absorb and feel all in the ordinary every day life, perhaps the supreme masters always can, but for the second order and, particularly to-day, what he can write about is what

> he has experienced through his own person. Academic knowledge is not enough. (qtd. in Mendelson, *Early Auden, Later Auden* 183)

In this letter and others, the Audenesque hunger for lived experience is obvious. And being by this time an already well-known poet, the expectation (both publicly expressed and internally wrought) to produce poetry that reflected accurately the concerns of a wider, common public would have been playing heavily on his mind. Indeed, it was his reputation that made Auden valuable to the Republican cause, as evinced in a banner headline of the *Daily Worker* on 12 January 1937 which read: "FAMOUS POET TO DRIVE AMBULANCE IN SPAIN."[38] For many volunteers, assisting the Republican government in its battle against the insurrection led by General Francisco Franco was a crucial opportunity to counteract the oppressive regimes that had engulfed Europe in the preceding years. For Auden, the reasons for alliance were more complicated. "I feel I ought to go," he wrote in a letter to a friend of his decision to join the cause and leave England for Spain. When pressed further on his motives, he was more sincere: "I am not one of those who believe that poetry need or even should be directly political," he wrote, "but in a critical period such as ours, I do believe that the poet must have direct knowledge of the major political events … I shall probably be a bloody bad soldier but how can I speak to/for them without becoming one?" (Mendelson, *Early Auden, Later Auden* 183). Despite his commitment, and whatever the actual underlying reasons for it may have been, Auden was despised and rejected because he wasn't a member of the Communist party. Forbidden to serve and horrified by what he saw, particularly of the burnt-out and vandalised churches in Barcelona, he left Spain roughly two months later and maintained a measured silence about the experience for a considerable period afterwards.[39] The well-known offshoot of this peculiar and evidently traumatic period in Auden's life is the poem "Spain 1937," which he completed shortly after returning to England. Considered by many critics the cornerstone of his political verse, the poem was originally published as the pamphlet *Spain* and was sold to raise money for the Spanish Medical Aid. A sweeping panorama of history, the poem begins,

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[38] See Carpenter, 208.

[39] Many years later, though, he observed: "Nobody I know who went to Spain during the Civil War who was not a dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist came back with his illusions intact." See Auden, "Authority in America," 9.

"Yesterday all the past. The language of size / Spreading to China along the trade-routes," before turning to a passionate assessment of the present: the outcome of Spain's Civil War and the consequences of this for the future. Two crucial stanzas in the middle of the poem evaluate the disjunction, as Auden sees it, between the parabolic figures charged each with the task of conveying the political turmoil unfolding in front of them, and the harsh reality of the destructive forces of war:

> As the poet whispers, startled among the pines,
> Or where the loose waterfall sings compact, or upright
> On the crag by the leaning tower:
> "O my vision. O send me the luck of the sailor."
>
> And the investigator peers through his instruments
> At the inhuman provinces, the virile bacillus
> Or enormous Jupiter finished:
> "But the lives of my friends. I inquire. I inquire." (*English Auden* 211)

The poem's organising metaphor is that of artistic representation through first-hand observation: the marrying of political and poetic impulses. Perhaps unwittingly, by attempting to draw attention to the gap between these two pursuits in the context of political literature in the 1930s, Auden has also revealed the vexed nature of his own position at the time. As it came to be, Auden's lack of first-hand experience on the battlefields of Spain would play a critical (and problematic) role in the immediate reception of his poetic response to the war. "The charge of inauthenticity," as Edward Quipp has called it, has shaped the critical reception of "Spain 1937" ever since (172). "Auden's decision," he continues, "to rewrite it, and then to disown it altogether, appears to bear this out" (172). The poem's final stanza foregrounds this conundrum: "The stars are dead. The animals will not look," it begins. "We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and / History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon" (*English Auden* 212).

While the publication of "Spain 1937" does not necessarily explain the FBI's interest in Auden or indeed, as I will move to discuss now, Auden's personal interest in surveillance more broadly, it is nevertheless a critical poem for understanding some of the motivation behind his departure for America along with the fact that, between 1937 and 1939, he returned to many of his political poems and removed their overtly political content. In *Early Auden*, Edward Mendelson refers to this as Auden's

"elliptical rejection of political solutions and of his own public role," highlighting the extent to which he had returned to England from Spain disheartened and with a feeling of powerlessness with regard to the possibilities of political action in Europe in the 1930s (xix).

All of this aside, a report contained within Auden's FBI file notes that he "was never in complete agreement with the Communist doctrine" and was perhaps rather, as another report suggests, "simply in rebellion" against "the upper bourgeoise [sic] into which he was born" (Newton 24). Such a remark is consistent with the persuasive argument laid out by Erin Carlston which contends that by employing tropes of spy craft and espionage in his work, Auden was able to "articulate the status of the upper-middle class, left-wing British homosexual as both emblem of, and traitor to, an empire he was bred to rule" (*Double Agents* 7). Even though the figure of the spy is principally confined to Auden's early work[40] and, by the time he resided comfortably in the US he had done away with much of his overtly political poetry, the FBI returned again and again to his door. In his 1995 biography of Auden, Richard Davenport-Hines reports that during World War II American neighbours of the poet told the FBI that he was a spy and that it was perhaps his "towheadedness" that gave him "a Nordic look." Davenport-Hines invokes one incident in which "the agent who came to interview [Auden] asked 'You're a Scandinavian, aren't you?'" (16). He was also surveilled from 1954 through 1973, during which time he took up a position as Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets. A piece of intercepted mail dating 1959 "contained birthday greetings to Auden from 'a secret admirer,'" and the FBI was still surveilling Auden in 1965 when "Jack Valenti, then an aide to President Lyndon Johnson, requested a background check on the grounds that Auden had been nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom" (Newton 24).

Above all, the peculiar vagaries of the FBI's interest in Auden reveal, not that he was considered a dangerous or even menacing figure to the overarching conservative aims of Hoover's agenda, but rather that the vicissitudes of both his political and poetic behaviour were enough to warrant suspicion on the basis of

[40] Carlson argues: "While Auden eventually abandoned the figure of the spy and turned to an exploration of the homosexual man's claim to citizenship, the early poetry registers an entrenched suspicion of the establishment and characterizes homosexuals as socially alienated and psychologically conflicted." See *Double Agents,* 7.

unpredictability alone. Moreover, the intriguing variations in Auden's poetic output are particularly apparent when it comes to the theme of surveillance. His early poetry features spies, agents and similarly sinister figures engaged in sabotage, espionage and other spy-like activities. So dominant are these characters and themes in Auden's early verse that his first major literary interpreter Richard Hoggart singled it out as a site requiring particular scholarly investigation. Why, he asked of the group of 1930s writers now colloquially known as the "Auden generation," were these writers "so interested in the apparatus of the spy story?" (20). The answer to this is perhaps to do with the intrigue and element of adventure inherent in all spy narratives, but it also has a lot to do with the political and cultural significance of the spy to Auden's specific historical context. "In some degree," writes Hoggart, "the fondness for the climate of war arose from the sense of menace which all had in the 'thirties,' from the sense of being in enemy country" (20). For poets, this manifested in a feeling that they did not properly belong, that "in this century less than ever," Hoggart goes on to say, "the poet is able to assume an audience of his own place in society" (20). Auden is without question the original architect of the modern poetic spy narrative. Furthermore, he is arguably the first modern poet to use spies in lyric verse as a way to illustrate complex psychological and social problems. Peter Firchow has even gone so far as to suggest that poems incorporating spies by other poets of the 1930s do exist but tend to be more or less direct imitations of Auden's verse, written by his close friends such as Stephen Spender or Cecil Day-Lewis (64). Whatever the reason for these kinds of imitation, Auden and his generation were writing during a period in which the prevalence of the figure of the spy in poetry and fiction more broadly thrived as never before. The obvious historical reason for this is largely to do with the sense of impending doom brought about by not only the devastating aftermath of World War I but, more crucially, worsening economic conditions and the rise of Hitler in Europe. All this produced a global culture infected by paranoia, suspicion and the constant fear of being watched by an enemy spy. Firchow makes an important differentiating point, however, in noting that during this period there existed a small but "qualitatively high proportion" of espionage fiction that departed radically from the previous norm (66). "Most notably," he writes, "and for the first time, the spy-protagonist was no longer invariably and predictably the agent of patriotic and upper-class interests" (66). This was unquestionably a pivotal moment in which the

established narrative which cast the spy as a professional, state-backed observer was overturned in favour of one where the figures doing the surveilling were left-wing subversives, who were not always effective but nevertheless acting on their own terms. Indeed, many of the late 1930s spy thrillers that had at their centre "unconventional, poetical, underdog spies" were largely anticipated by the characters who figured in Auden's early lyric verse (Firchow 66).

An important example can be seen in "The Secret Agent," which Auden previously titled "Control of the Passes." In this poem for first time the figure of the spy appears in Auden's work. Written in sonnet form, it describes the looming threat faced by a spy who, because his reports have gone unheeded, is about to be captured and shot. The poem opens on an authoritative note with the word "control" before detailing, in now thoroughly coded terms, the apparent acuity of the "trained spy":

> Control of the passes was, he saw, the key
> To this new district, but who would get it?
> He, the trained spy, had walked into the trap
> For a bogus guide, seduced by the old tricks.
>
> At Greenhearth was a fine site for a dam
> And easy power, had they pushed the rail
> Some stations nearer. They ignored his wires:
> The bridges were unbuilt and trouble coming.
>
> The street music seemed gracious now to one
> For weeks up in the desert. Woken by water
> Running away in the dark, he often had
> Reproached the night for a companion
> Dreamed of already. They would shoot, of course,
> Parting easily two that were never joined. (*CP* 32)

The poem moves dramatically through three distinct phases, each revealing the potentially devastating extent to which the workings of the human mind can become inseparable from the soldierly task at hand. The first stanza begins with official, military language, emphasising the insight and perceptiveness of the calculating "trained spy." The spy's apparent skill is immediately destabilised, though, since the members of his district are incapable of deciphering his signals, the speaker asking, "But who would get it?" Quickly, the scenario devolves into disorder and uncertainty as the institution within which he must operate "ignore[s] his wires," with bridges "unbuilt and trouble coming." Despite his training, Auden's spy is suddenly alone and

as the poem ends, he imagines "a companion / Dreamed of already," within the horrific reality of the larger "trap" in which he has become ensnared: "They would shoot, of course, / Parting easily two that were never joined." The spy in this poem, and by extension the spies that feature throughout the early phase of Auden's oeuvre, is entirely isolated and as a result ends by "running away in the dark" before being shot at.

Erin Carlston has written of this poem that "even if the spy/lover has exceptional skill and acumen, there is no one to understand his insights, no one who will 'get it,' and the mere dream of sexual fulfilment is apparently enough to merit death by firing squad" (*Double Agents* 161). Yet despite the poem's coded confession of homosexual desire in the two figures who, because illicit, "were never joined," Auden nevertheless eschews lyric sincerity through the very games the poem plays with the binaries of public and private. "The Secret Agent," to borrow Richard Bozorth's explication, employs a rhetoric that "hovers between revelation and concealment, allegorizing its own play with speakability" (719). While this early poem of Auden's can of course be read with reference to the alienated "self" that becomes indistinguishable from the unidentified "trained spy," it is nevertheless essential to note the poem's allegorical pyrotechnics. "The key," to the poem's "new district" is also, in large part, the key to the internal poetic knowledge of the poem itself, determined by complex processes of reading. Indeed the "Secret Agent," whoever he is, seems obsessed with the very secrets of his own agency and, by lyricizing his illicit desire, he exploits even further the tension between "what is open and what is hidden" (Bozorth 718). Michael O'Neill and Gareth Reeves also note the uncanny, subversive game played by the poem with language, albeit through the structure of the sonnet. "Along with the assonance and consonance," they write of the sonnet structure, "it gives the impression that the poem rhymes" (9). More interestingly, early drafts contained only ten lines and there was no second quatrain, leaving the poem's narrative to jolt from the militaristic description of the first four lines to the imaginative scene of the closing sestet. Reading this early ten-line draft alongside the poem's updated sonnet form, it is easy to see that Auden's later insertion of the middle stanza was in essence aimed at introducing an element of intrigue, especially in relation to the eventual downfall of the lyric's protagonist spy. The "they" who "pushed the rail" and "ignored his wires" only arrive in the poem with the later

insertion of this peculiar quatrain, prompting us to question, ultimately, who "they" actually are. It is certainly not a leap to say that Auden was very fond of keeping secrets, whether they were his own secrets or those of others. Even though he openly expressed antipathy for biographical criticism, he went so far as to claim that his line of inquiry when reading others' poems was to ask: "What kind of a guy inhabits this poem? What is his notion of the good life or the good place? His notion of the Evil One? What does he conceal from the reader? What does he conceal even from himself?" (*The Dyer's Hand* 51).

These are indeed the very questions the poem leads us to ask of both Auden's spy and the mysterious figures who seem to have betrayed him. Furthermore, the poem resists answering even the most straightforward of questions. Does the fault lie in the newness of the "district"? Or are we to blame the recipients of the wires who ignored the spy's critical messages, resulting in trouble to come? Perhaps the spy's problems really began with the mysterious "bogus guide." All of these explanations are no more convincing than the possibility that it is indeed the spy himself who is responsible for his dire situation. The aim of this multitude of diversions is surely, in the end, to conceal rather than reveal. After all, the poem's seductive, illusory semantics may invite but they do not necessitate us to interpret it along bureaucratic, military or erotic lines. It is also important to bear in mind the well-supported précis of Auden's early poems, presented by Stephen Spender. He claims that the young Auden sometimes "gave the impression of playing an intellectual game with himself and with others" (49). Thus a straightforward, or universal, reading of "The Secret Agent" also logically renders it an allegory about knowledge and the reading habits of the everyman. Or, as Bozorth has contended, "the poem semantically projects the reader as an insider able to set the text within a larger scheme" (721). There are no similes or symbols necessary to this particular interpretation, only referents. "Control of the passes was, he saw, the key / To this new district." The district onto which the poem opens out in this first line refers, then, to the poem itself and is therefore an early trigger for the poem's reader to compete for interpretive power, to control, as it were, the "passes" of meaning. Continuing this schematic logic, Bozorth writes of the poem's first line: "the definite articles, personal pronoun, and demonstrative adjective all put this poem in medias res, but do not specify the res" (721).

Drawing all of these readings together, it is clear that "The Secret Agent" exceeds a straightforward, if tragic, narrative of espionage or warlike entrapment. Instead, the duplication of identities leads to the astonishing discovery that the spy is both everyone and no one. The very structure of the poem itself requires us to be alert to the fact that anyone ("the trained spy," "a bogus guide," the reader of the poem, or the mysterious "they") could ultimately be an enemy. As suggested by the final stanza's description of the act of "running away in the dark" and "reproach[ing] the night for a companion," the consequence of such confusion over seeing, reading, surveilling and interpreting is a scenario in which limited knowledge leads to intense anxiety. In the very early stages of Auden's poetry, then, the spy functions as an allegory or metaphor for the subsuming of external conflicts by internal conflicts or vice versa and can thus, to borrow Carlston's delineation, "successfully be used to figure both the angst of the neurotic and the anxiety of the persecuted" (*Double Agents* 162). Auden echoes this idea in his preface to *Oxford Poetry* in 1927 where he writes, along with fellow editor Cecil Day-Lewis, that "[a]ll genuine poetry is in a sense the formation of private spheres out of a personal chaos; and therefore we would remind those who annually criticize us for lack of homogeneity, first, that on the whole it is environment which conditions values, not values which form environment" (v).

What we see therefore in Auden's early poems such as "The Secret Agent," and in many modern American poems more broadly, is a turn away from the obsessive sincerity of the Romantic lyric towards a lyric focused more on poetry's role as a transmitter of secrets or confessions—a lyric obsessed with the duplicity of signifiers in language. "The Secret Agent" is a lyric that thrives along two distinct but nevertheless interrelated registers: as a poem that critiques modes of surveillance, self-surveillance and spying, but also as a poem that enacts an internal witch-hunt of its own for the purposes of metaliterary spectacle. The illusory and enigmatic figure of the spy thus enters Auden's oeuvre "under the sign of danger, frustration, loneliness, and violent death" (Carlston, *Double Agents* 161).

Many of Auden's other early poems arrange internal poetic puzzles of their own. They allude to spies, frontiers, espionage, alienation, abduction, treason and secret codes for the purpose of showing how the notion of surveillance itself is capable of determining the poem's internal mechanisms and show how verse functions as a form of self surveillance. Published shortly after "Control of the Passes," the slightly

longer poem "Half Way" (1930) presents a spy figure who has escaped a regime where he had been required to report to an authority figure (the poem's speaker) from within a complex secret organisation. The first stanza reads:

> Having abdicated with comparative ease
> And dismissed the greater part of your friends;
> Escaped in a submarine
> With a false beard, hoping the ports were watched.
> How shall we greet your arrival;
> For it isn't snowing
> And no one will take you for a spy. (*CP* 69)

Poised between friend and foe, the poem's speaker cryptically assures the spy that his "false beard" will suffice in keeping his identity secret. The orator's surreal instructions to the spy leave it unclear whether the two are partners in the escape or whether the instructor is a madman who should not be trusted as a guide. While it is also unclear from where the spy has escaped, the tone of this opening stanza nevertheless suggests that the speaker knows the spy personally and that the beard-clad runaway is a person of some consequence. The conciliatory tone encapsulated in these lines is quickly reversed in the following stanza as the authority figure announces a surprising caveat:

> Of course we shall mention
> Your annual camp for the Tutbury glass workers
> Your bird-photography phase, and the Dream at the Hook,
> Even the winter in Prague though not very fully:
> Your public refusal of a compass
> Is fixed for tomorrow. (*CP* 69)

The technique of arranging images into lists is dominant in Auden's early poems. Described as "mechanical parataxis" by Rainer Emig, it gives the impression of being completely light-hearted and playful but is nevertheless frequently "slyly meaningful" (17). One such hidden meaning, for example, is described by Joseph Warren Beach in *The Making of the Auden Canon* (1957), where he notes that the "Tutbury glass workers," conjured in the poem's second stanza, are, in Auden, "a favourite device of the ruling class for corrupting those who might otherwise be revolutionaries" (117). Extrapolating outwards from this embedded hint towards the poem's broader politics,

Warren Beach suggests that the poem's "conspiratorial characters belong to the party in power, the 'ruling class,' and it is on them that the satire falls" (117).

Whatever the poem's satirical target, all of these readings are further complicated by the editorial blows later dealt to its lines as a part of Auden's larger project of rewriting. A version of "Half Way" entitled "Interview" was printed in the *Cambridge Left* in 1935, five years after its first publication, and never reprinted by Auden thereafter. In addition to changing its title, he also altered several parts of the poem's narrative and overall structure, making it a standout example of his incessant methods of amendment. John Haffenden has reflected upon these alterations, commenting that Auden's re-ordering of words in the poem's first stanza introduced a "non sequitur with intentionally comic effect" (442). Haffenden also notes how "the deletion of the third stanza with its references to Stinker and Bog-eyes has resulted in the creation of a quite different type of poem: originally belonging to the scoutmaster/conspirator cycle, it has been transformed into a somewhat bizarre Quest poem, a metamorphosis perhaps obliquely acknowledged in the new title" (442). Despite this later radical deletion of the poem's third stanza, the final section remained mostly unchanged in its narrative arrangement. This original décima begins:

> But now look at this map.
> Here are the first – and the second – class roads,
> Crossed swords for battles, and gothic letters
> For places of archaeological interest. (*CP* 70)

The poem ends with the lines:

> The car will take you as far as the forge,
> Further than that we fear is impossible.
> At Bigsweir look out for the Kelpie.
> If you meet Mr. Wren, it is wiser to hide.
> Consult before leaving a water doctor.
> Do you wish to ask any questions? Good; you may go. (*CP* 70)

There, the spy is finally dismissed with further cryptic instructions and a strategically designed map of England. Yet while the places of interest and ostensible obstacles placed along the spy's trajectory may seem intolerably abstract, the sense of trepidation, even failure, in this final section is clear. The lines, "The car will take you as far as the forge / Further than that we fear is impossible," reveal the extent to

which the fugitive traveller is, ultimately, on his own. It was Auden, after all, who characterised the 1930s as "the age of anxiety," and in his attempt to escape, amidst first and second-class roads, "crossed swords for battles," and "Mr. Wren," the poem's subject is inevitably blocked. In his fittingly titled essay, "W.H. Auden and rules of disengagement," Tony Sharpe summarises this dilemma, noting of the poem's final lines, "yet a map, even if it shows the best way out, is also a 'rehearsed response' that pre-ordains roads to be taken, and much of this tonal certitude reli[es] on the categorisation of experience (itself a mode of control)" (336). Moreover, these coded final lines encapsulate the idea that characterises the overarching mode of the *Poems* (1930) in which "Half Way" appears, and would also, in the end, dominate more and more of Auden's poetry, thought and work: the poet as professional observer. While this at first might seem like an obvious theme in Auden's poetry—and indeed the poetry of all poets—the panoptical structure of poems such as "The Secret Agent," "Half Way," and, as I will move to discuss next, "A Happy New Year," "The Watchers" and "Consider This and in our Time," is a poetic organisation mobilised by processes of systematic looking.

The unusual and in fact quite idiosyncratic form of surveillance poetics that I am delineating here cannot be altogether seen as separated from the conditions under which Auden wrote many of his early poems. In the decade before his departure for the US in 1939, he spoke of England from the perspective of one who was always looking down from above but he was also quite bitter. Indeed, the poems are dominated by the idea of a declining England—"a world that has had its day"—witnessed from the vantage point of one who could observe the world as if all of life were a *Bildungsroman* (Firchow 22). "A Happy New Year (To Gerald Heard)" (1932), set in "[t]he third week in December," when "frost came at last" describes one such surveillance lookout. As the poet gains higher ground above Helensburgh, the River Clyde remains "untilted" as he climbs, until "[o]n either side the moorland grew away" and "Loch Lomond was below" (*English Auden* 444). "Look down, look down at your promised land" a voice declares as the speaker peers out over the "tiny red flags" of the Helensburg Golf Course and the "tea being laid on the vicarage lawn" (*English Auden* 445). The poem continues in a lengthy, bizarre dream sequence characterised by secrecy, paranoia, anxiety and battles of various kinds, before two significant stanzas which read:

The ranks got unruly and yelled "Let's be free!"
Some pulling up saplings were thrashing their wives.
"I can fly," cried one and fell off a tree.
"Comrades," another, "draw your knives."
The secret police had the time of their lives.
Herding hundreds to a long black van
They drove them off to the Government San.

"Never sleep, never sleep, always on the go,"
The owner of the telephone was back again.
"O the fools, the fools. Why, don't they know
What I said to Lloyd George in 1918?
He couldn't answer, his hands weren't clean.
And I gave them lessons in deciphering codes,
I warned them of spies in acrostic odes." (*English Auden* 450)

These seemingly light, serio-comic Skeltonic stanzas are, in one sense, similar to those in a poem such as "The Secret Agent," where characters attempt to escape from nameless enemies and secret police have "the time of their lives." Yet there is also a marked difference here from the intensity with which the figure of the spy was employed in Auden's earlier poems. While in "The Secret Agent" the trained spy has, at the very least, a strategic plan of his own, by the time Auden came to write "A Happy New Year," even spies, it seems, need lessons from unnamed, untrustworthy companions. Similarly, as we witness in "Half Way," the roving agent's car will take him "as far as the forge" but "further than that … is impossible." In both instances, the spies only ever really make it *half way*. This reading is consistent with Erin Carlston's view of the symbol of the spy in these slightly later poems when it comes to the obvious homoerotic readings of Auden's verse. "In these texts," she writes, "the figure of the spy seems to be … running out of steam; arguably, in fact, the trope was never again used with quite such eerie, unsettling force as it had been in ["The Secret Agent"], and its later manifestations were all attempts, some successful and some not, to work out the connections that the earlier poem created between espionage, sexuality, and the conflicting private and public pressures operating on the homosexual subject" (*Double Agents* 167). If the symbol of the spy had, after "The Secret Agent," become attenuated, it was perhaps because Auden had begun to internalise the peculiar "bird's eye view" omniscience that would come with his imminent transcontinental conversion.

Any mention of observation in the poems of Auden brings into view another crucial poem in which the speaker looks out from a concealed position and describes the world around him from the perspective of expert eyewitness. "The Watchers" (1932) opens with a figure peering out of his window over the sleeping town below:

> Now from my window-sill I watch the night.
> The church clock's yellow face, the green pier light
> Burn for a new imprudent year;
> The silence buzzes in my ear;
> The jets in both the dormitories about out. (*CP* 63)

The time of year, we learn, is around New Year's Day and the meditative spectator concludes that without the traditional winding down of work at year's end, and the subsequent rituals enacted by the townspeople, their lives would be near empty. The various targets of the speaker's scrutiny are ostensibly random, yet it is this eerie mise-en-scène of images that is at the heart of the poem's unsettling comment about the contradictions inherent in the appearances of things and their realities. Nature, science and manmade objects move in and out of focus as the speaker conjures the night's assorted phenomena with cool apprehension. He examines concrete, faraway objects ("The lilac bush like a conspirator / Shams dead upon the lawn") before centring in on images of the mind: "But in my thought to-night you seem / Forms which I saw once in a dream, / The stocky keepers of a wild estate" (*CP* 63). There are obvious juxtapositions throughout this poem between the pastoral images of the town (trees, butterflies and the northern shore) and mechanical images (clocks, a stove, the green pier light and "guns beneath … arms"), a technique characteristic of the 1930s Pylon School poets who included Auden, Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day Lewis and Stephen Spender. There is an unquestionable Yeatsian ominousness to "The Watchers"; each human, mechanical intrusion into the natural landscape signifies another twist, or turn, in the town's widening gyre. The 1930s in which the poem was written was, after all, a decade of menacing uncertainty. The malaise of Auden's modern times is perhaps best captured later in the poem in a pivotal stanza, which reads:

> Look not too closely, be not over-quick;
> We have no invitation, but we are sick,
> Using the mole's device, the carriage

Of peacock's or rat's desperate courage,
For we shall only pass you by a trick. (*CP* 64)

In a poem that is, in the end, about looking, this stanza introduces an ironic inversion of the speaker's gaze. By looking "too closely," he runs the risk of *overlooking* the town's secrets; thus, in turn, the poem's entire narrative becomes a symbolic one, with multiple significations and levels of meaning. This implication serves to remind us of the power of the poet's role as writer, observer and surveiller: the poem as both a representation of and a reflection upon the process of looking. Moreover, the reference to the "mole's device" in this illuminating stanza belies the observer's earlier autonomy as watcher. In the jargon of espionage, a mole (sometimes called a "sleeper agent") refers to an espionage agent who has not yet been fully inducted as a spy. Instead, moles must fulfil service roles before being entrusted with the secret information needed to qualify as a professional spy. Thus, although the figure at the window and the "Great Bear" constellation that "hangs as a portent over Helensburgh" are both watchers, there are perhaps other, more menacing, watchers in the town about whom the speaker does not yet know. This reading of "The Watchers," in which I am suggesting that the poet's process of observation becomes a political critique in and of itself, is reflected in a remark by Rod Mengham in his essay "The Thirties: Politics, Authority, Perspective" where he notes that a characteristic feature of Auden's writing during this period is "a mode of address, which communicates the need for decisive action based on the analysis of a general condition, while appearing to confide in an inner circle of conspirators" (365).

Other poems written during this period make complex excursions into grey, dilapidated mining country where the observer stands at "the crux left of the watershed, / On the wet road between the chafing grass" and looking down "Below him sees dismantled washing-floors, / Snatches of tramline running to a wood" (*CP* 32). Operating like a late night secret policeman or spy, Auden was already at this early stage conceiving of his poetics as the profession of a new world order. Or, as Alexandra Harris has written of Auden's observational process, if civilian life and culture in England were "worn out and the mining towns were expiring, folding in over their own secrets, the new efficiency belonged to undercover agents and the new poetry came in the form of diagrams and codes legible only to inmates" (354). These diagrams were sometimes sketched from above mine sites or sometimes from coastal

lookouts; others are unnamed reclusive places in forbidden country or enemy-held terrain. All of these viewpoints come into focus in the early poem "Consider This and in our Time" (1930), whose first verse exemplifies Auden's preference to "imagine himself carrying out surveillance from above, detached and immune" but with crucial secrets to reveal about the process of watching (Harris, *Weatherland* 354):

> Consider this and in our time
> As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman:
> The clouds rift suddenly – look there
> At cigarette-end smouldering on a border
> At the first garden party of the year.
> Pass on, admire the view of the massif
> Through plate-glass windows of the Sport Hotel; (*CP* 61)

The dramatic shift early in this opening stanza ("The clouds rift suddenly – look there") destabilises the process of observation a mere three lines into the poem before the viewpoint is again changed by line six where, suddenly, it is the "plate-glass windows of the Sport Hotel" through which observation must occur. Perhaps more remarkable is the warning established as early as the opening line: "Consider This and *in our time*." Through this temporal warning Auden reminds us that the surveillance afforded to the helmeted airman has not always been as possible as that of the hawk. What this involves, Rod Mengham writes of this poem, "is placing an emphasis not on the position of the perceiving eye, but on all the things that are being perceived" (364). In this sense, Auden's key innovation, in poems such as "Consider This and in our Time" and numerous others, is a surveillance poetics in which no one observer has a privileged view of their target. As the "clouds rift suddenly," both the hawk and the airman have the same view of "a cigarette end smouldering on a border"; both calmly "pass on" since both instinctively know that their line of sight may disappear at any moment. In this way, the entire poem is experienced as if from the sky, adhering to a style of Auden's in which, as Edward Mendelson has written, Auden "frees himself from the manner of Eliot by reclaiming from Hardy what he later called Hardy's 'hawk's vision, his way of looking at life from a great height'" (*Early Auden* 33). It is this *height*, perhaps, which could be said to have afforded Auden the critical distance from which to analyse his homeland, both before and after becoming an American citizen. As Auden wrote to a friend in the UK about his intention to sever fully his connection with his homeland: "To attempt the most

difficult seems to me the only thing worthwhile. At least I know what I am trying to do, which most American writers don't, which is to live deliberately without roots. I would put it like this. America may break me completely, but the best of which one is capable is more likely to be drawn out of one here than anywhere else" (Dodds 136).

Prompted by a post-World War I surge in the number of Americans travelling abroad, American government interest in surveillance during this period became increasingly systematised and professionalised. As this chapter has argued, however, poets' responses to this increase in surveillance were often dissident and almost always concerned with a critique of national identity. Confessional poetry, as a movement concerned with domesticity, pathology and disintegration, counters many of the masculinised consolidations of national identity that can be seen in lyric poems written from the perspective of being abroad. Moreover, as the next chapter demonstrates, confessional lyric is not a marginalised aesthetic refuge from a culture of surveillance but is rather a socially and politically engaged medium, which enacts a process of surveillance itself. The movement between this chapter and the following is one of ideology and politics as much as it is of the evolution of a particular kind of lyric. Unlike a surveillance poetics abroad, a poetics of the home is twofold: the home protects and fortifies but at the same time it encloses and entraps. The metaphorical eye looks out from the home, but it is also kept in. These structures are mirrored in the poetry of the period, which amplifies the centrality of the self in order to deliver political messages under the guise of private confession.

# CHAPTER 4:
# SURVEILLANCE POETICS AT HOME

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated.[41]

T.S. ELIOT

The architectural and ideological space of the American home during the middle decades of the twentieth century was imbued with power, promise and the supposed guarantee of domestic security. However, as lyric poetry of the period reveals, the home also came to signify the threat of surveillance, invasion and enclosure. As a number of historians have shown, most notably Elaine Tyler May in her classic *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988), by the later half of the twentieth century the American home had become a paradoxical space: on the one hand it was a shield against the unnerving post-war environment, while on the other it was a site of increasing government surveillance. "Amid a world of uncertainties brought about by World War II and its aftermath," writes Tyler May, "the home seemed to offer a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world. The message was ambivalent, however, for the family also seemed particularly vulnerable. It needed heavy protection against the intrusions of forces outside itself" (3). Thus, the self-contained twentieth-century home offered the illusion of privacy even as it became the site of increasingly intrusive observation and overhearing.

American society's involvement in the political and cultural meaning of the home in twentieth-century America is precisely what lyric poetry of the period problematises. In an equation that endured from the early twentieth century into the post-war period, investment in the American home was considered synonymous with commitment to the nation. Thus the security and embellishment of the private suburban residence was regarded as akin to reinforcing the broader public sphere. However, the acceptance of the family home as a national symbol of courage, hope and ultimately protection brought with it a range of anxieties that made their way

[41] "Four Quartets," *Collected Poems*, 203.

into not only the politics of the period but also its television programs, advertising, consumption patterns and consequently, poetry. The tension between the private sphere (epitomised in the literature and social rhetoric from the 1920s onwards through a strong focus on gender conformity, domestic containment and entrapment) and the public interest (most apparent in ideals of social mobility, celebrity and increased globalisation) lies at the centre of the poetics of twentieth-century surveillance. This manifested in poems that addressed the scrutinising of the suburban home, and in particular the ways in which the poet, as a figure capable of being simultaneously inside and outside the home, came to be seen as a helpmeet to the regime imposed by an increasingly invasive security state, but also as a serious threat to the domestic regime.

Domestic containment during the twentieth century came to refer to the instrumental forms of surveillance directed at the American family home, but also to the various modes of culture through which this predominantly ideological form of surveillance was enacted. Throughout this chapter, my focus is on lyric poetry's role in constructing and communicating an experience of surveillance—of bodies, living rooms, individual habits and patterns of people's consumption. The lyric poem was not only a distinctively subjective response to the century's pervasive anxieties about privacy, it also became the site upon which an emergent identity politics was teased out against the backdrop of an increasingly bellicose security state. My argument is that American poetry about the home in the years from the 1920s to the 1960s was significant not only in responding to the rise of a surveillance culture, but also in shaping its very dimensions, even at the level of quotidian domestic practice.

The chapter begins with an examination of the political forces—both global and domestic—that gave rise to twentieth-century America's ideological insistence on the home as a symbol for national strength and security, and it moves from there to a discussion of various manifestations—both conceptual and material—of domestic containment ideology as exemplified in the poetry of the period. Finally, I examine wiretapping in America alongside the concept of "overhearing" in the lyric by turning to confessional poetry as the site upon which the lyric's engagement with public and private life comes full circle. The unstable boundaries between public and private life

that form the final step in the enactment of power that Foucault terms "normalization" are eventually realised in the confessional structure of modern subjectivity.[42]

## Diver Under a Glass Bell:
## Containment and Surveillance Poetics

on the kitchen shelf among the saucers
a pair of beetle-eyes would fix her own.[43]

ADRIENNE RICH

In June 1942, J. Edgar Hoover delivered a speech to students at St. Johns University Law School in Brooklyn, New York. Entitled, "A Nation's Call to Duty: Preserve the American Home," the invective sought to rally the collective protection of core American values and inspire a speedy and decisive victory in what he referred to simply as "this war." In typically forceful style, Hoover declared to the students:

> Tempestuous times in a war-inflamed world add a deep note of seriousness to the happiness of your day. World events have deprived you of the immediate choice of your life's work … You are being called to duty for your country. You must, as Americans, answer the call to public service. This year, instead of choosing, you are chosen for a crusade to protect this, our beloved land, from the savagery of those who would destroy our God, our Homes, and our Country. (555)

The jeremiad continued beyond these remarks, including an account of the new "mechanized age of the 40s," an impassioned summary of the United States Patriot

[42] Deborah Nelson makes a similar connection between Foucault's theorisation of normalising hierarchies and the public-private divide (or collapse) of twentieth-century America, writing: "The surge of critical reflection on modernity that followed World War II made evident to the intellectual vanguard in [America] that the boundaries between public and private life were highly unstable in both mass democracies and totalitarian regimes. This insight is by now familiar, as evidenced by the influence of Michel Foucault, whose account of the disciplinary technologies of modern states and the confessional structure of modern subjectivity located the interpenetration of public and private life in the founding institutions of the Enlightenment." See *Pursuing Privacy,* xii-iii.
[43] "Living in Sin," *The Diamond Cutters*, 60.

Act, an attack on what Hoover labelled the "espousers of all Godless and treacherous 'isms'" and lastly a seemingly mandatory account of the notion of democratic freedom. Perhaps most importantly, the speech returned again and again to the status of the American home, eerily forecasting America's Cold War preoccupation with domestic containment that emerged roughly a decade later. Emphasising the essential need to focus on the home above all else, Hoover pronounced: "The home is the first line of defence of our Democracy. Therefore, you should resolve here and now to dedicate yourselves to the task of preserving the traditional foundations of the American home. The home, in many ways, is imperilled. When the home is destroyed, everything in our civilisation crashes to its doom" (555). Almost immediately after the atomic bomb became known to Americans, the idea of containment was enforced through a meticulously crafted government narrative, the aim of which was to control fear and temper some of the responsibility that came with possessing atomic power. The thinking behind this strategy was provided by a succession of national security documents written by Kennan, Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze and several other state department officials throughout the late 1940s, which served to create a view of Russians as "difficult to deal with" and as requiring "a duel of infinite duration" (Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" 572; 576). As Kennan described it, "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies" ("The Sources of Soviet Conduct" 575). Politically, containment was the key to American national security, synonymous with preventing the spread of communism. It was also a military strategy aimed at stopping the expansion of a Soviet enemy. However, as May argues, "[i]n the domestic version of containment, the 'sphere of influence' was the home" (16). According to May, within the American home's walls, "potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, so they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which post-war women and men aspired" (16).

In the powerfully metaphorical structures of twentieth-century containment policy it is possible to locate the poetic inflections of American surveillance practices more broadly. Described by Alan Nadel as the "privileged American narrative" of the Cold War era, containment was a complex foreign policy strategy marked by a powerful rhetoric that delivered what Donald Pease has appropriately called "a

complex narrative of Other and Same" (14). Thus, the language of containment, though at the time cleverly disguised as staid government policy speech, was highly theatrical, so much so that it has been categorised by numerous scholars as embodying a clear hypocritical irony, the kind that is tidily summed up in Kennan's many descriptions of containment, such as: "It is important to note, however, that such a policy has nothing to do with outward histrionics: with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward 'toughness'" ("The Sources of Soviet Conduct" 575). Indeed, such was the hyperbolic, dramatic metaphor employed by the scripters of containment that in his "long telegram" of 1946, Kennan declared:

> Much depends on [the] health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is the point at which domestic and foreign policies meet. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes & joint communiqués. ("The Long Telegram" 63)

Here Kennan's rhetoric posits military containment abroad in dramatic medical terms, linking the threat of any fracture in domestic order at home with parasitic infection and, at worst, death. Domestic and foreign, internal and external are sketched as symbiotic, yet the relationship between the Soviets and the United States is always emphasised in terms of quarantining; America must fortify itself from the inside if it is to protect itself from the outside.

Containment's explicit equation of the body politic with the human body shares a significant theoretical overlap with lyric poetry as a literary form, which restores the first person "I" to the centre of the poem in order to look outwards, from the privileged view of the self, to the wider mass of citizens. Robert Corber offers an insight into this position when he suggests that "one of the ways that Cold War liberals tried to contain the increasing heterogeneity of American society was by linking questions of gender and social identity directly to questions of national security" (8). While Corber's account of post-war containment is steeped specifically in an analysis of mid-century queer politics, it nevertheless draws attention to the totalising, confining vault that containment rhetoric created through its tripartite conflation of McCarthyism with pervasive modes of government-led scrutiny and appeals to

internal security. The kind of vault I refer to here is evoked powerfully in, for example, "Fall 1961," Robert Lowell's foremost poem of the Kennedy years. In this distinctively personal, subversive poem which "revives Lowell's theme of apocalypse … as an imminent historical possibility," the poet blurs public discourse with the intricacies of family life to stage the tensions that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union over above-ground nuclear explosions during November 1960 (Martin 35). The poem begins with a disturbing image of fallout and entrapment:

> Back and forth, back and forth
> goes the tock, tock, tock,
> of the orange, bland, ambassadorial
> face of the moon
> on the grandfather clock.
>
> All autumn, the chafe and jar
> of nuclear war;
> we have talked our extinction to death.
> I swim like a minnow
> behind my studio window.
>
> Our end drifts nearer,
> the moon lifts,
> radiant with terror.
> The state
> is a diver under a glass bell. (*For the Union Dead* 11)

The poem's speaker, paddling back and forth "like a minnow" behind the glass of his private workplace, mimics the "state" which also hovers dreadfully inside its glass covering, able to see out yet forced to stay in. The poem reveals the deep anguish of a subject that Selim Sarwar has labelled "the Lowell-persona mentally worn-out by the Cold War" in which "the urgency and pace of the biblical apocalypse is distended into a bleak stretch of tortuous psychological time" (126). Set in the months following the famous U-2 incident, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the beginning of the Space Race, widespread anxiety over the assumed "missile gap" and a global nuclear arms race, "Fall 1961" buys into an already obsessive public anxiety about the possibility of imminent annihilation. The danger-seeking state, submerged under a glass bell, is held responsible for the risk of nuclear drift. What Lowell achieves here, through the replacement of public by private pains, is characteristic of poets in mid-century

America, many of whom worked within the parameters of what has come to be called 1950s personalism. As Michael Davidson has written, "such gestures are usually seen as reactions to New Critical values of distanciation and impersonality, but they are no less related to a kind of domestic cultural containment in which crises of national security are acted out as dramas of private insecurity" (270). More interestingly, the very expression of such insecurity was itself contained by critics of Lowell's generation, as Davidson has pointed out, "who pathologized what they took to be obsessive emphasis on internal states" (270). May emphasises the reactionary aspect of this excessive focus on domestic life:

> The domestic ideology emerged as a buffer against … disturbing political and sexual tendencies. Yet domesticity ultimately fostered the very tendencies it was intended to diffuse: materialism, consumerism, and bureaucratic conformity … The family seemed to offer a psychological fortress that would protect them against themselves. Bolstered by heterosexual virility, scientific expertise, and wholesome abundance, it might ward off the hazards of the age. (13)

Of course, there were those who did not subscribe to this rigid containment ethos. While the American government—via policy, mass advertising and public speech—focused intensively on domesticity as a solution to disturbing political realities, other rebellious Americans made it clear that their citizenry ideals could not and would not be represented by the American nuclear family idyll. Importantly, this resistance was resonant in twentieth-century American poetry well before George Kennan's first mention of the containment ethos, revealing both the extent to which the neo-conservative values that informed containment ideology actually predated Cold War political rhetoric and the degree to which poets of the pre-containment period were also caught up in these broader socio-political tensions.

Langston Hughes's "Madam and the Rent Man," first published in *Poetry* magazine in 1943, is just one of many early poems to highlight the moral skirmishes that surfaced when American suburban ideals, only just beginning to be aligned with national security, slammed up against the reality of poverty. Unable to pay her rent, the poem's speaker confronts the very system that "promised to've done" her a national service but which instead continuously defers the American dream. The unaffordable rent metonymically encapsulates the racial basis of America's economic

divide at the same time that it interrogates the vulnerability of those who were being sidelined by the American dream. Its opening stanza reads:

> The rent man knocked.
> He said, Howdy-do?
> I said, What
> Can I do for you?
> He said, You know
> Your rent is due.
>
> I said, Listen,
> Before I'd pay
> I'd go to Hades
> And rot away! (*CP* 275)

The poem's speaker then generates a catalogue of the various neglected aspects of the abode, detailing the decrepit state of even the most basic household amenities:

> The sink is broke,
> The water don't run,
> And you ain't done a thing
> You promised to've done.
>
> Back window's cracked,
> Kitchen floor squeaks,
> There's rats in the cellar,
> And the attic leaks. (*CP* 276)

The final part of the poem does not resolve the Madam's domestic dilemmas; on the contrary, it rehearses a tête-à-tête between the Madam and the prying rent man in particularly lively language:

> He said, Madam.
> It's not up to me.
> I'm just the agent,
> Don't you see?
>
> I said, Naturally,
> You pass the buck.
> If it's money you want
> You're out of luck.
>
> He said, Madam,
> I ain't pleased!
> I said, Neither am I.

So we agrees! (*CP* 276)

The interplay of conflicting positions in these final three stanzas focuses, above all else, on the voices of the two characters, each with a distinctive vernacular and tone. Yet even though the dialogue clearly reveals two contrasting positions on the renter's requests and the agent's demands, there is a sense in these lines (as well as in the earlier part of the poem) of entrapment and paranoia, played out via the Madam's unsettling narration. In short, while the scene of this poem may be that of the inquiring rent man literally knocking on the Madam's door before taking a turn about the home, the Madam's control of the narrative as well as the poem's eerie, singsong cadence equally suggest an internal monologue by a fearful tenant who eternally keeps an ear to the door. To be sure, the rent man is a real figure who has the capacity to answer the Madam's needs; however, in between visits it is as though his surveilling presence is felt just as palpably as ever. Thus the poem's humorous rhyme scheme and coolly rebellious narrator ("I said, Neither am I. / So we agrees!") belies a serious undertone of state control, overhearing and paranoia.

Moreover, the rebellious tone of the poem's exploited city dweller suggests that even if she could pay, she still would not. To the exploitative rent man at her door she declares: "I said, Listen, / Before I'd pay / I'd go to Hades / And rot away!" As Dellita Martin has written, "patriotic duty must go on the back burner when the rent is due and the money is not there" (98). But the poem is also about the false idealisation of the family home as a solution to harsher, politically constituted realities. Its catalogue of unpleasant, unsanitary conditions (cracked windows, a leaking attic, crawling rats, lack of water) reflects the string of broken promises that comprise "the classical drama of 'blaxploitation'" (Martin 98). At a broader level, Hughes's poem explores the angry defiance of people oppressed by the nationalistic agenda. In her conflict with American history, the Madam represents "[t]he comedy and tragedy, hope and desperation, frankness and subtlety, simplicity and irony, earthiness and sophistication with which black people react to city life" (Martin 98). "Madam and the Rent Man" uses the central image of the dilapidated, unaffordable rental property to establish the disjunction between the images of the ideal American home that were beginning to appear in films and magazines, and the reality of domestic containment.

More broadly, though, the meddlesome, intrusive rent man embodies the collapsed boundary between inside and outside, private and public, individual and government.

These kinds of ideological tensions were well known to Hughes. In 1925, the year of the publication of *The Weary Blues* (1925), Hughes's role as a busboy volunteer for the All-American Anti-Imperialist League had led to the creation of an FBI file in his name (Maxwell 40). The fact that he wrote poems sympathetic to the proletarian cause such as "Goodbye Christ" (1932) only intensified the American authorities' mistrust, leading in turn to the FBI's branding of Hughes as the "Negro pornographic poet" (Robins 63). Written only a few years after the publication of "Madam and the Rent Man," Richard Wright's polemic "FB Eye Blues" (1949) invokes a similar scenario of domestic intrusion. Composed while Wright was filming *Native Son* in 1949, the witty blues poem critiques the nightmarish intimacy of spy-sight, satirising the Bureau's habit of snooping on even the most private quarters of people's lives, including their love life. The poem begins:

> That old FBI eye
> Tied a bell to my bed stall
> Said old FB eye
> Tied a bell to my bed stall
> Each time I love my baby,
> gover'ment knows it all.
>
> Woke up this morning
> FB eye under my bed
> Said I woke up this morning
> FB under my bed
> Told me all I dreamed last night,
> every word I said.
>
> Everywhere I look, Lord
> I see FB eyes
> Said every place I look, Lord
> I find FB eyes
> I'm getting sick and tired
> of gover'ment spies.
>
> My mama told me
> A rotten egg'll never fry
> Said my mama told me
> A rotten egg'll never fry
> And everybody knows
> a cheating dog'll never thrive

Got them blues, blues, blues
Them mean old FB eye blues
Said I got them blues, blues, blues
Them dirty FB eye blues
Somebody tell me something,
some good news. (*Richard Wright Reader* 249-250)

Wright himself was a target of government surveillance in the 1930s when he was affiliated with the American Communist Party, but "FB Eye Blues" was written, as John McCluskey has pointed out, in the late 1940s when he was no longer a member of the party. However, by that time the domestic spying he alludes to in the poem had escalated so that even as late as 1960 (the year of his death), Wright was still listed as a "possible subversive among US personnel in France" even though he had been living in Paris since 1947 (Robins 285). What the lines of this poem make clear, however, is that the surveillance of Wright was more thoroughgoing and far more personal than simply the inclusion of his name among the cluster of African-American writers marked down by the United States government. Instead, the sardonic, wry digs at FBI surveillance encapsulated in "FB Eye Blues" suggest Wright's knowledge that the Bureau's gaze on him was especially sinister, because not just methodical and derived from a collective, but rather stemming from one man in particular: Hoover. As Maxwell has written, "from the early 1920s through the early 1970s, Hoover's hard-line bureaucracy was … a major if inconspicuous consumer of black texts, a half-buried interpretive empire with aboveground effects on the creation of black modernism" (39). The poem's comical, ironic tone conjures instantly the domestic version of Bureau surveillance, but it also invokes the leftist political aesthetic that was central to black American poets, along with provocative allusions to Communism. It seems appropriate that Wright would turn to the blues genre as a means of bringing together the clashing worlds of the communist movement and the United States government. Much later, in 1960, Wright used the foreword to Paul Oliver's *Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in The Blues* (1960) to emphasise the universality of blues lyrics in their poignant depiction of melancholy and despair. Focusing on the expressive complexity of the form he wrote:

> [T]he most astonishing aspect of the blues is that, though replete with a sense of defeat and down-heartedness, they are not intrinsically

> pessimistic; their burden of woe and melancholy is dialectically redeemed through sheer force of sensuality, into an almost exultant affirmation of life, of love, of sex, of movement, of hope. No matter how repressive was the American environment, the Negro never lost faith in or doubted his deeply endemic capacity to live. All blues are lusty, lyrical realism charged with taut sensibility. (ix)

Here, Wright explores the capacity of the blues idiom to be simultaneously irreverent and humorous. But he also uses lyric blues verse to sing publicly about the private anguish of being harassed by Bureau spies. As McCluskey observes, the result is a "narrative and lyric voice grand enough to capture the ambiguities, ambivalences, and frequent heroics in the modern Black experience" (332). In turning the tables on Bureau note taking, "FB Eye Blues" not only invokes a very real anxiety about the FBI's infiltration into the private space of the home during the middle years of the twentieth century, but it also suggests the extent to which Wright perceived this infiltration to be entirely inescapable.

Perhaps more than anything else, though, Wright highlights the sheer proximity of the bureau's harassment. As Emily Lordi has written of the poem's comical poignancy, knowing what we know now, "Wright's suspicions were justified" (56). Indeed, the FBI file on Wright, which is now available to the public, shows that the agency had begun tracking him as early as 1944, the year when he openly criticised the Communist Party's "failure to respond militantly enough to the 'Negro question'" (Lordi 56).[44] When Wright then moved to Paris in 1947, the newly founded CIA continued to surveil him overseas. Emily Lordi describes the intricate methods used to keep track of Wright while he was abroad, noting that shortly before his death he learnt that "the CIA had secretly funded and directed the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organization founded in 1950 to protect dissenting artists and intellectuals" (Lordi 56). Given this intense level of surveillance, one can understand why Lordi says that "'FB Eye Blues' reads as a bravely light-hearted response to a desperate situation" (57).

The violation of privacy emphatically re-enacted in Wright's poem (as seen through the repetition of the word "said" throughout the stanzas, characteristic of the blues's call-and-response pattern) locates the speaker at the centre of an all-knowing

[44] Like Robert Lowell, Wright also refused to serve in World War II. In Wright's case, this action also contributed to the government's decision to begin surveilling him.

yet defenceless regime of domestic intrusion. What the speaker sees as he looks around his private dwelling are deceptive, phantasmagorical manifestations—"Said if he'd been a snake, Lord / He'd a jumped up and bit me"—of bureau agents who have been physically present on prior occasions and are likely to return. The bedroom and its familiar "bed stall" function as the site of affixation for government surveillance work, evoking Betty Friedan's formulation of mid-century American domestic containment as the "comfortable concentration camp."[45] The bureau "eye" of the poem's title becomes metonymically transformed into a moving, hiding, crouching being as the speaker questions, "Wonder what FB eye loves, / crawling on his knees?" and then, in the following stanza, surveillance becomes bodily, an act of violence as the speaker remarks: "But old FB eye just hauled off / and hit me." Yet the poem's penultimate stanza stands in contrast to the self-deprecating tone that characterises the rest of the poem. Here Wright invokes a reactive militancy on the part of the surveilled speaker by constructing a game of cat and mouse between agent and subject, public and private, government and citizen. Significantly again, as in Hughes's poem, we witness a strategic yet sardonic resistance to FBI domestic intrusion:

> Grasshopper likes to spit
> In a bloodhound's eye
> Said grasshopper likes to spit
> In a bloodhound's eye
> Lord, let that grasshopper
> meet the FB eye. (*Richard Wright Reader* 250)

In this stanza, despite the poem's explicit recognition of the harsh reality of agency infiltration, the tone becomes suddenly audacious. Just as the speaker suggests the imminence of a confrontation between the prying eye of the bureau and the grasshopper's ostensibly poisonous spit, so too does he suggest that the harassed writer has plans of his own for tackling the government's penetration into the domestic sphere: "Lord, let that grasshopper / meet the FB eye."

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[45] While Friedan's remark is coined in critique of the roles of women in the middle-class twentieth-century American home, it nevertheless evokes the emphasis placed on furnishings, television and general domestic comfort that characterised the pervasive paradox of containment. Friedan went on to argue that television was one of the most archetypal "comforts" of this so-called concentration camp in a two-part essay for *TV Guide* in 1964 entitled "Television and Feminine Mystique." See *The Feminine Mystique*, 282-309.

Ultimately, the charm of "FB Eye Blues" derives from the contrast between the morose, melancholy tone of the poem as a whole and the striking intrepidness of this later stanza. Indeed, the "blues" of the title is a complex pun that is dependent on the paradox of the blues genre itself. African-American writer Ralph Ellison explains the irony of blues lyrics, remarking that "they at once express both the agony of life and the possibility of conquering it through sheer toughness of spirit. They fall short of tragedy only in that they provide no solution, offer no scapegoat but the self" (143). Thus, although the blues ethos is formulated around sorrow, it nevertheless communicates an idea of lasting triumph. Or, as music historian Eileen Southern has written in *The Music of Black Americans* (1997), "[a]lmost always there is a note of irony … in the blues, as if the blues singer is audaciously challenging fate to mete out further blows" (333). For Wright, the bitterly ironic tone of "FB Eye Blues" was perhaps also the upshot of his, by then, profitable career. By the time he composed the poem in the late '40s, the publication of his two major works of the decade, *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1946), had already afforded him global fame and financial security. As Richard Yarborough has observed, by the time Wright composed the poem "he had been out of the American Communist Party for several years and his initial sense of rejection, intellectual isolation, and disillusionment was fading as he developed the more sophisticated philosophical and political outlook which was to mark his career in the '50s'" (31). Although this transformation signals an important juncture in Wright's career, both personally and intellectually, he continued to be "subjected to direct and indirect harassment by American governmental agencies" (Yarborough 31). So, while the penultimate stanza of the poem is imbued with touches of rebellion, the note of uncertainty that creeps into the poem's closing stanza seems to reflect the very real circumstances of Wright's attempted but failed emancipation. The lines read:

> Breaks my heart in two, Lord
> And I just can't forget
> Said it breaks my heart, Lord
> And I just can't forget
> Old jealous FB eye
> ain't ended yet. (*Richard Wright Reader* 250)

In these closing lines, the bureaucratic structures of government surveillance are wholly internalised and therefore implanted into memory ("And I just can't forget"). Thus the defiant grasshopper of the poem's earlier stanza, although seemingly anesthetised to the processes of forceful bureau surveillance, is still psychologically vulnerable to state violation.

Through their conflation of defiant blues lyricism and an evocation of the harsh, unrelenting reality of bureau surveillance, these poems illustrate the extent to which poetry participated in the surveillance regime even while protesting the very notion of an outside gaze. The speakers of these poems, although seemingly secure in their private suburban homes, always feel susceptible to scrutiny by a powerful surveillance state. Yet what these poems—and there are numerous others just like them—also reveal is the reciprocated watchfulness of renter and rent-man, subject and government, citizen and state, neighbour and neighbour. Several scholars have in fact written about the way in which the "goldfish bowl" architecture of the twentieth-century American suburbs was fundamental in establishing a system of looking that fits alongside Benthamite and Foucauldian theorisations of residential clusters.[46] Lynn Spigel, in her important work *Welcome to the Dreamhouse* (2001), has explained that the postwar suburb was often described as "a land of 'fishbowl' houses," not because the view was of "postcard landscapes" but rather "of busybody neighbours next door" (2).

Possessing what Walter Barnes has called "the realistic sensory materials of life: facts, experiences, actions, sights, smells, sounds, scenes [and] people," Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Portrait by a Neighbor" provides a contrasting version of the neighbourhood surveillance regime, casting its subject in the role of a busy yet not necessarily busybody American woman (3). In this metrically upbeat poem with its warm, sympathetic tone and natural lyricism reflecting the laidback nature of the poem's housewife, the first-person speaker observes her neighbour not only sweeping the floor and doing her dishes but also "A-sunning in the sun!" The speaker traces the woman's actions through the day and into the evening:

> It's long after midnight
> Her key's in the lock,
> And you never see her chimney smoke

[46] See Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream,* 156.

Till past ten o'clock!

She digs in her garden
With a shovel and a spoon,
She weeds her lazy lettuce
By the light of the moon. (142)

The speaker describes the habits of a woman who, it seems reasonable to conclude, does not mind being watched. Although the woman in the poem is ostensibly confined to her home and consumed by an endless ritual of chores, she acts as though these were merely part of a fantasy world in which men go to work and women remain homebound in a state of lackadaisical euphoria. Such a condition is most overtly captured in the lines: "She walks up the walk / Like a woman in a dream, / She forgets you borrowed butter / And pays you back cream!" It is also implied by the fact that she gardens at night when most people do this during the day. This performance of suburban inattentiveness—which is arguably also a gesture of radical personal agency—culminates, as the poem's hyperbolic final lines reveal, in neglect of the sacred suburban lawn. An iconic feature of postwar suburban design, the lawn kept by the woman "looks like a meadow" and, "if she mows the place," the poem states, "She leaves the clover standing / And the Queen Anne's lace!" Thus, unaware of and altogether indifferent to her prying neighbour, the woman in this poem implicitly resists surveillance culture through her carefree neglect of the property's perimeter. Most ironically, though, despite her apparent unconventionality, the woman in St. Vincent Millay's poem nevertheless preoccupies herself with the domestic chores essential to the maintenance of the containment ethos. Although she does not necessarily police her behaviour "in visible obedience to the norms of the time" she is still concerned with cleaning, cooking and gardening (Gill 136). The curious inversion of surveillance enacted in this poem is perhaps doubly peculiar when we consider the fact that Millay herself, grown frustrated with the daily hassle of bureau surveillance, developed a practice of leaving calling cards in all places she visited purely to taunt FBI agents curious about her day-to-day routine.[47]

Indeed, in the fishbowl formulation theatrically poeticised by Millay and later theorised by Spigel, even friends and neighbours become caught up in the structures

[47] See Culleton and Leick, *Modernism on File,* 9.

of surveilling; containment expands its reach outwards from the walls of one's own private dwelling to the streets, fences and suburban lawns of other people's suburbs and homes. Moreover, the dilemma of looking described by Spigel and others draws attention to the profound influence that the metaphor of the window had on American life during this period, both in the form of the literal large glass window pane of the mid-century American house and also the "window to the world" that the television set eventually came to symbolise. While I explore the politics of the window in more detail in the following section, it is worth noting here the extent to which the glass window, as a symbol for the increasingly blurred boundary between public and private worlds, was also an important political tool for the propagation of containment-oriented ideas; according to the government, citizens should not only be watching one another, the very image of their watching should be reflected back at them.[48]

As we have seen, the poetic response to and anxiety about the widely understood intrusion into the home by an increasingly invasive state was a serious preoccupation of lyric poets of the period. In the case of "Madam and the Rent Man" and to a lesser extent "FB Eye Blues," the poem's speaker seems intent on empowering the spied-upon subject. "Portrait by a Neighbor" demonstrates agency of a different although not unrelated kind with the spied-upon neighbour refusing to return the gaze of her watcher. What these examples all demonstrate, however, is the way in which domestic containment ideology in the twentieth-century American context has as much to do with the private sphere as it does with anxieties around infiltration, public contamination and widespread invasion of people's privacy. Indeed, the focus on privacy throughout this period was not confined to the political investment in the home as an emblem of democratic liberty; it also touched upon the means through which government rhetoric and culture was able to enter the hitherto sacrosanct space of the home. The nationwide psychosocial experimentation with and exposure to the rhetoric of intimacy also figured a dramatic overhaul in America's understanding of the boundaries of the private.[49] As Spigel has rightly observed,

[48] Elaborating upon this idea, Spigel writes: "Tiny homes were typically sandwiched together so that the Smiths' picture window looked not onto rambling green acres but rather into the Joneses living room – a dilemma commonly referred to as the 'goldfish bowl' effect." See *Dreamhouse,* 42.

[49] See Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America,* xiv and Inness.

debates about the effects of communication (and transportation) technologies on the American home did not begin in the postwar era as commonly assumed (2). Rather, it can be shown that such technology was already having profound effects on the tension between public and private realms in the early decades of the twentieth century. “Radio and the automobile,” writes Spigel, “brought public and private spheres into greater contact, and numerous commentators worried about the impact of these media on the family” (2). Then in the post-war period new innovations such as television and satellite technologies meant that the domestic setting was, as if overnight, “filled with visual spectacles previously associated with public life, and the home itself was designed as a space for looking” (2). But the most important point to make here is not one about technology, nor is it the difference between the 1920s and the 1950s. It is rather about what communication technologies and innovations like the automobile and the satellite delivered: a set of ideologies and rhetorics aimed at national control, that in turning its sights on the modern suburban home was effectively removing what many poets regarded as the last bastion of privacy and freedom.

## The American Suburbs:<br>Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath as Eyewitnesses

> Today, in my house, I see
> our house, its pillars a dim basement of men
> holding up their foreign ground for you and me.[50]
>
> ANNE SEXTON

In the introduction to his pioneering work *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (1985), Kenneth Jackson argues that “throughout history, the treatment and arrangement of shelter have revealed more about a particular people than have any other products of the creative arts” (3). In establishing the inextricability of a

[50] “The Expatriates,” *The Complete Poems*, 22.

society's values and its architecture, Jackson focuses on the ways in which "the good life" in the United States, from the early decades of the twentieth century onwards, came to be equated with the attainment of a home of one's own, surrounded by a manicured lawn, filled with archetypal consumer goods, and located in a suburban space far from the anxiety-inducing urban office. While Jackson explores how it was that suburbia came to represent "the quintessential physical achievement of the United States," he nevertheless devotes considerable attention to the negative offshoots of this phenomenon (4). Specifically, suburbia in the twentieth century is an index of such fundamental characteristics of American society as "conspicuous consumption, a reliance upon the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family into nuclear units, the widening division between work and leisure, and a tendency toward racial and economic exclusiveness" (Jackson, *Crabgrass* 4). All of these things produced, and indeed relied upon, the escalation of a radical national homogeneity in which the American citizen became fused to the products of his or her labour—cars, televisions, fridges, lawns—in ways that were unimaginable a century earlier. This insidious sameness is captured sardonically in one of the opening passages of John Keats's prophetic work *The Crack in the Picture Window* (1956):

> For literally nothing down – other than a simple two per cent and a promise to pay, and pay, and pay until the end of your life – you too, like a man I'm going to call John Drone, can find a box of your own in one of the fresh-air slums we're building around the edges of America's cities … for even while you read this, whole square miles of identical boxes are spreading like gangrene throughout New England, across the Denver prairie, around Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, New York, Miami – everywhere. In any of these new neighborhoods … you can be certain all other houses will be precisely like yours, inhabited by people whose age, income, number of children, problems, habits, conversation, dress, possessions and perhaps even blood type are also precisely like yours. (7)

In this passage, Keats explores the seductive illusion of the freedom afforded by American housing developments, in which people with similar backgrounds, tastes and preferences create homogenous suburban enclaves that, ironically, are not really communities at all. John Drone, the text's fictionalised present-day Everyman, stands in for the millions of middle-class Americans who bought into the dream of a brave new world afforded by the nation's new housing developments. Through its narration of this experience, *The Crack in the Picture Window* also reveals the ultimately damaging

consequences of domestic, suburban conformity in which citizens eventually find themselves "enmeshed in a sort of 1984 with grass; civilization's auxiliaries all … 'nostril deep in swirling debt'" (Spectorsky 310). In this "arresting symbol of conformity," one might imagine the fictional John and Mary Drone of the novel "singing along with Malvina Reynold's satirical 'Little Boxes,' the suburban houses of which were all 'made of ticky-tacky' and 'all looked just the same'" (Marsh 584). While in many respects, Keats's bitter evocation of twentieth-century American suburban life reads like chilling dystopian fiction, he was not alone in critiquing with bitter fury the dark underside of the post-war American dream. The Drones had their equivalents in William Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), while Sam Bass Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs* (1962) details the late nineteenth to early twentieth-century annexation by Boston of Dorchester, Roxbury, and West Roxbury, three towns in which a "parade of 23, 000 new houses arranged by grid streets and frontage lots" resulted in the uniformity not only of architectural styles, but also of the "behavior among individual decision makers" (153).[51]

To communicate the interior world of the suburbs is, for the lyric poet, to draw connections between the material objects and architecture that constitute its spaces, boundaries and character, and the non-material, metaphysical dimensions of the life lived by everyday citizens who inhabit these suburban spaces. In the act of walking through the city, the citizen consciously practices anonymity among the bustling urban crowd, but the citizen of the suburb engages in something quite different. As Jo Gill has noted in her theorisation of what she calls "the suburban flaneur," while the flaneur as we know him or her in the nineteenth-century context "walks alone and unseen among the crowded city streets," the suburbs "offer a different set of conditions" (140). "To walk in the suburbs," Gill writes, "is, itself, an atypical and thus remarkable act" (140). For Gill the significance of the walking suburbanite is the very fact that they are doing just that, walking, and not hidden from view inside an automobile. It is my contention that this has ramifications for ordinary citizens' material and psychological freedoms. Indeed, in what follows I consider the complex status of the suburban subject by exploring their participation in,

[51] Other major works that discuss suburban development in the prewar US period are Robert Fishman's *Bourgeois Utopias* (1987) and John Stilgoe's *Borderland* (1988). See particularly Fishman, 116–54 and Stilgoe, 221–300.

and resistance to, the surveillant culture of the American suburbs. Here, it is possible to use the design of the suburbs as an "objective correlative" (to borrow Eliot's term) to the ways in which the American home and its surrounds throughout the twentieth century both explicitly and implicitly worked in generating surveillance culture. Modern American poets reacted in their poetry to the considerable impact of suburbanisation on American domesticity, identity and culture; in doing so they provide a lasting critique that problematises the relationship between suburbanisation, surveillance and American subjectivity.

In Anne Sexton's poetry, for instance, the suburban home is frequently portrayed as a paradoxical space, often in ways that invert Cold War political propaganda that positioned suburbia at the core of American democratic confidence. In "Housewife" (1961), a poem very much of its time and place in mid-century America, Sexton constructs an uncanny nightmare of the suburban home in which the stay-at-home woman subject of the poem is literally transformed into a house. The distinctively short poem reads:

> Some women marry houses.
> It's another kind of skin; it has a heart,
> a mouth, a liver and bowel movements.
> The walls are permanent and pink.
> See how she sits on her knees all day,
> faithfully washing herself down.
> Men enter by force, drawn back like Jonah
> into their fleshy mothers.
> A woman is her mother.
> That's the main thing. (*CP* 77)

By connecting the human body with the suburban dwelling, "Housewife" makes a direct connection between an attack on domestic security and a raid upon personal, bodily privacy. The architectural boundary of the house is only partially secure—"Men enter by force"—and yet for the woman occupant it is also a psychological fortress: "See how she sits on her knees all day, / faithfully washing herself down." In ways that echo the commentary of May, Spigel and Gill regarding the ambivalent message of the simultaneous privacy and vulnerability of the postwar American home, the woman in Sexton's poem is both protected and exploited by the "permanent and pink" walls of her own suburban space. Nelson summarises this contention, observing that "when the woman becomes the house and internalizes the public/private

boundary, she is both exposed and silenced" (*Pursuing Privacy* 97). "This disconnection of the woman from public discourse," continues Nelson, "was one of the results of marking the threshold of the home as the border between public and private and then idealizing privacy" (*Pursuing Privacy* 98). Thus, in the poem's final lines—"A woman is her mother. / That's the main thing"—we can observe the poet's sardonic reflection on the role set out for the mid-century American woman whose position in the home, unlike that of the man, is deemed ultimately natural. The very structure or design of the home therefore becomes that of the female body, inside which the figure of the male (the surveilling state) exists in the form of invasive, unnatural presences.

The problematic relationship between suburban architecture, politics, bodies, and speech that is enacted in "Housewife" is further evinced in James Dickey's review of *All My Pretty Ones*, the collection in which "Housewife" appears. Here, Dickey writes of Sexton's poetry:

> It would be hard to find a writer who dwells more insistently on the pathetic and disgusting aspects of bodily experience, as though this made the writing more real, and it would also be difficult to find a more hopelessly mechanical approach to reporting these matters than the one she employs … her habitual gravitation to the domestic and the "anti-poetic" seems to me as contrived and mannered as any poet's harking after galleons and forbidden pleasures. (50)

Applying a method that arguably conflates the bitter hangover of New Critical dogma with a general distaste for Sexton's choice of theme, Dickey strikes directly to the core of the ways in which Sexton's treatment of the domestic ran counter to discourses that sanctified the supposedly private suburban sphere as a guarantee of America's national security, in turn highlighting the poet's intentionally radical politics while simultaneously bolstering his own conservative political values. Carolyn Heilbrun elaborates on this idea in her suggestion that "women writers were not even to be allowed the subject of domesticity anymore because they were using it not to exalt life indoors but to derogate it" (312). Indeed, "Housewife"—like a great number of Sexton's poems—not only satirises and derides the ideological underpinnings of American domesticity but also, I argue, enters into a scathing political critique of the problematic connection between domesticity, security and surveillance. The poem's incest sub-plot, marked by a disturbing image of incest between a man, his wife and mother, coupled with the removal of the housewife's personal and domestic

autonomy, reduces the suburban home to a mere playpen, a juvenile resting place where mothers and their children are deprived of their privacy by a fleetingly invasive yet omnipresent "Jonah."

Throughout her work Sexton expresses what she sees as the symbiotic relationship between women and houses in different ways. In "Self in 1958," completed and first published in 1965 and originally entitled "The Lady Lives in a Doll House," the poet defines herself with reference to the paradox of the supposed mass-privacy afforded by the post-war family home. In this poem, the house is a doll's house, but it is also another false womb in which the housewife is trapped. The poem poses a rhetorical question at its outset before moving onto a description of the structural intricacies of the archetypal suburban structure, one that is neither private nor fully public in any useful way:

> What is reality?
> I am a plaster doll; I pose
> with eyes that cut open without landfall or nightfall
> upon some shellacked and grinning person,
> eyes that open, blue, steel, and close.
> Am I approximately an I. Magnin transplant?
> I have hair, black angel,
> black-angel-stuffing to comb,
> nylon legs, luminous arms
> and some advertised clothes.
>
> I live in a doll's house
> with four chairs,
> a counterfeit table, a flat roof
> and a big front door.
> Many have come to such a small crossroad.
> There is an iron bed,
> (Life enlarges, life takes aim)
> a cardboard floor,
> windows that flash open on someone's city,
> and little more.
>
> Someone plays with me,
> plants me in the all-electric kitchen,
> Is this what Mrs. Rombauer said?
> Someone pretends with me—
> I am walled in solid by their noise—
> or puts me upon their straight bed.
> They think I am me!
> Their warmth? Their warmth is not a friend!

They pry my mouth for their cups of gin
and their stale bread.

What is reality
to this synthetic doll
who should smile, who should shift gears,
should spring the doors open in a wholesome disorder,
and have no evidence of ruin or fears?
But I would cry,
Rooted to the wall that
was once my mother,
if I could remember how
and if I had the tears. (*CP* 155-56)

While the second stanza of the poem seems benign enough in the way it catalogues typical features of suburban homes frequently found in Sexton's work ("four chairs / a counterfeit table, a flat roof / and a big front door"), the final stanza by contrast has a harrowing psychological effect on the reader. Here the rhetorical question of the poem's opening line—"What is reality?"—is ultimately answered, revealing the fully immobilised, eternally trapped circumstances of the woman at the centre of the poem. So while there are obvious allusions in these closing lines, and indeed throughout the entire poem, to the madness and insanity brought on by the domestic situation, far more disturbing are the themes of monitoring, oppression, surveillance and invasion that are foregrounded by words and expressions such as "iron bed," "flash open," and "pry my mouth." The ominous implications of this for women's freedom are made all the clearer when contrasted with, for example, Nora Helmer's capacity to escape the urban doll's house of Ibsen's 1879 play. Shortly before she leaves the family home, slamming the door behind her, Nora declares resolutely, "I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all obligations towards her" (103). Contrastingly, the female speaker in Sexton's poem ends by declaring that she would cry, "Rooted to the wall that / was once my mother, if I could remember how / and if I had the tears." As Artemis Michailidou has written of this dismal ending, "[t]he woman's development from a 'plaster doll' to a 'synthetic' one cannot help her find any answers: the only versions of herself she is familiar with are artificial, and there is no actual difference in the move from the plaster to the synthetic" (129). Or, more succinctly, as Robert Boyers has observed: "The standard faces and counterfeit courtesy of our civilization … is remarkably

conveyed in that image of 'some shellacked and grinning person.' How Miss Sexton loathes the way in which we have agreed to be dominated by the synthetic comforts we crave" (69).

"Self in 1958" is very much a poem that, like Sexton herself, expresses aversion to the "synthetic comforts" that characterised the postwar American suburban home. Indeed, no thorough reading of the poem can fail to draw parallels between its disturbing conflation of commodities, bodies and privacy and Plath's "The Applicant," where the female figure at the centre of the poem literally becomes a doll: "in twenty-five years she'll be silver, / In fifty, gold. / A living doll, everywhere you look. / It can sew, it can cook, / It can talk, talk, talk" (*CP* 221). Here, household objects come to life, imbued with a disturbing agency that allows them to play their part in the various games that comprise doll-house-living. Importantly, as Carolyn Seifert has observed, while women artists of the 1960s eschewed the role of the housewife and everyday household objects as a focus for their artistic practice, American women poets of the period instead turned towards these phenomena as themes for their poetry (1-6). As citizens trapped within their own homes, the figures in both Sexton and Plath's domestic poems express the relationship between the physical architecture of the home and the structure of female subjectivity. The extent to which the poem dissolves the boundary between these two things is indexical of the poem's status as confessional. Nelson summarises this cross-over in her discussion of "Self in 1958" within the broader legal and political tensions of cold-war America:

> The loss of personal identity, which derived from a loss of privacy, gave birth to an autobiographical mode of writing that appeared to construct the personality of the poet obsessively while eschewing any notion of privacy. Compounding the lack of privacy within, the scrutiny of the home from without further dissolved the binary between public and private, obscuring the line between voluntary self-disclosure and forced confession. (*Pursuing Privacy* 89)

By saying that the autobiographical (confessional) mode constructs "the personality of the poet obsessively," Nelson suggests that any formulation of subjectivity in the context of the surveillance-steeped domestic setting of these poems is always conducted in a paranoid state. Such paranoia develops out of a tension between the ostensible submission to being watched in confessional poetry and the open acceptance that any compliance to surveillance through self-exposure always obscures

claims to autobiographical authenticity. As Nelson explains, "Sexton turns this openness inside out and instead uses it as her most effective disguise" (*Pursuing Privacy* 89). Thus, the very confession that apparently demonstrates submission to the overarching surveillance regime is actually a trick: as soon as the poet purports to be "telling all," it becomes impossible to sort fact from fiction and thus determine if anything significant is in fact being exposed.

"Self in 1958" highlights this confessional conundrum through its references to eyes and viewing in the opening stanza ("eyes that cut open without landfall or nightfall" and "eyes that open, blue, steel, and close"), but it also develops an important critique of the way in which the picture window came to play a crucial role in reshaping post-war America's understanding of the public-private divide (Sexton, *CP* 155). The lines in stanza two which read "windows that flash open on someone's city, / and little more" are a reminder of the privacy paradox introduced into American suburban architecture, and by extension culture, via the widespread installation of the large glass window. In this crucial architectural shift, the sudden visibility from within the home of other lawns, automobiles, houses and neighbours produced an alienation effect: what should have been familiar suddenly, through constant display, became foreign. The phrase "someone's city" suggests the uncanny de-familiarisation of what was once well-known. Gill places particular emphasis on the significance of the picture window for changing understandings of privacy in the post-war period, in particular the dominance that this relatively recent technological innovation had in "the privileging of the visual in the construction and understanding of suburban subjectivity" (132). Metonymically, the introduction of transparent sheet glass into architectural design signified not only the slickness of modernity but also the ideological insistence on the exposure of intimacy, a trend that would also make its way into magazines, advertising, and television. Detailing the double bind of "looking out" and "looking in" characteristic of the window, Keats describes the picture window as a "vast and empty eye with bits of paper stuck in its corners" (21). Through the window, he writes, neighbours "could see their view – a house like theirs across a muddy street, its vacant picture eye staring into theirs" (21). Here Keats paints a particularly disturbing image of post-war surveillance, in which eyes stare directly into one another, oppressed by not just exposure but also suburban proximity.

Anthony Vidler discusses the picture window's dual function in his book *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992), where he observes that historians and theorists, following on from the history of modern space described by Foucault, "have largely concentrated their attention on the overtly political role of transparent space − that paradigm of total control championed by Jeremy Bentham and recuperated under the guise of 'hygienic space' by modernists led by Le Corbusier in the twentieth century" (168). Thus the symbolic exposure afforded by the picture window ironically becomes a mechanism of oppression and restraint: in being seduced by the opportunity to gaze upon one's neighbour, the suburbanite, in turn, is herself under observation. Within this paradigm of looking, the impulse to imitate one's neighbour goes from being a function of government regulation to an almost cinematic, obsessive regime. As William Whyte writes in his 1956 bestseller *The Organization Man*: "In the battle against loneliness even the architecture becomes functional. Just as doors inside houses—which are sometimes said to have marked the birth of the middle class—are disappearing, so are the barriers against neighbours. The picture in the picture window, for example, is what is going on inside—or, what is going on inside other people's picture windows" (352). Looking thus becomes elliptical and the public is cast within the private and vice versa. The breakdown of the boundary between public and private, as articulated through the spectacle of the plate glass window, is powerfully captured by Sexton's 1959 poem "What's That," where the poem's speaker dramatically narrates an eerie penetration of an unclassified spectre ("it") into the private sphere:

> Before it came inside
> I had watched it from my kitchen window,
> watched it swell like a new balloon,
> watched it slump and then divide,
> like something I know I know—
> a broken pear or two halves of the moon,
> or round white plates floating nowhere
> or fat hands waving in the summer air
> until they fold together like a first or a knee.
> After that it came to my door. Now it lives here. (*CP* 25)

The poem's speaker traces the movement of the mysterious "it" from its position outside the perimeter of the private locale ("I had watched it from my kitchen window"), to the front step of the house ("it came to my door"), and then through the

walls of the house, as if by osmosis, to make its way inside ("Now it lives here"). While the barrier afforded by the kitchen window at first provides a safe place from which the speaker can observe the outside world, it later proves futile in keeping separate inside and out. Moreover, while the opening lines of the poem present a scene in which the poet or speaker does the surveilling, it ends eerily by engaging once again a dystopian intrusion into the family home's interior space:

> It is real
> as splinters stuck in your ear. The noise we steal
> is half a bell. And outside cars whisk by on the suburban street
> and are there and are true.
> What else is this, this intricate shape of air?
> calling me, calling you. (*CP* 26)

The theatricalised scrutiny played out on opposite sides of the picture window represents what Anna Creadick has described as a "multidirectional web of discipline" (118). This multidirectionality was first articulated via Foucault's theorisation of the gaze, wherein he described the effectiveness of surveillance in disciplining behaviour: "There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising his surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost" (*Power/Knowledge* 155). By interiorising the gaze fixed upon her through the kitchen window, the speaker in Sexton's poem enters into not only a voluntary self-disciplining, but also a performance. Creadick describes this as a "posturing, pretense of self, a projection through the veil of what one suspects others wish to see" (119). As if speaking out publicly about the interior, the picture window announces: "Feel free to look in … we have nothing to hide" (Rybczynski 208).

Other poems by Sexton such as "The Division of Parts," "Unknown Girl in the Maternity Ward," "The Operation" and "Cripples and Other Stories" critique medical surveillance of the female body as a form of unrestrained masculine domination, echoing the controlling and probing mechanics of archetypal truth-extracting torture techniques. In these poems Sexton figures the female body as an entrapped and surveilled site, often within the space of the hospital and under the gaze of a male doctor. But while the atomising of women "into single, privatized units

within separate households" and the policing of them "within those spaces with infantilizing mockery and secret destructive energies" is well known within postwar scholarship, the extent to which women poets subverted these systems through lyric verse is still being realised (Piette 109).

The internally self-contained surveillance regime that organises itself in Sexton's work is also observable in a number of poems by Sylvia Plath, many of which give voice to a range of private anxieties that critics and predominantly women poets would later articulate as political, public concerns. Plath's body poems blur public and private worlds through the representation of masculine violence and aggression as an all-seeing, all-probing doctor. Poems such as "Eavesdropper," "The Other," "The Detective," "Words Heard, By Accident, Over The Phone," "The Courage of Shutting-Up" and "The Secret" (all written in 1962) use the female body as a site for investigating the rhetoric of privacy. Through their incorporation of the figures of judges, policemen, surgeons, priests and psychoanalysts, these poems place lyric confession within the context of external pressures on individual privacy, thereby reflecting the somewhat controversial stance taken by confessional poetry in relation to post-World War II American surveillance systems. Speaking from within the walls of the home, confessional poets such as Sexton and Plath upturn mid-century America's obsession with domestic surveillance, revealing the paradoxical and often terrifying impasse integral to the government's internal surveillance regime: one must surrender privacy in order to achieve protection. In ways similar to, for instance, Auden's "The Secret Agent," Plath's "A Secret" mocks the deceptive power of secrecy, sardonically questioning the value of information that is, ostensibly, only worth as much as its inaccessibility. The first half of the poem reads:

> A secret! A secret!
> How superior.
> You are blue and huge, a traffic policeman,
> Holding up one palm —
>
> A difference between us?
> I have one eye, you have two.
> The secret is stamped on you,
> Faint, undulant, watermark.
>
> Will it show in the black detector?
> Will it come out

Wavery, indelible, true
Through the African giraffe in its Edeny greenery,

The Moroccan hippopotamus?
They stare from a square, stiff frill.
They are for export,
One a fool, the other a fool.

A secret … An extra amber
Brandy finger
Roosting and cooing "You, you"
Behind two eyes in which nothing is reflected but monkeys. (*CP* 219)

This late poem, written on 10 October 1962, subscribes to a lyric style of Plath's that makes, as M.L. Rosenthal describes, "a weirdly incantatory black magic against unspecified persons and situations" (*The New Poets* 88). The outlandish "blue and huge" policeman of the first stanza sets the poem's tone as a near-surrealist, hallucinatory witch-hunt for the truth. In ways comparable to the many surveillance-oriented Plath poems listed above, "A Secret" questions the motives and methods of a regulated, dystopian world, in which the nightmarish reality is one of unrestrained government administration and surveillance. Importantly, however, the poem's confession—by which I mean, the very admission it also withholds—is without a discernable first-person owner. It becomes unclear, as the confession unfolds, who is repenting; the identity of the "I" assumes perhaps greater secrecy than the secret itself. The lines "A difference between us? / I have one eye, you have two" explicate a division of parts, yet the question of who occupies the respective roles is part of the poem's game, merely one piece of its totalising secret. Yet despite this arcane distortion of guilty and guiltless, penitent and accuser, the confession takes on a detectable, material form. The surveilled confessor engages in an act of bodily ornamentation as the secret is transcribed through a machine that prints directly onto the skin of the accused: "The secret is stamped on you, / Faint, undulant, watermark." Sarah Churchwell's assessment of the poem's cryptic transmission regime highlights the way in which it conforms to the style of internal surveillance poetics that is also present in the example of Auden's work that I have already described. She notes that "'A Secret' is, implicitly, about revealing secrets, about, as it were, publishing them: the eponymous secret, in its very nature, seeks disclosure" (106-107). It is futile of course to repudiate the poem's biographical inflections; it is almost certainly motivated in part by Ted

Hughes's affair with Assia Wevill, a traumatic period in Plath's life around which several of her poems orbit. Biographical context aside, "A Secret" fulfils its own overarching ambitions, remaining one of Plath's most mysterious and cryptic poems; the amusing line, "Behind two eyes in which nothing is reflected but monkeys," is perhaps a teasing reminder of the futility of all attempts to locate the poem's ultimate meaning.

Yet despite the "morbid secretiveness" that hinders a straightforward reading of the poem, when read alongside Plath's other surveillance-oriented poetry, "A Secret" can be seen to contribute to the poet's reflection upon her turbulent political context (Rosenthal, "Poets of the Dangerous Way" 61). Indeed, the cluster of poems mentioned above not only illustrate Plath's own obsession with surveillance, they also reflect the ways in which lyric poetry, and in particular the confessional lyric, was capable of utilising the space of the suburban American home as a site for the critique of post-war government policy. Or, in Nelson's terms, "the surveillance everywhere marking American culture produced a novel approach to privacy rights, one that, while hardly unprecedented in American life, shifted the weight of privacy onto the metaphorical 'sacredness' of domesticity from the tangible, though limited literalness of property" (91). My understanding of the way in which Plath's poetry employs walls, mirrors, ceilings, floors and picture windows as images of confinement and incarceration draws on Christina Britzolakis's useful assessment in her important work *Sylvia Plath and the Theatre of Mourning* (1999) of Plath's group of later poems. She writes:

> These "weird" scenarios recycle key motifs of Gothic popular culture, drawing on cinematic as well as literary texts, to probe the nightmarish underside of the Cold War suburban dream of normality. Their satirical target, like that of many contemporary thrillers and horror films, is the stifling family-centered and ethnocentric conformity of the 1950s small-town idyll. (143)

As Britzolakis suggests here, in Plath's poetry the various architectural and domestic phenomena that comprise the overall design of the suburbs are also those through which the prying eye of government surveillance is able to categorise, normalise and regulate. In "The Secret," then, the domestic images of the ideal suburban existence, with its model couple and archetypal, tidy home, are distorted towards their ultimate

logical outcome. The African animals printed on a child's quilt "stare from a square, stiff frill. / They are for export." Further, the regulation of domestic normativity through surveillance renders nothing in the once-sacred family home either safe or competent: "One a fool, the other a fool."

The "blue and huge" policeman of "The Secret" also appears in "The Other," a poem in which the domestic drama of infidelity is played out through coded, detective speech. Drawing confession, detection, surveillance and a private relationship together into a heightened neighbourhood drama, the poem opens with a scene of paranoid domestic detective work:

> You come in late, wiping your lips.
> What did I leave untouched on the doorstep—
>
> White Nike,
> Streaming between my walls?
>
> Smilingly, blue lightning
> Assumes, like a meathook, the burden of his parts.
>
> The police love you, you confess everything.
> Bright hair, shoe-black, old plastic,
>
> Is my life so intriguing?
> Is it for this you widen your eye-rings? (*CP* 201)

These opening stanzas catalogue a series of surreal yet interlinking images: crime, detection, interrogation, assumption, suspicion, surveillance and confession. Throughout, the roles of interrogator and interrogated are intertwined so as to distort the gap between the two. The poem's sardonic lines reveal the terrifying results of over-surveillance, where "eye-rings" spy and "motes depart" yet no clear justification for spying is ever provided; surveillance for surveillance's sake becomes the prevailing standard.

Plath's poetry is not the only site on which she developed these strangely abstruse observations on the state of mid-century America's relation to the domestic. In a 1962 essay for the *London Magazine*, reprinted as "Context" in *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, she outlined her relation to and position within Cold War culture:

> The issues of our time which preoccupy me at the moment are the incalculable genetic effects of fallout and a documentary article on the

> terrifying, mad, omnipotent marriage of big business and the military in America – "Juggernaut, The Warfare State," by Fred. J. Cook in a recent *Nation*. Does this influence the kind of poetry I write? Yes, but in a sidelong fashion. I am not gifted with the tongue of Jeremiah, though I may be sleepless enough before my vision of the apocalypse. My poems do not turn out to be about Hiroshima, but about a child forming itself finger by finger in the dark. (92)

In one short paragraph, Plath moves between genetics, big business in America, gender, marriage, foetal development, poetry and nuclear fallout.[52] But while such remarks can be seen, on the one hand, to merely summarise the political trends that most influenced Plath's thinking and writing, they also reveal the extent to which the choice for poetry of the intimate zone of the domestic may be a political act in and of itself. After all, both the American home and one its primary activities (motherhood, and by extension, the child in the womb) had become an obsessive focus of the Cold War surveillance state. Or, as Adam Piette has written in response to Plath's "sidelong" approach to her political context, it is actually fallout and the warfare state that have sidelong influences: "their very insidiousness and ubiquity, at both genetic and supercultural levels, breed viral subtlety and suspicion in the most innocent acts of female making" (115).

Sexton's and Plath's choice of the domestic sphere as a site upon which to tease out the period's pressing political anxieties is, in many respects, a choice pertinent to the genre of confessional poetry. Confessional poetry's "breakthrough," as Plath famously described it, "into very serious, very personal, emotional experience" that had been "partly taboo" was a movement that naturally found fertile ground within the ideological and architectural space of the family home (*The Poet Speaks* 167-168). Moreover, as Diane Wood Middlebrook has accurately described it, "confessional poetry investigates the pressures on the family as an institution regulating middle-class life, primarily through the agency of the mother" ("What Was Confessional Poetry?" 636). It follows, therefore, that its principal themes are, as Middlebrook catalogues them: "divorce, sexual infidelity, childhood neglect, and the mental disorders that follow from deep emotional wounds received in early life"

[52] For more see Robin Peel, *Writing Back*, 72-73 and Adam Piette, *The Literary Cold War, 1945-Vietnam*.

("What Was Confessional Poetry?" 636). But while all these things explain the intensely personal focus on bodily privacy, motherhood and domesticity in the work of not just these two poets but numerous others classified under the confessional rubric, they do not necessarily explain the fraught relationship between lyric poetry, surveillance and the twentieth-century American home.

The ideological tension between what occurs inside the house and what occurs outside is clearly a feature of a great deal of poetry written before the twentieth-century. However, what most explicitly distinguishes the inside/outside divide in work by poets such as Dickinson or Coleridge, for example, from that written by poets of the mid-twentieth century is, I argue, a recasting of this domestic tension along lines of observation, subjectivity and exposure. Suburban architecture in the period under examination incorporated features that not only served practical or domestic functions but were also important metaphors in building a culture of surveillance. But while poets at the turn of the twentieth century looked to the home and domesticity as a site for lyric poetry, in practice this poetry became more a projection of domestic frustration. As a great deal of American poetry from the period reveals, what began as a collective impulse for a "return to normal" after both World War I and then more intensely after World War II ended in the wholesale invention of a surveillant culture wherein communities, citizens, homes and even appliances were thoroughly regulated in the pursuit of a post-war ideal. As Anna Creadick points out, "surveillance was a way of life enabled and encouraged by suburban geographies, but it was not new" (124). And as I have described in detail above, the homes that comprised twentieth-century American suburban geographies, by their very architectural design, played a central function in sustaining a widespread culture of surveillance.

## Poetry, Privacy and Paranoia:
## (Wire)tapping into the American Dream

That little microphone
In our teeth
Between our thighs
Or anyplace.[53]

NIKKI GIOVANNI

By the 1950s in America, open-plan and split-level housing, combined with the widespread introduction of large glass picture windows, had put the ideological power of looking at the forefront of collective consciousness. At the same time, Americans became increasingly aware that communication technology, so promising in what it appeared to be able to deliver, could be employed to manipulate ideology and culture. The crucial point at which mass culture and technology in America coalesced with a growing surveillance society was in relation to a widespread shift from the focus on "overseeing" to that of "overhearing." As I noted in Chapter 1, the lyric has always been associated with overhearing. Northrop Frye's influential insistence on the lyric as "pre-eminently the utterance that is overheard" looks back to John Stuart Mill's classifications ("we should say that eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard") and continues to dominate discussions of lyric poetry that come after it (249; 12-13). Poems that invoke the concept of overhearing—otherwise called poems of address or apostrophic poems—are more common among American poetry published after World War II than has previously been noticed. In particular, confessional poetry frequently employs apostrophe in explicit ways to create the effect of intimacy or authenticity, especially when biographical truths are nowhere to be seen. Yet while twentieth-century American poets were clearly interested in poetic address and the appeal in lyric poetry to absent others, when critics discuss apostrophe they usually do so by referring only to the Romantic lyric.

[53] "A Short Essay of Affirmation Explaining Why (With Apologies to the Federal Bureau of Investigation)," *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni*, 21.

This final section redresses the lack of scholarship on the overhearing conducted by modern American poetry as well as concludes the study overall by pulling together threads across several different registers. First, it considers the culminating developments and effects of surveillance in the post-World War II period by examining electronic wiretapping (otherwise known as phone tapping or bugging) as a surveillant technology that sits at the crossroads of twentieth- and twenty-first-century surveillance. That is, wiretapping represents the beginning of a shift towards more sophisticated, less perceptible and far more insidious forms of invasive surveillance. These new technologies had the capacity to invoke widespread paranoia and they continue to be recognisable today in the form of Internet tracking and mass data collection. Second, this section highlights the significance of confessional poetry as a site upon which the intensifying privacy crisis of the twentieth century in America comes to a close by radically breaking with prior lyric modes. Confessional poetry also forms a catalytic beginning to new content and a new direction for the lyric. Third, these observations conclude the many connections that I have drawn between lyric poetry and twentieth-century American surveillance culture by establishing the ways in which both the lyric and surveillance are as attentive to the auditory structures of confession as they are to the subject-object relations of the observational gaze.

By tracing the history of wiretapping in the United States alongside the eventual turn towards the confessional mode in lyric poetry, it is possible to see how the changing definition of privacy during the twentieth century had dual consequences for technology and literature in American society. I have devoted most of this study to exploring the complex politics and poetics of surveillant observation, in which the visual structures of the lyric can be read alongside attempts (as we see in Pound and William Carlos Williams, for example), to produce a visualisation of the "real," or something close to it, through lyric poetry. The turn from overseeing to overhearing, however, is one in which the impulse towards confession becomes central. Confession is, above all else, an auditory practice. This idea can be traced most clearly in Foucault's theorisation of confession as an act concerned primarily with domination and power. For Foucault, the empowered is not the confessing subject but rather the interlocutor who hears (or overhears) the confession and therefore possesses the power to absolve. He writes:

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (61-62)

Although these remarks offer no direct indication either of confessional poetry or apostrophe, Foucault's model nevertheless emphasises a feature of confession that is central to all discussions of the lyric: "the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but requires the confession." Moreover, the concept of a listener or "presence" who, as Foucault describes it, "intervenes in order to judge" is indicative of the intrusive nature of wiretapping, in which surveillance is conducted paradoxically by being both near and far away at the same time. The wiretapping listener (because unseen) could be listening in at any given time although it can never be known precisely when the eavesdropping takes place. Ann Keniston has drawn a useful connection between Sylvia Plath's apostrophe in lines such as those from "Daddy" and Foucault's model of confession outlined above. She notes that Plath's figure of "Daddy is, like Foucault's listener, 'not simply the interlocutor but the authority.' The poem wrestles with and works to appropriate 'the agency of domination' seemingly possessed by Daddy" (36). Plath writes, for example:

> And a love of the rack and the screw.
> And I said I do, I do.
> So daddy, I'm finally through.
> The black telephone's off at the root
> The voices just can't worm through (*CP* 224)

In these lines, like others from "Daddy" and many of Plath's later poems, the poet manipulates the lyric to create the effect of someone confessing. In the stanza above, the speaker terminates a confession; jams the telephone's wires. Yet despite cutting the conversation off, the poet still allows the interlocutor to overhear and in so doing, grants power to that listener. In turning away from the eavesdropper ("So daddy, I'm

finally through"), the speaker nevertheless sustains the confession; the turning away "disguises [the] dependency on this reader, who is after all the only listener the poem will have" (Keniston 36). As we shall see, these effects of overhearing are not unique to poetry that has been categorised as "confessional." Although exemplifying Foucault's paradigm, such poetry resists psycho-biographical readings in favour of those that are politically inflected. The general public's attitude towards the subject of electronic wiretapping made its way into a wide range of poems as well as public discourse, advertising, editorials and newspapers. The history of wiretapping in America reveals the extent to which the infiltrations and invasion that eventually came to define it were already embedded deep in the American consciousness.

Wiretapping has existed for as long as verbal communication has been transmitted over wire. After the invention of the telegraph in 1837 and the telephone in 1876, surveillance agents wiretapped for private clients, and business rivals surveilled each other's wires in attempts to gain private information that would give their company an edge. In America, wiretapping went from being a virtually unknown activity in the mid-nineteenth century to one that, by 1920, potentially targeted everyone and so received significant media attention (Segrave 3). Of course, in the lead-up to the post-World War I period, wiretapping often involved police and private detective agencies that used electronic audio surveillance without the knowledge of those they were listening to. State legislators quickly recognised the dangerously invasive capacities of wiretapping, and legislation to prohibit it was gradually adopted across the country.

However, the paranoia over privacy that characterises most discourse around wiretapping actually began with the introduction into America of the telephone. Intended primarily for use by businesses and other large organisations, the telephone (much like the Internet today) was not originally designed with the average American's home and daily life in mind. But even with the advancements that it brought to the communicative possibilities between American citizens, there were still tense concerns about privacy. In the years following its introduction, several editorials highlighted the telephone's unreliable status as a transmitter of secret or confidential information. *The New York Tribune*, for example, published an article in March 1877 decrying the potentially penetrable nature of telephonic communication:

> But then suppose … that somebody who has no business in the affair applies his telephonic funnel somewhere along the line while a very confidential message is passing. It is yet too soon to predict whether the new invention will fully secure what is most of all needed, the sacred privacy of telegrams. ("Sound sent by wire")

The arrival of a new medium designed to take the previously concealed, private content of the telegram and transmit it aloud to "somebody who has no business in the affair" was seen as an enormous threat to the sanctity of intimate communication. Another early report attempted to establish the potentially dangerous consequences of the telephone by listing various categories of American citizen whose private messages could be suddenly intercepted. With the introduction of the telephone, it declared, "the peril to statesmen, financiers, rogues and lovers will be so increased by reason of the rare facilities for discovering secrets afforded by tapping the wires, that numerous forms of speech will become as common as cryptograms in telegraphic communications" ("Pranks of telephones" 4). The article's suggestion that, in order to counter telephone surveillance, citizens would be left with no option but to contrive new, cryptic "forms of speech," reveals the extent to which the dissemination of private speech over telephone lines was viewed by many as the final, apocalyptic removal of privacy in human-to-human communication. Not until complex spoken cryptograms are developed, the article concluded, "will the nation be secure" (4).

American poets found a productive site of analysis and imaginative possibility in the arrival of the telephone, with many constructing elaborate metaphors that compared the phone's cord, mouthpiece and wires to uncanny or natural phenomena. Three poets of the same generation, Robert Frost (1974-1963), Florence Ripley Mastin (1886-1968) and Carl Sandburg (1978-1967), for example, would have been fully aware of the complex politics of intimacy and communication surrounding the introduction of the telephone on a large domestic scale as well as the paranoia around the potential wiretapping ushered in by this new technology. In Frost's poem, "The Telephone," the natural object becomes the technological as a flower acquires the sound-making qualities of a telephone:

> "When I was just as far as I could walk
> From here to-day,
> There was an hour
> All still

When leaning with my head against a flower
I heard you talk.
Don't say I didn't, for I heard you say –
You spoke from that flower on the window sill –
Do you remember what it was you said?"

"First tell me what it was you thought you heard."

"Having found the flower and driven the bee away,
I leaned my head,
And holding the stalk,
I listened and I thought I caught the word –
What was it? Did you call me by my name?
Or did you say –
Someone said 'Come' – I heard it as I bowed."

"I may have thought as much, but not aloud."

"Well, so I came." (*Collected Poems* 114)

The lyric's syntax mimics a conversation over the telephone, where flowers provide a link of communication between two separated lovers. While it could be argued that the poem's entire telephone sequence exists only in the poet's mind, "The Telephone" displays clear signs of the unit of writing Frost called variously the "live sentence-sound," "sound of sense," or "sound posturing." In Frost's formulation, while the eye reads the words on the page, the ear hears the sentence-sound. "The ear does it. The ear is the only true writer and the only true reader," he wrote in a letter to the English poet John Bartlett (Anderson 81). It is perhaps of little surprise, then, that Frost would embrace the newfound wonders of the telephone as a topic within which to present his favoured poetic method. The championing of the ear over the eye is, of course, at odds with the imagism embraced by someone like Pound, whose poetry and manifestos speak to the relationship between the image and the mind of the artist. Invoking Pound's phrase "the imaginative eye" from his 1913 essay "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Frost takes pains to emphasise the "imaginative ear" as a necessary component of lyric: "It is the imagination of the eye we think oftenest in connection with poetry. We remember the poet's injunction to poets to write with the eye on the object. We value poetry too much as it makes pictures. The imagination of the ear is more peculiarly poetical than the imaginative eye, since it deals with sound[,] which is what poetry is before it is sight. Write with the ear to the speaking voice" (*Collected*

*Prose* 138). The poet who made the "injunction" referred to here was William Wordsworth, whose precise, natural images are the product of a lifetime's close and detailed observation of objects and their effect upon the eye. As Frost wrote later: "When Wordsworth said, 'Write with your eye on the object,' or (in another sense) it was important to visualize, he really meant something more. That something carries out what I mean by writing with your ear to the voice" (qtd. in Hoffman 51). The lines of "The Telephone" fulfil this poetic aspiration by presenting voiced experience ("I heard you talk") as the primary substance of the poem. The overheard elements of Frost's poem are tied to a heightened experience. Or, as Hoffman writes, "even as Frost tries to separate his work from Pound's poetic priorities, he reveals their striking similarity through his strict insistence on the radical subjectivism of this aesthetic" (52).

Florence Mastin's "From the Telephone" also uses the image of a flower but unlike Frost's poem the flower becomes the voice itself, resembling the wavering, fragile sound that emanates from the mouthpiece of a phone. The short lyric reads:

> Out of the dark cup
> Your voice broke like a flower,
> It trembled, swaying on its taut stem.
> The caress in its touch
> Made my eyes close. (247)

Other poems are less focused on voicing and more on the mechanical and technological awe associated with the telephone and its capacity to transmit voices over the wire. Carl Sandburg's "Under a Telephone Pole" presents a personified copper wire telephone line that hangs above the "death and laughter of men and women" whose voices pass through it. The poem in its entirety reads:

> I am a copper wire slung in the air,
> Slim against the sun I make not even a clear line of shadow.
> Night and day I keep singing – humming and thrumming:
> It is love and war and money; it is the fighting and the tears, the work and want,
> Death and laughter of men and women passing through me, carrier of your speech,
> In the rain and the wet dripping, in the dawn and the shine drying,
> A copper wire. (71)

The poem's key image is that of the charged, shining telephone wires that hum incessantly over the citizens below as if they are the gatekeepers of the city's private information. Sandburg contrasts the surreal phenomenon of voices travelling through the copper wire with the telephone line's seemingly insignificant and slight presence – "slung in the air." Perhaps most significant is the extended metaphor, which connects the telephone wire's work with that of a soldier or messenger whose role is to carry important messages between people. The "humming and thrumming" of the line mimics the drum beat to which a soldier marches while the reference to "love and war and money" suggests the things that are used to justify the transmission of messages along the copper wires. As these three lyrics make clear, the spectre and awe of the telephone and the human voice that it carried was a poetic topic that promoted the audible essence of lyric. Yet as improvements to the technology of the telephone were announced throughout the decades of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Americans seemed far more interested in whether each particular iteration would help do away with wiretapping or at least make it significantly more difficult.

By 1920, though, the foundation for the American surveillance state was well and truly established, in particular the capacity for the automatic and mechanical recording of overheard spoken conversations by machine. Several critics have noted with interest how, despite the surge in crime during the Prohibition Era, federal law enforcement in America generally disapproved of the use of wiretaps to obtain evidence in criminal investigation, ending with the Justice Department banning the practice. Nevertheless, Prohibition in the United States, which began in 1920 and lasted until 1933, served as a testing ground for public sentiment and moral attitudes towards the concept of eavesdropping. Throughout Prohibition, bootleggers relied upon telephones to establish channels of communication between alcohol producers, distributors and buyers. Despite laws prohibiting wiretaps, local and federal police routinely eavesdropped on the phone calls between clandestine buyers and sellers. The case of *Olmstead v. US* in 1928 proved the first major interrogation of the social, political and ethical dimensions of early-twentieth-century advancements in surveillance technology. In establishing a ruling in the case, the Supreme Court was required to review whether the use of illegally obtained wiretapped telephone conversations by federal agents constituted a violation of the defendants' rights under the Fourth and Fifth Amendments. With *Olmstead* before the court, Seattle's Pacific

Telephone and Telegraphic Company defended the right of illegal vendors to have their private conversations free from monitoring by the authorities, writing: "when the lines of 'two parties' are connected with the central office, they are intended to be devoted to their exclusive use, and in that sense to be turned over to the exclusive possession of the parties. A third person who taps the lines violates the property rights of both persons then using the telephone, and of the telephone company as well" ("Olmstead v. United States, 277 U.S. 438"). Despite the compelling nature of claims such as these, the court delivered a 5-4 decision in favour of the eavesdroppers that found neither the Fourth nor Fifth Amendment rights of the defendant had been violated because "telephone wires are not inside the home and the conversations these wires carry are not properly private" (Nelson 172). The overarching judgment in the case was that words spoken, unlike words written on paper, could not be "seized" and were therefore irrelevant to considerations of what did or did not constitute illegal surveillance. Thus, despite the existence of police-tapped conversations that were transcribed in 775 typed pages, no trespass of the home was deemed to have occurred.

The verdict handed down in *Olmstead v. US* is less significant than the widely cited dissent delivered by Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, who argued for the relevance of personal privacy matters to constitutional law. Borrowing from his 1890 article "The Right to Privacy," Brandeis articulated the need to consider spoken communication over the telephone as analogous to written private communication such as that found in letters. In fact, his dissent went one step further by suggesting that phone tapping was a far more insidious instrument of power because of the way in which it violates not just one wire at a time but rather the privacy of everyone using the line. Unlike the literal paper gathering and interviews conducted by the FBI and other surveillance organisations, wiretapping was conceived by Brandeis to be a way of surveilling indiscriminately. Moreover, widespread acceptance of overhearing had the capacity to spill over into more invasive measures. Brandeis remarked:

> Subtler and more far-reaching means of invading privacy have become available to the Government. Discovery and invention have made it possible for the Government, by means far more effective than stretching upon the rack, to obtain disclosure in court of what is whispered in the closet … The progress of science in furnishing the Government with means of espionage is not likely to stop with wiretapping. Ways may someday be developed by which the Government, without removing papers from secret drawers, can reproduce them in court, and by which it

> will be enabled to expose to a jury the most intimate occurrences of the home. (Brandeis 473-474)

Perhaps the first thing that strikes one in reading Brandeis's remarks is the way in which he essentially predicted the electronic data surveillance that would emerge with the arrival of the Internet. The concept of producing written or audio evidence in court "without removing papers from secret drawers," while still an abstract concept in the 1920s, is now commonplace and constitutes essentially the majority of government surveillance in Western democracies. Moreover, this account links "far-reaching" methods of privacy invasion, such as the wiretap, with the violent interrogations of torture. In suggesting that the advancements of secret information gathering engendered by new technologies are more effective (and, of course, more subtle) than torture by the rack, Brandeis draws attention to the underhand and violent nature of new modes of clandestine surveillance. Moreover, his references to whispers "in the closet" and "the most intimate occurrences of the home" reveal the extent to which technological methods of overhearing had come to be linked with private, personal secrets in addition to those coerced from citizens for the purposes of crime prevention and government administration. In the most cited passage of Brandeis's dissent, he invokes the 4th Amendment to assert the "right to be let alone":

> The makers of our Constitution undertook to secure conditions favorable to the pursuit of happiness … They conferred, as against the government, the right to be let alone – the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men. To protect that right, every unjustifiable intrusion by the government upon the privacy of the individual, whatever the means employed, must be deemed a violation of the Fourth Amendment. And the use, as evidence in a criminal proceeding, of facts ascertained by such intrusion must be deemed a violation of the Fifth. (Brandeis 478-479)

The most persuasive part of Brandeis's detailed dissent, his devising of "the right to be let alone," provided a new way of conceptualising the relationship between the rights of citizens and their personal understanding of privacy. This was an ideological shift that sought to extend citizen's privacy rights from injury to a person's body to the incorporeal: the "inviolable personality."

The tension between the widely criticised *Olmstead* ruling and Brandeis's compelling dissent spanned a number of questions that were subsequently taken up in

later cases. Furthermore, many of the ideological problems raised by a case such as *Olmstead* are extremely relevant to the kinds of conceptual problems being teased out in the poetry of the period. Nelson summarises these troubling questions as follows: "First, was there an actual intrusion into the home if the telephone lines were tapped at another location? Second, are conversations, spoken words, seizable? Third, are telephone conversations private? Fourth, what method of constitutional interpretation would allow the Court to contend with new technologies such as electronic surveillance and telephones?" (6). All of these questions, while directed at the technical and pragmatic application of surveillance in and around the private space of the home, are nevertheless concerned with the overarching problem of whether privacy should or should not be a "right of the personality to set the terms of its own disclosure" (Nelson 8).

Throughout the 1930s, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies continued to conduct illegal wiretapping operations, despite the 1934 Communications Act which federally criminalised the tapping of telephones, and the 1939 case of *Nardone v. United States* in which the United States Supreme Court upheld Congress's power to federally outlaw the use of wiretaps. The court transcript in *Nardone* notes that "[s]ophisticated argument may prove a causal connection between information obtained through illicit wiretapping and the Government's proof. As a matter of good sense, however, such connection may have become so attenuated as to dissipate the taint" ("Nardone v. United States"). Shortly after, in 1940, Hoover approached Congress in an attempt to secure new wiretapping power but was defeated by Federal Communications Commission chairman James Fry. With the Supreme court declaring wiretapping illegal and Attorney General Robert Jackson ordering Hoover to cease it, the FBI Director exhausted perhaps the last option available to him by complaining to Roosevelt that Jackson's order had prevented his agents from listening in on Nazi saboteurs who were planning to blow up the *Queen Mary*. With this and other political motivations in mind, Roosevelt signed a secret order giving Hoover blanket authority to "secure information by listening devices" (qtd. in Beschloss). The President's instructions specified that such efforts should be kept "to a minimum" and used "insofar as possible against hostile aliens" (qtd. in Beschloss). Maxwell notes how, with this hasty decision, "the FBI's uppermost place in the countersubversive pecking order was honoured with the presidential seal" (81).

Similarly, Richard Gid Powers has recommended that Roosevelt's reputation be adjusted to "bear the final responsibility for removing all effective restraints from Hoover's surveillance of the American political scene" (233).

Hoover's skill in circumventing the law to instigate wide-scale wiretapping strengthened with the appointment of each subsequent Attorney General. In 1945, for example, President Truman hired Tom Clark (who would later become a Supreme Court Justice) to fill the role. According to Gentry, "Clark showed no inclination to actually supervise the FBI" (323). More disturbingly:

> He turned over all wiretap requests to an assistant because "he didn't want to know who was tapped or who wasn't tapped." Very few of the requests were denied. As far as Clark was concerned, the very fact that Hoover had requested them meant they were needed … He rubber-stamped the FBI's director's every request. He even – unknowingly – greatly broadened Hoover's powers. (323-324)

When Clark left office three years later, he was replaced by J. Howard McGrath who like those before him was unable to stop Hoover's quest for unrestrained wiretapping power. Gentry notes how "Hoover decided to test McGrath to see how far he could go, and asked [him] to approve the installation of microphone surveillances involving trespass. McGrath responded that he couldn't give his approval, because to do so might violate the Fourth Amendment, but he didn't say that Hoover couldn't do it, so the FBI went right on committing break-ins to plant its bugs" (393).

Hired by Dwight Eisenhower in 1953, Attorney General Herbert Brownell declared on 10 May 1954: "It is clear that in some instances the use of microphone surveillance is the only possible way of uncovering the activities of espionage agents, possible saboteurs, and subversive persons. In such instances I am of the opinion that the national interest requires that microphone surveillances be utilized by the [FBI]" (qtd. in Gentry 406). By that point, Hoover had total control, both over the use of wiretapping by the FBI and to interpret what could be meant by the term "national interest." Indeed, Brownell's May 1954 directive was in many ways the final step in giving Hoover free rein to eavesdrop on whomever he chose. As the former attorney general later testified: "The methods were left to the discretion of the FBI" (Gentry 406). Yet while the FBI covertly harnessed increased power to wiretap and surveil, the general feeling among Americans, as reflected in the decisions of the legal system over

subsequent decades, was that listening in on citizens' private conversations was a form of surveillance that required increasingly tighter restriction. By the end of the 1950s, due largely to the widening distribution of telephones to different classes of Americans, the general attitude towards wiretapping had significantly shifted. With the telephone becoming a near-ubiquitous feature of American households after the war, the judiciary began to revise the narrowness of prior wiretap rulings, particularly those that were delivered with only wealthy users in mind.

These changes, both within the surveillance culture of America and in the poetry that emerged alongside it, reveal the extent to which the meaning of privacy evolved over the course of the twentieth century and continues to do so today. Privacy, therefore, "is taken to be a condition that cannot be considered apart from its social context" (Rosen and Santesso, "Inviolate Personality" 3). The fact that the examination of self-disclosure during this period should take place in the lyric as well as in legal transformations is not surprising. The lyric is, after all, the site upon which individual, private expression becomes public. Thus the kind of lyric poetry that emerges in the middle to later decades of the twentieth century critiques a surveillance culture obsessed with overhearing but, at the same time, uses the apparatuses of the lyric form itself to experiment with the politics of self-disclosure.

Take, for example, Plath's 1962 poem "Words Heard, By Accident, Over the Phone," a poem steeped in tensions around hearing, overhearing and listening in to words spoken:

> O mud, mud, how fluid! –
> Thick as foreign coffee, and with a sluggy pulse.
> Speak, speak! Who is it?
> It is the bowel-pulse, lover of digestibles.
> It is he who has achieved these syllables.
>
> What are these words, these words?
> They are plopping like mud.
> O god, how shall I ever clean the phone table?
> They are pressing out the many-holed earpiece, they are looking for a
> listener
> Is he here?
>
> Now the room is ahiss. The instrument
> Withdraws its tentacle.
> But the spawn percolate in my heart. They are fertile.
> Muck funnel, muck funnel –

You are too big. They must take you back! (*CP* 202-203)

Several critics have maintained that "Words Heard" is a poem written after Plath intercepted a phone call from her husband's lover. While this is certainly one of the motivations for the poem, such a reading is less compelling than the overt fascination the poem has with hearing and listening as both sensation and experience, in particular in relation to technology. The technological intrusion made by the telephone becomes a permanent stain on the physical spaces of the domestic setting. As if a foreign creature, the "tentacle" of the telephone reaches out and scatters words "like mud" throughout the speaker's private zone. Unable to rid the space of words and sounds, the speaker is invaded by the technology that interferes with household chores: "O god, how shall I ever clean the phone table?" Helle insightfully notes that while Plath employs the percolator and telephone in the poem as devices that disrupt and distort domesticity, her construction of domesticity nevertheless "intersects with advertising's use of household appliances to configure romance" (216). "Words Heard," however, is a lyric in which the telephone is used to draw attention to the destabilising of self and other or indeed the breakdown of public and private spheres through the entry of overheard words into the private space of the home. This is consistent with the kinds of apocalyptic effects of the telephone that are outlined in Avital Ronell's *The Telephone Book: Technology – Schizophrenia – Electric Speech*, in which the infiltratory effects of electronic speech are described as akin to the rise of fascism. In this formulation, the words heard over the telephone represent "the call as decisive, verdict, the call as death sentence" (6).

Above all else, the poem stresses the paranoia that results from the effects that words spoken aloud are capable of having. At the poem's end the speaker knows that the words are "too big" and must be taken back. Yet these words cannot exist in their written form, which is to say that the interpretive strategies usually applied to written down words are unavailable to the poem's speaker, who must instead receive them as disembodied signs. Or, as Karen Ford writes, "a point crucial for understanding Plath's poem … is that the telephone translates the speaker and the listener into sheer language" (122). Because the telephone disallows signs of other kinds, such as facial expressions, words written, or eye contact, the force and potentially misleading effect of the words heard is immense. Moreover, the very fact that the misleading words are

heard by "accident" suggests a breakdown between the self of the poem (its speaker) and the other (the voice on the telephone). With the accidentally overheard words intended only for someone else (the speaker's husband), the lyric speaker's very position comes under enormous pressure. Ford provides a useful summary of the subjective and poetic instability that results from overhearing when she writes that overhearing is "a phenomenon that is irresolutely poised somewhere between the involuntary psychological event of hearing and the willed psychological act of listening. Overhearing is distinctive because it begins without the consent of the listener, it enthrals the listener with its sudden relevance, and it imprints itself on the listener" (122-23). Yet despite this, the very rearticulation of the overheard phone call through the lyric poem's utterances grants the speaker both agency and intersubjectivity. At the poem's outset the persona is engaged in passive hearing ("What are these words, these words?") but gradually this turns to active listening ("Now the room is ashiss"). By the poem's end the speaker, in the very act of poeticising the words that have been heard, becomes a third kind of speaker who has "achieved these syllables."

The surreal, distorted scene of neighbourhood sounds and overhearing is also explored in "Eavesdropper" where Plath depicts the national government-led initiative of "good neighbourliness" as a frightening act of undercover work. Trapped under the surveilling gaze of the "big blue eye," the citizens of "Eavesdropper" are continually alert "beckoning my words in":

> Arms folded, ear cocked,
> Toad-yellow under the drop
> That would not, would not drop (*CP* 261)

In this narrative of visual and auditory surveillance, the all-powerful eye of the surveiller "melts the skin" of its people, turning them into "gray tallow, from bone and bone." The result, to borrow from Britzolakis, is the creation of a "schizophrenic perspective … producing a quasi-Brechtian alien effect, confronting the reader with a world locked into the frozen grimace of cliché" (145).

By the time that Plath was writing "Words Heard" and "Eavesdropper" in the early 1960s, privacy had become altogether different to how it was understood several decades prior. The rulings of the constitutional court would also come to reflect this

change in attitude with decisions that revealed a newfound need to protect privacy and for the restraint of insidious methods of surveillance. In the case of *Hamberger v. Eastman* (1964) in the New Hampshire Supreme Court, for example, a husband and wife sued their landlord for installing an audio recording device in their bedroom and listening to their conversations and intimate activities for nearly a year. The justices in the case found for the plaintiffs on the grounds of sustained mental distress and suffering, even though the couple were unable to provide evidence that the landlord had "listened or overheard any sounds or voices originating from [their] bedroom" (Hamberger v. Eastman"). The justice's transcript in favour of the couple reads:

> If the peeping Tom, the big ear and the electronic eavesdropper (whether ingenious or ingenuous) have a place in the hierarchy of social values, it ought not to be at the expense of a married couple minding their own business in the seclusion of their bedroom who have never asked for or by their conduct deserved a potential projection of their private conversations and actions to their landlord or to others. ("Hamberger v. Eastman")

As a case that marked the New Hampshire court's first formal acknowledgement of the invasion of privacy tort in America, *Hamberger v. Eastman* is hugely significant to the intensifying debate over privacy during this period. In a review roughly two decades later, Robert Post highlighted the suggestive "impersonality" of the decision, noting that the outcome was such not "merely because the plaintiffs were in fact discomforted, but rather because the installation of the device was 'offensive to any person of ordinary sensibilities'" (960). This is of course significant since it signals an ideological shift in the notion of privacy and overhearing to that in which community standards, rather than individual opinions, come to determine whether an act is invasive enough to be deemed illegal. Rosen and Santesso have also referred to this case in their discussion of the "literary roots of the right to privacy," drawing particular attention to the question of whether "different people are affected by intrusion differently" ("Inviolate Personality" 17). "Still more perplexing," they go on to ask, "how can one prove that *harm* has actually occurred, even in the most egregious cases of violated privacy?" ("Inviolate Personality" 17).

Three years later, in *Katz v. United States* (1967), the Supreme Court ruled that even public payphones could be seen to carry with them a "reasonable expectation of privacy" ("Katz v. United States"). Thus the wiretapping of public phones was akin to

tapping the phones inside citizen's private homes. By this time, new computing technologies and the transition from wired telephonic communication to hand-held devices added increased paranoia about privacy rights to a cultural evolution that was already rushing out of control. This brought about a pressing paradox: despite the proliferating invasions of individual privacy faced by Americans, the very concept of privacy was still tethered to the collectively understood definition of democracy, which defined America in contrast to the Soviet Union. The identifiable shift in Supreme Court rulings, from those that protected the eavesdroppers in the early decades of the twentieth century to those that protected privacy from the 1950s through to the early 1970s, tell us a great deal about the ways in which surveillance itself shaped Americans' attitudes about what privacy actually meant.

With a turn towards private or taboo content in lyric poetry, the same tensions were felt just as strongly. Compare the ideological tensions arising out of *Olmstead v. US* or *Katz v. US,* for instance, with the ideas expressed in a letter from Elizabeth Bishop to Robert Lowell in March 1970, declaring her disdain for the private content made available to the reading public through the advent of confessional poetry:

> In general, I deplore the "confessional" – however, when you wrote *Life Studies* perhaps it was a necessary movement, and it helped make poetry more real, fresh and immediate. But now – ye gods – anything goes, and I am so sick of poems about the students' mothers & fathers and sex-lives and so on. All that *can* be done – but at the same time one surely should have a feeling that one can trust the writer – not to distort, tell lies, etc. … One can use one's life as material [for poems] – one does anyway – but these letters – aren't you violating a trust? IF you were given permission – IF you hadn't changed them … etc. But art just isn't worth that much.[54]

That the only concession Bishop makes for confessional poetry is that it helped make poetry more "real, fresh and immediate" perhaps overlooks the significance of this lyric turn towards confession at a time when society itself was increasingly invasive towards its citizens. To put this another way, one of the most important statements (made either explicitly or implicitly) about the confessional turn is that amidst a context of intensifying surveillance of individual citizens, the lyric was able to open up a space in which the performance of self-disclosure worked to counter the very

[54] Letter dated 21 March 1970. Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas, Austin. Permission to quote granted.

invasions which brought about its relevance or indeed acceptance as a new poetic mode. In continually foregrounding its relationship with an eavesdropping listener, the confessional poem reorganises the private voice of the lyric in reflexive and intentionally paradoxical terms.

Although writing at the same time as the confessional poets, Allen Ginsberg takes a different approach altogether to overhearing. "I Am a Victim of Telephone," written in 1964, registers the intrusions of the outside world into the private space through the constantly ringing machine. Yet despite its lack of confessional impulse, Ginsberg's poem nevertheless stages a protest against America's conformity in the face of the pervasive reach of the telephone and the multitude of public voices and intrusions it encouraged. The poem opens with "When I lie down to sleep dream the Wishing Well it rings," before ending in a sardonic cataloguing of the many interruptions generated by the telephone:

> When I muse at smoke crawling over the roof outside my street window
> purifying Eternity with my eye observation of gray vaporous columns in the sky
> ring ring "Hello this is Esquire be a dear and finish your political commitment manifesto"
> When I listen to radio presidents roaring on the convention floor
> the phone also chimes in "Rush up to Harlem with us and see the riots"
> Always the telephone linked to all the hearts of the world beating at once
> crying my husband's gone my boyfriend's busted forever my poetry was rejected
> won't you come over for money and please won't you write me a piece of bullshit
> How are you dear can you come to Easthampton we're all bathing in the ocean we're all so lonely
> and I lie back on my pallet contemplating $50 phone bill, broke, drowsy, anxious, my heart
> fearful of the fingers dialling, the deaths, the singing of telephone bells
> ringing at dawn ringing all afternoon ringing up midnight ringing now forever. (*CP* 344)

The lyric opens with a contrast between the observational gaze of the poem's subject who looks out from a street window with an "eye observation of gray vaporous columns in the sky" and the penetrating "ring ring" of the telephone that disrupts his seemingly contemplative mood. Even in Ginsberg's somewhat detached, mocking lyric style we can nonetheless get a sense of the very real tension over privacy that emerged in this period. The creation of more and more points of entry into the

domestic space, especially through the telephone and its associated threat of wiretapping, meant that the lyric poem became increasingly responsive to the question of what it means to be private and what, specifically, constitutes a violation of that privacy.

There is no question that for Americans of the twenty-first century a complete breakdown of privacy has arrived. Markers of this new reality include the rise and increasing popularity of reality television, the voracious market for biography and memoir genres, the insatiable commodification of celebrity confessions and the proliferation of daytime talk shows.[55] As is now well known, the near total erosion of privacy goes hand in hand with the commodification of confession, which began as a corrective (or defence mechanism) against an increasingly invasive surveillance state and rapidly evolved into a global industry, spurred on by the arrival of the Internet and the near-exponential growth of social media as a platform upon which citizens reveal even the most private of details. As Susan Wise Bauer writes in the introduction to her book *The Art of the Public Grovel: Sexual Sin and Public Confession in America* (2008), the public confession evolved in the twentieth century and "came to serve a very particular purpose" (3). Bauer argues that confession "became a ceremonial laying down of power, made so that followers could pick that power up and hand it back. American democratic expectations have woven themselves into the practice of public confession, transforming it from a vertical act between God and a sinner into a primarily horizontal act, one intended to rebalance the relationship between leaders and their followers" (3). A widely cited example of the imbrication of confession and cultural politics described by Bauer is the infamous presidential sex scandal of 1998 (sometimes referred to as the "Lewinsky scandal" or "Monicagate"), which emerged out of an extramarital affair between the then-49-year-old American president Bill Clinton and a 22-year-old White House employee, Monica Lewinsky. Whatever the actual truths of the Clinton-Lewinsky case, what mattered most was the classification of testimonial material through the American socio-political lens as either confessional or not. As Dave Tell writes in his detailed examination of the intersection between confession and democracy in the Lewinsky scandal, "classifying a text as confession or denying the same is always a political action … from August

[55] See Daniel Mendelsohn's discussion in *The New Yorker*, "But Enough About Me."

1998 through January 1999, the debate over the guilt or innocence of Bill Clinton was remarkably entangled with a rhetorical debate over which texts counted as confessions" (147).[56] The end result of this decades-long confessional crisis is that the twenty-first century culture we now live in is defined by what Tell has astutely labelled a "confessional anxiety" (1). Tell describes this pervasive unease as "an anxiety born of an uncertainty about which texts should count as confessions, and compounded by the conviction that such classifications matter a great deal" (1). The paradox, then, is that it has invariably become the role of the confessee, and not the confessor, to assert what is and is not a confession. Again, we are presented with a paradigm in which human relationships, that is the social realm, become a context of power, risk and responsibility (Lyon, *The Electronic Eye* 176). "Access to knowledge and information," writes Lyon, "becomes a field of power and conflict" (*The Electronic Eye* 176). The conflict that Lyon describes strikes directly to the heart of the vexed relationship between confession and surveillance. We want others to confess, but only on our terms; and only in ways that we deem beneficial to us. In order to accomplish these aims, regulation and control of those in power—of those doing the confessing—becomes a necessity. Bauer summarises this scenario in relation to the Clinton saga:

> We both idolize and hate our leaders; we need and resent them; we want to submit, but only once we are reassured that the person to whom we submit is no better than we are. Beyond the demand that leaders publicly confess their sins is our fear that we will be overwhelmed by their power. (3)

This highlights the development of the near-ritualistic quality of confession in the twentieth century, whereby the coerced confession becomes synonymous with power. But at the same time the very act of confession itself becomes commoditised. This commoditisation brings to mind the insatiable readers of Plath's writing; for instance, those invoked in the famous lines from "Lady Lazarus": "The peanut-crunching crowd / Shoves in to see / Them unwrap me hand and foot" (*Ariel* 15). Plath problematises the confessional conundrum by adding a third party: the literary critic

[56] Tell constructs the notion of "confessional crises," which he defines as "the public debates incited when a text that contains no apparent confessional characteristics is labeled a confession for patently political purposes." See *Confessional Crises and Cultural Politics in Twentieth-Century America,* 3.

or the biographer. In this scenario, the confessional power dynamic becomes simultaneously both attenuated and intensified insofar as the revelation of confidences stimulates the appetite for more confession. The effect of this dilemma is the dilution of authenticity or rather, the difficulty of sorting the authentic from the manufactured, a disease that would later come to infect American culture on a much grander scale: "You poke and stir. / Flesh, bone, there is nothing there" (*Ariel* 15).

# CONCLUSION

## The Lyric in the Age of Big Data

Poets are damned but they are not blind, they see with the eyes of the angels.[57]

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

The aim of this research has not been to define or redefine the lyric poem in the context of Anglo-American literary criticism or otherwise. Rather, it has been to examine the relationship between lyric poetry and twentieth-century American surveillance culture in order to bring about new ways of thinking not just about poetry but also about poetry's role in ongoing (and intensifying) debates over privacy, identity, subjectivity and confession. Producing an extended analysis that maps lyric poetry onto the ideological, technological, architectural and other dimensions of surveillance in the twentieth century has involved drawing specific attention to the formal and thematic features of lyric that make it relevant to thinking about surveillance. Through close readings and critical analysis, I have emphasised the way in which lyric poetry communicates a particular consciousness; is abstracted from real life; and inverts the relationship between privacy and observation through its paradoxical treatment of the speaking "I." These three factors are central to the particular way that twentieth-century lyric poetry invokes the structures of visualisation and overhearing most pertinent to surveillance. Beyond these three key points, I have also used different poets and diverse poems to demonstrate the extent to which poetry and the discourses of surveillance employ similar styles of information gathering, such as observation, overhearing, fragmentation, imitation and the repurposing of language. By examining the material conditions of surveillance from the 1920s to the 1960s in America, I have drawn attention to the reasons why surveillance agencies were preoccupied with American poetry and the people who

[57] "Howl for Carl Solomon," *Howl on Trial*, 19.

produced it. The methods of surveillance used in this time include the FBI's direct observation of poets and their acquaintances, interviews, indirect harassment through letters and memos and wiretapping. Most importantly of all, the FBI surveilled American poets via an examination of their writing, often in ways that attempted to read contemporary lyric poetry through a bio-historical lens that connected the details of poets' lives with their poetry.

The lyric poets that I have examined and the formal analysis of their poems that I have produced have in turn demonstrated the extent to which sight and hearing overlap in the historical period of this study. This is a crucial point because it speaks to the emergence and interconnectedness of a particular kind of surveillance and a particular kind of poetry in a specific place and time. The visual and auditory structures that form the basis of my study have *not* continued into the twenty-first century because the technological arrangement of American surveillance has evolved. Also, the lyric has entered into a very different engagement with postmodernism, confessional culture and the breakdown of particular kinds of meaning due to the rise of the Internet and mass media. This is the condition David Lyon has referred to as the "electronic panopticon," a contemporary existence in which the so-called "wired city" we live in "renders consumers visible to unverifiable observers by means of their purchases, preferences and credit ratings" (*The Electronic Eye* 55; 70-71). In my introduction I invoke a line from *Hamlet* to describe the lyric poet in the twentieth century as "the observed of all observers." By the turn of the twenty-first century, because of the evolution described by Lyon, the lyric poet is no longer an observer in the way that I have suggested throughout this study: we are now only observed.

These points made, the key contribution of this study has been to initiate an entirely new field of interdisciplinary research at a crucial moment in time. It cannot be denied that poetry is currently fighting harder than ever to keep hold of its academic and commercial standing. The increasing popularity of other literary genres and the (perplexing to some, logical to others) recent demand of poetry and those who study it to demonstrate its usefulness reflect a disturbing trend towards the erosion of the Humanities in favour of disciplinary study with tangible career outcomes, a trend only exacerbated by recent Higher Education funding strategies. Meanwhile, surveillance is a topic that in recent years has come to suffuse not only a wide range of academic study areas but also popular fiction, television, film, art, theatre and

technology and culture more broadly. With the increasing sophistication of mass data collection, virtual reality technology, Artificial Intelligence and the unrelenting disorder of the Trump administration, surveillance will only become an increasingly central topic in coming years. As recently as September last year, for instance, Dan Coats (the United States director of national intelligence) told a bipartisan bloc of House Judiciary Committee leaders that any attempt to study "the volume of communications involving Americans that the N.S.A. intercepts incidentally while targeting foreigners would be unfeasible" (qtd. in Savage). If governmental or legal studies of surveillance and its effects are becoming, as Coats seems to suggest, "unfeasible," perhaps this signals the urgent need for other approaches. A great deal of recent contemporary art has attempted to reflect upon and explain twenty-first century surveillance. Other practices and genres—novels, films, essays, political theory, cultural studies—have been exploring the processes and effects of surveillance for decades now. If nothing else, this study makes a solid case for suggesting that now is poetry's time to shine.

In concentrating on surveillance and its complex technological, bureaucratic, linguistic, visual, auditory and social dimensions, I have sought to delineate a context in which to read the lyric that is more specific, more ambitious and therefore more productive than that of simply politics, a common go-to for many readings of poetry's role and effects in the twentieth century. So dominant has been the recent tendency to read the lyric through a broad lens of all that is political that modern politics has become as fond of poetry as poetry apparently has of it. In recent years, American poetry and American politics have coopted one another. New York governor Mario Cuomo's phrase "campaign in poetry, govern in prose" reflects a modern political culture in which poetry has once again gone viral because of its ability to capture complex ideas in condensed text. This is very appealing in a western sociocultural climate dominated by media saturation, click bait and fake news. In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential campaign, Americans turned fervently to poetry as a way of comprehending their new government. "Words for solace and strength: poems to counter the election fallout – and beyond," read a headline in *The Guardian*, while the *Huffington Post* offered "18 Compassionate Poems to Help You Weather Uncertain Times" (Currier; Frank et. al.). If the role of the professional poet has become a difficult one in recent decades this has not been reflected in a rejection of poetry

outright but rather in a neoliberal online marketplace that is eager to use poetry as a shortcut to presentational profundity without remunerating poets for their efforts.

Moreover, any kind of renaissance of lyric poetry in response to the crisis of modern politics is likely to result, as it has done, in the neglect of lyric's many other important sites of focus. As David Orr pertinently questioned in a 2008 article for *Poetry*: "Why are [poetry and politics] talking about each other at all? We don't spend much time wondering what poetry has to do with neuroscience or television writing or college basketball, yet these are important areas of American life that involve assertions about truth, form, morality, and the nature of culture—all subjects regularly claimed as poetry's turf" (410). Perhaps one answer to this question is to do with the fact that locating some of lyric poetry's less obvious (and less fashionable) themes requires more intellectual work than the average reader or critic is willing to grant these days. The open-ended nature of poetry troubles many people, and the effect that this has in an online context obsessed with concision and immediacy has meant that the poems that "get the most clicks" are often those whose length is shorthand and whose meaning is immediately apparent. But even then, to reduce a poem about war, corruption or gun control to a political message is to rob it of its ingrained reflexivity, aesthetics, non-standard expression, symbolism and so on. A lyric poem is always one step ahead of politics because its meaning sits outside the prosaic ostensible meaning of everyday speech.

Nevertheless, the themes in which I have situated my close readings of surveillance poetics are themes that are inextricably bound up with politics: nationalism, expatriation, containment, domesticity and modernism. However, within each of these broad themes I have examined not only the lyric's connection to surveillance as a material, traceable practice, I have also considered the way in which the lyric's complex engagement with broad ideological notions of subjectivity, privacy and identity tell us something about the significance of poetry as a barometer of twentieth-century American culture and the literary criticism that responded to it. Of course, critics and poets writing in the decades outlined in this study (or indeed even in the later decades of the twentieth century) did not refer to either a poetics of surveillance, poetry about surveillance, or even necessarily the term surveillance in the way in which it is now universally theorised. As I noted in Chapter 2, it was not until the 1980s that surveillance began to occupy a "distinct place in the sociological

lexicon" (Lyon, *The Electronic Eye* 6). Despite the publication of James Rule's groundbreaking *Private Lives and Public Surveillance* in 1974, it was not until Foucault's historical study of surveillance, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), appeared in English that surveillance became a serious topic for social theorists. The shift from the process of surveillance as the monitoring of workers in the factory to the modern understanding of surveillance as a data-driven power generator in itself has been a relatively late development that, at each step, has surely lagged behind the more complex and insidious methods of state control, information collecting and electronic surveillance conducted by governments and big business.

For this reason, rather than revisiting a historical account of the lyric and surveillance in the twentieth century in these concluding remarks, I instead want to turn to the present techno-political crisis of mass data collection, or so called "Big Data," as a way of thinking about the relationship between the lyric and surveillance in the twenty-first century—a culture characterised by social fragmentation, inauthenticity, the 24 hour news cycle, shortened attention spans and mass electronic observation. My aim in concluding with an examination of Big Data is less to consider how contemporary poets are translating the actual experience of mass internet tracking into an aesthetic topos than it is to examine the limits of subjective lyric expression in an age characterised by near total revelation of both a voluntary and involuntary nature. I therefore want to think about the ways in which Big Data is transforming human subjectivity and its perspectives, and suggest how this might be applied to the theorisation and practice of contemporary lyric poetry. Curiously, there is almost no scholarship to date that examines lyric poetry (either in a thematic, technical or ideological sense) in relation to twenty-first century surveillance. The only study that I have encountered is Andrea Brady's 2017 essay "Drone Poetics," which considers the challenge posed by drone warfare to theories and practices of lyric poetry. "Modernist writing," observes Brady, "has historically been influenced by aerial technology; drones also affect notions of perception, distance and intimacy, and the self-policing subject, with consequences for contemporary lyric" (116). These are important overlaps that highlight not only the lyric's complex dealings with power, individualisation and subjectivity but also its capacity, like drone surveillance, to "collapse spatial and temporal distances" and "zoom in on opportunistically selected objects from the safe containers of a 'radical' aesthetic" (Brady 135). Yet Brady's

study, insofar as the drone is capable only of "seeing," is limited to the connections between the lyric and strictly observational power structures. Drone surveillance will only become a greater part of our everyday lives going forward, and yet drones are often visible (and audible), thus creating a very specific surveillant effect and one that is often obvious to those being watched. Big Data surveillance, because discursive, fragmented and essentially invisible, presents a much more troubling and complicated phenomenon.

The relationship between lyric poetry and Big Data is one that also initiates broader questions about the relationship between poetry and information technology in the twenty-first century. Questions such as: What role can poetry play in a society where the total breakdown of privacy has eroded the distinction between normative discourse and confession? Can poetic language reorient its aims and audience in the face of Artificial Intelligence and the recent so called "computer generated poetry"?[58] What is the significance of poetry's ability to create a sense of heightened experience and intimacy as the world begins to embrace the advent of virtual reality technology? And finally, what can poetry still tell us about ourselves that an ever-increasing matrix of personalised algorithms and data-predictive modeling cannot? As my discussion about the role of the lyric in the twentieth century makes clear, lyric poets are not just citizens who devise clever ways to describe culture, politics, technology and history through poetry; they also imagine and produce news ways of perceiving and recording information about the world. The role of the lyric poet in relation to twenty-first century surveillance is therefore worth examining since lyric poetry's essential goal of capturing human subjectivity is also at the forefront of contemporary digital culture's pursuit of each and every one of our digital footprints.

For American poets, the essential dilemma of the modern lyric is analogous to the dilemma that sits at the centre of American life itself: individualism. Yet the most recent revolution in surveillance in the form of Big Data has radically transformed the meaning of individualism in the United States and indeed the rest of the world. First coined in the 1990s to describe data sets too large to be processed by commonly used software, the term Big Data has now come to refer to "the capacity to search, aggregate and cross-reference large data sets" (Boyd and Crawford 663). Big Data

[58] See Trentini, "Computer Generated Poetry Will Knock Your Socks Off" and Schwartz and Laird, "bot or not."

enables surveillance when those large data sets are systematically and routinely analysed for personal details for a specific purpose. The revelations made by Edward Snowden in June 2013 about the National Security Agency's (NSA) surveillance of American citizens and the ambiguous complicity of data-collecting Internet companies that followed exemplify the way in which Big Data has become the definitive twenty-first century model of surveillance. Snowden's first and formative disclosure, published in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* on 6 June 2013, was that the NSA, following an order from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC), had compelled the multinational telecommunications giant Verizon to hand over the metadata from millions of Americans' phone calls to the FBI and the NSA (Greenwald). At the core of these revelations is the NSA's PRISM program (or SIGAD US-984XN), a code name for the program under which the NSA has direct access to the internet communications from at least nine of the United States' biggest technology companies including Google, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, Skype and YouTube.

American poets were among the first to respond to these exposures. Charles Bernstein's short lyric, "The Ides of July," captures the contentious blend of public and private interests that characterised the 2013 leaks and the public response that followed:

> 'Twas the summer of '13, Edward Snowden was in flight
> The state was coming down on him with all its craven might.
> Back in the homeland, patriotic, freedom-loving souls
> Debate the merits of A. Weiner's latest Twitter post
> (An epic act of self-surveillance, goodness only knows).
> I ogle royal baby, scan lobby video feed
> Modern life is all about looking and being seen. (*Boston Review*)

The poem's playful rhyming couplets belie the grave reality exposed by the former CIA employee. While Snowden fled the United States to Hong Kong, Americans back in the "homeland" were either oblivious to or simply did not care that much about the seriousness of the revelations, mindlessly debating small-time politics on social media. Bernstein's point seems to be that any revelation about governmental and corporate surveillance, no matter how alarming, is unlikely to change our browsing habits. The poem's speaker even plays into this obsessive culture of content cultivation, aimlessly scanning the Internet in the wake of the NSA disclosures. The

layers of subjectivity proliferate as the speaker not only uses the lyric to record the spectacle of the leaks but also catalogues quotidian acts of looking that comprise a daily routine: online journalism commoditising the "royal baby" and a seemingly monotonous "lobby video feed." Bernstein's poem explores the way in which the twenty-first century has seen the transformation of the Internet from a relatively private space to a public forum in which there are no blind spots—every action, every comment, every click "is all about looking and being seen."

In the wake of Snowden's revelations, what has become clear is that governments—especially American, British and Australian governments—routinely conduct "astonishingly large scale monitoring of populations," and that, as Snowden himself said in early 2014, the most striking disclosures are yet to come (Lyon, "Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data" 2). In direct response to the disclosures, the US Senate passed the USA Freedom Act in June 2015, which amended several provisions of the Patriot Act, in particular by imposing limits on the bulk collection of the telecommunication metadata of US citizens by the NSA and other intelligence agencies. The country's most significant surveillance reform since 1978, the Freedom Act was praised by the American Civil Liberties Union as "a milestone," yet still only one step in reining in more "intrusive and overbroad" surveillance powers that were yet untouched (Siddiqui).

In the five years since the NSA leaks and subsequent passing of the Freedom Act, the scope and sophistication of America's surveillance of everyday citizens has taken a darker, more insidious and far more invasive turn in the form of the private-sector technology companies that run the email services and social networking companies that Americans use every day. Today, the near ubiquitous incorporation of social media into the lives of the vast majority of citizens has transformed the landscape of surveillance beyond most people's comprehension. Two major factors are at play in this total transformation of the way that we are now being observed and tracked: the ever-expanding voluntary participation by citizens in the surveillance matrix owned almost entirely by Google and Facebook, and a dramatic proliferation in the multitude of ways in which these two companies are now able to gather information about us. To put this simply: Google and Facebook make money by combining user-generated content and detailed personal information with advertising. Everything users do on these two services is tracked, recorded, analysed and fed into

an ever-expanding algorithm designed to increase the amount of time we spend online and the number of things we do when we are there. And given the innumerable ways that data can be reused and repurposed (read: sold to other companies), it is essentially impossible for citizens to know of the "innovative secondary uses" for their data since these uses likely weren't envisioned when the data was initially collected. Users might release their information with a degree of consent, but that consent is far from informed (qtd. in Kakutani 2).

In their timely book *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*, Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier describe this contemporary situation in a way that sheds light on the implications that mass internet tracking has for individual subjectivity, the evolving concept of privacy and individualism:

> In the spirit of Google or Facebook, the new thinking is that people are the sum of their social relationships, online interactions and connections with content. In order to fully investigate an individual, analysts need to look at the widest possible penumbra of data that surrounds the person – not just whom they know, but whom those people know too, and so on. (157)

The very nature of surveillance, Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier argue, has fundamentally changed. In essence, Google and Facebook now run the Internet and the Internet runs the way in which we conduct our everyday lives. The pattern-generating capacities of these two giants, and a handful of smaller others, are revolutionising the way that we see and process the world and ourselves. Surveillance in this new formulation has moved away from the visual, auditory and textual structures that I have focused on throughout this study and is instead now characterised by the mass collection of fragmented information, generated not just by the data that surveillance agencies mine about us but also by our interaction with content online: what we click on; how long we look at it; what we divulge on social media; and where we are when we do it. As Hogan and Shepherd describe it, "[c]licks, uploads, and voices are collected, removed from context, and entrusted to a superhuman algorithm to perpetually aggregate, make sense of, correlate, and render data as evidence, for example, in the department of Homeland Security's Watchlist Service" (8). Of course, there is no reason for the vast majority of us to be on any kind

of watchlist, yet our data is collected and stored anyway. In fact, it is the disturbing *impossibility* of opting out that speaks most to the Internet as the chief web of contemporary surveillance. In essence, the Internet is always on and so the concept of being constantly watched and listened to translates life into a spectacle. When we're engaging with content online, even if nobody is actively *viewing us*, the very fact of the recorded nature of this engagement intrinsically alters our nature.

For the most part we instinctively know that our online disclosures, habits and preferences are either being directly recorded or somehow contribute to an overarching algorithm that in turn presents us with content relevant to our interests, usually in the form of advertising. But what is most revelatory of the dramatic shift in conceptions of privacy and therefore our relationship with the concept of surveillance is that few people seem to be worried or indeed care about the extent to which private Internet companies are collecting and storing our data. The will to disclose or expose, it seems, is stronger than ever. It is appropriate perhaps to include this trend under the broad category of "confessional culture," a term used to "describe aspects of popular culture and shifts in social relations taking place in the United States from the late twentieth century to the present" ("Confessional Culture," Williams 116). However, the current climate of online disclosure reflects a far more precarious development than this label captures. The normalisation of online disclosure, especially in the context of social media, has resulted in the commodification of citizen's confessions without their explicit permission or knowledge. The embeddedness of socially networked communication in our everyday lives has created the illusion of sociality as a cover for our unintended handing over of personal information. This is an outcome Jean Baudrillard predicted over three decades ago when he wrote that "[b]eyond the horizon of the social, there are the masses, which result from the neutralization and implosion of the social" (83). Baudrillard's "implosion of the social" describes the total reorganisation of the Internet from its ostensibly democratic rationale in the late 1980s, through to its current function as a meticulously targeted series of advertisements. At the level of the individual, this can be seen as a kind of "self-abnegation" in which we witness the "subtraction of the social subject from itself" within the framework of social media "into which the social subject flees as a pixelated avatar of itself that is immune to criticism – that isn't to be questioned" (Rapaport 451). Herman Rapaport usefully compares this transfiguration

of our social identities to the morphing of Milton's Satan, who has no stable, real appearance, "only a dissemination of surfaces" (451). In essence, the increasingly privatised and commercialised nature of surveillance, no longer a concept tied to the discipline and control enacted by the state, has resulted in increased participation in surveillance by citizens themselves. This participatory turn in contemporary surveillance has been characterised by some as a "technologically enlightened form of self-emancipation" (Cohen 208). But this classification is both too simple and far too optimistic. Whatever its designation, what we have entered into today is an unprecedented and increasingly complex network of surveillance, one that Julie Cohen rightly notes is "light, politically nimble, and relatively impervious to regulatory constraint" (208).

The myriad prior analogies or models for explaining surveillance are apparently no longer sufficient to describe today's social-media-driven cybernetic "eye." This thesis has explored surveillant formulations as diverse as the close reading of poetic texts by the FBI, the clandestine interrogation of a particular writer's close acquaintances and family by Bureau agents, the suburban glass windowpane and the eavesdropping on telephone conversations over the wire. Yet none of these late-nineteenth or twentieth-century practices, least of all Bentham's panoptic model, comes close to encapsulating the exponentially amassing volume of private citizenry data that is being collected via the Internet. Even the classic image of Big Brother seems simply too weak, or too simplistic, in comparison. The way in which data-based surveillance systematically considers every bit of data under the "performative of suspicion" (or indeed under the possibility of consumerism) "eradicates or better appropriates" our "resources to appear as a single, particular subject" (Matzner 209). "Eventually," Tobias Matzner has recently written, "all ways in which we can become a subject are also ways to become a suspect" (209). Just how we are able to "become a subject" within this surveillant paradigm, and precisely what that subject will *do*, is an increasing site of investigation for Surveillance Studies specialists, one that will require serious attention into the future. David Lyon provides one of the better summaries thus far of the increasingly complex relationship between individual subjectivity and mass electronic surveillance:

> Surveillance in the era of Big Data … does not focus only on the body or on a population but on definitions to which we may contribute as part of

> our daily online interactions. It "makes up" the data double … and that entity then acts back on those with whom the data are associated, informing us who we are, what we should desire or hope for, including who we should become. The algorithms grip us even as they follow us, producing ever more information to try to make the user data more effective. Users discover, one might say, that the price of our freedom in both political and consumer contexts is our shaping or conditioning by algorithms. ("Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data" 7)

Here, the subjective "self" in the form of an independent "we" or "our" is juxtaposed with a "data double": the subject's online, fabricated self. The identity split Lyon describes, while an apt summary of the concepts of online persona or digital avatar, also strikes to the core of a central concept in surveillance studies that I introduced in Chapter 1, namely the tradeoff between the privacy that we give up to gain the protection of the surveilling state or, in Lyon's summary, to access "our freedom in both political and consumer contexts." As I noted early on, the all too frequent retort to attempts to protect privacy employs a consistent and somewhat impenetrable logic: if you have nothing to hide then why be concerned? I also noted Parenti's response, among others, to this common mantra: "[t]his commonsense argument is rarely engaged because it is, in fact, quite hard to counter at the level of everyday experience" (8).

But there is something else worth pausing at with regards to the identity bifurcation theorised by Lyon. The binary developed here, between an originary, authentic self and a projected or double self that "acts back on" its origin, mirrors the structures of the lyric that I have referred to throughout my discussion. It is perhaps the site of lyric poetry in which it is possible to find not only a literary parallel to Big Data surveillance but also its antidote, in the form of a structure of self-reflexivity that, unlike the vast majority of discourse today, is unmediated by electronic algorithms. After all, as my various analyses have shown, the lyric is the form that at once encourages readers to consider the "I" as an extension of the poet, while at the same time employing linguistic effects to continually suspend the poem in an aesthetic space of its own creation; a space that is always something other than a real-world utterance or experience. In other words, the elements of the lyric poem allow it to be both a double of its creator or some other personal experience as well as a separate, artistic object that exceeds both poet and the poet's voice.

More than that, a lyric poem usually expresses a meta-awareness of poetry's formal codes, symbols and observations while strategically manipulating this awareness into art. The conceptual gap between poet and persona enables the lyric's essential critical distance. It can examine from afar by interchanging multiple voices, as in Langston Hughes's "Ballad of the Landlord": "Um-huh! You talking high and mighty. / Talk on — till you get through." Or, it can implicitly evoke the specter of surveillance by cataloguing the observations of an unnamed, all-knowing narrator as in Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Portrait by a Neighbor": "She digs in her garden / With a shovel and a spoon, / She weeds her lazy lettuce / By the light of the moon." A lyric poem can also become a literalisation of surveillance itself, as in Anne Sexton's "What's That" where the poem's speaker is concerned less with divulging personal secrets or disrupting political norms than in recording particular observations as if from a fixed camera or location: "Before it came inside / I had watched it from my kitchen window."

In essence, all lyric poems work to question processes of seeing and observation: the poem enacts a theatrical yet scientific treatment of observation that seeks to throw into question the very status of poetry as a medium through which truth (either objective or subjective) can be achieved. This, above all else, is the feature of the lyric that has the most to offer an analysis of twenty-first century surveillance in the form of mass data collection. The lyric, unlike the algorithm that processes the gap between the human and their metadata, is always *reflexive* of the distance between the real person and his or her representation in the world. The strategy of lyric, then, is to keep us guessing. Its goal is to increase, rather than decrease, the complexity of the subject at the centre of the poem. Big Data, in the very act of gathering more and more disintegrated information about us, does the opposite.

So, to finish, here are two contemporary lyric poems that enact the practice I have just outlined. First, a poem that I referred to at the outset of this study, Dara Weir's "Reverse Surveillance":

> It isn't so much that you do it, it's how you do it
> and that you do it on purpose
> while pretending you're not doing anything.
> It's not so much that you spy on me it's that your intention
> has always been to erase me.
> It's always been difficult

> to understand how your knowledge of me
> increases my invisibility.
> The more you see me the less I'm there.
> The solvent you use isn't apprehending so much as it is
> eliminating,
> not so much affirmative and loving as it is
> dissolving and dismissive.
> Especially your tactic that involves how you say
> I never existed.
> As if the more you know about me the less
> there is.
> Our relationship is a lot like a worst-case scenario
> romance. Ending excruciatingly unbearably criminal
> for one of us. (101)

And here is Robert Pinsky's "Cloud of Mexico Pork":

> Too easy to laugh at the list of *trigger words*
> In the *Analyst's Security Binder* as revealed
> By a *Freedom of Information Act* lawsuit.
>
> A website smirks at *Mexico & Pork & Cloud*
> Amid *Al Quaeda (all spellings), Hazmat,*
> *Enriched, Interstate, Nitrate*, and *Phishing.*
>
> Delicious, unkosher, dark, vague, the Cloud
> Of Mexico Pork threatens our borders.
> Experts will improve the list, the logarithms,
>
> Adapting meanings to effective analysis beyond
> *Effective* and *affective*. *Adopt* and *adapt*.
> *Surveillance*—French for *watching over*—
>
> Preceded the apprehension of who became
> *The Disappeared*. Their infant children, adopted
> Were raised by *Intelligence Officers* as their own.
>
> If I were a contemporary poet I'd make
> A poem consisting entirely of that list.
> *Random, Shale. Repurposed, Information.* (*Boston Review*)

Approaching the topic of surveillance from different angles, these two poems nevertheless frame their speaking "I" inside a network of codes and symbols that work to problematise their respective responses to twenty-first century surveillance. In the first poem, Weir's speaker is reflective, authoritative and self-referential while Pinsky dramatically suspends a noticeable first-person voice until the final stanza, thereby

upending the poem's subjective focus. More so, reading these two poems side by side reveals the way the lyric poem can capture both structure and content, either in isolation or at the same time. Weir's poem interrogates the conceptual framework of surveillance, its murky ideological aims and the psychological effects these have on human subjectivity. Pinsky's poem, on the other hand, uses the lyric to question the material and dialectical content of surveillance: lists, logarithms, lawsuits and language. Both poems can be read as a reflection on Big Data and, as I noted earlier, as lyrical antidotes to the homogenising structures of contemporary mass surveillance.

"Reverse Surveillance" works to capture the effects of Big Data through the poem's statement that an intensification of the act of watching works to further obscure those seen: "It's always been difficult / to understand how your knowledge of me / increases my invisibility. / The more you see of me the less I'm there" (101). The discerning speaker in Weir's lyric articulates a model of twenty-first century surveillance in which scale is central. In the dichotomy of personal-versus-Big Data, the more information that is collected about us, the less we stand out from the crowd; the larger the data collection scale gets, the more people can slip under the surveillance radar. As the poem's title tells us, this is a formula for an ironic model of "reverse surveillance," where the very surveillant configurations designed to capture everything about us end up diluting the usefulness of the data they collect. The outcome of mass surveillance in Weir's lyric eerily echoes the code-centric critique in William Carlos Williams's poem "To Have Done Nothing," which I examined in Chapter 2. For Williams:

> codes
>
> for everything
> and nothing
> are synonymous
> when
>
> energy *in vacuo*
> has the power
> of confusion (*CP1* 192)

In analysing enormous amounts of personal data via the fragmented algorithms of the Internet, twenty-first century surveillance knows everything and nothing about us. Snippets of data collected in isolation, or "energy *in vacuo*" as Williams describes it,

dislocate individual subjectivity from context. Indeed, Williams's assertion that information collected "*in vacuo* / has the power / of confusion" captures the current state of electronic surveillance culture in three short lines. Yet while Williams's poem, in adhering to high modernist convention, sustains its elaborate linguistic puzzle throughout, Weir's lyric dismantles its allegorical construction in the final lines through the reference to a personal relationship: "Our relationship is a lot like a worst-case scenario / romance. Ending excruciatingly unbearably criminal / for one of us." The personal-versus-data paradigm re-enters at the poem's end, placing the speaker's everyday intimate interactions inside the surveillance regime itself; the seemingly detached "you" of the opening lines is suddenly revealed as known to the speaker and, more than that, as romantically associated. Weir's poem thus describes a world in which surveillance is so pervasive, so embedded in everyday life, that it cannot be separated from personal interactions.

At the same time, a lyric poem is also capable of incorporating into its compositional process the very language and practice of the techno-governmental world it describes. "Cloud of Mexico Pork" is at once a playful satire of bureaucratic, technical rhetoric and a dark study of the essential meaninglessness of online surveillance in a twenty-first century context. Pinsky deliberately constructs the poem by stitching together words used by the US Department of Homeland Security to monitor online media and social networking sites for signs of terrorism and other threats against the United States. The Electronic Privacy Information Centre notes how in February 2011, the Department of Homeland Security "proposed initiatives that would gather information from 'online forums, blogs, public websites, and message boards' and disseminate information to 'federal, state, local, and foreign government and private sector partners'" ("EPIC v. Department of Homeland Security"). The program was executed, in part, by individual surveillance officers who created fictitious usernames and passwords for covert social media profiles in order to spy on other users, storing personal information for up to five years. In early 2012, the department was forced by a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit to release the list of supposedly subversive words, three of which Pinsky amusingly employs in the poem's title: cloud, Mexico and pork. The wordplay extends throughout the poem, culminating in the speaker's ironic appeal to the looming phantom of the cloud: "Delicious, unkosher, dark, vague, the Cloud / Of Mexico Pork threatens our

borders." The satire here is twofold: while the poem's speaker mocks the fictional "cloud of Mexico pork" through such descriptions as "delicious" and "unkosher," he also makes a statement about the ambiguity of borders. Surveillance agents supposedly protect America's borders from outside threats by monitoring a cluster of words online, yet it is the American citizens themselves who are also the targets of such scrutiny. The virtual world of Internet-speak thus becomes a mechanism through which the US government is able to trap citizens within their own borders. In essence, Pinsky's lyric gathers information in precisely the same way as the online surveillance matrix, inventively inserting detached fragments ("Enriched, Interstate, Nitrate, and Phishing") alongside a first-person voice that laughs at its own compositions ("Too easy to laugh at the list of *trigger words*"). In repurposing the language of surveillance inside the lyric poem, "Cloud of Mexico Pork" stages an elaborate meta-lyrical performance of the act of surveillance itself. The self-referentiality of the closing stanza further exaggerates the poetic game: "If I were a contemporary poet I'd make / A poem consisting entirely of that list." Finally, in its very existence as a contemporary lyric poem, Pinsky's text of course itself appears on the Internet. Thus the poem's very critique of so-called subversive language enters into the milieu out of which it was generated. The overarching message here is of the uniquely paradoxical significance of lyric texts. The poem wants to tell us about the total inseparability of subjectivity, self-expression and surveillance in a twenty-first century context. Of this, we are becoming only ever more aware. However, the explicit framing of this message inside the aesthetic structure of the lyric also keeps it at a safe distance from the invasive data-driven world. It is this dual-capacity that perhaps explains the persistence of the lyric as contemporary poetry's dominant mode. But it also explains the role of the lyric as a medium that is capable of continuing unscathed in a world where meaning is constantly carved up, analysed and repurposed. The key question we seem to be asking today is not "what does my government know about me?" but, "is there anything about me which is not already known?" Perhaps this is where the lyric is able to best provide answers.

At many points, and in different ways, this thesis has returned to a very old question in lyric studies: what exactly is meant by the "I" that appears in lyric poems? Of course, this is a question that also begs the same identificatory query of words such as "myself," "me," "we," "us," and the other self-referential pronouns that appear in

lyrics. Depending on which poem is being examined—and perhaps even on who is asking—the "I" can seem to refer directly to the poet behind the poem or it can refer to an elaborately constructed persona. Either way, the "I" in lyric poems is always a voice that has a particular subjective focus and something particular to say. This effect in lyric is, as Pound described it, "the moment when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward, and subjective" (*Selected Prose* 89). So even in a lyric where biographical context, dates, politics and the like are virtually untraceable, we are still presented with a particular consciousness and a particular moment in time. That very consciousness, even if it is unsure whom to address—and by extension, unsure of its relationship with politics, history, society—still wants to address *someone*. Some of the poems that I have examined throughout this thesis do not touch explicitly on themes of spying, subversion, or the notorious FBI, yet I have intentionally drawn attention to them because they still possess formal characteristics that can be read alongside the technical and ideological properties of surveillance. So when Jackson and Prins ask if lyric poetry really can change the world, my response is that it already has. Yet this study also demonstrates that even if the lyric has made one of the most important contributions to twentieth-century surveillance in America, it still has unfinished business.

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