Of Doppelgängers and Alter Egos: Surveillance Footage as Cinematic Double

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Résumé/Abstract

This article argues that as surveillance becomes defined less as an idea of power-knowledge and more as a representation or action conducted by or contingent upon moving images and related technologies, the spectre of surveillance that was maintained subtextually in moving images *returns*, rather than develops anew. It argues that surveillance is the return of the repressed; it is cinema's uncanny double—its doppelgänger and alter ego. It uses the first two *Paranormal Activity* films as case studies to explore how the discourse and emulation of surveillance produces multiple interdependent doubles, which engender uncanny cinematic experiences. Ultimately, it argues that the manufactured uncanny experiences mimic the way surveillance manufactures the self and physical reality as doubled, attempting to leverage the horror genre's currency of fright to reveal this reality.

À propos de l'auteur/About the Author

Evangelos Tziallas is currently a doctoral candidate at Concordia University. He has published articles on "torture porn," the *Saw* series, and the films *Head On* and *Mysterious Skin*. His dissertation is titled "Doubled Visions: Surveillance, Identity, and Queer(ed) Narrative Fiction Film and Pornography (1980-2012)," and his major areas of interest include: surveillance, queer cinema and cultural politics, pornography, film theory, videogames, aesthetics, digital media and technology, and globalization. He is also on the editorial board of Porn Studies.

With the rapid development of new technologies that seem to rob us of our privacy and compel us to give up whatever we are allowed to keep and with each act of violence designed to be trafficked as a spectacle, an urgent need to explore the recent and historical relations between film and surveillance has developed in response to the increasingly mediating presence of surveillance in media. Concerns about surveillance are often articulated in the social sciences (Lyon 1995; Staples 1997). It was not until movies began to *show* surveillance as something that mimicked itself that research on surveillance and cinema became an agenda in film studies and related fields. As surveillance became something that was almost exclusively manufactured by technology—often the very same technologies that entertain us (Virilio 1989; 1994)—representations of surveillance have become popular cinematic tropes and shooting methods, mirroring the growing ubiquity of CCTV (Mark 2005; Kammerer 2004; Levin 2008; Leblanc 2010).

Although movies may have only recently begun to represent surveillance as an action achieved primarily through moving image technology, this seemingly recent focus is misleading. From their inception, moving images were a hybrid tool for calculating, acquiring knowledge, and entertaining: surveillance has always been a part of moving images and their respective technologies (Grieveson 2008; Gunning 1990). Surveillance is a concept, and thus a potential that is already present within recording technologies because surveillance is the structuring rationale of the society that invented moving image technologies (Crary 1992): it was the impulse that brought about its development.[1] As Steven Shaviro notes, "In response to an emergent capitalism's need to mobilize and control labor power on a massive scale, the human body's actions and reactions were analyzed, dissected, and quantified as never before…Cinema is one important product of the new episteme and technology of vision" (Shaviro 1993, p. 45). Fiction and

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[1] In *Hard Core: Power Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy' of the Visible,'* Linda Williams argues that "the very invention of cinema develops, to a certain extent, from the desire to place the clocked and measured bodies produced by the first machines into narratives that naturalize their movements" (p. 36). In *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*, Lisa Cartwright argues that "that the cinematic apparatus can be considered as a cultural technology for the discipline and management of the human body, and that the long history of bodily analysis and surveillance in medicine and science is critically tied to the history of the development of the cinema as a popular cultural institution and a technological apparatus." (p. 3). In *Bodies and Machines*, Mark Seltzer argues that at the turn of the 20th century, it was discovered "that bodies and persons are things which can be made…remaking individuals as *statistical persons*" (p. 3); new technologies such as film aided in that reinvention.

actuality, narrative and document, surveillance and voyeurism coexisted—at times consonantly and at other times abrasively—in variegated ways in early primitive cinema (Auerbach 2007; Elsaesser 1990). Mary Ann Doane (2002) has argued that at the turn of the twentieth century the anxiety over cinematic contingency was placated by narrative. Narrative's assuaging potential privileged it, pushing the threat of contingency and surveillance into the background. I argue that this anxiety returns to the moving image a century later, and its presence and anxiety-inducing effects are articulated primarily through emulated surveillance footage.

The spectre of surveillance, which was always present in photography, and which was quintessentially distilled from cinema early on, returns and gains prominence as analog, and especially digital, video and their respective technologies become increasingly accessible (Sekula 1986; Finn 2009; Tagg 2009). An uncomfortable conflation of moving image surveillance footage and entertaining or informative moving images has developed. Not only is surveillance footage produced by the same technologies that sold and sell us overwhelmingly realist visions, thus replicating cinematic vision, but movies themselves also have begun to focus on, integrate, and emulate technologically mediated surveillance.

Unable to fully flesh out the above overlaps, and unable to account for every theoretical, historical, and current intersection of and digression between surveillance and cinema, I would like to argue the following: surveillance is the return of the repressed; it returns as cinema's uncanny double. As surveillance moves beyond the realm of discipline and power-knowledge and becomes something that is almost entirely conducted through technology, the spectre of surveillance, which was maintained subtextually or suppressed in moving images, rises to the surface, or *returns*, rather than develops anew (Gunning 1999).[2] It is the paradox of this simultaneous pull toward the past and future which engenders the uncanny.

Moving image surveillance is both the cinema's doppelgänger and its alter ego precisely because it attempts to *remerge* cinema and surveillance so that they share the exact same body and consciousness once more. Surveillance becomes an external force that attempts to reabsorb film, yet is simultaneously a consuming force from within. The integration of surveillance footage may seem to contaminate moving

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[2] See Gunning's "Embarrassing Evidence: The Detective Camera and the Documentary Impulse," for a discussion of how surveillance and photography effected both the reception of cinema and its representations at the turn of the 20th century.

images when it in fact highlights how movies themselves are already compromised. This engenders slightly off feelings and uncanny experiences when watching movies that integrate or emulate moving image surveillance, partially because these emotional splits reveal that movies and surveillance footage, *and* cinema and surveillance, may not be as different as we would like to think. Recently, Catherine Zimmer has dangerously argued that "cinema (and televisual) narratives of surveillance…should be viewed not just as 'reflections' of increasingly surveillance-centred media, but themselves as *practices* of surveillance" (Zimmer 2010, p. 439), potentially collapsing the border between spectator and corporeal subject, character and corporeal subject, and representation and reality.

Mediated surveillance is a crisis of epistemology and ontology, and I would like to begin this paper by briefly sketching the contours of some recent works on documentary that touch on the relations between surveillance and realism. I will do this in order to flesh out the intimate proximity of surveillance footage—whether fictional or factual—and documentary cinema, and to underscore the discursive impact surveillance has had on recent scholarship about film and realism. I will then move on to a case study using the recent found footage horror films *Paranormal Activity* (Peli 2007) and *Paranormal Activity 2* (Williams 2010). I will unpack the concepts of the uncanny, the doppelgänger, and the alter ego, and make connections between these phenomena and emulated surveillance as a way to speak more broadly about the relationship between surveillance and cinema. It is pertinent here that I emphasize that I am using these films as both evidence and allegory: although these movies embody discursive cinematic formal shifts, it is clear that the majority of movies released do not resemble the *Paranormal Activity* films—at least, not yet.

Surveillance is often, if not exclusively, associated with right-wing purposes, while movies, especially documentary, are much more politically fluid, but are particularly hospitable to left-wing and progressive politics and causes. The effects of this political convergence through formal and ideological remerging can co-opt the potential to critically reflect on the ubiquity and power of surveillance through moving images. Because surveillance is as much a crisis of politics as it is one of representation, I will conclude my essay with some observations as to how the films engage spectators as subjects of surveillance and some of the limitations brought about by experiencing the uncanniness of cinematic surveillance.

Documentary and (Self-)Surveillance

Elizabeth Cowie (2011) has recently challenged the traditional view of documentary as a discourse of sobriety, arguing that "actuality and documentary films involve us as desiring, as well as knowing, spectators" (p. 3). Cowie aligns the experience of documentary to narrative fiction, breaking down the binary between fiction and pleasure, and actuality and rationality. She also notes that documentary is part of the modernist impulse to mechanically realize our desire to represent life as if completely unmediated, as if "I" did not exist (p. 20). Cowie's position is that the appeal of documentary is the way it allows for more intimate and urgent access to "the real"; people watch documentaries because they *want* to see the real presented as a spectacle. The spectacle of mediated surveillance is situated at this exact nexus point, as representations and emulations of mediated surveillance are products of, and attempts to satisfy, those desires. Rather than begin with a historical discussion of early and primitive cinema, its affinity to reality, and early film technology's status as a tool of science and art, I begin with a brief discussion of documentary because surveillance footage, whether fictional or factual, primarily denotes and connotes "documentary." Falsified surveillance footage may be fiction and may tell a story and be used to tell a story, but its status remains firmly within documentary's realm.

Faked surveillance is mockumentary: it cannot and does not want to erase the residue of actuality. Whether real or not, surveillance footage appropriates and augments documentary aesthetics and poaches its function as "visible evidence." Whether the footage is used to drive a fiction film's narrative or is integrated into an actuality, its significance remains the same. Surveillance footage and documentary's parallel standing point to the importance of video as contemporary surveillance and documentary's medium par excellence. The complex relations to, claims about, and stakes in reality mark cinema and surveillance, and movies and technologically mediated surveillance as each other's double, with documentary occupying an unstable position as a centripetal conduit. Moving image surveillance conflates documentary, narrative, and fiction,[3] and so in this section I will explore some crucial points of contact between reality and fiction, and narrative and non-narrative so that I can flesh out how these instabilities generate uncanny relations.

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[3] For an extended discussion on narrative, fiction, and nonfiction, see Murray Smith's "Double Trouble: On Film, Fiction, and Narrative." *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*. 1 (2009): 1-23.

Cinematically speaking, the loss of the real is partly attributed to the loss of indexicality and the rise of coding and encryption brought about by analog, but mostly digital, video technology (Rodowick 2007; Baudrillard 2007). The deployment of surveillance through digital technology is what begets the return of surveillance to and through the moving image. Cinema and surveillance are on equal footing with respect to their contingency to the real, but surveillance by its nature is at least perceived as a discourse and representation of truth because "surveillance always looks *through or behind* something" (Bogard 1996, p. 21). Surveillance *automatically entails seeing and knowing beyond limitations*; surveillance by definition will always see and know more than the alternative. As film continues to lose its aura, surveillance enters to compensate for that loss. Paradoxically, surveillance is facilitated through analog and digital technologies whose authenticity is always in question because what they produce are simulations. The return of surveillance to and through the moving image is indeed a return of the real, but the real as *uncanny*: it returns as reality's double. The realist tradition in cinema emphasized light etching reality onto celluloid, and without this physical imprint there is only simulation. Building on Bazin's notion of the cinema as an "embalmer" of time, Philip Rosen contemporizes the discourse of realism brought about by the "crisis of the digital" and the loss of the index by comparing digital technology to surveillance. He writes, "The 'purity' of 'pure data' cannot mean the obliteration of referential origins, for without referential entities or events pre-existing the data itself, that data would have no fundamental value as surveillance" (Rosen 2001, p. 307). Rosen leverages this argument in favor of a "pro-digital event," as issues of realism are contingent upon the idea of a "profilmic event." He argues that surveillance data/images derived from satellites would be incomprehensible and suspect without that data being extracted from a tacitly accepted reality. Surveillance entails a "reality" to surveil, re-inscribing "reality" into the (digital) image. For Rosen, digital technology generates "digital mimicry" (2001, p. 39). Digital mimicry is crucial because it maintains reality by mimicking the pro-digital. In mimicking the pro-digital, however, it also potentially blurs diegesis and mimesis as digital mimicry creates a legible simulated real, opening a space for the uncanny.

In her introduction to the 1999 anthology *Collecting Visible Evidence*, Jane M. Gaines states in her title that "'The Real Returns,'" arguing that "to return to documentary is to return again to cinematic realism and its dilemmas. To look back at film theory from the 1950s to the 1970s is to

think about the way cinematic realism, first heralded as a technological triumph, became a philosophical problem" (p. 1-2). From Bazin (1967/2005), Kracauer (1960/1997; 1947/2004), Cavell (1979), Balázs (1945/1970), and even Münsterberg (1916/1970) to the "critique of realism" and the development of film theory in the 1970s as a strategy to expose reality as ideology, and in doing so reveal real reality (Metz 1982; Mulvey 1975/1986), reality and realism's slipperiness have been central contentious discourses. Self-reflexivity, especially in narrative cinema, was a key strategy for charting ways of resisting because it allowed for the division of dominant and counter-dominant modes and discourses. Self-reflexivity shattered ideology and its false reality, disarmed the seductive power of the apparatus, liberated spectators from their chains, and created an alternative space that was real because it was created in antithesis to hegemony (Baudry 1974/1986, 1976/1986; Harvey 1982; MacCabe 1974, 1976/1986; Polan 1974; Rosen 1986; Stam 1982; Walsh 1975; Wollen 1972/1986).[4] Self-reflexivity announced itself as manufactured and thus other to capitalist illusionism and created enough of a distance for critical reflection (Kovács 2008, p. 217-237). The critical distance offered by self-reflexivity has been truncated as self-reflexive, stylized, and alternative forms and aesthetics have been absorbed by the mainstream, normalized, and rendered quotidian. We are not only inured to seeing reality represented in radical ways while not being alienated or having our catharsis denied, but we are also accustomed to seeing the apparatus, or various parts of it, in the frame because we are used to seeing the apparatus everywhere in everyday life: cameras on the streets, cameras in our phones, posed images with the

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[4] In his introduction to Part 1 of *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Philip Rosen notes how psycho-semiotic's appeal was politically motivated. He writes, "It was by no means a historical accident that this approach to cinema became so attractive at a time when the institution of the university was a center of directly political concerns. For if there was a system of norms, then we can inquire about the foundations and determinants of such systems, and about the implications of deviation or (from a different perspective) oppositional practices and systems" (9).

It was in this bustling and volatile environment where the Brecht/Lukács debate provided an excellent context for thinking through the perils and necessities of a politics of aesthetics, specifically in narrative fiction film, as the goal was to take on dominant culture. Dana Polan's "Brecht and the Politics of Self-Reflexive Cinema" crystallizes the debates taking place over the dialects and interdependencies between reality and ideology, self-reflexivity and realist "transparency," and critical distanciation and pleasurable spectatorship. If norms could be detected, this could open up a space for resistance, and this political resistant counter-practice often came in the form of a documentary, as well as experimental, avant-garde and various types of personal filmmaking such as the essay film, the diary film and home movies which more often than not bled into each other as discursive strategies.

apparatus in the foreground spread virally over Facebook, Reddit, and 4chan. Reflexivity now reflects our lived reality.[5]

Discussing experimental filmmaker George Kuchar's video diaries in her final chapter on autoethnography, Catherine Russell (1999) argues that "he creates the impression that he carries a camera with him everywhere, and that it mediates his relation with the world at large… creat[ing] a sense of infinite 'coverage,' potentially breaking down the difference between experience and representation" (p. 286), one which is accentuated by the principles of continuity editing which inscribe his point of view, creating a seamless diegesis (p. 287): cinema's imprint on video potentially collapses *diegesis* and *mimesis*. Russell concludes the book by writing that "in the cinema, self-representation always involves a splitting of the self, a production of another self, another body, another camera, another time, another place. Video threatens to collapse the temporal difference of filmic memory…because of its 'coverage,' its capacity as an instrument of surveillance" (p. 313). For Russell, video's sense of coverage is coupled with the persistence of memory and its ability to produce archives. She writes, "Everything will be retrievable; nothing will be lost, except the sense of loss" (p. 314), and that video cannot "'forget' film and its auratic fantasy of transparency, its memory of the (celluloid) body in the machine" (p. 313); neither can it forget its desire to tell stories. It is the dismantling of the real in conjunction with the convergence of permanence and coverage, and the memory of transparency embedded within video that elevates the act and discourse of documenting to a point where it becomes surveillance. Video—analog or digital—collapses temporal and physical distance, problematizing the ability to be self-reflexive because it collapses the necessary distance between subject and object, between interiority and exteriority, between me and that version of me I created and am watching, and between characters and real people.

This collapse is not limited to only spectators and people but affects textual forms as well. The continual replacement of 35mm film by digital video is an important meta-example, but this paradigmatic collapse is exemplified more specifically by recent documentaries such as *We Live in Public* (2009) and *Article 12* (2010). Both films attempt to shed light on the issue of surveillance, with *Article 12* sticking, to use Bill Nichols' terms, to a more traditional expository style, while *We Live in Public*

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[5] See the Dutch artists' project panoptICONS website for an interesting perspective on surveillance in the public sphere <http://www.panopticons.nl/>.

blends elements of expository, interactive, and reflexive modes. Although following a more traditional method, *Article 12* is implicitly reflexive precisely because it dissects surveillance and the complex relations between recording technologies and reality. Because the film is about how surveillance invades our privacy, the borders between object and subject overlap significantly. The film essentially puts itself under its own microscope because it puts its own technology under its own microscope. The reflexive mode calls attention to itself, to its own construction as a way to self-critique and reflexively question how it itself came to access reality and create knowledge (Nichols 1991, p. 56-75). The reflexive mode challenges documentary realism's "unproblematic access to the world through traditional physical representation and the untroubled transference of psychological states from character to viewer…employ[ing] such techniques only to interrupt or expose them" (p. 57). Thus, in many respects the reflexive mode puts itself under surveillance. It is a way of organizing vision and knowledge in order to dissect, expose, point out flaws, correct, and, most importantly, *self*-correct. It is in essence a form of both surveillance and self-surveillance. Even when reflexivity is framed as a reflection, as in the case of the 1970 Canadian documentary *VTR Rosedale*, a documentary film about the use of video and the Fogo process in rural Alberta, the documentation can still be a form self-surveillance (Marchessault 1995, p. 22-23).

Although a film's mise-en-scene, fictional or factual, may suggest clear divisions (e.g., this camera is different because we are filming surveillance cameras, surveillance monitors, people under surveillance, people talking about surveillance), self-reflexivity and the reflexive mode underscore how in the twenty-first century new technologies and how they activate new ways of seeing and experiencing the world conflate surveillance and documentation, surveillance and documentary, and surveillance and storytelling. This is only problematized further when surveillance camera footage *can* be perceived as the "ideal" documentary, especially since surveillance, mediated or not, does indeed entail the production of narrative (Carroll 2000, p. 304; Currie 2000, p. 306; Plantinga 2005). To encounter surveillance footage is to experience its contingency to reality, even if it is digital mimicry of the pro-digital: Where are all the people? Who are all these people? Whose house is this? What street corner do you think this is? What do you think those people are talking about? Do you think something will happen soon? Why are these cameras here? What do they, the people who put up these cameras,

expect to see? These inquiries construct narrative because the surveillance of something always connotes, whether it is authentic or not, reality. Even if we don't see anything happening in the frame, we know things are happening outside the frame somewhere in some capacity. Surveillance footage is reality's narrative. Surveillance footage does not need to be real, just real enough, and it is precisely this epistemological and ontological instability and liminality that arouses both mistrust and the uncanny.

Recording Technology and the Uncanny

Jane Gaines argues that "verité is becoming a style" (1999, p. 12), and nowhere is this more evident than in "mockumentary" cinema: fictional narratives that mimic documentaries (Hight and Roscoe 2001; Juhasz and Lerner 2006; Rhodes and Springer 2006). *Paranormal Activity* and its sequels are mockumentaries, but are also part of a new subgenre known as "found footage" horror, a subgenre that mixes mock-documentary vérité and horror narrative fiction, and appropriates the avant-garde tradition of found footage/archival filmmaking, presenting itself as reassembled after-the-fact evidence. The trend's widespread popularity began with the infamous *Blair Witch Project* (1999), whose financial success birthed a new subgenre. Found footage filmmaking was traditionally a countercultural or intellectual pursuit, one that attempted to reassert the real in the face of reality fabricated through images (Russell 1999, p. 246), but has now been appropriated, although not necessarily uncritically, by narrative fiction film and the mainstream. Unlike most typical mock-documentary films that emulate conventional documentary cinema (talking heads, interviews, the chronicling of a particular person or event), found footage mock-documentaries—which are primarily housed in the horror genre—are often self-shot, emulate verité, and are discovered after the filmed traumatic events have reached their deadly conclusions and those involved have been killed: the footage is then edited together by someone unknown, and screened for some unknown reason. Found footage horror in particular poaches aspects of amateur filmmaking and personal documentary, exploiting their sense of intimacy and proximity (Zimmerman 1995; Renov 2004). Narrative is a crucial element of documentary: it is an organizing strategy rather than a pure diegesis. Mockumentaries annex documentary's stake in narrative and reality, transforming it into a hybrid diegesis, further imbricating actuality and fiction.

Paranormal Activity tells the story of Katie and Micah, a couple who have recently moved into their new home in a San Diego suburb. Convinced she is haunted and that this haunting has followed them to their new home, the couple purchase a professional Sony digital camcorder to film themselves during the day and while they sleep. By filming themselves at night, they can review the footage in the morning and scrutinize the images for abnormalities, or "paranormal activities." As the narrative continues, the couple begins to notice increased abnormalities throughout the evening, culminating with Katie killing Micah and leaving the house with her whereabouts unknown. The sequel's narrative runs parallel to the original's, showing Katie's sister Kristi's family rigging their home with surveillance cameras, and ends right after the original with Katie entering her sister's home, killing her and her husband and stealing their infant child.

In the first film, verité filming gradually morphs in the evening taking on surveillant properties and aesthetics, while in the second film the split is much more abrupt. In the first film, the couple—Micah almost exclusively—operate the camcorder themselves, embodying the mechanism's position. The camera is mobile and shaky, and becomes a prosthesis—an extension of their bodies—granting us intimate and immediate access to their experiences and emotions. At night, the camera is placed at a distance from their bed and kept completely immobile. The footage is shot with night vision, has the time code imprinted onto the images, and features a copious amount of dead time (although it is extra-diegetically fast-forwarded). During the day, the camera denotes neither "documentary" nor "home movie," but "diary," a space to purge emotion (Rascaroli 2009). In conjunction with the characters' emotional investment, the apparatus is used for the purposes of security, acting as a substitute security blanket for them to hide underneath (Tziallas 2010). The aesthetics and characters' desire for security, along with the examination of the evening's recordings in the morning mark them as surveillance.

The films emphasize how surveillance aesthetics can be used as a ruse in order to falsely alleviate anxieties about surveillance. In the first film, the evening stationary camera is aesthetically and ontologically coded as surveillance. This coding suggests that when the device is operational during the day it is "not surveillance." As the film progresses, not only does the threshold between surveillance and not surveillance (or documentary/personal filming) break down, but it evinces how the presence of the amateur/documentary apparatus in the diegesis was

always intended to be used for surveillance. In the sequel, the distinction between documentary and surveillance is at first much more explicit with the single, mobile, hand-held, eye-level, embodied camera juxtaposed with the stationary, high-level, high-angle, multi-networked camera apparatus clearly demarcating the mobile camera as amateur and the surveillance apparatus as professional. Despite these aesthetic and formal differences, the distinction breaks down as the mobile camera integrates into the surveillance apparatus, becoming another appendage.

There is a discomforting sense that surveillance cameras in this day and age are basically documentary cameras put to different, *better* use. Surveillance cameras do what documentary cameras do but taken to extreme degrees. They are meant to capture reality and reveal that which is concealed, but instead of one camera there are multiple cameras, long-takes become endless, and instead of shedding light on something they shed light on everything. This conflation likewise suggests that the properties attributed to the surveillance apparatus and its footage bleed into, or back into, the documentary apparatus, making it nearly impossible to tell the two apart. If surveillance and documentary—and in the context of the film, fictional narrative—cannot be circumscribed, then neither can their respective goals, aims, and desires. Dangerously, documentation and documentary can be framed as something *primitive* while surveillance and technologically mediated surveillance can be framed as their natural evolution—the next logical steps. Mediated surveillance can do what documentary and narrative fiction film do, but more so and better. Filming surveillantly co-opts documentary's and fiction film's desires, replacing their internal logic with of that surveillance's, likewise subtly integrating the logic, language, and power of new digital technologies (Turner 1998; Manovich 2001; Galloway 2006; Zimmer 2011). Paradoxically, this primitive/advanced juxtaposition reverses the return of the repressed's logic. It is usually the primitive that is repressed and returns to take over what rightfully belongs to it, but here it seems that it is the more advanced that has been repressed and returns to consume the primitive. Surveillance *is*, relatively speaking, primitive in that it is a system of observation and documentation that precedes the cinema, but it is also a highly adaptive system that has both reconfigured itself and absorbed other phenomena for its own genesis (Foucault 1995; Deleuze 1992). Cinema is but one extension with the development of analog video and digital technologies further opening the gateway for the return of the primitive. Video is celluloid's doppelgänger: it is cinematic but not cinema, surpassing

celluloid's limitations, making it the ideal conduit for the return of surveillance. Video surveillance is reality's uncanny.

The *Paranormal Activity* films' roots lie in Gothic horror, a genre wholly invested in the paranormal, the occult, the subjective, and the interior. It is Gothic horror where doppelgängers and alter egos play prominent roles and where the uncanny is the prevailing structure of feeling (Vardoulakis 2006, p. 100; Simpson 2000).[6] The film, however, is more in line with the contemporary haunted house subgenre (Bailey 1999), and continues Hollywood horror's infiltration of the private sphere (Krautschick 2012). I previously argued that *Paranormal Activity*:

> Is a low-budget reinterpretation of the "haunted house" subgenre, a subgenre which has always pitted the private space against the encroachment of the public space, and stands as an indictment of the continual erosion between the public and the private. The house, as a symbol for the private space, demands its privacy, with the camera, symbolizing the public, agitating and provoking the house to react and defend itself from this forced visibility, eventually leading to the couple's demise. (Tziallas 2010)[7]

The paranormal activity is the house's resistance against the camera's gaze. It symbolizes an invasion of the self while speaking to a broader cultural politic of surveillance violating the privacy and autonomy of both the body and the home. Although Katie has been haunted since she was a child, it is not until the private sphere is captured, imprisoned by this external apparatus, that the abnormal activities become aggressive and violent. The uncanny, or *unheimlich*, is etymologically bound to the idea of the familiar: *heimlich* refers to that which is homely, belonging to the house, not strange, intimate, friendly (Freud 1997, p. 196). Continuing this association with the home, that which is *heimlich* is not just agreeable and familiar, but *concealed* and *kept out of sight,* the same way the private sphere, the home, is familiar and keeps things out of sight (Freud 1997, p. 199). In the films, the home, *heimlich*, is literally made *unheimlich*, uncanny, *not home,* by the camera's presence. The camera, an external object whose job is to objectify and externalize, is brought *inside* in order to put the private sphere under surveillance to make it

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[6] Particularly Simpson's first chapter, "The Gothic Legacy and Serial Murder."
[7] <http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/evangelosTorturePorn/4.html>.

transparent and thus *not home*. The way recording technology has penetrated and fused with the home symbolizes the way recording technology encroaches on and compromises our bodily and psychic integrity. The *unheimlich*, that which is uncanny, is not that which is unfamiliar, but something that is somewhat familiar but not concretely recognizable. Freud writes that "something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny…the uncanny is that class of the frightening which *leads back to* what is known of old and long familiar" (1997, p. 195). The uncanny is that which is *uncertain* precisely because it is known and familiar but slightly off: it is about going back to a point where that which is *unheimlich* is *heimlich.* The uncanny is about *origins*.[8]

For Freud, the uncanny is frightening and distressing because it relates to the self, to the *insecurity* of one's self. For Freud, the double "becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" after primary narcissism (1997, p. 210-211) since "the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted…" (1997, p. 212). That which is uncanny has been repressed early on and recurs later as something that has been alienated from us through the process of self-determination (1997, p. 217). The uncanny is about *re*-experiencing the splitting, the doubling of the self, that we disavowed early on. To experience our double manifests a sense of *mistrust* because the ego, that singularity which is "us," or stands in for a unified whole, is no longer singular and thus makes us not us, and this other which is not us, potentially us. The double not only makes us aware of our own fragmentation but also forces us back to an earlier point where we were secure and stable before the self split. The double comes back for a reason: to finish off that which is *unfinished*. In the film, the desire to return to an origin is symbolized by Katie repossessing her sister's infant child, living out the prophecy of her own haunting. If

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[8] I am very aware that Lacan took up, although in a much less paranoid tone, the splitting of the self in his infamous writings on the "The Mirror Stage" where he formulated his ideas about the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. I am also very aware that the mirror stage was a seminal idea for 1970s Film Theory and the foundation for gaze and apparatus theory, and theories of spectatorship. Unfortunately, an analysis of how the uncanny, doubles, and split egos relate to, or are altered by current changes goes beyond this paper's scope. Although it is not my intention to minimize the importance of this dialogue, the remainder of this paper will focus on character and textual analysis in relation to theoretical engagements with cinematic experience and formal style as they engage the idea of the double, minus the extensive detailing between psychoanalysis and film studies/theory.

surveillance is the return of the repressed, why does it return now? What unfinished business does it have?

Theorizing the horror genre in the 1960s and 1970s, Robin Wood argued that "the relationship between normality and the Monster [is what] constitutes the essential subject of the horror film" and that the "relationship has one privileged form: the figure of the doppelgänger, alter ego, or double" with "the doppelgänger motif reveal[ing] the Monster as normality's shadow (2003, p. 71-72). For Wood, the horror genre is one where that which has been repressed returns to destroy stability and the tranquil existence predicated on that which is repressed remaining repressed. In the *Paranormal Activity* series, the haunting consistently thwarts stasis, but it does so under the guise of wanting to create stasis. Surveillance is paradoxically both monster and normality, with normality and surveillance becoming each other's double. Katie's mistrust of her surroundings and ultimately herself incites self-surveillance, but it is the very device that is supposed to placate anxiety and maintain normalcy that ultimately produces anxiety and abnormality. The mistrust of the self necessitates constant verification, yet doing so only furthers the need for *more* verification: it produces paranoia as the paranoid obsesses over and finds meaning in the minute and insignificant of the everyday (Holm 2009). Paranoia is paradoxically both a product of and form of resistance to panopticism. The desire for self-surveillance is meant to alleviate the anxiety over the potential threat of an invisible gaze by placing oneself under one's own controlled surveillance-gaze, thereby verifying oneself and making one verifiable to oneself. Self-surveillance attempts to mitigate mistrust by amplifying the real and the real you, normalizing the world and one's sense of self, but can only produce the self and the real as a double, as something uncanny.

There is a pervasive sense that the compulsion to film the self is contingent upon a contemporary structure of feeling where "the quest for real life…requires surveillance for its—for our—verification" (Pecora 2002, p. 348). The loss of the real is compensated for by surveillance—by magnification and expansion. The return of surveillance is an attempt to return things to a state of *normalcy* through technology—a state of stability to be achieved by any means necessary. The return of surveillance through moving images is an attempt to assert a new, but not new, type of reality and realism. It suggests that the reality we know is in need of disciplining, or *re*-disciplining. Surveillance has returned through moving images as reality's "perfected" alter ego, and in this parallel reality, stasis, efficiency, and the norm are forcefully maintained above

all else. This reality has returned to correct and to take over our current one. The return of surveillance and its reality through technology crystallizes a crucial paradox in cinematic discourse: the desire to return to a previous state through technological advancement encapsulates Bazin's belief that "every new development added to the cinema must, paradoxically, take it nearer and nearer to its origins" (Bazin 1967/2005, p. 21). The return of cinematic surveillance, of surveillance through moving images, is the return of a particular real: a desire for the *supposed* scientific, objective, empirical real of primitive early cinema, and the making of attractions out of the quotidian and the recording apparatus itself (Rony 1996; Grieveson and Krämer 2004; Gunning 1994; Elsaesser 2004).

The House, The Camera, The Automaton, and Their Spectator

The figure of the doppelgänger is often attributed to humans, animals, or other "beings" and not pieces of technology or organizing theories of representation/discourse. In his seminal study on German literature, Andrew Webber (1996) argued that accounts of the doppelgänger are forms of praxis that come to represent "the subject as more or less pathologically divided between reality and fantasy"(p. 2), and "serves as a test case for the dialectically complicated conflict between realism and fantasy" (p. 9). Cinema and the study of cinema is, as I have laid out above, practically founded on this very same dialectic, and only intensifies when comparing the images, purposes, and impulses of documentary cinema and surveillance footage, or between these discourses and their intersection with narrative fiction film. Webber argues that the "doppelgänger is above all a figure of visual compulsion…an inveterate performer of identity…" (p. 3). The doppelgänger is a product of autoscopy, self-seeing, or visual self-duplication who "embodies the stake which epistemology and sexuality have in each other[—]…between cognitive and carnal knowledge" (p. 3) and between desire and rationality. He continues to argue that this knowledge-desire paradigm frequently "introduces voyeurism and innuendo into the subject's pursuit of a visual and discursive sense of self," giving rise to a "power-play between ego and *alter ego*" that manifests the doppelgänger as a figure of displacement who repeatedly returns as something uncanny (p. 4). The *Paranormal Activity* films exemplify how the tension between desire as knowledge and knowledge as desire compels autoscopy, and how the autoscopic process doubles the

self and the moving image apparatus.[9] It is not just Katie and Kristi who become their own doubles, but the camera and home as well, with all three interdependently provoking and engendering each other's doubling. The camera is the home, the home is Katie/Kristi, Katie/Kristi is the camera, and we the spectators are a part of all three.

Steven Jay Schneider argues that doubles more or less "fall pretty neatly into two basic categories: *doppelgängers* (physical doubles) and alter ego*s* (mental doubles)" (2006, p. 110), a proposition built on Robert Roger's distinction between "'doubling by multiplication' and 'doubling by division'" (Roberts 1970; Schneider 2006, p. 110). Moving image technologies are physical bodies whose outputs are their egos or consciousness—if not bodies themselves (Sobchack 1992)—with the representation and emulation of mediated surveillance further problematizing and blurring their division. Schneider notes that in general, doubling is "the experience of seeing or otherwise sensing, feeling or believing that there exists another 'you,' *from inside your own self*": in fantasy and fiction this can be represented by "supernatural or alien forces" or "*technological advances*" (p. 107).[10] So, technology can not only generate the doppelgänger and/or alter ego, it can, in and of itself, be one or both. Schneider goes on to argue that "physical doubles can themselves be divided into two types: *replicas* (natural doppelgängers) and *replicants* (non-natural doppelgängers)." Replicas encompass both *primitive* and *alien* life forms and come in the forms of *twins* and *chameleons*, while replicants constitute machinic, manufactured, and spiritual entities such as *robots, cyborgs, clones,* and *apparitions* (supernatural replicants) (p. 110-111). Mediated surveillance brings replicas and replicants into such intimate proximity that the organic and inorganic imbricate, cross-pollinating the apparatuses, characters, and spectators, mirroring our lived experiences.

Discussing alter egos, Schneider argues that they can "be divided up into four main groups: *schizos* (possess one body but two or more temporally contiguous consciousnesses)*, shape-shifters* (mental doubles whose behavioural dissociation is accompanied by physical transformations which are different than chameleons as they *manifest* the existence of a mental double and do not *cause* it)*, projections* (are like shape-shifters but have bodies which are spatially distinct)*,* and *psychos* (normality's violent double often attributed to serial killers as their

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[9] This is particularly fitting as individuals nowadays are likely to film themselves rather draw or write themselves.

[10] Emphasis mine.

hunter's—detective agent usually—double) (p. 112-113). Alter egos are usually different "characters" who either manifest in the same body, or are implanted in another body but symbolize an alternative ego in relation to the original. In the film, the manifestations of alter egos occur across various planes and speak to the unstable position of surveillance generally, but moving image surveillance in particular, in relation to cinema and within our collective social consciousness. This instability is embodied by the recording apparatuses, the home, and the two female protagonists who are both presented as schizophrenic: the camera alters between two modes of observation that eventually converge; Katie and Kristi alter between normal and automatons; and the home vacillates between safe/private and vengeful/exposed. But they are also very clearly psychotic: Katie's automaton alter ego kills Micah, her sister and her sister's husband; the house, hell bent on maintaining its privacy tries to kill various family members; and the camera's surveillant alter ego pathologically provokes while feigning protective observation. The camera can also be framed as a shape-shifter as its variable use (mobile needing a human body, or static requiring a tripod or attachment to a wall) alters its physical cohesion and mentality. This is especially true in *Paranormal Activity 2*, where the camera gets "cloned" into many identical cameras. The cameras are the same but not the same as the original and, in this context, are projections as they are spatially rather than temporally distinct, since they exist at the same time as the original. The *Paranormal Activity* films present multiple, multilayered, permeable doppelgängers and alter egos rather than singular and/or clearly defined ones, stressing the interdependency between privacy, the self, and technology, and the violating, manipulative potential of surveillance across a broad spectrum. Rather than a single doppelgänger or alter ego haunting a single original, there are multiple originals that mirror each other, spawning several doubles which affect each other and produce further effects. Surveillance does not exist without a host, and its deployment through corporeal, but now mostly mechanical, bodies create *potential* splits as previously innocuous or unsuspecting host bodies *can* now be used for ulterior purposes.

Unlike other films about possessed beings or host bodies becoming automatons, here the possessing force is surveillance, an idea, rather than aliens (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)), ghosts/demons (*Poltergeist* (1982); *The Exorcist (*1973), magic (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (*1920)) or a specific brainwashing ideology (sleeper cell agent as an example: *Salt*, (2010)). Surveillance can be framed as an

ontological haunting of the mechanical recording apparatus whose return produces the apparatus as doubled, and thus ourselves as doubles, suggesting that surveillance now always haunts the human form and mechanical recording apparatus. The films are keenly aware of the viewing process, re-engineering and troubling common reality, alluding to how the ubiquity of recording technologies makes the everyday uncanny. When Katie and Kristi are watching their automaton on screen, they are watching their double, reflecting cinema's possessive, calculating powers (Rodowick 2007, p. 124-131), *duplicating* and absorbing the spectator and the viewing experience, rather than just reflecting it. As Steven Shaviro argues, "Cinema produces real effects *in* the viewer, rather than merely presenting phantasmic reflections *to* the viewer" (p. 51). The texts are all too real and all too familiar, interpellating viewers as subjects of surveillance.

The *Paranormal Activity* films position watchers as participants rather than passive subjects, but do so only to call attention to their dissimulation and to announce their reverse observation. In the films, the process of sifting through archival material is not only equated to an act of surveillance, but also implicitly questions the tacit euphoria of digital media's participation potential (Jenkins 2006) and the meaning and limits of active watching (Rancière 2009). In *Paranormal Activity*, each morning the couple wake up, load the previous night's recorded footage onto their computer, and carefully watch the monitor for any abnormal, or paranormal, activity. Scanning the previous evening's footage is almost ritualistic, mirroring the relentless scanning and monitoring the couple do each waking (and sleeping) moment. Spectatorship here is active, requiring concentration, facilitated by a process of endless scanning. What these characters do, we do, copying their actions as spectators—a microcosm for what we do as average people on a daily basis. What these characters do is monitor footage in order to detect deviation, mimicking what security guards do at a security desk and the habitual vigilance of paranoid individuals. The critique of surveillance is implicit as the purpose of watching demands urgency, but it is a falsified urgency as the events have already been determined. Like Micah and Katie, we too scan old footage but all we can do is point out what happened and not what *will* happen, subverting surveillance's precognitive proclamations. Surveillance's effectiveness is construed as an epistephilic narrative rather than a helpful tool: a way to tell more stories rather than a way to maintain security. Surveillance's intimate proximity to reality is used to manufacture participation, positioning

viewers as investigators, security camera watchwomen or watchmen, forensic analysts, and archivists. The films construct a type of false active-spectatorship in order to emulate the experience of being complicit with surveillance (Andrejevic 2006). We are neither psychoanalytic voyeurs of typical fiction film, nor eager-to-learn citizens of documentary, but security guards monitoring surveillance monitors and paranoiacs scrutinizing the real for danger. We simulate the labour of the surveillance camera operator, scanning through dead time, actively watching nothing just in case something happens, perversely hoping for something to happen. We are invited to experience the mimetic technology that is the cinema and the disciplinary apparatus that is surveillance re-converge.

This mimetic labour privileges the database as a digital archive that complements the text as retrieved and reassembled document. As we and the characters sift through archival footage like archivists we simultaneously watch the text *as* archival footage, *doubling* the process of excavation, likewise implicating ourselves as subjects of surveillance. This uncanny experience constructs us as the characters' doubles, as figures who are them but are not them, ambivalently appropriating the horror genre's currency of fear and tension to captivate as well as critique. Dead time here bridges emotional bonds rather than alienating or boring us, reversing how European modernist filmmakers deployed it as a critical form, further bridging the films' affinities with early cinema (Doane 2002, p. 140-171). For modernist European filmmakers, dead time was a strategy of distanciation and reflection: it used boredom to agitate and provoke reflection, allegorically mirroring the ennui of bourgeois existence. Dead time was an aesthetic of shock and a political choice meant to chip away at illusion and announce reality. Here, however, dead time is encoded real time and is designed to achieve the exact opposite of modernist cinema's distanced reflexivity: intimacy, immediacy, urgency, and engrossment. Aesthetically, it may denote self-reflexivity, but connotatively the images enthrall and further absorb us into the diegesis through mimesis. Self-reflexivity has been drained of its counterculture energy because, as Shaviro argues, "the machines used by the filmmaker can no longer be regarded as tools to manipulate reality from a distance, for there no longer is any distance" (p. 40). The desire for film to reflect on itself has been co-opted by the return of surveillance to the moving image; there is no longer self-reflexivity, just self-surveillance. The reuptake of reality via simulated surveillance has

closed the opening for "reality" to announce itself through moving images.

In their introduction to their recent collection *Inventing Film Studies* (2008), Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson discuss how digital technology engendered disciplinary reshuffling. They write, "The definition of cinema expanded, and often included phenomena not explicitly linked to celluloid," noting how the decision to change the discipline's society name to Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) from Society for Cinema Studies (SCS) pointed to "a widely shared assumption that the theoretical models articulated in the early 1970s were no longer sustainable…" (p. xvii). Perhaps the return of surveillance marks the return of the apparatus, but one that is different…and yet not all that different. Surveillance usurps documentary's aesthetics and the weapon of reality, and collapses the border between resistance and replication, between affect and effect, between diegesis and mimesis. In the twenty-first century it becomes, just as Thomas Y. Levin predicted (2002), a narrative trope and method for structuring narrative—fictional, actual, and everything in between.

This paper comes from a much larger research project on the theories, histories, intersections, and digressions between cinema and surveillance, and has been able to only briefly trace the contours of some of their major points of contact in a contemporary context. This paper is not meant to provide definitive answers and is unable to articulate some of the deep theoretical contingencies and discrepancies between film, desire, surveillance and realism. It is meant to address what I feel is a gap in current research and become a platform for further discussion and research. My goal is to make a small intervention into the discipline of Film Studies, the growing subfield that can perhaps be referred to as "surveillance cinema," and the interdisciplinary field of Surveillance Studies. Although knowledge-power has been part of the dialogue in Film Studies for decades, studies of surveillance and/as cinema are lacking, but slowly developing (Dixon 1995; Denzin 1995). Representations about surveillance open up discomforting potentials: is all documentary now a form of surveillance? Was documentary always a form of surveillance? Is narrative fiction a form of surveillance? How do we resist surveillance? Can we use movies to resist surveillance when the same recording technology can be used for the purposes of surveillance (Ganascia 2010; Mann, Nolan and Wellman 2002; Mann 2005; Weber 2012)? I hope this paper has opened the door for us to further contemplate and discuss these questions.

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