



## **Returning the Gaze: Culture and the Politics of Surveillance in Ireland**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This essay seeks to examine the modalities of colonial state surveillance as well as several ways in which they have been problematised in recent Irish literary writing, film, painting, photography and practice. Works by Ciaran Carson, Willie Doherty, Dave Fox, Terry George and Jim Sheridan, and Dermot Seymour are all therefore examined with the thematic of "returning the gaze" in mind. Further, this essay seeks to advance contemporary theories of surveillance away from an information-based or textual model to one which considers the spatial violence of surveillance and the subject positions it delimits, particularly in the context of colonialism and postcolonial theory.

**KEYWORDS:** Surveillance, Irish Cultural Studies, postcolonial studies, Irish film, photography, Ciaran Carson, space.

Colonial state surveillance has an extensive history in Ireland, from Martello Towers to spy networks, photographs of Fenians, and paid informers. Surveillance has been, if not essential, at least integral to the maintenance of the power of the colonial state apparatus. In the last three decades, the state in Northern Ireland has used a particularly advanced, modern system of

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surveillance. This system had been —and still is to a large extent— composed of several interlocking elements: the physical presence of the military and paramilitary police force on the streets, several RUC photographic units taking about 2,500 prints per week, 19 purpose-built permanent vehicle checkpoints (PVCs) and 13 purpose-built surveillance towers on hilltops in south Armagh, of which all have been serviced by helicopters. Perhaps the most advanced element, however, of this surveillance system is continuous RAF helicopter surveillance, made possible by the invention in the 1970's of reliable telescopic camera and viewing equipment (the Ferranti AF 532 stabilised magnifying observation aid is one example), with the addition in the 1980's of infra-red, night-vision, and thermal imager scopes and effective long-range listening devices. While the level of helicopter surveillance in Northern Ireland is only a degree or two more intensive than, say, south central Los Angeles, it is that degree or two extra that is exceptional —possibly unique— for a putative modern state. Such extraordinarily intensive surveillance is one of the aspects of the North that makes it possible to understand it as a colonial situation.

The object of this essay is to address the socio-psychological ramifications of such intensive surveillance, to identify just what kind of subject positions it enforces, and to examine the manner in which artists and activists have successfully resisted it in poetry, film, photography, painting, and practice. First, however, the essay offers a brief theorization of optical and photographic surveillance in general, challenging common assumptions that surveillance is primarily about information gathering rather than the production of forms of spatiality. For returning the gaze does not involve merely contesting gathered information, but re-constituting colonized space itself, and in the process re-figuring subjectivity in colonial conditions.

It is my premise that surveillance in general is less about information, as most theorists would claim, and more about the material display of force —less about taking notes than spatializing the force monopolized by the state. The most influential theorization of surveillance for cultural studies scholars is that of Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). It is clear, however, that something has changed between the older forms of surveillance that Foucault critiques —the model of surveillance, for him, being the Panopticon that Bentham sketched out— and contemporary surveillance. For one, these modes of surveillance are material forces of social control, not sketches and not plans or theories to be generalized later, hypothetically, into all possible social institutions. They are not, in other words, Bentham's unbuilt architecture. Secondly, what once was to be applied in prisons, insane asylums, or schools, is being applied to society in general, out 'in the open', in public space. And third, expensive technologies and procedures of instruction (backed by the accumulated resources only available to the state) are necessitated by these new modes of surveillance (most exemplified by helicopter surveillance). These developments, I think, transform the concept of surveillance itself. We can no longer think of it as an activity in which anybody off the street can participate, for example, as a sort of self-sustaining auto-mechanistic practice. Foucault's observation about

the ultimate surveillance "machine", the Panopticon, no longer holds: "Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his family, his friends, his visitors, even his servants" (Foucault, 1977: 202). Today the servants would be powerless to operate (or to turn off) the machine of surveillance or in the case of helicopter surveillance — powerless even to access the equipment.

With the advent of photographic, and specifically filmic modes of surveillance the concept of surveillance within critical discourses needs to be retrofitted. One reason why is that surveillance has always been for its theorists a problem of information: it involves the recording and processing of information about (national, colonial, etc.) subjects as a way of locating and fixing individuals by means of a vast structure of data. The central point about surveillance in the plague town for Foucault is that it is based "on a system of permanent registration: reports from the syndics to the intendants, from the intendants to the magistrates or mayor" (196). At the heart of this logic of surveillance is an "uninterrupted work of writing" (197). It is a body of information, written down in "reports", which enables the "capillary functioning of power". This description of the relations between power, information, and surveillance is still of course useful to critiques of the state. The North of Ireland is a site of constant and pervasive processing of information by the colonial state. For example, soldiers flying aerial surveillance for the RAF in Belfast have boasted publically that not only do they have the license plate numbers of every car moving in and out of the city in their on-board computers, but that they know the color of every sofa in every living room in the city. (Whether this is true, or even possible is of course another question.) This is indeed an advanced example of the kind of information-based model of surveillance Foucault rightly foregrounds. The advancement of computer technology, as some critics have noted, represents a sort of technological amplification of the structures states or imperial powers employed to control and reproduce subjects. This, to some theorists, represents simply an intensification of surveillance. And ways of describing and critiquing it must therefore match this exponential expansion. Computers, by this logic, simply enhance the same, classic structures of information behind surveillance. The computer and the technologies accompanying it, like closed circuit television (CCTV), are simply conceived of as more sophisticated procedures of writing, recording, of registration. In sum, the practice of surveillance has always been theorized as a sort of locator service which produces and secures subjects by keeping track of them in textual forms. New technologies simply ramify and reproduce on a massive scale old modalities of surveillance.

Canadian sociologist David Lyon, in his work, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society* (1994) provides the most detailed examination of the various concepts of surveillance applied to map out the shift that has occurred with the introduction of new technology. Lyon begins by discussing the two dominant "metaphors", as he calls them, within theories of surveillance: Orwell's "ubiquitous two-way television screen" of *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Bentham's Panopticon (Lyon, 1994: 58). Both seem to have distinct limits as descriptive metaphors for Lyon because neither really treats of the complexities of modern

surveillance technology. They are, for Lyon, staple visions of surveillance for its theorists but are outmoded. Administrative power has been "enlarged and enhanced by computers, especially since the 1960's," he says,

**Yet surely we see here nothing less than the near-perfection of the principle of discipline by invisible inspection via information-gathering. Or do we? Today no shortage exists of social analysts prepared to complete Foucault by making the connections explicit.... [M]ay we think of electronic surveillance as panoptic power? (Lyon, 1994: 67).**

Lyon suggests that modern electronic surveillance is not immediately recoverable to the concept of panopticism or to Orwellian dystopian visions of it. The Canada Lyon cites, a country of twenty-six million where a central government operates 2,200 databases containing an average of twenty files on each citizen is simply not adequately described within the framework of Orwellian or Foucaultian models (82). This enormous structure of data is not merely an "electronic Panopticon". And it surely is not near-perfect or total. Lyon cites various means subjects employ to evade such information-gathering surveillance: false identity cards, deliberately distorted information, computer hacking and cyber-theft, etc., available of course to different classes at different historical moments. Lyon cites theorists Bauman, Shearing and Stenning who see the dominant force of social control as ordered consumption such as occurs at Disney World.

**Less like Orwell's nightmare, much more like Huxley's Brave New World, here [at Disney World] is consensually-based control in which "people are seduced into conformity by the pleasures offered by the drug 'soma' rather than coerced into compliance by threat of Big Brother, just as people are today seduced to conform by pleasures of consuming the goods that corporate power has to offer." (75).**

This is a Gramscian model, where consent is necessary to secure hegemony. Gramsci does not accept the notion, like Orwell's position does, that power is ever total. Even in the tight structure of corporate and state control implied by 2,200 databases and countless files and mailing lists, resistance and the autonomous initiatives of the subaltern classes exist. In other words, surveillance is clearly crossed, undermined, and conflicted as a dominant practice of social control, always encountered in a dialectical set of relations. In short, it is more complex and less total than it purports to be and as it tries to portray itself. Yet the main assumption about surveillance that underlies Lyon's conclusions as well as the those of the social theorists he cites is that it is primarily a system of information-gathering, that the heart of the matter is information collection and maintenance alone. In the various descriptions Lyon outlines, however, structures of information and systems of surveillance are collapsed into each other. The collection of information comes to appear identical to surveillance, and vice versa.

Lyon and others, then, have taken the "optic" out of panopticism. The only way for Lyon to recover even in part the concept of panopticism is as a metaphor for a network of data. Yet such a reduction is troubled, if not made impossible, within the analysis of new technologies of

surveillance —particularly that of the camera. It is not possible to analytically collapse "information" with the "camera", because the camera does not function primarily as an information gathering tool, especially in the context of colonialism and the delimitation of subject positions under it. The camera or the range of other technologies of gazing function only secondarily as a way to collect and process information. Camera tapes, in fact, often re-cycle, filming only every few hours or so before they rewind and begin taping over themselves. They do not get filed in a vast state video library in which years of footage of everyday street life is dutifully stored and diligently examined in endless offices filled with state bureaucrats. Cameras represent something rather different than computer databases. Visual inspection simply does not constitute primarily a form of information-gathering. It constitutes a form of spatial violence.

The temporality of information gathering, the "work of writing", the reporting along (through, via) lines of communication, in other words the concepts of time produced by police log entries or computer databases for example, tend to be denecessitated by the security camera or the helicopter. What comes to be important is not a logic of linear temporality —i.e. lines of reporting, lines of writing, capillaries of power— but the production of a particular spatiality. This can be understood roughly as 'policed' spatiality, a form of space that also intersects dramatically and forcefully with the delimitation of subject positions. Individuals are fixed into particular subject positions by virtue not of a linear, temporal logic of accumulated information, but by virtue of surveillance organized around the idea of the secure area. It is not the accumulation of information that fixes the subject, but the space itself.

This sort of fixity is the same as that imposed by imperial states in other colonies, as several postcolonial theorists have explained. The gaze of the camera functions as a kind of permanently fixed (and fixing) "gaze of the colonizer", as Homi Bhabha articulates it. Bhabha rejects the subjective fixity Foucault insists upon for the more liberating idea of a colonial subject who is multiply divided into fixity and fantasy. Bhabha's colonizer's gaze is met not with a stable, controlled colonized subject, but with mimicry. Identity vacillates, and the colonial relation of power is destabilized: "[It is] a process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and the 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence" (Bhabha, 1990: 129). In Bhabha's understanding of surveillance, the gaze does not attempt to produce subjectivity by way of information gathering. The gaze is something distinct. It attempts to impose subject positions by fiat. Most importantly in Bhabha, the gaze fails because it is returned —the watcher becomes the watched.

I want to salvage the assumptions Bhabha makes about the colonial gaze, the seeming non-textual, non-discursive, and non-informational aspect of it. In the 'secured' space of Belfast or Derry, it is clear that one cannot mimic a security camera, or resort to 'fantasy' to respond to a helicopter hovering over one's neighborhood; one cannot exactly film the filmer, so to speak, because the barrier of a new technology does not allow that, i.e. the subject cannot gain the same kind of access to the material modes of surveillance that the state can. But one can return the

gaze by other means, which I will explain in detail below.

The poet Ciaran Carson's writings that deal with surveillance are well known. The prose piece, "Intelligence", in *Belfast Conjecti*, is perhaps his most engaged treatment of the subject. The text opens, as David Lloyd has said, "with the vista of night-time surveillance, apprehended not from the perspective of the operator but from that of the grounded denizen of the city" (Lloyd, 1999: 50). It reads:

We are all being watched through peep-holes, one-way mirrors, security cameras, talked about on walkie-talkies, car 'phones, Pye Pocketphones; and as this helicopter chainsaws overhead, I pull back the curtains down here on the terraces to watch its pencil-beam of light flick through the card index—I *see the moon* and the *moon sees me*. (Carson, 1989: 78)

Surveillance, for Carson, is a continual presence as continual as the moon. Carson maps clearly a form of subjectivity that surveillance imposes and enforces. As Lloyd has pointed out, however, it is mitigated by spaces apart, by locations outside inspection, the "lo-tech tactics of response" (Lloyd, 1999:50). "... [T]he technological glitz [of the military hardware Carson fetishizes] remains susceptible to the interference of the location in which it is deployed..." (50). However susceptible Carson represents it as being, however, he casts into bold relief the psychological impact of being continuously observed. In a more recent poem Carson returns to the problem of the surveyed subject in a poem, entitled, *Cave Quid Dicis, Quando, et Cui* (meaning, 'beware what you say, when, and to whom'). It reads:

You will recognize them by their Polaroids that make the span between their eyes  
Immeasurable. Beware their digital watches; they are bugged with microscopic batteries.

Make sure you know your left from your right and which side of the road you walk on  
If one stops beside you and invites you in, do not enter the pantechicon.

Watch it if they write in screeds,

For everything you say is never lost, but hangs on in the starry void  
In ghosted thumb-whorl galaxies. Your fingerprints are everywhere. *Be paranoid*.  
(Carson, 1993: 46).

Carson's poem, full of imperatives, advises—as if to somebody new to the area—to be the right kind of subject, to watch what you say, to watch where you walk, to refuse entry to the "pantechicon" (Carson's word for a space more complicated, and more controlled, than the old-fashioned panopticon). The poem almost seems to be the ramblings of somebody who has escaped a totalizing state, and is advising, between breaths, to somebody about to enter it how to behave. Here we have the very figure of the subject under surveillance, warning, finally: "*Be paranoid*."

Paranoia is, of course, the inevitable result of living with intensive state surveillance. The

Derry photographer Willie Doherty, in several of his photographic pieces, including the haze-shrouded "Last Hours of Daylight", explores the perspective of paranoia brought upon by surveillance. In pieces like "Undercover", he portrays a quotidian path down by the River Foyle, but across it he has printed the words, "Undercover" in order to undermine the complacency usually reserved for viewing landscape representations. He infuses into the work a sense of distrust, a paranoid anxiety about being watched—even in as mundane settings this. As Jean Fisher has explained of this piece, "seeing here conjures up paranoid sense of blindness and vulnerability, of being seen without seeing" (Fisher, 1990: 8). Perhaps Doherty himself best speaks for his work. Filmmaker Dave Fox's 1992 documentary film, *Picturing Derry*, sabotages accepted assumptions about the visual. In it, Doherty, who is interviewed about his photos in the exhibition *Unknown Depths* (1990) explains:

I think, just as important in these photographs is what is not shown, as what I show. Because often the things that you can't see, here, are the things that impinge most on your life, like the idea that you are being watched, or the idea that surveillance happens daily. You can't photograph those things because you can only photograph something that physically is in front of you, but you can suggest those things as a psychological state.

Referring to "Undercover" he says:

So on the one hand you have this very romantic idea of a walk along a river, but that's underlaid by a layer of undercover activity that you're never quite sure about but you suspect is there.

He continues:

The photographs themselves often don't have anything happening in them. There aren't any people. So they could, in a sense, be one frame from thousands of surveillance photographs. Surveillance is a condition. It happens all the time, and it's continually there. It's like the Northern weather. It's constantly gray here during the winter, and there isn't a break from it. It's only afterwards that you realize that it was an oppressive situation that you were in. I think of these photographs as being primarily for people who live in Derry; living in this place I have to deal with it in some way. So I think of these works as my first act of resistance. (Fox, 1992)

In the film, Fox interviews one local amateur photographer, Julie Doherty, who describes a time when somebody asked her why she did not photograph scenery rather than material "heavy", as she calls it, with politics. She explains to the questioner, "Well, if we go out and take photographs of scenery, if we go out and take a photograph of trees and bushes and lovely green fields, we don't know what's behind the trees and bushes ... That's reality for us. That's what scenery means to us. You don't know who's behind a bush or a tree" (Fox, 1992). Surveillance makes even the landscape suspect to the subject who is constantly watched. This is because surveillance relies precisely upon concealment and suspicion to achieve its effects.

One of the leading theorists of contemporary surveillance, William Bogard, in his work *The Simulation of Surveillance: Hypercontrol in Telematic Societies* (1996) has explained surveillance as being intimately linked with simulation. That is, the simulation of watching

—making subjects believe that they are being watched, even if they are not— is integral to its functioning. Bogard explains:

**As a support of surveillance, simulation produces those disorienting effects of the oscillation of presence and absence —i.e. uncertainty regarding its locus, its modes of operation, its intent, and so forth— which are the source of its [surveillance's] power.... It is the play of these conditions ... that defines the paradoxical space-time of surveillance, its command of location and duration, as it were, from the 'outside', out of view, while nevertheless remaining a kind of 'presence'. Surveillance is always linked in complex ways to those forms of ruse and deception which, in supporting the exercise of power, present power to be something else, elsewhere, not what it seems. (Bogard, 1996: 79)**

The slow-motion, still-frame effect of Doherty's photographs captures the 'space-time' of surveillance exactly, heightening a sense of presence precisely by representing absence, drawing attention to the "play of these conditions", demonstrating the logic of surveillance Bogard outlines. By doing so, Doherty is returning the gaze in a specific way. He is holding a moment out of the space-time of surveillance, like pausing upon a frame in a reel of frames. Bogard elaborates on the returning of the gaze in a way that advances Bhabha. He describes "*the gaze that returns the gaze*, like a *stare* that syphons off the power of the other's stare by repeating or doubling it, and thus becomes, discreetly, covertly, something more than a gaze (the best way to neutralize the observer is to look back with the same, or even greater, intensity). In that return of the gaze, a 'moment out of time' is created, where differences of power are canceled in the virtual space of endless repetition." (Bogard, 1996: 81) By pausing, by suggesting presence by representing absence, Doherty forcefully cancels out —short-circuits— the power of photographic surveillance.

To clarify here for a moment: surveillance, as we know from Foucault, happens in time, as mentioned above. It has a duration, as information is collected and compiled within its unique, self-contained temporality. (More familiarly, for example, **films have their own 'time'** —we see the **entire** Russian revolution in Eisenstein's hour and a half, or the lifetime of a gangster in Coppola's two hours; surveillance has its own time, necessitates its own temporality.) But it also produces space, the space in which the subject strolls within, along the walls of Derry, for example. In filmic modes of surveillance both time and space are combined, creating what Bogard calls the "paradoxical space-time" of surveillance. It is paradoxical because the two things appear to be produced at the same juncture: duration and location, or, in the terms of my argument, information and spatiality intersect, both producing their respective effects. For my analysis, what matters is the form of subjectivity that emerges at this juncture. Fixed and recorded, placed in space, noted in time, the subject experiences what Doherty terms the "psychological state" of being watched, or thinking that one is being watched.

Ciaran Carson, Doherty, and Fox approach the problem of surveillance from the discourses of poetry, photography, and documentary filmmaking —and all of them approach it from the point of view of the subject of surveillance — from the ground up, so to speak. Of the

three, however, none have effectively represented the structural relation produced by surveillance between the gazer and the gazed upon, though Doherty's astute dualism does gesture towards that.

It is my argument that surveillance forces the externalization of the subject, who becomes continually aware of its presence. Inner life is pushed aside and in its place an external fascination is inserted. Intimacy is made susceptible to externalization, to a kind of extimacy. Jim Sheridan and Terry George, in the 1997 film, *The Boxer*, represent such a process of externalization in action. And unlike other oppositional art forms that have approached the issue from the point of view of the subject, Sheridan and George successfully demystify the relation between the air and the ground, the camera and the space, the watcher and the watched. The film is set in Belfast during the time of the 1994 IRA cease-fire. It has, however, no fewer than 12 separate helicopter surveillance scenes interspersed throughout it, and the chopping sounds of military helicopter rotors echo through the soundtrack. Sheridan and George create an effective illusion that everything that is happening in the film is somehow being watched by the state.

To contextualise this briefly, helicopter surveillance has been a feature of life in the North of Ireland for almost half a century. We know, in fact, that the RUC and British Army used helicopters in the pursuit of IRA volunteers as early as 1956, only a few years after helicopters were introduced for widespread use in the military. Bernadette McAliskey, for example, recalls in her *The Price of My Soul* (1969) a raid in which IRA volunteers, including her father, fled into the "Black Bog" outside of Cookstown to evade capture. "[T]he authorities put search lights on it by night and sent helicopters over it by day, [but] the Black Bog never gave up an IRA man." (Devlin, 1969: 40-41) Again, as in Carson, the "interference of the location in which it is deployed" makes technology impotent, despite its glitz and powerful appearance (the appearance of helicopters in 1956 rural Ireland would indeed be a spectacle of state fiat). Of course, the military and police in the North did not initiate the extensive use of helicopters for regular aerial surveillance until the early 1970's. As the British military historian Colonel Micheal Dewar has outlined in *The British Army in Northern Ireland* (1996), "In the early 1970's, the Army was equipped with Sioux and Scout helicopters" (Dewar, 1996: 4). The Sioux was an American designed machine used primarily for reconnaissance, observation and liaison duties. It was replaced in the late 1970s with the Gazelle, many of which are still used to this day for aerial surveillance. Helicopters were used intensively in south Armagh, especially to re-supply the Crossmaglen army base, which was only servicable by air. And they served a crucial function in the re-supply of other bases, otherwise isolated. They were used in so-called

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<sup>1</sup> For perspective on the novelty that such a sight would represent in rural Ireland, it should be remembered that it wasn't until 1956, for example, that the Bell XH-40 Huey helicopter, well known for its presence as a work-horse in the American imperialist war in Vietnam, was invented. The Korean War and British operations in Cyprus and Malaya represented the first use of helicopters for counter-insurgency operations, and we had to wait until 1964 before the first helicopter would land on a skyscraper helipad in New York. Helicopters were a relative novelty almost everywhere until the early 1960s.

"Eagle" operations in which a helicopter would approach a car in rural terrain and drop soldiers off who would subsequently set up a "surprise" road-block, harassing suspects and civilians alike (Dewar, 1996: 24). They were also used, as they are in all combat situations, for the evacuation of wounded soldiers from theatres of operation (in fact, the helicopter was pioneered for just such a purpose in Korea and elsewhere). In general, however, as technology improved through the late 1970's and early 1980's the use of helicopter surveillance in the North of Ireland increased at an exponential rate. In the 1990s, surveillance became a daily experience for most urbanites in the North, something to be deliberately ignored by colonized populations or applauded by Unionists and Loyalists. It was effectively normalized, becoming as much a part of life as walking the dog or taking a stroll. It was often a shock, for example, to outsiders who arrived in Belfast or Derry to see helicopters hovering in the sky continuously while most people who live there hardly noticed them at all.

The normality of helicopter surveillance is exactly what Terry George and Jim Sheridan represent. Helicopters are continuous, involving themselves in nearly every intimate moment. The first helicopter surveillance scene in *The Boxer* is early in the film. Provocatively, the film begins with a wedding—a woman marrying an IRA prisoner in Long Kesh. As she returns to the pub where her wedding celebration will take place, with her family and friends around her, a helicopter hovers over her. Sheridan carefully sequenced the shots so that the first shot is taken from a military helicopter, looking down on the excitement. The very next shot is of Maggie, a main character, and the bride *looking up* at the helicopter, returning the gaze quickly, as they rush inside away from its prying cameras. The relation between the watched and the watcher is dramatized in the shot sequence—we move from seeing to being seen, from intruding to being intruded upon. The next time we see a helicopter is when Danny Quinn, the film's main character, approaches his neighborhood from the Loyalist side of a 'peace line'; he walks up to the gate, and finds it locked; he realizes, in this one attempt to open the gate, that the places familiar to him from 14 years ago, before he was imprisoned, are changed utterly, partitioned. Exactly at this moment he looks up, and returns the gaze of a hovering helicopter; and again, Sheridan takes us immediately to the cockpit of the helicopter to dramatize the relation. It is a remarkably effective example of shot sequencing. At crucial 'personal' moments, like the wedding and the prisoner's return to his neighborhood after 14 years, Sheridan and George show the way that such personal, intimate, or interior moments are folded outwards by the watching helicopter's presence. The subject is obliged to look up from her celebration, to look up from his "homecoming moment", to be distracted and indeed abstracted from an inner life. This is dramatized even more effectively in two scenes at the close of the film.

As has been recently reported in the *Irish News*, it is quite common for helicopters to hover over graveyards during funerals in the Nationalist community. In South Armagh, it has been standard practice for years. "In the course of all funerals, helicopter activity would be at its peak," reports an interviewed local priest.

You would have two or three helicopters in the air at that time and during the burial service they always make a point of hovering over the people assembled for the graveside prayers. Last year we had to invest in a portable speaker and microphone in order to make the prayers audible. It happens at every funeral. It has got to the stage that, if the helicopters weren't there, you would wonder what's wrong. (*Irish News*, 1997: A4)

In *The Boxer*, Sheridan and George make it a point to have helicopters hovering at the two funereal, *mourning* scenes in the movie. Again, they carefully sequence the shots to emphasize both the positions of the watched and the watcher. When young Liam finds the dead body of the boxing trainer Ike in a vacant lot, a hovering helicopter watches as he cradles Ike's head in his lap. Likewise, at the very end of the movie, the villain's wife finds her husband dead under a bridge, as a helicopter stirs the air with its rotors and watches attentively as she grieves, and cradles his bloody head in her lap.

In the helicopter surveillance scenes in *The Boxer* what are usually represented in cinema as private or intimate scenes are in fact liable to be turned inside out. The shot from the ground snaps to the shot from the air, what is usually represented as inner life is exteriorized, watched from above. (As such, the film almost achieves a sort of Brechtian alienation effect — constantly privileging *thepositionality* of gazing as an issue.) Further, the film makes clear that the watched is forced to become aware that she or he is being watched. The subject, at the time of *marriage*, *homecoming*, and *grief*, is made to understand that she or he is being surveyed, and that intimacy is liable to exposure or a forced inversion. Begonia Aretxaga, in *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (1997), notes that, as in the Algeria that Fanon describes (and Bhabha elaborates upon), women in the North were often subject to an externalizing form of surveillance. Aretxaga explains: "... in Belfast, a woman wearing a coat eventually became suspected of hiding ammunition. The military attempted to counteract this possibility by literally uncovering the body of women, asking them to open their coats and their handbags at search points to expose them to the soldier's gaze..." (Aretxaga, 1997: 66). What surveillance seeks to accomplish is to oblige people not only to open their coats but their lives and bodies to be exposed "to the soldier's gaze". The control of bodies is central to this, but so too is the control of the space in which these bodies live. As Bogard explains: "Surveillance includes those methods of 'ocular' control, scanning-selection mechanisms of the most diverse sorts, which command objects and events by means of their *exposure*" (78). Subjects become bodies; bodies become objects; objects are exposed. A brief scene from the 1995 Peter Yates film, *The Run of the Country*, makes the exposure of bodies in space by aerial surveillance as clear as possible. An IRA gunman is swimming naked in a lake, with his friends on the shore, as a helicopter appears from nowhere. The man's body is quite literally exposed, naked, as he runs to shore asking for a towel to hide himself. The nakedness of the subject of surveillance is likewise highlighted in Dermot Seymour's 1988 surrealist/ photorealist piece, "The Queen's Own Scottish Borderers Observe the King of the Jews appearing behind Sean McGuigan's Sheep on the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany". Here the body is a figure of Jesus Christ that Seymour

uses to gesture towards the intemees of the **blanket protest** and, of course, the gaunt hunger strikers of the early 1980s. But it is **also** more generally a figure of the subject who is continually monitored. The watching helicopters **visually** strip and crucify him. His subjectivity is tuned **outwards**, like his **arms** on the cross, opened like his ribs from hunger inflicted on his body by the state.

I **assume** a **necessary** correlation between space and subjectivity **here**. A space that is always watched by the colonial state can never be possessed **collectively**. The people who live in this space can never retain complete **self-possession**, either, but are continually subject to exposure —as **their** bodies and intimacies are made objects of an **unrelenting** gaze. The **artists** I **have** cited **all** succeed at problematizing, **resisting**, and returning that gaze.

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