Bauman, Z. & Lyon, D. (2013). *Liquid Surveillance.* Cambridge (UK): Polity.

Zygmunt Bauman introduced the concept of liquid modernity with the publication of the book with the same name in the year 2000. Liquid modernity follows postmodernity. It's the spirit of our times, a fast-paced baiting and feinting played atop the rubble of the twentieth century's obsolete disciplinary and regulatory structures. It describes a world where power has splintered from politics; where discipline is not located in the institution, but diffuse; where "social forms disappear before new ones are cast," (p. 3) leaving us without strategies for navigating the inside or outside of these shifting social systems.

In *Liquid Surveillance*, Bauman and fellow sociologist David Lyon explore liquid modernity through an extended dialogue about one *dispositif* of the era – surveillance and its attendant apparatus. Born in Poland to Jewish parents in 1925, Bauman fought the Nazis in the Polish First Army and continued to work in high positions in the Polish communist party and military after the war. Upon becoming disillusioned with – and being discharged from – these groups in 1953, he began a long career as a nomadic academic, publishing over fifty books on wide-ranging subjects related to sociology and critical and political theory. David Lyon is a Professor of Sociology and directs the *Surveillance Studies Center* at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. He has written extensively about surveillance in different social contexts and is well-known for his explanation of "social sorting," a term he coined to describe algorithmic classification of huge swathes of the population.

Throughout the text, Bauman and Lyon perform a nuanced excavation of surveillance systems. Surveillance, here, is undertaken by an array of actors, not restricted to practices of the State alone. Surveillance is imposed upon the subjects of liquid modernity, but also craved by them – a desired gaze that provides the illusion of security and meaning. According to the

authors, we want to be watched and affirmed by *someone*, but this *someone*, more often than not, ends up being *something* – the corporations who have created social networks in order to mediate (and profit off of) the weak ties that are necessitated by the fast-paced, provisional lifestyles of liquid modernity.

One entry into thinking about liquid modernity and its surveillance structures – cited heavily throughout Bauman and Lyon's conversations – is Deleuze's *Postscript on the Societies of Control*. Herein, Deleuze details the ways in which Foucault's monolithic disciplinary apparatuses have been transmuted into diffuse systems of control. The prison becomes everywhere and nowhere as the panopticon dissolves into a far more insidious and far less static surveillance apparatus. Per Deleuze, the "apparent acquittal of disciplinary societies (between two incarcerations)" changes into the "limitless postponements of societies of control (in continuous variations)" (Deleuze, 1992, p. 5). The subject is never imprisoned; she never goes on trial, but she is always already accused, on edge, doing something worthy of suspicion.

To this end, Bauman and Lyon herald the marriage of discipline and security. Security has become a "future-oriented" enterprise, one that accuses in the present in order to avoid what might happen. Accusation is chronic and employed preemptively in order to ensure the maintenance of the current order. As subjects of liquid modernity, our concern is with our accusations, which are dictated by the agenda of the powerful. Wrapped up in what we have done wrong, it becomes nearly impossible to construct another agenda.

Yet the panoptic shift that is vital to *Liquid Surveillance* is still more complicated than this. It is not enough to say that the accusation is endless; it is even more important to consider where the gaolers have gone if they are no longer in a center tower. Following Didier Bigo, the authors posit the creation of a *banopticon* that:

…guards the entrances to the parts of the world inside which DIY surveillance suffices to maintain and reproduce 'order'; primarily, it bars entry to all those who possess none of the tools of DIY surveillance (of the credit card or Blackberry kind) and who therefore cannot be relied on to practice such surveillance on their own.

Bauman and Lyon, 2013, p. 63.

Therefore, inside the banopticon we find other self-managing citizens who willfully engage with surveillance technologies in order to lead a "normal" life.

The traditional tasks of the managerial are passed to the managed. With the belief that they are "hacking" their lives for the better, the managed adopt a lifestyle of endless labor, clicking, liking, and networking after leaving the office, generating – usually without realizing it – massive data streams for which they are not compensated. This is the cloud replicating the data of millions of users and then piping it to shady third parties who are and will remain unnamed. Billions and billions are served something they did not ask for and could not ask for. There is no one to ask and so asking is not an option. Participation is not mandatory, it is obligatory – there is no imaginary that would allow non-participation. Borders are obsolete. College drop-outs in Silicon Valley design apps that the rest of the world uses to communicate. The State is a mosaic of corporate interests masquerading as the will of the people. It is rarely embodied, invisible except at the airport and on tax day; its citizens surveil each other and themselves.

Outside the banopticon, the State enforces otherwise obsolete borders in order to continue practices like *Extraordinary Rendition*, the CIA policy that allows accused terrorists to be extradited to places that allow torture. To do so, it operates far outside of its borders, enabled by and entangled with corporations that sell firearms and surveillance software, luxury items and private jets.

The subjects outside the banopticon become the contemporary *Homo sacer*. The State will not kill them outright; instead, any number of puppet machines and actors do. The drones. The human traffickers. The militarized police on a suburban street, claiming self-defense.

This oppression by roving and often invisible power has implications for both spaces of the banopticon. The first is what Bauman calls "adiaphorization" – "systems and processes become split off from any consideration of morality" (p. 7). Without politics as the binding force between the powerful and the subjects of power, considerations of humanity are absent from decisions. People are analysed based upon their data doubles – the traces captured by algorithmic evaluation of a person's habits. This collage becomes more important than the person – the person cannot testify against her data double.

And what of mundane, everyday interactions? Social media has become the dominant means of communication, one that replaces strong ties with weak ties. It is a type of communication that refuses to consider geography a prerequisite for connection. The network

replaces the society, and those who are not on the network do not exist. Bauman and Lyon caution that one should not consider social media the cause of liquid modernity. Rather, it is a necessity of the changing system – archaic social formulations and expectations must be wiped away to allow power to flow across defunct territories.

This point resonates with a common refrain throughout the book: do not blame the messenger for the message. We have built the tools; the tools do not build us. And this is why escape is so difficult to imagine, because it is not a matter of simply changing the tools.

Yet we might wonder about the benefit of having different tools available. Software platforms that are not owned by major corporations, projects designed with goals that are not solely financial, which do not simply replicate the structures of those that are in place (*Ello* is an ugly clone of *Facebook*). These tools, lying in wait for the arrival of a collective conscious shift, might provide us with space to begin thinking about what the other side of the liquid modernity might be.

These themes are the main subjects of debate through the book's seven chapters, in which Bauman and Lyon taxonomize the surveillance trends they see emergent within liquid modernity. The book's first sections attend to issues of drone surveillance (and operation), social media, the post-panoptic, "surveillance for security," consumerism, and social-sorting. Throughout, the authors push these subjects through to their ends, again and again knocking up against the question of morality and hope – how does one act ethically in a system that shirks the foundational structures of traditional ethical practices? And, more complicated still, how does one locate hope within a liquid modernity in which "real" alternatives do not exist and utopian movements are always subsumed by the system?

The book's final chapters broach these questions. First, the authors dissect ethical practices within systems of surveillance. They return to a discussion of the ethical impact of *adiaphorization* through an exploration of Levinas' idea that humanity is to be found in the face of the Other. If information has become disembodied – per Claude Shannon's visionary prediction – the systems (and the employees within the systems) that process our information are incapable of a Levinas-esque confrontation with the subjects of the data. In response, Lyon encourages the formulation of "disclosive ethics" – explorations that excavate the processes and media that enable *adiaphorization* (p. 139). He points to the work of Lucas Introna, a professor of Organization, Technology, and Ethics at Lancaster. Introna has written extensively about the phenomenology (following Heidegger) of information technology – especially about screens. He questions how IT affects our processing of the world and the ways in

which the world processes us. Through explorations such as these, we find the places where the Other is *adiaphorized*, where humanity is lost. By locating these junctures we might begin to imagine their elimination.

The discussion of ethics – and how to inject them back into the apparatuses of liquid modernity – transitions into the book's final section, an examination of the agency and hope available to subjects of liquid surveillance. To decide that we are condemned is to be condemned, the authors argue. We are not condemned so much as we are unable, given our current capacity for articulation, to "make words flesh" (p. 153). Here is the failure of so many utopian movements, and of the utopian imaginary. In this way, we are two steps removed from escape. Our present linguistic systems do not have the power to give us the thoughts that are needed to channel the end of the liquid modernity. We need to find a language that allows us to create a hope of escape.

It is in part because we are without this language that we have no real options for escape. We need to spend some time thinking thought. As one methodology for this meditation, Bauman and Lyon discuss the "recovery of culturally neglected vocabularies without slipping into nostalgia or reaction" (p. 146). Lyon found Derrida's exposition of Levinas' la *responsibilité* in a 1996 lecture "revived...[a] halting hope that there are alternatives that also make sense of the present liquid time" (p. 146). This halting hope could come from the reanimation of fallow philosophical thought. It could come from refusing to engage with the existing theoretical apparatus, as McKenzie Wark proposes in his Public Seminar writings about the Anthropocene (Wark, 2014). Or it could come from the work of Peter Fend, who challenges audiences to think about his speculative land art as potential ecological tools. (For example, Fend proposes the flooding of sub-sea level deserts in order to absorb rising ocean levels and bring water to drought-ridden areas.) (Russeth, 2013) It seems always that there is something that compels us to continue the work in spite of the fact that we are trapped in an ill system with no outside and therefore no articulable end. Hope, Bauman writes, "is party to the human" (p. 145).

We do not have the ability to manifest an outside to liquid modernity, and until we do, the worst we could do is become so dazzled by the lack of alternatives that we lose our ability to act politically on local levels. In a recent lecture at the *Institute for Contemporary Inquiry* in Berlin, Rosi Braidotti addressed just this kind of local politics, encouraging the audience to "get a life" – that is, to begin critically engaging with the systems that allow us to exist as we do, where we are. What is unappealing, Braidotti asked, about dissecting the structures that

feed our own funding and lifestyles? Braidotti challenged us to begin with the universities, the NGO world, the art world, the music industry.

David Lyon writes about using disclosive ethics to combat *adiaphorization* – about loca-ting the joints where the face of the Other loses its humanity. Braidotti would have us apply this investigation to the institutions that frame and enable our work. One endeavor that comes to mind is the collective wage-sharing undertaken by six Duke University graduate students (Schuman, 2014). In the United States, graduate student stipends vary depending on field of study, sometimes dramatically. In an attempt to upend this unequal funding structure, a group of students from different departments at Duke agreed to pool their wages and spend collecti-vely, with much success. There are opportunities for action in the spaces where we live and with the people who surround us. In the frantic haze of liquid modernity, we might do well to ask not how we can better lock down our houses, but instead how we can relate to one another in ways that preserve and celebrate humanity.

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