

Participating in '1984': The Surveillance
of Sousveillance from *White Noise*
to Right Now

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SURVEILLING THE SCENE

The debate seems lost: we *are* being watched. Our culture is a surveillance culture, for better and worse. The way to overcome that, a new generation has cheered, is through sousveillance: now we will do the filming and watching. It is not as easy, however, to just beat the watchers by watching. The gazes then only pile up, and the panopticon finds a new media distribution strategy. In this chapter, I make this argument by reading Don DeLillo's 1984 novel *White Noise* alongside the emerging technologies of that pivotal year to establish what I call the "surveillance of sousveillance" through tracing how those technologies have developed into our present cultural moment. I focus specifically on Jack's desire to create an "avatar," a character extension beyond himself that can reach the media network as a recognizable subject—from sousveillance viewer to surveillance victim—in Part II, "The Airborne Toxic Event." Surveillance—being constantly monitored by "eye-in-the-sky" technology—today is now reciprocally complicated by what Steve Mann has termed sousveillance—monitoring

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back through “eyes-on-the-ground” technology. Where DeLillo’s novel comes in theoretically handy, then, is its reflection of the media-saturated society in the year he completed writing it: 1984. The plot trajectory and thematic resonance of *White Noise* are both influenced by, and in reaction to, the permeating effects of digital technology. Though the book has been exhaustively analysed as a seminal text of television-age literature, DeLillo, as an author, is always in conversation with media, so I suggest we update that conversation to dialogue with new developments in network media. The novel’s status as a text amid 1984’s technological zeitgeist renders it, within my argument, DeLillo’s prophetic text about the way we digitally manifest our extended identities into surveillance culture. 1984 was the year of the Apple Macintosh computer’s debut (and the famous Super Bowl commercial advertising its arrival), as well as the interim between the Atari’s demise and the Nintendo Entertainment System’s North American release. Looking back, in this year when new media was on everyone’s mind, Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* stands out in its ability to predict the fallout of what happens when it is no longer just “them watching us,” but now “us watching each other” in an interactive media panopticon of circulating content.

Surveillance is getting much bigger as it gets smaller. Mann et al. (2003, p. 334) explain that the Panopticon worked best in “pre-industrial ‘door-to-door’ communities,” thus with the industrial revolution and the expanding of cities came a shift in the structure of surveillance. And with that shift, the emergence of “neo-panopticons”: “Since that comparatively ancient time, surveillance techniques have increasingly become embedded in technology. Where people once watched people with their naked eyes, computer-aided machines now do remote monitoring of behaviour” (Mann et al. 2003, p. 335). The panopticon effect is digitally extended, as those recorded “do not have direct visual and aural contact with those who are observing” (Mann et al. 2003, p. 335) But the “computer-aided machines” have changed considerably since Mann et al. discussed them in 2003. Ten years later, Edward Snowden changed the conversation surrounding surveillance forever with his whistle-blowing revelations about NSA wiretapping and monitoring of American mobile phone records, a practice he has since revealed other countries are similarly guilty of. We now carry these neo-panopticons with us, as a majority of people in the developed world cannot get by without a smartphone.

Sousveillance supposedly offers a way to take this technology back. Steve Mann is considered the progenitor of the term and pioneer of the practice.

Mann et al. elucidate that since “sur” is French for “over,” then “We call this... ‘sousveillance’ from the French words for ‘sous’ (below) and ‘veiller’ to watch” (Mann et al. 2003, p. 332). To continue sampling Mann’s terminology, he (Mann et al. 2003, p. 333) considers sousveillance a form of “reflectionism” in which the technologies used for surveillance are re-appropriated by the surveilled to film themselves, or even those surveilling them: “[it] holds up the mirror and asks the question: ‘Do you like what you see?’” In our Web-enhanced society, not only must it be filmed, it must be circulated for social and, in Mann’s original conception, political purposes. He proposes utopically:

Digital technology can build on personal computing to make individuals feel more self-empowered at home, in the community, at school and at work. Mobile, personal, and wearable computing devices allow people to take the personal computing revolution with them. Sousveilling individuals now can invert an organization’s gaze. (Mann et al. 2003, p. 336)

It is, however, the circulation of the sousveillant effort, I suggest, that compromises how radical Mann had it in mind to be. Sousveillance is rendered into web content, something to be seen as the consumer’s form of entertainment. As surveillance technology reaches out further into realms of media, sousveillance ends up effecting, instead, an inverse reaching out, filming to be filmed. The surveillance of sousveillance undermines the reclaiming of technology for digital liberation as everyone remains entrenched in a media-entertainment-construct of the neo-panopticon.

1984 AND BEYOND

The shift from surveillance to sousveillance can be seen from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to “1984.” When George Orwell wrote his famous novel in 1948, he foresaw a society in constant deference to Big Brother, where the Ministry of Truth told lies and the televisions watched the viewers. It was a future of total and constant surveillance, in which the government is always a step ahead of Winston Smith’s plot to push back against their dystopian control. Defeated and brainwashed, Smith joins in and admits that he loves Big Brother. There are few novels more crushing in their inescapable visions of totalitarian power. At the time, it threatened a future not that far away in which all privacy is past and the present is complete surveillance. Therefore, when 1984 actually came around, everyone could breathe sighs

of relief that Orwell's vision had not come to pass. In fact, as I outlined earlier, tracing 1984's technological advancements to their contemporary developments, implicates that year as the beginning of a proto-sousveillance culture that encouraged interaction with organizational technologies tooled into the personal. The Apple Macintosh kicked off the personal computer revolution to come; suddenly this high technology was an interactive part of the home. But before the product, there was the pitch. The year in technology truly began with the most famous Super Bowl commercial to ever air, Apple's "1984" advertisement. More short film than commercial, this ad, directed by Ridley Scott, features a woman in bright red and white contrasted against a cold and grey future who hurls a hammer at, and shatters, the screen on which a "Big Brother" like authority captivates a uniformly dreary crowd of sad men with shaved heads. As the evocative scene concludes, Apple ends the commercial with an enticing tagline that states, 'On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like "1984."' Using Orwell's dystopian classic as its context, Apple implicitly compares then-reigning IBM's lock on the computer market to a fate as dreadful as Big Brother's ideological dominance. This analogy makes Apple that hammer wielding woman. The Macintosh is boldly touted as the free-thinking individual's solution that will save society from a fate worse than a faceless dystopia. In the computing world of 1984, Apple made itself the unique hero against big institutional odds: To escape the surveillance nightmare of Big Brother Business, buy an Apple Macintosh.

Contributing his own proto-sousveillance prescience, DeLillo's *White Noise* contains similar thematic conflict between the interactive individual and the surveilled crowd. Just two years after the novel's publication, Tom LeClair published the first critical analysis of it, in which he famously calls DeLillo a "systems novelist" ... who analyse[s] the effects of institutions on the individual" (Osteen 1998, p. xii). Huddled under the umbrella term 'institution' could also be the panopticed public, which *White Noise* interacts with in the catastrophe of "The Airborne Toxic Event." Stacey Olster's (2008, p. 82) take on the text posits that, "The characters in *White Noise* can only locate themselves collectively within the crowd and by way of those places that facilitate congregation." With Jack in mind, however, fading into the examined crowd goes against his search for character throughout the novel. Rather than identify himself "collectively," Jack references himself against the crowd in order to become a distinct node in the system, for a system is necessary for identity formation, just as a "story"

is needed for a character to emerge. His inverse surveillance is to be watchable rather than just merely watched. Jack would rather play the heroine with the hammer than be a part of the blank and grey crowd, recognizing that her red and white clothing needs that dreary palate to stand out. DeLillo's novels often feature what Susana S. Martins (2005, p. 90) calls "meditations on how individuals are forged within systems of language and ideology." We see in this novel that Jack plays a persona bigger than himself to reach beyond his individuality into the network. What his game entails, however, is an attempt to become a character, not quite a quest for realized identity. It is out of the crowd that Jack aims to escape surveilled self and attempt sousveilled extension. For within surveillance culture, Jack equates this technology that he cannot understand with death, hoping that his sousveillant attempts to connect to new media will let him "live."

In DeLillo's novel, new media and death often go hand in hand, both contributing to the *White Noise* of the title. When the SIMUVAC technician testing Jack for Nyodene D. exposure informs him that he is "generating big numbers" according to the computer, he frets and asks questions to hide his anxiety (DeLillo 1998, p. 140). The answers do not really help. Ultimately Jack finds out he is "the sum total of [his] data [and] No man escapes that," leaving him feeling "like a stranger in [his] own dying" (DeLillo 1998, pp. 141-142). Leonard Wilcox (1991) argues that this fear of technology directly correlates with the fear of death. According to his analysis (Wilcox 1991, p. 353), "the symbolic mediations of contemporary society deprive the individual of an intimate relation with death, with the result that society is haunted by the fear of mortality." Jack's "death" is rendered into computer code, indecipherable to him. He is being watched and recorded into the "massive data-base tally" (DeLillo 1998, p. 141). Therefore, the fear of death mediated into information may be seen as a vulnerability to surveillance. Jack then aims to invert this surveilled self through sousveillance: to become a character that does not just accept the code, but contributes to it. It is by inhabiting a role that one may approach death, through Mann's reflectionism. What is reflected, though, is not the thing itself. Martin Heidegger (2008, pp. 281-282), in *Being and Time*, offers that we can only understand death through the death of Others, which means never completely, for "the dying of Others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there alongside.'" We do not fully understand death then; more specifically, we do not want to understand it. Heidegger (2008) takes

the phrase, “one dies,” and then explicates that stubbornness. Through his idea of the “they,” meaning everyone else but oneself, Heidegger (2008, p. 297) suggests “that what gets reached, as it were, by death is the ‘they.’” One can say, “one dies,” because everyone thinks “‘in no case is it I myself,’ for this one is the ‘nobody’” (Heidegger 2008, p. 297). He says then that the “they” can even convince one that this person who will one day die is not oneself. One takes on a part and convinces oneself, “The person left to confront death is not me.” The “they”, however, are everyone else watching, constituting the surveillance of *sousveillance*. Being watchable through filmed acts of *sousveillance* only expands the neo-panopticon, which reaches farther than ever as phones are unwitting tools of surveillance and laptops, tablets, and smartphone hardware keep us within quick access of the Web wherever we are. When Google asks to access a user’s location, the ability to invert that level of surveillance becomes even more difficult through interaction and contribution. We now seem to allow it, wanting Heidegger’s “they” to be our audience. “Death has entered,” says Jack, and he may be right (DeLillo 1998, p. 141): the surveillance of *sousveillance* has us even more connected but just as vulnerable.

In trying to escape his surveilled self, Jack’s character play could be considered a game: the poignant medium through which one can “die” so much and yet live. For Jack and his game, the fact that virtually all digital games offer a player the chance for multiple lives is crucial. When one plays a game, he or she can perform clumsily and die quickly with the first life, and then that same player can perform well and complete a certain level with the next: both lives (and deaths) belong to the same character and yet do not. Jack, through his character, then may be said to be sampling lives by skirting close to death. These characters are not the actual Jack, but his extensions, the way he attempts to conceptualize death; because he never authentically faces death and, in fact, cannot without dying is exactly why he remains afraid of it. Fear of death, as fear of surveillance, here allows us to read DeLillo’s media-saturated narrative as a cultural examination of lives perpetually at the mercy of screens. Before gaming was even a ubiquitous medium, DeLillo suggests through the character of Jack how we may engage those screens rather than just accept them. The interactive medium of gaming offers a proto-*sousveillant* way to approach death through playing it. The passivity of surveillance resets to the interactivity of *sousveillant* representation. New game.

The concept of becoming a separate *sousveillant* character reaches ideological completion in this new game, a media pastime that 1984’s America oddly enough thought little of. Atari had just plummeted under the video game crash of 1983, because “no one,” in the large economic sense, was playing it. Even though the Nintendo Entertainment System was exponentially gaining a reputation in Japan, it would not reach North America until the fall of 1985. Computer games mostly carried the year, but in a niche market. Therefore, this pivotal year is important for its omission of what is now a booming culturally legitimate medium. DeLillo has never written about video games; even a mention of the machines is nowhere to be found in *White Noise*. His text is, nevertheless, certainly prophetic of how we may conceptualize the way we become a character through gameplay as both first person player and third person character. DeLillo’s first novel *Americana* predicts this provocative concept, albeit regarding television, when protagonist David Bell rehearses lines with an actor playing his father, who reads, “[Television] moves [man] from first person consciousness to third person. In this country there is a universal third person, the man we all want to be” (DeLillo 1989, pp. 270–271). A game, as a media technology with increased screen interaction, similarly affords the chance that “entering the third person singular might possibly be fulfilled” (DeLillo 1989, p. 271). The most telling part of these recited lines is the conclusion, the chance to enter the third-person singular. That third-person singular is nevertheless caught inside the pre-programmed plots of rule and mechanic bound story and gameplay, a visual representation of *sousveillant* play still trapped within a larger surveillance structure. Even the advent of online gaming and its freedom still promises that surveillance of *sousveillance*, all the players their own main characters, and everyone watching everyone.

To best conceptualize this representational reach into the network, I turn to Gregory Ulmer’s (2011) avatar theory. Jack, as if he were online in real life, creates a character to adapt to his evolving situations in ways that project self beyond self. Not just the narrator of this novel as book, he actually narrates himself within the plot as well. Jack’s narrative play over his character resembles a kind of real-life writing, but his persona projection, furthermore, evokes Ulmer’s concept of avatar. In our own Internet age, Ulmer (2011) writes of the self-extending practice of becoming one’s avatar, to inhabit one’s online identity as something not “oneself” but another character entirely, for “Avatar is not mimetic of one’s ego, but a probe beyond one’s ownness.” Explaining that, “The term avatar in

Sanskrit literally means descent,” Ulmer (2011) discusses how the analogy comes from the times Krishna came down to earth and took on embodiment in Hindu mythology. Our own “descent” then is becoming our online selves, like Jack, the narrator, narrating his characterized extension. This play is a pastime born from what Ulmer (2011) calls the emerging language apparatus: “electracy.” It is learning to communicate in the media of our increasingly digital culture, a step away from strictly print literacy to electronic fluency and production. To connect the literate to the electrate, he (Ulmer 2011) claims that, “Playing one’s avatar is to electracy what writing an essay is to literacy.” In his embrace of the digital apparatus, he (Ulmer 2011) encourages that, “You need to meet avatar, that part of you inhabiting cyberspace.” If this is the case, then Jack’s “character,” a more literate construct, may be understood as “avatar” given the 1984 milieu discussed earlier. Within Ulmer’s electracy, the technologies we interact with are tied to an apparatus that includes individual identity, so he suggests we employ avatar to understand where this emerging language apparatus is taking us and how we may intervene and take some control over it. I argue that if we analyze Ulmer’s version of literacy as a more passive apparatus in relation to the interactivity of electracy, then we may likewise see surveillance as the passive overview against sousveillance as the gameplay on the ground. Meeting one’s avatar, in light of that conception, should mean, more cynically, to reach out to be watchable rather than just to be watched; perhaps even to be a playable character than just played.

The relationship of avatar as described by Ulmer suggests that when one plays any game, he or she both is the character and is not. There is a sequence of identity extension in which one is oneself, one plays through the character, and one is the character. This relationship gets even more direct once we can design our own avatars rather than simply playing with pre-built characters, which is increasingly standard practice in certain console games and nearly all MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games). As innovator of Hitler Studies, Jack feels he must enlarge his persona (and waistline) to match his own academic import; in other words, he must become what a professor looks like. Per his chancellor’s advice, he aims to “‘grow out’ into Hitler” (DeLillo 1998, p. 17). This embellished image grooming is what turns Jack into “the false character that follows the name around” (DeLillo 1998, p. 17). His dark glasses and robe even resemble mask and cape, making him seem like some super-professor and foreshadowing the hero that Jack wants to be when the Airborne Toxic Event cripples the town of Blacksmith. Jack’s mission

to bodily become a character entails playing his own life, designing his avatar of professor through his own sousveilled body to make it worthy of surveillance.

In times like these, however, as predicted by DeLillo, embodying a character is taken beyond gaming analogies bound by graphical interface, directly into players’ bodies themselves. For example, the social video platform Twitch turns the players playing into DeLillo’s “third person singular”—not just the characters they play—by fostering a network for anyone to upload streaming videos of their “Twitch plays,” live footage of their gameplay for other players to watch. Through a vast community of Twitch “channels” (echoing the language of television at the heart of *White Noise*), players engage in sousveillance by filming themselves play their favourite games and, on average, exceptionally well, because the most talented players get the most interaction on their Twitch channels. Therefore, the community space of Twitch still rewards the extension into avatar, a character beyond just oneself, even when the character is oneself on camera. In fact, some Twitch players even make their livings off ad revenue associated with the views they receive. The surveillance of their sousveillance, then, is built into Twitch’s platform as its intent is to create a shared community of everyone watching everyone (a neo-panopticon disguised in promises of fun and connection). Beyond merely real game players, advancements in augmented reality gaming, such as *Pokémon Go* are turning the real world into game space, just like we turn ourselves into sousveillant characters of the surveillance culture. While players “catch” virtual Pokémon in actual spaces via smartphone interfaces, the game highlights, even more clearly, the surveillance of sousveillance as the vast amount of data collecting permissions it requires players to grant has become the content of many news articles’ cautions. These developments in gaming technology and culture continue to shift the proto-sousveillant medium of gaming into an actually sousveillant—and even surveillant—reflection of our implicated culture. As Jack Gladney learns in the face of the Airborne Toxic Event, becoming and playing a character is not a safe escape from the real anymore.

THE DECENTRED CENTRE OF THE SOUSVEILLANCE DISASTER

In Part II of DeLillo’s novel, “The Airborne Toxic Event,” a black cloud of spilled Nyodene Derivative disrupts Jack’s illusion of privileged safety and sends him clinging to the illusion of an Other. The illusion of the Other

that I refer to directly correlates to the desire to be watchable. Just as I previously discussed how Jack references himself against the examined crowd, I claim that as we vie for this viewability, we separate ourselves from those we are privileged to watch. When that model will no longer last, we must extend ourselves through sousveillance into the right to be circulated as content. We then fall victim to the surveillance of sousveillance. As we see Jack shift from sousveillance viewer to surveillance victim within this state of emergency, we should notice that Jack's vulnerability to the television screen, as discussed by scholars like Martins (2005) and Wilcox (1991), nicely predicates what DeLillo can likewise say to networked windows. For it is within any screen, in fact, that this mediated Other can be found. As an example, when Jack and his children see Babette on television earlier, nothing short of a rediscovery takes place:

The face on the screen was Babette's...I'd seen her just an hour ago, eating eggs,

but her appearance on the screen made me think of her as some distant figure from the past, some ex-wife and absentee mother, a walker in the mists of the dead... It was but wasn't her... I tried to tell myself it was only television whatever that was, however it worked—and not some journey out of life or death,

not some mysterious separation. (DeLillo 1998, pp. 104–105)

Jack here muses that Babette seems simultaneously more real and more mythical all at once. It is as if Jack's wife truly exists all over again for he and his family—not just as the Babette they thought they knew, but as that character in the television set. Wilcox (1991, pp. 346–347) says this is what happens in a world where “images, signs, and codes engulf objective reality; signs become more real than reality and stand in for the world they erase.” The erased world gives way to the surveillance of everyone watching each other through screens, even those right alongside them in a disaster like this one that shakes Blacksmith.

Within the perceived world of mediated reality is a perceived need for this “Other.” Jack as disaster viewer needs something to view, or more poignantly, needs a way to view himself. It is through this mediation that Jack compartmentalizes apocalypse and renders himself perceivably untouchable: bad things only happen to other people. Jack Gladney

believes this lie wholeheartedly every time he assures his son Heinrich the cloud “won't come this way” and states so matter-of-factly:

I'm a college professor. Did you ever see a college professor rowing a boat down his own street in one of those TV floods? We live in a neat and pleasant town near a college with a quaint name. These things don't happen in places like Blacksmith. (DeLillo 1998, p. 114)

He feels protected by the character he creates. This arrogance on Jack's part is comparable to the many people in our current culture who feel similarly unaffected by the pervasive surveillance permeating their own lives. It should take less than an “Airborne Toxic Event” to jar them into realizing that they cannot afford Jack's smugness. It is this realization on Jack's part as the cloud comes closer “this way” that puts his illusion in danger of disillusionment, as he puts off the idea that those who perceive their Others can likewise become someone else's Other. If people continue to think they are not being watched—just watching, then this false truism can be considered an example of Jacques Derrida's (1993) “centre.” In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida (1993, p. 278) explains, “The function of this centre was...to orient, balance, and organize the structure—one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure.” The structure at play here is this othering effect, and at its centre is the surveillance victim as Other, drawing upon Derrida's (1993, p. 278) notion that “classical thought concerning structure could say that the centre is, paradoxically within the structure and outside it.” The Other may be the centre, but it is outside the structure, which means, “The centre is not the centre” (Derrida 1993, p. 279). Yet this centre that is not the centre still cannot hold. When Jack hears the sound of sirens announcing the chemical spill, what Derrida (1993, p. 280) calls a “rupture” occurs, because “when the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought, that is to say repeated” this centre is now decentred. Once Jack Gladney's frame of reference is disrupted, his narrative identity shifts and he is forced to face the fact that he is vulnerable to disaster too. This upset then requires him to think about the structurality of the othering effect as structure. The outcome of this decentring then renders him the centre. Martins (2005, p. 105) expounds upon this jarring re-evaluation by clarifying, “The startling thing about television's citationality is that sometimes, what's happening on TV is also happening to you.” Martins's concept of “citationality” circa 2017 suggests that what is happening in the surveillance network is also happening

to everyone: we in fact do it to each other. Now that this proto-sousveillant version is happening to Jack, it all comes full circle when those othering are themselves othered.

Jack the disaster victim is left then with the decision to realize that the decentred subject can become a new centre. In the chaos of the airborne toxic event, what transpires here is a heightened fervour for this new role disproportionate to its actual involvement. Jack then steps into his new identification as the character of another's Other at first implicitly and then more explicitly. At first, he quells his excitement, maybe does not even recognize it. As Jack drives away from the changing wind of Nyodene D., he does not realize how much he longs for decentred stardom when he complains:

I wanted them to pay attention to the toxic event. I wanted to be appreciated for my efforts in getting us to the parkway. I thought of telling them about the computer tally, the time-factored death I carried in my chromosomes and blood. Self-pity oozed through my soul. I tried to relax and enjoy it. (DeLillo 1998, p. 159)

The disaster victim wants to play the hero now and be recognized for his daring escape. Unbeknownst to himself, he wants to show how much he has embraced his role as the Other in a dramatized disaster scene. In the surveillance of our sousveillance disaster, we similarly offer ourselves up as content: if someone is watching, then be worth watching.

The "recentered" centre then can be located in contemporary surveillance politics paradoxically through an infamous foil to Jack's disproportionate fervour to be the media hero. American police departments nationwide are under heavy scrutiny to equip their officers with body cameras after several highly covered police shootings of black civilians turned racial political discourse in the U.S. toxic. Operating under the assumption that everyone acts differently when they know they are being filmed, body cameras are seen as a transparent remedy to the inscrutability of police conduct in the vein of Mann's "watching the watchmen" reflectionism. But what they ironically undermine is the opacity of American police officers' hero narrative. If anyone questions the police, they are seen as doubting American heroes. Unlike Jack's sousveillant attempt to become the surveilled hero, police officers equipped with body cameras then must revert to ordinary model citizens. For without this forced accountability, these "American heroes" have had to be ratted out

by citizen sousveillance. Black Americans have turned to smartphone technology for reflectionism against police brutality, such as the phone camera that caught Walter Scott's shooting on video and even Facebook Live, which immediately broadcast the aftermath of Philando Castile's murder. Therefore, as police officers are pressured to film themselves through wearable technology and citizens film them with their handheld versions, the "white noise" of these racially charged tragedies gets cut through by footage—for a moment. The title of DeLillo's novel remains apt, for what contributes to the white noise of media saturation is the surveillance of sousveillance. These socially justified uses of sousveillant practices have already become more content, one web search away from the watchable being watched. Yet still we try to answer surveillance with sousveillance just as Jack insists to be recognized by the only mediated gaze that matters: everyone else's.

CONCLUSION

Here in the blueprint of *White Noise* is where I argue that we similarly aim to interact with our media technologies through sousveillance in order to push back against the passivity of surveillance. We would rather be watchable than just be watched. Therefore, we contribute to the network in order to be a part of that network, instead of just a pawn. Nevertheless, the heroic disaster victim is still caught in the disaster, just as sousveillant connections end up only contributing to the surveillance of everyone watching each other. Many of Jack's fellow townspeople must similarly want to become their own heroes as well, so what was unique was likely never unique. As we circulate ourselves and our sousveillant attempts to invert surveillant gazes, we only contribute to the content that everyone else is too. The surveillance of sousveillance takes over, and we end up as disappointed as Jack and the rest of Blacksmith when the disaster was not even that bad: "a little weary, glutted in an insubstantial way, as after a junk food spree" (DeLillo 1998, p. 160). The centre is decentred as everyone both "watches you" and requests, "watch me." We are all the Others wanting to be viewed and viewing, therefore no one is. Forced to accept then that the surveillance of sousveillance is here to stay, not only was DeLillo right in 1984, but Orwell was onto something in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: we all know we're being watched, so we give each other something to watch. By analysing Don DeLillo's *White Noise* alongside the

emergent technologies of the year he wrote it, I argue that we see now how mediated we are than ever before through the ways we watch one another. The neo-opticon is here; we helped it solidify its very power.

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