Historein

Vol 4 (2003)

Public Histories
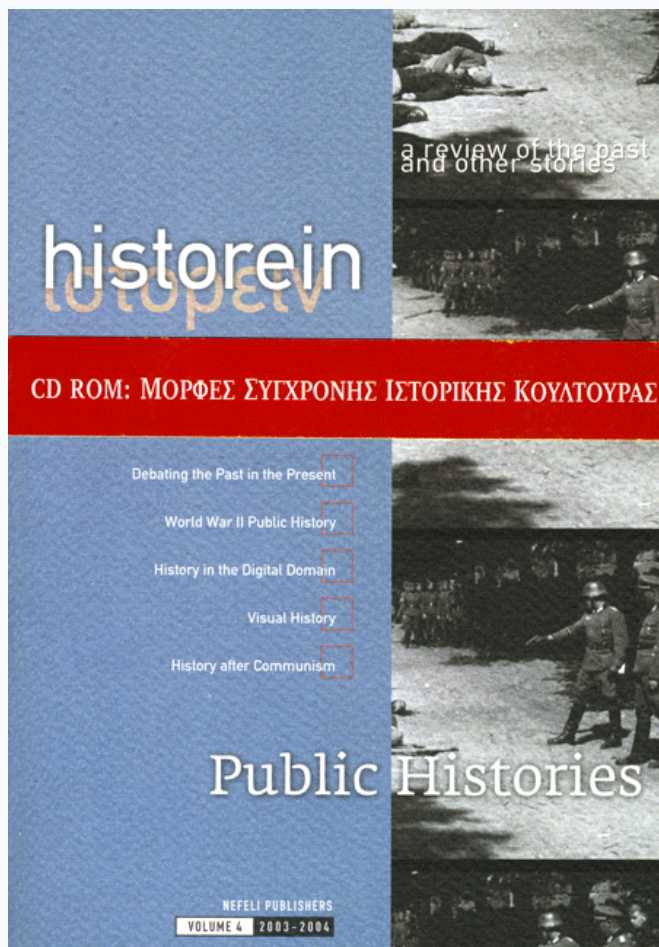
BOOK REVIEWS

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To cite this article:

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Eric Hobsbawm
Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life

London: Allen Lane / Penguin, 2002. xv + 448 pp.

by Lawrence Black

With Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down*, Eric Hobsbawm's *Labouring Men* was one of the first serious history titles I read at school. Did I know they were Marxists? – no; was I a communist? – not likely in 1988; were they more engaging than Geoffrey Elton's *The Tudor Revolution in Government*? – you bet!

Of the British Marxist historians, Hill might have been the "dean" (423), E.P. Thompson the inspiration, Raphael Samuel the imagination, but in many ways Hobsbawm was the pre-eminent figure. His style was more accessible and range greater, from the detail of political shoemakers to authoritative and commanding overviews of international history from the 18th century to present – the quartet of *Age of Revolution, Capital, Empire* and *Extremes* (1962-94). There is a definitive quality to Hobsbawm, enunciating something of the certainty and comprehensiveness he sought in Marxism. Hobsbawm's life is a guided tour of the storm-centers of Western 20th century history: born in 1917 (in Alexandria, Egypt); raised in the poverty and grandeur of Vienna, the capital of the unravelling Austro-Hungarian empire; educated there and from 1931 in Berlin as Nazism destroyed the Weimar republic. To England in 1933 and Cambridge (no mean political hotbed) where he edited *Granta* and was a member of the elite Apostles; in France in 1936 during the popular front government, he saw wartime service in the British army, having been maneuvered from wartime intelligence (whether by dint of his non-British mother or his communism is unclear); a communist at the height of the Cold War; 1960s' America and latterly South America. This comprises an effective personal companion to *The Age of Extremes*.

Hobsbawm's life also doubles as a grand tour of British historical and intellectual culture beyond, in the company of one of its grandees. He was a founder of what would become a leading historical journal, *Past and Present*, in 1952, publishing "The Machine Breakers" in its first number; a key protagonist in the standard of living in the industrial revolution debates in economic history from the 1950s, something of a Cold War battleground; through to the "Forward march of Labour halted?" lecture delivered in 1978 on the dawn of the Thatcher era. A modernizer in history's subject matter (the history from below of workers, rebels and underworlds), Hobsbawm has also influenced historians' approaches, notably in *The Invention of Tradition*. And their use of theory – he is pictured addressing a Gramsci conference in 1958, well before Gramsci's stock as a Marxist theorist rose in 1970s Britain. Other luminaries – Marcuse, Bourdieu, Braudel, Althusser – make the narrative an intellectual odyssey. Multi-lingual and displaced (although rarely venturing beyond intellectual circles) – Hobsbawm was a global citizen. *The Age of Extremes* (1994) has been published in 37 languages. Although the advance of £500 for *The Age of Revolution* (1962) is a salutary reminder that the life of the tramping, globe-trotting, professor-at-large was not initially as glamorous as all that.

Hobsbawm touts the book as "more about the public than the private man" (xiv) – a very pre-1960s attitude, but also typically Communist outlook, downplaying the private to the public sphere and the Party. Hobsbawm muses at one point on, "What was more painful: my

divorce or the execution of the Rosenbergs?"(186) Although since Hobsbawm's public persona is comparatively well known, this does make his private asides of added interest. As a resident (with Alan Sillitoe) of a pre-gentrified Clapham Old Town in South London, now something of a New Labour haunt, Hobsbawm confesses he was "peculiar" through his disinterest in the gardening and car-washing that occupied the local workers. This was quite usual of socialists – domestic frivolities were rated lowly! A footnote reveals their use of that middle-class symbol, a cleaning lady (209,221-2). Other intriguing episodes include his appearance, at the behest of pianist Erroll Garner, on the *Johnny Carson Show* in 1960 – the premier US TV chat show – to discuss *The Jazz Scene*.

The Jazz Scene was Hobsbawm's first published book – his first manuscript, *The Rise of the Wage Worker*, was spiked by Hutchinsons in 1953, he guesses at the Cold War prompting of some (unnamed) Labour figure at Cambridge – emerging in 1959, the same year as *Primitive Rebels*. Published by Macgibbon and Kee, who were funded by Labour millionaire Howard Samuel, it was written under the pseudonym Francis Newton, ghosted from a communist trumpeter sideman of Billie Holiday. As Newton, Hobsbawm was the *New Statesman's* jazz critic for several years. Jazz, its milieu of nocturnal characters in London and the USA, engenders an enthusiasm (to rival that for King's College Cambridge) in Hobsbawm. Just imagine Dizzy (Gillespie, the trumpeter – not Benjamin, the Tory) as US President – a campaign (well, notion) organized by Ralph Gleason, Hobsbawm's guide to the USA!

Martin Amis's *Koba the Dread* holds too many on the left were soft on or complicit in Stalinism's crimes. Niall Ferguson (in the *Daily Telegraph*) has claimed Hobsbawm has skirted the awkward issue of his association with communism in the 20th century. This is not a new charge and has also come from those to the Left, who have pointed out that whilst

Soviet communism was "actually existing," Hobsbawm was chary of writing about it and the period, his politics tied up with its prospects and any serious history likely to erode what prospects it had further. Thus *The Age of Extremes* only emerged in 1994, in the post-Soviet world. Hobsbawm did not, after all, leave the British communist Party in 1956, when other historians did – notably John Saville, Samuel, Thompson and Hill (in 1957). He never left the party he had joined at King's in 1936 – it left him when it dissolved itself in 1991! Was this path dependency, whereby earlier decisions locked him into a communist commitment? How are Hobsbawm's choices to be differentiated from those of other CP historians? It would not have been controversial had he quit – that he stayed makes him a more awkward case.

And Hobsbawm is awkward. On the jacket cover his glance is critical, skeptical verging on derisory, and partly in shadow. His acceptance of a Companion of Honour from the Queen in 1998 (at the same time as Chris Patten, a leading Conservative MP exiled after 1992 to be the last British Governor of Hong Kong) chafed with many on the left and is an episode not discussed. Patten and Hobsbawm are an unlikely pairing – perhaps bound by affiliations to decayed empires, although Patten featured in *Marxism Today* during the 1980s – curious where the popular front can lead you!

Hobsbawm's own explanation for staying in 1956 is threefold. Although discounting it as a "private emotion," he confesses that pride played a part, the desire to prove himself as a historian during the Cold War, in spite of being a communist. And this was not unproblematic. The Smith Act (until the 1980s) meant he was ineligible for a US visa and a waiver to enable his Atlantic-hopping was not so easily obtained. Until 1958, when in a sign of the post-1956 times a popular front was struck up with figures like Lawrence Stone, London's Institute of Historical Research refused to stock *Past and Present*.

Secondly, he stresses the significance of his emotional conversion (in 1932) if not affiliation to communism coming before 1935 (when the Comintern swung from the Third Period to a popular front against fascism). This instilled a firmer sense of communism as the idea of world revolution rather than as an anti-fascist force. Many post-1935 communists would contest this and it hardly tallies with Hobsbawm's own iteration of his politics as primarily those of the popular front. Thirdly, and more (although still not entirely) plausible, is the suggestion that his Mitteleuropean Jewish origins and experience in Weimar Germany generated a firmer commitment than the 1930s did amongst the British stock of communists (217-8). *In* but *not of* the Communist Party, Hobsbawm was less a *British* and more an international communist – and in many ways it was the Comintern ideal of an international movement he clung to.

A semi-detached party member, Hobsbawm's politics after 1956 were pursued elsewhere: through Labour; the New Left, to which Marxist history and intellectuals gravitated (although he is rather disparaging of its efforts, as of the soixante-huitards, 211-14, 261); internationally and via history writing (his output increasing in the 1960s – coincidentally a lucrative moment to be a Marxist writer with a larger Western and non-Western audience than ever before). Thus the uneasy identity of being a British communist was negotiated through an internationalism and enthusiasm for parties other than the always politically feeble British Party. Hobsbawm's admiration for the sizeable post-war Italian Communist Party (PCI) is radiant. He suggests that "unlike in Britain, in Italy it was still worth joining the Communist Party after 1956" and became a fellow-traveller of the PCI much more than a CPGB member (216, 352-3). Still, the imprint of his communist tutelage remains, for instance in references to "Trotskyite" infiltrators of Labour in the 1980s, a Stalinist avoidance of the term "Trotskyist" (208, 268, 275).

Another negotiating device is his case that he was less of a political activist from the 1960s,

a "watcher" rather than active participant in politics (ch.16). If this was not fallout from 1956, Hobsbawm does confess to being a stranger to the cultural revolution of the 1960s. He taught in the USA during the anti-Vietnam war protests, but his unease with scenes like the San Francisco counter-culture is plain. Not taking drugs he remembers much of the 1960s, so (as the saying goes) was not really part of it. In Paris in May 1968 he was at a UNESCO conference on "Marx and Contemporary Scientific Thought" whilst the streets swelled outside – an irony not lost on him. The sense not only of a generation gap, but of his world dissipating in the 1960s is palpable. "The personal is political" – a mantra of his students like Sheila Rowbotham – was not something Hobsbawm subscribed to. Although it applied to him all the same since the 1960s was when a secure middle-class, academic lifestyle replaced the rounds of demonstrations, comrade's sofas and shabby flats. The jazz buff was no rock'n'roll fan ("excessive amplification," 251), nor even of folksier varieties like Bob Dylan ("too idle or self-absorbed," 252). Even jazz seemed to him to have had its last golden age in Miles Davis's quintets of the late 1950s (395). "The forward march of blue jeans" passed-by this be-suited communist (261).

A subtext to this relative political inactivity would seem to be that his historical writing should not be read as a cipher of a contemporary political line or was not written to service a specific vision. This dovetails with recent research suggesting British communism was not just a pliable plaything of its Soviet overlords (see particularly Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow 1920-43*). Likewise, Hobsbawm subscribed to the ideal despite its shortcomings, but was in practice only loosely beholden to it. Indeed his work was rarely published in the Soviet bloc, with the exception of Hungary – his only publication in Soviet-era Czechoslovakia was *The Jazz Scene*. By the 1970s, he writes, his CP membership was a badge of "personal peculiarity." At a 2002 London seminar – arguably

attempting to dodge the discomfort of his lengthy association with Stalinism and achieved to the genial amusement of the audience – Hobsbawm even claimed a lack of expertise in the field of British Communist history! (see: http://icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/cpgb/ index.html)

Such beguiling modesty is poor cover for some of Hobsbawm's choices. Everything he touched turned it political – jazz included, because of strong leftish links in the USA (notably John Hammond) and through rivalry with other contemporary jazz columnists in the UK like Phillip Larkin and Kingsley Amis. His historical writing rarely lacked for political context or purpose. *Nations and Nationalism* (1990) critiqued the ethnic/nationalist forces that absorbed the ex-Soviet republics and he was pleased that anti-Franco forces welcomed a 1964 Spanish translation of *The Age of Revolution*. Via the CP magazine *Marxism Today*, a mesh of Eurocommunists, Labour's soft left and the (by now quite old) New Left, he was embroiled in Labour Party politics in the late 1970s and 1980s. Resisting the Bennite and Trade Union (including Communist) left, he advocated electoral pacts, tactical voting and a "degree of realism" to counter Thatcher. Regarded as Neil Kinnock's "guru" – although they only met once – Hobsbawm was an early modernizing influence on Labour. The Communist (or ex-Communist) influence on New Labour is at least relative to that of Thatcherism. Hobsbawm's daughter Julia, runs a leading PR firm with Sarah Macaulay, wife of Gordon Brown.

Communism cannot disqualify the power of Hobsbawm's writing – and his confessed urge to change besides explain the world lends it fervor. He was aware too of its contaminating effect – regretting how it reduced his King's contemporary James Klugmann to a Stalinist stooge or lamenting the desecration by the 1970s Czech regime of the Holocaust memorial at the Altneuschul synagogue in Prague, that listed his Aunt and Uncle amongst its victims (124, 178). Nor can Hobsbawm be completely absolved of association

– he certainly does not seek to repent but to distance himself. Recollections of Eastern Europe are scant, diffident, even elusive. Hobsbawm knew Burgess and Blunt of the Cambridge spies, but not that they were Soviet agents (101). He knew Soviet agents like Ruth Kuczynski, a contact for Klaus Fuchs (45) and alludes to the bohemian underworld of the "Homintern." Some scruples at naming names is understandable and this is hardly a Cold War exposé in the "confessions of a fellow-traveller" genre, but a future biographer could dwell a little longer and more exactly in some of Hobsbawm's corners. If some shadows haunt this intoxicating tale, it remains undoubtedly the case that present-day historians work in Hobsbawm's shadow.

Lawrence Black

The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-1964: Old Labour, New Britain?

New York and London:
Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 288 pp.

by Eleni Liarou

Lawrence Black's book *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-1964: Old Labour, New Britain?* is placed within the historical debates and scholarly works published in the *Contemporary History in Context Series*. The series seeks to provide a fruitful historical understanding of contemporary issues, breaking away from interpretations of history that tend to perceive the past and present in ossified, polarized terms.

Black's book significantly contributes to the historiography of post-war Britain, focusing on the attitudes of the political Left in a period that – with hindsight – is regarded as formative for the Left's relationship with party politics and social change in later years. The book's main line of discussion revolves around the Left's difficulty in coming to terms with affluent British society, often identified with Macmillan's observation in 1957 that "Most of our people have never had it so good." Black argues that what inhibited the Left's progress during these years in opposition was not so much the people, as the socialists' perception that the people had betrayed socialism.

The book's interpretation of the concept of "political culture" is the key to understanding the methodological approach employed. Political culture is discussed in broader terms encompassing informal and formal ideological reasoning, both "doctrine and ethos." This approach pays attention to what has often been neglected in Labour history: how socialists perceived and imagined their British electorate in the 1950s. The author's aim is not to eliminate, or disregard what "actually" happened in party politics, however, but to unveil attitudes, ethical impulses, and values forming part of a complex structure of political identities and strategies. This approach also broadens the book's outlook in two interrelated ways. First, it offers a two-fold thematic analysis of "popular" politics (history of mentalities and cultures) and "high" politics (organisation, finance, and political technology). Secondly, the study of "popular" politics particularly questions the clear-cut differences between "left" and "right" within the Labour Party, often reiterated in histories of socialism. Furthermore, it sheds light on the generic qualities shared by the Bevanites and the Gaitskellites (revisionists), the Communist Party of Great Britain and the New Left.

The book is divided into three broad sections: the first section examines socialist identities and branch life. The second addresses the Left's attitudes towards youth, leisure, culture, and "Americanisation" as well as television, advertising, suburbia, and consumerism. The third section explores the Left's reaction to the political meaning of affluence as discussed by Labour's revisionists and the New Left. Moreover, Black evaluates the impact of television, advertising, and opinion-surveying upon socialist politics and its established methods until Harold Wilson's rise to power in 1964. Black draws upon a wide range of sources, such as organizational records and private papers of the political parties, contemporary newspapers and journals, biographies, memoirs, diaries, and other contemporary literature and sociological studies.

The first section of the book portrays socialist lifestyles, values, and cultural preferences with their strong moral undertones and a renewal of the traditional ethical language common to Marx and William Morris. This becomes evident, Black argues, in socialism's affinity with religion, in the significance of history in making a socialist future, and in socialist intellectualism. However, special attention is given to the rupture of these beliefs caused by Khrushchev's revelations and the Soviet

invasion of Hungary in 1956, both of which crucially influenced the CPGB. Party-mindedness and the value of fellowship, usually extended to socialists' family lives, are also discussed in opposition to the individualism and private acquisitiveness of consumerism during that period. The study of the conditions of local organisation and the activities of local parties (branch life) expands Black's argument with regard to the outdated and meagre resources of socialist culture in a time of rapid social change. The collection of membership dues and canvassing were indicative of the Left's difficulty in coming to terms with modernity and of its paternalistic attitude towards its electorate. Here Black points out the gender discrimination in socialist circles. Both the Labour Party and the CPGB were overwhelmingly male organizations in terms of staff and membership. Women usually were assigned menial tasks such as "subs" collectors, an activity considered time consuming and of little financial importance.

The first section provides a platform for developing the second section. In this second section, the Left's values and beliefs are seen to be at odds with the emerging youth culture, leisure habits, and American mass culture. Although the New Left embraced the new youth culture more favourably than most on the Left, Black shows its difficulty in breaking away from the Left's condescending attitude towards new trends among teddy boys and girls, or the "Angry Young Men." Within this context, the new uses of leisure and culture would also be regarded as products and expressions of a debased, trivial, "Americanized" mass culture. Still, Black portrays a more differentiated picture, ranging from Raymond Williams's comment that "culture is ordinary" to Richard Hoggart's more nostalgic approach to a "lost working-class culture" and, finally, J.B. Priestley's criticism of "admass."

Television and advertising are also two areas where Black surveys the Left's moralizing and interventionist approach to mass culture. Commercial television, in particular, was seen – in the eyes of most leftists – as undermining socialism's ideals of public ownership and cultural control. In the same vein, advertising was also regarded as fostering the manipulative values of consumerism. To these Black adds the Left's assumptions regarding the "gullibility and triviality" of consumers themselves.

The book's final section starts with how the meaning of "affluence" was contested within the Left, focusing on the Labour revisionists and the New Left. Alongside the revisionist texts, (like Crossland's *The Future of Socialism* and *Must Labour Lose?*, characterized as sociological obsequy of Labour), however, Black discusses other contributions by Communists and "Bevanites" and arrives at two principal conclusions: First, that revisionism was not so much a cultural turn in socialism as a return or renewal of existing ways of socialist thinking. As Black comments, this was embodied in the political construction of the "affluent worker"; a concept that reflected how socialism failed to interpret the social changes of post-war British society. Second, Black clarifies that Labour's failure in those years did not explain the Conservative success, or that affluence necessarily benefited the political right. Instead of making linear connections between political fortunes and social changes, he emphasizes the conception the political parties had about these changes; that too, Black argues, can tell as much about the parties as about social change.

In the second half of the final section, Black discusses the amateurish methods left-wing politics employed with television, advertising, and opinion pollsters. He recognizes a partial modernization of Labour's communication methods before the 1959 election, however, as Labour feared another electoral defeat. Nonetheless, traditional elements in political communication were still evident in Wilson's 1964 campaign.

Overall, two critical points can be made about this book. Black concludes that "a more pluralist and multicultural society – as post-war British society was becoming – required more

than ever that parties be able to collate diverse identities and interests." Throughout his analysis, however, Black offers very few examples of the Left's failure to address this issue. The question emerging here is related to the inclination of the youth culture in this period to appropriate and internalize national and ethnic identities that partly belonged to the new cosmopolitanism, shaped by the changing consumption patterns. For example, it has been argued elsewhere that young white men and women could project themselves not only as American but also as Italian, or even black. Dick Hebdige points out that within the inner life of these symbolic forms, a "phantom" history of race and ethnicity was played out at the moment when the diversification of Britain's ethnic composition was about to change. It would be interesting, then, to know how, or even if at all, the Left responded to this new "youth-image."

Although Black is alert and willing to expose its contradictions and differentiations while developing his main argument, he does not mention Ted Willis's contribution to ITV television plays – often dealing with socially "sensitive" subjects – (Willis was an ex-Communist and member of the Labour Party Youth Commission in 1959) in his analysis of the Left's dismissive attitude towards commercial television. Even from 1958, these tv plays were included in very popular series like the *Television Playhouse* and the *Armchair Theatre*. Writing in the *TV Times* in 1958, Willis claimed that "the truth is that ordinary people – the so-called masses – do not exist. There are 50,000,000 people in the British Isles and they are all individuals… Plays can turn a microscope on everyday life and the tv screen is the only medium that has the direct, intimate contact [with the audience]."

Black's book establishes what has been called "new political history" even more firmly. In spite of the possibly controversial connotations the term "new" may evoke, the book is a thoroughly researched and creatively argued piece of academic work, with significant resonance for the contemporary context of British politics.

Thomas Y. Levin,
Ursula Frohne, Peter Weibel (eds.)

Control + Space. Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother

Cambridge, Mass. and London: Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe and the MIT Press, 2002. 450 pp.

by Lia Yoka

I.

Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* and Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes* in the early 1990s[1] continued Michel Foucault's metaphor of modern mechanisms of control as Panopticon and purged the discussion on visual primacy of its narrow focus and hostility (as found, according to Jay, in the French ocularphobic tradition marked in the twentieth century by Bataille, Breton, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Althusser, Derrida, Levinas, Lyotard and Foucault himself). More studies followed, their scope today extending beyond European and U.S. universities and research centers. This metaphor, derived from Bentham's late eighteenth-century architectural model of the Panopticon seemed particularly convenient, as it symbolized the shift from rulers owning, repressing, and oppressing their subjects to rulers keeping, monitoring and controlling their subjects. This theorization of power was further elaborated and politicized not least by Deleuze and Guattari, the Italian *autonomia* movements, and a series of analyses and practices throughout the 1980s and 1990s. For a parallel school, the modern phase of panoptic control was a moment of acceleration in a historical movement of power towards visualization, i.e. towards the treatment of social and geographical space as a

map that can be centrally surveilled and mon-itored. For Guy Debord in the *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) the commodity relationship in contemporary capitalism is expressed in the *spectacle,* a dominant visual form, or rather a form realized in images*.* The notion of visuali-zation as the defining expression of a series of spatializations effected by capitalism has been developed by Henri Lefebvre (in *The Produc-tion of Space,* 1974) for whom the exercize of power is basically a spatial practice, and con-sequently, the way to counteract power is to *spatialize* resistance.

The discussion of surveillance as (visual or aural) control, variably charged with the style, names and arguments of this genealogy, entered academic course descriptions at the same time as it inspired research centers and artistic competitions concerned with new media and visualization technologies. Political discourse on CCTV surveillance, *dataveillance* or political power as panoptic machines either informed the 'visual culture' niche within joint programs in Humanities and Science depart-ments (often to the benefit of the latter), or was connected with experiments in which the very techniques being used for military/politi-cal or commercial/political surveillance and espionage were being examined and duplicat-ed. This practice of piecemeal high artistic and hi-tech *détournement*, while having as its starting point a critical concern, did not nec-essarily result in a productive or resistant understanding of surveillance – perhaps because of the inescapable paradox inherent in surveillance (connecting desire and knowl-edge to their pathologies): Indeed, surveil-lance is an act of violation, but it is also a labour of fascination and protection. There is a fundamental attraction in watching, as there are aspects of narcissism and vanity in being watched. This contradiction haunts *Control + Space*, as indeed any ambitious attempt to present the "largely unknown history of the various attempts to creatively appropriate, refunction, expose and undermine... surveil-lant [*sic*] logics." (p.11)

II.

"We must not let the 100-eyed all seeing colossus Argos become a mythical icon of our media society, we must be watchful for strategies of surveillance, be vigilant against the technology of reconnaissance, and defend civil society against the armament of vision, that is society's new task," pleaded Peter Weibel of the Centre for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe before the exhibition *Control + Space* (ZKM, Oct.-Jan. 2001-2002) was even announced.[2] The theme of ZKM's (and Süd-westfunk Baden-Baden's) 2001 international media art prize and of the ZKM's exhibition promised to arm the abstract awareness of surveillance with a conscious political agenda.

While the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the birth, boom, demise, or further development of a number of "art and technology" initiatives, ZKM's exhibition was the first museum exhibi-tion to attempt to "investigate the state of the panoptic art at the beginning of the 21st centu-ry" on a grand scale. The post-9/11 "anti-ter-rorist security" craze intensified the sense of urgency to address the issue, and there immediately followed several smaller overviews.[3] While any comprehensive exhibi-tion catalogue definitely linearizes the exhibi-tion narrative and cannot reproduce the track-ing and surveillance systems employed to great poetic effect for viewing the exhibition, this 658-page, luxuriously produced volume, comfortable on a university library shelf and on a coffee table (but perhaps more useful in photocopied installments!) offers an insight into the logic and texture of the whole project.

The catalogue is divided into eight parts (a number void of any apparent symbolism, unless one tips the digit 8 to the side), in turn divided into theoretical articles and descrip-tions of the most relevant artistic projects. This format is tricky. It creates great expecta-tions of theoretical consistency from the rele-vant artworks.

Part 1, entitled "Phenomenologies of Surveil-lance," is an exemplary collection of views on the religious/cultural meanings of surveillance

and visuality. The all-seeing eye of God or the post-1789 democratic polity offers the faithful Christian trusting citizen a sense of security and protection, as well as a self-censoring fear of punishment. In the same way, the schools and prisons of Enlightenment in the West control their inmates through a closed circuit of preventive and poenal disciplining, at once producing visual proof of criminal behaviour and managing potentially criminal intentions.

Parts 2 to 6, rather than further explore the conceptual depths of visuality, prefer to drop the philosophical aspects of visuality altogether and offer instead a concise and topical (albeit perhaps arbitrary) arrangement of the themes associated with surveillance. This is a decisive editorial and curatorial step in taming the exhibition's rich material, and it succeeds in illuminating a series of sensitive dialectics of surveillance: the practice of panoptic vision and its internalization by the controlled subject; the technology of control and the effects of this technology; the normative and the performative; the political and the psychoanalytical. "Surveillance and Punishment" offers a reprint of Foucault's elaborations on 'the eye of power' and a translation of Paul Virilio's "Le Krach Visual." "Politics of Observation" warns us of post-9/11 *bio-informatics* (the article was published only days after the attack), provides a detailed description of the Echelon and its possibilities, and tells a paradoxical story on the Stasi files. "Surveillant Pleasures" analyzes internalized surveillance, with Slavoj Zizek arguing, in his usual witty acrobatics, that ultimately, crimes (or sins for that matter) are committed out of our inbuilt desire to be caught in the act. "Controlled Space" reproduces Deleuze's definitive "Postscript on control societies" and presents new contributions on contemporary architecture and military command control systems, while "Tracking Systems" tackles the function and meaning of surveillant 'machines,' such as perspective, radar, 3-D graphics, and computer vision, and continues with a post-Virilio contribution by McKenzie Wark on 'vector society'.

The volume's last two parts, however, seem to have been attached artificially. "Control,

Surveillance and Everyday Life," though it contains five theoretical articles that are very interesting in themselves (including a good translation of Jean Baudrillard's predictably fatalistic "Télémorphose"), lacks the coherence and clarity of the preceding chapters. It is not specifically about "everyday life" at all, at least no more than most other texts in the catalogue. If *the quotidian* is to be understood as a signifier charged with multiple layers of visionary programs and theoretical contests even before its extreme politicization in the Soviet context, a concept which thinkers struggled to invest with either more banality as a result of mass culture (as e.g. Heidegger and, from a different angle, Adorno) or with as much revolutionary potential as any grand historical moment (as Lukacs, Lefebvre, Markuse, the *Situationniste Internationale*), here it is treated as a media representation – a 'construction' – of cultural homogeneity. But do, for instance, TV-stereotypes of the American family refer more directly to 'everyday life' than cameras in shopping malls? Distinguishing between urgency and repetition in order to denote 'everyday life' is getting harder and harder. War, shoplifting, or extreme sports can be at once recyclable news items and emergencies.

"Recastings: Surveillant Subversions," in some ways a continuation of the previous chapter, sets out to suggest how surveillant practices should be counteracted, as a final chapter should. It connects NATO panopticism to 'humanitarian interventions' in Sarajevo and Kossovo in an extremely well-researched text by Thomas Keenan and a perceptive article by Thomas Levin on 'the shift from spatial to temporal indexicality in the medium of the cinema today… in terms of a rhetorics of surveillance' (p. 593). Preserving the volume's *leitmotiv* of surveillance as a double-edged knife in a media society, a cultural study (of the type that, rather too generously, see 'subversive tactics' in media stunts) points to how political and legal values can be reversed in the name of commercialized subjectivity. It links surveillance to

celebrity through the example of a genius coup by the singer George Michael, who immediately incorporated the theme of his monitored arrest for sexual indecency in a public toilet into his song and video-clip.

Steve Mann's article opening this final chapter proposes 'reflectionism' and 'diffusionism' as "new tactics for deconstructing the Video Surveillance Superhighway." His 'reflectionist' principle, that is, a mirror-like deconstruction of surveillance "that also creates deep reflection on the mechanism of surveillance," in practice translates into a wearable device with cameras recording things, which creates a kind of mirror-symmetry with cameras in stores. (pp. 531-543) This sounds much more like a playful interpretation of surveillance rather than a subversive critique of it. Could it be otherwise? The question inevitably leads us to the poverty of alternatives to the "extensive arsenal of social control" the volume promises to deliver. These ought to be found, in applied and tangible form, in the artworks[4] following the theoretical *exposés* in each chapter.

III.

The curators talk of a need for "surveillant literacy." They find that a number of artistic practices go beyond "the juridical and legislative debates" on surveillance, thereby contributing to a wider discussion on the "merits, limits and uses of surveillance," and on the "pros and cons" of it. (p. 11) Yet this settling for a balanced account, the wish to contribute to the "global discussion over society's new task to defend its civil rights against the tyranny of control as much as against the threat of militant violence" makes an ambivalent subject for a commissioned work.

Indeed, it is hard for a contemporary 'visual product' to address surveillance. Surveillance is an inbuilt quality in all works of art produced after modernity. The very status of a contemporary work of art existentially depends upon how it encodes the practices of its own presentation and exhibition. 'Clairvoyance' and 'enlightenment,' the keywords in any discus-

sion on visuality and surveillance, are primary demands from both contemporary artworks and their museum and gallery environments. Artworks contain a consciousness of the fact that they are going to be shown. How then can they actually be *about* or *against* surveillance without questioning their own ontology?

Vito Acconci's "following pieces" and Andy Warhol's explorations of "real-time" and early closed circuit video, Bruce Nauman's video corridors, Dan Graham's "Time Delay Rooms" are individual achievements that have affected the history of filmmaking and video art. Sophie Calle's documentation of a detective hired to spy on her, Michael Klier's compilation of found surveillance footage in "Der Riese," Thomas Ruff's night photographs, installations by Diller & Scofidio and the humorous surveillant science of the Bureau of Inverse Technology, and many other works are nicely presented and interesting to read about. As diverse as they might be, most works are about the same thing. In a world where you leave more and more traces wherever you go and whatever you do, it is becoming increasingly harder to make a difference.

The dead weight of information in the 'information society' is one of its corpses hiding in the closet. The invasion of privacy, often a willing, staged and/or sponsored invasion, as in all the Big Brother-type TV programs, or the constant surveillance of consumers in shopping malls through CCTV have nothing publicly interesting to disclose (unless one focusses on the spectacle of direct relationships) and no aberrant behaviour to report back to the disembodied eye of the camera as panoptic viewer. One of the paradoxes of systematic policing and surveillance, now in the service of the dominant ideology of security, is that, while it actually affects thought and behaviour (of the person under surveillance) by treating behaviour as special and worthy of surveillance, at the same time it trivializes the object of surveillance and renders most of the perceived material junk. This awareness is what fuels most of the works, and in this lie both their limitations and their strength.

Rem Koolhas' "Project for the Renovation of a Panoptic Prison" in the 1970s is probably the most ironic inclusion within this volume, precisely because it is not meant ironically at all. With more than 15 million CCTVs in operation worldwide, with immigrant camps spreading throughout the world's boarders and battle regions, with a business generating over 95% profits for companies owning prisons and relocating them according to financial prospects, immigrant camps and detention centers actually do constitute the sites of today's panoptic power structure.[5] Yet neither are discussed as such in this volume as symbols of the visual regime in which we live today. Koolhas' work, a plan for renovating the Koepel prison in Arnheim, the Netherlands, is the only reference to architecture and detention. Its ambition was to "dismantle the panopticon's former center, accept and possibly extend the surveillance culture that has spontaneously developed, … identify and exploit the prison's (unforeseen) potentials." (p. 125) It is the design for a prison, full stop.

So this delightfully broad overview of texts and works of art dealing with surveillance fails to discuss detention and prevention as equally important macro-strategies of domination for the global military and industrial Panopticon. If this weakness were to be compensated for by focussing on the micro-level of bio-politics and the psychological effects of surveillance, then one would also expect some reference to the industry of biotechnology. After all, biotechnological research relies heavily on control of information (and consequently *dataveillance*), has major consequences for social monitoring and cybernetics, and is also encouraged in contemporary art environments, the fluorescent mutant bunny shown at last September's *Ars Electronica* in Linz being the most scandalous example.

IV.

New media arts and their supporting institutions on the one hand, and the academic field of visual culture, new technologies and media studies on the other coexist in parallel worlds, diverge from each other and often interact, as in this exhibition catalogue. When both 'visual culture' scholars and 'media artists' actually redefine their actual relationships to each other within public discourse, rather than rephrase them in isolated rhetorical adventures, such interaction is bound to spill over into effective social defense against oppressive technology. Surveillance establishes a power relationship that can only be countered by a relationship antagonistic to it, a relationship that would have to redefine the very process of producing theory or technology. Though primarily concerned with vision and its relationship to thought, control, and behaviour, in short, to power over society, surveillance is not an 'event' or a 'force of imposition' that can be visually 'expressed' or 'alternatively defined.' This catalogue simplifies and brings together concepts and categories that delineate a slowly emerging field, a field that is exposed to developments in the hardware production of theory, and is therefore cross-disciplinary in the finest sense. (So is the ZKM catalogue for the exhibition *Iconoclash: Beyond the image wars in science, religion and art,* ZKM, Karlsruhe, 4 May-4 August 2002, which followed this one.) In the end, the alternative proposed by this exhibition is the numerous anonymous and collaborative projects represented here. The collection brings together important art and technology groups and institutions and highlights their relevance. A careful reading thus renders all the more interesting and worth solving the crucial contradiction in working within the commercial pseudo-public sphere and striving for the blinding visibility it offers, while drawing from the mega-theme of oppressive surveillance with a critical purpose and subversive ambition.

[1] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990; Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Berkeley: University of

California Press, 1993. The same press in the same year also published David Michael Levin (ed.), *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, with formative contributions to the discourse on visuality.

[2] Now quoted on the ZKM's website www.zkm.org

[3] Notably a one-day conference at the Tate Modern in London on March 9, 2002 entitled *Surveillance and Control*, with practically the same structure paying tribute to *Control + Space*, and an exhibition entitled *Big Brother: Architecture and Surveillance* (18 June-25 August 2002) at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, curated by Memos Philippidis, the catalogue for which contained a translation of an article by Thomas Y. Levin ("Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Space and the Cinema of 'Real Time'") from the ZKM catalogue.

[4] The artists in the exhibition were Vito Acconci, Merry Alpern, Lutz Bacher, Lewis Baltz, Denis Beaubois, Jeremy Bentham, Niels Bonde, Bureau of Inverse Technology, Paul Bush, Sophie Calle, Jordan Crandall, Peter Cornwell, Jonas Dahlberg, David Deutsch, Bart Dijkman, Diller + Scofidio, Harun Farocki, Dan Graham, Graft, G.R.A.M., Jeff Guess, Harco Haagsma, Jon Haddock, Institute for Applied Autonomy, Jürgen Klauke, Michael Klier, A.P. Komen & Karen Murphy, Rem Koolhaas/OMA, Korpys/Löffler, Laura Kurgan, Langlands & Bell, Ange Leccia, Chip Lord, Jenny Marketou, J Mayer H, Michaela Meli×n, Dan Mihaltianu, Heiner Mühlenbrock, Pat Naldi & Wendy Kirkup, John Lennon/Yoko Ono, Bruce Nauman, Chris Petit, Walid Ra'ad, Daniel Roth, Thomas Ruff, Julia Scher, Cornelia Schleime, Ann-Sofi Sidén, Lewis Stein, Stih & Schnock, Surveillance Camera Players, Frank Thiel, ZoranTodorovic, visomat inc., Jamie Wagg, Andy Warhol, Peter Weibel.

[5] See Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Empire of Camps" in *Situation Analysis,* October 2002, pp. 1478-2014.