Surveillance from Orwell to Orwell: the power of vision in popular culture

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Reviews
In Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), Orwell pictures a powerful force of totalitarian surveillance that watches, deters and controls. The idea of surveillance has been a popular theme inspired by Nineteen Eighty-Four and explored by popular culture. This paper focuses on the presentation and reflection of surveillance in Orwell’s dystopian masterpiece as well as novels and videogames inspired by it. In 1985 (1983) by György Dalos and 1Q84 (2009-2010) by Haruki Murakami, the authors explore possible changes and variations based on or borrowing an Orwellian imagination of surveillance. Videogames, on the other hand, approach the idea of surveillance in a more immersive and experimental way. In Papers, Please (2013), Beholder (2016), Replica (2016) and Orwell: Keeping an Eye On You (2016), the player – whether inside the screen as a virtual participant of the event or beyond the game in reality as an experiencer – becomes both the subject and the object, both the executor and the victim of surveillance.

Keywords: Nineteen Eighty-Four, surveillance, totalitarianism, inspired work, videogame

THE VISION OF POWER AND THE POWER OF VISION

George Orwell’s dystopian novel Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) features a world under the constant surveillance of telescreens – ‘BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU’ is written everywhere. It resonates in modern readers’ minds with the famous opening of the 2011 CBS sci-fi crime drama, Person of Interest: ‘You are being watched. The government has a secret system. … A Machine that spies on you every hour of every day.’ In the drama, a surveillance AI provides the social security numbers of prospective victims for a vigilante group of former agents to trace and save lives. Yet the surveillance in PoI and in Nineteen Eighty-Four are not only different in purpose but also different in method. PoI portrays a spectacle of ‘new surveillance’ defined by Gary Marx (2007: 88-89) as formed of multimedia, with cutting-edge technology; intensive, invisible, and intangible. Nineteen Eighty-Four stays in the ‘traditional surveillance’ mode. Unlike new surveillance, it focuses more on personal behaviour and
less on personal information. If the Machine in *PoI* uncovers the
evillains by gathering their location, personal history, interpersonal
relationships and even personalities to infer the crime yet to be
committed, then the telescreens and Secret Police uncover the
‘villains’ by observing anyone at any time and revealing those
committing the ‘crime’.

Whether traditional or new, the fundamental structure of
surveillance is a simple bilateral relationship: someone is watching
and someone is being watched. The objectification of the ‘object’ of
surveillance inherently happens under the inequality and imbalance
of power. Moreover, if the object can be watched, it can reasonably
be heard, touched, or understood. In addition, the self-authorised
power of looking symbolises the potential of omniscience and thus
omnipotence. As Neil Richards points out, surveillance endows
the watcher with the potential ability of ‘sinisterness’ since it
‘distorts the power relationships between the watcher and the
watched, enhancing the watcher’s ability to blackmail, coerce and
discriminate against the people under its scrutiny’ (2013: 1936).

There are two classic models of panoptic surveillance: Benthamian,
in *Panopticon* (1791), and Foucauldian, in *Discipline and Punish*
(1975). In Bentham’s panoptic prison, each prisoner stays in
an individual cell in an annular building surrounding a central
tower. Panoptic surveillance provides ‘uninterrupted exposure
[of prisoners] to invisible inspection’ (Bentham 1843 [1791]: 86)
and enables the guards to surveil in secret. Yet Foucault further
develops the model, in which surveillance works visibly, to make the
prisoner aware of being ‘seen, but he does not see; he is the object
of information, never a subject in communication’ (Foucault 1991
[1975]: 200). As Elmer summarises, what distinguishes Foucauldian
surveillance from Benthamian surveillance is its ‘perspective’, as for
the former ‘the prisoners, not the tower, are at the centre of the
panopticon’ (2012: 22). In a Foucauldian panopticon, the play of
visibility is transferred into the play of power. On the one hand,
surveillance becomes ‘an important mechanism, for it automatises
and disindivisualises power’; instead of imposing on individuals,
power is executed by ‘a certain concerted distribution’ to ‘produce
the relation in which individuals are caught up’ (Foucault 1991
[1975]: 202). On the other hand, Foucauldian surveillance, whose
core is ‘disciplinary control’ (Lianos 2010: 70), works in the form of
self-surveillance. The power of the watcher and the power of the
watched are unequal: the former can see and control the latter,
while the latter cannot interfere in surveillance. Therefore, once
aware of the existence of a watcher, the watched have to suppose
the constant presence of it in order to behave themselves and
avoid punishment. They are in practice under self-surveillance and
become the *de facto* watcher.
This is the trick Orwell plays on Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is a world of Foucauldian surveillance (Booker 1994: 79) that desires and seizes power, with citizens always watched openly and encouraged to watch others. When a citizen looks at the face of Big Brother on the telescreen, Big Brother is also watching them. ‘6079 Smith W.! Yes, you! Bend lower, please!’ (Orwell 1954 [1949]: 32). When Smith struggles to bend his back during the physical Jerks, the telescreen barks at him. It directly, and almost proudly, reminds every member of the society of their visibility. ‘There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. … You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised’ (ibid: 6). Yet, surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a mixture of Benthamian and Foucauldian. Yeo (2010: 53-55) believes that Smith’s vain expectation of a secret corner to breathe in a Foucauldian panopticon leads to his arrest, but he fails to grasp the root of this fatal mistake. The arrest of Smith in his secret nest, as well as his vain expectation, results from his neglect of the Benthamian possibility of his surveillance. He takes it for granted that the surveillance is all Foucauldian, since as long as he watches Big Brother, he knows Big Brother is watching him. He fails to realise that Big Brother also observes in a Benthamian way; when he does not watch Big Brother, Big Brother is still watching him.

Meanwhile, the Party’s stress on informing, confessing or ‘selling’ (as sung in the nursery rhyme about the ‘spreading chestnut tree’) (Orwell 1954 [1949]: 64), encourages people to lose faith in each other, even in the most intimate families. Like the panoptic prison, it divides people into many persons. At the beginning of the novel Smith is struck by ‘the look of helpless fright on [Mrs. Parsons’] greyish face’ in front of her children (ibid: 22), but he comes to understand that the children are ‘taught to spy on them and report their deviations. … It was a device by means of which everyone could be surrounded night and day by informers who knew him intimately’ (ibid: 109). Failing to trust means the elimination of safety, as anyone can be a reporter, and no place is a safe house. One is completely isolated; everyone watches and watches out for others. ‘Proles and animals are free’ (ibid: 60), because they are not objectifying and objectified under surveillance. When people watch not only themselves but also others around them, they become in practice accomplices of the Big Brother totalitarianism. It is an easy mistake to make. Arendt names it ‘the banality of evil’ (2006, cited in Williams 2017: 21); Freedman names it ‘the breakdown of common sense’ (1984: 615); Gottlieb calls it ‘organised injustice’ (2011: 30), as ‘the individual has become a victim, experiencing loss of control over his or her destiny in the face of a monstrous, suprahuman force’ (ibid: 11); and Spender highlights man’s use of ‘machinery in order to condition his own consciousness’ (1971: 66). The quicksand of self-surveillance traps all.
THE INSPIRATION FROM NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SURVEILLANCE

Nineteen Eighty-Four has had enduring inspiration in all fields of popular art and culture. The work itself has been adapted into stage performances (e.g. an opera by Lorin Maazel 2005, a play by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan 2013, and ballet by Northern Ballet in 2016), television and radio programmes (many produced by the BBC), and films, the latest directed by Paul Greengrass due to be released in 2019. Many novels, comics and songs employ its symbolic elements. In more recent years, videogame developers have also been attracted to the idea of dystopian society, surveillance and the Thought Police. These works, however, do not necessarily follow the original design and intention of Nineteen Eighty-Four. They may discuss more advanced forms and techniques of surveillance, or depict what has happened instead of suggesting what could happen. Just as Orwell injected his own understanding and expectation of the era,¹ so do authors and designers in the modern day.

‘The best thing that could happen to George Orwell is unquestionably 1985,’ claims Sandison (1986: 191). ‘[All] apocalypses, in the literary sense, are failed apocalypses,’ according to Bloom (1987: 3). The writings of György Dalos, however, may raise questions about these two points. His 1985 (1981), a sequel to Nineteen Eighty-Four, portrays an eventful year full of political turbulence and dramatic changes in Oceania in the form of a historical report beginning with the death of Big Brother. During the jostling for power between two political factions, O’Brien and his Thought Police are forced to stand neutral and ironically play the role of ‘the defender of freedom of thought’ (Dalos 1983 [1981]: 27). He sets up the Times Literary Supplement, recruiting Smith, Julia, Parsons, and Syme as editors. When thoughts are gradually liberated, the totalitarian government gradually loses control of its emancipated people. A revolution breaks out but fails. Finally, a new Eurasia-dominated regime is established. Surveillance returns, the leader of revolt is hanged and Smith is sentenced to thirty years’ imprisonment.

Central to 1985 are not the models of surveillance but the phases of surveillance. It describes the chaotic yet temporarily free period during the transition of one totalitarian government to another. Dalos explains how the after-effects of surveillance gradually fade, and why the transition of power called back the terror of surveillance. After the death of Big Brother, governmental surveillance gradually loosens and ‘the horse has bolted’ (ibid: 28). Self-surveillance still exists, but in a different form. On the one hand, as Smith notes, TLS editors ‘achieved a situation which was previously unimaginable, that we were able to be our own censors’ (ibid: 40). Yet, on the other hand, people still ‘fight against the heritage of Big Brother’ (ibid: 43):
Syme's favourite pastime was to scare us continually. One fine day, he prophesied, there would be an official announcement in the Times which would claim the whole liberal era was only a joke, that Big Brother was not dead but only wanted to check in this way how many loyal supporters he still had in Oceania – and who the traitors were. ... We almost killed ourselves laughing except for Parsons, who found nothing witty in Syme's prophecy and begged him desperately to stop his bad joke (ibid 45-46).

The weakening and eventually interruption of surveillance made people dare to write 'truth for the first time' yet leads to 'the beginning of the end' for Oceania (ibid: 94). As Arendt comments, totalitarianism has 'disregard for facts [and] strict adherence to the rules of a fictitious world' (2017 [1951]). Once the facts are recalled and the fictitious world is exposed, it will soon 'collapse within months or even weeks' due to 'lack of self-confidence' (Dalos 1983 [1981]: 57).

The collapse of the old Oceanian system, in effect, leads to the collapse of totalitarianism in which surveillance is one of the most important and efficient tools to supervise, deter, and thus control. The gradual fading of surveillance not only indicates the fall of the totalitarian system, but also accelerates this process. The establishment of a new system dominated by Eurasia, however, helps restore totalitarianism and so the Big Brother surveillance returns. The rebuilding of surveillance, in a similar way, not only indicates the return of the totalitarian system, but also accelerates it. The Eurasian 'keeping-smile pistol' (ibid: 108) fires if someone does not smile. In front of the pistol, tears 'flowed from some people's eyes while they smiled; others turned round so that, for a few seconds at least, they could make a face that corresponded to their state of mind' (ibid: 108). Facing telescreens, everyone needs to 'dissemble your feelings, to control your face, to do what everyone else was doing, was an instinctive reaction' (Orwell 1954 [1949]: 17). Moreover, even the 'historian' who writes the 'historical report' 1985 is under close surveillance. There is 'an egg-shaped apparatus the size of a hand' hiding in their office, eavesdropping on their work (Dalos 1983 [1981]: 95, n79). All this suggests that the freedom of Oceania with the new government is merely an illusion, as surveillance and its control will never end as long as the system of totalitarianism lasts. Big Brother died, and 'Little Brother' became the new leader (ibid: 107, n83).

As Booker argues, the 'satire of Dalos's book is directed not only at the structures of official power ... but also at the opponents of such power and at their tendency either to be ineffectual or to be conscripted into the service of official power' (op cit: 114). Dalos, unlike Orwell, intends his novel to be a criticism of an authentic past
instead of a warning about a possible future. He wishes the readers to bring in their own history when reading the book and to bear in mind that ‘all of us play – can play – a role in the world history’ in the preface to the Chinese translation (2011: 1, my translation). 1985 attempts to ‘inherit the intelligent legacy of Orwell’s, and to tell the authentic life of East-European people in [Dalos's] own language’ (ibid: 158, my translation). So this incorporates not only the fate of the country but also his personal experience: the governmental accusation of being Maoist, the police surveillance and the prohibition of his books for around twenty years (ibid: 1). When the novel ‘was finally published in Hungary in 1990, people were astounded by the author’s foresight’, commented Yu, the Chinese translator of 1985. ‘But of course, rather than “foresight”, I would give credit to Dalos thorough understanding the logic of totalitarianism’ (ibid 159, my translation).

If 1985 focuses more on the phases of surveillance, then 1Q84 (Murakami 2009-2010) investigates a more modern form of surveillance. In its three books and 925 pages, 1Q84 creates an intricate world, full of specious clues without ends, questions concerning key characters and notions unanswered, and multiple themes: dystopian society, religion and cult, reality and fiction, authority and authorship, good and evil, etc. Many Murakami scholars claim that the connection between 1Q84 and Nineteen Eighty-Four are weak and only in the form of wordplay, yet this is a superficial misreading. From one perspective, Murakami has clearly indicated the close relationship between Nineteen Eighty-Four and 1Q84. In fact, the novel was almost named 1985 (Oي 2009). When interviewed about 1Q84, he confessed: ‘For long I have wanted to write a novel about the near past based on George Orwell’s futuristic novel Nineteen Eighty-Four’ (Ozaki 2009). From another perspective, the connection between Nineteen Eighty-Four and 1Q84 is not about the superficial similarity of settings, but about the underlying theme of surveillance they both discuss. In its timeline, 1Q84 does not depict George Orwell’s near future ‘but the opposite – the near past – of 1984’ (Murakami 2010). Yet for its structuring of surveillance, it does not show how surveillance may appear in the future but how surveillance appears at present. There is ‘no longer any place for a Big Brother’ (Murakami 2011: 227), as he infiltrates through the body of ‘Little People’, who watch over and control only in a more fragmentary, circuitous and invisible way. Little People and Big Brother are two sides of a same coin.

1Q84 tells how Aomame and Tengo, two childhood friends who have lost contact with each other, reunite in ‘another’ reality. The year of 1Q84 is a parallel to the reality of Nineteen Eighty-Four and a world with two moons. Accidentally breaking into 1Q84, Aomame is an instructor at a deluxe sport club, and also a killer hired by her private client Madame Ogata to murder husbands committing
domestic violence. After they rescue a tortured teenage girl who escapes from the cult Sakigake (‘Forerunner’), a plan to assassinate the Leader is fixed. Tengo, alternatively, is a mathematics teacher at a cram school and a part-time column writer. He is recruited by editor Komatsu to rewrite the draft novella *Air Chrysalis* (Kūki sanagi) about life in Sakigake by Fuka-Eri, a teenage girl who also escaped from the cult, making it a prize-winner and bestseller. When Tengo is pursued by the cult for the novella and Aomame too for the assassination, they reunited, finally escape from 1Q84 and return to 1984.

The Little People are creatures in the novella *Air Chrysalis*. The heroine is locked up for ten days with the corpse of a goat she fails to care for. At night, the Little People come out of the goat’s mouth and start to make an Air Chrysalis. The confinement ends before the Chrysalis is finished, hence the girl never knows what may come out. At first Tengo thinks it is all the result of Fuka-Eri’s imagination, but she insists the Little People actually existed. She suggests that the Little People are godlike for Sakigake, who receive information from them. They are omnipresent and omniscient:

‘They are watching us,’ Fuka-Eri said.
‘You mean the Little People?’ Tengo asked.
Fuka-Eri did not answer him.
‘They know we’re here,’ Tengo said.
‘Of course they know,’ Fuka-Eri said.
‘What are they trying to do to us?’
‘They can’t do anything to us.’
‘That’s good.’
‘For now, that is’ (ibid: 459).

The Little People observe Tengo and Fuka-Eri, cause thunderstorms to express their anger, but they do no direct harm to people. Their mere existence is enough to deter, as those aware of their power automatically reflect over their actions repeatedly, wondering if they are ‘correct’ (seikaku) and fearing any possible annoyance and consequential revenge to their beloved. The Little People in this sense work like surveillance cameras, who are only concerned about people around Sakigake because they control and manipulate the cult to fulfil their will. Professor Ebisuno, the protector of Fuka-Eri, hits the essence of the influence of the Little People:

George Orwell introduced the dictator Big Brother in his novel *1984*, as I’m sure you know. The book was an allegorical treatment of Stalinism, of course. And ever since then, the term ‘Big Brother’ has functioned as a social icon. That was Orwell’s great accomplishment. But now, in the real year 1984, Big
Brother is all too famous, and all too obvious. If Big Brother were to appear before us now, we’d point to him and say, ‘Watch out! He’s Big Brother!’ There’s no longer any place for a Big Brother in this real world of ours. Instead, these so-called Little People have come on the scene. Interesting verbal contrast, don’t you think? (ibid: 236).

‘Little People’ are ‘Big Brother’ in IQ84, only in a physically smaller and structurally more fragmentary way. Like Orwell, Murakami reminds readers to rethink the meaning and effects of surveillance, as well as how it may change our sense of reality. That they became a part of everyday life for people in Sakigake, Fuka-Eri, and Tengo marks the difference between IQ84 and Nineteen Eighty-Four; ‘Better be careful in the forest,’ Fuka-Eri reminds Tengo (Murakami 2011: 300).

Compared with Nineteen Eighty-Four, IQ84 becomes an alienated duplication of the original world, as if a model of David Lyon’s ‘surveillance society’ (1994, 2001), Chalmers’ society ‘acculturated to, and saturated with, surveillance’ (2005: 262), or Dilevko’s ‘new surveilled world whose aim is to channel behaviour into normalised and thus easily manageable patterns’ (2011: 117). Nineteen Eighty-Four and IQ84 for Aomame and Tengo are Murakami’s ‘Reality A’ and ‘Reality B’ (2010), or ‘this world’ (kotchi no sekai) and ‘that world’ (atchi no sekai) (Amitrano 2015: 207). ‘This world’, our world, is factual, while ‘that world’ is fictional. It is the objectification under surveillance and control of the Little People that reduces ‘the level of reality’ (in Murakami’s words, 2010) of IQ84 and makes it ‘that world’. In ‘that world’ manipulated by the Little People, people are simplified into labels, instrumentalised, and used. Just as those in Nineteen Eighty-Four, they lose control of their fate. ‘I’m just following the plan that has already been laid out. Continuing to live, alone, in this unreasonable world … where something called Little People control the destiny of others,’ thought Aomame to herself (Murakami 2011: 610). Everything in IQ84 has been – and must be – controlled and designed by the Little People. That was why Aomame and Tengo do not belong to ‘that world’, and why even their returning to ‘this world’ is also a part of their destiny. ‘To make sure the Little People don’t harm you, you have to find something the Little People don’t have,’ Fuka-Eri tells Tengo (ibid 300).

SURVEILLANCE AS AN EXPERIENCE AND SURVEILLANCE AS A PREMISE

Dystopia has been a common theme for indie game developers. Games take a different approach from novels to narrate and present. Juul’s discussion about the ‘chronologicity’ of games (2001), Dovey’s argument that games are ‘activities’ (2006: 23, and Newman’s opinion that games are ‘audiovisual spectacles’
(2008: 46) suggest that ‘ludonarrative’ strategies and multimedia involvement enable games to be a more direct, immersive and modern medium to represent modern surveillance ‘beyond Orwell’ (Lyon 2007: 143). The four games to be discussed are all inspired by the Orwellian dystopia, especially *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* (Osmotic 2016), which names its episodes after famous quotes from the novel. According to Tadhg Kelly’s categories (2011), the four games can be classified into two types of gameplay: one behaviourist, focusing more on the action of surveillance itself and employing the player as a literal observer, document-checker and governmental officer; the other ‘narrativist’, concentrating more on storytelling and involving the player as an important participant with potential to make changes happen. Though different in gameplay style, all games portray the player as both the subject and the object, both the executor and the victim of surveillance. The means and focus of surveillance are updated from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but the purpose and harm remain the same.

*Papers, Please* (Pope 2013) and *Beholder* (Warm Lamp 2016) belong to the first category. To be clear, in *Papers* the player becomes the O’Brien of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, while in *Beholder*, they are Mr. Charrington, the landlord of Smith and Juliet’s love nest. In both games, the player works as a governmental worker, checking the paperwork of travellers and immigrants at the border checkpoint or in disguise as a benign landlord supervising the behaviour of tenants, ready to report or blackmail them at any time. In addition, the player has to shoulder the responsibility for taking care of their family, paying house rent or tuition fee for their child. The familial responsibility requires them to consider the balance between selflessness and selfishness with great caution. If they allow people lacking proper immigrant documents to enter the country to reunite with family, they will be fined for the dereliction of duty. If they do not frame or blackmail an innocent tenant to raise money for their daughter’s illness, she will die in their arms.

What *Papers* and *Beholder* inherit from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, apart from the representation of a surveillance society, is the criticism of the objectification of people and the subsequent warning of the banality of evil. *Papers* completely objectifies the player as an inspecting machine. To earn their family food and heat, they must repeat daily the mechanical work of accessing personal information and comparing paperwork with the latest immigrant policies. Both the officer whom the player plays and the people being checked are objectified in this process. The player becomes both the accomplice to totalitarianism, who assists and reinforces its reign simply by following the rules and undertaking their duty, and the victim to it, since they are also objectified, and their loyalty to their job is justifiable. The dilemma in *Beholder* is even more dramatic. As the developers of *Beholder* point out: ‘You are just a
cog in a totalitarian machine – a cog that has been given the power to destroy the privacy of any person’ (Alawar 2019). ‘The Ministry can turn a blind eye to forgery and blackmail if they help you achieve your goal,’ the player is thus instructed in Beholder when introduced to their duty. When surveillance cameras endow the player omniscience, that the authorities ‘turn a blind eye to forgery and blackmail’ endows the player with omnipotence. This is exactly what worries Richards about surveillance society: it enhances ‘the watcher’s ability to blackmail, coerce and discriminate against the people under its scrutiny’ (2013: 1936).

As the power of vision transfers into a power of action, surveillance not only represents totalitarianism, but also works in effect as totalitarianism itself; once the executor of surveillance becomes the ‘cog in a totalitarian machine’ using and abusing the power of the system – not necessarily out of a sinister purpose – they will fall into the trap of ‘the banality of evil’ (Arendt 2006 [1963]). Arendt’s discussion focuses more on the lack of ‘thinking’ in the process of totalitarianism as seen in Papers, but Beholder thinking is completely invalidated. One cannot think, so evil, instead of a choice, becomes the foundation of this totalitarian world. The ‘choices’ the player make are not out of free will but forced by the system: not reporting those suspected by the government but who are actually innocent, the player will be arrested and eliminated for shielding a suspect. To protect their children from school dropout or fatal illness, the player must blackmail the tenants for an extra income. Each test of power and human nature further blurs the boundary between good and evil, which ends up disappearing. The ‘right’ choices are always ‘wrong’, and vice versa. The player will forget about morality, following only the rules and their interests. The character stripped of ‘perspicacity, of psychological instinct’ is thus objectified into an evil ‘automaton’ and ‘symbol’ (Cioran 2015: 85).

Replica (Somi 2016) and Orwell give the player more initiative: they experience surveillance rather than exercise surveillance, and for the player, surveillance is neither carried simply by them nor on them, but through them. In both games, the player is outside the totalitarian system, an employed and authorised inspector working in modern society detecting mobile phones, SNS, and anti-government activists. Replica is fully based on a mobile phone, while Orwell employs a system called ‘Orwell’, which gathers all public information left on the internet and hacks into devices, reading text messages and eavesdropping on phone calls. Compared with all other works mentioned above, both games introduce more advanced technology to execute a very modern system of surveillance. It not only watches, but also collects all abstract information about a person from favourite food to sexuality.
But even the player, the ‘outsider’, is inside the system: the observer is also observed. Surveillance in *Replica* is, from the beginning, Foucauldian and works via self-surveillance. ‘Always remember that we are watching you and your family,’ the player is told (Somi 2016). Any violation of command can lead to a threatening call and end up with the player in jail. This is ‘a system of ubiquitous spying … everybody may be a police agent and each individual feels himself under constant surveillance’ (Arendt 2017 [1951]). The player observes the characters; the government observes the player; the player also observes and acts to avoid being arrested. In *Orwell*, however, the transformation of the nature of surveillance from Benthamian to Foucauldian is the key point. After the characters realise they are being observed by the player, they will instruct the player to find an entry in the system recording all actions of the players. As Wasihun points out, admitting that the watcher is also watched ‘entails a renegotiation of power’ (2016: 387). When the player reveals to the nation that it is under close governmental surveillance, people protest and demonstrate. ‘Orwell’ is finally cancelled.

Once the player has been appointed as the executor of surveillance in a totalitarian society, it is hard for a game to avoid dragging the player into the trap of ‘the banality of evil’, as *Papers* and *Beholder* do. Yet *Replica* and *Orwell* cleverly create a space outside – beyond – the game. Though the embodiment of the player in the virtual game has no room to think about good and evil, the players themselves are able to think in the authentic world. Both games have ‘metagame’ elements, as the virtual characters realise the existence of the inspector/the player and directly resort to them for help. On the one hand, the information that the player has already gathered about the characters is plausible enough for them to sympathise and imagine the characters as authentic persons; yet on the other hand, the help-seeking directly drags the player into the world of the game and makes them one of the characters as well. From either perspective, the player jumps from Reality A into Reality B just as Aomame entered 1Q84 from 1984. ‘To make sure the Little People don’t harm you, you have to find something the Little People don’t have’ (Murakami 2011: 300). A character in the world of Reality B, as in *Papers* or *Beholder*, may easily sink into the banality of evil, lacking the ability or power to think, yet a player from Reality A can think. As game simulates real life (McMahan 2007: 167), it temporarily limits the player’s thinking, but after all it is a pseudo-reality ‘other than life’ (Atkins 2003: 142). When reminded of their authentic reality where no surveillance exists, the player’s power to think, evaluate and choose is immediately restored. That is what characters from the virtual world ‘don’t have’.

*Replica* and *Orwell* seem to offer a realistic suggestion for the watched to resist against the surveillance – to resort to an outside,
benign force – but in reality it is simply not workable. Though I have listed possible good endings of the two games, in which the characters are saved and the totalitarian governments are either overturned or restructured, the possibility of bad endings is held in the hands of the player as well. They can also choose to report the characters, in which case they will be investigated, convicted and arrested, while the player will obtain a game achievement. This, for sure, does not suggest that the developers encourage the player to support totalitarianism and be an active reporter. What they present is the process and possibilities of surveillance, not a straightforward answer to the boundary between good and evil or the definition of morality. We may recall the short interruption of surveillance during the replacement of one totalitarian regime with another in 1985.

On one hand, surveillance exists as long as totalitarianism exists; on the other, surveillance exists as long as its subjects and objects obey. ‘You MUST! But WILL YOU??’ (Alawar 2018) asked the makers of Beholder to the player. The same question may also be asked to the characters in and readers/players of Nineteen Eighty-Four, 1985, and Papers, who struggle with the moral dilemmas, unable to decide on the boundaries between good and evil. But the author of 1Q84 and the makers of Replica, and Orwell certainly ask a different question: ‘You CAN! But MUST YOU??’ What they attempt to imagine is not only the form and harm of surveillance, but also how one can jump out from the dilemma and break away from surveillance.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, popular culture increasingly and extensively investigates the techniques and possibility of surveillance, as well as its embodiment. Surveillance in Nineteen Eighty-Four is a mixed model of the Benthamian and Foucauldian panopticon that objectifies its people and drags them into the mire of banal evil. Novels and games inspired by 1984 extend or transfer the idea of surveillance for their own purposes: 1985 by Dalos György explores the phases of surveillance and its relationship with totalitarianism concerning his personal history, while 1Q84 by Murakami Haruki imagines an alternative reality influenced by surveillance and, like Orwell, encourages the readers to reconsider surveillance. Games, on the other hand, take advantage of multimedia and simulation to extend the implication of surveillance into a more inclusive and modern sense. Papers, Please and Beholder portray an all-round totalitarian society under surveillance and warn about the trap of the banality of evil, while Replica and Orwell attempt to seek a possible exit from it by encouraging individual thought. So increasingly the notions of ‘surveillance’ and ‘Orwellian society’ are used as a shortcut to criticise, warn, remind – or simply describe.
NOTES

1 For 1984’s reference to history and concerns about reality, see Orwell’s letter to Henson on 16 June 1949, in worries about ‘totalitarian ideas’ (Orwell & Angus 1968: 502). Also see e.g. Booker 1994: 69-90; Kateb 1971; Lewis 1981: 102-116; Sandison 1986 for a general background of Nineteen Eighty-Four; Freedman 1984; Newsinger 2018; Hunt 2013 for Orwell’s political ideas in the novel; Stansky and Abrahams 1994, Woodcock 1970: 47-175 for his personal life and Nineteen Eighty-Four

2 Scholarship on Dalos, though little, reads the novel as a literalisation and a sarcastic criticism of his life and the history of Hungary during the 60s and 70s. See Booker 1994: 114-116 and Gottlieb 2001: 260-261

3 For the theme of 1Q84, see e.g. Franssen 2018; Ilis 2017; Kawade 2009; Ozaki 2009; Strecher 2011

4 Scholarship on the connection between Nineteen Eighty-Four and 1Q84 largely mentions only superficial phenomena, namely the connection of the novel’s name (as in Japanese ‘9’ and ‘Q’ share the identical pronunciation) and the connection of a key character’s name (‘Big Brother’ in Nineteen Eighty-Four and ‘Little People’ in 1Q84). See, for example, Amitrano 2015: 212-213; Ilis 2017; Yeung 2017. Discussion on other aspects is rarely seen

5 Metagame, not to be confused with Nigel Howard’s mathematical metagame theory, is a game type inspired by metafiction. In general, it tends to create an awareness of game-playing instead of an immersive or simulative experience. A metagame has quasi-self-awareness, declares to players that it is a game, and/or asks players to decide upon information not only given in the game but also beyond the game in their actual life. Famous metagames include The Stanley Parable (Davey Wreden 2011), The Magic Circle (Question 2015), Undertale (Toby Fox 2015) and Doki Doki Literature Club! (Team Salvato 2017). Some cardgames e.g. Yu-Gi-Oh! (Konami 1999-present) are also a type of megagame. See, for example, Boluk and Lemieux 2017 for metagame theories; Garfield 2010; Jie 2016; and Yoge 2017 for metagame criticism

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