Surveillance and the City in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*

Peter Thompson
Carleton University

Over the past decade, surveillance has become a regular feature of life in North America. In the wake of 9/11, governments in Canada and the United States passed laws such as the Patriot Act and the Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act, giving both states broad and unprecedented authority to monitor citizens. North Americans are at once critical of surveillance practices and accustomed to the fact that digital background checks, closed circuit television, and drug testing have become standard obstacles to moving between countries, purchasing goods, and even taking out library books. At the same time, the rise of elaborate social networking infrastructures has made informal instances of surveillance both routine and seemingly innocuous. Facebook users habitually censor themselves in case their friends photograph and post their embarrassing moments, and employers uncover information on prospective employees through simple internet searches. This heightened tension surrounding surveillance has emerged in several ways in contemporary popular culture; television shows such as *The Wire*, *Big Brother*, and *CSI* dramatize the surveillance society's potential ethical and philosophical concerns and tap into the often exhilarating appeal of voyeurism.

ESC 36.4 (December 2010): 71–90

Peter Thompson is an assistant professor at the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. His research looks at representations of landscape and space in contemporary Canadian literature and visual culture, with a particular focus on Atlantic Canada. He holds a BA from St Francis Xavier University, an MA from Saint Mary´s, and a doctorate from Carleton.

Michael Winter's *This All Happened* (2000) engages these anxieties and addresses the question of how innovative forms of surveillance and technology create and manage the body and personal identity. The narrator of *This All Happened*, Gabe English, both embraces and rejects surveillance: he watches over St John's with binoculars and writes about the city's goings-on in his diary but also expresses discomfort with the state or his neighbours monitoring him.

Gabe's contradictory approach to surveillance and apprehensions about the changing community of St John's sheds light on Winter's role in shifts taking place in contemporary Newfoundland literature. In his 2004 essay "Report from the Country of No Country," Lawrence Mathews notes that contemporary Newfoundland authors make use of the "strategic deployment of irony" (10) to move past the two dominant preoccupations found in twentieth century literature from the province: the attempt to come to terms with the island's forbidding landscape and the almost equally mythical struggle to understand Newfoundland's troubled political history. He argues that writers such as Lisa Moore, Michael Crummey, Edward Riche, and Winter are instead interested in working out Newfoundland's relationship with the globalized world and exploring the increasingly cosmopolitan and urbanized space of St John's. While critics commonly cite Winter's work and that of fellow members of the Burning Rock Collective as evidence that Newfoundland literature has moved beyond romanticized portrayals of the family and place, his protagonist in *This All Happened* finds in surveillance a strategy for preserving traditional forms of community and sealing off Newfoundland to outsiders. The text offers on the one hand a critique of the impersonal nature of contemporary forms of surveillance and an uneasy analysis of Newfoundland's "ironic" urban culture on the other.

Contemporary Surveillance Studies: The Postpanopticon

Scholars in literary and cultural studies have responded to the rise of complex digital forms of surveillance by examining the societal effects of North America's intrusive and ever-present security apparatus. Virtually every study on this subject cites Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. In it, Foucault observes that the state employs highly organized and efficient forms of policing and surveillance to secure what he calls "social discipline" (213). Foucault argues that by breaking space into easily manageable geometric units, ensuring that the gaze of authority is not only everywhere but also impossible to detect, separating people from one another and organizing power hierarchically, modern forms of

surveillance impose social control by forcing individuals to police themselves. For Foucault, the effect of this is

> to induce … a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (201)

William Bogard, David Lyon, and other scholars working in this field point out that methods of surveillance have changed dramatically during the past two decades. During most of the modern era, surveillance was strictly tied to territory and was designed to bring the observer and the observed into close proximity. Technologies such as fingerprinting, watchtowers, mug shots, border controls, and identification cards required monitors and their targets to share a delimited space and involved direct physical contact between them.

Contemporary forms of surveillance eliminate the variable of territory, allow authorities to screen large groups of people from remote locations, and translate data on subjects into forms they can search quickly and from anywhere in the world. Retina scans, CCTV, DNA databases, autoradiographs, and satellite photography translate identity markers into digital code and "[abstract] human bodies from their territorial settings" (Haggerty and Ericson 606). These technologies achieve this both by monitoring people without their knowledge from great distances and by exerting surveillance in a way that is both random and all-encompassing, bringing people not accustomed to being observed (individuals who are neither criminals nor celebrities) under surveillance.

A consequence of this approach to surveillance, according to Katja Franko, is that law enforcement now assesses slippery concepts such as potential for risk using "hard" evidence such as genetic dispositions and gait patterns instead of judgment calls based on first-hand interactions with targets. In heavily monitored places such as refugee camps and border checkpoints, authorities de-emphasize knowledge of local languages and cultural practices, and "profound questions of human nature, character evaluation, danger and trustworthiness are turned into simple, empirical questions of false and positive that can be answered by technology" (152). Bogard maintains that "the evolution from panoptic to post-panoptic

systems is from territorial to deterritorialized forms of social control, for example, from guarded or confined spaces to digital networks" (97). He goes on to argue that one of the effects of this evolution is that surveillance infrastructure is increasingly decentralized; he notes that the central role of the state has given way to companies to whom surveillance contracts are outsourced, corporations who administer blood tests on their employees, and private citizens who watch over their friends and neighbours through satellite imagery and social networking.

Gabe's approach to surveillance seems to be designed to counteract the impersonal effects of the digital age: he watches over his neighbourhood through binoculars, he records the events he witnesses by hand in his diary, and he painstakingly constructs narratives about the people he observes. Whereas the contemporary surveillance apparatus privileges objectivity and constant access to information, Gabe's modest operation seeks to connect him and his subjects to specific locations and times of day and serves as a way of forging relationships between them. Gabe appoints himself a protector of what Franko calls "meaningful" methods of surveillance and relies on binoculars and his instincts to judge the people he watches from his house on Long's Hill. This aspect of the text provides insight into a particular tension in contemporary Newfoundland fiction: as much as Winter looks to construct St John's as a cosmopolitan and contradictory space, Gabe at times wants to close off St John's to outsiders and clings to a romanticized version of the city in which neighbours gently watch over one another from their front windows.

In "The Rock Observed: Art and Surveillance in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*," Christopher Armstrong argues that in dramatizing Gabe's quest to find material for his historical novel by constantly observing the city, the text provides a commentary on the "degree to which art is complicit in surveillance" (38). While many studies of surveillance focus on threats to individual privacy, Armstrong notes that this phenomenon is better conceptualized as a tool that divides society into classes and restricts the mobility of impoverished or racialized groups. Armstrong suggests that *This All Happened* is

> an exploration of the stakes for social justice under contemporary surveillance, a view of surveillance that moves beyond today's pervasive discourse about the loss of privacy, monopolized as it is by the more privileged and mobile middle-class … the novel examines how in their contemporary, coercive form, technologies of surveillance effect "social sorting," the marking and maintaining of class divisions. (38)

While Armstrong focuses on the way in which *This All Happened* engages contemporary North America's preoccupation with surveillance and Gabe's navigation of a postprivacy world, this essay seeks to examine the text's depiction of the relationship between surveillance and the construction of community in St John's. Winter engages with tensions surrounding the representation of regional identity and community specific to the context of Newfoundland: Gabe's obsession with traditional forms of surveillance and his rejection of deterritorialized and technologically advanced forms of monitoring in part tempers the enthusiasm for the sophisticated and cosmopolitan reading of St John's critics often see in contemporary Newfoundland fiction.

In addition to a concern with the social and political implications of surveillance in contemporary North America, Armstrong sees in the text a meditation on the "ethics of fiction"—the question of whether or not an author has the right to cull material for his or her work from interactions with the people around them. As Armstrong notes, this issue is a controversial one that has long followed Winter and one on which he comments through his presentation of surveillance and its connection to Gabe's writing in *This All Happened*.

In interviews, Winter talks at length about his work offending his friends, hurting his sister's feelings, and prompting his brother to threaten to punch him in the face if he ever wrote about him again. When speaking about these incidents, Winter often seems apologetic or at least regretful about this aspect of his writing. In a 2007 interview with Shaun Smith, for example, he calls himself an "idiot" for neglecting to change his characters to make them less obvious copies of people who would eventually read his work (19). In spite of this reflection, Winter seems to feed on the transgressive and dangerous thrill of writing about the people closest to him. In a interview with Herb Wyile, Winter notes that writing his family members and friends into his novels is "very exciting" and talks about enjoying the challenge of sneaking references to the people in his life into his work or coming up with depictions they find acceptable. As I discuss below, this element is also a key to Gabe's approach to surveillance: his breathless descriptions of watching over the city and writing about his friends are fueled by the taboo of observing people without their knowledge and the possibility that he might be caught at any time.

Gabe and his Diary

Written as a series of 365 diary entries, *This All Happened* catalogues a year in the life of Gabe English, a frustrated, insecure, and often aimless writer

who lives in St John's. The diary serves several functions for Gabe: writing in it is a recreational activity, it is a productive outlet for his procrastination and writer's block, and, most importantly, it gives him a forum for documenting the most mundane and salacious events in his life and the lives of his friends.

Gabe negotiates his two simultaneous projects by combining them.

In "Divided Cities, Divided Selves: Portraits of the Artist as Ambivalent Urban Hipster," Lisa Salem-Wiseman argues that *This All Happened* fits into a long tradition of Canadian literature that focuses on failed artists. She notes that Gabe fails to complete the historical novel he sets out to create but succeeds in constructing a "new [form] that represents a negotiation between the contradictory poles of engagement and detachment, and that more accurately reflect a fragmented, overdetermined urban existence" (144). Although Terry Goldie maintains that Gabe's diary "represents a series of observations by someone who seems to have minimal control over characters or dialogue" (183), it lends his writing a sense of authenticity and verisimilitude, and he effectively uses it to manipulate the events that surround him. He does this by carefully selecting which parts of his day make it into his diary and by subtly making his entries reflect well on him and less positively on others.

Both the metanarrative of *This All Happened* (Gabe's diary) and its action (his attempts to write a historical novel) engage the question of how a writer gains control over space, time, and subject matter. In his first mention of the latter, a novel about the American painter Rockwell Kent and the time he spent in Newfoundland, a project that Winter completed in 2004 as *The Big Why*, Gabe notes that his strategy is to distort historical events in order to make them fit the narrative he envisions for Kent. He says, "I want, this year, to write a historical novel, set in Brigus, where the painter Rockwell Kent and the northern explorer Bob Bartlett both lived. I want a boy who is fourteen to meet them. To have these men inform the boy of the outside world. The boy will be the last person born in the nineteenth century" (12). Gabe negotiates his two simultaneous projects by combining them: he frequently looks for ways to translate his experiences with Lydia and his friends into historical moments appropriate for his novel and he grafts the personalities of his friends onto the people Kent knew—Lydia becomes Kathleen Kent, his father becomes Bob Bartlett, and his friend Max becomes Rockwell Kent.

Gabe and his friends believe that writing is both an act of creativity and a potential act of retribution. Never intending for his diary to be an objective record of the events in his life, Gabe often admits to deliberately representing Lydia negatively as retaliation when she does not pay

adequate attention to him or spends too much time with other people. Keenly aware of this aspect of his friend's writing, Max complains to Gabe that his wife Maisie gently and accidentally pushes him out of their bed at night, a habit that he believes to be a metaphor for her pushing him out of her life completely. He then admits that he has told Gabe about this experience in the hopes that he will write it into his novel and thus get Maisie back for writing about him in her own work.

In addition to inserting his friends into the history of Newfoundland by writing them into his novel, Gabe also declares, after breaking up with Lydia, that the provincial archives should include a detailed record of people's dating history: "[W]hen people break up, they should have to write out a statement about their feelings of what happened, what went wrong, who was at fault, and how they feel. Purely subjective. These statements should be kept together on file down at the archives for anyone to look up. Both for curiosity and for personal interest (you can look up the history of a man or woman you're interested in seeing)" (234). Writing at a moment when North American society is on the cusp of shifting to a completely digital system for recording personal and historical information, Gabe aggressively pushes traditional methods of documentation such as his diary and the provincial archives, maintaining that they are accurate, effective, and suited to the needs of St John's. Just as *The Big Why* is concerned with mapping out the north and with Rockwell Kent's artistic construction of early twentieth-century Newfoundland, *This All Happened* dramatizes Gabe's attempts to insert his day-to-day activities and those of the people around him into the space of St John's and the island's historical record.

Gabe and the Gaze

Gabe spends much of his time monitoring the city from his front window and writing about what he sees in his diary. His obsession with surveillance achieves several things for Winter: it calls attention to the fervency with which governments in Canada and the U.S. watch their citizens (and it satirizes this process by suggesting that agents capture only uninteresting events such as breakups and grocery shopping), it allows for Gabe and his friends to assert a sense of ownership over the physical space of the city, and it functions as a strategy for Gabe to turn the gaze around on tourists and outsiders who come to this space. While his obsession with surveillance is closely related to his aesthetic vision—he tells Lydia at one point that his binoculars "make colour appear" and "create sound" (70)—Gabe seems less interested in the way in which this activity informs his writing

and more concerned with using the information he gleans from observing the city to his advantage in social situations.

Gabe observes and documents weather patterns, the movement of ships in St John's Harbour, and, most importantly, the actions of his friends and purported enemies from the vantage point of his house on the top of Long's Hill. In his fourth diary entry, Gabe writes that his house closely resembles the central tower that Foucault describes in "Panopticism":

> I walk down Long's Hill to Lydia's. Lydia's house is of better material than mine, but she has no view and the house is attached. There is a wooden bannister and hardwood floors and exposed beams and a funky bathroom sink and tub. My house is the windows, the eyes that study downtown and the harbour, that witness the marine traffic and the weather accumulating on Grand Banks. (5)

Gabe's angst causes him to worry that his friends make more money than he does, that Craig Regular has a more impressive sounding job than he does, or that Lydia has a more structurally sound house than he does. Constantly looking for validation that these fears are unfounded, Gabe often lists the ways in which he does measure up in his diary. In this entry, he reassures himself that his house is indeed superior to Lydia's and is suited to his own particular needs.

Gabe's descriptions of the time he spends monitoring St John's makes it seem as though he is doing volunteer work for the city. He says that while he looks out over St John's only during certain portions of the day, his house and its windows constantly survey the landscape—another feature that makes his house resemble Bentham's panopticon. It is not clear if Gabe chose to buy this house because it is such an effective watchtower for the rest of the city or if this was an unexpected benefit of living there. One way or the other, Gabe is highly dedicated to this project and comes to be intimately knowledgeable about the people and the goings-on of his neighbourhood. Methodical in his approach to surveillance, Gabe writes that St John's is the perfect city for this kind of activity: its hills offer a series of viewpoints from which to observe the action of the people who move below, and the city is small enough that one can maintain a relatively comprehensive manifest on its inhabitants.

While Gabe's language is almost always sexually charged, he experiences his most intense moments of excitement when he talks about surveillance. This is especially apparent when he mentions that the onset of winter makes the city completely vulnerable to his gaze: "Now that it's definitely November you can see through veils of dying shrubs. The world

is going bald. Hedges you can see through. You can stare into a house. There are no secrets. With the trees bare you can see the whole city sitting on the hill in its underwear. The striptease of the city is complete. Honesty reigns and the honest picture is bare and mean" (248). The idea of the city being laid bare in front of him and the possibility of knowing the secrets of its citizens exhilarates Gabe. Always straddling the line between surveillance and voyeurism, Gabe revels in putting the people around him in vulnerable positions; here, he has positioned the entire city.

Later, he incorporates surveillance into a flirtatious conversation with Alex Fleming. Angry at Lydia because she neglected to tell him about an appointment she made to have her piano tuned (more on their complicated relationship in a minute), Gabe seeks retribution by meeting with Alex the next day about an art project focusing on passion. During lunch, Gabe notices that Alex carries around her passport, and he play-acts as a border guard, gleaning as much information from it as possible:

> We are paying the bill. I notice she has a passport in her purse. You were born in seventy-three, I say.
>
> I am trying to be a customs agent, or prescient. I am formal but flirting. Alex Fleming pulls out the passport, numerous ports of entry. I see her photo and birthdate. Her full name: Marie Alexandra Fleming.
>
> I was born in October, Officer.
>
> She says officer in a tone that is courageously sexual. This tone lingers for a moment. I am supposed to be a border guard considering her credentials. The word and the tone disappear. (9–10)

Like the provincial archives and his own surveillance operation, Alex's passport represents a traditional form of identification and record keeping. Gabe values and defends observational tools such as the passport, which bring authorities and the object of the gaze into close contact. While Lydia frustrates Gabe because she resists his attempts to monitor her, Alex plays along here with Gabe's desire for authority, calling him "officer" and permitting him to dwell in the make-believe position of authority that he constructs. Gabe reports that flirting with Alex is "delicious," in no small part because of this unexpected opportunity to review her passport. He is happiest when people have no secrets from him, and he devises elaborate strategies to gain personal information from his friends and acquaintances.

While Alex indulges Gabe's desire for control, several of his other friends report that Gabe's watchful eye makes them uneasy. Gabe is not deterred, however, as he seems to enjoy making people around him

uncomfortable through his constant scrutiny: "I've been told I have a critical eye. Some people mistake my gaze for judgement. When all I'm doing is looking into your eye. I have an open eye, I admit. This can unnerve some people. Make them uneasy. But it's their insecurity that is exposed" (23). Elsewhere, he watches as Maisie walks up the hill with her groceries, calls as he sees her entering her house, and startles her by ominously saying that she should close her front door (35). At its heart, *This All Happened* is about control: Gabe's attempts to control the space of St John's, to control his girlfriend Lydia, and to delineate between those who do and do not belong in St John's. Gabe finds that the most effective way of achieving this kind of control is through old-fashioned forms of surveillance, which allow him to construct idealized versions of both the community of St John's and his relationship with Lydia.

Gabe and Lydia

Gabe's anxieties surrounding his relationship with Lydia propel much of the action of *This All Happened*. Frequently worried that he is less interesting than she is and that she has eyes for men other than him, Gabe pushes Lydia to commit to him and to keep him informed as to her whereabouts, complaining that he "can't stand not knowing what she's doing" (132). He openly detests the fact that Lydia keeps secrets from him, has friends of whom he does not approve, and resists his attempts to monitor her. While Gabe clearly resents the fact that Lydia is elusive, he is also drawn to this aspect of her personality. His approach to reconciling this tension is to attempt to convince Lydia to marry him or, at least, to move in with him: "I want her to rent her place and have her move in with me. Or the other way around, though I'd miss the view" (15). Here, Gabe seems to be torn between two strategies for maintaining control over Lydia: while he would like to live in the same house as her because that would signal a step forward in their relationship, he also likes to secretly monitor her actions from the comfort of his house at the top of the hill. The location of Gabe's house creates a power imbalance between himself and Lydia: from it, he is able to view her without her knowledge. Gabe likes seeing people when they cannot see him, and part of the reason Lydia frustrates him is because she reverses this on him—she can come and go in his house as she pleases, but he does not have a key to hers.

In spite of his own intimate friendship with Alex Fleming, Gabe also becomes very jealous of the time Lydia spends with Craig Regular. Gabe identifies Craig as a technology and money-obsessed yuppie and des-

ignates him as his primary nemesis. For this reason, Gabe takes extra pleasure in keeping tabs on him:

> I love my binoculars. Watching a rollerblader tack down Signal Hill Road. Then I see it's Craig Regular. Cars brake, weave around him, using a lot of gas on the brake and accelerate. Craig wears an orange traffic vest. He's zipping, dipsy-doodling, turning down Battery Road. He has no idea I am watching him. I would love to see a car smack into him. But he is too swift. He zooms by the last saltbox in St John's, down past the yellow guard rail, and straight to his door. I hadn't realized I can see his house.
>
> I turn to a coast guard vessel, to read its name on the bow, but can't steady the binoculars—my excited heartbeat is moving them a fraction. (92)

Surveillance is a strategy for Gabe to retain anonymity while monitoring the rest of the city.

In this passage, Gabe's exhilaration comes not only from witnessing Craig Regular almost get hit by a car but also from realizing that he can watch over his enemy's house with ease. Toward the end of the text, he is dismayed to find that although he assumed that he had a one-sided view over Craig Regular, much like he does over the rest of the city, his enemy was actually also able to see him. When he picks Lydia up at Craig's house, he notices that he has "a beautiful window that looks back over St John's. His view is the reverse of my view" (271). Like Lydia, Craig proves difficult to monitor and actually turns the gaze back on Gabe. In part, this is why Gabe is so frequently frustrated with both of them.

Gabe and the Security Apparatus

Gabe distinguishes between himself and people whom he believes employ monitoring practices in negative ways: Boyd Coady, the contemporary "surveillance society," and tourists who come to St John's over the summer. In each case, Gabe seems less concerned with the social and cultural implications of private and public forms of surveillance that have become standard in North America than with their effect on his own comfort. As much as he enjoys watching over the city and his friends, he detests the idea of the gaze being turned back on him. As the image on the front cover of the text, a photograph of Winter looking back at the reader through binoculars that shield his face—a play on Alex Colville's *To Prince Edward Island*—suggests, surveillance is a strategy for Gabe to retain anonymity while monitoring the rest of the city.

While Gabe stays within the bounds of the law, Boyd Coady's approach to surveillance is a little more sinister. Instead of simply watching people,

Coady records their schedules and breaks into houses during the day to relax, watch television, and do his laundry—Gabe and Lydia discover his invasion after finding a strange pair of men's underwear in Lydia's room. As it turns out, Coady alternates between six houses in the neighbourhood. Instead of passively watching them, he would "break in, find a spare key, make a copy, and then study the patterns of the people who lived there. When he knew they were gone, he'd go in" (241). Gabe's goal is to remain a detached observer; Coady, on the other hand, longs for human contact and marks his visits by leaving behind his most intimate belongings.

Gabe struggles with finding an appropriate response to Coady's actions. He initially seems to understand why Lydia feels violated at the thought of someone entering her home without her knowledge. However, Gabe selfishly protests when the police install a video surveillance system in her house in order to find out what has been going on. Perfectly comfortable with watching both strangers and close friends without their knowledge, Gabe feels very self-conscious when the state trains its gaze on him: "We eat with our fingers. Lydia says we can shut off the video system while we're in the house. But even so I feel monitored. There is one camera on the front door, one in the living room, and one in the kitchen" (201). While he clearly resents Coady for what he has done (and because he finds him annoying), Gabe also feels sympathy for him. Gabe believes that he and Coady represent and work to protect a tightly-knit society where neighbours know and rely on one another and where keeping tabs on your fellow citizens is an act of assistance rather than social control:

> Sometimes, at night, late, I will see Boyd's pickup idling, parklights on, in behind the Big R on Long's Hill. Boyd Coady stands across the street, hands in jean pockets, looking in a gallery window at a print on an easel. He was on his way home and had to have a look. Longing for something in the print. The print is nostalgic, an outport at dusk, yellow squares of light indicating windows, woodsmoke, a reflection in a still sea. Boyd is longing for this. He lived there once. (246)

Like Coady, Gabe at times laments the changes that have taken place in St John's and throughout North America during the twentieth century. While Coady is frequently the object of Gabe's ridicule, here he discovers that they are more alike than he would let on. Gabe struggles to project an ironic and urbane image, but moments like this complicate things; he dwells with Coady on this idealized image of Newfoundland and often crafts a similar vision of the province in his diary.

This nostalgic impulse emerges again when Gabe travels to Heart's Desire to work on his historical novel. He discovers that this isolated town, which is dilapidated and whose many abandoned buildings have been picked over by people looking for lumber, is even more close-knit than St John's. He jealously notes that Josh and Toby, the teenagers he befriends while there, have memorized the names and occupations of every person who lives in town: "The boys rhyme off fifty-four families that live along the road. They are like old men in their depictions and knowledge. They are far more knowledgeable of the people they love than I am of my own" (17). Upon moving to Heart's, Gabe immediately begins documenting the actions of the people he meets: every day, Josh and Toby visit him, and he writes down the stories they tell him about his neighbours. Gabe believes that St John's is increasingly becoming sterile and impersonal, and he juxtaposes his adopted city with the refreshingly traditional community of Heart's Desire.

Gabe's wistful descriptions of Heart's Desire stand in stark contrast to his fears about the hyper-technologized twenty-first-century society he believes Craig Regular represents. He takes pride in the fact that he chooses the old-fashioned medium of diary writing to construct meaningful and thoughtful meditations on character while Craig is a television writer who "doesn't care about story or character" and is concerned only with "creating moments of suspense" (149). When Craig tells a group of Gabe's friends that the people he works with in Seattle believe that "all new computers have a clipper chip installed so the CIA can backtrack into any computer and scan information stored there" (149), Alex informs him that people will eventually reject such invasive techniques. Craig then goes on to state that the government's eventual goal is to install chips into each one of its citizens, explaining that this will save valuable time and energy.

Gabe takes the other side of this debate, denouncing computer chips and satellites not because they are intrusive but because they fail to provide an accurate picture of their targets. As Franko and Bogard note, new methods of surveillance extract "truths" from the body that inform monitors about psychological and criminal traits. Contemporary surveillance technologies introduce new conceptions of identity and embodiment, one of which is the idea that the body physically houses identity and that authorities can isolate it through cutting-edge interventions such as DNA tests. Gabe writes often that instinct is more reliable than technology and maintains that his practice of observing subjects over long periods of time and from close proximity is foolproof:

> I'm having a conversation about everyone knowing everything. This is my belief, that instinct over body language is a sophisticated, primitive knowledge, as old as sharks. Our new found intellect thinks it can hide true feeling through omissions in language, but it forgets the body is talking the entire time. Anything we hide we are hiding only from ourselves. As long as someone is not practising obliviousness, he will know how you feel and what you feel about him. (241–42)

Gabe trains himself to read subtle cues given off by the body and employs the same techniques as border guards who assess whether or not travelers are lying during their interrogations at customs checkpoints. His incessant need to know Lydia's whereabouts, his almost compulsive habit of recording his daily events and those of the people around him go beyond an attempt to manage his romantic life and his writing career. Aside from his historical novel, Gabe's most important project is to stave off "obliviousness" and to be in charge of the events around him: if he sees everything, writes things down, and masters the art of reading body language, then he believes that he is in control.

The Tourist Gaze

Gabe is less concerned with the philosophical or ethical problems with contemporary forms of surveillance than his belief that the technologically savvy systems espoused by Craig Regular and the state are impersonal and unreliable. He identifies the same problem with the video cameras tourists lug around during their stay in Newfoundland. In addition to documenting and preserving the relationship between his friends and neighbours and the urban space of St John's, Gabe's surveillance practices also serve to identify those who do and do not belong in "his" city. While he directs much of his distaste for outsiders toward Craig and his American friends, Gabe reserves a particular scorn for tourists who come to St John's throughout the summer. As Ian McKay, James Overton, and others have suggested, one of the dangerous cultural effects of Atlantic Canada's shift from a resource and manufacturing based economy to one centred largely on tourism and the service sector is the unequal relationship it creates between inhabitants of the region and visitors. The state and industries that rely on tourism insist that residents of St John's, Halifax, Cavendish, and other cities in the region should be polite and helpful to the tourists who eat at seasonal restaurants, patronize local festivals, and occupy cottages during the summer months.

McKay and Overton argue that in the middle of the twentieth century, an anti-modern movement in North America brought on by urbanization and technological advance gave a certain amount of cultural cachet to the "unspoiled" region of Atlantic Canada, particularly the remote villages "discovered" by folklorists such as Helen Creighton. In *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Development, and Culture in Newfoundland* (1996), Overton contends that the tourism industry creates an idealized version of Newfoundland society that depicts the province as rockbound, backwards, and home to a folk society inviting visitors to experience their authentic pre-modern culture. Overton and McKay suggest that representations of Atlantic Canada as innocent and quaint appeal to the state and the business community for several reasons: tourists who come to the region like easily packaged and "safe" experiences and commodities such as being screeched in on George Street or miniature lobster traps, such images give the region a readily available "brand," and attributing conservative and unchanging qualities to the region serves to stifle class conflict.

As Herb Wyile notes, while the state and the business community often position tourism as a partial cure to chronic economic downturn on the East Coast, this industry actually serves to institutionalize and commodify underdevelopment (160). Building on the work of R. M. Vaughan, Tony Tremblay, and others, Wyile argues that the tourism industry's emphasis on exoticism perpetuates a colonial relationship between the centre of the country and the marginal region of Atlantic Canada. Wyile goes on to suggest that this unequal relationship creates a situation in which

> the host society may come to resent being compelled to perform their culture for visitors … such a reaction to tourism is more and more visible in contemporary Atlantic Canadian literature, reflecting how tourism provides a powerful frame through which the region is viewed, as well as how tourism, in the minds of many Atlantic Canadians, is thoroughly bound up with the region's economic, political, and cultural marginalization. (166–67)

Winter's indignant treatment of tourism aligns him with other contemporary writers from Atlantic Canada such as Lynn Coady and Edward Riche whose work satirizes the nostalgic version of regional culture the tourism industry promotes. Gabe's hostility toward the tourists he sees in St John's stems from his general distaste for people he deems annoying and tacky, but it is also part of a wider cultural and literary backlash toward the unequal relationship between residents and visitors created by the tourism industry in Atlantic Canada. Gabe resents being expected

to perform as a welcoming and hospitable Newfoundlander for visitors to his city, and his mocking treatment of their actions is a subtle act of resistance to the cultural logic of tourism.

Gushing about Lydia's "stellar performance" in a play at LSPU Hall, Gabe writes about his pride in seeing the "pink, white, and green national flag of Newfoundland emblazoned on the Hall's forehead" and goes on to juxtapose the trawlers docked in the harbour with the cruise ships that are inevitably on the way, writing that "tourists will soon be pointing their video cameras at things that don't move: the basilica and Cabot Tower" (96). Gabe rejects modern surveillance methods because they are remote, untrustworthy, and fail to adjust depending on their target. Here, he says that it is ridiculous to film something like a church, which does not move, on a video camera, a device designed to capture movement. For him, traditional forms of surveillance such as observation and note-taking do not suffer from this disconnect and are the only methods that depict subjects warmly and accurately.

For him, traditional forms of surveillance such as observation and note-taking do not suffer from this disconnect and are the only methods that depict subjects warmly and accurately.

By the end of the summer, Gabe finds it impossible to mask his bitterness toward the tourists: "This morning I woke up to a honking. It looked like flags had been strung across the harbour. But it's the world's eighth largest cruise ship. The radio says be nice to the tourists, let's not charge for the water. It makes me want to go down there and knock heads" (201–02). Gabe is irritated by the prevalence of tourists in St John's partially because they are noisy and inconsiderate of the people who live there year-round; however, his aggravation also stems from his discomfort with being the object of someone else's gaze. He also cannot stand the idea of people who do not know and understand this space as well as he does creating representations of it. For Gabe, contemporary forms of state-mandated and vernacular surveillance give no context for the images they produce.

Gabe's resentment toward the tourists who come to Newfoundland on cruise ships during the summer mirrors his disdain for writers from outside the province who exploit its culture and setting for commercial gain. Published in the decade after Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* agitated critics who were offended by an outsider parlaying misrepresented Newfoundland stereotypes into a lucrative Hollywood script deal, *This All Happened* appeals to a defiant regionalist sensibility present in East Coast literature. When Alex tells Gabe about a "big Hollywood feature" being shot in Rocky Harbour, whose author (thought to represent Proulx) "heightened, or torqued, the language in order to best capture the place and people" (253), she says that instead of these "arrogant" outsiders controlling this story, Maisie should be the writer and Lydia the director. Their bitter-

ness at this author (Alex goes on to call her "arrogant") betrays wariness toward outsiders who come to Newfoundland looking to construct their own narratives of life in the region. Gabe seeks to protect his own claim to the province's cultural identity by closing it off to outsiders.

Gabe as the Object of the Gaze

In advocating for the benefits of traditional forms of surveillance, Gabe's diary commemorates his group of friends and the city of St John's by capturing them at a moment in time and ensuring that they do not change, at least in his text. He runs into unanticipated problems with this project, however, and ultimately feels trapped in the idealized and closed version of the city he has created. In this way, Winter's construction of the urban space of St John's is contradictory; Gabe is alienated by the ironic and fragmented St John's that deterritorialized forms of surveillance in part create but also finds that the static vision of the city he promotes stifles him.

Gabe seems particularly conflicted about everyone in St John's knowing everyone else: while he likes keeping tabs on people and is dedicated to staying up-to-date on the city's latest gossip, he resents being the subject of others' conversations. Gabe notes that the rampant gossip of the city's artistic community can be particularly damaging: "We manage the stairs to Duckworth Street and speak quietly under the ear that hears all of downtown St John's. Quiet with the stories you tell, or the wrong person will hear you. Whispers from actors, from producers, from songwriters and one drummer" (95). In the end, Gabe is happy with traditional surveillance as long as he is not on the receiving end of it, and he bristles at the thought of one of his conversations ending up in someone else's diary.

This anxiety surfaces most clearly during a fight with Lydia over her kissing Craig Regular. Gabe's anger over this perceived betrayal is surpassed only by his fear that, since it took place in public, other people in St John's might have witnessed it. In this case, Gabe resents the fact that everyone in the city knows everyone else, writing that incidents such as this make him think about "leaving this claustrophobic city" (91). Later, he complains that it is unfair that Craig Regular has gained a kind of prestige for having moved away from the city for six years. He jealously reports that his friends have been speculating on the mysterious conditions under which he left, the most common theory holding that Craig contracted a terminal disease and spent time rehabbing on the west coast. When Lydia tells him that she not only believes this rumour but also says that she is interested in Craig in part because "he's new" (151), Gabe bitterly offers this rebuttal: "Fact: I know everyone in this town even if I haven't met them and

they know everything about me, which is frustrating. So when someone new comes to town, or someone returns, like Craig Regular, everyone lurches towards him, especially the women, because it's such a relief to meet someone you don't already know" (152). This passage sheds light on Gabe's contradictory opinions on watching and being watched. While he appreciates and seems to revel in knowing everyone else, even people such as Craig Regular who leave St John's and then brand themselves as outsiders to the city, he dislikes the idea of the rest of the inhabitants of St John's knowing and monitoring him. Gabe both protects his own anonymity and works diligently to keep tabs on the people who surround him.

Conclusion

This All Happened was written and takes place during North American society's transition away from traditional forms of surveillance such as constant observation by a person who is physically present to a digital and deterritorialized approach to surveillance that relies on video, digital code, and elaborate statistical models. The novel examines the effects of this change on the small, close-knit environment of St John's. Gabe views the influx of new, impersonal forms of observation as threats to the fabric of St John's and ultimately seeks to protect a romanticized version of community in which everyone knows and watches over everyone else. Gabe's methods of observation are designed to counteract North American society's shift into CCTV-style surveillance and what he sees as abstract understandings of identity and citizenship.

While Gabe goes to great lengths to present himself in his diary entries as an "ethical observer" interested in guarding traditional forms of social monitoring that exist in small communities, his actions are ultimately self-serving. Gabe uses surveillance as a strategy for controlling Lydia, observing his enemies, and capturing material for his historical novel. Winter's presentation of Gabe and his surveillance techniques is at all times conflictual: while Gabe talks publicly about his concern that North American society is under threat from increased surveillance, his own desires always seem to trump these philosophical debates. Ultimately, Gabe remains unhappy with his own decisions: in this case, rejecting change makes him feel trapped in an old-fashioned and gossip-ridden city. In engaging this contradiction, *This All Happened* offers a tentative and ambivalent examination of the urban space of St John's. The text stops short of wholeheartedly embracing the new ironic and urbane character of St John's and Newfoundland literature, insisting that there is still value in nostalgic or romantic portraits of the East Coast, if only in small doses.

Works Cited

Armstrong, Christopher. "The Rock Observed: Art and Surveillance in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*." *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 25.1 (2010): 1719–26.

Bogard, William. "Surveillance Assemblages and Lines of Flight." *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*. Ed. David Lyon. Portland: Willan Publishing, 2006. 97–122.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Franko, Katja. "The Body Does not Lie: Identity, Risk, and Trust in Technoculture." *Crime Media Culture* 2.2 (2006): 143–58.

Goldie, Terry. "The Angel Gabriel." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 82 (Spring 2004): 173–86.

Haggerty, Kevin, and Richard Ericson. "The Surveillant Assemblage." *British Journal of Sociology* 51.4 (December 2000): 605–22.

Lyon, David. "The Search for Surveillance Studies." *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*. Ed. David Lyon. Portland: Willan Publishing, 2006. 3–20.

Mathews, Lawrence. "Report from the Country of No Country." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 82 (Spring 2004): 1–20.

McKay, Ian. *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. Montreal: McGill Queen's UP, 1994.

Overton, James. *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture, and Development in Newfoundland*. St John's: ISER Books, 1996.

Salem-Wiseman, Lisa. "Divided Cities, Divided Selves: Portraits of the Artist as Ambivalent Urban Hipster." *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities*. Eds. Justin Edwards and Douglas Ivison. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 142–65.

Smith, Shaun. "Change is Good—Author Profile: Michael Winter." *Quill and Quire* 73.6 (July/August 2007): 18–21.

Winter, Michael. *The Big Why: A Novel*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2004.

———. *This All Happened: A Fictional Memoir*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2000.

Wyile, Herb. "Going Out of Their Way: Tourism, Authenticity, and Resistance in Contemporary Atlantic Canadian Literature." *English Studies in Canada* 34.2–3 (June/September 2008): 159–180.

———. "This All Was Said: An Interview with Michael Winter." *The Antigonish Review* 161 (Spring 2010): 117–30.