

Article Spousebusting:
Intimacy, adultery, and surveillance technology

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#### Abstract

This paper explores emerging practices of intimacy, publicity and privacy evident in online and mobile media applications. It focuses on platforms that facilitate, obscure or reveal adulterous behaviour, to understand the surveillance logic underpinning these products. Spouse-busting websites and their accompanying devices are part of a booming industry that renders marital disloyalty open to both amateur and professional surveillance. Promotional testimonies highlight the ease with which monitoring equipment can be deployed, drawing on authenticating 'user-generated' aesthetics to reinforce product credentials.

The very need for adultery technologies is symptomatic of a period in which some individuals see few options for intimate support—few visions or practices of community—other than the fulfilment to be gained from a dependent partner. As Laura Kipnis argues, the modern relationship is one in which lovers 'must know everything there is to know about one another' (2003: 162). This accords with broader transformations in intimacy encouraging openness and communication between self-directed individuals. The paper offers an alternative reading to these dominant ideals. It suggests that adultery apps evidence a modest ethics of erasure that might work to decouple the pact between surveillance, transparency and security.

### Introduction

The rise in online communication has brought an accompanying demand for services that facilitate, obscure and discover intimate and adulterous behaviour, from dating sites to detective services and location-based tracking devices. This paper takes recent examples of 'spouse-busting' applications to investigate the relationship between intimacy, transparency and security. Adultery anxieties hold useful lessons for Surveillance Studies, since intimacy often means entitlement to a certain kind of knowledge—the provision of which equates to dominant ideals of commitment, care and trust. As Laura Kipnis argues, the modern relationship is one in which lovers 'must know everything there is to know about one another' (2003: 162). This premise accords with broader transformations in intimacy encouraging openness and communication between self-directed individuals (Giddens 1992; Shumway 2003; Illouz 2007). According to Kipnis, the practice of 'withholding information or having secrets is a definite warning sign of relationship distress', since 'in principle nothing should be off limits (even if on occasion, "making sure" may be required)' (2003: 162-3). Spouse monitoring software provides the means for 'making sure'. It demonstrates a major tenet of contemporary intimacy in so far as it presumes there is no need for privacy 'if there's nothing to hide' (*ibid*). I

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kipnis' *Against Love: A Polemic* reinvigorates for a popular audience a tradition of anti-monogamy thinking within women's liberation movements through the 1970s and 80s (as recounted by Jackson and Scott 2004) and even the early 1990s (see Rosa 1994), prior to the more wholesale ascension of queer theory in the academy.

The relationship between intimacy and transparency is likewise a prominent feature of tech industry commentary and the privacy discourse that pervades it. Mark Zuckerberg has repeatedly invoked the idea of transparency when defending the privacy policies of Facebook: for Zuckerberg, the suggestion that users might seek to maintain multiple online profiles signals a suspicious 'lack of integrity' (Lind 2010; Dash 2010). Such a vision of identity and privacy leaves few grounds for discretion. Without sufficient attention to the social and cultural context, privacy becomes an overly personal concern (Dourish and Anderson 2006; Nissenbaum 2010). Mutually affirming logics produce normative parameters for intimacy and online interaction by holding surveillance and trust as equivalent—as if no other models of witnessing could provide a preferable form of security. This paper explores alternatives to this vision. It elaborates practices of intimacy and privacy that are 'situated and collective' in the sharing of information (Dourish and Anderson 2006: 320). The paranoid register of spouse-busting apps, reliant on a moralising politics of exposure, can be contrasted with new design innovations that not only question the symmetry of surveillance and security but suggest a more thoughtful, forgiving and considerate model of care in intimate relationships.

## Everyday spyware: Online intimacy surveillance

In August 2011, the Japanese company Manuscript was forced to amend the settings of its new software application, *Karelog* ('Boyfriend Log'), in response to consumer complaints. Drawing on GPS technology, the service allowed users to log in from a computer to track another person's phone. In the program's first release, these surveillance capacities also stretched to include accessing the mobile's call history and remaining battery life. Promotional material for the product targeted anxious girlfriends wanting to know the whereabouts of partners. But within days of the campaign going public, anti-virus software giant McAfee labelled the app a 'Potentially Unwanted Program'. This was because partners had no way of knowing that the technology had been installed on their device or what information was being logged and sent. The problem was not so much the capacity of the application (GPS tracking is already used for caring purposes of other kinds, such as parents keeping tabs on their children). The crime was that women were encouraged to install the app without partners' permission. The language of internet security literalised the threat that the program posed as an example of everyday spyware. Facing the media, the president of the fledgling software firm, Yoshinori Miura, admitted the product launch involved some cynicism:

We were still a largely unknown company, so I thought that we could grab attention by focusing on anti-cheating programs, but we went too far. I didn't think we [would] get so much criticism.

(MSN 2011)

The official apology also addressed the gender assumptions inherent to the application design, since its aesthetics showed clear allegiance to the established traits of Japanese *kawaii*, or 'cute' (see Hjorth 2009; McLelland 2009). Still, press reports admitted that there was nothing about the technology that stopped it from being used by both genders (Levenstein 2011).

While *Boyfriend Log* made headlines in the English-speaking media, software programs dedicated to infidelity matters have been evident for many years. *iTrust*, designed by two Norwegian brothers, has been available for download from the Apple Store since 2010.<sup>2</sup> This privacy application creates a fake home screen on a user's phone which serves to lock the device while its owner is absent. Once activated, the app records the traces of interfering fingertips to reveal the identity and intention of tampering digits. In the demo video for the program, a female voice-over describes a failed attempt to read her boyfriend's text messages in a moment of distraction. Like the men offended by KareLog's marketing, the casting of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See http://www.jorgnsn.com/#about.

ditzy-sounding girlfriend did not escape the notice of commenters responding to the story on Mashable.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to *Boyfriend Log*, however, *iTrust* is designed for the distinct purpose of maintaining privacy—to protect the user from unwanted scrutiny.

KareLog and iTrust are only the tip of the iceberg in the booming market for online intimacy surveillance. The website that inspired this essay is an Australian business, www.spousebusters.com.au, which I saw advertised in a neighbourhood pub on the Gold Coast in Queensland in late 2011. Appearing in between gambling results on the TV screens of the family dining room, the service seemed to reflect multiple sources of financial and ontological insecurity infusing suburban domestic and leisure space.<sup>4</sup> Spouse Busters provides on-call assistance (at 1300-SPOUSE) for those who 'suspect a partner has betrayed your commitment'. 'Are you worried about your husband, wife or partner?' the website copy reads: 'Are they coming home late without an excuse? Are they being defensive or aggressive or guarding of their mobile phone? You need a Private Investigator'. With access to over 60 certified professionals trained by the New South Wales Police Unit, some with military backgrounds, companies like Spouse Busters use a range of measures, from keystroke logs to hidden voice recorders, roving cameras to secret microphones, to produce the certainty of adultery. The most heavily promoted spouse surveillance packages deploy familiar tropes, including '007 Spy', 'stealth software' and 'spy agent' alongside a host of popular detective imagery (hats and overcoats, magnifying glasses, zoom lenses). Websites like E-Spy (http://www.e-spy-software.com), Spouse Spy (http://www.spousespy.com.au) and Spy Tech (http://www.spytech-web.com/spouse-monitoring.shtml) come with accompanying images of glamorous conniving couples next to tell-tale signs of suspicious behaviour. Vague statistics on the prevalence of affairs (the video at http://catchspousecheating.com quotes Wikipedia) performatively generate a culture of distrust, as promotional testimonies highlight the ease with which monitoring equipment can be deployed. YouTube style confessionals, like those at Catch-Cheaters (http://catch-cheaters.net/), complement other customer feedback comments by drawing on authenticating 'user-generated' aesthetics to reinforce product credentials. Scores of heartbroken lovers directly address their grievances to webcams, at times visibly upset and aggressive, at others hilariously unconvincing (to the point of forgetting the name assigned to them in website captions). The willingness of these alleged customers to reveal themselves as users, with or without providing 'real' names, raises important questions of digital literacy and legal culpability. In the worst instances, such as http://www.catchcheaters.com/, the website's pedestrian design and barely maintained links database makes for a dubious mix, since the US phone numbers attached to services muddy any clear juridical rights in relation to the spyware being purchased.

Other marketing techniques for popular spouse-busting applications present infidelity detection as a subcategory or niche benefit for a product sold to employers as a means to ensure workers' appropriate behaviour. Here the discipline of the factory shop floor finds its equivalence in the domestic surveillance adultery technologies evoke and police (Kipnis 2003). This synergy between personal and professional trust illustrates the role of mobile devices in mediating a broader culture of insecurity. On one level,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry commented: 'This video is really, really offensive. After all, everyone knows girls are dishonest and go through your stuff, and totally clueless about technology so unable to hit the "home" button on an iPhone. Maybe this app is for men who have girlfriends but I'm pretty sure the guys who made the app don't have, and never will have one' (http://mashable.com/2010/01/18/itrust/). Women are the investigatory agents in each of these examples, whether deliberately, in the case of *KareLog*, or more casually—indeed, recreationally—in the case of *iTrust*. The worried partner is gendered female, seen to require stability and transparency through the surveillance of her wandering male. If the heterosexual bias of these visions weren't obvious enough, the *iTrust* icon in the Apple store reinscribes it through the pairing of boy and girl stick figures—much like the universal icons for toilet signs. The codification of intimacy thus occurs on multiple levels.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This perspective may have been due to the fact that I was having lunch with a family member who had recently moved to a gated community in the area, partly to protect herself and three children from a succession of volatile exhusbands. If this paper presents an optimistic view of adultery in theory, it is not without awareness of the aggression and violence that can affect domestic relationships, and that can result from the discovery of adultery in practice.

surveillance of this kind might be read in terms of the wider shift, in Deleuze's terms, to a 'control society'. This refers to the forms of power and knowledge that emerge when relationships are less a matter of intersubjectivity and more about negotiating packets of data that project an identity as meaningful (Deleuze 1992). Concerns over social media's popularity have fixated on this algorithmic aspect of online affinity, where profile pages are a matter of matching similar 'likes' and interests (Gregg 2011a). However, data bits and code are only the latest in a long history of discursive representation that has been used to evince and police middle class heterosexual etiquette—especially given the patriarchal exchanges traditionally enacted through marriage.

### The crime of secrecy

In his study of adultery, David Turner notes that monitoring and surveillance strategies were key to proving criminal cases in 17th century England. To engage in intimate relations with another was to partake in a 'criminal conversation' (Turner 2002: 47). Opportunities for men and women to engage in 'wicked', 'illegal' or 'libidinous' conversations increased with wider social changes in the use of public and private space, from the drapes dividing and secluding domestic interiors and chambers, to the parks and parties providing the settings for metropolitan sociability. By the 1700s, the transgression of adultery carried specific consequences. For men, the charge conveyed a failure of responsibility and an abuse of authority if the affair was with a servant. For women, adultery generated 'revulsion' among society members who read the actions as upsetting convention through an act of 'domestic rebellion'.

Turner's study provides useful historical context to appreciate the different social conditions attached to intimacy surveillance as it occurs through online platforms and digital devices today. He explains the legal basis for adultery as it came to be associated with location, namely 'private and suspicious' places (2002: 157). This focus on location initiates some of the modern meanings of infidelity as being almost synonymous with secrecy. Early court testimony from neighbours and servants, among others, illustrates that the refusal to open a door, or having a locked as opposed to a 'latched' door, were each taken to indicate 'a crime of secrecy' between conspiring couples (Turner 2002: 158; see also Robertson 2012). Turner's analysis of cuckoldry and adultery trials shows how intimate encounters were increasingly brought to public attention. The affairs of the elite class 'did much to further the opinion that the *beau monde* lived by a code of sexual manners significantly removed from the rest of society' (2002: 193).

The crime of secrecy continues in today's spouse-busting websites which list a host of apparently incriminating activities performed by partners. *E-Spy Software*'s top signs of a cheating spouse include 'a sudden interest in a different type of music', 'a sudden preoccupation with his or her appearance', 'an excessive amount of time on the computer when you are asleep' and deleting emails.<sup>5</sup> Already established 'suspicious' practices are exacerbated by virtual and mobile platforms, not only for their ability to escape the domestic sphere of surveillance, but by making any space potentially intimate. Mobile phones that fit neatly in pockets, only to vibrate discreetly against the body without public intrusion, are design innovations that assist contemporary 'libidinous conversations'. Over the course of a decade, SMS text has only consolidated its reputation for pithy flirtation (Shahin 2002).<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the growing crop of adultery services online, alongside more generic channels like Skype and Facebook, provide further

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See: http://www.e-spy-software.com/signs of cheating spouse.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> I mention Shahin's article not only for its by now historical interest, but also to recognise the significant personal and political stakes for women engaged in extra-marital relationships in religious and caste-controlled cultures. See also Vasudev (2002). In Iran, 'temporary marriages' have emerged as a stop-gap solution to avoid the serious consequences of adultery for women (Sciolino 2000), which include flogging, fines and even death—the latter also being the case in parts of India (Blakely 2010). This paper's focus on secular and largely Anglo-American women's experience is an obvious limitation, one that reflects the political biases of queer theory more broadly.

avenues for private conversation and the circulation of gossip, much like the newspaper coverage, novels and plays that Turner identifies as important in earlier historical periods.

What counts as adultery in 'virtual' space is subject to contention. The case of Anthony Weiner, the Democrat Congressman forced to resign in the wake of a Twitter photo scandal in 2010, shows the loopholes that continue as to what 'having sexual relations' with a woman might mean (Berlant and Duggan 2001). Caught 'Tweeting' a picture of his underpants to a girl he'd met on his work website, the unfortunately named Weiner had little chance of surviving the uproar, given his initial panicked claim that his account had been hacked. That The New York Times could devote an entire 'Room for Debate' opinion forum to 'sexting' on the back of the event remains a marker of the vast industry of commentary devoted to etiquette and intimacy. In the history of adultery, it is never just the act of intercourse that is at issue, even when it is proven. Judgement falls most harshly on the character of actors whose betrayal of the marriage institution is an affront to society's most privileged demonstration of loyalty and trust. The 2012 resignation of CIA Director General David Petraeus following revelations of an ongoing affair is a further example of the political stakes of mediatised infidelity. Leaving aside the curiosity that a CIA head could be so poorly informed about the mechanics of email, the case epitomises the conjunction of morality, transparency and (in this case national) security. As in the Clinton scandal, in high office adultery is taken to be especially significant since it can be placed on a sliding scale of dishonesty that is presumed to end in treason.

### Postfeminism, adultery and boredom

Given the equation of intimacy and transparency, adultery concerns are especially intense for the elite class of government. For the ordinary person, free from the weight of national responsibility, infidelity poses a more modest dilemma. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips regards monogamy as 'the only serious philosophical question' for 'the fortunate, or at least, the affluent' (1996: i). It is philosophical because, unlike the very poor or the very rich in society, the middle class no longer depend on marriage for their economic survival. In wealthy Western economies, and in the wake of several waves of feminism, the fortunes of women are less beholden to the generosity of husbands,8 hence adultery takes on different dimensions. Suzanne Leonard's (2007) account of recent Hollywood narratives argues that the trope of female-instigated adultery gives voice to 'the condition of female boredom' as women's experience of economic dependence has changed (2007: 112). Leonard outlines the dialectical balance between the positive legacy of paid work achieved by feminism and the resilient mythology of heterosexual marriage 'as both the greatest achievement and the producer of the greatest happiness' for women (2007: 102). The adultery plot in the Jennifer Aniston vehicle *The Good Girl* (Arteta 2002) is taken as a challenge both to the 'celebratory rhetorics of the female worker and to the rampant overvaluation of the marital imperative' in postfeminist media culture (Leonard 2007: 107). Focusing on the thankless and repetitive drudgery of service industry work, an employment experience that echoes women's unpaid labour in the home, this adultery narrative 'persuasively connects an exploration of marital boredom' to working conditions that are far from the liberating, according to Leonard. These ideas echo Kipnis' observation that '[i]nsofar as adultery represents discontent, insofar as it acts on that discontent—even in unformed, inchoate, often temporary ways', adultery implies 'a nascent demand for "something else" and 'has the potential to model uprisings in other social spheres' (Kipnis 2003: 198).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Recalling the memorable debates in internet studies precipitated by Julian Dibbell's 'A Rape in Cyberspace', originally published in *Village Voice* in 1993.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Clearly this is not the case for all women, and not even in the Anglo-American cultural contexts that underpin postfeminist theory. Katherine Boo's (2003) account of marriage education in poor African-American neighbourhoods is essential reading in support of this claim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> In Leonard's view, 'the adultery narrative, already well able to debunk marital mythology... presents itself as a likely vehicle through which to *also* energize a workplace critique' (2007: 114).

Leonard's essay responds to the pervasive postfeminist experience whereby women are increasingly encouraged to view the workplace as a complement if not an alternative to the relationships available in the domestic sphere (McRobbie 2007). Another connection between adultery and work in this sense is the long hours culture that can produce as much as withhold access to desirable forms of intimacy. It is hardly incidental that the secretary/boss is an iconic image of adultery; the genre of work-based romance is resilient enough to be a regularly actualised cliché. More broadly, the online networks that have proven such a feature of everyday life in the past decade encompass the chat windows of colleagues and micronetworking of 'buddies', 'followers' and 'fans'. This new landscape for intimacy normalises multiplicity within and alongside more traditional relationship structures.

In my study of white-collar workers in Brisbane, Australia (Gregg 2011a), couples with jobs dependent on computer use often took advantage of online platforms to communicate with each other during the long workday. Mood changes, events and random trivia could be broadcast from distant locations, and the reach of these messages extended not only to partners but workmates, friends and family. These online exchanges took on the function of domestic intimacy in the sense that shared space, lived and inhabited *together* for a prolonged period, played host to a couple's relationship. This meant an increased number of witnesses and participants in the routines of daily life. New media technologies' effects on normative domesticity occur on at least two levels here. First, partners reckon with the possibility of having unprecedented knowledge about their mate's daily travails beyond proximate observation. Time spent at work isn't neatly separate from intimate others, as social media relieves the loneliness and separation of home and market spheres. Then, returning home from the workplace, selected networks of followers reading online updates have the chance to observe the rhythms, realities and even shortcomings of friends' domestic relationships. Ongoing commentary about home-based activities joins an accumulation of regularly posted items as individuals log in more or less often at different times of the week. Friends can even provide a comforting companionate role for each other when partners are busy at work.

The benefits of this type of online intimacy include the possibility of expanding the always limited caring capacities of the couple. Virtual friends assist and alleviate the pressure on domestic partners when work and other commitments prevent them from acting as the sole source of intimacy. Of course, the popularity of Facebook and other ambient media platforms is also due to their role in offsetting boredom. This adds to their potential to facilitate adultery. The solitude of the lunch break or the suburban commute is softened as friends literally appear in the palm of one's hand, offering respite from the isolation of 'alienated' labour or the routine of long-term relationships. These online companions reconfigure the spatial organisation of the Fordist work world, which relied on distinct realms of home and office, and an accompanying gender bias for each. Following friends across the course of the day is the communal witnessing mobile technologies facilitate. As a model for care, then, this ambient witnessing is a preferable flipside to the paranoid outlook of spouse-busting sites, acknowledging the productive modes of interest and affection that dwell beyond the couple form. Seen this way, social media platforms provide a release valve for the normative and overbearing expectations of monogamy—and the intense financial and psychological pressure that is placed on marriage when society offers few other possibilities for ethical conduct and recognition (Horning 2013; Shumway 2003).

kitchens, even from bed. Meanwhile, for young, part time and casual employees, obtaining office space was one of a range of privileges reserved for salaried peers. See Gregg (2011a).

When there is a workplace outside the home: the 'Working from Home' study focused on the changing location for work and the consequences for employees encouraged by popular media and management discourse to embrace the freedom to work anywhere. Interviews revealed a number of employees regularly working from dining rooms,

#### **Covering tracks**

The rise of smartphones and other portable devices continues a process of 'mobile privatization' (Williams 1974) and personalised media consumption. The existence of adultery technologies reinforces our intuition that the popularity of online communication is at least partly to do with the capacity to deliver all kinds of discreet pleasures, irrespective of the relations at play in the physical space around us. Epitomising this development is *Tiger Text*, a secure messaging service that ensures instantaneous messaging and secure work flow (http://www.tigertext.com). Tiger Text allows users to 'cover their tracks' by deleting SMS messages within predetermined time periods. It also has the function of recalling messages: 'Regret sending that text? Quickly remove it from the recipient's device before—or even after—he or she opens it'. Tiger Text takes its name from the animal which is characteristically difficult to trace, and yet its origins bear more obvious relevance to another Tiger, Tiger Woods, who may lay claim to the title of world's most notorious cheater. As with KareLog, the developer's first instinct was to sell the product in association with infidelity. Initial marketing for *Tiger Text* was targeted to a fictitious lover whose extra-marital affair was on the brink of discovery in the workplace. 'I told you not to text me here', a cautious phone user writes in the early demo video, before an incriminating SMS disappears into thin air. According to instruction, Tiger Text messages delete themselves after a set period of time, so that compromising messages need never be found. In true Get Smart fashion, messages sent through the service are pre-programmed to self-destruct.<sup>11</sup>

From this basis, *Tiger Text* has developed a primary market in business applications and, in particular, hospital settings dependent on the delivery of time-sensitive information. Yet the prehistory of *Tiger Text* points to something useful in adultery's longer transformation from a 'criminal conversation'. The benefit of the application is its capacity to circumvent the ideals of transparency that pervade contemporary understandings of intimacy. *Tiger Text* illustrates a modest ethics of erasure, an alternative framework for care that is interested in curating appropriate information flow. The diligence required to cover one's tracks encourages forethought in directing attention and communicating with others, and places limits on the amount of information necessary for disclosure. In addition, it provides a neat solution to the problem of data deluge—freeing the reader from one more online obligation to delete.

Applications like *Tiger Text* hint at the possibility of a move away from compulsory monogamy and its confessional genres of discipline and punishment. They make us conscious of the ways in which intimacy is presumed to bestow entitlement to certain kinds of knowledge and therefore power (Foucault 1978). Adultery apps allow us to contemplate an overthrow of society's dramatic obsession with exposure, to reconsider the pact between sexual fidelity and loyalty, and assist with the ethical labour of managing the vicissitudes of love, affection and attraction. At the very least, the multiple witnessing publics made possible through social media, combined with the ethics of erasure evidenced in *Tiger Text*, offer a preferable contrast to spouse-busting's paranoid epistemology.

Adultery-spying through technological devices is a leading example of the contemporary desire for truth-making machines. Such practices of intimacy surveillance merely continue the detective work inaugurated by the normative 'love plot': where 'lovers are like detectives: they are trying to find something out that will make all the difference' (Phillips 1994: 40). The enigma of falling in love is also the pleasure of falling for the fallacy that knowing *something* about how a person feels about us is *everything* (Berlant 2001). The more pressing question in the sexually permissive present is to ask what, exactly, infidelity tells us. As Phillips writes:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> At the time of writing, applications with self-destructing capacities have stretched to include photo-messaging, as in the highly popular *Snapchat* http://www.snapchat.me/.

Infidelity is as much about the drama of truth-telling as it is about the drama of sexuality. It is only because of sexuality that we think about truth at all; that we find honesty and kindness at odds with each other.

(1996:4)

In this passage, Phillips unsettles the pact between fidelity and truth, in the same way that other sexuality scholars have revealed the regulatory function of sex as the truth of oneself (Foucault 1978). It is this tradition of thinking, thoroughly critiqued by Foucault and his successors, that continues to legitimate popular notions of the individual who finds self-recognition in one 'true' love (Pettman 2006). Phillips asks us to consider another model for intimacy, so that knowing and loving are no longer the most compelling or inevitable pairing. 'What would falling in love look like', he writes, 'if knowledge of oneself or another, of oneself as another, was not the aim or the result? What would we be doing together if we were not getting to know each other?' (1994: 41).

As Phillips observes over many years as a therapist, long term relationships are thwarted by the problem of *over-exposure*. We therefore need to develop sensitivity to the fact that 'knowing people... can be counter-erotic'; that the 'intention of certain forms of familiarity is to kill desire' (*ibid*). Adultery anxieties are genuinely scary because they show the extent to which negative affects sustain desire (jealousy, selfishness, 'elusiveness', in Phillips' reading), and 'that certain ways of knowing people diminish their interest for us' (*ibid*). To counter this unconscious tendency, Phillips maintains, 'we have to watch out for the ways people invite us—or allow us—to know them; and alert ourselves to the possibility that knowing may be too tendentious, too canny, a model for loving' (*ibid*).

### Beyond adultery anxiety

Uncovering infidelity in relationships remains an obsession partly because of the paucity of intimate relationships welcomed and fostered by individualistic notions of love and romance. In an era of data flow and control, 'virtual' sex can amount to the ultimate transgression, requiring qualified professionals capable of navigating the broadening expanse of the 'digital enclosure' (Andrejevic 2007). But such epistemologies of entrapment need careful consideration in a culture where the stakes involved in domesticity, property and alimony are no longer so fraught. In a postfeminist culture, it is difficult to invest in adultery as a serious civil offence when women's material wealth is increasingly independently amassed. The middle classes have long been considered the 'innovators' in love (Bourdieu 1984). If print publishing and written testimony were crucial to circulating knowledge of citizens' affairs in the past, as Turner convincingly shows, online and mobile media provide a new discursive space to experiment and improvise in the realm of sexual politesse and manners today. These avenues of society and association available to educated professionals have found cultural hegemony with the rise of the online social network, whose articulate performances and in-crowd humour stand in contrast to the surveillance practices of isolated others. Spouse-busting services and their unsubtle marketing strategies are an inkling of what is required by those outside the sphere of digital literacy, those without access to the elite realms of opportunity that provide salvation from love's material benefits. Adultery apps address a market for whom marriage still matters, because the financial stakes of living solo in a heteronormative culture are often unforgiving. In this sense, the mundane pedagogy of intimate surveillance reveals less about our capacity to be desirable or suggestible and more about the changing nature of social belonging.

Yet even for the middle class, in an era of 'liquid love' (Bauman 2003), a decline in occupational security means the workplace and the domestic unit are equally challenged to provide reliable displays of recognition, identity and support—all key attributes that we associate with love and intimacy. In a time of precarity, 'love is only slightly less contingent than work' (Berlant 2011: 185). Hence the tagline for *Ashley Madison*, a dating website for the married: 'life is short, have an affair'. The slogan plays on a temporality of redundancy—both in software design and job security—as much as it invokes the figure of

the philanderer who trades in longevity for a new model. The appeal of these sentiments gains traction in a techno-mediated culture enamoured with the upgrade. Outsourcing our concerns about ontological and economic stability to the surveillance of strangers is, however, not a necessary reading of the situation.

Anxieties about adultery are always anxieties about security: financial, material, psychological, ontological. They are worries about losing what little can be counted on; about holding on to an image of someone that we partially know and want to trust but who may not—indeed cannot—stay the same. The managerial techniques of the factory and the firm find equivalence in the domestic surveillance that adultery technologies evoke and police. This symmetry between work and home-based scrutiny makes visible the relationship between economic and ontological security. Both rely on contracts that presume a penalty for poor behaviour. The mainstream uptake of social media is an affirmative alternative to these critical circuits of surveillance. New forms of communal witnessing enabled by mobile and digital platforms break open the insularism of the dyadic couple, allowing a kind of everyday multiplicity to enter even the most mundane of domestic relationships. It is this additional community of online, 'ambient' companions that offers a resilient model for care in information rich work and lifestyles. Yet its restricted availability, to a digitally-equipped demographic, reveals ongoing inequities in the avenues for intimate support.

To move beyond the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Sedgwick 2003) that adultery technologies exacerbate, we must demand and promote a wider ecology of care that allows long-term intimacies of all kinds to flourish. What has happened in the course of a century is not just the emancipation of women, whose indenture to men through the institution of marriage provided an enduring if unacceptable definition of loyalty and commitment. We have also witnessed a remarkable change in the meaning and practice of love from a communal to an archly personal experience (Hardt and Negri 2009; Gregg 2011b). The search for love now involves navigating a world that is intensely mediated by profiles, status updates and computer screens. The 'appification' (Bowles 2012) of work and intimacy through mobile devices risks isolating our projected selves from this other kind of social belonging, one that involves commitments beyond the individual and the couple. For all its investment in exposure, the industry of infidelity cannot survive without keeping this 'new relationality' of the common well hidden (Davis and Sarlin 2012). It is a relation of community, witnessing and care that Surveillance Studies can collectively bring to light.

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