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**"The best stories . . . we've known
the end from the beginning":**

Lisa Moore's *Caught* and the Rise of the Surveillance Society

Herb Wylie

In his archly titled *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*, David Lyon points to how "Surveillance in modern times has become a phenomenon that affects everyday life and thus it has also become the stuff of popular culture, cropping up in novels, songs, films and other media and venues" (155). Although he notes that the novel is being eclipsed by film as a medium for engaging with surveillance, he nonetheless stresses how novels "help to alert us to significant dimensions of surveillance as well as helping the reader imaginatively to get inside characters who are either surveillors or, more frequently, the surveilled" (145). This imaginative engagement is precisely the effect of Lisa Moore's 2013 novel *Caught*, which follows the adventures of a drug smuggler after he escapes from Springhill prison in Nova Scotia in 1978 and, over the course of the novel, strives to avoid being caught and thrown back into jail.

Caught is an eminently literary thriller, a suspenseful immersion into the psyche of the pursued. But it is also, like an increasing proportion of our contemporary culture, preoccupied with surveillance and what it means for our sense of self, of freedom, and of privacy. A burgeoning area of study, surveillance has come to have a central and complex place in contemporary culture, especially given that so much of that culture, especially reality TV and social media, involves a voluntary embrace of surveillance. As Lyon notes, "While it is true that one

strand of the surveillance genre is indeed alarmist, unsettling, haunting, conspiratorial, other strands of popular culture may not only reassure about the realities of surveillance or support the view that surveillance is a necessary dimension of life today but even discourage deliberate disclosure. So, far from fearing exposure, in some contemporary media exposure is relished, sought and celebrated" (139–40). While this pervasive presence and ambivalence of surveillance has led to increasingly complex engagements with the phenomenon in film, television, literature, social media, and other forms, Moore's novel adopts a more traditional form, the thriller, to address an earlier era of surveillance in order to put into perspective the complexities of the present.

Caught is something of a departure for Moore, in that its narrative is driven by generic considerations much more so than her previous novels *Alligator* and *February*, but Moore reworks those generic conventions to produce a very different kind of thriller. For instance, by focusing on an escaped convict, *Caught* subverts the moral polarity typical of the thriller, which traditionally pivots around the thwarting of some kind of criminal scheme. In *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre*, Jerry Palmer contends that "the thriller locates the source of evil in criminal conspiracy, something that is inside the world that the thriller portrays, but not of it. Once the hero has successfully extirpated it, the world returns to normal: the hero has refounded the state, the rule of law and the predictability of everyday life can resume" (87).

Whereas the protagonist of the thriller is usually some sort of agent of justice — a police officer, sleuth, or secret agent, say — in *Caught*, Moore reworks that convention by having as her central character a criminal being pursued by police. At the opening of the novel, Newfoundlander David Slaney has just made his escape from Springhill after serving four years of a sentence for smuggling drugs. Over the course of the first half of the novel Slaney makes his way across the country to Vancouver to join his childhood friend and criminal accomplice, Brian Hearn, who jumped bail and has been at large while Slaney languished in jail, but in the meantime Hearn has laid the foundation for a second smuggling operation that will make them both millionaires.

That the protagonist of Moore's novel is an escaped criminal leads to a reversal of the contours of the traditional thriller: rather than tension and suspense ensuing from the reader's desire for the criminal to be captured, in other words, Moore's novel cultivates the hope that the criminal will not be caught. As Slaney strives to elude capture in the Maritimes and to make it to Montreal, where he hides out waiting for the arrival of a false passport, and eventually makes his way to the west coast to be reunited with Hearn, the possibility that Slaney might be caught (whether thought by Slaney himself or expressed out loud by Slaney or others) rings out at regular intervals. But, as a result of Moore's sympathetic depiction of Slaney, readers are increasingly compelled to fear, rather than welcome, that possibility.

Slaney is youthful, handsome, and charismatic, and Moore cultivates sympathy for him by stressing his debilitating experience in prison and his concomitant delight at his newly won freedom. During his first real pause for breath after his escape, Slaney reflects that he "had lost four years to the deepest kind of solitude and sorrow and boredom. Of those three torments boredom was the worst. Four years had been taken from him and he would not get them back and he could hardly draw breath seeing what he had been missing" (24). One of the things driving Slaney's escape is his desire for adventure and to get back out on the sea: "The swashbuckling glamour of fucking going for it. The wind on the water and beaches and not knowing if they'd make it" (37). Slaney has been deformed by his time in prison, where the system has done its best to rehabilitate him, or, as Slaney muses, "Break a man and reconstitute him" (148). In response, Slaney has striven, throughout his incarceration, to protect an inner core of his being, a somewhat undefined but essential sense of integrity or dignity. He had resolved not to "betray the innermost thing. He didn't know exactly what the innermost thing was, except it hadn't been touched in the four years of incarceration. Come and get me. They couldn't get him. It fluttered in and out of view, the innermost thing, consequential and delicate" (37).

The recurring tension and suspense over the possibility of Slaney being captured are fortified by an overarching atmosphere of moral

ambiguity characteristic of the thriller, in which the sincerity and reliability of characters are constantly called into question and routinely revealed to be a sham. As Palmer argues, the conspiracy characteristically at the heart of the thriller "makes the world into which the hero plunges an opaque, radically uncertain world. It is a wilderness which is wild not because it has never been explored and civilized, but because it is inhabited by dissemblance: the conspirators hide behind disguises; things are not what they seem" (85).

In *Caught*, that dynamic is operative as well, but from the perspective of the criminal, in the sense that Slaney must be attentive to the possibility that those he encounters may well be complicit in the effort to recapture him. After his heart-pounding scramble across the fields from the prison to the highway, for instance, Slaney is picked up, as prearranged, by a trucker, a friend of Slaney's sister, who appears to be a genuine ally but also confides in "Slaney that he had learned how easy it was to tell a lie relatively late in his life, and found he had an aptitude for it." "It's just a matter of looking someone in the eye," he advises, "and speaking as if you could hardly be bothered recounting the facts" (19). After suggestively warning Slaney, "You won't get very far . . . I'll tell you that" (20), the trucker drops him off at a safe house, a bar run by the half-sister of one of Slaney's prison cronies, Harold Molloy, where Slaney takes temporary refuge.

In another ambiguous encounter, Slaney is later picked up by a man, John Gulliver, who offers to drive him to Montreal. At first, Slaney is disarmed by Gulliver's tearful story about how "he'd had to put down a dog last week. He'd had the dog for twelve years and it was the saddest thing he'd ever had to do and he was only now starting to feel like himself again" (41). But Slaney then chastises himself when the man pulls over and another car pulls up, and Slaney assumes that he is about to be attacked by investors furious about the previous failed venture or taken back to prison. This turns out to be a false alarm, and Gulliver reassures him by admitting that he recognized Slaney from the newspapers but stopped for him all the same because "There's pigs all over the road" and "I like a toké as much as the next guy. Nothing

wrong with it" (47). Nonetheless, Slaney is discomfited by the man's demeanour and subsequently takes the opportunity to slip away when the two stop for gas. As Palmer puts it, "the world the thriller portrays is a paranoid world, for paranoia is precisely a paradoxical combination of unequivocal self-certainty and constantly being on the look-out for conspiracies" (86). In *Caught*, Moore frames this sense of uncertainty in a characteristically striking image, as she depicts Slaney torn between trust and doubt: "He imagined trust and doubt as twins joined by a fused skull, eye to eye, the two of them, trust and doubt, in the dark forest yelling at each other: Put up your dukes" (48). One of Moore's hallmarks as a writer has always been the rich texture of her prose, and in the series of ambiguous encounters Slaney has during his cross-country flight she reworks the hard-boiled, world-weary, even cynical discourse of the thriller with her idiosyncratic and vivid characterization and dialogue.

These qualities are also on display during a series of close calls with the police that further serve to escalate the tension in the novel. When Slaney, having slipped away from Gulliver, holes up in a cheesy motel in rural New Brunswick, the police raid the hotel clearly searching for him. In a vintage Moore scene, Slaney steals into the room of a young bride about to be married, helping her to zip up her dress while philosophizing with her about the nature of marital commitment. "Prison," he realizes, "had introduced him to the notion of a consequence for every action, and he understood that freedom was the opposite of all that. He was pretty sure the bride had come across the same revelation" (73). After the woman, who at first assumes that Slaney is a relative of the groom, recognizes him as the escaped convict the police are pursuing, she bails him out by steering away the cops with a series of witty rejoinders to their questions about a handsome male fugitive: "I was looking for one of them too But you settle for what you get" (72).

Later on, after laying low in Montreal while waiting for his forged passport, Slaney ends up hitchhiking across the country and, having caught a ride with a friendly trucker, pulls into a truck stop in Alberta.

When the police show up, he escapes out the back of the building and hides out in the truck, where the police find him and question him. Although the officer who interrogates him clearly doubts his flimsy story that he is studying to be a dental hygienist — the result of a prison test “that would discern what kind of work he should pursue when he was released” (161), which cracks up Slaney’s psychologist — they ultimately let him go on his way, much to the trucker’s surprise. When Slaney says, out of appreciation for the man’s aid, “You had my back,” the trucker enigmatically responds, “I don’t have your back . . . Nobody has your back” (187). Palmer points to “the close relationship between suspense and approval of the hero” in the thriller because “excitement and suspense derive from wholeheartedly wanting one person to succeed and fearing setbacks to their projects” (62), and we see this dynamic at work in *Caught* as Slaney’s recurring brushes with recapture reinforce the reader’s alignment with his fate.

This sense of adventure, peril, and moral ambiguity is escalated in the latter part of the novel, which chronicles Slaney’s journey by yacht from Mexico to Colombia, where he is to pick up a shipment of marijuana from a corrupt army colonel. The plan is perilous enough, especially given that word of Hearn and Slaney’s failure to come through in their previous venture might have made its way to their new Colombian accomplices. But it is made more so by the fact that the yacht’s owner, the dissolute Cyril Carter, a psychologically unstable Newfoundlander with a reputation as a notorious alcoholic, not only insists on coming himself but also on bringing along his girlfriend, an 18-year-old femme fatale named Ada Anderson, ramping up the unpredictability of a venture already poised on a knife-edge. Between Carter’s boozy volatility (and he is even worse when sober) and Ada’s distracting seductiveness (his first sight of her has Slaney racking his brain for the word “vixen”), Slaney is challenged to keep an even keel. Moore has alluded to the influence of the *Odyssey* on *Caught* (“Lisa Moore Explores”), and Ada is a siren whose song Slaney must strive not to hear. Slaney’s misgivings are confirmed during negotiations with the Colombian colonel, first when Carter’s deranged ravings

threaten to derail the whole proceedings and again when the bikini-clad Ada, who has been told to stay on the boat, creates a sensation by striding onto the beach after having swam the two miles to shore.

Although the deal is brought to a successful close, two more close shaves are in store for the trio as they embark on their return trip to Vancouver. First they are caught in the eye of a hurricane, battered to the cusp of capsizing, and ultimately becalmed off the coast of Mexico after their sails are torn to shreds. Then they are taken in by Immigration authorities, only to be rescued when Hearn sends one of his investors to bribe the authorities into letting them go, with a Mexican official suggestively prodding Slaney on his release: "Before you go . . . Is there anything you think we should know?" (249). As with Slaney's cross-country journey, the constant alternation between peril and delivery, fear and relief, during this high-wire sea voyage cultivates the reader's empathetic alignment with the youthful and daring Slaney, the hope that he will somehow manage to safely navigate his way through the shoals.

As suggested by Slaney's intimate exchange with the bride, which has palpably erotic overtones, part of Slaney's appeal as the main character of *Caught* is his charismatic manner with women. The protagonist of the thriller is usually, if not categorically, characterized by a certain sexual magnetism, and the plots of thrillers are often punctuated by casual sexual encounters. For instance, after he gives Gulliver the slip, Slaney is picked up by a young woman returning from a class at a community college, who gives him shelter in the home she shares with her ailing grandfather. Struck by the woman's concern for her "Pops" and her determination to move up the ranks in supermarket management, Slaney confides to her about his arrest and time in jail, and the pair end up having passionate, drunken sex before she helps him on his way the next day. In Montreal, looking for a doll for his lover's young daughter, Slaney drops into a department store, where he has a provocative exchange over the doll's capabilities with a sexy francophone salesclerk, who informs him that the repertoire of "Saucy Suzy" includes not only phrases such as "Change my dress" and "Let's bake cookies," but also

"Tell me a story" and "Let's do acid and fuck like bunnies" (108). Shortly after, Slaney alters course on his westward journey to visit his Newfoundland sweetheart Jennifer, now married and living in Ottawa. Although she is initially furious at Slaney's reappearance (she had been oblivious to the first smuggling operation and had thought Slaney was merely going out west to work), Jennifer retreats with Slaney to the laundry room during her daughter's birthday party, where they have furious sex, with Jennifer perched on top of a running washer, before Jennifer warns Slaney that if he persists with the drug-smuggling operation she will refuse to ever see him again. Finally, while they are stranded in Mexico, Ada, who has been at turns come-hither and stand-offish with Slaney, comes to his hotel room while Carter is asleep, and the pair consummate the desire that has been coursing between them during the entire trip.

The fleeting nature of all of these encounters (his visit with Jennifer indeed turns out to be the last) seems to accord with Palmer's contention about sexuality in the thriller that "sexual relationships and love relationships/companionship never quite seem to meet — the hero is as alone in his most intimate relationships as in his most antagonistic ones" (35). In *Caught* this dynamic is particularly poignant, as Slaney, in contrast to the routinely misogynistic and cynical protagonists who populate the pages of the traditional thriller, comes across as sensitive and considerate, notwithstanding his willingness to jeopardize his relationship with Jennifer by participating in a second smuggling scheme.

Despite the adrenaline surging through him for much of the novel, then, Slaney exudes a geniality and openness to others that makes it hard to view him as a criminal. In an interview with Kiley Turner, Moore notes that the novel is "based on several stories about drug smuggling here in Newfoundland in the 70s. A time when smuggling drugs meant pot, rather than harder, life-destroying drugs" ("Lisa Moore Explores"). Reflecting that distinction, Slaney comes across as adventurous, dashing, and youthful rather than as a hardened and dangerous criminal; indeed, the only inclination towards violence on

Slaney's part throughout the whole novel is his punching a flailing woman in the jaw to save her from drowning herself and her two rescuers off a beach in Mexico. As former smuggler Brian O'Dea suggests in his memoir *High! Confessions of a Pot Smuggler*, Newfoundland has a long tradition of popular approval of smuggling: "smugglers were heroes and smuggling a legitimate business" (229). Indeed, at the end of the first smuggling operation, when Hearn and Slaney are arrested after being rescued from the fog by some local fishermen, they take on the aura of "folk heroes in the making" (78): "Two boys smuggling pot, what a lark! Hey man, everything's copasetic. Chill out. Deadly" (79).

Later, though, this impression is revised in a key passage that suggests Moore's reservations about overly romanticizing drug smugglers as latter-day folk heroes.

They'd been arrested when they got back to Newfoundland and the local papers had said *Adventure on the High Seas*. They were folk, it turned out. The university had just begun to offer courses in folklore and Newfoundlanders were their own subjects, their music and dances, the way they courted and the way they constructed their flakes for drying fish, and Slaney and Hearn were modern-day folk heroes. (139)

Here Moore gestures to the burgeoning self-consciousness and confidence about Newfoundland in the 1970s, a revival and embrace of traditional Newfoundland culture that, as James Overton has argued, was largely spurred by an urban, middle-class intelligentsia (48–49). In the countercultural atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s, "Newfoundland was discovered as an already existing alternate society," as part of "an anti-materialist, often romantic" movement that "led to a search for the primitive and a willingness to appreciate other ways of life and states of being" (Overton 49). However, Moore immediately qualifies the view of the pair as folk heroes:

Meanwhile, the real folk, the simple fishermen of Capelin Cove, had turned them in.

The law was a folktale that changed every time it was told. (139)

As Overton argues, the cultural revival of the 1970s was driven by the culturally essentialist assumption that "there exists a distinctive Newfoundland culture, way of life, ethos, character, soul, or ethnic identity" (49) centred on "the attitudes and experiences of the rural small producer" (53) living in the outport communities of the province, and here Moore seems intent on keeping some daylight between these young, cosmopolitan, countercultural bandits and the outport fishermen whom they wrongly assume will turn a blind eye to their flouting of the law. While this modifies the view of the two as heroes, however, it does little to modify the sense of sympathy built up for Slaney. Of course, the fact that Moore is portraying a 1970s-era pot-smuggling scheme in 2013, at a time when a broad consensus in favour of the decriminalization of marijuana was emerging, makes it easier to see Slaney, in a way, as an enterprising importer ahead of his time.

Moore, though, is less interested in this contrast in attitudes towards marijuana than she is in the surveillance of those involved in importing it, and it is in this respect that *Caught* offers its most dramatic twist on the traditional conventions of the thriller: all the tension and suspense running through the novel prove, ultimately, to be illusory. That is, as we progressively discover, Slaney has been under surveillance all along and never free in the sense that he thought himself to be. Indeed, not only have Slaney's movements been closely monitored all along, but even his escape from jail occurred with the full knowledge of the authorities, whose aim was to have Slaney lead them to Hearn. This gradual revelation prompts a re-evaluation of the whole narrative and reframes its generic contours, as we are forced to realize, nearing the culmination of this suspenseful narrative, not that it hasn't been suspenseful but that the outcome was never in the kind of doubt that the narrative cultivated. Palmer suggests that in the traditional thriller,

suspense is in a sense artificial because the ultimate success of the protagonist and the defeat of the criminal are foregone conclusions (57–58), and *Caught*, in a way, reworks this foreordination from the perspective of the criminal. This ingenious reframing of the thriller gives the novel added depth and complexity, making it not just a clever and highly literary variation on the genre but also a meditation on the advent of what has come to be known as the surveillance society.

Writing of Moore and Michael Winter, critic Adrian Fowler observes that in their work abiding notions of Newfoundland identity and culture have been reworked in a highly contemporary and cosmopolitan milieu: “Both writers present characters who in various ways are caught up in the wonders and terrors of a globalized and technology-dominated present but who draw on human qualities and shared attitudes traditionally privileged in the culture of Newfoundland to ground and stabilize themselves” (119). Just as Moore engages with “the mechanisms and effects of consumer capitalism” in her 2006 novel *Alligator* (Parsons 25) and with the advent of a neo-liberal sensibility in her 2009 novel *February* (Wyile 56), in *Caught* she tackles in a nascent state what has become, since the 1970s milieu of the novel, a pervasive, complex, and troubling culture of electronic surveillance. As the scope of the police operation tracking Slaney becomes increasingly clear, Moore engages in a searching examination of the existential, political, emotional, and psychological dynamics of surveillance.

Slaney’s foil in this relationship, and the second-most important character in the novel, is Staff Sergeant Patterson, the police detective who is assigned the high-profile task of getting the Newfoundlanders. Patterson, initially, is represented as receiving reports on Slaney’s progress after his escape from jail and responding to his movements under — and out from under — surveillance. For instance, when the focus first shifts to Patterson in the novel, we discover that Slaney’s intuition of something suspect about John Gulliver and his stories is justified, as Gulliver turns out to be a police plant whose role it is to ensure that Slaney reaches Montreal. We also discover that Harold Molloy, who has served as a conduit for the flow of information between Hearn and

Slaney, is an informer who has kept the police abreast of the escape plan all along. Here, in a marked ironic twist, Harold's sister's earlier explanation for her brother's protracted time in jail — "Harold has a knack for wading into the middle of one cesspool after another" (32) — can be seen, if only in retrospect, as an unintended cautionary message and another example of the opacity of the terrain through which Slaney makes his way. In the latter half of the novel, Patterson figures more prominently as he infiltrates the operation pretending to be an angel investor, Roy Brophy, to whom Hearn has had to turn at the last moment to keep the operation afloat. In this guise, Patterson makes two key appearances, first at a wild party at Hearn's Vancouver residence to celebrate Slaney's liberation and the launch of the operation, and later when he is delegated by Hearn to fly down to Mexico to bribe the authorities into letting the stranded smugglers go on their way.

As suggested earlier, the thriller is characteristically preoccupied with hermeneutic questions, particularly the importance of reading appearances and evaluating the veracity of both people and situations. Brophy's infiltration of the operation contributes to a kind of metafictional quality to this hermeneutic dimension, as both pursuer and pursued take on false identities, pitting one fiction against another. To facilitate his travel, Slaney adopts the alias of Douglas Knight, a name he takes from a tombstone in a kind of grave robbery that proceeds to haunt him. Stoned and spooked by his own footsteps in the grass of the graveyard as he makes his decision, Slaney has a momentary sense of the uncanny: "He was going by the name of another man; and he had caught up with himself, passed through himself" (138).

His unease about his alias deepens when Slaney calls the deceased young man's mother, pretending to be a Revenue agent, to cajole personal details out of the clearly bereaved woman, and hangs up feeling "like he'd punched her" (143). As David Barnard-Willis argues, identity theft, "the circumvention of security measures through the illegitimate use of identifying information, allowing a criminal actor to counterfeit the link between that information and an individual" (49), has become a central concern in a milieu in which

identity is so thoroughly bound up with data and surveillance, and in *Caught* Slaney wrestles with the ethics of doing just that: “This was a dead man. A man his own age who had died before he had a chance to do the things Slaney was going to do” (138). When Slaney meets Patterson, who presents himself as housing developer Roy Brophy, at the party in Vancouver, Hearn’s girlfriend invites Patterson/Brophy to tell a secret, and he shares with them the story of his affair with his father’s mistress after his father’s death. When Hearn’s girlfriend asks Slaney, in front of Brophy, “is he for real” (200), Slaney coyly responds, “I don’t know Your boyfriend seems to think so” (201), dangling the possibility that he might not be and implicitly recognizing that, just as he is presenting a false front, Brophy may well be too.

Patterson’s perpetration of this fiction underscores the complex human dynamic of surveillance, the emotional and psychological complications that often destabilize the moral and ethical boundaries of undercover work. As Gary T. Marx notes in his landmark 1988 study, *Undercover: Police Surveillance in America*, the deception practised in undercover operations often leads to various forms of ethical entanglement and a concomitant questioning of the operations themselves: “To the extent that agents develop personal relationships with potential targets, they may experience pressure, ambivalence, and guilt over the betrayal inherent in the deceptions” (160).

In Moore’s novel a key element of Patterson’s character is his increasing emotional involvement in the fate of Slaney and an attendant self-consciousness about the process of surveillance. As Patterson tracks Slaney’s movements, he is, like most others Slaney encounters on his cross-country journey, struck by Slaney’s youth and charm, and he gradually develops a sense of concern about how Slaney’s involvement in criminal activity has compromised his life. This empathy in turn translates into a certain amount of guilt about the net that he is helping to weave around Slaney and Hearn. The ambivalence of the surveillor is particularly highlighted during the sexually and emotionally charged encounter between Slaney and Jennifer, which is then replayed in the novel as Patterson, who has had Jennifer’s apartment

bugged, goes back over their conversation, both fascinated at witnessing a relationship on the precipice of ruin, but also appalled at the idea that Jennifer might convince Slaney to walk, realizing that "Hearn wouldn't go ahead without Slaney" as "Slaney was the raw courage and the will" (169). Although Patterson is unable to hear the pair over the noise of the washer and dryer once they retire to the laundry room, the invasive voyeurism of the scene is palpable.

Moore's concern with surveillance and its myriad ramifications, though, is most pronounced in her portrayal of the sea voyage to Colombia. The police operation to set up and arrest Slaney and Hearn is high-stakes in part because it presents the opportunity to showcase the latest in electronic surveillance technology. In a key scene depicting a triumphal gathering of the RCMP to celebrate the new technology, Patterson reflects on how it rewrites the rules of surveillance by giving them a profound sense of omniscience:

They had the eye of God. The world was wrapped with an eye. A glance lay over it now and forever.

Patterson looked at the giant screen in the front of the room and he saw nothing was impossible. They could follow movement all over the surface of the globe. (154)

The police have installed on the yacht a powerful transmitter that will allow them to track the trio all the way to Colombia and back and thus to be on hand for their arrival. But for Patterson this moment of triumph is almost immediately mixed with doubt:

It was just a sophisticated tracking device, Patterson told himself. But he couldn't help feeling proud. State-of-the-art technology; they were witnessing a leap.

A dish, an eye, a cyborg or Cyclops, and perhaps Patterson was the only man in the room old enough, besides O'Neill, to wonder about hubris. (155)

Moore underscores the coming into being of a culture of ubiquitous monitoring, what has been called by many a “surveillance society,” and the ambivalence of this development is underscored as Patterson digests the implications of their new capabilities:

O'Neill sat down and they all watched the screen. The new technology gave them the exact co-ordinates. It gave them a picture.

It took the sport out of it, Patterson thought. There was a pornographic element, the way they could watch without a break in the flow of time.

They looked on in silence, now, and they felt the hair on their arms stand up, the way you're meant to feel in the presence of the supernatural.

Watching made them feel watched.

They knew they were next.

Everybody on earth was next. Perhaps they had always been watched. But now someone owned the eye.

They owned it.

This was the kind of eye: there was nothing to hide behind. (161)

Here Patterson's epiphany in 1978 anticipates what Lyon chronicles in his seminal 1994 book, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*, in which he describes: how, to an unprecedented extent, ordinary people now find themselves “under surveillance” in the routines of everyday life. In numerous ways what was once thought of as the exception has become the rule, as highly specialized agencies use increasingly sophisticated means of routinely collecting personal data, making us all targets of monitoring, and possibly objects of suspicion (4).

It is perhaps this unsettling of the traditional power dynamic of surveillance — the sense on the part of the watcher of the inevitability of becoming the watched — that prompts Patterson increasingly to question his complicity in the sting operation. This self-questioning stems particularly from his concern for Ada, who is roughly the same

age as Patterson's own rebellious and wayward daughter, as he sees Ada fundamentally as an innocent caught up in a criminal enterprise that could ruin the rest of her life. Further complicating the moral grounding of his infiltration of the operation is his questioning of his own motives for so eagerly pursuing his prey. At the beginning of the novel, Patterson is portrayed as professionally vulnerable, passed over for promotion and a controversial choice for such a high-stakes operation, which will guarantee his promotion. His desire to succeed, we gradually discover, is driven by motives that are, in some respects, not all that different from Slaney's: he needs the money. More specifically, he needs the money to continue to provide suitable special care for his half-brother Alphonse, who has Down's syndrome. Patterson is in arrears to the facility where Alphonse lives and is facing the possibility that, without a promotion, he will have to move the highly volatile Alphonse, the offspring of his father's affair, to a less-than-optimal home. He comes to question, then, whether his sense of desperation is pushing him to participate in a morally suspect operation.

This sense of doubt comes to a head when the police lose contact with the yacht during the hurricane, and Patterson is forced to face his own involvement in what might be their deaths:

For the first time Patterson felt complicit. He broke a sweat all over.

Carter. Carter had made his choices.

But David Slaney was just a kid.

And the girl was even younger than Patterson's own daughter. (238)

Pondering what it would be like to have to call Ada's father with the news of her demise, Patterson is forced to confront his fundamental sympathy for those he has been helping to encircle:

He would have to admit he'd met her, heard her at the piano, knew she was talented and strange, and that he'd let

her go off with that filthy old goat of a man. Let her get embroiled in illegal activity. He had not taken her aside as he hoped somebody might do, another father, for his own daughter.

Patterson could put a stop to it. He thought of shaking Slaney's hand. The boy had been earnest and, Patterson thought, intelligent and desperate. Audacious. The raw will in his eyes. That would be destroyed by another round in prison.

How much of this had to do with Patterson's promotion? He let himself ponder that question. What if they died out there? (239)

As critics such as Gary Marx have argued, undercover work almost by definition destabilizes the moral absolutes so often assumed to govern the pursuit of criminals (107), and we see that uncertainty at work in Patterson's doubts about his own motives and actions.

Patterson's guilt, indeed, leads to the pivotal moment in the plot of *Caught*, as his ethical and moral qualms prompt him to compromise the facade that he has constructed for himself. When Patterson travels to Mexico to liberate the trio, his concern for Ada compels him to put his own priorities and indeed the whole undercover operation on the line by revealing himself to her and encouraging her co-operation to save both herself and the ailing Carter, who has a wife and children back in Newfoundland. But Patterson's humanity also betrays him during a conversation with Slaney and imperils the operation, as it disrupts the consistency of the identity he has adopted. As Marx notes, undercover operations can be compromised in various ways: "The agent may not be convincing, his story may be confused, he may forget a crucial element or be unable to respond convincingly to changed circumstances, or he may encounter a situation in which his inability to actually act like a genuine perpetrator is a sure giveaway" (84). Here Patterson betrays himself through a moment of sincerity, as his description of how his son predicted an impending heart attack catches

Slaney's attention and confirms his growing suspicions about the man: "He believed the story about the heart attack, but it had a different cadence than everything else Brophy had said. He was thinking: the heart attack is true, but everything else has been a lie" (282). However, luckily for Patterson, the one moment of vulnerability compensates for the other when Slaney, rightfully concluding that the entire smuggling enterprise is compromised, decides to change course and sail for Newfoundland instead of back to Vancouver. With the tracking device damaged and disabled during the hurricane, this decision represents one last potential moment of freedom, one last opportunity for Slaney to evade the net that has been increasingly drawn about him. But history repeats itself, as again the authorities are waiting at the other end in Newfoundland, scooping up Slaney, Hearn, and their band of associates, thanks to a tip from Ada, who sacrifices Slaney to save herself and Carter.

Slaney's arrest completes the paradox of *Caught*, aptly captured (if you will) in the title itself, whose applicability to the entire narrative, and not merely to its outcome, is consolidated by the ending. As Paul Chafe pithily puts it in a review of the novel, "this is *Caught*, not *Catch Me If You Can*" (143). What Slaney realizes in a crucial passage describing his reflections after his arrest is that, because of the apparatus arrayed against him, he was never not caught:

Over the weeks that followed he came to understand about the satellite technology and that the boat had been followed all the way down. And that he had been followed across the country from the beginning.

The revelation was something of a relief. How could they have beat that sort of omniscience? He learned that they had even let him go from prison so that they could follow him to Hearn, and the humiliation blazed through him.

What he had felt as freedom had not been freedom at all. The wind and the water and the stars. None of that. He

had not been free. Slaney had always been caught. He had never escaped. He'd just been on a long chain. (301)

This epiphany recasts the entire course of Slaney's existential reflections, his meditations on incarceration, his harbouring of his integrity, and his savouring of adventure and freedom, in the process raising profound questions about the nature of identity and liberty within surveillance society. If Slaney thought he was free, does that mean that, in a sense, he was? Or are we to conclude that surveillance, the scope of which has expanded exponentially since the time in which the novel is set, has profoundly rewritten the rules not just of personal autonomy but of personal identity as well? In many ways, *Caught* is something of a throwback — to an established genre, to an earlier era of smuggling, and to what now seems like a quaint surveillance regime of stings, stakeouts, and tracking devices. Nonetheless, the effect of *Caught*, which portrays the dawning of what has become a vast and multifarious network of surveillance, is to prompt readers to contemplate what has transpired, and perhaps what has been lost, in the roughly 40 years between the period the novel depicts and the present. While Slaney may be a criminal, the omnipresence of the surveillance that leads to his return to prison has become, by the time of the novel's publication, not an exceptional and circumscribed scrutiny but an elaborate, ubiquitous, and deeply ambivalent culture of monitoring. A story about the tracking and apprehension of a criminal, then, can be seen as a broader allegory about how the terms of autonomy, liberty, and privacy are reworked within a culture of pervasive surveillance.

A seminal paradigm in theories of the surveillance society, of course, is that of Michel Foucault's notion of the panopticon, derived in turn from the carceral model of eighteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Central to the panoptical model is the idea that the incarcerated subject, never sure at what point he may be under surveillance, engages in a kind of self-regulation:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures 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. (Foucault 202)

Foucault's view of modern society as fundamentally and pervasively panoptical and disciplinary seems particularly persuasive in light of the ubiquity of surveillance in contemporary society, where it is operative in "the private sector realms of consumption and financial services, in the police, military and security apparatuses, in government traditionally understood as well as in the wider institutions of 'governance', in social services, in the media, in science and technology where surveillance systems are produced" (Barnard-Wills 67). And Foucault's emphasis on the self-regulation of the individual in such a society seems particularly compelling, given the widespread acceptance of the trade-off of liberty and privacy for safety and security, essentially an acquiescence to the necessity of surveillance. As the authors of *Transparent Lives: Surveillance in Canada* argue, "living in a world permeated by surveillance subtly alters how we all act, what we say, what we post on social media — a form of self-censorship that can have a detrimental and chilling effect on political speech and action" (Bennett et al. 45).

Moore's novel, however, sits uneasily within such a paradigm, its resonant title notwithstanding. While Slaney is certainly attendant throughout the novel to the possibility that he is being monitored and that the operation may have been infiltrated, he does not assume that inevitably to be the case but does his best to detect that network of surveillance and elude it. To be sure, that evasion proves to be illusory,

and the ending suggests that, for all intents and purposes, Slaney has been an inmate all along. But Slaney's attempt at self-determination is arguably genuine, and in that sense *Caught* can be seen as a novel about savouring freedom from the surveillant gaze.

Moore, in *Caught*, resists the somewhat deterministic and fatalistic application of power in Foucault's model in another important respect. As Lyon argues in *Surveillance Studies*, it is important to recognize not just the ambivalence of surveillance — that it is more than a dystopian repressive technology — but also the limits of societal tolerance of it (57). And here the ending of *Caught* is instructive. While Slaney is sent to prison and ends up serving 20 years, Hearn, in another reprisal of the first failed smuggling operation, ends up going free after the police, enamoured of the potential of their new technology, overstep their authority and try to record a conversation between Hearn and his lawyer. Alerted by a waitress, Hearn's lawyer discovers the bug and has the case against his client dismissed.

The RCMP had violated solicitor–client privileges. It was an abuse of process. The judge felt the state had behaved egregiously. They revered the solicitor–client thing, these judges. Patterson knew that. They were always going on about it. A punk running drugs and the judge saying the cops were egregious.

Or justice will be denied to one and all, said the judge.
(304)

This overstepping, anticipated by Patterson's musing about hubris, evokes Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson's observation that surveillance has been susceptible to "mission creep" or "function creep," in which "New tools create a new environment of monitoring possibilities that were perhaps unanticipated by the original proponents of the system" (19), leading to "abuses that often arise from the thoughtless extension of some legitimate surveillance to other areas" (Bennett et al. 10–11). While Patterson's disgusted filtering of this news reflects an

end-justifies-the-means mentality that underpins so much of surveillance society, Hearn's lucky break underscores the presence and importance of limits to the level of surveillance that are tolerable in an ostensibly free and democratic society (however ironic and unfair his liberty may seem, given that his incautious decisions, especially to involve Carter and Brophy, led to the compromising of the venture and thus to Slaney going back to jail). In other words, rather than ending with an emphatic statement about the panoptical power of the state, *Caught* points to the importance of recognizing surveillance as something whose limits are negotiable, however ensconced it may be in so many arenas of contemporary society.

Moore's *Caught*, to be sure, is not a deeply profound and sustained meditation on surveillance society along the lines of Orwell's *1984* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Nor does it engage with the technological, existential, ethical, political, and social complexities of contemporary surveillance, as do, say, films like *The Truman Show*, *Caché*, or, more recently, *Eye in the Sky*. At the same time, neither is it merely a lightweight literary riffing off the genre of the thriller, and its engagement with surveillance is an important part of its aesthetic and thematic complexity. *Caught* is a compelling, suspenseful, and taut novel, but it is also deeply humane and richly textured, replete with sharply delineated and engagingly off-kilter characters, succinct and striking imagery, and plenty going on at the level of the sentence. It represents, in other words, an accomplished literary writer putting her distinctive stamp on a popular genre and producing a highly readable but also thought-provoking narrative.

As Dietmar Kammerer contends, "Popular culture can help us shape our imagination by providing metaphors, images and references for discussing and theorizing surveillance," in the process providing "bridges between academic discussion and popular perception" (104). Moore's novel prompts us to consider the gap between the world of the 1970s (a world not without scrutiny by any means) and the world of the present, in which "we have . . . embedded surveillance into our taken-for-granted understandings of the worlds we inhabit. Surveillance

is now spoken of as a normal part of parenting, work, and travel, and many of us routinely watch others and allow ourselves to be watched as we go about our day, without thinking twice about it” (Bennett et al. 139). The problem with this acceptance of surveillance as a given is that it “makes it difficult for us to identify, understand, debate, and democratically regulate surveillance practices as they become woven into the fabric of contemporary life” (Bennett et al. 139). Thus the importance of novels like *Caught* is that, as Kammerer suggests, they jolt us out of our complacency and prompt us to consider the dynamics and the implications of such a pervasive network of surveillance.

In a scene that takes place during Patterson’s trip to Mexico to negotiate the release of the smugglers, the outcome of the novel is forecast, as Patterson confers with his Mexican counterpart in the stands at a bullfight. As both the negotiation and the bull come to an end, Patterson muses:

He loved that the fight was fixed. Every step planned and played out. Always the bull would end up dead.

It was the certainty that satisfied some desire in the audience. The best stories, he thought, we’ve known the end from the beginning. (272)

And the same, we might say, in a very different sense, turns out to be the case with *Caught*.

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