

FANTASTIKA JOURNAL

Dystopian Surveillance and the Legacy of Cold War Experimentation in Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* (2018)

Nicolas Stavris

Volume 4 Issue 1 - *After Fantastika*

Stable URL: <https://fantastikajournal.com/volume-4-issue-1>

ISSN: 2514-8915

This issue is published by Fantastika Journal. Website registered in Edmonton, AB, Canada. All our articles are Open Access and free to access immediately from the date of publication. We do not charge our authors any fees for publication or processing, nor do we charge readers to download articles. Fantastika Journal operates under the Creative Commons Licence CC-BY-NC. This allows for the reproduction of articles for non-commercial uses, free of charge, only with the appropriate citation information. All rights belong to the author.

Please direct any publication queries to editors@fantastikajournal.com



www.fantastikajournal.com

DYSTOPIAN SURVEILLANCE AND THE LEGACY OF COLD WAR EXPERIMENTATION IN JOYCE CAROL OATES' *HAZARDS OF TIME TRAVEL* (2018)

Nicholas Stavris

This article examines the speculations raised by Joyce Carol Oates in her forty-sixth novel, *Hazards of Time Travel* (2018) concerning contemporary processes of surveillance, specifically, how participation in and complicity with surveillance practices can transform and alter the fundamental nature of an individual's identity. Unusually, and unlike many dystopian texts that critique the present world by looking ahead, *Hazards* is not restricted by prophetic speculation. Initially, the early stages of the novel present a not-too-distant dystopian America, one explicitly reflecting the practices of surveillance that have in many respects developed in response to the events of 9/11. However, following a narrative leap backwards through time, Oates' future world is quickly supplanted by a 1950s society plagued by anxieties pertaining to nuclear destruction, and a temporal period that saw the development of Cold War experimentation and psychological conditioning. Through this temporal shift, Oates constructs a connecting timeline between Cold War experimentation and behavioural control and the Surveillance State of her post-9/11 epoch. In so doing, Oates' novel offers up the notion that the post-9/11 era, as well as what David Lyon has referred to as "today's surveillance culture," are rooted in the legacy of Cold War America ("Surveillance Culture" 826). Through a critical analysis of Oates' retrospective speculations, and by following the journey of Adriane Strohl, the novel's chief protagonist who is sent back in time, this discussion explores how practices of surveillance, typified as they are in the twenty-first century by our relationship with digital technologies, can have a detrimental impact on a person's identity, and, ultimately, completely alter the very foundations of an individual's sense of self: their memories.

The introduction of Adriane, a high school student living in a near-future America, occurs within the novel's dystopian present. The citizens of Oates' future America, or the North American States (NAS) as it has been re-named, exists under the strict authority of the Patriot Party, "who controlled all electronic communications and transmissions" (132). In this sense, this first temporal location markedly resembles the world imagined by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Oates presents her nightmare world of unremitting surveillance as an aftermath of sorts, which in principal has arisen following the 9/11 terror attacks and its after-effects. Following Adriane's high school graduation valedictorian speech – in which she dissents against the government by questioning the nature, values, and norms of her society – she is arrested and sent back in time to 1950s Wauskotia Wisconsin, or "the era of Zone 9" (43). This is a place of exile for individuals who have presented insubordinate behaviour and used to rehabilitate citizens who have shown

themselves to be potential dissidents. As Adriane is told: "There, you will attend an excellent four-year university to train yourself in a socially useful profession" (43). Effectively, the past is codified as a space of confinement for non-conformity and a temporal location whereby behaviour can be overseen and governed. Once in Zone 9, Adriane – renamed Mary-ellen – falls in love with her psychology professor, Dr Ira Wolfman, another exile from NAS. This encounter is further evidence of Adriane's so-called rebellious nature, as Adriane attempts to defy the rules of her exile that forbid her to form relationships with other individuals. Both Wolfman and Adriane are punished for this offence, albeit in different ways. While Wolfman is killed, Adriane finds herself to be living in what appears to be the idyllic setting of Heron Creek Farm. However, as becomes apparent, this third location proves to be nothing more than an illusion and is a place in which Adriane remains subject to conditions of surveillance and control. In this space, Adriane's memories are removed resulting in the fundamental reconfiguration of her identity, thus exposing her journey through time to be an experiment of the mind and a punishment that has forced her into a state of behavioural compliance.

The nightmare world of NAS presented in the novel's opening chapters is demarcated by a temporal break with the past, which has itself become heavily restricted and controlled following a deliberate abandonment and cultural forgetting of history prior to the events of 9/11. Historical 'reality' has been re-constructed by the Government, who have taken control of all historical documentation and written-out any traces of the past that might serve to threaten their position of power and authority. Essentially, history has been re-written. Due to this, the political and societal landscape of Oates' future America has been transformed under the Patriot Party to such an extent that time itself is no longer governed by the pre-9/11 calendar. As Adriane explains: "It was against the law to compute birth dates under the old calendar, but Daddy had told me – I'd been born in what would have been called the twenty-first century if the calendars had not been reformed" (31). 9/11, then, represents a cultural and indeed global shift in Oates' fictional universe, operating in the novel – in an almost apocalyptic way – as a pivotal moment in time. This resulted in a discontinuation with the past and echoes what became an almost entirely Western-centric interpretation of 9/11 and its aftermath in the twenty-first century. Within the context of the novel, the world as it existed prior to 9/11 remains subject to the teachings and restrictions of the new Government, who are in complete control of the country's collective history.

Any information concerning the past deemed to be "'Outdated'/'unpatriotic' information" has been removed from the collective consciousness, "deleted from all computers and from all accessible memory" (31). The dystopian society of NAS, in this sense, follows a specific Cold War literary heritage. For example, NAS sharply echoes the world constructed by Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), in which history has become suppressed and regulated by the Government, achieved through the censorship of books that do not reinforce the laws and policies of the Patriot Party: "The old, 'outdated' (that is, 'unpatriotic') history books had all been destroyed, my father had said. [...] Only reconstituted history and information were allowed, just as only the reconstituted calendar was allowed" (Oates 32). In her analysis of Bradbury's Cold War dystopia, "Ray Bradbury and the Assault on Free Thought" (2013), Daphne Patai examines how the novel highlights fears pertaining to "the suppression of independent thought in whatever form it might take" and suggests that nearly all of

the inhabitants “believe that happiness and harmony are what best characterize their society” (43). The same can be said of the citizens of *Hazards*, who have become indoctrinated into conforming to codes or patterns of behaviour that can only ever underpin the beliefs of the Patriot Party. History, then, is closely monitored and constructed by the Patriot Party, as are the memories of the past world, which are strictly controlled by systems of aggressive surveillance.

The dystopian nature of the novel is epitomised by citizens of the NAS who monitor their own behaviour and social activities so as to avoid being placed under suspicion by the government. Otherwise put, citizens must avoid appearing in any way unique. Lyon, in “Surveillance Culture” (2017), posits that the crucial trait of surveillance in the twenty-first century “is that people actively participate in an attempt to monitor their own surveillance and the surveillance of others” (824). Crucially, contemporary practices of self-policing and of unremitting, collective surveillance can undoubtedly be found through our engagement with and existence in relation to digital platforms and social media environments. Within these spaces, individuals monitor the thoughts and actions of others while simultaneously observing and policing their own behavioural practices. It is the very act of participatory monitoring and self-policing that typifies the collective culture of surveillance within NAS-23, Adriane’s home state. As with the rest of this re-constituted American society, behaviour is monitored by both the Government and by individual citizens, who have learned to police their own thoughts and systems of belief. Early in the novel, for instance, Adriane makes clear that her father, Eric Strohl, had been given “MI [Marked Individual] status” before she was born and was therefore kept under surveillance by the government for being a “scientifically-minded individual” (6). “[S]uch individuals,” Adriane continues, “were assumed to be ‘thinking for themselves’ – not a reputation anyone would have wished for” (6). Eric’s MI status, however, is only a minor sentence when compared with the more extreme repercussions of behavioural infringement, such as deletion, vaporisation, or execution, which in NAS are televised during “Execution Hours” (6). The way in which the citizens of NAS participate in their own surveillance, through processes of self-regulation and the monitoring of others is indicative of surveillance practices in the twenty-first century. The novel effectively draws on a contemporary culture of surveillance whereby we regulate our own behaviour based on how others view us. Surveillance, in this sense, becomes an active part of how we see ourselves.

The citizens of NAS can be placed under suspicion based on their presumed potential to commit subversive acts. As such, individuals must avoid highlighting this potential by monitoring and regulating their own behaviour in order to appear culturally obedient. Adriane explains that “[a]t Pennsboro High – as everywhere else in our nation, I suppose – there was a fear of seeming ‘smart’ – (which might be interpreted as ‘too smart’) – which would result in calling unwanted attention to you” (17). Students in NAS society must, therefore, modify their behaviour, and indeed, their academic performance, so as to avoid being placed under suspicion as potential dissidents:

It was OK to get B’s, and an occasional A–; but A’s were risky, [...] Of course it was just as much of a mistake to wind up with C’s and D’s – that meant that you were *dull normal*, or

it might mean that you'd deliberately sabotaged your high school career. Too obviously "holding back" was sometimes dangerous. [sic] (17/18)

The educational setting here notably foreshadows the role of the University during Adriane's exile in Zone 9, a point of discussion to which this article will return. The process by which students at Pennsboro High conform to strict and regulated patterns of achievement, however, not only emphasises the workings of self-policing and control in *Hazards*, but likewise, reveals them to be responding to what Christian Fuchs and Daniel Troittier, in "Towards a theoretical model of social media surveillance in contemporary society" (2015), refer to as "categorical suspicion" (128). Drawing on the thoughts of Gary T. Marx (1988, 219), they purport that "[c]ategorical suspicion means that due to surveillance technologies 'everyone becomes a reasonable target. The new forms of control are helping to create a society where everyone is guilty until proven innocent; technologies that permit continuous, rather than intermittent, monitoring encourage this'" (128). Through the society of NAS-23, and throughout the rest of the novel, Oates engages with contemporary practices of surveillance, whereby humanity is continuously connected to systems of surveillance, including social media platforms, as well as digital devices such as phones, tablets, and computers that monitor our behaviour and govern our actions. Essentially, *Hazards* highlights how we, perhaps unconsciously, self-monitor and self-regulate our own behaviour in the contemporary world through the use of digital technologies. Fuchs and Troittier contend that categorical suspicion has "intensified" in the twenty-first century following the events of 9/11 and with the development of social media technologies in particular, as they suggest: "The focus on fighting and preventing terrorism and the creation of a culture of categorical suspicion is one of the societal contexts of social media surveillance" (128). Oates' portrayal of a culture of self-policing and academic regulation at Pennsboro High, as well as her envisioning of 9/11 as a temporal rupture in the fabric of history effectively demonstrates *Hazards* to be a novel heavily influenced by the post-9/11 rhetoric and the methods of surveillance that followed, in which "suspicion can easily result in the constant monitoring of social media activities of citizens and the police assumption that all users are actual or potential criminals and terrorists until proven innocent" (Fuchs and Troittier 128).

Oates further reinforces the fact that her dystopian society is one that functions on the basis of suspicion and surveillance in her representation of racial categorisation, whereby citizens of NAS have been reclassified under the Patriot Party and placed into a numerical system based on their skin tone:

(The highest ST – SkinTone – category was 1: "Caucasian." Most residents of Pennsboro were ST1 or ST2 with a scattering of ST3's. There were ST4's in a neighbourhood district and of course dark-complected ST workers in all districts. We knew they existed but most of us had never seen an actual ST10.) [sic] (19)

This structure of classification, which defines the surveillance system under the Patriot Party, is a process that provides the Government with control over society through processes of racial discrimination, or what Simone Brown, in "Racializing Surveillance" (2012), suggests are the "'Othering' practices that first accompanied European colonial expansion and that sought to structure social relations and institutions in ways that privilege whiteness" (73). Likewise, this system of classification based on skin tone notably resembles what Lyon has referred to as "social sorting," a system of surveillance in the twenty-first century brought about in the aftermath of 9/11 in which Government authorities and consumer markets alike, monitor individuals "according to varying criteria, to determine who should be targeted for special treatment, suspicion, eligibility, inclusion, access, and so on" (*Surveillance as social sorting* 20). Oates captures the essence of a post-9/11 world through which digital technologies and systems of social sorting have commanded forms of surveillance based on discrimination and control. In this way, Oates effectively illustrates the role that surveillance can and often does play in both the perception and self-monitoring of identity categories.

It is in Adriane's refusal to adhere to the principles and ideologies of NAS that result in her exile to 1950s Wainscotia Wisconsin, or Zone 9. Adriane refuses to obey this culture of self-policing during her life at Pennsboro High – "sometimes I tried harder than I needed to try. Maybe it was risky. Some little spark of defiance provoked me" (18). Likewise, she singles herself out by "saying 'surprising' things – 'unexpected' things – that other students would not have said" and thus questions the socio-political structures of the NAS (21). Adriane's resistance to the behavioural norms of NAS marks her out as an "uncooperative subject" (33). Her interest in censored and restricted information, reinforced by the questions she raises during her valedictorian speech concerning the society's fragmented past, "before the Reconstitution, and before the Attacks," is enough to place her under suspicion as a potential traitor to the country (32). Following Adriane's valedictorian speech, Oates presents what Patai terms the "Grand Inquisitor" scene in dystopian fiction, a passage of "confrontation between the rebellious protagonist and the society's leader or representative" (43). Adriane is detained and questioned along with a number of other scholars "in a Youth Disciplinary 'sweep'" (38). "The question," Adriane explains, "was bluntly put to me: Was I, Adriane Strohl, a collaborator with these students? Was I a co-conspirator?" (38). Once arrested, the scholars are kept separate but collectively interviewed on television screens, a passage in which Oates highlights the interconnection of surveillance and spectatorship.

As Adriane is forced to watch the 'vaporization' of one of the suspected criminals, she exclaims that "A camera was turned on me [...] I had to assume that my face was being beamed into other interrogation rooms, where the Patriot scholars were being held" (40). This passage illustrates not only Adriane's own subjugation, foreshadowing the unseen force that monitors her behaviour during her time in exile, but reinforces her participation in and complicity with the act of surveillance itself, prompting a clear articulation of the audience's own role as participants and spectators of surveillance in contemporary society. The execution of the scholar, ZOLL, JOSEPH JAY [sic], proves to be the starting point of Adriane's character arc, as she transitions from being a rebellious citizen at the start of the novel to a compliant and reconditioned subject in the concluding chapter. The scene serves to introduce Adriane's subjectivity to behavioural control in Zone 9. However, it also supports

an understanding of *Hazards* to be a novel that highlights the intertwined issues of surveillance and behavioural manipulation in contemporary society. *Hazards*, as will be explained, reflects upon the behavioural experimentation practices undertaken during the Cold War and which continue to influence and underpin surveillances practices today.

In the novel's second location, Oates removes the reader from the futuristic, speculative world of NAS-23 and places them deep within the heart of a 'Cold War Campus,' one clearly inspired by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, at which Oates in fact studied (Anderson, 3). Through Adriane's exile at Wainscotia State University Oates draws heavily on the role of the United States Higher Education environment in the 1950s and 1960s and, in particular, the impact of Cold War anxiety upon student life at the University of Wisconsin during this time. Matthew Levin, in *Cold War University* (2013), explains that during the Cold War, and following World War Two, Madison became a "'Cold War university'. Increasingly supported by the federal government, it played an increasingly crucial role in the broad and multifaceted struggle with the Soviet Union" (16). It is through her inclusion of behaviourism and social conditioning, central themes that are played out during Adriane's time in Zone 9, that the temporal connection between the two time zones on which the novel is structured becomes most apparent.

In looking back to the Cold War era, Oates participates in what Andrew Hammond, in his article "The Twilight of Utopia" (2011), suggests became a particular concern in literary criticism during the 1980s, concentrated "on the conscious and unconscious impact of nuclear technologies and of the widespread fear of nuclear disaster" (662). This "so-called Nuclear Criticism," Hammond avows, responded to a literary sea-change amongst authors, as well as poets and dramatists, who had begun to focus directly or indirectly on collective anxieties pertaining to the acceleration and stockpiling of nuclear armaments (662). However, it was not merely nuclear warfare that spearheaded this concern within the arts. In an analysis of the post-War dystopian novel in "The Flight from the Good Life" (1994), David Seed reflects upon an "abiding fear which runs through American dystopian fiction of the 1950s that individuals will lose their identity" amidst widespread reorganisation in the fabric of society (225). Seed explains that "protagonists of dystopias are usually defined in relation to organizational structures" that place the individual at the mercy of a totalitarian State and "draconian" measures (226). Adriane is continuously defined by her lack of autonomy, subjugated to regimes that limit her individuality and freedom of thought and expression.

Significantly, the Cold War period led to a particular development in behavioural experimentation, a development that, as Alfred McCoy argues in his work *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (2007), involved a "massive mind control effort, with psychological warfare and secret research into human consciousness that reached a cost of a billion dollars annually – a veritable Manhattan Project of the mind" (7). "[F]rom 1950 to 1962," McCoy continues, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was experimenting with innovative torture techniques that progressed from the physical to the psychological, leading to a "paradigm" that probed "the essential nature of the human organism to identify its physiological and psychological vulnerabilities" (7, 8). This, McCoy confirms, resulted in a "total assault on all senses and sensibilities,"

a development he describes as “a hammer-blow to the fundamentals of a person’s identity” (8). The impact of psychological experimentation and behavioural control is conveyed through Adriane’s exiled experience, during which she undergoes psychological punishments that re-condition her behaviour over time, thus forcing her into a state of behavioural compliance. Importantly, Oates returns to this particular period in order to provoke an interpretation of contemporary surveillance as being in some way influenced by the experimentations in behavioural science undertaken during this time. Moreover, the novel appears to advance the position that as consumers of digital technologies in contemporary society, and of devices that continue to monitor our behaviour, movements, and actions, we are now being conditioned by digital and virtual technologies in ways not dissimilar from the psychological experimentation practices undertaken during the Cold War era.

Once Adriane arrives in Zone 9, she enrolls on a psychology course under the direction of Dr Ira Wolfman, in which she studies the work of psychologist B. F. Skinner. Adriane attends a seminar on Skinnerian behaviourism, during which she is informed that “Individual, group, and mass behavior can be programmed, conditioned, predicted and controlled” (Oates 90). The premise of Skinner’s operant conditioning, as Saul McLeod asserts (2007), worked on the assumption that through the use of positive and negative reinforcements, and also through the use of punishments typically in the form of an “electric shock,” the behaviour of a subject – usually a rat – could be profoundly altered (3). Edward K. Morris, Nathaniel G Smith, and Deborah E. Altus, in “B. F. Skinner’s Contributions to Applied Behavior Analysis” (2005) claim that “Skinner was not only the most eminent psychologist of the 20th century but also the most eminent behavior analyst of any century. He established a science of behavior, formulated its philosophy, and founded behavior analysis” (121). Skinner’s operant conditioning paved the way for further experimentation into neurological functions, including, for example, the function of ‘pleasure in the brain.’ In his article “Cold War ‘Super Pleasure’: Instability, Self-stimulation, and the Postwar Brain” (2016), Otniel E. Dror makes clear that “[t]he discovery of pleasure in the brain was the immediate effect of the rapprochement of behaviorism with neuropsychology and serendipity” (230). Furthermore, discoveries of brain pleasure through experimentation “also coincided with the anxieties of the Cold War and a unique ‘Cold War rationality’ (which was distinct from ‘reason’)” (228). Skinnerian psychology, and in particular his theory of operant conditioning, becomes crucial to understanding Adriane’s transitional development or journey from dissidence to compliance. It is conveyed in the novel by Oates as a thematic backdrop, secondary to the love story that develops between Adriane and Wolfman. However, it is a theme that allows for an interpretation of Adriane’s existence in Zone 9 to be nothing more than an experimental punishment, whereby Adriane is observed and controlled by an unseen force and which leads to her eventual conformity at Heron Creek Farm. Adriane’s transitional development from dissident to conformer ultimately illustrates how a person’s identity and the very essence of their character can be manipulated and controlled. In a twenty-first century context, then, it is worth considering how our continued utilisation of digital technologies – technologies through which collective practices of surveillance are maintained – are essentially informed by Skinnerian psychology. *Hazards* prompts an interrogation into our relationship with digitisation in the contemporary world, and critically addresses how our participation with surveillance through the use of digital technologies, whereby we perpetually observe the behaviour of others and regulate our own behaviour in return, has

ultimately stemmed from the experiments into behavioural manipulation undertaken by Skinner and his predecessors.

Adriane's monitored condition is hinted at during her first encounter with Wolfman: "Our instructor was returning our midterm exams. He was smiling, though not with his eyes. His eyes moved restlessly over us, impersonal and detached, calculating. I wondered: were we 'subjects' to him?" (87). During her time in Zone 9, Adriane's identity is reshaped or reconstructed through Skinnerian science, transformed through the process of behavioural conditioning. Her behaviour is guided in principle by a set of rules entitled "The Instructions," which are provided for the reader in the opening sections of the novel (3). These instructions forbid exiled individuals from leaving their place of exile – which in her case is the campus – reveal their true identity to other citizens, or "enter into any 'intimate' or 'confidential' relationship with any other individual" (3). Adriane must follow these directives during her four-year sentence, as specified in points six and seven of The Instructions: "The EI will be monitored at any and all times during his/her exile. [...] Violations of any of these restrictions will insure that the EI will be immediately Deleted" (4). Exiles in Zone 9 submit to The Instructions under the belief that they are being watched at all times, verifying the Panoptic-like state of Adriane's environment. Her existence is therefore regulated by an absent presence, subjected to the ideological belief that she is being monitored by some form of unseen observer. Furthermore, Oates compels the reader into participating in the very act of Panoptic surveillance in Zone 9's opening chapter through a brief change in narrative, which temporarily abandons Adriane's point of view and is conveyed instead by the collective voice of the student body at Wainscotia State University:

She looked like a convalescent. Some wasting disease that left her skinny, and her skin ashy-pale and sort of grainy as if it would be rough to the touch like sandpaper. Her eyes would have been beautiful eyes – they were dark brown, like liquid chocolate – with thick lashes – but they were likely to be narrowed and squinting as if she were looking into a bright, blinding light. (51, original emphasis)

Here, Oates concurrently stresses our own participation in the act of surveillance, as the audience observe Adriane from a position of unseen authority. Forced by the Government to take on a new identity and new name – Mary-Ellen – Adriane is described from the perspective of her fellow students who have observed her during her initial days and weeks on campus. The essence of Adriane's identity is reduced to that of a closely observed entity that is being carefully considered, analysed, and dissected by the narrator, exemplifying her existence as an experimental subject under constant surveillance.

Adriane's status as an experimental subject becomes progressively apparent both to herself and to the reader. Her anxiety continues to be influenced by her belief that she is being watched, reinforcing the panoptic quality of her surroundings. In essence, the environment of Zone

9 sharply resembles that of NAS-23, as Adriane feels compelled into a position of subordination and compliance. Motivated by her studies on behaviourism, she likens herself to a “laboratory creature that has been conditioned by a menacing visual stimulus to ‘freeze’” (216). She is akin to the rat in Skinner’s maze, a condition to which Adriane becomes overtly aware: “In a new and unexpected variant of a ‘Skinner box’ everywhere I went, in Zone 9, I brought this (invisible) box with me, for I was at its epicentre” (192). Adriane must monitor her own actions in accordance with The Instructions, and is constantly defined by her fear of the unknown watcher. “Often,” she explains, “I caught sight of myself in reflective surfaces, and was struck – stricken – by the person I’d become, [...] [M]y manner was vigilant, hyper-alert. I’d become one of those lab rats that has been frustrated or frightened by shock” (193). In this symbolic moment, Oates foregrounds our relationship with technology in the twenty-first century, encapsulating our use of digital devices, into which we incessantly gaze, as well as our unwavering connection to the social media spaces through which we participate in acts of collective and participatory surveillance. Echoing her refusal to obey the regulations and social norms of NAS-23, however, Adriane continues to perform rebellious behaviour in Zone 9 by resisting the rules set out in The Instructions. She eventually reveals her true identity to Wolfman and enters into an intimate relationship with him. Likewise, after discovering Wolfman is, like her, an exile, they attempt to flee Zone 9 altogether.

The events preceding Adriane’s and Wolfman’s attempt to escape their place of exile exposes the distinct culture of Cold War anxiety into which Adriane has been placed. Whilst in exile, Adriane begins part-time work at the Museum of Natural History, a location within the novel that at first appears to offer Adriane a degree of respite from her monitored state. On one occasion, Wolfman leads Adriane to a bomb shelter, located underground and beneath the museum. It is a location where they can talk privately: “Now, we’re safe!” he explains, “No surveillance” (169). In this space, Oates underscores the collective paranoia that governed the Cold War period as stemming from fears of nuclear Armageddon. Concerning the bunker, Wolfman explains to Adriane that “for a long time after World War II, Americans had lived in terror of a *nuclear holocaust*. School children as young as five or six were drilled in what to do if there was a sudden ‘nuclear flash’ – they were to scramble beneath their desks, bow their heads and cover the backs of their necks with their clasped hands” (171, original emphasis). Here, Oates provides an illustration of what M. Keith Booker in *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001) refers to as “the long 1950s,” and “the great period of Cold War hysteria beginning soon after World War II and ending sometime around 1964, when nuclear and anti-Soviet paranoia in the United States began notoriously to decline” (3). The shelter visited by Wolfman and Adriane functions as an emblem of this paranoia, a period from which a culture of Cold War experimentation began.

The sections of the novel that follow on from Adriane’s and Wolfman’s intimate encounter in the bomb shelter are notably omitted from the pages of the text and withheld from the reader – “all that passed between us that night,” Adriane reflects, “went unrecorded” – a deliberate absence within the text through which Oates confronts perpetual surveillance through the omission of narrative, and it is from this moment of privacy between them that Adriane and Wolfman embark on a journey in an attempt to escape their place of exile (181). However, what follows is in fact

not Adriane's deliverance from exile, but her complete loss of 'self,' and the fundamental loss of her identity, revealing her experience to have been nothing more than an experiment of the mind. Indeed, Adriane and Wolfman's attempt to escape their exiled conditions at the Wainscotia State setting proves futile. Importantly, though, it reinforces Adriane's confined existence within a Skinnerian box:

Though we'd been walking for six hours, following the trail that Wolfman had carefully chosen for us [...] it seemed that the trail had looped back upon itself, and had brought us again to the entrance of the arboretum, close by the University campus. The tolling sound we'd been hearing was the chapel bell. (272)

Oates underpins Adriane's condition as a trapped subject with the use of a spatial paradox. Described earlier on in the novel as "The Happy Place," Zone 9 has now become a location from which she is unable to emancipate herself and in which she is caught within a spatial loop (45). Furthermore, this section is clearly indicative of our existence within digital spaces in the twenty-first century and which provides the basis for an understanding of the novel's final location. In addition, Adriane's utterance concerning the "tolling sound" prepares the audience for a pivotal moment in her development from dissident to conformer, eventually resulting in the total re-conditioning of her identity. Adriane describes the loss of Wolfman as a vaporisation:

In pine branches overhead a small bird, possibly a bat, was circling strangely, as if rabid. Then, as I started, the thing – black, swift, unerring – swooped down to rush at Wolfman, struck him on the side of the head and entered his head, suddenly aflame, engulfing him in flames within seconds turning the man to vapour only a few feet from me. (273)

Unable to grasp the reality of the situation, or see this punishment for what it truly is, Adriane perceives what is an electric shock to be an animal of some kind. This moment echoes the vaporisation of ZOLL, JOSEPH JAY in NAS-23, and like that moment, has an immediate impact on Adriane, transporting her once again to an entirely new location in the novel's final chapter.

The setting of Heron Creek Farm at first appears to be a location that provides Adriane with a sense of recovery from her exiled state in Zone 9. She finds herself living in an idyllic, rural environment, a place in which she has developed a strong bond with the natural world: "Walking through the overgrown garden, with Rufus at my heels, sniffing and bounding into the dry-rustling corn, I am suffused with happiness" (310). Essentially, this chapter gives the impression of renewal, or recovery. It appears to present Adriane as having recuperated from her exiled state, from her "teletransportation," and from the death of Wolfman, of whom there is no mention in this chapter (65). However, it quickly becomes apparent that Heron Creek Farm is an artificial world, one that exposes Adriane's journey through time to have been an illusion while also representing the final

phase of her subjugation to behavioural conditioning. It is a space that provides the reader with the culmination of Adriane's journey, which appeared at first to be a movement backwards in time. Instead, the final chapter underscores the truth surrounding Adriane's existence in Oates' novel, that she has not in fact travelled backwards through time, but has been subjected to a form of mind-control experimentation designed to recondition her behaviour.

At Heron Creek Farm, Adriane has little memory of what has brought her to this place: "In my former life – (which I can remember only vaguely, like something glimpsed through frosted glass) – I don't believe I lived on a farm, working with the soil, grew things" (310). Adriane has married Jamie Stiles, a scholar she met whilst in exile, and has built a life with him here. Again, though, her recollection of how this happened is absent from her memory: "Somehow it seemed to have been decided between us" (306). Her loss of memory is a clear marker of her reconditioned self and while Adriane has come to accept her life at the farm as her true reality, she does experience momentary, fleeting glimpses that this life is not altogether her own. She briefly considers that the names of her parents on her birth certificate are not real: "Were these my birth parents? Or were they simply fictitious names someone had provided [...]?" (318). Adriane also feels Wolfman's absence when making love to Jamie: "sometimes a sensation comes over me, that I am in the arms of someone else [...] someone whose name I have forgotten" (317). Moreover, this constructed environment is addressed overtly as Adriane attempts to read from a collection of library books:

I saw to my surprise that there were no words on the page – no printed words. [...] I turned pages, and all were the same: blank. [...] Shaken, I replaced this book and opened another at random. And this book did have printed pages, but the print was blurred and incomprehensible as if it has melted. (323)

Adriane's observations, her perception of the blank and distorted pages, confirms the illusory nature of her new existence within this confined space in which she can be observed and controlled. On some level at least, Adriane mistrusts the reality of her surroundings in spite of her acceptance of them. In this respect, Oates is likewise encouraging the reader to mistrust the hegemonic structures in which we operate today. During her time in Zone 9, Oates introduced the notion that Adriane's experiences since giving her Valedictorian speech have been manufactured, presented at one stage as Wolfman and Adriane discuss the execution that she witnessed prior to being placed into exile. Wolfman suggested to Adriane: "If it was a TV monitor, you were probably just seeing a re-enactment. You have no way of knowing if the execution was authentic" (219). Wolfman's utterance epitomises the constructed environment of the farm, which serves as a representation of the reality placed upon Adriane by an external force.

Through the use of this rather unusual setting on which the novel ends – which collapses, distorts, and ultimately abandons the portrayal of Adriane's temporal shift backwards through time – Oates confronts the dystopian realities of the digital age. In particular, Heron Creek Farm functions as a social commentary on our reliance on and existence in relation to digital or illusory spaces in the

twenty first century. In “Big Data Surveillance” (2014), Mark Andrejevic and Kelly Gates suggest that “the flexibility of digital environments can double as laboratory and virtual Skinner box, enabling an ongoing process of experimentation in social control” (194). Adriane has been placed within a space of artificial reality, one not dissimilar from the digital environments that we ourselves utilise in the contemporary world. She remains subject to systems of surveillance and control, failing to understand the full extent of her continued incarceration within a constructed environment. At the same time, in describing this environment as “a dream” rather than a nightmare, Adriane is shown to have accepted her condition as an experimental subject (323, original emphasis). She no longer resists her confinement or questions the structures on which her environment functions. Otherwise put, she has been reconditioned – like Skinner’s rat – to conform to the rules of her new reality.

Oates’ *Hazards of Time Travel* looks backwards as well as forwards in its examination of surveillance and the impact of surveillance practices on human identity. The novel proposes a timeline between the Cold War era and, in particular, Cold War experimentation and the post-9/11 world of aggressive surveillance. However, by blurring the boundaries between reality and artifice, *Hazards* draws attention to the way in which our existence within artificial environments, specifically online, continues to place the human self at the mercy of the unseen watcher. Adriane’s existence at Heron Creek Farm is one of a split-identity, caught as she is between a utopian and dystopian way of life. Adriane has entered into a space in which she is ‘happy’ whilst at the same time continues to function as a closely monitored and highly restricted subject within a system that has complete control over her actions. Concerning the role of technology, namely, the rise of social media in the contemporary world, Lyon posits that “[a] key aspect of today’s nascent surveillance culture is the imperative to share. Social media is in some ways synonymous with such sharing” (“Surveillance Culture” 830). ‘Sharing’ as Lyon maintains, has become a normalised process of everyday life, “in which persons are made more visible by others or—and this is the relevant sense—deliberately make themselves more visible.” (831). The process of sharing in the twenty-first century reinforces our participation and complicity with our own surveillance and indeed the surveillance of others. Sharing invites participation whilst in the same instance reinforces the essence of surveillance, that we remain under constant observation and control. Oates’ novel purposefully addresses how surveillance can alter the essential nature of the human self. However, Oates critiques our imperative to share in the digital age through Adriane’s final words, and the final words of the novel, as Adriane invites us to join her in her new environment: “Please come! I would like to meet you. Stay with us as long as you like” (324).

WORKS CITED

Anderson, Eric K. “Review of Joyce Carol Oates’s *Hazards of Time Travel*.” *Bearing Witness: Joyce Carol Oates Studies*, vol. 4, no. 7, 2018, pp. 1-5.

Andrejevic, Mark, and Gates, Kelly. “Big Data Surveillance: Introduction.” *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2014, pp. 185-196.

Booker, M. Keith. *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. Greenwood Press, 2001.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd, 1954.

Brown, Simone. "Race and Surveillance." *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*. Edited by Kirsty Ball, Kevin Haggerty, and David Lyon, 2Routledge, 2012, pp. 72-80.

Dror, Otniel E. "Cold War 'Super Pleasure': Instability, Self-stimulation, and the Postwar Brain." *Osiris*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2016, pp. 227-249.

Fuchs, Christian, and Trottier Daniel. "Towards a theoretical model of social media surveillance in contemporary society." *The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2015, pp. 113-135.

Hammond, Andrew. "'The Twilight of Utopia': British Dystopian Fiction and the Cold War." *Modern Language Review*, vol. 106, no. 3, July 2011, pp. 662-681.

Levin, Matthew. *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.

Lyon, David. *Surveillance as social sorting: Privacy, Risk, and Digital Discrimination*. Psychology Press, 2003.

---. "Surveillance Culture: Engagement, Exposure, and Ethics in Digital Modernity." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 11, 2017, pp. 824-842.

McCoy, Alfred. *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Metropolitan Books, 2007.

McLeod, Saul. "Skinner-operant Conditioning." *Simply Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-7.

Morris, Edward K., Nathaniel G. Smith, and Deborah E. Altus. "B.F. Skinner's Contributions to Applied Behavior Analysis." *Behavior Analyst*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2005, pp. 99-131.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Hazards of Time Travel*. 4th Estate, 2018.

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, 1949.

Patai, Daphne. "Ray Bradbury and the Assault on Free Thought." *Society*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2013, pp. 41-47.

Seed, David. "The Flight from the Good Life: *Fahrenheit 451* in the Context of Postwar American Dystopias." *Journal of American Studies*, vol 28, no 2, 1994, pp. 225-240.

BIONOTE

Nicholas Stavis received his PhD in 2018 from the University of Huddersfield, UK, where he currently lectures on modules covering speculative fiction, critical and cultural theory, and contemporary women's writing. His other research interests include gender studies, contemporary dystopian narratives, and eco-criticism in twenty-first-century fiction. He has previously written on the literary works of Jonathan Franzen and Zia Haider Rahman in a post-9/11 context, and on the subject of postmodernism and its aftermath in literature and the arts.