

**The Art of Totalitarianism**

**A Critical Analysis of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* and  
Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police***

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### Abstract

Building on Edward Said's notion of worldliness, this thesis critically analyses three novels: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* and Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*, and attempts to answer the research question of how these novels analyse and critically reflect on their present times in view of the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. This thesis approaches this question in two steps: first, it locates the specific novel within its contemporary situation and discusses how the situation is reflected within the novel, and second, it close reads and critically analyses how the different authors regard the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. Concepts such as the infallibility of the leader, panopticism, cultural memory, and *kako no kokufuku* are used in the analysis of the respective novels and inform the close reading. Ultimately, this thesis underlines the importance and value of literature as a heuristic tool to be used by readers to analyse and critically reflect upon socio-political situations.

### **Introduction: The Importance of Literature**

It is an accepted notion in the world of literary criticism that literature is of an indispensable nature for the analysis and understanding of human essence and behaviour. One of the many assets of literary novels is their ability to hold a mirror up to human existence. It is for this reason that many of us read and enjoy books, because it provides for a space in which people can make sense of the world around them. Novels such Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* have gone down as classics due to the very fact that they critically reflect on something that is deeply embedded within our society.

According to Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen, literature has as its central characteristic the purpose "to develop in depth, through subject and form, a theme which is in some sense central to human concerns and which can therefore be recognized as of more or less universal interest" (450). Based on this assumption I argue that literature has a heuristic capability; it is a tool that enables its user to discover and learn something for themselves. It is this idea that is of interest to the current research.

Following this statement, it is important then to look at the way in which literature is able to possess this heuristic capability. I argue that literature contains this ability due to the fact that it inhabits a critical, complex position within the world it exists in. This is not a new notion. Edward Said stated in his article "The Text, The World, The Critic" that "a text in its being a text is a being in the world; it addresses anyone who reads," (3) and that texts therefore have "ways of existing, both theoretical and practical, that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place and society – in short, they are in the world, and hence are worldly" (4). The worldliness of a text to which Said is referring, means that a text is placed and acts within the constraints of circumstance. As a result, a text takes on a significant form in which its "worldliness, circumstantiality, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are

incorporated in the text, are an infrangible part of its capacity for producing and conveying meaning” (Said 8). A text thus has a specific situation embedded within it, which in turn limits the reader and interpretation of the text (Said 8). There exists no limitless ability to interpret a text. If this were true, it would mean the text would have no connection to the situation within which it is produced and the situation in which it is read; it would have no sensuous particularity or historical contingency. In short, it would not be connected to actuality (Said 9). The dominant historical, political, and social structures of the world allow a text to incorporate and be incorporated within a specific situation and to be interpreted thus. The text becomes a cultural product; it has a material presence. Literature is thereby able to retain a heuristic capability because of its worldliness and allows its reader to use it as a tool to critically analyse the worldly situation embedded within the literary text. The role of the critic within this, according to Said, is not only “in writing as dialectically creating the values by which art might be judged and understood,” but also to create “the actual conditions by means of which art and writing bear significance” (21).

The significance of art then is my next point. It is imperative to discuss why the ability of literature to critically examine worldly situations should be considered important. Art, which includes literature, is often perceived to be of importance because, as Mark William Roche argues, art and the humanities “concern themselves with the fate and prospect of humankind” (1). Art’s significance is derived from its intrinsic value to our human concerns, from what it can mean to us. This value becomes evident when examining a statement of artist Paul Klee: “Die Kunst gibt nicht das Sichtbare wieder, sondern macht sichtbar” (118). Art does not reproduce the visible, but rather renders visible. It allows its viewer, or in our case its reader, to see that which previously was not evident. In the case of literature, the worldliness of a text assists this function. Roche states how literature “does not take us away from the everyday as much as illuminate the higher meaning implicit in the

everyday” (19). When we circle back to the idea that literature can be used as a tool to critically reflect on worldly situations, I argue that literature is able to do this because it teaches the reader to look beyond that which is visible. Literature has the ability to teach us, to make us understand reality in a new sense, it “clarifies, [...] brings our abstract concepts into play with concrete situations and vivid examples” (Roche 22). Often, literature does this in a proleptic sense, it anticipates and showcases scenarios and scenes that we ourselves could not have imagined to take place (yet). This idea is of interest to the current research, because it is my strong belief that due to a text’s worldliness and its heuristic and proleptic features, literature can be used as an instrument to analyse and reflect critically on worldly situations, specifically political and social instances of these worldly situations. The temporality of prolepsis is relevant here because it allows the reader to view and critically assess a possible future act or development that has grown out of a worldly situation.

It is here that we come to the main objective of this research. To be able to showcase that literature retains a critical competence, I will perform three analyses of novels which showcase this ability. These novels are George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Joyce Carol Oates’s *Hazards of Time Travel* and Yoko Ogawa’s *The Memory Police*. These three novels have been chosen as the subjects of this research due to several reasons.

Firstly, all of these novels engage with their own specific contemporary situations in an analytical and critical manner. Each of the novels reflects on socio-political questions and I wish to specifically look into how they regard the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. These questions are of interest to me due to their complex nature and prominent historical presence in both the past and the present. Totalitarianism has left a lasting mark on the world’s socio-political landscape and has inspired many writers past and present. Surveillance in turn remains a much debated topic and often enters our discourse in relation to the balance between privacy and security. Manipulation is a socio-political

concept that is often ignored but forms an important cog in totalitarian machine. The aforementioned novels all deal with these concepts, but do so in different settings. Orwell's novel replies to a Western situation during the antebellum and postbellum of the second World War, whilst Oates' novel replies to the more contemporary situation of the United States post-9/11, and Ogawa replies to the Japanese situation after the atomic bombing.

Secondly, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a canonical text that has gone down in literary history as a critical artifact of Orwell's contemporary time. This is a widely accepted fact and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is still used as a text by people today to analyse and reflect on more modern situations<sup>1</sup>. Orwell's novel is therefore a prime example to use in showcasing how literature can be used to reflect on socio-political situations.

Lastly, Oates and Ogawa have specifically been chosen because they are more contemporary texts and reflect on a Western and Eastern situation respectively. This ensures that this current research does not become one-sided but incorporates literatures from different periods and different worldly situations, while still discussing the same questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control.

Based on the considerations mentioned above, this research proposes the following research question: how do George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* and Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* analyse and critically reflect on their present times in view of the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control? In terms of manipulation, I will focus specifically on the manipulation of history, language, and memory. This research's methodology consists of close reading the different

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<sup>1</sup> For example, sales for George Orwell's novel surged in the past whenever there was a feeling among the general public that one or multiple of the themes within the novel were mirrored in real life. Two examples of when this happened are when Edward Snowden revealed the U.S. National Security Agency's surveillance programmes and when Kellyanne Conway stated that President Trump gave "alternative facts" about the attendees at his inauguration.

novels and placing them within their contemporary situations, supplemented by secondary sources. Each chapter follows the same structure: the first section will locate the specific novel within its contemporary situation and discuss how this is reflected in the novel, whilst the second section focuses on close reading and analysing how the different authors regard the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control.

Chapter 1 is spent on critically analysing George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*. The first section discusses Orwell's involvement in the Spanish Civil War and his recurrent fears of a loss of historical objectivity. It discusses how Orwell viewed the totalitarian Nazi and Bolshevik regimes and how these views are reflected in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The second section discusses how Orwell critically reflects on his contemporary situation in view of the three questions. Important sources that support my close reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* include Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel*. The first section discusses how the socio-political landscape post-9/11 and the new Trumpian era are reflected in the novel. The second section analyses how Oates presents a more modern conception of totalitarianism to the reader and how modern surveillance mechanisms can support this totalitarian landscape.

Chapter 3 discusses Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*. The first section places Ogawa's novel within the Japanese cultural discourse of *kako no kokufuku* during which Japan started to come to terms with their role as wartime aggressor. The atomic bombing of Japan is pertinent here, and the second section analyses how Ogawa uses the notion of the atomic bombs to inform her writing on totalitarianism, surveillance, and most importantly manipulation.



## Chapter 1: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

In late November of 1948, George Orwell handed over the finished manuscript of his newest novel called *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Published in June of 1949, Orwell's novel became his greatest literary and popular success, having sold 50,000 copies in England and 360,000 copies in the United States in its first year alone (Rodden and Rossi 85). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* tells the story of Winston Smith, a citizen of Oceania living under the totalitarian rule of a government called Ingsoc in the year 1984. According to John Rodden and John Rossi, at the time of publication it caught the public's attention because it reflected and rendered visible certain aspects of their and Orwell's contemporary time and projected these into a near future situation (84). The aspects Orwell addressed with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* spoke to an underlying feeling of concern for the way in which society was developing during and after the World War years, and the role humanity played in it. The loss of historical objectivity, the management of facts, the corruption of language, the power of the state, and the mistreatment of human beings are central tenets of Orwell's novel.

This research specifically focuses on how Orwell addresses the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. With regards to manipulation, this research focuses on the manipulation of memory, history, and language. What is important, however, is to first locate *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in its contemporary situation and to discuss how this is reflected within the novel. As I stated in the introduction, literature inhabits a critical, complex position within the world it exists in. To understand how Orwell addresses the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control, it is important to understand the worldliness of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* first.

### 1.1 Years of War and Terror

Born as Eric Arthur Blair in 1903, George Orwell spent the larger part of his adult life in a world occupied by wars. His two most famous works, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-*

*Four*, are in essence responses to the vagaries of his eventful life. In the summer of 1936, Spain democratically elected a left-wing government which abolished the monarchy and took away much of the church's power. This resulted in the Spanish military, led by General Francisco Franco, invading Spain from North Africa. In this Spanish Civil War, Republicans fought the Nationalists. Stanley Payne explains that "the Spanish Civil War was the most important political and military struggle in Europe during the decade prior to World War II. It not only polarized Spain but produced an intense reaction among millions all over Europe and the Americas" (1). The reason for this was that the Spanish Civil War was seen as a dress rehearsal for the Second World War. Payne states how "the war was given many names" including, "fascism versus democracy, the people versus the oligarchy," but also "Western civilization against communism" (1) because it reflected "all the tensions, hatreds and ideologies" (4) found on the European continent at that time. These chasms in European politics resulted in the Nationalist forces receiving, among other things, munition, soldiers, and air support from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, whilst the Republican forces received support from the USSR and Mexico. According to Stephen Ingle, the civil war also "prompted socialists and communists in the West to support the Republicans in a variety of ways, chiefly by joining the International Brigade," with many in Britain deciding to join because they saw it as the "first skirmish in the coming war against fascism" (47).

One of these Britons was George Orwell. He set out for Spain at the end of December in 1936. According to Ingle, he told Labour MP Fenner Brockway that all he wanted "was to have a 'whack' at Franco" (48). He joined the group POUM, which had affinities with both Trotskyism and anarchism. Ingle explains how Orwell "was in the trenches for more than three months, seeing action on many occasions," and even got "shot through the throat by a sniper" (48). Whilst he was waiting for his discharge, however, POUM was disarmed and its

members arrested by the communist-dominated police, because they “saw the revolutionary POUM as nothing more than an instrument of fascism” (49).<sup>2</sup>

Orwell escaped prosecution and returned home to England. Here, however, Orwell found that the civil war “was distorted in the British press to serve the interests of pro-communist forces” (Rodden and Rossi 81). In his essay “Looking back on the Spanish War,” Orwell states:

I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely denounced as cowards and traitors, and others who had never seen a shot fired hailed as the heroes of imaginary victories, and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened. I saw, in fact, history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various ‘party lines’. (“Looking”)

Returning back to England was a pivotal time for Orwell. He became a witness to the manipulation of facts and history which installed in him the feeling that history as he knew it might not continue to exist in the future. Orwell wrote about this fear that “the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world” and that the lies perpetuated by propaganda on both sides would pass into history as fact (“Looking”).

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<sup>2</sup> As the Spanish Civil War progressed, the communist Republicans aligned themselves with Stalinist beliefs, whilst POUM became fiercely anti-Stalinist. This caused immense hostility to develop between the two groups who were supposed to fight on the same side. This eventually resulted in the disarmament and arrest of POUM as the communists accused them of siding with the Nationalist fascists. See Victor Alba and Stephen Schwartz’s *Spanish Marxism versus Soviet Communism* for more information on this subject.

Orwell's fear clearly configures within *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The narrative is engaged with the idea of the loss of historical objectivity. Winston explains how it is one of the "sacred principles of Ingsoc [...] the mutability of the past" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 28). When reflecting on wartime himself, Winston states that it is impossible "to trace out the history of the whole period, to say who was fighting whom at any given moment," (Orwell, *Nineteen* 36) because the past "had not merely been altered, it had been actually destroyed" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 38). The destruction of the past is possible because "the Party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, *it never happened* [...]" 'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.'" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 37).

In the years leading up to the Second World War, Orwell therefore turned his writing into political writing. According to Ingle, during this period Orwell focused "his mind to analysing the nature of totalitarianism" (51). Orwell himself wrote that "the Spanish war and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism" (*Why I Write* 8). This was because Orwell saw totalitarianism as a force of unimaginable brutality, and it was growing in power on the European continent under the rule of Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler.

When the Second World War began Orwell was rejected for active service and resided in London during the war years. Wartime London clearly figures as Orwell's inspiration for Airstrip One in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston comments on the grimy landscape of "rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron [...]" and the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willow herb straggled over the heaps of rubble" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 5). The description can be seen as a logical extension of

London's cityscape during World War II, which was severely bombed and damaged by Nazi Germany (Rodden and Rossi 82).

Besides wartime London, Orwell drew inspiration from the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the Bolshevik USSR. These political regimes and their ideology coloured the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. According to Rodden and Rossi, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is in essence a novel that shows its readers "what the modern trend toward totalitarianism would look like in the future" (80). The question of totalitarian control will be dealt with in the second part of this chapter, but I felt it was pertinent to note that this political ideology was the main reason for Orwell to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The novel is an indictment of Stalinism, Nazism, fascism, and totalitarianism. The dominance of these ideologies during Orwell's lifetime determined the predominance of politics in his writing.

Another contemporary situation of Orwell's that had a significant influence on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was the Tehran Conference of 1943. This was the first meeting of the so-called "Big Three" allied leaders: Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill. The three allied leaders at this conference made the unwritten assumption that Europe would be divided into spheres of influence in which US-Britain and the USSR would have different areas under their control with unrestricted rights. Although this was not an official agreement, Albert Resis states that by making this assumption, the Big Three found a "certain way to split the world into a hostile coalition" (417). For Orwell, these spheres of influence formed a threat to civilisation and humanity as a whole, and thus inspired the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Such spheres would mean that large groups of people would be under the rule of a leader or a select few individuals. This becomes dangerous when combined with the idea of totalitarian rule. As Hannah Arendt explains, "the totalitarian movements depend on the sheer force of numbers to such an extent that totalitarian regimes seem impossible, even under

otherwise favourable circumstances, in countries with relatively small populations,”(403) because those relatively smaller countries “simply did not control enough human material to allow for total domination and its inherent great losses in population” (405-6). Spheres of influence with an endless supply of human lives thus make it much easier for a totalitarian regime to fully develop, with all the political and social consequences that that entails. There would be enough people to feed “the power-accumulation and man-destroying machinery of total domination” (Arendt 407). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* these spheres of influence are transformed into the three superstates: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. Orwell describes how “the splitting-up of the world into three great superstates was an event which could be and indeed was foreseen before the middle of the twentieth century” (*Nineteen* 192-93). Here, the influence of the Tehran Conference becomes clear.

All of the above-mentioned features of Orwell’s contemporary situation make up the worldliness of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This allows the novel to inhabit a critical and complex position from which it regards the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. The following section is dedicated to the analysis and argumentation of how Orwell delineates these questions.

## 1.2 Oceania: A Totalitarian Utopia

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the questions of surveillance and manipulation grow out of the question of totalitarian control. For Orwell, the former two are aspects of a totalitarian society that are necessary for its operation and survival. This research shall therefore discuss how and in what way Orwell tackles the question of totalitarian control first and out of this will grow the discussion of the other two points.

As stated previously, everything Orwell has written since 1936 “has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism” (*Why I Write* 8). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a product of Orwell’s struggle to showcase the totalitarian enigma which he saw present in the

European continent. It is therefore important to first establish what totalitarian control entails.

According to Michael Halberstam, totalitarian control:

eradicates human freedom in all its dimensions. It categorically denies its subjects their right to self-determination. It seeks the total, unconditional control of a disenfranchised population. The totalitarian society is ruled by force, not by consent. Totalitarianism eradicates political freedom, democratic process and legality as such, by setting up the daily pronouncements of the ruler and the party as an omnipotent force with unchecked powers to exercise control over the institutions of the state. (39)

Based on this ideology of totalitarianism, Orwell chose to highlight and intensify certain aspects of totalitarian control with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in his effort to render them visible and to critically reflect upon them. These aspects include the leader, the infallibility of the leader and the Party, the usage of terror, and the abolishment of individuality.

To begin with the first, the leader of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is introduced to the reader on the very first page. As Winston is walking up the stairs to his home in the Victory Mansions, he sees a poster on every floor across from the elevator. The posters have “an enormous face, more than a metre wide” plastered on them, which is “the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features.” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 3). Winston has the feeling that “the eyes follow you about when you move” and underneath the large face there is a caption that reads “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 3). Big Brother is the leader of the Ingsoc party which rules Oceania and is featured on posters all over London that run the same caption. Based on his physical description and the contemporary situation in which *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written, it is believed that Big Brother is a representation of Stalin (Rodden and Rossi 85). Big Brother in this sense can be seen as an indictment of Stalin himself as a leader and of his Bolshevist party.

With *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell rendered visible the problematic features of totalitarian leadership. Big Brother, like Stalin in the USSR, plays a central role in Oceania's government. He is "at the apex of the pyramid" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 216) and he forms "the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 217). Big Brother is both the leader of Ingsoc and embodies Ingsoc itself. It is questioned in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* whether Big Brother actually exists, but the reader is told that it "is of no importance" since Big Brother is "the embodiment of the Party" and he will therefore never die (Orwell 272). In the same sense, as Arendt explains, the leader of a totalitarian regime is "the simple consequence of this type of organisation; he is needed, not as a person, but as a function, and as such he is indispensable to the movement" (506). Moreover, Arendt states that the leader is a representative of the movement and he therefore "claims personal responsibility for every action, deed, or misdeed, committed by any member or functionary in his official capacity" (490). Orwell mirrors this statement almost perfectly and writes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* how "every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from [Big Brother's] leadership and inspiration" (216). Citizens of Oceania are made to believe that their lives improve every year and that this is all due to the care and leadership of Big Brother.

Of course, the reality is different, but Arendt explains that the leader in a totalitarian regime "cannot tolerate criticism [...] a mistake can only be a fraud: the impersonation of the Leader by an imposter" (490). Orwell takes this one step further in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Mistakes made by Big Brother are not acknowledged since they do not exist at all. Big Brother and the Party are the source of all good things and only good things. This is possible because the mistakes that are made by Big Brother are corrected. That is the purpose of Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth, "to rectify" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 41) any statements



made by Big Brother in the past that do not reflect the current situation. Winston rectifies past statements of Big Brother by rewriting speeches “in such a way as to make [Big Brother] predict the thing that has actually happened” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 41). This is because “leaders in power have one concern which overrules all utilitarian considerations: to make their predictions come true” (Arendt 456).

This comes down to the infallibility of Big Brother and the Party. As Arendt explains, “the chief qualification of a mass leader has become unending infallibility” (456). The society which Orwell presents to the reader in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ultimately rests “on the belief that Big Brother is omnipotent and that the party is infallible” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 221). The infallibility of Big Brother and the Party is only possible because of the very reason that Big Brother is omnipotent. There are no other parties, sources or facts that can discredit them. Arendt explains that only in a world completely under the control of a totalitarian leader can he “realise all his lies and make true all his prophecies” because “fact depends entirely on the power of man who can fabricate it” (458). All of Big Brother’s predictions will come true because he utters them. As a leader, Big Brother has monopolized all knowledge and thereby has obtained the power to always be right, in the past, in the present, and in the future (Arendt 501).

At the time in which Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* this had not yet become fully possible, because such totalitarian regimes as the Nazis and the Bolsheviks found opposition in the scepticism of the West. However, Orwell found that the trend towards the infallibility of regimes became more prominent in Europe with the falsification of facts in newspapers about the Spanish War. Stalin, in the same vein, was known for altering reality to fit his totalitarian ideology<sup>3</sup>. Orwell’s portrayal of Big Brother and the Party as infallible and

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<sup>3</sup> This will be discussed more in-depth in the section dedicated to the manipulation of history and memory in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

omnipotent thus demonstrates how far ideologically inspired lying can go and showcases the critical mindset with which *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written.

Orwell also highlighted the aspect of terror that is utilized by totalitarian regimes. According to Halberstam, “the success of the leadership [of a totalitarian regime] depends largely on their ability to recognize, manipulate, and keep alive the circumstances that have brought them to power” which means that “once the totalitarian regime has established itself, provocation is replaced by constant terror” (172). Terror is therefore of an utmost importance to the survival of totalitarian control. Orwell recognised this and placed Oceania and its citizens in a permanent reign of terror carried out by the Party. The first aspect of this reign of terror is the perpetual war in which Oceania finds itself. The effect of this war is twofold in its support of terror.

First, the reader learns from Goldstein’s book that war in Oceania “is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects, and the object of the war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society in tact” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 207) by using up “the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 196). Second, it has resulted in the full acceptance of war-related terror. Orwell describes how “such acts as raping, looting, the slaughter of children, the reduction of whole populations to slavery, and reprisals against prisoners which extend even to boiling and burying alive, are looked upon as normal” (Nineteen 193). This logic extends itself to Winston as well, who, when a bomb falls nearby, kicks a severed hand from a victim into the gutter and walks on as if nothing strange had just happened (Orwell, *Nineteen* 88). Both of these effects ensure that terror becomes a normal and accepted part of life from which most citizens will not seek to be freed. This automatically extends itself to totalitarian control, and Orwell showcases how war-related terror ensures the subjugation of Oceania’s citizens.

Moreover, society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* also exhibits the terror of “endless purges, arrests, tortures, imprisonments and vaporizations” (Orwell 220). These tactics are used by the Party because terror weakens the ability of individuals to establish themselves within the world by continuously dislodging them from their relationships to society and each other (Halberstam 172). Subversion thereby becomes impossible because there is no moment of rest during which individuals could concoct plans or establish relationships to undermine the totalitarian regime.

To the Party, terror is a means to assert power over its subjects. When O’Brien asks Winston how one man asserts his power over another, Winston answers with: “By making him suffer” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 279). This is because the Party views obedience as not being enough, for “unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own?” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 279). The world Ingsoc is trying to create is a world “of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but *more* merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 279). From this idea Orwell created a picture of the future: “A boot stamping on a human face – for ever” (*Nineteen* 28). O’Brien explains that everything Winston has undergone in his life will never cease, the Party will never stop with “the espionage, the betrayals, the arrests, the tortures, the executions, the disappearances,” in other words, the world will always “be a world of terror” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 280-81). This is necessary for totalitarian control to survive and thrive.

The fourth, and final aspect Orwell critically reflected upon with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in relation to totalitarian control is the abolishment of individuality. According to Arendt, totalitarian regimes are “mass organisations of atomised, isolated individuals,” with their central, conspicuous characteristic being “their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member” (423). This unconditional

loyalty of the individual member automatically results in the abolishment of their individuality. They are the Party, and the Party is them. This is because the totalitarian regime, as stated by Halberstam, has as its very essence the will to “establish total control over every individual, in order to impose its single-minded truth on the world. Totalitarianism has no regard for individual freedom whatsoever,” and can therefore be said to not even “properly recognize individual human beings” (40). Individuality does not coincide with totalitarian control, because it requires the full and utter surrender of the individual to the regime. This level of loyalty also has as its logical consequence that a person cannot be connected to anything else besides the regime. Loyalty, as required by totalitarianism, requires the individual to be completely isolated from other aspects of life, such as family and friends, which ensures that he or she only derives meaning from his association to the totalitarian system (Arendt 424).

Orwell recognised this abolishment of individuality and complete loyalty as a prerequisite for totalitarian control as well. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the entire conflict of the plot is based on this assumption. The first reference to individualism is made in chapter 8 by Winston who comments on the danger of individualism: “To do anything that suggested a taste for solitude, even to go for a walk by yourself, was always slightly dangerous. There was a word for it in Newspeak: *ownlife*, it was called, meaning individualism and eccentricity” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 85). Moreover, the value Winston sees in the proles is also based on the assumption of their individuality and loyalty to each other. Winston states how “they were not loyal to any party or a country or an idea, they were loyal to one another” which to Winston means that they “had stayed human” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 172). Most important, however, is the fact that Winston’s rebellion with Julia through the act of loving each other is an expression of individualism and thereby an expression of defiance of the Party and Big Brother. This is because their love for each other automatically eradicates their

loyalty to the Party. O'Brien recognizes this danger, for the power of the Party rests upon the idea that "power is collective" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 276) and this power cannot exist when the collective enjoys individualism. The only way to therefore bring Winston and Julia back into the collective is by having them betray each other's love. O'Brien eventually succeeds in this and Winston in the end "loved Big Brother" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 311) and had utterly abolished his individualism.

As stated previously, the other two questions of surveillance and manipulation grow out of the question of totalitarian control. For Orwell, both of these were necessary components of totalitarianism; Ingsoc would not have thrived and survived without them. To begin with the first, surveillance is the first and foremost enabler of Oceania's totalitarian regime. Orwell regards surveillance in its relationship to power and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is his critical reflection on this debate. It grew out of his need to showcase the dangers of the development during his time of technology with regard to state surveillance. Social surveillance, social monitoring, state incentives to spy on fellow countrymen, and the usage of agent and undercover work were all important aspects of the totalitarian Nazi and Bolshevik regimes. By reflecting on these principles with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell rendered visible the dangers that could be found within this type of governmental monitoring.<sup>4</sup>

Surveillance in Orwell's novel is not so much of a contemporary, modern essence. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* made no conception of globalisation, the computer, the tracking of people and their behaviour through the internet, the mining of personal data, and the role of

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<sup>4</sup> Even though Orwell does not reflect on the question of surveillance from a contemporary, modern sense, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s portrayal of surveillance still influences our understanding of the dangers behind state-wide surveillance programmes even today. The salience and cultural impact of Orwell's novel is visible, for example, in the continued usage of the term "Big Brother" in surveillance, political, and criminology studies.

large, capitalistic corporations. According to Karin Bauer and Andrea Gogroß, surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is of the panoptic principle, echoing Michel Foucault's term, and centres on the idea of "surveillance as a means to create a 'disciplinary society' controlled and maintained by the omniscient eye of the Orwellian Big Brother" (354).

Foucault, in his book *Discipline and Punish*, talks about the idea of panopticism in relation to surveillance and discipline. He uses Jeremy Bentham's design of the panopticon, in which a single watchtower within a prison has the ability to view and surveil all prisoners, to showcase that people will self-discipline due to the pressure and inability to know when exactly they are being watched. Foucault states that "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-03). The panopticon, in other words, induces "in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 201), it makes it possible "to perfect the exercise of power" (Foucault 206).

Although Foucault's theory of panopticism was written quite a while after Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the tendencies of panopticism were visible much longer historically. Society in Oceania is a perfect example of panopticism used as a state-wide surveillance programme in order to control all social aspects of life. This is done mainly through the use of the telescreens. These oblong metal plaques that look like dulled mirrors are installed in every house – with the exception of some proles' houses – every public place, and every workspace. Winston describes how the telescreen "received and transmitted simultaneously" and any sound he made "above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 4). At the same time, Winston explains that "so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as

well as heard” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 4). As with the idea of the panopticon, the telescreen gave no way of knowing “whether you were being watched at any given moment” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 4-5). This results in the idea that “you had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 5). Citizens of Oceania in this manner self-discipline themselves out of fear for the punishment that would ensue from not obeying the social norms set up by Ingsoc and maintained through their extensive surveillance.

As Orwell states in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, “private life came to an end” (214) with the technological advancement of the telescreen. The telescreen not only made possible the enforcing “of complete obedience to the will of the State, but complete uniformity of opinion on all subjects” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 214). In this way, every behaviour is disciplined through conforming to state lines. The telescreen, in the words of Foucault, is “the perfect disciplinary apparatus” because it makes “it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly” (173). Orwell, however, goes even further than the telescreen and explains that one of the Party’s ultimate goals is “to extinguish once and for all the possibility of independent thought” and aims to do this by developing a type of surveillance which discovers “what another human being is thinking” (*Nineteen* 201). Surveillance in this sense would constitute the ultimate form of discipline.

The last aspect this research considers in relation to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the question of manipulation. Concerning this question, this research focuses on the manipulation of memory, history, and language. In his essay “Looking back on the Spanish War” Orwell writes how Nazi theory “specifically denies that such a thing as ‘the truth’ exists” and to him “this line of thought is a nightmare world in which the Leader, or some ruling clique, controls not only the future but the past.” Orwell realised that in this scenario if “the Leader says of

such and such an event, 'It never happened' – well, it never happened. If he says that two and two are five – well, two and two are five." This prospect frightened Orwell "more than bombs" and he concluded that this fear, based on his experiences of the past years, "is not a frivolous statement." Besides the Nazi regime, Stalin's Bolshevik regime was also known for altering the truth and by extension also memory. Some examples include his rewriting of the history of the Russian Revolution which, according to Arendt, destroyed "together with the older books and documents, their authors and readers" (447) and his removing from memory key figures of the revolution, such as Trotsky and Bukharin, who were "simply airbrushed out of photographs" (Rodden and Rossi 82) and therefore made to look as if they never existed. These instances of manipulation by totalitarian regimes informed Orwell's writing of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* greatly.

According to Aleida Assmann, memory as we understand it does not exist in totalitarian states due to the fact that "every scrap that is left over from the past has to be changed or eliminated because an authentic piece of evidence has the power to crush the official version of the past on which the rulers base their power" (105). Assmann continues to state that this effort is necessary "for the protection of the state because an independent reference to the past can trigger a counter-history that challenges the totalitarian version of the past and undermines the state" (105). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* this effort is carried out by the Ministry of Truth which concerns itself with the "day-to-day falsification of the past" (Orwell 222). Orwell states that this is necessary for two reasons, the first being that "the Party member, like the proletarian, tolerates present-day conditions partly because he has no standards of comparison," and the second being "the need to safeguard the infallibility of the Party" (*Nineteen* 221). In other words, it is "necessary to the stability of the regime" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 222).



The manipulation of memory and history in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a simple enough process, because there exists no counter-memory. Orwell writes how the past has no objective existence, memory and history “survive only in written records and in human memories” and because “the Party is in full control of all records and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it” (*Nineteen* 222). The control of minds is exercised through the mental technique of doublethink, which is “the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 223). Because the manipulation of one’s memory is equally as important as the manipulation of history through documents, doublethink “lies at the very heart of Ingsoc” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 223). It is because of doublethink “that the Party has been able [...] to arrest the course of history” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 223). Since doublethink is exercised by the majority of the population, the collective, cultural memory is always what the Party dictates. Cultural memory here refers to “the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (Assmann and Czaplicka 130). It is, according to Agnes Heller, simultaneously “identity constructing and identity maintaining” (139). The individual in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* therefore has no power in relation to memory and history, because the cultural memory aligns to the Party’s narrative. It constructs and maintains Ingsoc’s identity.

As O’Brien explains to Winston, “reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind [...] only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth” (Orwell 261). Memory and history are altered endlessly in this way in order to fit the reality of the totalitarian regime. Winston’s futile attempt to escape Ingsoc’s cultural memory occurs through the object of the paperweight. He cherishes it and explains to Julia that “it’s a little chunk of history that [the Party has] forgotten to alter” (Orwell, *Nineteen* 152). Winston thinks the same about the

room over Mr Charrington's shop, it was "a world, a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 157). However, both do nothing more than exist. Winston is unable to grasp any meaning or truth from them and in the end, both betray him. The room turns out to be under the surveillance of the Thought Police and the paperweight is smashed on the hearth-stone, with the pieces being picked up by the Thought Police.

"Fitting hand in glove with doublethink," (103) according to Ingle, is the third form of manipulation that plays an important role in Oceania's society: the manipulation of language. Orwell wrote in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that "even in the early decades of the twentieth century, telescoped words and phrases had been one of the characteristic features of political language" and language as such "was most marked in totalitarian countries and totalitarian organisations" (320). Orwell saw how the Nazi and Bolshevik regimes manipulated language<sup>5</sup>, and, by extension, applied it to his own world in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Out of this was born the idea of Newspeak. Newspeak entails the transformation of English, or Oldspeak, into a hybrid language compressed and constricted in form, meaning and vocabulary. Orwell writes that "the purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible" (*Nineteen* 312). Language in this way aligns with the Party's narrative, because it prevents citizens from a heretical thought – thoughtcrime – that diverges from the principles of Ingsoc. Winston's 'friend' Syme who is engaged in compiling the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak Dictionary explains that "the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought" which makes "thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 55). Syme even goes as far as to suggest that there "will be no thought" (Orwell, *Nineteen*

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<sup>5</sup> See for a more in-depth discussion on this topic John Wesley Young's *Totalitarian Language* or Victor Klemperer's *LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*.

56). Ultimately, Newspeak would ensure that there is no ability to express any deviating thoughts and because people cannot think differently than the Party they will feel no need to think at all since the Party thinks for them. To be able to manipulate language in this way, the Party is in essence able to manipulate power itself and can therefore ensure to stay in power for ever. Orwell recognised these “relationships among vocabulary, beliefs and actions” (Ingle 99) and critically reflected upon them with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

What this chapter has attempted to show was Orwell’s ability to analyse and critically reflect on his present times in view of the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. Orwell showcased most clearly the danger that lies hidden underneath the ideology of totalitarianism. Europe, during and after his time, had only seen a glimpse of what a totalitarian regime was capable of, and even in that quantity it produced some of our world’s darkest historical periods. With *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell did not so much try to predict a future, but rather render visible aspects of his contemporary time that could lead to the development of a totalitarian regime like Ingsoc. Orwell himself stated after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that he did not believe “the kind of society I have described [in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*] necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe that something resembling it *could* arrive” (qtd. In Marks 62). More than anything, his novel serves as a warning issued to his fellow countrymen to not stand idly by while oppressive and malicious regimes like that of the Nazi’s and Stalin’s Bolsheviks oppress people and manipulate history.

## Chapter 2: Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel*

Joyce Carol Oates is an American writer who has, since her first publication in 1963, published over 50 novels, numerous plays, and many volumes of short stories, poetry, and essays. She is known as one of America's most prolific writers and was very early on recognised as "a major new voice in American fiction" (Johnson 3). The majority of her work, with a few exceptions, have as their setting the United States of America and centre around individuals who have strong relationships to their surroundings. According to Greg Johnson, this is because Oates has an "overwhelming fascination with the phenomenon of contemporary America: its colliding social and economic forces, its philosophical contradictions, its waywar, often violent energies," which has resulted in Oates portraying an America "in which individual lives are frequently subject to disorder, dislocation and extreme psychological turmoil" (8).

This is no different for one of her latest novels: *Hazards of Time Travel*. Published in 2018, *Hazards of Time Travel* is Oates's first dystopian novel and deals with a very near future world – around 2024 – in which democracy as we know it has ceased to exist and has been replaced by a sham democracy that functions as a totalitarian regime. In this world, the United States, Mexico and Canada have been merged together to create the North American States (NAS) and a new calendar year has been adopted that finds its starting point on the day of the 9/11 attacks. Citizens in the NAS<sup>6</sup> live under strict surveillance and control, free speech does not exist and having subversive thoughts is almost as dangerous as uttering them. Citizens are put into categories depending on their SkinTone (ST) and have jobs and statuses accordingly.

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<sup>6</sup> The acronym NAS can also be considered to be an anagram of NSA, America's National Security Agency, which has been proven by Edward Snowden to use extensive measures of surveillance.

*Hazards of Time Travel* follows 17-year-old protagonist Adriane Strohl, who, in her valedictorian speech, decides to ask twelve questions she has never learned the answer to during class. Since this is seen as treasonous and as questioning authority, Adriane gets arrested. The government decides she is guilty of treason and designates Adriane as an Exiled Individual (EI). This results in her being transported through time to Zone 9 in Wisconsin in 1959. Here she is to attend university under a new name, Mary Ellen Enright, and is only left with a list of rules to follow and a microchip embedded in her brain to manipulate her memory. The final warning she is left with is if she decides to rebel again she will be vaporized (e.g. killed).

At university, she is plagued by the constant threat of vaporization – i.e. being killed by the NAS government – and the manipulation of the chip in her brain. She finds out that one of her professors, Ira Wolfman, is also an EI from the NAS who was exiled a long time ago and she tries desperately to form a bond with him. Ira convinces her to flee with him, by hiking through the forest surrounding the campus. But after a few days they find themselves back on campus. Ira has a mental breakdown and as Adriane tries to calm him down, a laser is shot from a flying object above them and vaporises Ira and mortally wounds Adriane. She wakes up in hospital, having no recollection whatsoever of her life in the NAS, thinking she is truly Mary Ellen Enright, and remembering just small parts of her life in 1959 Wisconsin. The novel ends with her becoming docile: she ends up marrying an art teacher and dedicates her life to being a mother and housewife.

As stated earlier, Oates showcases with her fiction a fascination for contemporary America which is played out by her characters undergoing strong psychological terror. Johnson explains that because of this, Oates is able to “relate the intense private experiences of her characters to the larger realities of American life” (8). *Hazards of Time Travel* follows this formula too and subjects the character of Adriane to extreme psychological turmoil as a

way to address political and social aspects found both in the political context of the United States in 2018 and in that of the government of the NAS. Part of these aspects are the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control, and this chapter discusses how and in what manner Oates regards these questions with her novel.

As with the previous chapter on Orwell, it is important to first locate *Hazards of Time Travel* in its contemporary situation and see how this is reflected within the novel. To discuss the worldliness of the novel is important, because it allows us to understand how Oates comments on the intricate socio-political landscape of the United States in the twenty-first century.

### 2.1. A New America

On Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup>, at 8:46 am a plane crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City. 18 minutes after the first plane hit, a second plane crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Centre and 57 minutes after being struck the south tower collapsed. At 10:28 am the north tower followed suit. During this time, two other planes were hijacked as well, one finding its target in the Pentagon and the other crashing before it could hit its unknown target. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 killed more than 2900 people and left more than 6000 injured for life. According to the National Commission of Terrorist Attacks, a foreign aggression on the scale of 9/11 “had not been carried out anywhere in the world in more than 30 years, and never in the United States” (qtd. In Hillstrom 30). It was the first attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor and of a scale previously unknown to the powerhouse that is America. Taken together with the unexpectedness of 9/11, this meant that the attacks caused a certain shift in the socio-political landscape of America. One of these shifts was in the rights of American citizens. September 11 had as its direct consequence the adoption by the Bush administration of new antiterrorism

measures in the form of congressional acts which significantly impacted the political rights of U.S. persons. According to Mark Sidel, “the rapid adoption of antiterrorism measure – often without sufficient congressional review – actually began within days of the September 11 tragedy” (9).

The most famous of these is the U.S.A. Patriot Act of 2001. According to Sidel, the Patriot Act “provided the executive branch with an expanded menu of authority to act against various forms of crime and terrorism” but in actuality was not a proposal in response to terrorism, but rather “to the use of rapidly expanding new technologies such as cell phones and e-mail” (10). Sidel explains that the political environment provided the Bush administration with the perfect opportunity for congressional adoption, which ensured that the Patriot Act was accepted by Congress without much debate or review (10). The Patriot Act allowed the U.S. government to carry out secret searches of houses without informing the owner, permitted law enforcement authorities to obtain personal records from third party holders without notifying the target, lowered the legal barrier for wiretapping and the usage of foreign intelligence, and enlarged the power of the CIA and the FBI (cf. Sidel 12-16). Moreover, the Patriot Act paved the way for other surveillance mechanisms to be developed such as the TIA programme, TIPS, CAPPs II, the Eagle Eyes programme, the MATRIX, and a draft for the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003.<sup>7</sup>

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, America’s premier defender of the rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, the Patriot Act “amounted to an overnight revision

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<sup>7</sup> TIA stands for Total Information Awareness; TIPS stands for Terrorism Information and Prevention System; CAPPs II stands for the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System II; MATRIX stands for the Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange Program. All of these programmes, including the Eagle Eyes and Domestic Security Enhancement Act, are forms of surveillance mechanisms through which the U.S. government is able to collect large amounts of data on civilians inside and outside the U.S.

of the nation's surveillance laws that vastly expanded the government's authority to spy on its own citizens, while simultaneously reducing checks and balances on those powers" ("End Mass Surveillance"). The dangers of these powers became known when whistle-blower Edward Snowden revealed in 2013 the extent to which surveillance programmes under the Patriot Act gathered information about national and foreign peoples. According to Bauer and Gogroff, what people learned was that "governments practice secret surveillance on their own citizens, thereby violating democratic principles established precisely as recourse against the excesses of power" (353). In reply to the national and international outcry about Snowden's revelation, the U.S. government adopted the Freedom Act in 2015, which is seen as an effort to enact surveillance reform, but which, according to critics and the ACLU, does not go nearly far enough ("End Mass Surveillance").

This specific socio-political environment that was created as a result of the 9/11 attacks, plays an important role in Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel*. As explained earlier, the North American States started their new calendar year after the September 11 attacks and Oates writes how the NAS "came into being some years after the Great Terrorist Attacks," and were "a direct consequence of the Attacks" (31). This was due to the fact that the attacks created an environment suitable for the development of a totalitarian regime. Oates explains how the NAS was born out of an "Interlude of Indecisiveness during which time issues of 'rights' (the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, Civil Rights law, etc.) vs. the need for Patriot Vigilance in the War Against Terror were contested," with the latter winning "after the suspension of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by executive order" (31-32). Here it becomes evident that Oates, with *Hazards of Time Travel*, reflects the general political uncertainty that existed straight after the 9/11 attacks of which the Bush administration took advantage to push the Patriot Act through. However, Oates takes it further than the Bush administration did. *Hazards of Time Travel* showcases how uncertain socio-political times



form the perfect base for unlimited and unchecked power to grow. As a result of the September 11 attacks, the government of the NAS was able to establish its totalitarian regime. By situating her novel in the political landscape of post-9/11 America, Oates showcases that the development of powerful regimes is not limited to the past but can very well happen in our current socio-political climate.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 also allowed for the Bush administration to rapidly develop unprecedented surveillance techniques through digital technology. In a similar vein, the government of the NAS in *Hazards of Time Travel* relies heavily on surveillance techniques to maintain their power by monitoring their citizens. The question of surveillance will be dealt with in more detail in the second part of this chapter, but I felt it was important to note that the usage of surveillance in Oates's novel stands in direct relation to the September 11 attacks and is a tool used extensively by the NAS government. By rendering visible the danger that lies behind a government's rapid adoption of something like the Patriot Act, Oates shows how irresponsible usage of surveillance can be disastrous for individual freedom and potentially lead to totalitarian control.

Another contemporary situation of Oates' that had a significant influence on the writing of *Hazards of Time Travel* was the ascendance to power of president Donald Trump. Oates herself tweeted that if the novel had been published before 2016, *Hazards of Time Travel* "would seem like dystopian future / sci-fi [novel]," however, because Donald Trump became president in 2016, Oates now rather regards her novel as "a just slightly distorted mirroring of actual [...] US sliding [...] into totalitarianism & white apartheid" (@JoyceCarolOates). The socio-political environment which the Trump administration created during and after the 2016 election thus plays an important role in the way in which Oates depicts society in *Hazards of Time Travel*.

According to Christian Fuchs, “Donald Trump’s presidency is the most powerful expression of the rise of right-wing populism” (29) and his government is by some critics believed to display fascist tendencies. One of those critics is Robert O. Paxton who argues that Trump, on a superficial level, “seems to have borrowed a number of fascist themes for his presidential campaign: xenophobia, racial prejudice, fear of national weakness and decline, aggressiveness in foreign policy, a readiness to suspend the rule of law to deal with supposed emergencies [... and a] mastery of crowds,” but explains that these are just qualities “derivative of fascist themes and styles; the underlying ideological substance is very different” (qtd. In Fuchs 31-32). Leaving the discussion of whether Trump is a true Fascist or not aside, the themes deployed by him during his presidency are strongly reflected in *Hazards of Time Travel*.

As explained previously, in the novel the population is divided up into SkinTone categories, ranging from ST1 to ST10: ST1 being Caucasian and having the highest rank, going all the way down to dark black ST10 having the lowest rank. This way of dividing up society mirrors the racial prejudice expressed by Trump in America today.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the concept of history in the NAS is designated as Patriot Democracy History and is only concerned with the NAS’s triumphs against the “numerous Terrorist Enemies in other parts of the world” which are called “Wars of Freedom [...] all of which our country had won” (Oates 32-33). Trump, in a similar fashion, is known for his indisputable patriotism and his strong focus on “winning”, which translates to his fear of national weakness and decline.

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<sup>8</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of Donald Trump’s racial prejudice over the years, see Peter Baker et al.’s “Trump Employs an Old Tactic: Using Race for Gain” in *The New York Times* from July 20, 2019. More recent examples of Trump’s racial prejudice can also be found in his handling of the Black Lives Matter protests as a result of the murder of George Floyd (see: Sofia Lotto Persio’s “Trump Declares War On America: Europe Reacts As Black Lives Matter Protests Spread Across Continent” in *Forbes* on June 2, 2020).

Additionally, the Trump administration presents strong xenophobic feelings with regards to such groups of people as refugees, Muslims and the Chinese, and they practice an aggressive foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> All of these are mirrored in Oates's idea of having Terrorist Enemies against which Wars of Freedom are waged. *Hazards of Time Travel* also discusses how the president of the NAS is no longer the product of a democratic two-party system. Oates writes how "there was just the Patriot Party, funded by the NAS's wealthiest individuals, which appointed all political leaders" (103), and she explains that "the general population knew little about [the President] though they were believed to be multi-billionaires [... and] you were conditioned to 'like' them" (171). Trump in the same sense is also from an extremely wealthy class and – despite his severe unpopularity with the left – holds great charisma and has amassed a significant support. Based on the description of the president in *Hazards of Time Travel*, I would argue that Oates builds on the idea of Trump as a president but takes it further. She demonstrates that having a political background does not matter anymore in American politics. Rather, presidents can get chosen on the basis of their wealth and likeability, with Trump forming the perfect example.

As I have shown, both of these contemporary situations have had a large impact on *Hazards of Time Travel* and make up the worldliness of the novel. I argue that both situations allow the novel to inhabit a critical and complex position and render visible aspects of America's socio-political landscape to the reader. These aspects are looked at through the

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<sup>9</sup> The Trump administration's aggressive foreign policy can be found in numerous examples: the famous statement of "America first" illustrates a turn in behaviour from an internationally focused world leader to an isolationist U.S.; the administration's wish to build a wall along the Mexican border; the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership; Trump's continued admonition of NATO; The Trump travel ban; and the withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, just to name a few.

questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control, and the second part of this chapter is dedicated to analysing how *Hazards of Time Travel* accomplishes this.

## 2.2. A Contemporary Totalitarian State

As with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* I believe that the questions of surveillance and manipulation grow out of the question of totalitarian control, since these are instruments used by the NAS regime to exert power and control over their citizens. I will therefore discuss how the question of totalitarian control is presented in *Hazards of Time Travel* first, after which I will go on to the other two questions. Moreover, since the qualities of totalitarian control have been presented in chapter 1, I will not reiterate them in this chapter.

As stated previously, Oates holds a strong fascination for contemporary America. To Oates this is not just any America, but, as Frank R. Cunningham explains, "an America in which, indeed, something has gone 'terribly wrong'" (10). With regard to *Hazards of Time Travel*, the aspect that has gone "terribly wrong" is the political situation. Citizens of the NAS have fallen under the totalitarian control of the Patriot Party and live according to its strict rules and power. Oates has represented this control in her novel in three different ways, namely through continued acts of physical violence, the physical threatening of the individual, and the reference to psychologist B. F. Skinner.

To begin with the first, violence is nothing new to Oates and her fiction. According to Johnson, Oates has often "been accused of using gratuitous or obsessive violence in her work," with Oates herself insisting as a defence "that her violent materials accurately mirror the psychological and social convulsions of our time" (9). This is no different for *Hazards of Time Travel*. The continuous recurrence of violent acts in the novel forms a tool with which Oates renders visible and critically reflects upon the danger of totalitarian control. Violence is important to totalitarian regimes, because systematic violence in large quantities is one of the ways in which a regime can ensure obedience and thereby establish its power. It forms a

mechanism through which governance can be retained, i.e. violence becomes an investment into power. This is not a new concept. Political philosophers Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Jean Bodin (1530-1596) both considered “political violence an instrument for the repression, even extermination, of political enemies” (Mayer 99). This is the functional context within which violence exists for a totalitarian regime and it exists in the same manner in *Hazards of Time Travel*.

The first act of overt physical violence in the novel happens when Adriane is arrested by Homeland Security and gets taken away for questioning. She is subjected to severe interrogation, is tortured with deafening noises and electric shocks, is injected with a truth-serum drug, and eventually is strapped to a chair in front of a camera and several TV screens on which other students can be seen. Oates describes how these “Patriot Scholars had been arrested yesterday afternoon, simultaneous with [Adriane’s] arrest,” in an attempt to crack down on potential subversives (37-38). Adriane is questioned whether she is “a collaborator with these students” or if she was “a co-conspirator” (Oates 38). None confess and Oates writes how a brisk voice informs Adriane “that we had thirty seconds to compose our confessions. At the end of these thirty seconds, if no one had confessed, one Patriot Scholar would be suitably ‘disciplined’ with a Domestic Drone Strike (DDS) – on camera” (39). Again, no one speaks, some cry and Adriane tries to plea with her interrogators after which she sees a blinding flash and one of the boys on her screen “was slammed sideways as if he’d been struck with a laser ray, that entered the side of his head like liquid fire, exploded and devoured his head, and then his torso and lower body, in less than three seconds” (Oates 40). The violent act leaves Adriane shocked and traumatised, and she once again hears a deafening sound after which she faints. In this scene, Oates illustrates how physical violence can be used as a device to extract confessions and to intimidate citizens. This is viewed as a necessary device by the NAS government in order to control and discipline their citizens.

Physical violence in *Hazards of Time Travel* does not stay limited to the dystopian world of the NAS. When Adriane is teletransported through time to Wainscotia State University in 1959, violence follows. Adriane, as Mary Ellen Enright, is in a constant state of terror. Her list of instructions state that if she violates any of the rules it “will insure that the EI will be immediately Deleted” (Oates 4). Throughout the novel, Adriane wonders if the threat is real and is scared of other people being spies who will betray her. She lives in constant fear until Ira Wolfman convinces her to flee with him. But, again, this momentary feeling of freedom ends in violence through the Domestic Drone Strike. Oates describes how, when Ira and Adriane inevitably return to campus, “a small bird, possibly a bat, was circling strangely, as if rabid,” and swoops 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 vapor only a few feet from me” (273). Adriane is hit as well but is not vaporized. She becomes hospitalized, loses all her memories and learns from the doctors that her name is Mary Ellen Enright, and ends up living that role in blissful obedience.

According to Cunningham, Oates often writes about characters that “can be liberated only through accident or random violence,” but states that this “is no true liberation at all” (24). His argument can be extended to Adriane as well. The violent act of the Domestic Drone Strike erases all of her memories of her life in the NAS, making her believe to truly be Mary Ellen Enright. This results in her becoming docile and she subjects herself to the life of a housewife with no true identity of her own. At the end of the novel, Adriane, now as Mary Ellen Enright, derives meaning only from her relationship to her husband Jamie. On one of the last pages she quite literally states: “I think only of Jamie” (Oates 315). I argue that Oates issues a warning with ending the novel in this way, namely, to not let power and totalitarian control suppress individual identity.

This leads me to the second aspect of totalitarian control which Oates depicts with *Hazards of Time Travel*, namely the threatening of the individual. As I argued in chapter 1 in relation to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, totalitarianism is concerned with the abolishment of individuality, of merging the individual into the collective. In Oates's novel, however, a different trend with regard to the individual is evident. There is no collectivism run wild in the totalitarian future of the NAS. Rather, there is a wealthy Patriot Party which rules the social and political sphere through totalitarian control and dominates the individual into coercion and submission. There is no threat of collectivism overwhelming, no abolishment of individuality. Instead, Oates showcases with *Hazards of Time Travel* how twenty-first century totalitarian control can subject the individual to suffering by political oppression and how a lack of reform on the part of the individual results in elimination.

This is evident from both Ira Wolfman and Adriane. Both rebel against the government and are transported to the past in an effort to re-educate them and make them obey. However, Ira and Adriane decide to rebel again, concluding not in the merging of the individual into the collective, but rather in the abolishment of the individual as a whole. Ira is killed and Adriane loses any sense of identity, believing she is truly Mary Ellen Enright. Totalitarian control in this sense is enacted through the physical threat of elimination to the individual, for if the rebelling individual does not exist there is no longer a threat to the power of the regime. Writing in view of totalitarianism as a political concept, Peter Bernholz argues that in a totalitarian regime "individual freedom and human rights are subordinate to supreme values" (427). This is because, as Bernholz explains, each action of an individual which is hindering "or not dutifully promoting, the goals implied by the supreme values must be a severe crime. For it endangers the very ends of the ideological society which are sacrosanct and on which the legitimacy of rulers and the self-understanding of society rests" (428). This logic can be extended to the world of *Hazards of Time Travel* as well. The

physical threatening of the individual is of importance to the Patriot Party to exert totalitarian control and to maintain its value system. If this would not be done, who is to say what would happen to their position at the top of the totalitarian pyramid.

The third and last way in which Oates represents and reflects upon totalitarian control with *Hazards of Time Travel* is through references to B. F. Skinner. An important American radical behaviourist psychologist, Skinner is perhaps most famously known for the operant conditioning chamber, also known as the Skinner Box. In *Hazards of Time Travel* references to Skinner and his radical behaviourist psychology are numerous. The first of these is in the epigraph to the novel, which states: “A self is simply a device for representing a functionally unified system of responses” (Skinner qtd. In Oates). Skinner considered free will to be an illusion, or as Joseph F. Rychlak explains, Skinner “could see no room for freedom in behaviour” since he believed there was “a capacity for control of behaviour” (21). Oates embedded this idea within *Hazards of Time Travel* as a way to critically reflect upon boundlessness of totalitarian control.

In the novel, Adriane, as Mary Ellen Enright, follows a class called Intro to Psychology in which she is taught by Ira Wolfman and professor A. J. Axel in the science of social engineering and behaviourist psychology. Every now and then as the reader follows Adriane along in her classes, small facts about behaviourism are encountered. For example, Oates writes:

It was a behavioral premise that an animal is, essentially, a machine. A human being is an animal and is therefore, essentially, a machine. Individual, group, and mass behaviour can be programmed, conditioned, predicted and controlled. [...] A human being *is* behavior, to be observed and charted by others. (90)

Adriane is disturbed by this way of thinking but realises throughout the novel that the logic of behaviourism pertains to her own situation. She is taught in her classes that any individual



behaves as he does “not because he has chosen to behave in these particular ways, but because his response to stimuli has been sufficiently ‘reinforced’,” which she finds illogical, making her “heart beat in opposition to it” (Oates 140). Eventually, Adriane comes to the conclusion that she had “become one of those lab rats that has been frustrated or frightened or shocked [...] so many times, it has lost its essential, original *ratness* [...] a creature waiting to be defined by the next possible lethal stimulus,” (Oates 193) and she concludes: “Around me, the Skinner box materializes” (Oates 203). Adriane, however, remains opposed to the ideas connected to behaviourism but is ultimately reprogrammed into an obedient subject through the drone strike. In the hands of the totalitarian NAS, the drone strike becomes the ultimate example of controlling behaviour. The strike eradicates any form of rebellion in Adriane and re-programmes her into Mary Ellen Enright. Through incorporation of the logic of Skinner’s radical behaviourism, Oates illustrates how totalitarian control is able to condition an individual into docility and obedience, thereby reflecting on the danger of totalitarian control.

As stated previously, in Oates’s *Hazards of Time Travel* the questions of surveillance and manipulation grow out of the question of totalitarian control. Surveillance and manipulation are an essential instrument in the totalitarian socio-political landscape and are used in order for those in power to remain in power. To begin with the former, I argued previously that the question of surveillance in *Hazards of Time Travel* grew out of the idea of America post-9/11. The novel concerns itself with a very modern conception of surveillance, one that fits a twenty-first century scenario. According to Andrea Kendall-Taylor et al., the turn of the millennium meant that “new technologies, including the Internet and the cell phone, promised to empower citizens, allowing individuals greater access to information and the possibility to make new connections and build new communities,” instead, however, “new technologies now afford rulers fresh methods for preserving power” (103). Kendall-Taylor et al. explain that the new technologies allow authoritarian regimes “to counteract

what has become the most significant threat to the typical authoritarian regime today: the physical, human force of mass anti-government protests” (104). This is because technologies such as the computer, internet, AI, and others allow regimes to surveil more people with less resources and effort while those people simultaneously police themselves due to the knowledge that they are being watched (Kendall-Taylor et al. 104). Here, the idea of the panoptic principle takes on a contemporary bearing. All of this taken together means, as Bauer and Gogröf state, that “digital technology has become the most formidable and ubiquitous tool of surveillance and control ever devised” (354).

In Oates’s novel, surveillance is used for the simple purpose of eliminating privacy and consequently eliminating political dissent and rebellion. The degree to which surveillance techniques are enacted in the NAS becomes clear when Adriane notes how “you would never trust your computer [...], or your cell phone or dicta-stylus, but also thermostats, dishwashers, microwaves, car keys and (self-driving) cars” (Oates 9). She also notes how “our classrooms, like all public spaces and many private spaces, were ‘monitored for quality assurance’,” while the “Democratic Citizens Volunteer Surveillance Bureau” deploys spies to keep tabs on people (Oates 21). These extreme measures of surveillance used by the NAS government have grown out of the event of the September 11 attacks. As mentioned earlier, the “Interlude of Indecisiveness” (31) which followed 9/11 allowed for the Constitution to be abolished and with it any legal right to privacy. The NAS government gained the right to surveil its citizens as a way to maintain national security against terrorists and due to their totalitarian control, this right can no longer be reversed. Oates, with *Hazards of Time Travel*, thus comments in a calculating manner on the consequences of sacrificing privacy for a perceived idea of safety and renders visible how digital technology surveillance in the hands of a modern-day totalitarian regime can lead to unobstructed totalitarian control.

The final question on which Oates critically reflects is the question of manipulation. Oates employs manipulation on two levels: historical and memory. The former only forms a smaller part of the novel but is worth mentioning for it speaks to the larger question of totalitarian control. In relation to the manipulation of history, A. Assmann argues that “nation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography,” (101) and do not necessarily have to be based on fact. Furthermore, as A. Assmann explains, the ruling class uses history as a tool “for the symbolic legitimation of power and to discipline the population” (102).

This technique is also used by the Patriot Party in *Hazards of Time Travel*. The collective memory is manipulated in such a way as to fit the Party’s narrative. As a result of the reconstituted calendar, the NAS’s history, also called Patriot Democracy History, is “only concerned with post-Terrorist events” (Oates 32). Consequently, Oates writes how “the old, ‘outdated’ (that is, ‘unpatriotic’) history books had all been destroyed, [...] ‘outdated’ and ‘unpatriotic’ information was deleted from all computers and from all accessible memory – only reconstituted history and information were allowed” (32). As part of this reconstituted history, the NAS presents its citizens with a narrative in which all long-ago wars had all decisively been won by the NAS (Oates 33). However, with regard to the actual past to which Adriane is transported, I would not go so far as to state that this has been manipulated as well. Adriane is told by the NAS government, for example, that she is not allowed to provide “future knowledge” (Oates 3) to Americans in 1959, which showcases that the NAS has no intention of altering the past. Moreover, the Domestic Drone Strike carried out near the end of the novel is perceived by the Americans in 1959 to be a lightning strike. The drone is only a preventive measure used by the NAS government in order to maintain control over the Exiled Individual but is not used on actual citizens of 1959; they are unaware of its existence and it does not alter events in that time period. History in *Hazards of Time Travel* is therefore

only manipulated in the NAS itself in order for it to fit the narrative of the Patriot Party who use it to legitimize their power.

The second form of manipulation deployed by the NAS is the manipulation of memory. This manipulation is implemented in two ways: first, through the manipulation of collective memory about a specific individual, and second, through the manipulation of a specific individual's memory. To begin with the former, in the section on totalitarian control, I argued that the NAS practices a method of threatening the individual into submission and when this proves unsuccessful, eliminates them. Part of the elimination process is the manipulation of the collective memory of said individual. The importance of this process to a totalitarian regime lies in the idea that a collective memory derives its meaning from the collective and subsequently builds an identity upon it (cf. J. Assmann 110). If, in totalitarian regimes, there exists within this group an individual who does not adhere to the collective, they have to be ultimately removed because they corrupt the collective's identity which is understood to be one cohesive block. This results in the practice of collective memory manipulation and is applied by the NAS in *Hazards of Time Travel* as well.

In the beginning of the novel Oates describes how Adriane's uncle Toby, after having helped organise a May Day free-speech demonstration, was arrested and consequently believed to be Deleted. Deletion differs from Execution in the sense that Execution "is intended to be openly discussed," whilst to even "allude to Deletion is a federal offense punishable as Treason-Speech" (Oates 6). Deletion of an individual is meant as a total abolishment of said individual, without recognising the deletion has taken place. The individual is treated as if they never even existed. Adriane explains that they "aren't supposed to 'recall' Tobias" (Oates 8) and describes how law enforcement officers "had raided the house and appropriated his medical textbooks, lab notebooks, personal computer and electronic devices, etc., and all pictures of him either digital or hard copy that they could

find” (Oates 10). The effectiveness of this approach is proved when Adriane’s father explains how his wife had “probably forgotten what Toby looked like,” for if you “work hard enough to *not think* of something, and wall off your mind against it, and others around you are doing the same, you can ‘forget’ – to a degree” (Oates 10). Manipulating the collective memory of the individual in this way benefits the Patriot Party’s totalitarian control. For if there is no collective remembrance of subversion, there will likely be no subversion at all in the present or future.

The other form of memory manipulation is the manipulation of a specific individual’s memory. This is enforced by the NAS regime through the usage of a memory-blocking microchip, inserted “into a particular part of [the] brain called the hippocampus” (Oates 66). After being teletransported to Wainscotia State University, Adriane wakes up and remembers how her “scalp had been shaved, a pie-shaped wedge of skull removed, the microchip installed” (Oates 66). The microchip’s purpose is to block any of Adriane’s memories of the past, or rather of the future if seen from 1959, and to alter or block any memories of her life in the NAS. At one point, Adriane describes how her head aches just behind her eyes and “if I tried to think of (was the word *home? Parents?*) there emerged a barrier like Plexiglas” (Oates 80). At another point in time, Adriane is kneeling in a corner of her room, pressing her forehead against the wall “in an effort to summon back memory – memories – of my old, lost life” but she “could not, *could not remember*” (Oates 93). Adriane sees this as the ultimate punishment: to know that she has lost something but being unable to understand that which is lost to her. As the novel progresses, however, Oates describes how the microchip now also starts producing memories that never existed. Oates describes how Adriane realises this manipulation is taking place and states:

I was thinking: the ugly memory has been a false memory. The microchip was programmed to interfere with my memory. To provide me with a cruel, false, ugly

memory. *To punish*. [...] It is terrifying to lose memory. To lose trust in memory.

What is a human being except the sum of her memories? [...] If these memories were taken from me, what would happen to me? What would happen to my soul? (151)

Writing in view of memory studies, Anne Whitehead explains that “memory’s significance is located in its assertion of the singular identity of the individual across different times and places, and in the face of continual lapses and confusions” (62). An individual who loses (part of) their memory or has it manipulated, as in Adriane’s case, is unable to assert their identity. The fact that Adriane is unable to remember and is fed false memories thus leads to an inability to assert herself as a person. As I argued in relation to the manipulation of the collective memory, the manipulation of an individual’s memory serves the same purpose, namely that of threatening and eliminating the individual in order for those in power to remain in power. Punishment is secondary to this. The question of memory in this way is regarded by Oates through the lens of totalitarian control.

This chapter has attempted to show how and in what manner Oates critically reflects upon the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control in view of the worldliness of *Hazards of Time Travel*. By way of presenting the reader with a totalitarian regime in a near-future society, Oates addresses a contemporary audience living in a post-9/11 Trumpian era and has presented them, by way of Adriane’s story, with the danger behind letting a power go unchecked. By letting Adriane live on in blissful ignorance in 1959 I also believe Oates remarks on the lack of active political opposition in her contemporary U.S. *Hazards of Time Travel* figures as a warning not to let the U.S. slip into a sham democracy resembling that of the NAS. This view of the novel is supported by the fact that Oates’s fiction has always concerned itself with the serious study “of American character and American society” (Creighton 37). To Oates, the NAS society in *Hazards of Time Travel* is

an extension of America today, and by critically reflecting upon it she renders visible certain problematic features of the socio-political landscape and warns against them.

### Chapter 3: Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*

Yoko Ogawa, known in Japan as Ogawa Yōko, was born in Okayama in 1962 and made her official debut in the Japanese literary world in 1988 with “When A Swallowtail Falls Apart.” Since then, Ogawa has published more than twenty books in Japanese, including nonfiction books on such subjects as Anne Frank and the beauty behind mathematical equations (Siegel, “The Question Floating”). Only a few of these works have been translated into English, one of which is Ogawa's *The Memory Police*. Written in Japanese in 1994 but only recently having been translated and published into English by Pantheon Books in 2019, *The Memory Police* is slowly growing in popularity in the English-speaking world, most notably through its recent shortlisting in April 2020 for the International Booker Prize. Much of Ogawa's work follows a familiar pattern, her fiction is often sparse and slightly surreal. According to Robert Anthony Siegel, Ogawa “prefers first-person female narrators with simple, almost naïve voices that balance a sense of intimacy with a paradoxical emotional reserve,” and often “these women come into contact with mysterious men who are wounded in some way, but who nevertheless serve as teachers for a time, before being taken from them” (“The Question”).

*The Memory Police* adheres to this pattern as well. The novel is narrated in first-person by an unknown female narrator who lives on a small unknown island off an unnamed coast. On this island, objects slowly disappear, both physically and mentally. Things such as ribbons, roses, hats, but also animals such as birds are condemned to obliteration. The island is ruled by the so-called Memory Police. Most islanders automatically forget when the Memory Police tells them to do so. A minority of islanders, however, do not have this impulse and are able to remember even after the objects have disappeared. The reason behind this distinction between Islanders is never explained, but it is rumoured that the ability to



forget come down to a difference in genetics. The Memory Police are committed to ensuring that what has disappeared remains forgotten and to arrest and kill those who do not forget.

The female narrator lives on the island as a novelist and she discovers that her editor, named R., is in danger from the Memory Police due to his inability to forget. R. is one of the few islanders who is able to remember the objects the Memory Police has made disappear which automatically makes him a state enemy. Because the narrator regards R. as her dear friend, she decides she must help him hide away from the Memory Police before he is found out to be one of the islanders who cannot forget and taken away to be killed. The narrator enlists the help of a friend, called the old man, and comes up with a plan to hide R. beneath the floorboards of her house. Meanwhile, things continue to disappear. The disappearance of boats, maps, and calendars makes it difficult to navigate daily life and a perpetual winter seems to have taken hold of the island. People can no longer escape the island, for how do you cross a body of water when the concept of boats has completely disappeared? Fear and loss start to dictate the lives of the islanders, and the narrator and R. start to cling to the narrator's writing as the last way of preserving the past. Her newest novel details the story of a woman whose voice gets captured in a typewriter by her typewriting instructor. She is unable to speak and is eventually taken captive herself by the typewriter instructor and locked in a bell tower. This story alternates with the main story, but when novels disappear from the island the narrator is unable to continue her profession.

Slowly, life seems to become meaningless and eventually even body parts start to disappear, albeit only mentally.<sup>10</sup> R. tries to persuade the narrator to continue writing and as

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<sup>10</sup> This concept is a bit difficult to explain, but essentially what happens is that the Memory Police start to make body parts disappear from memory. This means that the majority of the Islanders forget what the concept of, for example, an arm or a leg is even though those limbs do remain physically attached and do not have to be disposed of. For the islanders this means that there is a "lump" affixed to their bodies which has lost all meaning and can no longer be used.

she slowly loses control over her body, she is able to write one last chapter for her novel. In it, the woman whose voice was locked up in a typewriter now disappears completely. This process is mirrored in the main story. The narrator's body begins to disappear too as limbs and body parts are slowly being erased from memory. In the end only her voice is left. Once this has disappeared as well, R. is left behind and finally exits the room underneath the floorboards to go back out into the world.

Ogawa's surrealistic portrayal of an island held in the grasp of the Memory Police paints a melancholic and bleak picture from which she regards the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control. As with the previous two chapters I argue that it is important to locate *The Memory Police* within its contemporary situation first and see how this is reflected within the novel.

### 3.1 The Memory of War

In the early mornings of August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, at 8:15 am, an American bomber plane called the Enola Gay dropped a ten-thousand-pound atomic bomb known as "Little Boy" over the city of Hiroshima in Japan. According to Michael J. Hogan, the atomic bomb "exploded over the city with a brilliant flash of purple light, followed by a deafening blast and a powerful shock wave that heated the air as it expanded. [...] Within seconds Hiroshima was destroyed and half of its population was dead or dying" (1). Only three days later at 10:58 am, the city of Nagasaki was met with a second atomic bomb, known as "Fat Man", which killed more than 60,000 people (Hogan 1). As a result of America showcasing its immense destructive (military) power, the Japanese government surrendered on 15 August 1945, marking the end of the Second World War.

Japan's defeat was a defining moment for Japanese society. Michael Boiger et al. state that the cultural concept of "face, and especially the importance of maintaining or

keeping face, is a central concern in Japan” (1258). At the same time, as Louis G. Perez explains, Japan during the Second World War practiced a “complete militarization of the culture” which resulted in the idea that “women, children, and civilian men had duties and obligations equal to those of active soldiers and sailors. All of society was regimented as if everyone was in the military” (151). This meant that the defeat and surrender after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki left Japan with an immense feeling of shame and lost honour.

Seiitsu Tachibana explains that as a result of this perceived shameful defeat, “the Japanese people identified themselves as victims, not only of Allied wartime measures but also of the militarism of their government” (168). This was problematic due to two reasons. First, as Tachibana explains, as a result of victimizing themselves, the Japanese “have been slow to realize their role as victimizer. Thousands of Asians suffered as a result of Japanese aggression during the war,”<sup>11</sup> and the denial of this role led to victims of Japan’s aggression being unable to request compensations and apologies (168). Second, by viewing themselves as victims, the Japanese came to consider the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a national tragedy. Leaving aside the argument of whether the atomic bombs were a necessary and justified measure, John W. Dower states that “Hiroshima and Nagasaki became icons of Japanese suffering – perverse national treasures, of a sort, capable of fixating Japanese memory of the war on what happened to Japan and simultaneously blotting out recollection of the Japanese victimization of others” (123). Dower explains that at the same time, due to censorship enforced by the U.S. authorities who occupied Japan after the surrender, the Japanese “were not allowed to publicly engage the nature and meaning of this new world

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<sup>11</sup> Some examples of Japan’s extreme wartime aggression can be found in historical situations such as the Rape of Nanking, the Bataan Death March, the Siam–Burma Railway, Unit 731, and the usage of Comfort women. See for an overview, Lord Russell of Liverpool’s *The Knights of Bushido: A History of Japanese War Crimes During World War II*.

[post-atomic bombing]” (116). This created an environment in which victims of the bombings, called *hibakusha*, were unable to process or understand the horror they were exposed to.<sup>12</sup> Dower describes how “survivors of the bombs could not grieve publicly, could not share their experiences through written word, could not be offered public counsel and support,” and “psychological traumas we now associate with the bomb experience [...] could not be addressed in open media forums” (127). As a result of both the denial of foreign victims and the denial of *hibakusha*, Japan found itself manipulating its national memory into something that denied and altered the past.

Only after the death of emperor Hirohito, who governed Japan during the Second World War, was there a cultural shift in this way of thinking in Japan. With the ascendance to power of emperor Akihito, Japan ushered in a new age in which it turned from denial and victimhood to responsibility and acceptance. According to Perez, “the new emperor tried to allay the fears of a return to anything resembling the pre-war emperor system by several times publicly apologizing for Japan’s wartime actions” (175). Public apologies of national governments for historical misdeeds are significant because, aside from possibly healing the bond between victim and victimizer, “apologies encourage reconsiderations of the past” (Yamazaki 1). The change in Japan from a small number of apologies between 1950 and 1990, to more than twenty in the 1990s alone, therefore meant that there was a definite shift in the way Japan looked upon its war responsibility and its past.<sup>13</sup> Besides the apologies to

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<sup>12</sup> For further reading on this subject, see *From Trinity to Trinity* by Kyoko Hayashi. Hayashi, a *hibakusha*, writes about her pilgrimage to the Trinity Site in northern New Mexico, the place where the world's first atomic bomb test was conducted. In the book, Hayashi goes through a process of confrontation as she tries to understand the horror she has been exposed to by the atomic bomb.

<sup>13</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on apologies from Japan for their Second World War responsibilities, see Jane Yamazaki’s *Japanese Apologies for World War II: A Rhetorical Study*.

Japan's wartime victims, the *hibakusha* finally began to receive recognition as well and were no longer as vehemently ostracised from society as before.

Moreover, as a result of West-Germany's President Richard von Weizsäcker's famous speech in 1985, which marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, Japan introduced the term *kako no kokufuku* into the Japanese discourse on war responsibility, meaning "facing the past" (Seraphim 265). It was a direct translation of the German term *vergangenheitsbewältigung* and the introduction of the term was seen as a significant step in Japan for facing, rather than overcoming, their war responsibilities (Seraphim 265). The term *kako no kokufuku* is significant here because it uses the word *kokufuku* which translates to "making an effort to overcome difficulties." According to Franziska Seraphim, the introduction of this phrase "designated a broad political task in addition to the narrower intellectual and philosophical discourse (the 'war responsibility debate') that had characterized earlier efforts to deal with the legacies of the war" (qtd. In Zimmerman 75-76). The usage of the term *kako no kokufuku* in public discourse meant that Japan developed an understanding for the need to face the past and reorganise its national memory to recognise past victims. This is evident, for example, from the establishment of the Centre for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility in 1993. The early 1990s in Japan thus saw a shift in cultural discourse. Japanese society refocused its attention on the past, the role they played within it, and the victims that were claimed because of it. Seeing how Ogawa's *The Memory Police* was published in 1994, I argue that Japan's new-born sentiment of facing the past is reflected within the novel, most specifically by Ogawa's reflection in her novel of the consequences of the atomic bombs.

To begin, the whole narrative of Ogawa's novel revolves around the idea of forcefully forgetting and ignoring. Objects, animals, but also humans themselves are exposed to this unexplained process of forgetting that is enforced by the Memory Police. The Memory Police

in Ogawa's novel has as its primary function "to assure that there are no delays in the process [of forgetting] and that useless memories disappear quickly and easily" (106). One agent of the Memory Police compares this process to cutting off your big toe if it becomes infected with gangrene or "you end up losing the whole leg" (Ogawa 106). In a similar fashion, the Japanese people and government ostracised the *hibakusha* and "were happy to put them out of mind" (Dower 128). Japan believed the *hibakusha* to "carry the curse of the bombs in their blood," and were "not welcome compatriots in the new Japan" (Dower 128). The *hibakusha* were cut out of society like a big toe infected with gangrene. The similarity here between the Memory Police and Japanese society showcases the obsession with forgetting and ignoring objects and people that do not adhere to the sentiments expressed by those in power. Because Japanese society recognised this behaviour in the 1990s, I argue that Ogawa reflects this in her novel through the enforcement of forgetting by the Memory Police. Moreover, I argue as well that Ogawa, through reflecting this in her novel, also contributes to changing this behaviour by showcasing what the effect of forceful forgetting and ignoring is. She demonstrates that this behaviour can lead to a loss of valuable stories and memories, but also to the eventual disappearance of people themselves.

Another thing Ogawa reflects in her novel pertains to the *hibakusha*'s inability to convey trauma in the post-Second World War years. According to Dower, the *hibakusha* "were deformed reminders of a miserable past," (128) which resulted in their ostracization from Japanese society. In effect, they were silenced and could not ask for help or reparations from their government. Even though the *hibakusha* are directly referenced in *The Memory Police*, this idea of being silenced is reflected in the second narrative of the mute typist. In this story, the typist's voice gets captured by her typing teacher in a typing machine. This machine eventually breaks, making her unable to communicate. Her typing teacher takes her up to a church's bell tower with the promise of fixing her typewriter. Here, however, she is

met with a pile of other broken typewriters. He adds hers to the pile and states: “Your voice will never come back [...] your voice is trapped inside this machine. It’s not broken, it’s just been sealed off now that it no longer has a purpose.” (Ogawa 130) He explains it has no purpose because “when you lost your voice, you lost the ability to make sense of yourself” (Ogawa 132). The rhetoric used here by the typing teacher can be applied to the *hibakusha* as well. When they lost the ability to voice their trauma, they lost the ability to make sense of themselves and their trauma. In this way, I believe the physical muteness of the typists reflects the cultural and social muteness of the *hibakusha*. My argument that the *hibakusha* are reflected in Ogawa’s novel without being directly referenced, is not a far-fetched one based on the fact that the atomic bombs also make up a significant part of the worldliness of *The Memory Police*.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of a scale and intensity never seen before. The atomic bombs killed many and robbed those who survived of their humanity and prospects in life. According to Dower, many *hibakusha* experienced a “fracturing of identity,” (116) and Tachibana explains how the *hibakusha* realised that their “dehumanization took place as a result of the atomic destruction of the community that had sustained their lives” (180). One Hiroshima survivor stated how seeing the victims and corpses “no longer moved me in the slightest. At that time, human beings on the point of death were no longer human: they became mere substance. And the man watching them lost his humanity, and also became but a substance” (qtd. In Lindee 4). This idea of lost humanity through a destructive force is reflected in *The Memory Police*.

After the disappearance of roses, the narrator wonders about the speed of disappearances. She states: “If it goes on like this and we can’t compensate for the things that get lost, the island will soon be nothing but absences and holes, and when it’s completely hollowed out, we’ll all disappear without a trace” (Ogawa 53). The loss of objects and things

has forced her “to make do with a hollow heart full of holes,” (Ogawa 82) and R. states at a later point that he is happy only “if I can help delay or stop this decay in your hearts even in some small way” (Ogawa 146). After novels have disappeared, the narrator explains how “my soul seems to be breaking down,” (Ogawa 176) and when the first body part disappears, the hatmaker states how it feels wrong: “My body feels as though it’s gone to pieces and won’t go back together again” (Ogawa 248). Here, it becomes evident that the disappearances slowly alter the humanity of the islanders that are affected. Their hearts are full of holes and their souls and bodies seem to be breaking apart. The islanders slowly turn into hollow shells of what they used to be; they are becoming but a substance. This belief mirrors the feeling of the *hibakusha*, who became dehumanized through the destructive force of the atomic bombs. Not only did they lose their community and possessions, but the bombs altered their minds and bodies as well, the latter in such ways that they became severely ill to the point where they died from exposure to radiation. Ogawa reflects this situation with *The Memory Police* by echoing the feelings of the *hibakusha* within the inhabitants of the island.

As I have tried to show, the cultural shift in Japan during the early 1990s with regard to their war responsibilities has had a large impact on Ogawa’s *The Memory Police* and comprises the worldliness of the novel. The numerous reflections within the novel showcase how the new cultural discourse of *kako no kokufuku* allowed Ogawa to inhabit a critical and complex position with her novel. *The Memory Police* represents a totalitarian society in which the behaviours of forceful forgetting, as practised by the Japanese in the post-World War II years, have devastating consequences for the Islanders. By publishing this novel during a time when the cultural discourse on facing the past was changing, Ogawa not only reflects the sentiments of this period but, more importantly, contributes to the discussion on the dangers behind forgetting and ignoring as well. *The Memory Police* invites the reader to take part in a discourse on the importance of the past and remembering. From this critical and



complex position, Ogawa is able to regard the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control, and the second part of this chapter is dedicated to researching how *The Memory Police* deals with these questions in view of its own time.

### 3.2. The Power of Memories

In the previous two chapters on Orwell and Oates, I argued that the questions of manipulation and surveillance grew out of the question of totalitarian control. However, in Ogawa's *The Memory Police* manipulation is so central to the narrative of the story that I believe the questions of totalitarian control and surveillance are inextricably bound up with it. Due to this reason, I will discuss the question of manipulation first and out of this will grow the discussion on totalitarian control and surveillance.

Unsurprisingly, manipulation in Ogawa's *The Memory Police* takes on the form of memory manipulation through enforced forgetting. The novel never provides the reader with an explanation or reason for why objects, animals, and humans themselves have to disappear. Ogawa only explains how the Memory Police, who enforces the disappearances, sees memories as its adversary and, by extension, sees those who remember as the enemy. However, there is never a reason given for why the Memory Police wishes things to disappear and be forgotten. The manipulation of memory in *The Memory Police* is therefore not as straightforward as it was in the novels of Orwell and Oates, where manipulation took place as a means to an end. The end goal of the Memory Police is not clear, considering they are victims of their own force as well, causing them to disappear alongside the islanders at the end of the novel. Manipulation in *The Memory Police* is thus not a tool to gain and maintain power, as it is in the novels of Orwell and Oates. Rather, it becomes a tool that ultimately extinguishes power completely. In this sense, memory manipulation in Ogawa's novel does not create, it destroys.

Consequently, I argue that memory manipulation in the way it is exercised by the Memory Police is comparable to the destructive force of the atomic bombs. According to Ran Zwigenberg, one of the immediate anxieties in Japan in relation to the atomic bomb was about “the power the bomb had to shatter not only the physical infrastructure but [...] to destroy the value systems and beliefs of the Japanese. The bomb was a challenge to the very idea of progress and science” (27). In a similar vein, Stefanie Fishel states that “nuclear weapons signal for some a final end to the idea of human potential as progressive and limitless, and brought our faith in human nature radically under question. They signify a loss of belief in human progress and decency” (135). The atomic bombs represent total destruction, it is in essence a force of forgetting. It is used to wipe out an entire territory, to obliterate objects, and, of course, to kill people. It destroys instead of creates and this idea is mirrored by the manipulation of memory in Ogawa’s novel.

The unknown force with which the Memory Police is able to make the larger majority of the island forget things leaves nothing behind. Not only is the idea of the forgotten object erased from memory and is a person unable to comprehend the meaning of said object, the actual physical presence is also destroyed and all connecting memories as well. For example, when birds disappear the narrator notes:

When I opened my eyes I could sense something strange, almost rough, about the quality of the air. [...] Then I spotted a small brown creature flying high up in the sky [... and] I realized that everything I knew about them had disappeared from inside me: my memories of them, my feelings about them, the very meaning of the word ‘bird’ – everything. (Ogawa 10)

Birds are important to the narrator because her late father was an ornithologist, a person who studies birds. The bird she observes in the sky “should have been intertwined with memories of my father,” but instead is “already unable to elicit any feeling in me at all” (Ogawa 11).

The next day, the Memory Police raids the house of the narrator in search of research papers written by her father on the subject of birds. Once they leave with trash bags filled with academic papers and photographs referencing birds, the narrator notes how “the traces of my father’s presence, which I had done my best to preserve, had vanished, replaced by an emptiness that would not be filled” (Ogawa 14). Here, it becomes evident that the enforced disappearance does not only alter the bird itself, but the memory of birds and everything that is connected to that memory is changed as well, including the memory of the narrator’s father. This influence is also felt in language. At one point the old man talks about doing two things at once, and states: “It’s an excellent idea, killing two creatures with one stone” (Ogawa 93). The alteration of language here showcases how the proverb that incorporates the word bird is affected by the disappearance as well. As the example of the bird showcases, the manipulation of memory by the Memory Police mirrors the complete and total destructive force of atomic bombs. Similar to victims of those bombs, the narrator tries to “fill in the voids left by the Memory police,” after the impact of every disappearance, but finds “no way” to do this (Ogawa 16). The bombs similarly destroyed any faith left in human progress and left behind a void that could not be filled. Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been altered forever by the atomic bombs and in the same sense so have the inhabitants of the island in *The Memory Police* through the force of forgetting.

Building on this, I argue that the question of memory manipulation is also regarded by Ogawa from a viewpoint of destruction. All forgetting in the novel, except for the forgetting of the human body itself, is done through the act of destruction. The destructive aspect is significant because, as Daniel Levy explains, “memory is indispensable for our ability to make sense of the present” (484). At the same time, Vijay Agnew argues for the important role memories have “in the individual’s struggle to construct a social and personal identity” (7). The manipulation of memories through destruction thus has equally destructive

consequences for an individual's identity. The Memory Police is essentially eliminating the ability of the island inhabitants to navigate their present and construct their identity. This is in line with the ideology of totalitarianism as well, which, as established previously in the chapter on Orwell, requires the full abolishment of the individual.

An example of the consequence of destructive memory manipulation can be found in the disappearance of photographs. On the morning of the disappearance, the narrator is forced to burn all her photographs. R. begs the narrator not to dispose of them, stating how photographs "may be nothing more than scraps of paper, but they capture something profound" (Ogawa 94). However, the narrator explains that by losing the memory of photographs, photographs themselves have lost all value. She describes how they used to bring back "wonderful memories every time I looked at them, memories that made my heart ache. As I wander through my sparse forest of memories, photographs have been my most reliable compass," but by losing them the narrator feels as if she has lost "a compass" (Ogawa 94-95). Photographs are now nothing more than pieces of paper to her and they no longer hold the ability to guide her through her memories and the past. According to Agnew, "the past is always with us, and it defines our present; it resonates in our voices, hovers over our silences, and explains how we came to be ourselves and to inhabit what we call 'our homes'" (3). Losing the ability to navigate the past thus means that the narrator can no longer navigate the present and construct her identity accordingly.

Another example of the consequence of destructive memory manipulation can be found in the destruction of calendars. Calendars do not hold the same emotional value as photographs do, but, as one islander states, "with the calendars gone, no matter how long we wait, we'll never get to a new month [...] spring will never come" (Ogawa 135). The destruction of the memory of calendars physically makes it impossible to move from the present to the future. The islanders are quite literally stuck in time and have lost control of

their present. Having this ability taken away from them by the Memory Police thus makes the islanders powerless. Ogawa, by viewing the question of manipulation through the idea of the atomic bombs and destruction, renders visible the consequence and danger behind the forceful forgetting of memories and the impact this can have on a society, but most notably on an individual.

As stated previously, the other two questions of totalitarian control and surveillance are inextricably bound up with the question of manipulation. To begin with the first, totalitarian control in *The Memory Police* is exerted mainly through the manipulation of memory. In relation to Ogawa's novel it can be stated that those who control memory control people, and those who control people control power. In this sense, the manipulation of memory ensures the Memory Police's totalitarian control over the island. Of course, this control is exercised through the memory manipulation of some objects more than others. The disappearances of roses or hats, for example, does not result in an increase of totalitarian control except for the fact that it reiterates the power of the Memory Police. However, the disappearance of novels does strengthen and facilitate the totalitarian control of the Memory Police.

Ogawa describes how the process of forgetting novels "started during the night, but this time it developed more slowly. Throughout the morning, there was no apparent change in the town" (175). As the day progresses, the narrator receives condolences from her neighbours as "it must be horrible for [her] as a writer" (Ogawa 175). R. is immediately distraught by the news and begs the narrator not to do away with her books and manuscripts. She saves a few, but in order not to arouse suspicion from the Memory Police, has to discard most of her collection. Ogawa describes that "by evening, the disappearance was settling in more rapidly. People were bringing books to burn in fires" (177). The narrator piles her books into a cart and walks to the centre of town where she sees "a great mountain of books

[...] already burning, sending sparks high into the night sky” (Ogawa 178). She starts to throw her books in the fire as well when suddenly a woman “moved out of the circle of onlookers, climbed up on a bench, and began to shout something” (Ogawa 179). She screams frantically, “arms flailing, saliva flying, she was clearly agitated,” (Ogawa 179) and the old man comments how “she seems to want [the Memory Police] to put out the fire” (Ogawa 180). Her cries transform into hysterical screams when the Memory Police pull her down and take her away, leaving the crowd with the last words: “No one can erase the stories!” (Ogawa 180).

The destruction of novels in *The Memory Police* is significant for totalitarian control because, as Simon Swift explains, “storytelling offers an important tool for resisting the evils of the modern world” (3). The destruction of this tool by the Memory Police thus eliminates the possibility of resistance and ensures the continuation of power and control. The effectiveness of this approach becomes visible when the narrator finds it impossible to continue writing her manuscript. Only in the end, through great exhaustion, is she able to finish it. The significance of this feat seems to elude the narrator who states that “I may have managed to finish the story, but I’m still losing myself” (Ogawa 270). However, R. tells her that “each word you wrote will continue to exist as a memory” (Ogawa 270). This shows that although she disappears herself, her resistance of the Memory Police in the form of a novel does not. By not destroying and even finishing her manuscript, the narrator demonstrates the weakness of the Memory Police’s totalitarian control. This in turn showcases how novels can become a symbol of resistance.<sup>14</sup> By viewing the question of totalitarian control through the

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<sup>14</sup> The resistance quality of novels has been significant in historical examples of totalitarian control as well. Examples include holocaust survivors who wrote about their experiences with the totalitarian Nazi regime and Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*, which was used as a propaganda device by the U.S. against the totalitarian Soviet Union.

manipulation of memories, Ogawa critically analyses and reflects on the role memories can play in the construction but also resistance of totalitarian regimes.

The last question Ogawa reflects upon is the question of surveillance. As with the question of totalitarian control, the question of surveillance is also inseparable from the question of memory manipulation. Surveillance in Orwell and Oates was partly enacted through digital surveillance. In *The Memory Police*, however, digital surveillance does not seem to exist. Modern technologies, such as computers or mobile phones, are never mentioned in the novel and the narrator is able to hide away R. underneath her floorboards, signalling that a certain level of safety exists within her home. *The Memory Police* displays no panoptic principle through such things as telescreens or other digital technologies. Instead, the Memory Police relies on two analogue forms of surveillance. The first is quite straightforward and simple, namely surveillance through informants and house searches. This form of surveillance was used by the totalitarian regimes of the Nazi's and Bolsheviks as well and is based on the idea of large amounts of manpower and the loyalty of citizens to the ruling class.

In *The Memory Police*, there are multiple examples of this form of surveillance. Ogawa describes how "sometimes the Memory Police would appear in the middle of the night, completely surrounding a whole block with their trucks, and search every house without exception" (97). They are also said to be "always gathering information," by rounding up any islander and questioning them "about anything at all" (Ogawa 99). Moreover, there exists a continuous environment of suspicion on the island. The narrator is wary of most of her neighbours in fear of them reporting her to the Memory Police. When the narrator and the old man wish to hide R. under the floorboards of her house, the narrator notes how "it was rumored that all the carpenters on the island had been recruited by the Memory Police and instructed to alert them to any suspicious construction project," (Ogawa

69) meaning that the narrator can only rely on the old man and herself for the task. The suspicion of other islanders in *The Memory Police* is based on the idea that all islanders are obedient to the ruling power and will follow, without question, the directions to disclose any suspicious information. According to Fathali M. Moghaddam, this type of behaviour is common “in the context of institutions,” such as “the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and the Nazi Party in Germany” (135). The behaviour of the islanders is therefore not surprising, considering the Memory Police can be viewed as a totalitarian institution as well.

The other way in which Ogawa regards the question of surveillance is through the notion of memory manipulation. As stated previously, the enforcement of forgetting by the Memory Police is possible due to the fact that most of the islanders are biologically altered in unknown ways, making them unable to not forget anything the Memory Police has consigned to oblivion. However, certain islanders, like R., do not have this biological need and are therefore able to remember the memories the Memory Police destroys. This ability has as its logical consequence that people such as R. are not inclined to do away with the objects that have been forgotten. Due to this reason, the Memory Police is able to see which islanders are unable to forget and which are not. In other words, the Memory Police is able to surveil its citizens through the destruction of memories. Those islanders who are visibly unable to forget are immediately marked as the enemy, arrested, and killed. The effectiveness of this surveillance technique is evident from the fact that people such as R. feel the need to go into hiding from the Memory Police, because they are unable to keep their status secret. Moreover, *The Memory Police* shows that surveillance through the destruction of memories becomes most effective when memories of body parts start to disappear.

On the morning of the first bodily disappearance, the narrator awakens, tries to get up, but feels “as though dense air had coiled around my body” (Ogawa 246). She pulls back the quilt and makes a bizarre discovery, “something was stuck fast to my hip. And no matter how



much I pulled or pushed or twisted, it would not come off, just as though it had been welded to me” (Ogawa 246). Her left leg has disappeared from memory, making her unable to understand what is attached to her body, but more importantly, making her unable to use it. Ogawa describes how “the neighbors were gradually beginning to gather in the street outside,” and all of them “seemed to be wondering how to deal with their own bodies” (Ogawa 247). Eventually, the narrator and others become used to living without their left leg, finding a new sense of balance and a new way of walking. Those who are unable to forget, however, are not capable of adjusting. Ogawa describes how “the number of people who were taken away by the Memory Police suddenly increased” (252). The reason for this is that “those who had used all sorts of tricks in the past to blend in could no longer fool the police after the disappearance of their left legs. [...] No matter how much they tried, something was slightly different about the distribution of the weight or the alignment of the muscles or the movement of the joints. And the Memory Police could spot it immediately” (Ogawa 252-53). Here, it becomes visible that the Memory police effectively surveil the islanders through the demarcation of their bodies. They extract surveillance data from the body by visual policing and arresting those who do not conform to the new norm. Viewing the question of surveillance through these analogue forms of surveillance, allows Ogawa to showcase the danger of blind obedience to any form of institution.

Chapter three of this thesis has ventured to show how and in what manner Ogawa critically reflected upon the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control with her work *The Memory Police*. Her novel was greatly informed by Japan’s cultural discourse during the early 1990s on their war responsibilities and perceived victimhood. Analysing the three questions in view of this worldliness, allowed Ogawa to present the reader with a story about what it means to modify and ignore the past and to turn away from responsibilities. By writing about such a subject she not only placed her novel within the

cultural discourse of *kako no kokufuku* but also contributed to it. This is also the reason why I believe *The Memory Police* was translated into English in the U.S. in 2019, because its subject matter of modifying and ignoring the past speaks to the current political climate of the U.S. Ogawa, with *The Memory Police*, requests all readers of her novel to take a second and reflect on the importance of memories and what they can mean for the construction of identity and history, and thereby showcases the importance of literature in rendering visible that which lies beneath the surface.

## Conclusion

The question this research set out to answer was as follows: how do George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* and Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* analyse and critically reflect on their present times in view of the questions of surveillance, manipulation and totalitarian control? I have endeavoured to answer this question to the best of my abilities as exemplified by the three chapters on the aforementioned novels and I will reiterate my findings here.

In the chapter on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* I illustrated how Orwell's novel was greatly informed by the totalitarian regimes found during the antebellum and postbellum of the Second World War. Orwell was specifically concerned with the loss of objective history, the manipulation of language, and the overall amount of totalitarian control exercised by regimes such as the Nazi's and Bolsheviks, and these concerns figure notably in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as I have shown. Orwell believed writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was crucial due to his conviction that the value of literature can be found in "the central part it plays in the development of human history" (*Fascism and Democracy* 19).

The second chapter was dedicated to Joyce Carol Oates's *Hazards of Time Travel* and it followed the same argumentative structure as the chapter on Orwell. I have argued in chapter 2 that Oates presents the reader with a more modern, twenty-first century view of the three questions. The socio-political landscape of the U.S. post-9/11 and of the U.S. in the current Trumpian climate figure within the novel prominently. I have argued that her critical analysis and reflection of this landscape is demonstrated through the story of Adriane, and through Adriane, Oates remarks on the lack of active political opposition in the U.S. today. *Hazards of Time Travel* is thereby presented as a warning to the reader to not let the real U.S. follow the same path as the NAS.

The final and third chapter was concerned with Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police*. In this chapter, the discussion of the question of manipulation took centre stage. I argued that Ogawa, with her novel, took part in the cultural discourse of *kako no kokufuku* through critically reflecting on and analysing the impact of manipulating memories. The novel thereby also contributed to the discourse as a whole, and this led me to the argument that *The Memory Police* serves as a warning to not ignore the past. The novel underlines the importance of memories in the construction of history and identity, and this makes its publication into English in 2019 an understandable choice due to the current political climate of the U.S.

In this research's assessment of the three novels I have strived to answer the research question in an adequate and in-depth manner as illustrated by the above stated conclusion. The question that now remains is how this carries beyond these immediate cases. My answer to this is that I believe that my research has also demonstrated the overall importance and legitimacy of using literature to analyse and critically reflect on socio-political situations. Literature is a cultural product and takes part in the public discourse, it navigates questions of power, and it is a witness to the structure and substance of our cultural landscape. It is a heuristic tool that can be used to question and examine the facts of our lives.

My research opens up the possibility for contemporary readers to view the three novels in relation to their own current socio-political situation. I stated earlier that I believe Oates directly addresses a contemporary U.S. audience and warns against the political developments taking place under the Trump administration's rule. In the same sense I believe readers of this day and age could very well use the novels of Orwell and Ogawa to reflect on their own contemporary, worldly situations. Examples of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* being used in this regard already exist. The sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have surged, for example, when Edward Snowden revealed the extent to which the U.S. National Security Agency's

surveillance programmes monitored their own and foreign citizens, and when President Trump's political consultant Kellyanne Conway stated that Trump gave "alternative facts" about the number of attendees at his inauguration. With regard to Ogawa's novel, I already stated that *The Memory Police* was only translated into English in 2019 and that I believe this to be significant because the current socio-political climate of the U.S. speaks to the novel's subject matter of modifying and ignoring the past. Readers of today that encounter Ogawa's novel can use it to reflect critically on their own contemporary situation, as they can with any of the three novels.

Based on this assumption, I believe my methodology can be applied to other novels that engage with worldly situations as well. Further research that I would find interesting would be in relation to such novels as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Vox* by Christina Dalcher. These novels respectively discuss subject matters relating to consumerist culture and gender issues, which are very different questions than examined in the current research, but which are also socio-political in nature.

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@JoyceCarolOates. "If this novel—'Hazards of Time Travel'—had been published before 2016 would seem like dystopian future/ sci-fi; now, a just slightly distorted mirroring of actual T\*\*\*p US sliding, we hope not inexorably, into totalitarianism & white apartheid." *Twitter*, 21 Jan. 2018, 9:01pm., <https://twitter.com/JoyceCarolOates/status/955168445762433024>.