Since "*Nineteen Eighty Four*": Representations of Surveillance in Literary Fiction

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Introduction

This chapter explores the representation of surveillance practices in (mostly) contemporary "literary fiction", a term used here in the sociological sense, to denote novels in general, including genre novels (and short stories), not just the putatively "highbrow" writing to which critics usually restrict the term. It examines the way in which novelists present surveillance as an issue, and identifies some of the cultural resources which the (admittedly segmented) "reading public" might be using to make sense of the emergent "surveillance society". It extends David Lyon's (2007:145) recent comments on the subject, which suggest that while "the novel may be being supplanted by the film as a means of understanding surveillance ... the key question of the surveillance metaphor .. will still have to be sought in literary contexts". The intimation that cinematic (and televisual) fiction is superceding literary fiction as a source of knowledge about surveillance rests on clear evidence that "blockbuster movies" like *Enemy of the State* and *Minority Report* became significant reference points in popular debate upon it, in a way that no *recent* novel has. It has to be admitted, though, that George Orwell's *(1948) Nineteen Eighty Four* still remains a touchstone in this respect, although the concepts it bequeathed to us - "Blg Brother", "thought police" and "telescreen" - long ceased to be adequate for grasping the varied forms, political complexity, multiple uses, ambivalent intentions and contradictory consequences of contemporary surveillance.

The Ur-Surveillance Novels - "We", "Nineteen Eight Four" and "The Castle"

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four,* Yevgeny Zamyatin's (1924) *We,* which influenced Orwell, and Franz Kafka' s (1922) *The Castle* were the three novels - published in the first half of the twentieth century and all written in oblique response to an emergent totalitarianism - which gave contemporary conceptions of the surveillance society its inalienably sinister tone. *The Castle* , admittedly, is open to a range of readings, not all of which privilege surveillance, although the comments of the superintendent (a Castle functionary) to the novel's bewildered lead character, K - "You ask if there are control officials .... There are *only* control officials" (quoted in James 2008: 346) - ensures that it is never wholly outwith the territory. I will dwell here on Zamyatin, because his work is the least celebrated, and because not all of it is echoed by Orwell.

We - a mortifying satire on the dangers of untrammelled Taylorism as much as a veiled indictment of Stalinism - envisages control via the regimentation of labour, propaganda, leader worship, public executions and the creation of popular fears about imminent dangers - all of which occur in *Nineteen Eighty Four.* The "One State" stifles imagination using neurosurgery rather than Orwell's "newspeak", while the Bureau of Guardians are the precursors of Orwell's "thought police". The Guardian's covertly infiltrate the population and observe them from flying cars equipped with "spying tubes", or via mechanical "ears" in public thoroughfares. Domination in Zamyatin's dystopian city, however, is both augmented and symbolised by buildings whose walls, floors and ceilings are made of toughened glass, and whose occupants are forever on display. Only a residual interest in privacy survives - citizens can temporarily screen off their rooms at set times in order to have sex with officially sanctioned lovers, but the subjects of the "One State" accept that everything is known about them, and cannot imagine it otherwise.

Both Orwell's and Zamyatin's narrators are initially system-insiders who become (doomed) dissenters. Zamyatin's is a senior mathematician "named" D503, who takes a certain pride in knowing that it is his profession's work - the construction of mathematical formulae - which underpins and makes possible the hyper-regulated social order in which he lives. He rejoices in "the mathematically perfect life of the One State" (4) and in "the glass walls of my algebraic world" (32) through which everything becomes clear, certain and orderly. "When a man's freedom is reduced to zero", he reasons, "he commits no crimes. That's clear. The only means to rid man of crime is to rid him of freedom.". Yet the highly cerebral D503 guiltily knows himself to be attracted by the apparent

chaos prevailing among the barbarian-humans in the "wild world" beyond the city walls, and because he fails to suppress his more unruly, natural", emotions he believes himself to be an unworthy subject of the One State, deserving of his eventual punishment.

D503 anticipates that his secret memoir might one day be read by those outside the city walls, and struggles to explain to a less educated, less modern, consciousness what the the experience of being totally known by the state felt like. At one point he compares it to the intimacy of being watched by one's own shadow. Later, ruminating on the the ever-presence of undercover Guardians in their midst, he asks "Who knows, maybe it was the Guardians that ancient man foresaw in his fantasy about the 'archangels', both stern and tender, that were assigned at birth to every human" (49). Scrutiny by a real Guardian actually feels anything but tender - "his eyes flashed: two sharp gimlets, quickly revolving, boring deeper and deeper and now screwing into my deepest depths, where they will see what I myself won't even ..." p32) - but later he tells himself :

> It strengthened me, I'd say. It's so nice to feel that someone's keeping a
> sharp eye on you, kindly protecting you from making the slightest mistake,
> the slightest misstep. This may sound sentimental, but the same analogy
> occurs to me: the guardian angels that the ancients dreamed about. So
> much of what they merely dreamed about has materialised in our life (65)

Contemporary stories about people who find themselves in indecipherable environments, at the mercy of unseen but seemingly omniscient powers necessarily owe a debt to Kafka. Serbian fabulist Zoran Zivkovik's (2003) promisingly entitled - but ultimately tedious - *Hidden Camera* is one such. It concerns a somewhat prissy citizen who discovers that he has been secretly filmed while sitting in a park and immediately assumes not that he is the victim of state surveillance, but of a reality TV show. Rather implausibly, he spends the next 12 hours trying to find out who is filming him and simultaneously to avoid embarrassing himself on camera. He resigns himself to the ubiquity of the invisible cameras, but is nonetheless discomforted by the surveillant gaze, and tries, probably forlornly, to make his "indisposition as unnoticeable as possible" (p217). There are resonances here with Milan Kundera's (1985: 109) observation in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* that "the moment someone keeps an eye on what we do, we involuntarily make allowances for that eye, and nothing we do is truthful" [in the sense of authentic] and indeed with Vaclav Havel's (1986) broader indictment of having always to "live a lie" in totalitarian societies. This characteristically East European view of surveillance's effects - self-diminishment, suppression of oneself as a public being - remains an important, although not universal, motif in surveillance fiction.

Science Fiction

In a multiplicity of idioms - scientific, surreal and satirical - science fiction sought throughout the twentieth century to imagine possible, probable and preferable futures for mankind, near and distant. Whilst by no means exhausting all that science fiction has attempted to do, extrapolations of existing technologies and explorations of their social consequences, have been legion. Surveillance technology - particularly of the visual kind - has been a recurrent theme, rooted in the pre-twentieth century utopian, dystopian and speculative fiction from which science fiction itself sprang. One of the earliest references occurs in a Jules Verne-influenced novel called *The Land of the Changing Sun,* (1894), by a neglected but once popular American writer W N Harben[1]. In it a group of Victorian-era travellers discover a 200 year old, technologically advanced utopian city beneath the Arctic. The ruler explains to them that order is in part maintained by police who have access to a glass disc on which a detailed simulation of the city and its people are displayed: "the most remarkable feature of the invention was, that the instant the eye rested on any particular portion of the whole that part was at once magnified so that every detail of it was clearly observable. ..... No sooner does anything go wrong than a red signal is given on the spot of the trouble and the attention of these officers is immediately called to it. A flying machine is sent out and the offender is brought to the police station, but trouble of any nature rarely occurs , and the duties of our police are merely nominal; my people live in thorough harmony" (Harben 1894).

The prescience of this is barely diminished by the knowledge that engineers had imagined the use of a Camera Obscura for urban crime prevention purposes as early as 1824 (*Glasgow Mechanics' Magazine* No XXXII, cited in Jennings 1985:164). Scottish dystopian James Leslie Mitchell (1934) (though better known as Lewis Grassic Gibbon) may himself have been extrapolating from this technology in *Gay Hunter*, whose future rulers of Britain relay visual images

of what their enemies are doing over great distances. The technological mechanism is not precisely explained; "what if?" is more important to sf novelists than "how?". Orwell did not explain how "telescreens" worked, although Phillip Dick (1967: 238) made it a little clearer in one of his dystopias, where "each TV set came equipped with monitoring devices to narrate to the SecPol, the Security Police, whether its owner was bowing and/or watching" when the Absolute Benefactor of the People was addressing his subjects. A strand of modern American science fiction was much influenced by *Nineteen Eighty Four* ; in the Cold War era the idea of the omniscient tyrant who sees and knows everything became commonplace in the genre, (see, for example, Van Vogt 1976). Nonetheless, among right wing libertarian writers, long before the "War on Terror", heroes rather than villains were becoming enamoured of surveillance technology - as a means of securing personal liberty. Larry Niven's (1972), for example, imagined basketball-size "copseyes" floating twelve feet above ground patrolling a California park, allowing all manner of libertine behaviour but zapping all perpetrators of violence; when an antiauthority activist misguidedly disables them disorder erupts and civility crumbles.

Non-visual forms of surveillance - the amassing and mining of unimaginably vast tracts of information, for example - were arguably imagined by H G Wells (1898/2004:5), whose prospective Martian invaders - "intelligences greater than man's" had "scrutinised and studied" the Earth for many years before attacking, "perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water". The link to the contemporary practice of dataveillance - perhaps to the darker ideal of "total information awareness" - is made clearer in Iain M Banks "Culture" novels, in which a benevolent despotism of Minds (the Culture) seek to know everything about, and sometimes to manipulate, the species living on other planets. In one novel a gigantic Culture spacecraft unobtrusively orbits Earth throughout the year 1977, dredging an "avalanche of data" into its computers. The precise means by which this is done is left unclear, although it includes the use of miniature drones and bugs, some of which were "so small the main problem with camera stability was Brownian motion" (Banks 1991:134).

"Smart dust"- "autonomous computer[s] with a volume of around one cubic millimetre sensing and communicating information wirelessly" (O'Hara and Shadbolt 2008:188) had barely been conceived when Banks wrote this, but the idea of microscopic surveillance devices suffusing whole environments might first have been suggested in the last of Bob Shaw's "slowglass" stories. Shaw had envisaged an accidentally invented transparent metal, formally called Retardite but nicknamed "slowglass", through which light passes slowly - how slowly depending initially on how thickly and densely the glass is engineered - thereby preserving an image of whatever happens in front of it. The invention, initially used by artists to make pictures, is adapted by the American government for surveillance purposes. Once it is discovered that a "usable image could be obtained from a "particle a few microns in diameter, ... each speck invisible to the naked eye" the government manufactures slowglass dust and sprays it everywhere from aircraft: "the slowglass micro-eyes were ... released from high up to that they would cling to everything - trees , buildings, telegraph poles flowers mountain slopes, birds, flying insects. It would be in people's clothing, in their food, in the water they drank" (Shaw 1972:157). The chagrined inventor of slowglass anticipates a totalitarian future: but we are told in the conclusion that, in later decades, "men were to come to accept the universal presence of Retardite eyes, and they learned to live without subterfuge or shame as they had done in a distant past when it was known that the eyes of God could see everywhere" (p158).

In their homage to Shaw, *The Light of Other Days*, Arthur C Clarke and Stephen Baxter (2002) substitute "wormhole cameras" for slowglass particles, microscopic devices which can literally expose anything anywhere instantaneously. This technology is initially exploited by a global news corporation, but subsequently made cheaply available to everyone. This novel explores the social and psychological consequences of total mutual surveillance, fleshing out David Brin's (1998) "transparent society" (which he envisages as not far off) with descriptions of shame-free public nudity and public sex. Although he is in no sense a futurist, in M John Harrison's (2002; 2006) recent imagining of the 26th century, variants of "smart dust" are still the surveillance technology of choice, in routine use by spaceship captains and police officers, but no such transformations of sexual expression are in evidence, and governmental omniscience is limited simply because, then as now, for want of proper maintenance, technologies sometimes break down. Despite the distant future setting, Harrison is speaking to the way we live now - or at least soon, but in a fabulist idiom. Yet while science fiction writers do not necessarily aim to be predictive, it is in the nature of their craft to envisage possibilities outwith the interest of more realist writers, and by dint of that avid science fiction readers have less reason than most citizens of the 21st century to be surprised by

contemporary forms of surveillance. Something akin to the now widespread electronic tagging of offenders was imagined by Piers Anthony and R E Margroff (1968), and now it figures in conventional realist crime fiction (Leonard 1992 - see Nellis 2003 for a fuller account). Implant technology (to read minds, modify moods and track bodies) was envisaged by Phillip Dick (1966), among many others of his generation; but already it is shifting into realist comic thrillers (Llewellyn 2002).

Spy Novels

Spies as information gatherers have a long history in literature, but the the post-nineteen sixties espionage novel - typified by Ian Fleming, John Le Carre and Len Deighton - drew attention to surveillance largely in terms of what might be called "the psychology of spycraft" (the effect of the job on the person doing it) and gadgetry (usually in the form of eavesdropping and tracking devices, and miniature weaponry). Deighton's first major novel, *The Ipcress file* (1962), apart from containing an appendix with technical information testifying to the author's supposed insider's expertise in spycraft" contended that however substantial external threats may be, "one's real enemy [was] behind one, in the upper echelons of the British secret service, not across the Iron Curtain" (Sutherland 2002:69-70). Different authors have toned the "intelligence community" in different ways, but whether glamorous or seedy, heroic or - in Jerzy Koscinsi's (1976) explicit conflation of surveillance and voyeurism - depraved, this widely read genre has cumulatively fed into popular culture the idea that there were arms of government in all major nations - "a secret state", perhaps beyond democratic control even in democratic nations - whose work was largely unknown to their respective general publics and who had, whenever they needed it, means of accessing information about whatever they wanted to know.

Even in the hiatus between the ostensible ending of "the cold war" and the beginning of the "war on terror", the popularity of "secret agent"/"secret state" stories never died, in literature, film or TV, but the post-9/11 world has further boosted their significance, and the surveillance technologies available to them - near instantaneous access to a range of databases and real-time tracking of individuals - has become immensely sophisticated. It resembles the technology routinely found in "technothrillers" (a genre with which spy novels overlap) and even in the more realistic science fiction novels - the average reader cannot know whether such technological expertise really is available to the security services or not, which c an heighten or lessen paranoia .

Eoin McNamee is a relative newcomer to spy fiction, specialising in "fictionalising" real events. In *12.23* (McNamee 2007) the event is the "assassination" of Princess Diana in a Paris car crash. His security operatives, of a generation who learned their "dark craft" (as he calls it) in Belfast in the 1970s, are as seedy and downbeat as Le Carre's, but - unlike them - they are matter of factly aware of globe-spanning information-gathering technologies than can either enable or thwart them. *12.23* is replete with men who position themselves so as avoid being seen face-on by CCTV cameras and who use mobile phones with caution. McNamee does not celebrate or exaggerate the flashiness of the technology, but he is alert to its presence and demystifies its purpose. He goes behind the walls of listening stations like GCHQ and Menwith Hill, into the minds of the people who sift the datastreams, and speculates a little on the nature of the human/machine interface. The following is typical:

> It felt like the times at GCHQ when they knew that something was going on, signal traffic building in the east, nothing defined, but you could feel the anxiety out there in the networks, the deep unease. Operators bent over their screens, Transmissions coming in in dense clusters. If you touched one of the cables you could almost feel it, the coaxial hum. A feeling that events were moving on the ground. Everyone getting connected. Trying to access the information clusters. Knowing that they had to get beyond the commonplace, that powers akin to divination were required, that you had to use the ancient parts of the cortex, access the primordial neural pathways. They were trying to filter out the clutter and find their way to the pure message (McNamee 2007:73)

Many people on the receiving end of such surveillance will never know that they are so positioned, but for those who do, what does it mean to have become "data"? Don de Lillo (a "highbrow" novelist, whose work nonetheless sometimes touches on espionage, and other ostensibly

genre themes) offers an intriguing description in *Mao II* of a political activist mentally reconstructing the processes by which he'd become inscribed in security service databases:

> In the beginning there were people in many cities who had his name on their breath. He knew they were out there, the intelligence network, the diplomatic backchannel, technicians, military men. He had tumbled into the new culture - the system of world terror - and they'd given him a second self, an immortality, the spirit of Jean Claude Julien. He was a digital mosaic in the processing grid, lines of ghostly type on microfilm, They were putting him together, storing his data in starfish satellites, bouncing his image off the moon. .. He sensed they'd forgotten his body by now. He was lost in the wavebands, one more code for the computer mesh, for the memory of crimes too pointless to be solved. (De Lillo 1993: 12)

Police Procedurals

Police procedurals focus on the *methodical* way in which policemen solve crimes, narrowing down the list of suspects, marshalling evidence, catching the villain (or not). The process always involves information gathering and exposure. ("Private eye" novels do the same thing, less methodically). Ian Rankin's seventeen-book series about an Edinburgh police Inspector, John Rebus, written between 1987 and 2007, implicitly traces the way in which technology has developed to augment the information gathering process. In the very first book, *Knots and Crosses*, a colleague explains to a sceptical Rebus how he is beginning to make informal, unofficial use of a new police computer, and speculates on the shape of things to come:

> I know one of the guys who work in the computer room. Comes in handy, you know, having one of those terminal operators in your pocket. They can track down a car, a name, an address, quicker than you can blink. It only costs an occasional drink. ... Give them time, John. Then *all* the files will be on computer. And a while after that, they'll find that they don't need the work horses like us any more. There'll just be a couple of DI's and a desk console. ... It's progress, John, Where would be without it? We'd still be out there with our pipes and our guess-work and our magnifying glasses. (Rankin 1987:32)

By the time of the last book, twenty years later, newer technologies are both embedded in policing, and completely taken for granted. Characters banter about the ubiquity of CCTV cameras - joke about them being fitted in winebars - and get annoyed when they don't work. Human capacities to detect nonetheless still matter to policemen, especially to one of Rebus's generation - "One of the things [he] liked best about bars was the urge to eavesdrop on other people's lives" (Rankin 2007: 167) - but he now comfortably scans CCTV tapes in the Edinburgh Central Monitoring Facility to ascertain the movement of a car on a particular night. He reflects on the place:

> There was something soothing about the unhurried voyeurism going on around him. One act of vandalism reported, and one known shoplifter tracked along George Street. The camera operators seemed as passive as any daytime TV viewers, and Rebus wondered if there might be some reality TV show to be made from it. He liked the way the staff could could control the remote cameras using a joystick, zooming in on anything suspicious. It didn't feel like the police state the media were always predicting. All the same, if he worked here every day, he'd be careful of himself on the street, for fear of being caught picking his nose or scratching his backside. Careful in shops and restaurants, too (Rankin 2007: 202)

CCTV is not portrayed in any way problematically in the Rebus novels. It is mere background to character-driven and plot-driven stories. It is no panacea in respect of crime control, but it has its uses - although on the night in which Rebus is interested, not all the cameras are operative. In terms of his own personal reaction to the Monitoring Facility Rebus is doing no more than Zivkovik's character, resolving to make his "indisposition as unnoticeable as possible", but it is not a major

issue. Rankin's later Rebus stories can legitimately be read as state of the nation novels, but surveillance is not something that either Rebus or his creator urge us to worry about. The prospect of further technological developments does not preoccupy Rankin/Rebus - even though the novels have traced just such development, and shown the relative ease with which people adapt and accept it. Paul McAuley's (2001) *Whole Wide World* is a police procedural crossed with a technothriller - the murder of a young woman is connected to the installation of a sophisticated new police CCTV system in a near-future London, whose computer controlled cameras can automatically track identified individuals. Watching an array of swivelling cameras track a fox in a park late at night, their underslung spotlights   "finger[ing] the darkness with unforgiving precision", McAuley's policeman protagonist becomes aware early on "of something new and non-human at play in the world: an intelligence vast and cold and unsympathetic testing the limits of its ability"(p5).

Technothrillers

Technothrillers are a very literal type of science fiction (often blended with spy fiction), set in the present or recognisable near future, quite often with a specific aim of educating the public (in an entertaining way) about the significance of a   particular scientific   advance or environmental development, eg, DNA, computerised financial transactions, nanotechnology or climate change. They epitomise what literary critic John Sutherland (2006) calls "info-fiction" because however much the narrative may accord with thriller conventions the author has usually undertaken detailed research into the topic being written about, and may even provide an appendix explaining the issues.

The Traveller (2005)   John Twelve Hawks

The Traveller, the first volume in a projected trilogy, is set a few years hence. An ancient Illuminati-like secret society is on the brink of achieving complete but mostly covert control of western populations through a capacity to access, integrate and if necessary hack the world's burgeoning surveillance systems. Various characters, and Twelve Hawks himself, disparagingly portray it as a colossal electronic version of Bentham's panopticon. Its enemies - the handful of people who even know of its existence - call it the "vast machine", and try, with ever increasing difficulty to   live "off the grid", beyond its reach. The plot concerns the efforts of Maya Thorn, a "Harlequin" (a highly trained order of bodyguards), to find and protect a two young men who may be "travellers", a dying breed of mystics who have the power to cross dimensions - to truly evade the power of the "vast machine", which understandably regards them as a very distinctive kind of threat, and wants them eradicated. *The Traveller* works well enough as a thriller, it teaches a great deal about integrated surveillance systems and sometimes conveys rather well what it might be like to tracked in realtime by an array of monitoring devices.

The pseudonymous Twelve Hawks - who garners kudos by living "off the grid" himself[2] - is consciously reaching for Orwell's mantle and dreads the imminence of total control. He explains in a concluding essay that he has written the novel to awaken readers to the dangers of surveillance in a post 9/11 world. The concept of the "vast machine" is simply extrapolated from the Bush/Poindexter Total Information Awareness project inaugurated in 2002 The essay explains the coming integration of facial recognition software in CCTV systems, biometric, RFID chipped passports, infrared and X-ray machines, on-line detection packages whose algorithms distinguish what is normal and what is suspicious

> two modern conditions - a generalised fear coupled with sophisticated electronic monitoring - shapes the world of *The Traveller*. The novel is set towards the end of this decade, but all the technological aspects described in the book are either in use at this moment or far along in the development process. I didn't write to predict the future. I wanted to use the power of fiction to describe how we live now. (592)

The imminent integration of computer systems means that Bentham's "panopticon is going to be established throughout our society" (p598). "If privacy truly disappears freedom will vanish with it" (599). He draws on Barry Glassner's (2000) *The Culture of Fear* to show how fears are created and sustained by politicians and media. He admits he does not "believe that a shadowy group of illuminati are guiding the industrial world, but I think it clear that a variety of institutions use fear to manipulate public opinion" (p 602). He   wrote the book to shatter the complacency towards surveillance and to inspire resistance to it , admitting that "no outside force will save us. We must

look into our own hearts to find the Travellers and Harlequins - the prophets and warriors - who will keep us free" (605). *The Dark River* (Twelve Hawks 2007) continues the story.

The Pixel Eye (2003) Paul Levinson

 The Pixel Eye, a technothriller combined with a police procedural, is the third in a series of full-length novels featuring Phil D'Amato, an NYPD detective operating approximately ten years from now, in the city's "security governance" department. It was one of the first novels in any genre, to deal with the ongoing development of surveillance technology in the post 9/11 era . Its plot hinges on the development of a covert surveillance programme within the Department of Homeland Security, which turns urban squirrels into living cameras by implanting miniaturised telecom equipment in their brains, and retrieving any visual images recently stored there. This "panopticon of squirrels", as D'Amato drily calls it (p296) enables Homeland Security to scan public spaces - or windows from adjacent trees - without visible hardware, and without arousing suspicion.

 One of the novel's strengths is its depiction of the way that d'Amato comes to terms with the ostensible absurdity of the "squirrel-cams". Like most lay people (us, the readers) he is actually quite ignorant of what is technologically possible, or even "in development" on his own, law-enforcement, side: geopolitically, he knows that he lives in a world whose murky heart - and whose engines of change - he can barely fathom. A plausible context-of-emergence for the squirrel-cam technology is also provided, in experimental neuromusicology - studying how rodents remember visual and aural images, then converting the neurochemical braincode for such memories into computer readable algorithms. Security services co-opt the research to help develop "total information awareness":

> The goal of course is first to have images,[an operative tells D'Amato] then reliable images, then legally reliable images. Imagine the benefit to national security of having millions of extra eyes, unobtrusive, that can see for us, but send back recordable images of what they see" (p60) .

 Even without squirrel-cams, surveillance technologies infuse d'Amatos world. "Authorisation codes" of one sort or another govern movement and communication in the city. Swipe cards on subway turnstiles, police scannable ID cards , voice authentication technologies, biometric locks", figure in his daily routine. Humans outperform automated surveillance - facial recognition - but only for the time being. Large crowds can be subject to automated retinal scans using "cyberspotlights" linked to "powerhouse computers" (p267). None of this is foolproof and d'Amato knows that "digital records could be expunged as easily as people" (p162). In addition, every advance in surveillance technology seems to be matched by an advance in deception and encryption technology - ways of fooling eyes, ears and minds, even technologically augmented ones - and the denouement of *The Pixel Eye* reveals that the squirrel-cam project has already been corrupted and subverted. The novel accepts that the dangers facing post 9/11 America are real enough and that security will require some sacrifices of liberty. D'Amato (and maybe Levinson himself) is a reluctant liberal convert to this view, but he worries as to where the limits of security might lie :

> Everyone's DNA in some national archive, matchable to DNA embedded and scannable on a card? Government access to everyone's potential for whatever genetic tic? Would that be worth the chance to stop the ticking bomb of a terrorist? (p168)

The (Self-Defined) Literary Novel

 Contemporary "literary fiction" - in the highbrow sense - explores the consciousness and lived realities of people in the here and now, notionally without recourse to the conventions of genre. As such it comments on the state of the psyche, the nation and the world; the way we live now. Arguably, in the past, literary fiction evinced a certain disdain for questions concerning technology, but now, if it is to remain true to its ethos, it can hardly avoid them, and "we will", as one noted author/critic has claimed, "see more engagement with scientific and technical themes before the decade is out" (Foden 2007). It is in this spirit that a number of literary novelists have already begun exploring what living in a surveillance society means and feels like.

The Seymour Tapes (2005) Tim Lott

To date, all Lott's novels (and a memoir) deal with dysfunctional families. This punningly entitled work (Seymour = see more) is no different. Alex Seymour, a London GP, installs covert miniature CCTV in his living room because he suspects his adolescent son is stealing from around the house, and also that his wife is having an affair. The American woman entrepreneur from whom he buys the kit - her shop is based on a real one, cited by Lott in the acknowledgements - turns out to be a sleazy voyeur - and after a series of painful exposures within the family, dysfunctionality is seriously intensified. Lott's underlying argument is that the desire for surveillance is grounded in insecurity and control addiction - the belief that one can shore up one's power, make oneself more secure, if one can only see what others are doing, without them seeing you. Voyeurism - at root a characteristic of people with a fragile and uncertain sense of their own identity, and deficiencies in their capacity to make relationships - emerges from this. A therapist in the novel explains:

> Voyeuristic activity fulfils a sense of adventure and participation missing in 'real' life. The subject is usually introverted, timid, over-controlled and socially isolated. ..... voyeurism is not simply about sex. Voyeurs .... are stimulated or satisfied by covert observation of many kinds. The main thing is that people are being watched in secret. It gives the voyeur a sense of power. But at the same time, like any compulsion, it leaves the sufferer feeling empty and hopeless. As an alcoholic needs more and more alcohol, the voyeur needs to witness deeper and deeper secrets, you might say (Lott 2005:163)

Lott (and the therapist) debate whether voyeurism has now become a "national trait" (or a "national sickness") in Britain. The concluding pages - chillingly written from the standpoint of a "sentient" but emotionless camera - "I see you .... Nowadays, I have no limits" (Lott 2005: 242) make clear that Lott believes his insights can be generalised out to larger CCTV systems , and to recognise that just as surveillance fails to solve the relationship problems in this family so it will also fail to solve society's disorders - and may well aggravate them. It is debatable whether the loathing readers will likely feel towards the players in the domestic drama will translate into civic anger towards public space CCTV, but it is a commendably ingenious attempt to foster skepticism about pervasive surveillance systems. Like Michael Haneke's (2006) film *Hidden*, the novel convincingly questions whether CCTV images ever contain much "truth"; the meanings imputed to merely visual representations of people's private behaviour are likely to be erroneous (see also Meek 2007). In addition to all this, Lott also argues - by way of further explanation as to why the invasiveness of surveillance seems not to bother us - that in contemporary culture media-stimulated narcissism is turning privacy into a tradable commodity; people are increasingly willing to market themselves to the tabloids or to publishers of fashionable "tell all" memoirs for the sake of tawdry fame and transient fortunes. *The Seymour Tapes* is actually a damning spoof of that kind of book.

Surveillance (2005) Jonathan Raban
Surveillance concerns the permeation of surveillance technologies and mentalities into the everyday lives of ordinary Americans in the early 21st century, focusing on the lives of four people in a very near future Seattle. Lucy is a freelance journalist writing a profile about an ageing neocon writer, August Vanags, who has achieved fame with a holocaust memoir; Alida is her almost-teenage daughter; Ted a middle-aged, politically radical family friend and Charles Ong Lee is the landlord wanting to evict them all from his apartment block. The novel opens with a mock-terrorist attack on the city, orchestrated by the Department of Homeland Security to test civil defence procedures. The putative threat of Islamist terrorism is ever present, and an easy mental separation between reasonable vigilance and creeping paranoia becomes difficult to sustain. Lucy listens uneasily to radio bulletins covering the hunt for an Algerian who seemingly fits the "terrorist" profile, and twigs the presence of an undercover marshall aboard a ferry. She recognises "the fright-machine at work, cogs and wheels relentlessly revolving from sea to shining sea" (p144) but simultaneously, mostly for Alida's sake, she seriously contemplates moving from the potentially dangerous city to the probably safer countryside. Ted stokes her anxieties with talk of black helicopters, ECHELON, and the expanding "machinery of tyranny" (p227), warning her of

> a huge programme to renew reflective lane-markers on highways, ostensibly the baby of the Department of Transportation but known by Tad

to have originated in the National Security Agency. These weren't just any old lane-markers, they were clandestine - you might say clairvoyant - lane-markers that would track the number, make and colour of your car as it went by when the system was complete, they'd be able to bug the exact movements of every vehicle in the US. It was, Tad said, all done by microchips and wireless technology (220)

But surveillance is ubiquitous. Alida and her schoolfriends observe "the angled barrel of the spy camera that had just recently gone up over the doors of the gym, one of the many that had appeared around the school since the winter break" (p34). They joke about the possible whereabouts of the watchers, trading on popular stereotypes - "underground, in a secret cellar, somewhere downtown". The landlord proposes installing CCTV in the apartments, so that tenants can be alert to the "lowlife" in the rear alley. Investigative journalists like Lucy utilise surveillance tools to good ends paralleling the government's more sinister use of them. As Ted tells her:

> We're all spooks now. Look at the way people Google their prospective dates. Everybody does it. Everybody's trying to spy on everybody else. At least you know you're a spook, which is something. Most people are in denial. 225 -

Raban is actually moot on the extent to which surveillance protects us from terrorism, but the earthquake/tsunami which devastates Seattle at the novel's end effectively says that, all along, the real danger lay elsewhere. Satellite surveillance (and advance warning) of tectonic plate activity may have saved more lives than tooling up for a "war on terror". Echoing Zamyatin, Raban mocks the view that technoscience and risk management strategies have wrought "the end of nature" - in both novels, in different ways, resurgent nature ruthlessly reclaims the formerly surveilled spaces. Somewhat sardonically, he also confirms Zamyatin's belief that mathematical formulae appeal to those who desperately want order and predicability in their lives - in this instance, via twelve year old Alida, who likes algebra because in it

> unknown quantities revealed their true identities . ... . $6 - 2y = 7y + 13$ made perfect sense to Alida but what she really wanted was a system of human algebra . It'd be incredibly cool if you could only figure people out like this , isolating their variables to just one side of the equation, adding positives to negatives to make zeros, until the problem disentangled into one clear statement; this means that" (53).

People, of course cannot be figured out like this, reduced to algorithms - but while insecure children can and do outgrow the need for order and predictability, insecure states progressively demand more of both. Raban clearly challenges this, whilst recognising that many instances of modern surveillance technology have their uses. Tad's diligent computer searching, for example, does eventually expose Charles Ong Lee as an illegal immigrant with a stolen identity, giving him and Lucy the leverage to thwart his plan to evict them (p251). At root, though, in Raban's view, not everything is knowable, or traceable online. Lucy concludes that despite all her internet searching, the truth about Vanags' background remains shadowy, and she builds that unfathomability into her profile, deliberately writing "an ambitiously inconclusive piece .... for these inconclusive times" (p308). *Surveillance* itself is pitched the same way, provoking-thought rather than supplying answers .

What Was Lost (2007) Catherine O'Flynn

What Was Lost is set in and around the fictitious Green Oaks shopping mall in Birmingham, alternating between 1984 and 2003/4. It is, on one level, a mystery story which resolves, some twenty years after the event, the fate of a missing little girl. It is also a sombre commentary on working life in a modern shopping centre, and a critique of contemporary consumerism. Kurt is one of 200 security guards on the four square kilometre site. He mostly patrols the mall and its labyrinth of service corridors. Sometimes he takes his turn manning the banks of CCTV monitors. He is singularly bored:

He never expected to see anything on the CCTV. No one ever did on the night shift. ..... He'd been looking at the same monitor screens for the past thirteen years. When he closed his eyes he could still see all the empty corridors and locked doors in soft grey -scale tones. Sometimes he thought maybe they were just flickering photographs - still lives that would never change (p71).

Ruminating on the expansion of shopping centres in Britain generally ,

Kurt wondered how much of the country had now been split off into these security fiefdoms. Patches of scorched earth almost bleached white by the constant surveillance of so many eyes. He thought of his grandmother who had been badly beaten up in her own flat last year, and wondered when she might be considered as worthy of protection as a range of Nike baseball caps (p84)

Lisa is a young woman who works in Green Oak's Your Music store. She is as despondent about the banality of her job as Karl is with his, and equally as uncomfortable with the ubiquity of surveillance. Like Zivkovik's character she makes her "indisposition as unnoticeable as possible", but embellishes it with a mildly satisfying fantasy drawn from the surveillance fictions suffusing popular culture:

Lisa was keenly aware of the hidden security presence in the centre. Every morning she felt those tired eyes upon her and was hyperconscious of her every movement, The constant weight of surveillance made her feel suspicious, and over time, this sense of guilt had developed into a little game she liked to play. She imagined that inside her bag, instead of an aged satsuma and seventeen empty envelopes, she carried something clandestine; a small timed device, a secret message, an illicit package - it didn't matter what. In her head various genres had been mixed up to create some incoherent spy/terrorist/resistance fighter fantasy - it changed from day to day, but always with the hidden security guards cast as Nazis. (p74-5)

There is a great deal in *What Was Lost* about the desolating experience of being managed, manipulated and watched as employees and customers of the shopping centre, but no grand political theme, and no dramatic human consequences. Being subject to constant surveillance has the effect of making people feel under suspicion, wary rather than safe, but in the main ordinary life goes on relatively unchanged. Control is far from total - people (Lisa's estranged brother) still go missing, and manage to live under assumed names - but CCTV is a fixed presence in the workplace, and the novel captures exactly what John McGrath (2004:186) means when he calls shopping mall security guards an embodiment of "peculiarly abject authority".

Conclusion.

Literary fiction - in the broadest sense - has tackled the theme of surveillance in a way that parallels and complements (and quite possibly draws from) ideas being developed in the social sciences. It does so in a somewhat more nuanced way than cinematic fiction, and it acknowledges the increased complexity of surveillance since *Nineteen Eighty Four* appeared. Yet no single surveillance story has emerged to supercede this iconic novel, although the majority of the texts mentioned here are among the few to have been publicised in press reviews. No claims can be made as to how audiences have received them, and it is unlikely that any readers yet have a sense of "surveillance novels" as a distinct literary grouping; at present, for now, that is a purely academic construction. The gist of the novels, taken collectively, is indeed that burgeoning surveillance technologies are to be feared, although if psychoanalyst Adam Philip's (2007) insightful epigram - "Paranoia is the self-cure for insignificance" - is valid, our fear is arguably functional, perhaps even agentic. In a globalised world where we occasionally sense that the control of events is beyond us, shaped unimaginably powerful institutions, in whose machinations we might at any time be

caught up, surveillance stories both legitimate our suspicions and hint reassuringly that, in our fumbling quest to understand who our masters are, we are at least on the right track.

In at least some surveillance stories, a new variant of the traditional adventure story hero is our surrogate in this task - a person who, despite everything, still manages to live anonymously, invisibly, "off the grid", without leaving traces, and onto whom we can project our dwindling hopes of freedom. In Ken Macleod's (2007) technothriller *The Execution Channel,* for example, a security operative frustratingly learns

> from MI5's London HQ that all the face recognition software, all the trawling
> and tracking and surveillance of the British state, couldn't find a trace of the
> face, card transactions, or vehicle registrations of a man who evidently went
> by many names, only one of which   was James Travis (Macleod 2007:
> 107-8)

In broad terms, this type of character is not wholly new in Western literature. Joseph Conrad's (1915) Axel Heyst was "invulnerable because elusive" but the Malay archipelago in the late nineteenth century afforded more opportunities for reclusive Europeans to vanish than the present day western world affords to anyone. From the Scarlet Pimpernel onwards, in traditional crime and spy thrillers, insouciant and ingenious heroes routinely stay "one step ahead" of powerful opponents, but twenty-first century heroes require quite specific counter-surveillance skills to achieve this. Anonymity must now be worked at, via easy access to forged identity documents, the capacity to route untraceable phone calls through the net and, when necessary , an ability to anticipate and dodge the swivel and and tilt of CCTV cameras. Maya and the two young men she protects in *The Traveller* epitomise the type, but there are more mundane, realistic examples. They can comfortably take on new identities, remain anonymous despite remorseless scanning and cannot be "mined" out of databases, at least not in real-time, not until it is "too late" for whatever authority-subverting action the plot requires. The Harlequins' austere protocols for survival amidst the tendrils of "the vast machine" - keep on the move, defy predictability and order, cultivate randomness - speak, in fantasy form, to the latent fears and desires of at least some late modern people3.

But, for ordinary mortals, is ever greater self-diminishment before the gaze and reach of surveillance, all we have to fear? Is that the only subjectivity that surveillance produces in us? In J G Ballard's idiosyncratic oeuvre, the sterile, alienating domains in which the contemporary middle class lives and moves - suburbs, science parks, leisure complexes and shopping malls, in which surveillance is ubiquitous - call forth psychotic violence, before - or more precisely, at the very point at which - subjugation of their occupants is achieved. Such is our human nature, that "indisposition" is neither as passively borne, nor as easily suppressed, as Zoran Zivkovik imagined, at least not in a western consumer society. In much of Ballard's work psychosis is represented rather ambivalently, as an affirmation, albeit twisted and destructive, of basic human impulses for freedom and meaning in the soulless landscapes of modernity. In *Running Wild* - Ballard's (1988) masterpiece - the emphasis is a little different. It is set in a luxurious gated community in southern England whose affluent parents benignly use technology to surveil every moment of their precious children's time, fatally but unknowingly eroding their capacity for affection and empathy - and are systematically massacred by them as a result. Here the childrens' psychosis is less a *reaction against* the "surveillance of the heart" (p37) and is more its terrifying corollary, an outworking in more brutal form of the same cold logic that misguidedly inspired the imposition of panoptic surveillance in the first place (see Gasiorek 2005:161-168).

A similar dynamic, on a grander scale, is at work in Margaret Atwood's (2003*) Oryx and Crake*, which also echoes Jonathan Raban's novel in its insistence that investment in contemporary forms of anti-terror surveillance, directed at an external "other", is deflecting our attention away from more pressing dangers. It is set at two points in the future. In the first, humanity has been rendered all but extinct by an orchestrated bioterrorist attack from within rather than without the western world. The second - nearer to us in time - depicts the police state in which the virus responsible for the man-made pandemic is first cultivated. The security services in this earlier era   - the CorpSeCorp - make full use of CCTV, biometric access controls, automated motion sensors and lie-detection, but none of this hardware identifies where the real danger lies - a misanthropic scientist, emblematic of western nihilism - let alone saves the world. In the later future, the ailing lone survivor of the pandemic shambles disconsolately into the ruins of the laboratories where he had once worked:

He passes the first barricade with its crapped out scopers and busted searchlights, then the checkpoint booth. A guard is lying half in, half out. .... No trees here, they'd mowed down everything you could hide behind, divided the territory into squares with lines of heat and motion sensors . The eerie chessboard effect is already gone; weeds are poking up like whiskers all over the surface. .... He continues on, across the moat, past the sentry boxes where the CorpSe Corps armed guards once stood and the glassed-in cubicles where they'd monitored the surveillance equipment, then past the rampart watchtower with the steel door - standing forever open, now - where he'd once been ordered to present his thumbprint and the iris of his eye. (Atwood 2003: 225-227)

Such may be one future for the surveillance technology we see around us now. As the review   in this chapter had shown, there are numerous others, and   many idioms in which surveillance is being discussed. How much such fiction contributes to a critical consciousness in the wider public is uncertain, but it is of significance in itself that major novelists like Atwood, Lott, Ballard, Raban and de Lillo think surveillance is worthy of serious intellectual attention. Genre novels are important too - perhaps more important, given their mass readership - because whether surveillance is merely part of the backdrop or the specific focus of the story, they are at least registering its presence in the world. The distinction between genre fiction and literary fiction is in any case permeable, and increasingly spurious. Atwood, like Orwell before her, recognised that the idiom of "speculative fiction" has much to offer as a means of engaging with the challenges of late modern life. Several hitherto literary writers eg Michael Cunningham (2005); Jeannette Winterson (2007) have in fact tried their hand at science fiction (and addressed surveillance in passing) and this genre - the very first to see surveillance coming - will continue to be a key source of critical thinking on the subject. J G Ballard, on the other hand, famously made the transition the other way - from science fiction to literary fiction, and in *Running Wild* he produced a classic of "surveillance literature" which has yet to be recognised as such, and which may indeed have anticipated the very neglect into which its searingly unpalatable truth about contemporary surveillance would fall.

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Endnotes

1. I am grateful to Dietmar Kammerer for the reference to Harben's work. He also drew my attention to a recent German novel by Ulrich Pelzer's (2007) *Teil der Losung (Part of the Solution* - although it is as yet untranslated into English) - which explores the surveillance society through the eyes of a contemporary young journalist seeking to make contact with the still "underground" members of the former Red Brigades. Doubtless there is a case for comparative literary studies of surveillance representations, and different stories are perhaps being told outside the mostly Anglophone literature covered in this chapter.

2. There is inevitably much speculation on the internet as to Twelve Hawk's "real identity". One suggestion, currently ascendant, is that he is Michael Cunningham, a literary novelist seeking to reach a wider audience with his concerns about surveillance with a potentially bestselling genre novel. Cunningham (2005) has written a serious literary/science fiction novel, *Specimen Days*, passages of which do indeed register some of the same concerns as *The Traveller* - but the same might be said of many contemporary writers.

3. There is a general fascination with people who live "off the grid", precisely because it is getting harder to do. Osama Bin Laden is a case in point. More mundanely, John Darwin faked his own death in a canoe accident near Hartlepool in March 2002, lived "off the grid" thereafter (secretly renewing contact with his "widow" after a year, but not his grieving sons), finally handing himself into London police in December 2007. One journalist described it as "a story that has gripped the imagination of the British. A story of greed, lies, subterfuge and betrayal. But perhaps most of all a story about escape" (Richard Elias, Living a Lie. *Scotland on Sunday* 9th December 2007)

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