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**Totalitarianism and Dystopia: Parallels between Orwell's *1984*
and the Twenty-First Century**

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Dedications

This research work is wholeheartedly dedicated to our beloved parents who taught us life lessons, and precious siblings for their constant support and endless love.

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Abstract

The twentieth century marked the rise of totalitarian regimes in different places around the world, likewise, the genre of dystopian literature flourished concurrently. This dissertation aims at analysing the dystopian and totalitarian aspects of George Orwell's *1984* as well as picking out the similarities between the fictional world of the novel and today's reality. For this purpose, the historical approach was used to investigate the influence of Orwell's life on his work, combined with the comparative method to draw the parallels between the novel and the world today. The dissertation is organized into two chapters; the first one gives a theoretical background about totalitarianism and dystopian literature before exploring the author's life and earlier works, then an analysis of the novel and its elements is given leading to reveal the novel's controversy. The second chapter, however, illustrates examples of dystopian and totalitarian elements in the novel, followed up by a comparative study that highlights the common points between fiction and reality. The results of the dissertation show that the ruling power in the novel made use of fear and psychophysical torture mixed with systematic brainwashing to keep its tight gripe around the people. Moreover, it confirms that regardless of the similarities between the fictional world of the novel and that of nowadays Orwell did not write *1984* to predict the future but rather to raise awareness against totalitarianism.

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General Introduction

It is hard to imagine a world with no connections, because as complex species made of various molecules and atoms, we also share time and space with other parts of the universe. Therefore, this creates a sense of unity. Over centuries of human existing, *homo sapiens* have developed mentally due to the constant change of their environment; their ability to think helped them to form new cultures and languages in order to be capable of clear communication. It is human nature to seek freedom; we are separated from our mothers' wombs at the moment of birth in order to be free and belong to a certain group. The community people live in has the power to unconsciously shape their identity and influence choices in life. However, individuality is not difficult to reach, especially for those who lack the sense of belonging. This is why, history marked decades of people committing acts of deviance and rebellion.

Humans are able to record history through literature to tell their stories and represent different aspects of life. Literature, over centuries, has had a major role in telling such stories; it has impacted readers and encouraged them to study these issues in depth and contemplate the meaning of life and morality. They are all portrayed in different genres; fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

The age of Renaissance for example, had known one of the greatest men in history who viewed the world differently; Galileo's fondness of the night sky made him the father of modern science today. Shakespeare's name, however, is often associated with literature. His understanding of human nature was demonstrated in his works; he uses complex characters to represent the depth of human mind. For this reason, he expanded the English vocabulary in order for us to comprehend this complexity and be able to express our own thoughts and ideas. Although Renaissance utopias had a massive contribution to the English literature, today, centuries later, they came to an end, to give birth to the dystopian genre.

Dystopian fiction did not only emerge as a response to utopia, but to represent the reality of the societies who live under oppression and reflect on the injustice of some

political systems by predicting a very exaggerated dark future. One of the very popular authors who tackled such issues was George Orwell in his most important book *1984* where he depicted the life of societies under totalitarian rule. The events of this novel took place in a fictional gloomy city named Oceania, where there are no real connections or credibility of information. Though it is a fictional literary work, its events are inspired from the second world war, with the rise of totalitarianism in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the depiction by raising the following research questions:

- How was totalitarianism depicted in the novel?
- How is the Orwellian retrospective evident in the 21st century?

In conducting this research, the historical approach is used in order to see how Orwell's living conditions shaped him as a writer, combined with the comparative method to compare the fictional world of the novel with that of today's reality. Moreover, the purpose behind writing this extended essay is to debunk the myth that *1984* was written as a literal prediction for the future, but rather as a cautionary tale against the dangers of totalitarianism and fascist regimes.

This dissertation is segmented into two chapters; the first one specifically covers the concept of totalitarianism and its origins, along with dystopian literature and its focal features. Moreover, it explores the life of George Orwell and his earlier works which were so influential that the term "Orwellian" was coined, before giving a brief analysis of the novel in terms of characters and settings and their contribution to the plot. Finally, the chapter closes with a recount of the novel's controversy upon its release.

The second chapter is devoted to study this cautionary tale in depth, starting with the dystopian elements in the novel, then tackling some aspects of totalitarianism such as doublethink, newspeak, past rectification, the usage of warfare and finally the issue of surveillance. In addition to that, this chapter highlights the common points between the novel and today's world in general, bringing attention to the excessive usage of propaganda and censorship in every state regardless of its ideology, moving to the issue

of privacy and the education system that limits the students' creativity and critical thinking forcing them to accept injustice and hierarchy as a norm. Lastly a comparison between the lonely situation during the pandemic and that of the novel is given before tackling today's thought police that is the cancel culture.

Chapter One: Literature Overview

Outline of Chapter One

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2. Totalitarianism
 - 1.2.1. Definition of the Totalitarianism
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1.1. Introduction

One of the most popular literary works in the genre of Dystopia is George Orwell's novel *1984*; in which he depicted the oppression in a society under the rule of a totalitarian government where the characters were constantly watched. This chapter will cover the concept of totalitarianism and dystopian literature along with the background of the author and analysis of the novel.

1.2. Totalitarianism

One of the most controversial political systems over the last sixty years is "Totalitarianism". During this era, people started assuming that the world could be a dark place where the government is the absolute power referring to it as the "new god". After the horrible genocides the first and second world war had caused, people realized the danger of this regime.

1.2.1. Definition of Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a political system that strives to take full total control over the masses' public and private life including beliefs, identity and even thoughts. In fact, "when a totalitarian government gains control, existing laws, government systems, and traditions are replaced or destroyed" (Cernak 12).

The term "totalitarianism" was developed by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in the early 1920s in order to describe the new fascist government of Italy in which he tried to spin it to appear more positive. Elaborating his argument, he often repeated: "all within the state, none outside the state, none against the state" (Reeves 206).

While the two concepts "totalitarianism" and "authoritarianism" are used interchangeably, their ruling approaches are not exactly the same. In his book *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Linz argues that "We cannot emphasize enough how important such an analytical distinction is for raising meaningful questions between polity, society, and economy, to which we should add a fourth aspect, the cultural and religious realm" (58). On the one hand, an authoritarian system's main focus is on the

individual power, some social and economical situations are outside the government's control.

A totalitarian system on the other hand, is a holographic structure where the tyranny exists at every single level; they seek power beyond governmental rule. People living under such regime are completely powerless with no freedom; they are constantly afraid of being unmasked, as the government uses advanced technology to spy on them. Totalitarian leaders aim to build an ignorant society where people do not know how to think for themselves, only the government can decide and choose; the people they marry, the career they choose and the right words they should say. Therefore, the government puts a lot of efforts and uses different methods in order to remain powerful such as manipulating its citizens, brainwashing their minds to accept their reality. Though this system might seem too terrifying to be real, it actually existed in the past and started to develop in the 20th century.

1.2.2. Origins

The totalitarianism movement has emerged between the 1920s and 1930s. It appeared in different areas in the world including Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and Stalin's Soviet Union. Back then, most people started to see the world from a nihilistic perspective, this eventually led to the rise of this movement. As a matter of fact isolation and loneliness are one of the main causes that contribute to the birth of totalitarianism; lonely and purposeless people are the easiest preys; when people are apart, they are more likely to cling to the government, and eventually follow its rules.

In part three of her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt states that "What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience" (176). For dictators, law is above everyone, they believe in one absolute power, using fear and force as their main strategy to maintain their control over the state, especially at the times where people are most vulnerable, weak, and apart such as in wars. And probably one of the most infamous examples of a totalitarian ruler was Adolf Hitler, who went beyond the political rule and sought control over people's beliefs and race, causing the death of

millions of Jews during the Second World War, in a catastrophic incident known as “The Holocaust”. According to Arendt “Both Hitler and Stalin held out promises of stability in order to hide their intention of creating a state of permanent instability” (89). Between the past and present time, the totalitarian regime has always been relevant and applied in different methods. In fact, this concept was perfectly embodied in many literary works, more precisely in the genre of dystopia.

1.3. Dystopian Literature

Dystopian literature is currently one of the most influential genres, a lot of its classics had been adapted into successful movies. The genre as it is known now had been established with the publication of *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin and it went through a process of development that produced other sub-genres and introduced different themes. Dystopias are now used as weapons for speaking against social and political issues and to understand how that is done an explanation of this concept and its features is needed.

1.3.1. Definition of the Concept

The term dystopia was coined by John Stuart Mills in 1868, and it came as a counter to Thomas More’s *Utopia* (Vieira 16). While the latter refers to a place where everything is at its best, dystopia is used to describe “An imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The word dystopia has roots from Ancient Greece's “dys” which means “bad”, and “topia” that means place, making the whole meaning as “bad place”.

Dystopian societies are usually built on positive principles such as honesty, loyalty and equality, aiming to achieve a utopian one. However, these principles are taken to the extreme, resulting in a totalitarian state where every form of individualism is denied and prohibited. Thus, dystopia is “a utopia which goes wrong” (Vieira 16). Dystopian literature warns us of the dangers of choosing such a path and foreshadows a future that might be a bit exaggerated but still accurate in most of its points.

The increasing popularity of dystopian literature set the ground for the emergence of a sub-genre called Young Adult Dystopia. While this genre had almost similar features as the main one, it was mainly directed to an audience of teens as well as had teens as the main characters. The *Hunger Games* trilogy written by Suzanne Collins is considered as one of the most famous YA dystopias that brought attention to this sub-genre.

1.3.2. Features of Dystopian Literature

Dystopian literary works have some repeated themes and characteristics that can be considered as the pillars of this genre with government control being the most predominant one. It is likely due to the fact that dystopian literature flourished in the twentieth century, drawing inspiration from major happenings like the First World War as scholar Gregory Claeys points out (Bendahmane 8). This theme was used for the first time by Yevgeny Zamyatin in his novel *We*, the supreme power that was “One State” was nothing but a reflection of Lenin and Stalin’s Russian government (Stoner 03). The government plays mind games on the citizens and imposes the ideology it sees most fit. It brainwashes the people into mindless creatures who have neither freedom nor individuality but are only there to serve the government. According to Sharon Stevenson,

The evil in a dystopia is usually a faceless, all-encompassing state, bureaucracy, or belief system that annihilates or restricts some set of values the readers believe are indispensable to both their own and the characters’ ability to function as fully dignified human beings (131).

These people are forced to neglect the simplest rights such as love and feelings in general. Children are educated and raised as soldiers whose brains are stuffed with the state’s ideology to eliminate any room of doubt or potential revolution in the future. The state also tends to alter the past and change history, impose suppression and surveillance on its citizens to further its tyranny (Booker and Thomas quoted by El-Sobky 151).

Critics argue that government dominance is achieved through technology which makes it another dominant feature in dystopian works. Gorman Beauchamp claims that the reason why dystopian societies are generally technically advanced is that dystopists view “the technology of dystopia not as a neutral tool misused by totalitarian rulers but as intrinsically totalitarian in itself, a futuristic Frankenstein's monster”, yet he makes an exception of cases where the state puts its citizens in technically disadvantaged situations on purpose in order to trap them in “a state of depressed deprivation” (54-55). The issue is not whether the society is too reliant on technology or barely has any but how the state uses it to manipulate people’s lives and turn them into conformists who blindly follow the government.

Conformity therefore is another issue that is treated by dystopian literature. The government aims at suppressing any type of individual thought by deluding the people into believing that “achieving conformity and sameness” is their ultimate goal (Booker and Thomas quoted by El-Sobky 151). The reason behind this is to eliminate possible conflicts that can be caused by diversity. (Basu, Broad and Hintz quoted by Ryan 9). Conformity is sometimes manifested in dress codes, literary works, music and art produced and imposed by the government, since these aspects can be considered as forms of self expression that threaten the unity of society.

Spisak in her article “What Makes a Good YA Dystopian Novel?” argues that conformity is not absolute and some vulnerability is necessary in order for the protagonist to start questioning things, especially if he was in contact with a person from the older generation who remembers how life used to be before (par. 8-par. 10). She adds that the protagonist is the readers’ lens that detects what is wrong within society and raises questions that may escalate into a revolution, all while being a normal human being with no extraordinary abilities. She concludes by saying that this normalcy is what allures the readers into this genre since watching the protagonist take risks, fight and struggle for survival ignites excitement (par. 16).

Not all dystopian novels include all of these aspects but the majority and most influential ones do. And some others include additional themes like environmental

destruction for example. These aspects, however, are apparent in George Orwell's dystopian work.

1.4. George Orwell Biography

George Orwell was a British writer whose works are still impactful until today. To understand the ideology and value of his literary works, one must investigate the circumstances he grew in.

1.4.1. Life and Early Works

Orwell's birth name was Eric Blair, he was born in Motihari, Bengal, India in 1903 from Scottish parents. His father was an official in the Indian Civil Service and only retired by the time Blair was eight years old, this resulted in forming a fragile relationship between the two as he explained in his essay "Why I Write" (par. 2), especially after he got sent to the preparatory school ST. Cyprian on the South coast of England thanks to a scholarship.

Orwell talked about his experience in this school in a long autobiographical essay named "Such, Such Were the Joys", he admitted that it was there that his eyes were opened to the true cruel nature of life and his ideology and perception of the world started shaping at that point. Seeing how the rich students were treated better than he and the other scholarship boys by the principle and his wife, Orwell was introduced for the first time to the concept of classes and he could witness the power of money (Orwell and Angus 334-335). Being beaten by the principle was a normal punishment for breaking the rules or failing academically but Orwell claimed that the rich boys were spared from such punishment: "I doubt whether Sambo ever caned any boy whose father's income was much above £2,000 a year" (336). In addition to that, he criticized the teaching system in that school saying that it pretty much consisted of cramming scholarship boys with learning "as cynically as a goose is crammed for Christmas" (336). His days there were tiring and stressing that his resolution was to make it to Eton just to laze around and he succeeded in doing that, yet when he finished his programme in Eton, he was advised by his tutor to quit his education and get a job instead, and this

is how he joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma by the age of seventeen (Nuwayser 3).

Orwell did not enjoy his profession as a police officer in Burma especially that the weather was affecting his poor health (Nuwayser 3), nonetheless the five years he spent there were crucial for shaping the writer in him as he says in *The Road to Wigan Pier*: “Moreover, in the police you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters and there is an appreciable difference between doing dirty work and merely profiting by it” (Orwell quoted by Kozak 66). He could witness at firsthand how the British Empire was growing and flourishing by robbing and exploiting the Burmese rather than building itself up from scratch, he condemned the imperialistic policy of Britain and refused to be a part of it as he explains:

I was in the Indian Police five years, and by the end of that time I hated the Imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it [...]. But it is not possible to be part of such a system without recognizing it as an unjustifiable tyranny (130).

He left his position in Burma in 1927 and headed back to England to pursue his writing career, yet his lack of success and money forced him to take additional jobs such as teaching (Nuwayser 4). Living among the poor was the driving force for him to write his first ever book *Down and out in Paris and London*, it was also the first time he used his pseudonym George Orwell. It was mainly an autobiographical work that recounted his life from 1929 to 1933, providing a shocking image of the lives of the poor and struggling classes. There were many theories and questions as to why Orwell chose such a life style despite having enough connection to live a better one. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* Orwell stated that he resolved to live like this because of the huge guilt and disgust he felt during his time in Burma, since he helped oppressing and exploiting the Burmese, he hoped for this period to be of redemption for him (Perkins 7). In 1934 Orwell released his first novel *Burmese Days* aiming to expose the dark side of the British rule in Burma, this also marked the beginning of Orwell’s interest in politics, yet he was still not sure about his “political orientation” by that time (Orwell par. 10).

Late in 1936 Orwell decided to fight in the Spanish Civil War for the Republicans against Franco's Nationalists, and although this decision got him shot in the throat and arm ("George Orwell" 2016) it helped determine where he stood politically (Orwell par. 10). Being a socialist, he was forced to escape Spain because of the Soviet-backed communists who targeted the likes of him, this was what turned him into an anti-Stalinist ("Historic Figures: George Orwell (1903 - 1950)" par. 2). In 1938 he released his book *Homage to Catalonia*, an autobiographical account of his experience in the Spanish Civil War, where he resisted the fascist threat that targeted his freedom, and although this experience was so painful and draining for him it did not change the faith he held for man's decency (Aceituno 30).

In 1939 Orwell published another novel, *Coming Up for Air*, it foresaw the Second World War and described the nostalgia of the British for their old peaceful times while anxiously waiting for the nightmarish future (Nourmohammadi 5). Orwell decided to join the British army when the war broke out for real, yet he was rejected because of his illness so he instead joined the Home Guard (Nuwayser 8). He also worked for the *BBC* from 1941 to 1943 in broadcasting British propaganda to India. In his resignation letter he explained that he did not leave because of conflicts with the *BBC*, nor was he forced to say and broadcast things he did not believe in, it was simply because he believed that all the work he was doing was nothing but a waste of his time and the public money with no results, and it was better and more useful for him to go back to "the normal work of writing and journalism" (Nuwayser 8). His works in that decade consisted mainly of book reviews, serious and literary essays and two novels which he is mostly known for: *Animal Farm* and *1984* (Nuwayser 8).

Animal Farm was published in 1945 as a political satire on the Russian Revolution and criticism of the totalitarian regimes in general and that of Stalin in particular (Pelpuo, Bakuuro and Tuurosong 4). Orwell had problems finding publishers for this novel because it had elements that offended Russia, some houses rejected it on the spot while others contemplated whether they should publish it or not, but in the end it was published by Secker and Warburg and it was a huge success that brought Orwell both financial stability and acclamation ("Animal Farm: An Overview" 2015). It is

assumed that one of the reasons why this novel was unique was the participation of Orwell's wife in it, she provided her special view of life as well as her knowledge about psychology and unique usage of words, yet she passed away shortly before the novel was published (Nuwayser 9).

Orwell wrote *1984* while fighting for his life against tuberculosis, this was one of the reasons why the atmosphere in that novel was so depressing. His aim from writing this novel was to warn people of the dangers of government control that could reach even personal thoughts ("George Orwell" 2016). *1984* was impactful even beyond Orwell's expectations. The special vocabulary it introduced, such as "*doublethink, newspeak, thoughtcrime, and Big Brother*", slowly became part of the language of English speaking people everywhere (Mambrol). The novel was published in 1949, one year before Orwell's death.

The purpose behind Orwell's writing was to "make political writing into an art", as he states in his essay "Why I Write" (par. 11). His driving force "[was] always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice" and his desire to unfold truths and shed light on facts that went unnoticed, all while trying to find people who were ready to listen to him (par. 11). He also stated that only after finding a political purpose to back up his works that it felt like his books were alive and had value, (par. 14) and that political purpose was to attack and condemn totalitarianism as he notes in the same essay: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism, as I understand it." (par. 10). Orwell was successful in keeping a strong legacy behind him, as his ideology was so influential it got its own name, "Orwellian".

1.4.2. The Orwellian

The term "Orwellian" is derived from the famous English writer Eric Arthur Blair's pen name "George Orwell". It was coined in one word to represent the issues that Orwell had been tackling in his journey as an author; the reality of a totalitarian state and how it actually works. It is in essence, an adjective that describes what seems abnormal, dark and particularly the misuse of language for the purpose of manipulating

societies, especially totalitarian ones. Nick Bentley claims in his article “What does ‘Orwellian’ mean, anyway?” that,

Perhaps one of the ironies of using writers’ names as adjectives is that they become saddled with the very things that they were warning us about. Dickensian, for example, has become synonymous with the worst aspects of a class-ridden Victorian society, while Kafkaesque refers to the dehumanizing effects of the individual’s encounter with inflexible state bureaucracy (par. 11).

He also added: “Orwell’s name will forever be associated with totalitarianism and the manipulation of language in order to maintain state control.” (par.12). According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, the term Orwellian is “used to describe a political system in which a government tries to have complete control over people’s behavior and thoughts”. It emphasizes on the importance and power of language in shaping our thoughts and actions.

The themes of Orwellian were apparent in Orwell’s two famous novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* in which the characters private and public life is out of their hands, abused mentally and psychologically by the upper power. *1984* took place in Oceania ; a fictional gloomy city ruled by a government that not only controls every single move of its people but also has a very restricted and limited vocabulary known as the “Newspeak”; one official dialect must be followed by all the citizens of the state.

In his essay, “politics and the English language”, Orwell argues that “political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” (Orwell and Angus 139) “If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” (137) he adds. Orwell believed that language and thoughts are correlated, therefore, a simple vocabulary with less complexity and grammar rules does not really give people the chance to contemplate big issues, because a man who is able to think is not easy to be controlled, he is critical, thus, he can form new ideas that might be considered as an act of rebellion against the party.

People often think that Orwellian only exists in fictional books, or totalitarian regimes, but Orwell has warned us of the potential of this occurring even in democratic countries, especially nowadays with the rise of technology where social media has deceived its users to blindly adopt new ideas that do not necessarily align with their values and beliefs, to buy products that they may not need but they do just because the algorithm thought it is the best option for them. In fact, algorithm or artificial intelligence in general does not think, it only collects patterns and presents them to us. And this might sound harmless, however the problem lies when people start to find a hard time processing information in unbiased and rational manner as they are now influenced by robotic choices, they end up losing touch with reality and the ability to think for themselves.

Recently, this issue has been represented in a lot of science-fiction films and television shows; one of the most popular works is the one entitled “Black Mirror”. Every episode of this spectacle show is different from the another, tackling serious issues like the herd mentality, the danger of technology and corrupted politics. In his article “Behind the Black Mirror: The Limits of Orwellian Dystopia”, Tony McKenn thinks that “Specifically, these episodes offer slices of dystopia; a future – clearly not too far away from our present – in which one of the aspects of our contemporary cultural existence is enhanced and exaggerated to the point at which its crass and exploitative dimensions are naked and visible.” For these reasons, George Orwell insisted on the protection of language in a world where “war is peace” and “freedom is slavery” when he wrote his most important novel “*1984*”.

1.5. Orwell’s *1984*

1984 (*The Last Man in Europe* initially) is a dystopian science fiction novel written by George Orwell and published in 1949 unlike what the name suggests. The events take place in Great Britain, or “Airstrip One” as it is called in the novel, in London specifically where Winston Smith is trying to rebel against the totalitarian rule in his country. The novel serves as a cautionary tale against totalitarian and controlling regimes by predicting a very exaggerated and dark

future for the people, it mainly drew inspiration from the aftermath of The Second World War. The book is considered controversial and was challenged and banned in several places, regardless of that, *1984* is Orwell's most acclaimed work and it was translated into 65 languages at least (Rodden 168), making it a literary classic in dystopian fiction and below an analysis of the characters, settings and plot is provided.

1.5.1. Characters

The characters in *1984* vary from rebellious ones who search for freedom, to heartless and brainwashed others who only want to serve the Party. The characters are also the main element that pushes the plot to develop and move, yet almost all of them seem to be constructed on single ideas that contradict each other most of the times, except for Winston whose different sides are presented. This makes him stand out as a normal human being more than the others. This does not nullify the importance of the rest of the characters in any way, if anything they help bring the book into life by representing the despair of the people and corruption of the government.

1.5.1.1. Winston Smith

Winston Smith is the protagonist of the novel. We are introduced to him in the opening scene as he is coming back home from his work in the Ministry of Truth. Winston is a very aged thirty-nine years old man with a poor health and thin physique, as Orwell described him: "...a smallish, frail figure, the meagreness of his body merely emphasized by the blue overalls which were the uniform of the party" (4), his state is a projection of Orwell's when he was suffering because of tuberculosis. He lives in a filthy building where the elevator almost never works, add to that the disgusting smell of boiled cabbage that never leaves it. In his apartment, Winston cannot enjoy his privacy because of the telescreen that monitors his movements, thus he is forced to show outward orthodoxy all the time, despite him having rebellious thoughts and desires.

Winston works in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth, this ministry is concerned with all forms of art and media, and in this department, Winston is tasked with altering and changing history according to what the Party demands. This job does not align with Winston's morals and beliefs, yet he is obliged to do it out of fear and

in order to survive. He is not, thus, a total conformist member of the Outer Party, as he is constantly taking acts of defiance. The first and smallest one was owning a diary where he wrote what he could not share with anyone else. His rebellious self started unleashing by the time, he started mingling more with the proletariat, owned items that were forbidden for they unveiled something about the past the Party was trying to erase and he fell in love, proving that the Party failed in rooting out his humanity. His actions of rebellion reached the peak when he decided to join The Brotherhood, a secret organization that rebelled against the Party, yet he puts his trust in the wrong people thinking that they were members of that organization. Winston gets exposed and arrested by the Party that subjects him to all kinds of torture, this time they do succeed in killing his soul. Winston Smith was named after Winston Churchill for they both had rebellious thoughts, yet a name as common as Smith was chosen to add to the realism of the novel and help the reader identify with the protagonist. Winston symbolized everything the totalitarian societies lacked: freedom, love and intellectuality.

1.51.3. O'Brien

O'Brien is one of the main characters as he is -besides Big Brother- the main antagonist of the story who could easily gain Winston's trust and fooled him to think that he is nothing but a comrade and ready to rebel against the Party at any moment possible. He is described in the novel as "a large, burly man with a thick neck and coarse humorous, brutal face. In spite of his formidable appearance, he had a certain of manner." (14). He has interesting looks that drive people to assume he is quite intelligent and "curiously civilized" (13) or at least to Winston whose curiosity was not only piqued by "the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prize-fighter's physique" but also by the subtle belief that the latter's political orthodoxy was not as absolute as it seemed (14).

In the first part of the book O'Brien was depicted as a mysterious man who looks smart enough to realize the corrupted system, and Winston has always sensed that since the moment he saw him. However, "it was impossible to be sure whether O'Brien was a friend or an enemy." (26) For that reason Winston was very cautious, considering if

he should approach him and get to know him on a deeper level; his thoughts about Big Brother. O'Brien was also watching Winston for a long time, and after them both finally interacting, O'Brien wanted to gain Winston's trust. Thus, he faked a story of him being a member of "The Brotherhood", and gave him and Julia a banned book that contains the Party's history and ideology. It was then clear that O'Brien was indeed a traitor; one of the Inner Party's leaders and a member of the police of thought. In the last part of the book, he tortures Winston by all means and brainwashes him to obey and follow the Party's rules blindly forcing him to believe that if Big Brother says two plus two equals five it means it really equals five and not four. When looking back at the history of O'Brien, it is quite similar to Winston as he was previously caught for a thought crime, and also got tortured and abused psychologically. Therefore, O'Brien is another victim of Big Brother's party who symbolizes its contradictions and cruelty; turning humans into monsters for power.

1.5.1.3. Big Brother

Big Brother is supposedly the ruler of Oceania and one of the founders of the Party. He is a forty-five years old man "with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features" (Orwell 3) as a certain image of him shows. This image is crafted on coins, broadcasted through telescreens and spread all over the city with the slogan "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU", which either infuses the people with a sense of protectiveness and loyalty or fear and obedience.

Throughout the whole novel, Big Brother never makes a physical appearance, he is neither seen nor heard, even in his speech during the Two Minutes Hate the reader never gets to know what Big Brother said. Nonetheless, his impact in the novel is undeniable and his importance for the people of Oceania is far greater than that of other individuals they see and interact with, this can be shown in the conversation Winston had with O'Brien after he got arrested:

'Does Big Brother exist?'

'Of course he exists. The Party exists. Big Brother is the embodiment of the Party.'

'Does he exist in the same way as I exist?'

‘You do not exist,’ said O’Brien (327).

O’Brien goes as far as telling Winston that Big Brother will not die, cannot die. This suggests that Big Brother does not even exist in the first place, he is merely a propaganda tool created by the Party, since people are more likely to trust an individual rather than an organization, and thus Big Brother is a symbol of the totalitarian rule in Oceania.

It is not a secret that Orwell was an anti-Stalinist, this explains the assumptions that Big Brother was based on Stalin. The two men had very similar traits, they both achieved power and total control over their people, they both altered history and rewrote books to match their agendas, they also did not show their opposers any mercy and immediately got rid of them, and just like Big Brother was given this name to paint him as a loving, caring family member to be trusted, Stalin was also known as “Uncle Joe” (Jenks 488).

1.5.1.4. Emmanuel Goldstein

Goldstein is the leader of the Brotherhood and the face of rebellion. He is an interesting character with huge influence in the story without even appearing. He happened to be one of the leading public figures of the Inner Party with great political power and status almost at the level of Big Brother. That was until one day he decided to run away and disappear from the public eye and refuse the injustice system he has been witnessing for a long time. “In spite of his isolation, his helplessness and the doubt that hung about his very existence, seemed like some sinister enchanter, capable by the mere power of his voice of wrecking the structure of civilization” (17).

He is the author of an untitled book that contains the darkest secrets of the Inner Party, their history, ideologies and the different manipulative methods they use in order to control the people of Oceania. He then formed “The Brotherhood”; a place for rebels to turn against Big Brother’s will. For these reasons, he became the symbol of revolution for rebels, and portrayed as an evil and treacherous man by the party. “The programmers of the two minutes hate varied from day to day, but there was none which Goldstein was not the principal figure” (14). However, in the last part of the book his existence has

been questioned, whether he was real or just an image created by the government to tell people that the penalty of betrayal is inevitable and even the strongest will not be able to stand against the power of Big Brother.

1.5.1.5. Julia

Another main character in the novel is a female named “Julia”; she is described as “a bold looking girl, of about twenty-seven, with thick dark hair, a freckled face and swift, athletic movements” (13). At first, she appears as an ordinary woman who works in the Fiction Department at the Ministry of Truth and for no reason at all “Winston had disliked her from the very first moment of seeing her” (13). However, his feelings change after she hands him a note confessing her feelings towards him. She turns out to be a fearless woman who broke the party’s rules as she claims to have had several affairs previously with her co-workers.

“Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the character who strengthens the feelings of rebellion in Winston Smith. This rebellion leads to torture and horror; it is this significance of the women’s characters that makes them important in the Orwellian fiction (Joshi 52-53). However, unlike Winston’s motivation to change their lives, Julia breaks the rules only for her own sake, she does not care about politics, she is aware of the inevitability of her death, thus, she takes the risk and does what brings her pleasure and troubles simultaneously; such as getting chocolate from the black market and falling in love with Winston.

Many literary feminists criticized the misogynistic descriptions of women in dystopian novels; they are “either sexless automatons or rebels who’ve defied the sex rules of the regime.” (Atwood 516) and Rania Khelifa Chelahi particularly in her article, “Male is Feminine under Patriarchal Governments: Male Characters of *1984* by George Orwell” shows empathy with Julia’s character stating that “She is suffering from both male’s oppression and mistreating and the patriarch government at the same time” (901). She was portrayed as an empty minded, superficial girl and inferior to Winston who only cared about her white youthful body.

1.5.2. Settings

Orwell's use of the setting is one of the things that add to the impact of the novel. Relating the character's depressing feelings to the destroyed state of London helps the reader get into the mood and understand the characters better. The events of the novel supposedly take place in 1984, yet because of how much the past had been altered nothing proved that it was indeed 1984, Winston who helped in faking the past himself knew this better than anyone else:

To begin with, he did not know with any certainty that this was 1984. It must be round about that date, since he was fairly sure that his age was thirty-nine, and he believed that he had been born in 1944 or 1945; but it was never possible nowadays to pin down any date within a year or two (Orwell 10).

The world was divided into three powerful totalitarian states, one of them being Oceania where the novel was set in while the other two were Eurasia and Eastasia. When Oceania was at war with either of them, they made a truce with the other.

The actual events happened in the capital of Airstrip One London where Winston the protagonist lived. The life of the people there is characterized by total conformity and obedience to the ruling party as rebellion is totally impossible. Everyone's movements are monitored by the telescreens that are optimized with cameras and microphones, ready to report any signs of unorthodoxy to the Thought Police whose main job is hunting down and arresting rebels. The people are thus forced to accept the poor living conditions they live in, from low wages, rationed food and clothing to worn out buildings and constant bombing. The party who is the ruling power of Oceania is able to implement its totalitarian ideology through the use of four ministries, each one having its own share in maximizing the people's suffering.

The Ministry of Truth, or Minitrue in Newspeak, is concerned with "news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts." (Orwell 7), it controls all kind of information that reaches the outer Party members, from books, newspapers, shows and broadcasts to slogans, poems and even dictionaries. The ministry was also tasked with creating cheap entertainment material for the proletariat to limit their thinking and keep

them busy not to pay attention to the real issues. It also faked and altered the past by constantly rewriting history, this job was done in the Records Department. The department can be considered as a propaganda tool for it always aimed at glorifying Big Brother by making his predictions seem like they never miss, when in reality Big Brother's past statements are often edited to match the happenings of the present. In addition to that, the Records Department destroys any records about party members who disgraced the Party by committing thought crimes, every trace of evidence about their existence is erased and instead they are replaced by fictional members who possess qualities the Party deems as the best and urges other members to be like them. There are assumptions that the Records Department was inspired by Orwell's job in the broadcasting house in the *BBC*. In short, this ministry with all of its departments were designed to plant the Party's ideology into the people.

Next there is the Ministry of Peace (Minipax) and unlike its name it actually "concerned itself with war" (Orwell 7). By constantly engaging in war with the other superstates, Oceania traps its people inside a cage of fear and paranoia that eliminates any potential possibilities of revolutions or civil wars. Having a unified enemy that all feelings of hatred and resentment are directed to creates a fake atmosphere of solidarity between the people. Since the threat is from the outside, the citizens are brainwashed to believe that the party is their protective shield, therefore Big Brother is loved and glorified even more and the people's attention is, again, shifted to trivial issue.

The third ministry is the Ministry of Plenty (Miniplenty) which controls the economy in Oceania. It is another ministry that does exactly the opposite of what its name entails by maintaining a continuous state of poverty. There is a shortage both in food and clothing, let alone the unequal distribution of goods that prioritizes the Inner Party members over the rest, yet the ministry convinces the people that their living conditions are better than that of fifty years earlier. In addition to that, the ministry tries to hide the poor quality of its products by adding the word "Victory" to their names (Victory Gin, Victory Cigarettes).

The last one is the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) that "maintained law and order" (7), another ironic name for a ministry that is described as frightening. It is where

thought criminals are sent to receive their punishment. The criminals are put in detention and forced to face the worst kinds of psychological and physical torture especially in room 101 in order to root out their rebellious thoughts. They either face their ends between the windowless walls of the ministry, or they get released when they are near broken but their love for the party and Big Brother is restored and planted deeply inside this time. This ministry implements loyalty to Big Brother through fear, surveillance and systematic brainwashing. It is also an allegory of the soviet's labour camps.

Almost everything in Oceania seems to be contradictory, from the ministries' names and their actual jobs, to the fact that real people are vaporized and totally forgotten yet fictional individuals are admired and glorified, and lastly to the party's slogan that equal between a negative aspect and its positive counterpart, "WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (Orwell 6). These contradictions are probably what make the setting not only unique and impressive, but also add to the suspense of events as the plot keeps developing.

1.5.3. Plot

In *1984*, Winston Smith is the protagonist of the story. He lives alone in a one room department located in Oceania; a country governed by Big Brother, where government consists of the previously mentioned four ministries. As much as the names of these ministries and their functions are seemingly contradictory to common sense, they demonstrate the idea of the double think, which is a concept in which one is able to believe in two contradictory thoughts. Mozaffor Hossain's article "Language as the Device for Psychological Manipulation in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: a Psycholinguistic Analysis" tackles the use of the "double-think", and argues that the "language in George Orwell's *1984* is more for intimidation than for regular communication." (25).

Due to this fear and the constant surveillance by Big Brother who appears everywhere in telescreens, Winston is unhappy and dreams for a better life of freedom with no suffering. Therefore, on April 4th, Winston Smith commits his first act of rebellion as he writes down in his diary what is on his mind; his controversial opinions about a party that not only does not believe in freedom of speech but also freedom of

thought. Winston then meets a young woman named Julia who shares with him the hatred of the system. Together, they commit another crime by engaging in a romantic relationship which is a forbidden act by the government. They continued to meet secretly discussing their usual topics such as the existence of Goldstein underground army, and the injustice of Big Brother. Until one day, they gained the courage and confessed their real thoughts of Big Brother to one of the inner party members -O'Brien- who seemed to be trustworthy, as he told them the shocking details of the brotherhood and its membership requirements which they eagerly accepted even if it costs them to steal or even murder.

In the last part of the book, the plot twist reveals the betrayal of O'Brien who turns out to be a member of the thought police and arrested both Julia and Winston. It revolves around the mental torture journey the main character- Winston- had to go through in room 101, where he tried to resist at first, and did not understand how someone can see five fingers where there are only four. O'Brien's torture even drove him to question his own existence and everyone around him. Therefore, he abandoned his values and principles not to cease his agony but because he has been brainwashed to love and accept Big Brother; the government was not interested in the rebels' actions but only their deepest thoughts, in order to change them.

The plot of this novel explores the reasons behind dictators' pursuit of power. O'Brien himself admits to Winston that "the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority. That it sought power because men in the mass were frail cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth, and must be ruled over and systematically deceived by others who were stronger than themselves" (279). Orwell firmly criticized certain regimes through this novel without dropping names, leading to different interpretations of this work and ultimately making it a subject of criticism and controversy.

1.6. 1984's Controversy

Although Orwell finished writing *1984* in 1948, the novel only got published a year later. Due to the controversial themes that were discussed in the novel many

publishing houses refused to risk publishing it, but perhaps it was this controversial aspect that made the novel Orwell's most celebrated work. It has been challenged and banned on multiple occasions, yet the novel is still relevant today after more than seventy years since its publication.

The first country to ban *1984* right after its publication was the Soviet Union. This should not come as a surprise since the novel is known to be a satirical representation of the Soviet Union under the Stalinist rule. Orwell himself admitted that a great portion of the book was based on the information he knew about the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s (Bergman 174). In response to that, the Soviets made sure that book could not reach the people in general and the dissidents in particular, yet supporters of the regime attacked it constantly and it eventually backfired at them, because the book got highlighted for being banned (Bergman 177). By the early 1960s the Soviet lost control on censoring the book and more people got their hands on it, and it became common for people to get arrested for merely possessing it (Bergman 177). However, a limited edition of the book was approved to be published in 1983 by the Andropov regime; yet, it was only available to the party elite, but by 1989 the novel got published serially in *Novyi Mir* and it was only then that the Soviet regime accepted its failure in censoring the novel (Bergman 177). Although the novel was interpreted differently by people and so many Soviets tried to alter its message by using it to criticize other states and regimes, many Soviet dissidents considered *1984* a revelation for how accurate it was in its representation of the Soviet Union and they could not believe that Orwell was not a Soviet dissident in disguise (Bergman 177).

The novel also had its share of controversy and criticism in Great Britain. *1984* was misinterpreted as an attack on socialism and the beliefs of the Labour Party since the philosophy of the Party is called "Ingsoc" which is the word for English Socialism in Newspeak. This narrative was pushed strongly by the US Republicans that it put Orwell himself on edge, and shortly before his passing away he came forward to refute these claims:

My recent novel is NOT intended as an attack on Socialism or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to

which a centralised economy is liable and which have already been partly realised in Communism and Fascism. [...]The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasise that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere (Orwell and Angus 502).

Orwell, thus, confirmed that the novel was more of a cautionary tale that condemned totalitarianism and the extreme points it could reach if people do not revolt against it. In the end, *1984* was not only criticized for its political views but for its explicit and sexual content as well. Regardless of that, the novel still proves its relevancy as it topped *Amazon's* best seller list multiple times in the past few years (Ho par.1) as some readers believe the novel to be a prophecy on its way of fulfilment.

1.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, one can clearly see that the Oceanic society is a perfect embodiment of the totalitarian principles. By instilling fear and obedience in the people and through systematic brainwashing, the Party managed to gain control over the citizens. Through the four ministries the Party could control the economy forcing the people to live in constant deprivation and poverty. The corrupted judicial system along with its constant surveillance were everyone's nightmares as no one wanted to end up in room 101, add to that the never-ending bombing that made survival almost everyone's priority. However, barely anyone seemed to question the conditions they were living in since the Party succeeded in convincing the citizens that they were living the best lives thanks to its ceaseless propaganda. It is also important to shed the light on the similarities between the fictional world of the novel and the real world of the 21st century.

**Chapter Two:
Manifestation of
Orwell's
Totalitarianism
in the 21st
Century**

Outline of Chapter Two

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Dystopian Elements in the Novel
- 2.3. Aspects of Totalitarianism in the Novel
 - 2.3.1 Doublethink
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 - 2.4.6. Cancel Culture
- 2.5. Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

During the twentieth century, the world has witnessed drastic changes in different aspects of life; it was the era of technological advances, space race, diseases, wars, and decolonization. Such events led people to think more about the future of our nations and the possibility of living in a dystopian world, especially with the rise of totalitarianism after the Second World War.

The novel *1984* in particular, has contributed enormously to the English dystopian literature and politics. Not only by exploring the themes of censorship, freedom, social class, and also the darkest facets of human nature and power, but most importantly, how these had shifted from fiction to reality.

2.2. Dystopian Elements in the Novel

Orwell wrote *1984* as a warning against what could happen if the government was to be given too much power and control over its citizens, therefore it is only logical that government control is the most dominant dystopian element in the novel. It was discussed in the previous chapter how the Party kept a firm hold of Oceania through fear, psychological and physical torture as well as the four corrupted ministries. On top of that, the Party strived to completely dehumanize the people, so their starting point was destroying families. They took it upon themselves to decide who should marry who:

All marriages between Party members had to be approved by a committee appointed for the purpose, and—though the principle was never clearly stated—permission was always refused if the couple concerned gave the impression of being physically attracted to one another (Orwell 83).

In addition to that, marriage was advocated as nothing but a tool “to beget children for the service of the Party” (84). The children of inner Party members are forced to attend “The Junior Spies” where they are trained to be the future army soldiers. They are also taught to spy on the adults, their parents especially, and report them to the Thought Police in case they witness any act of disloyalty against the Party. An example of that is Mr Parsons, Winston’s neighbour, who got turned in for thought-crime by his own

daughter after muttering “down with Big Brother” in his sleep. In short, the families are totally void of any feelings of love and comfort, they only serve the Party and are ready to betray each other for that purpose.

Another apparent dystopian element is the misuse of technology. The Party used telescreens both to monitor the citizens and pierce their ears with constant propaganda that consisted of broadcasting fake news about the Party’s achievements. Microphones were planted everywhere around the country in both visible and hidden places; these microphones could pick up sounds as faint as a whisper. Add to that the speakwrites which were used in the Records Department, these devices turn speech into written passages to facilitate and quicken the work pace and therefore the falsification of history and news. No other inventions are mentioned in the novel beside these three adding to them rockets and bombs; in fact, the technology in Oceania seems to be quite simple. This makes the country fall under the “depressed deprivation” category that scholar Gorman Beauchamp mentioned before (55).

Winston learns from Goldstein’s book that the Party is repressing the technological development on purpose to maintain the hierarchical nature of the society (Orwell 240). Goldstein notes that “...the world is more primitive today than it was fifty years ago” and this was either caused by the series of wars that ravaged the world or the repression of individual thought in the totalitarian states when thought is the essence of scientific development (239). He adds that the only technological development that was allowed was the one “connected with warfare and police espionage” (239), since it was clear that an increase in inventions in other fields meant putting an end to inequality by ending “hunger, overwork, dirt, illiteracy, and disease” (239), and regardless of whether these inventions were created for this exact purpose or not, an increase in wealth was inevitable and that wealth was to be distributed sooner or later therefore the living standards would be improved (239). The Party built its hierarchical society on poverty and ignorance, an increase in wealth would totally shake these two pillars since people would have more time to think and educate themselves. Therefore, they would not accept any abuse from their rulers, as it was explained by Goldstein:

[For] if leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves; and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realize that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. (240)

In short, the Party would rather invest in developing machines that spy on and surveil the people, bombs and rockets to wage war against the neighbouring states and perhaps even use it on its citizens than help enrich them; all to plant conformity deeper into the citizens' minds.

As stated in Chapter One before, a dystopian society is characterized by conformity and sameness in order to avoid conflicts fuelled by diversity and individualism. The forced use of the word “comrade” is an example of that since labels such as “Mr” or “Mrs” are not allowed, “‘Mrs’ was a word somewhat discountenanced by the Party—you were supposed to call everyone ‘comrade’—” (Orwell 26). In other circumstances some may argue that the word “comrade” was used to entail equality and perhaps even friendship, but in a world where everyone is forced to wear the same thing—blue overalls were worn by all Outer Party members regardless of their gender—and everyone is supposed to read the same books, novels, poems that are obviously made by the Party, it is a clear sign that the label “comrade” is a form of forced conformity and sameness. In fact, Julia herself admitted in one of her meetings with Winston after she got a hold of some make-up that she wanted to feel more like a woman than a comrade: “[...]And do you know what I’m going to do next? I’m going to get hold of a real woman’s frock from somewhere and wear it instead of these bloody trousers. I’ll wear silk stockings and high-heeled shoes! In this room I’m going to be a woman, not a Party comrade” (179).

Another form of imposed conformity and sameness is the erasure of religion. In fact, everyone is supposed to glorify and worship Big Brother, like that woman who called him her saviour during the Two Minutes Hate (21). Religion proposes a threat to the Party since it will direct the people’s feelings of love and devotion from Big Brother to a god or any other spiritual being. It is also known that religion can give solace, inner

peace, and sometimes even answers to some questions; this clearly goes against the prescriptive and fear infusing nature of the Party. The neglect of religion can be clearly seen in the old churches that are mentioned sometimes throughout the novel, and which are either left in ruins or given another function. Moreover, in the Ministry of Love Winston meets a poet who got sent there solely for using the word “God” to rhyme with “rod” (291-292), and Winston himself was forced to confess being a religious believer as one of his crimes (306). In general, Winston and Julia were forced to show outward conformity all the time despite their inner desire for rebelling in order to survive.

Lastly, Winston seems to have all the qualities of a dystopian protagonist. He is an ordinary member from the middle class who does not possess any supernatural abilities; if anything, his health was so poor he had to put so much effort just to get to his apartment on the seventh floor (Orwell 3). His only additional merit that distinguished him from the rest of his society was his intellectuality and critical thinking. It is thanks to his constant questioning of his surroundings and his eagerness to unveil the past that the reader gets to see what is wrong with this society and question how things became how they are. Winston picks up any lead that may seem to tell him a bit about the past, and one of those leads was an old proletariat man in his eighties. Winston risked getting caught by the patrols and followed the man to a bar, there he offered him some drinks in hopes of making him share what he remembers from the past, but all his efforts go in vain because the man did not remember anything useful. (110-117) Winston’s last resolution was joining The Brotherhood and getting a hold of Goldstein’s forbidden book that most likely could answer his questions; he succeeded in doing that, but that also marked his ending as a person.

In conclusion, *1984* is a dystopian classic that depicted clearly the themes of the genre. It also fulfilled its role as a cautionary tale against all forms of totalitarianism since it highlighted many of its aspects.

2.3. Aspects of Totalitarianism in the Novel

George Orwell’s *1984* had brought attention to one of the most controversial political philosophies that have been shaping societies between the past and present

focusing mostly on the psychology of freedom, social class, power and traumas. This book is a reference to the totalitarian regime; in fact, it is a story about totalitarianism where the antagonist of the story “Big Brother” represents the dictators’ strategies to maintain power; including censorship and monopoly. In a research work entitled “The Myth of the Totalitarian Leader in George Orwell’s *1984* and Ismail Kadar’s *The Palace of Dreams*”, Ervin Xhinaku states that “the figure of Big Brother in Orwell’s *1984* before serving as a general symbol for the deified tyrant of totalitarian societies, is reminiscent of certain historical personages, and more particularly of Stalin, the prototypical totalitarian dictator of modern times” (151).

As a matter of fact, aspects of totalitarianism were numerous in the novel not only with the characters but the misuse of technology had also played a major role in controlling the life of these characters; telescreens for example, are not some ordinary entertainment tools or regular cameras, instead, they are technologically-advanced surveillance devices placed everywhere and designed as a reminder to the people of Oceania that Big Brother is watching their movements. It is through these devices that they lose privacy and therefore need to evade them;

the corner of Winston's room that is out of range of observation and the chance to write his own diary represent two equally symbolic themes from the very outset of the novel, allowing Orwell to shed light on the internal structure of liberal societies. The issue here is not metaphysics that is not freedom and truth and justice, but the *interior* that is necessary for these values and without which neither truth, freedom nor justice seems to be thinkable, feasible or liveable (Roessier 146).

This system of terror was not enough for people to follow the Party instructions obediently with no problems; therefore, the government was making sure that people are not only following the rules but wanted them to be convinced that such life is normal and the one who thinks the opposite of that is a criminal who deserve a good punishment. To prevent such acts of rebellion, the Party faked the past to control the present including thoughts, speech and communication.

2.3.1. Doublethink

Double think is the ability to believe in two contradictory concepts simultaneously, even if one is completely aware of what is false and what is right; to deceive the consciousness into not only telling lies but also believing in them “to know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies.” (Orwell 73). It is one of the techniques the party used to control reality driving them to go delusional. Even the party’s slogan itself, “WAR IS PEACE FREEDOM IS SLAVERY IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”, is a perfect representation of double-think, along with the ministries names where the ministry of truth is responsible for faking news and telling lies, the ministry of love for torture, the ministry of plenty for starvation and the ministry of peace for declaring wars.

Doublethink was strongly apparent in the third part of the book, where Orwell demonstrates what the human’s psyche goes through under torture; how suffering can reveal humankind’s instinct of survival, even if it costs him abandoning his values. And the reason behind such act was well explained in *The Conscience of Humankind: Literature and Traumatic Experiences* where Jianquo Chen argues that “Living a life of vicissitude, people have to resort to the instinct of survival, that is, they will attack in the hope of defending oneself. In Michel Foucault's terms, in order to prove one is sane, one needs first to prove that one’s neighbor is insane” (170). This is pretty similar if not the same to what happened in the novel with Winston’s mental and physical torture in room 101 where he wanted to fight for his beliefs, but then he chooses what the Party wants him to say -two plus two makes five. Even if it is mathematically incorrect, he would do anything to cease his agony. However, the Party’s intention was to not only make him say it but also think it and believe it, which he did eventually, betraying his companion Julia, and submitting to Big Brother.

The story continues to show emphasis on Winston’s behaviour and thoughts even after he was set free. He was not really a free man but a damaged one with no sense of identity, “he hardly knew why he had ever rebelled. Everything was easy, except—! Anything could be true. The so-called laws of Nature were nonsense. The law of gravity was nonsense” (Orwell 279). He had an existential crisis and he could not differentiate

between reality and illusion, what is right and wrong because “he remembered remembering contrary things, but those were false memories, products of self-deception” (279).

Orwell focused on the importance of thoughts in such regimes, as they are the reason why a revolution starts in the first place, because “In our society, those who have the best knowledge of what is happening are also those who are furthest from seeing the world as it is. In general, the greater the understanding, the greater the delusion; the more intelligent, the less sane” (222) and this was probably what inspired him to come up with this concept.

And perhaps one of the examples of double think in the modern world is the rise of gender pronouns; to not assume someone’s gender by their physical appearance. Instead, you have to call them based on how they would like to be referred to. And though biologically and grammatically, there are only two genders, liberal societies today choose “to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it.” (Orwell 37). Such controversy proves Orwell’s point and helps us understand the notion of double think.

2.3.2. Newspeak

Along with the power of thinking, language was extremely important in shaping the dystopian tale of *1984*. Orwell demonstrated how words and thoughts are closely correlated; a language with less vocabulary leads to the creation of a narrow-minded society, too ignorant to see the injustice or speak up for themselves. In fact, complex words that require thinking might not even exist in the dictionary of totalitarian states such as Oceania where the official language is the newspeak.

In the book, “Newspeak” is the language invented by the Party to replace the English language known as the “Oldspeak”. This new language has a very limited vocabulary with simple grammar; no antonyms or synonyms, even some adjectives and adverbs are reduced or completely removed adding “plus” to describe feelings and objects; the word “great” for example, is replaced by “plusgood”.

“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” (Orwell 297). The term was coined in order to reveal one of the many techniques such regimes use to control people’s lives. The party aims to diminish words from the language to limit their ability to think; therefore, shrinking their knowledge; “Its basic principle was that what could not be said could not be thought and thus not communicated. Thus, limiting language limited thought and thus communication of certain ideologies” (Batra 4).

Labels and titles, additionally, raise awareness and highlight the real problem. For example, cancer campaigns did not exist in the past because people did not have enough knowledge about such illness; ancient Egyptians mentioned the symptoms but it was the Greek physician Hippocrates who first named it using the terms “carcinoma and carcinoma”. This proves that “Knowing a language, then, is knowing how to translate mentalese into strings of words and vice versa” (Pinker 76). Egyptians could identify what it was, because they were using the language of thoughts but with the translation of these thoughts into words, people were able to understand them more; to communicate and discuss these concepts.

2.3.3. Manipulation of the Past

Orwell’s emphasis on knowledge was very apparent in the novel; he designed a fictional totalitarian government with the slogan of “ignorance is strength”, where there is no access to correct past information. The party was rewriting every single piece of literature that existed in the past to parallel their reality; “‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past’” (Orwell 37).

The character of Winston in *1984* was designed as an intellectual man who witnesses the paradox of life in his job at the records department of the Ministry of Truth, where he himself had to rewrite history. Though he is aware of this deception, he eventually submits to the Party because “the lie became truth” (Orwell 77). And perhaps one of the reasons the Party used memory deception to control the mass is that the lack of awareness in societies drives individuals to cling more to the

Party for security, because such stories are specifically written to shape the Party as a powerful and superior entity and rebels as mentally unstable people, thought-criminals who deserve a good punishment. Therefore, faking history was another aspect of totalitarianism in the novel to demonstrate how the manipulation of the past can change people's view to reality.

2.3.4. War

Warfare is one of the vital totalitarian aspects that were apparent in the novel. It did not matter whether Oceania was at war with Eastasia or Eurasia, because the reason behind this continuous war was not the traditional desire for more territory but rather other indirect aims.

As it was explained in *The Book*: “It is a warfare of limited aims between combatants who are unable to destroy one another, have no material cause for fighting and are not divided by any genuine ideological difference.” (Orwell 236). Goldstein argues that this war is driven by economic purposes, mainly the search for labour power in disputed areas between the frontiers of the super-states (236). These regions hold huge numbers of people who are forced to work under severe circumstances yet are not paid enough, they are no different than slaves in that matter. Moreover, the work that they are tasked with does not benefit the economy wheel in any form, if anything it contributes to the enhancement of warfare material and therefore the permanence of the war. At this point one must wonder why the super-states are eager to wage this endless war if no victory is to be achieved, unlike what their propaganda claims. Goldstein explains that this war is mainly waged “to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living.” (238) In short, war serves the same purpose as the lack of technological development, and that purpose is to keep the hierarchical nature of society by avoiding the equal distribution of wealth and therefore the power remains in the hands of one group of people. War is also a psychological tool that traps people in fear and sets survival as their main priority which eventually leads them to trusting those in power who delude them through propaganda.

In Oceania, telescreens are constantly broadcasting the state's war achievements; moreover, the Party promises the people a victory in the span of two years when in

reality this is all fake. Inner Party members know better than anyone else that the achievements and victories they are claiming are invalid and total nonsense, yet through Doublethink they wholeheartedly believe and support these lies. They know that the war is only going on because they want to and stopping it will not put them in danger of being invaded since Goldstein explains that the natural defences of each state are too strong to be trespassed (Orwell 236), yet their hatred for the enemy is too intense and unexplainable. This hatred is passed to the rest of society and even encouraged through rituals and national holidays like the “Two Minutes Hate” and “Hate Week”. In the Two Minutes Hate both Inner and Outer Party members gather to watch videos of their enemies, and whichever state they are at war with, and express their hatred for them in a very violent manner that no one can resist. The wave of violence calms down by the end as the pictures of the enemies are replaced by that of Big Brother to show that he is their saviour after all and urge them to be more devoted to him. Hate Week is like an extension for the Two Minutes Hate. Its events include military parades and more slogans and songs are created to deprecate the enemies, even lectures are given on that matter.

It is essential for the Party to encourage war hysteria and normalize it, not only to guarantee that people’s attention is shifted from their needs to the fake victories and achievements but also to accept the hierarchical society since they would always feel like they need to be protected by the higher ups in order to survive. War in this case is as important as the Thought Police or the constant surveillance of the people to the totalitarian government in Oceania.

2.3.5. “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”

One of the most memorable quotes from the novel is “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Orwell 3). Marking its appearance in the very first pages of the book, the quote already tells a lot about the suffocating nature of the environment in Oceania. The citizens are endlessly reminded of the fact that Big Brother is like a looming figure over them, watching their every movement. It might sound a bit

exaggerated, but the truth is the Party used everything available to make sure that surveillance over the people is absolute, from machines to individuals.

Starting with machines, the Party used telescreens to monitor the people. This device does not only broadcast things but it also watches its watchers like a camera. Another remarkable feature about it is that it cannot be turned off, the only privileged people who can do so are Inner Party members. Telescreens also seem to be absent in the areas populated by the proletariat, this is why Winston is often seen frequenting these areas. The room that Winston rented where he and Julia used to meet did not have a telescreen; this allowed them to be themselves for a short period. In addition to telescreens, the Party makes use of high-quality microphones that can pick up the faintest of sounds. These microphones are both hidden and left in visible places. The machine has its shortcomings and one might be skilled enough to trick it; therefore, the Party made individuals fill those shortcomings.

It is a normal and totally accepted act for people to denounce each other for thoughtcrime in Oceania. The lack of honesty and trust between the individuals is evident in the novel. Winston was horrified that Mrs Parsons, his neighbour, might denounce him as a thought-criminal if she could see his diary, in fact she herself was scared of her two children who were part of The Spies. Children are not the only individuals to be feared as some Thought Police agents tend to disguise as proletariats in order to catch thought-criminals; an example of that is Mr Charrington, the man who rented the room for Winston and Julia to use. Also, the areas populated by the proletariat might not have telescreens, but they are still scanned by the patrols all the time.

In reality, it is impossible for the people to know whether they are being watched or not, yet Big Brother's looming figure forces them to be obedient at all times. This is similar to Bentham's concept of the panopticon that is manifested through a central observation tower surrounded by a circle of prison cells, and thanks to the flow of light inside the guards from the tower can see the prisoners in their individual cells, yet the prisoners cannot see the guards (Foucault 200). The prisoners know that they are being watched but cannot tell at which point, this forces them to stay disciplined in order to avoid punishment. Bentham argues: "power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible:

the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at anyone moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (201). In Oceania’s context, the power is visible through the telescreens and the slogan “Big Brother is watching you”, and just as stated in *The Book*: “A Party member lives from birth to death under the eye of the Thought Police. Even when he is alone, he can never be sure that he is alone” (Orwell 265), this makes Oceania similar to a giant panopticon.

The imposed surveillance stripes people from their privacy and instils fear and paranoia into them, a typical strategy of totalitarian regimes that is mostly achieved through technology and science. With how fast technology is advancing, one cannot help but wonder whether the world today is turning into that of *1984*.

2.4. Parallels between *1984* and Now

1984 is one of the most important revolutionary literary works in history; it is listed among the best classics of all time. This novel, however, is popular because of the accurate depiction of totalitarian regimes and Orwell’s predictions of the future. Though “far from being a picture of the totalitarianism of the future, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, in countless details, a realistic picture of the totalitarianism of the present” (Voorhees 87).

Orwell’s inspiration to write this novel came primarily from the two infamous dictators: Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin and their ruling approach in forming Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union leading up to the outbreak of World War Two. Even Big Brother’s physical features in the novel were designed to look similar to these tyrants; he was portrayed as a middle-aged man with a black moustache, and intense look. In fact, “each time big brother's face is being described, the reader is reminded that the personality cult was as characteristic a feature of Stalin's as of Hitler's dictatorship” (Gottlieb). Today in the Twenty-First Century, some parts of the world are still governed by totalitarian leaders such as Afghanistan and North Korea.

The reason *1984* is relevant today is that "Orwell had understood and had the experience of living in a totalitarian society” (Cushman and Rodden 84). He did not talk about the leaders as much as the strategies they use to manipulate the mass. The concept

of Newspeak for example has become a real thing with the rise of technology and social media; our communication with each other has shifted from the earliest times when there was no use of texting or slang language. This is not very dangerous comparing to real life situations of people in democratic countries getting arrested because of words they said. Most of them are reporters and public figures; such incident occurred in Egypt back in 2013 when TV host and comedian Bassem Youssef got arrested for allegedly insulting president Mohammed Morsi (Fahim and El Sheikh para.9). It was not the first time to witness such thing in the MENA world especially after the movement of the Arab spring

Whether we live in democratic societies or not, no one can deny the fact that we are now living in a world of digital totalitarianism; in the age of internet and technology, we are globally controlled. Algorithm chooses for us what we watch and what we should buy even when there is no need for any of these. The media also have a huge impact on our opinions and thoughts; when watching the news for example, we often see the subtitle on the television screen written in a thick red font: “two Muslims attacked a white man”, such words stick in the unconscious of the viewers and often lead to the stereotype that all Muslims are terrorists. According to “Digital totalitarianism - from *Homo sapiens* to “one-button man”:

Digital totalitarianism is a new reality, in the pursuit of which every person must be able to keep his soul and heart in himself. In order not to become a "one-button" person, it is necessary to develop self-control, monitor psychological health and be socially free – to use the Internet within reasonable limits, not to teach children to it and develop thinking, because *homo sapiens* is a reasonable person. People don't want to be manipulated when they have knowledge (Kurochkina et. al. 11).

It is indeed true that when we break free from the toxic influence of modern technology and form our own identity, we evolve as individuals and develop critical thinking; therefore, we would be less controlled but not completely safe; because like Big Brother is watching the people of Oceania through “telescreens” in the novel, we are also constantly watched.

2.4.1. Propaganda and Censorship

1984 is linked to many themes, yet its association with propaganda and censorship seem to be the strongest one. Before exploring how these themes were introduced in the novel, a simple definition of the two terms must be given. On the one hand *The Oxford Reference Dictionary* defines propaganda as “a persuasive mass communication that filters and frames the issues of the day in a way that strongly favours particular interests; usually those of a government or corporation, [or] the intentional manipulation of public opinion through lies, half-truths, and the selective re-telling of history”. Censorship, on the other hand, is defined as “any regime or context in which the content of what is publicly expressed, exhibited, published, broadcast, or otherwise distributed is regulated or in which the circulation of information is controlled.” Propaganda and censorship go hand in hand as pillars of any totalitarian regimes, as one brainwashes the people into what the government wants, the other prevents their enlightenment by regulating the flow of information.

The importance of propaganda for the ruling Party in Oceania can be seen in the fact that a whole ministry is created just for the sake of providing and spreading false news, that ministry is the Ministry of Truth. In fact, Big Brother himself can be considered as a propaganda tool for the Party; as he is their representative, he should be presented in the best way possible:

Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration. [...] Big Brother is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world. His function is to act as a focusing point for love, fear, and reverence, emotions which are more easily felt towards an individual than towards an organization (Orwell 292).

While Big Brother is depicted as the perfect leader, Goldstein on the contrary is the scapegoat that all bad things are blamed on, and rituals like the Two Minutes Hate encourage despising him. Moreover, Oceania is always changing enemies, meaning that the military propaganda is in a never-ending process of changing and editing; just like what happened during the Hate Week, when Oceania suddenly changed enemies from

Eurasia to Eastasia, and all the propaganda that was directed against Eurasia had to be rectified (228). What is amusing about the propaganda in Oceania is that it is all invented news, yet the Party decided what to pass off as fact and what to pass off as fiction as long as they propagate for the same cause. The department of Fiction, just like what its name entails, concerns itself with creating fictional works that add nothing to the people's knowledge but praise the Party's principles.

Although telescreens seem to be the main tool the Party uses to spread its propaganda for they exist almost everywhere especially in the houses of Party members, the government makes use of other tools like slogans and posters. Some memorable slogans that repeatedly appear throughout the novel are, "War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength" and "Big Brother is watching you". The posters either show Big Brother's face all over Oceania to emphasize his presence and authority, or show the enemy's army in scary ways to encourage hatred and war hysteria.

The Ministry of Truth with all of its departments take care of providing material for the public to consume, thus it is one of the instruments the Party uses to impose censorship. The ministry's job is to "supply the citizens of Oceania with newspapers, films, textbooks, telescreen programmes, plays, novels—with every conceivable kind of information" (Orwell 54-55). The information that the ministry provides is specific to certain groups, i.e. what is consumed by Outer Party members is not the same as the proletariats, for the proles are given material that is shallow and void of anything useful to keep them stupid and ignorant.

Another form of censorship is the destruction of language by creating another one where words that may describe opposition are deleted. Syme, Winston's friend who is a researcher working on the eleventh edition of the Newspeak dictionary, in one encounter explains the reason behind the creation of such language, "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it" (67). This is the most extreme form of censorship since in a few decades no traces of the old language would remain and therefore not even the possibility of thinking against

the government would be possible, the people's thinking process would be too narrow for that.

The usage of propaganda in the world today does not differ that much from that of Oceania. The governments of the most influential countries nowadays spend huge amounts of money on propaganda mainly to target and defame their enemies. Russia for example is reported to have spent more than \$146 on foreign propaganda since 2016 with \$16 millions directed towards the U.S (Massoglia par.1). Some of this defaming propaganda was targeting Covid-19 vaccines that were produced outside Russia to undermine their utility (par. 3). Moreover, because of the current war with Ukraine, Russia has to focus both on the military and non-military sides of the war. The Russian government forbids the use of words like war and invasion to describe the crisis with Ukraine, claiming that what is happening is nothing but a special operation that presents no harm for the Ukrainian civilians. This is all done to gain the support of Russians who cannot access the truth because platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are banned in the country, and the media outlets broadcast nothing but what the government agrees to, so they cannot see the atrocities of the Russian army in Ukraine. Although Russia was thought to end up victorious, Ukraine seems to be putting up quite a fight. The Ukrainian government just like its rival used propaganda but in a different way, it mainly aimed at reaching and manipulating the emotions of its audience. The government encouraged the citizens to arm themselves and fight for their country, as well as urge Russians to speak up against their country's actions. Ukraine also broadcasted pictures and videos of the Russian atrocities in their land to guilt trip other nations into cutting ties with Russia and sending more reinforcements to them instead, and this seems to work because a severe censorship was imposed on Russian material in many Western countries.

Propaganda is not only evident in war matters. With the outbreak of Covid-19 by the end of 2019, the Chinese government found itself a target of defaming propaganda that accused them of hiding important information that could help in ending the pandemic and also lying about the number of cases. China had to counterattack by propagating accusations of other countries, saying that the virus started elsewhere, in

Italy for example. The government also would show footages of restrictions being removed and kids going back to schools to show both its efficiency in handling the outbreak and the efficiency of the Chinese vaccine. China is also known for having a strict censorship. Western Social media platforms are banned and replaced by Chinese ones like Weibo; in fact, even Google is banned and the Chinese use other search engines like Baidu. It is worth mentioning that although these platforms are banned for the people, the government still uses them to spread its propaganda through bots and fake accounts.

Moreover, for the last three years China has been ranked as the first country with the most imprisoned journalists; Beina Xu in her article “Media Censorship in China” states that “reporters face harassment and jail time for violating rules, and are effectively pressured into ‘self-censorship’.” She then adds:

China's government also tightens censorship in times of political transition; before its Eighteenth National Congress power handover in late 2012, it issued new rules requiring Internet users to provide real names to service providers, while assigning Internet companies greater responsibility for reporting forbidden postings to the authorities (3).

The tools used by the government of Oceania for spreading propaganda are almost the same ones used by governments today. Televisions that exist almost in every house are pretty similar to the telescreens, and the channels mostly broadcast information approved by the government. Slogans are still used until today, like the "People's Democratic Republic of Algeria", Obama's "Change We Need", and UNICEF's "For Every Child". Posters show their dominance by being present everywhere, on subway ads, on billboards and walls in the streets and even on websites and social media platforms. They are mostly apparent during campaigns and election days as means of attraction.

Another common point is the existence of scapegoats for these governments to blame. Western media has been painting minorities as the barbarous threats that should be either eliminated or colonized in order to be educated. Muslims for example have

been represented as fanatics who are obsessed with spreading their religion through the shed of blood. Any terrorist attack that happens anywhere around the world is blamed on Muslims even if no clear evidence is found. The U.S for example accused al-Qaeda of the September 11 attacks, and multiple shooting and bombing accidents have been blamed on ISIS when neither of these groups represent Islam or Muslims. Another minority who is constantly blamed of violent activities especially in the U.S. is the black community. African Americans have to deal with wrongful convictions all the time if no lead to the real culprit is found.

Propaganda might have a negative connotation and it had been clearly used wrongly in the novel, yet it still presents some advantages nowadays. It is thanks to propaganda that some causes have finally received the attention they deserve. The situation in Palestine is an example. For years Israel has been enjoying the support of almost all westerners, but thanks to positive propaganda from private news outlets, the views have finally begun to change. Another form of positive propaganda is the one done to spread awareness through campaigns. There are campaigns that propagate for environment preservation, others for mental health importance, etc.

To sum up, propaganda is a two-edged sword and the way it is used determines whether it is negative or positive. In the novel it was totally used in wrong ways that helped the totalitarian government to establish itself. Although it is largely used for negative needs nowadays, it still presents some positive aspects. The importance of propaganda cannot be undermined nowadays, and we are subjects to it even without realizing, which can be concerning considering that it can propose a threat to our privacy.

2.4.2. Lack of Privacy

The lack of privacy in *1984* is reflected in Winston's character; he was portrayed as an anxious man who tries his best to not get caught by Big Brother. This is seen since the beginning of the first chapter as he hides in the corner of his room to write in his diary what he must not think of; "By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went. He could be heard, of course, but so long as he stayed in his present position he could not

be seen” (Orwell 7). Since telescreens are highly intelligent devices that can spot rebels by their facial expressions and detect lies through body language; Orwell in the novel describes Winston’s discomfort by these devices as follow:

It was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away. A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself –anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide. In any case, to wear an improper expression on your face (to look incredulous when a victory was announced, for example) was itself a punishable offence. There was even a word for it in Newspeak: facecrime, it was called (64).

Telescreens are placed everywhere in Oceania. It is through them that the thought police monitor people’s behaviours; they are in fact used as a propaganda tool in order to intercept all means of communication and close relationships. And with the explosive growth of the technology, surveillance became easier as in the US; on one hand it ensured national security such as the federal investigative and intelligence “FBI”. On the other hand, “privacy violations helped provoke the American Revolution, and they appear prominently in the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights, but the legal theory of a “right to privacy” is only about 100 years old” (Bridgam 13).

The lack of privacy is now part of our daily life; “Surveillance, which was once thought of as touching only the realm of political citizenship, now affects our involvement in society at a more basic level” (Lyon 23). As a matter of fact, it is not even imposed on us anymore; we allow these electronic devices to steal our information by accepting “the privacy terms and conditions” without reading them. This act itself can be justified as herd behaviour; as long as everyone is doing it, there must be no harm. For this reason, we should not blindly trust people in power. Mark Zuckerberg, the Co-founder and CEO of many social media platforms, has faced a lot of controversies and was accused for privacy violations for the last couple of years. He is the modern example of Big Brother, with the slogan of “Facebook is watching you”; the reason we are getting ads about a certain product right after we talk about it is no

coincidence, but because it tracks our online habits and constantly collects our data; “making us all targets of monitoring, and possibly objects of suspicion” (Lyon15).

2.4.3. Educational System

The education system holds a huge importance for every government since investing in it means investing in the future of the country. The school prepares the individual who will grow up to be the leading force in society; yet not many seem to recognize this, for education has many problems now and it had barely evolved throughout the centuries. Unfortunately, the education system nowadays might have some common points with that of Oceania.

It is no secret that schools in Oceania are nothing but an extension of the army. In the *Junior Spies* children are taught to love and glorify the Party only, this is why they are trained to spy on adults and report them in case they offend the government, even if those people are their parents. The children are successfully brainwashed by the Party and their thinking is limited to what the Party wants. They do not question things around them as they all lack critical thinking. Keeping in mind that Oceania is a totalitarian state, one should remember that it does not encourage diversity and forms of self-expression; thus, the schools in this novel certainly destroy the children’s creativity and imagination. Our schools nowadays relate to this in some sense.

With the way lessons are conducted at this age, one can clearly see that students have no saying in choosing what to learn. The teacher is the one in charge and unfortunately all children are taught the exact same subjects in the exact same ways. In most cases, students tend to be passive and spoon-fed by the teacher. They are taught that a problem has one solution only, and creative answers get shunned away as being stupid. This prescriptive teaching method that rewards the correct and punishes the wrong is the biggest obstacle in developing the students’ critical thinking. The students’ role would only be receiving and memorizing the information provided by the teacher without actually understanding the significance of the information. This is what Paulo Freire refers to as “the banking concept of education”, as students are nothing but “containers” filled by their teachers (1).

Moreover, schools and society equally undermine the importance of creativity when it comes to learning. Students are barely given any creative freedom even in situations where it is necessary. The school imposes the topics the students need to deal with, even in creative writing they do not get to choose what to write about. It is clear that the school values subjects like math and physics or anything scientific in nature over artistic subjects. Neglecting the artistic side of learning leads to closing the students' minds and therefore killing their creativity and critical thinking which will sadly prevent them from reaching their potential. Eventually they will become robots who accept everything the higher ups give them without providing their own input, almost similar to the children of Oceania.

Another similarity worth mentioning is the use of doublethink by both the education institutions of Oceania and those of our world. The citizens of Oceania are obliged to develop the ability of doublethink in order to survive in a world full of contradictions, so it is safe to assume that the development of this ability starts from the early days of school. Our schools, however, use doublethink in a very subtle way that is hard to be noticed. Students are usually told that they are free to ask and express themselves however they want, but the truth is that they have a limit to what they can ask. Questions that can criticize the government's policy are highly discouraged and frowned upon, and students can get punished for asking them. In religious and conservative societies, one cannot question these beliefs either in school or outside it. So, in general, schools preach about the importance of asking questions and deem it a sign of intelligence, yet the moment a student dares to ask something that does not align with what is prescribed by the higher ups, he or she get shunned away.

In very special cases, the government can use the education system as a tool to instil its political views into the students. In the novel, the Party strives to promote its communist views even to the children through their textbooks. Winston reads a passage from his neighbour's children book and that passage demonises capitalism by stating facts that cannot be proved or disproved. It says that capitalists were the only people who enjoyed wealth and all of those who were below them were treated as slaves, and even children their age had to work, otherwise they would starve to death (Orwell 93).

An example of governments who use schools to instil their ideology from today's reality would be North Korea. The ideology of this country is called "The Juche" which translates to "self-reliance" and it was introduced by the leader Kim Il Sung who stated that the nation must depend on its individuals to develop without relying on outsiders and that this ideology should be taught in schools as well so that the upcoming generations would be taught exactly how the government wants (Nielsen, et al. 21).

Saying that the Oceanic education system is totally similar to that of today's world would be quite exaggerated. Our schools certainly do not train the children to spy and report adults nor destroy the concept of family like those of Oceania, but they do limit the students' potential and thinking just as much.

2.4.4. Differences in Power between Classes

The theme of hierarchy is pretty evident in novel. In fact, the whole plot is driven by the difference in the Oceanic social classes since those at the top are doing everything to keep this order. The Oceanic society is divided into three classes, and these classes exist in our society as well but just bear different labels.

Being a citizen in Oceania means that one can either be an Inner Party member, an Outer Party member or a proletariat. Each class is a little privileged than the other. Inner Party members are the decision makers and the people who get to enjoy living a luxurious life where everything they wear, drink, eat and inhabit is of the best quality, Outer Party members are not as fortunate but the little additional stuff they enjoy like the gin differentiates them from the proletariat who are totally ignored (Orwell 242). Another aspect that sets them apart is the surveillance, the proletariat are not monitored by the telescreens at all giving them much freedom despite them making up 80% of the population, Outer Party members are always monitored and their every movement is scrutinized while Inner Party members are free to turn the telescreens off if they desired to, unlike the less privileged.

In "The Book", Goldstein argues that this social structure is nothing new but actually existed since the Neolithic Age with slight differences in the classes' characteristics and their relationship with each other. He then explains the aim of each

class, stating that the High desire to remain on top of the society and enjoy authority on those below them, while the Middle aim at exchanging places with the High so they delude the Low who most of the time have no aims into lending them their strength by promising them better life conditions in case the Middle succeeded at overthrowing the High. However, when they do succeed in becoming the new High class, they push the Low back into their misery and establish a new policy that keeps them at the top, and the cycle repeats itself (254-255).

Taking a look at our reality, it is evident that the gap between the three classes is widening. The higher the one goes, the wealthier and stronger he or she becomes, creating a system of hierarchy. Lake defines hierarchy as “any form of social differentiation and stratification as well as differences in authority over others” (quoted by Toelstede 335). Some argue that this hierarchy is necessary and beneficial, for it gives authority to a limited number of people and thus prevent conflicts from arising when making decisions; it also boosts the people’s motivation to climb higher in their ranks and eventually benefit the society as well as strengthen the relationship between individuals and unite them (Dubois and Ordabayeva 335). If the aims of establishing a hierarchical system were indeed the ones mentioned before, then that system had really deviated from them. Judging from the situation now, the upper class is abusing its power quite so much and inequality is spreading like a plague around the world.

The global wealth is distributed in a shockingly uneven way. According to Credit Suisse’s Wealth Report in 2014, the richest 10% of the population owns 87% of the global wealth with 1% of them owning almost its half yet more than half the population owns less than 1% of the wealth (quoted by Keeley 22). This hierarchy has been maintained for centuries, the only thing that changed about it is the gap between the classes, which is growing. The High certainly do not want to leave their position for the Middle, and there might be some going back and forth between these two classes, yet the Low never get to change their situation even for once. They may be given some small advantages to be silenced, but the improvement in their situation will never be permanent.

Currently, hierarchy has a very negative connotation because of all the inequalities happening around the world. Someone's rank decides every aspect about their life; how they speak, how they dress and how they are perceived by the other members of society. Moreover, the age of the pandemic unveiled the ugly side of hierarchy today, as most of the victims were people from the lower classes who lived in dirty places and could not afford to pay to get treated.

2.4.5. “Covid 1984”

There are no doubts that one of the most significant events for the past two years was the outbreak of the deadly virus known as “Covid 19”. It was one of the hardest times for humanity, resulting in the death of millions of people worldwide and global economic crisis. For this reason, people started relating more to the dystopian events of *1984*.

In attempt to put an end to the pandemic, the world implemented several restrictions on the population including “lockdown”; when we compare the isolation of the lockdown to the novel, we find that in Oceania, the people are naturally lonely. It is forbidden for them to communicate with one another for no specific reason, which is quite similar to the safety measures in Covid-19 when we had to avoid any interaction with other human beings. Though the intentions of each case in this comparison might be different, the pressure they experienced is very similar and reflects the reality of “Covid 1984”.

2.4.6. Cancel Culture

Orwell's *1984* introduced special vocabulary that not only elevated the novel and made it impactful but was also eventually integrated into the English language. “Thoughtcrime” and “the Thought Police” are prime examples of expressions that stick to the reader's mind regardless of how much time has gone since he or she has read the novel. The two expressions hint at notions of freedom of speech restriction, as thoughtcrime simply refers to the act of holding beliefs that do not align with the Party's ideology, while the Thought Police is a governmental apparatus that spies on people and arrests thought criminals. The idea of living under a system that controls how one must think otherwise they face death is terrifying, and it is quite a relief that this system only

exists in fiction. However, with the emergence of what is known now as cancel culture society might be walking down that dark path.

Cancel culture, or what is known as today's Thought Police, is "the practice or tendency of engaging in mass (canceling) as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure" (*Merriam-Webster*). The phenomenon is largely known as a social media trend that aims at holding people in general and celebrities in particular accountable for their mistakes, but in fact it has roots way in the past since public shaming of wrongdoers is nothing new. The age of social media and technology though has facilitated the act of cancelling those in the wrong, since it is mainly done on platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and through the use of hashtags especially.

As stated before, the main idea of cancel culture is accountability through boycotting and ostracizing, but as years went by the phenomenon seemed to create a range of what is good and what is bad with no ranges of neutrality. Any attempt of questioning or deviating from the right path chosen by the cancel culture agents would definitely result in ending one's career, if not life, for some of them are taking their cancelling to the extreme by sending the cancelled people death threats. Not only that, some of them even dug deeper in the past, bringing to the surface old claims from celebrities before they made it big and shame them for them, totally ignoring the possibility that these people might have changed and they no longer stand by those claims. Moreover, even influential people who passed away did not escape getting cancelled in their graves; like Dr. Seuss, the famous children's books author who passed away in 1991. Yet, six of his books got pulled from libraries in 2021 for claims of being racist in the way they depicted Asians and Black people (Ibrahim).

The problem with cancel culture now is that it blocks all roads of redemption and education. People are scared of voicing their thoughts especially on social media because one misunderstanding is enough to kick them from their jobs. One mistake is all it takes for someone to lose everything, and no explanation or attempts of fixing the damage would be accepted after that, no matter how sincere they are, it is as if they committed a crime. In Orwell's world, "*Thoughtcrime does not entail death:*

thoughtcrime IS death” (Orwell 36) and in today’s world, getting cancelled might not end someone’s life literally, but it is strong enough to close all the doors in that person’s life.

In conclusion, the future is unknown and no one can predict if it is utopian or dystopian. However, the most important thing we should do is to teach the next generation how to read, in order to stand up against the injustice of totalitarianism.

2.5. Conclusion

The novel included a handful of dystopian elements and provided examples of totalitarian aspects that exist in our reality as well. For this exact reason, many believe that Orwell wrote *1984* as a prediction for the future, when in reality it was a cautionary tale inspired from events that he witnessed. Orwell himself admitted this fact: “I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it *could* arrive” (Orwell and Angus 502). Saying that the world today is too similar to that of the novel would be a bit far-fetched, but ignoring the little parallels would be just as mindless.

General Conclusion

Literature has always been more than just a form of art but also a weapon that gave voice to the voiceless. Taking inspiration from major events in the world, writers decided that it was their duty to speak up against injustices and document them as warnings for the next generations. For this sole reason different literary genres emerged to discuss different themes, one of them being the genre of dystopia.

Dystopian literature mainly criticized totalitarian and oppressive regimes that were on the rise during the twentieth century especially, it was only natural that the genre flourished during that time period as well. Witnessing the horrors of the two World Wars, some people began fearing for their lives while others wondered to which extent their governors would push their powers if no one was to speak up against them. George Orwell was one of the writers who witnessed those regimes and addressed this issue, in his novel *1984* particularly. The life he led and his experiences in the St. Cyprian preparatory school, Burma, Paris and London and finally the Spanish Civil war shaped his vision and political orientation as well as influenced the novel in many aspects. His work was so powerful that despite its controversy it became a dystopian classic leading to the term “Orwellian” getting coined just to refer to situations of totalitarianism and oppression.

The novel takes place in a fictional state called Oceania where everyone lives a suffocating life under the constant surveillance of the Party and its omniscient leader; Big Brother. The government has total control over everything concerning the citizens, from their outward behaviour down to their inner thoughts. In fact, the act of holding beliefs that do not align with the Party’s ideology is considered “a thoughtcrime” i.e. the most severely punished criminal charge in the country and it sends its culprit to the depths of hell that is the Ministry of Love. Regardless of that, rebels like Winston and Julia still existed and challenged the Party in their own ways, either by digging in the past and trying to unveil the Party’s hidden truth, or by committing a taboo that was simply falling in love. The couple went as far as trying to join the revolutionary movement; The Brotherhood, but by placing their trust in O’Brien who betrayed them they faced their end.

The sad ending that faced the couple and literally everyone who tried to oppose the Party shows just how hard the government's grasp around the people is. The government achieved total control over the citizens through different methods such as instilling fear into them. The constant surveillance and reminder that they are being watched by the telescreens, their children and Big Brother himself force them to be disciplined and behave according to the Party's demands so they do not end up in the Ministry of Love. They are also subjected to systematic brainwashing through the never-ending propaganda and imposed censorship by the Ministry of Truth; they are forced to believe that they are living in better situations than the generations before them. Moreover, the economy is completely controlled by the state through the Ministry of Plenty, leaving no chances of improving it as it is purposely decaying. Lastly, the Ministry of Peace makes sure that Oceania is always at war with either of the other states. By encouraging war hysteria, the government makes sure the citizens have an outlet for their rage that is neither the Party nor Big Brother, this also unites them under the act of hating the same enemy.

The theme of government control is one of the dystopian features that were apparent in the novel, alongside technological espionage, conformity and the nature of a dystopian protagonist. Moreover, the novel shed light on many totalitarian aspects, from doublethink to newspeak and the relationship between thought and language, from the act of rectifying the past and warfare's role in maintaining a hierarchical society to the extreme surveillance and lack of privacy. Since Orwell wrote *1984* as a warning for the next generations rather than a prophecy, it is only natural to find parallels between the novel and today's reality.

The world nowadays is not a carbon-copy of that in *1984*, yet the evident similarities can be concerning. Propaganda and censorship prove to be indispensable for any government. Huge amounts of money are spent on propaganda both inside and outside the country to convince the masses of the states' ideology or to justify certain acts as well as demonize enemies. Everyone is a subject of propaganda without even realising that, which brings forward the issue of privacy. With the rapid technological development everyone is forced to use devices and websites to fulfil their needs,

eventually leading the users to give out personal information either with or without their consent. Also, the education system is another threat with how it is turning the students into containers with no critical thinking or clear understanding of the significance behind the knowledge they acquire. Another common point is the hierarchical nature of society that we live in, those on the top, regardless of being the minority, enjoy the best of everything and take decisions on behalf of the remaining majority. In addition to that, this age has its own thought police i.e. the cancel culture agents who decide your beliefs for you, otherwise they end your career. Lastly, the situation during the pandemic might be the closest the world could now get to that of the novel, as the restrictions imposed on us made it almost impossible to interact with others, creating this lonely atmosphere.

In the end, the misconception that *1984* was written as a solid prediction for the future should be corrected. It is a cautionary tale that warned against the dangers of totalitarianism by projecting a very exaggerated future for humanity if no one was to fight against this regime. People should be more cautious and aware of the age of digital totalitarianism we are living in now and show more scepticism towards what is passed now as absolute truths, because if we lose our freedom, as well as our ability to think for ourselves, then we would not be that far from the future Orwell warned us about.

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Summary:

Literature has the power to give us a better understanding of our reality and broaden our world view, but most importantly it pushes us to study different aspects of our life in depth. Dystopian fiction in particular warns readers about the dangers of social and political issues in societies. Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the concept of totalitarianism in George Orwell's novel *1984* and how is it still relevant today. The first chapter covers the origins of the concept, the background of Orwell and the controversy of his novel. While the second chapter explains how these predictions shifted from fiction to reality. It is crucial to introduce this book to the next generation to learn about totalitarianism.

Key words: totalitarianism, dystopia, Orwellian, *1984*, surveillance

Résumé:

La littérature a le pouvoir de nous donner une meilleure compréhension de notre réalité et d'élargir notre vision du monde, mais surtout, elle nous pousse à étudier en profondeur différents aspects de notre vie. Les fictions dystopiques, en particulier, mettent en garde les lecteurs contre les dangers des problèmes sociaux et politiques des sociétés. Par conséquent, cette thèse vise à explorer le concept de totalitarisme dans le roman *1984* de George Orwell et à déterminer en quoi il est toujours d'actualité. Le premier chapitre couvre les origines du concept, le parcours d'Orwell et la controverse suscitée par son roman. Le deuxième chapitre explique comment ces prédictions sont passées de la fiction à la réalité. Il est essentiel de présenter ce livre à la prochaine génération pour qu'elle apprenne ce qu'est le totalitarisme.

Mots clés : totalitarisme, dystopie, Orwellien, *1984*, surveillance.

ملخص :

يتميز الأدب بالقدرة على منحنا فهما أفضل لواقعنا وتوسيع رؤيتنا للعالم ، ولكن الأهم من ذلك أنه يدفعنا لدراسة جوانب مختلفة من حياتنا بعمق. تحذر الديستوبيا القراء على وجه الخصوص من مخاطر القضايا الاجتماعية والسياسية التي قد تواجه المجتمعات. تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى استكشاف مفهوم الشمولية في رواية جورج أورويل 1984 وكيف أنها لا تزال ذات دلالة حتى اليوم. يغطي الفصل الأول أصول المفهوم وخلفية أورويل والجدل حول روايته. بينما يشرح الفصل الثاني كيف أصبحت هذه التنبؤات حقيقة تامة . لذلك، يجب علينا تقديم هذا الكتاب إلى الجيل القادم للتعرف على الشمولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشمولية ، ديستوبيا ، أورويل ، 1984 ، المراقبة