

Power Relations, Instruments of Authority, and the
Enemies of the System:
George Orwell's *1984*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious”, writes Winston Smith in his diary in April 1984. He looks up, and realises that this observation could very well fit into a textbook, published by the Party itself (1984 71). Indeed, the Party is doing everything to prevent the people from gaining consciousness: a disappointed memory experienced at a proletariat market urges Winston to take control instead of waiting for the working class to act. He sees rebellion as the only possible (or rather only effective) solution to overthrow the regime. The reader, however, never gets to see the aftermath of this rebellion: even though there are attempts, in the end, the rebellion itself fails.

1984 by George Orwell was published in 1949, right after World War II, and at the beginning of the Cold War. It shows us a possible future, which was inspired by Orwell’s predictions and experiences of the Stalinist regime. The novel follows Winston Smith, working for the Ministry of Truth, who is supposed to be an antagonist for the system, and at the same time a protagonist from the readers’ perspective: this image, however, gets more complicated along the novel. In this paper, I put the failure of the rebellion in the centre, and for this reason I examine the power dynamics, means of force and the enemies of the system portrayed in Orwell’s *1984*. The aim of this paper is to find answers to the questions why I see *1984* as an ideological and political satire, why the rebellion Winston Smith and Julia took part in failed, and why the Party created an illusion for the sake of seeming freedom and hope, just to break it down in the next moment.

In the first part of my paper, I look at real-life political ideologies, what Orwell himself says about them, and how they resonate with the novel. In the second part, I explore the different “weapons” of the Party, including the Ingsoc philosophy, the image of Big Brother and Goldstein (I explain why I think that their figures are similar as well), the influence and destruction of family ties, and how the Party uses these weapons to stop a possible organisation of a rebellion. In the last part, I examine the illusion of freedom, the manipulation of the characters (both by Orwell and the Party), and how the novel shows a mirror to our own acts and society.

A desire for keeping order, despising capitalism, and the complete erasure of class differences: these are some of the similarities we might find in both utopia and dystopia. In spite of their superficial differences, they are still hard to distinguish from each other, due to these shared values. Even the most inexperienced readers can sense the different atmospheres,

and maybe even point out the most obvious characteristics of those two genres – utopia being a positive, nature-oriented, futuristic environment, whereas the readers imagine dystopia as always something terrifying, a restricted state, with grey concrete buildings, polluted air, and enormous factories standing at the horizon. Even though on the surface they are opposites (regarding locations or feelings we associate with them), but these are only superficial differences; both of these concepts advocates for the abolition of class differences, general prosperity, and equal treatment.

Before I begin, I would like to clarify that the point of the introduction of my paper is not to prove that George Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (or, as it is stylised today, *1984* – and by this title I will refer to it from now on) is indeed a piece of dystopian fiction: a categorisation that has been a staple of its reception for decades. Such scholars can be cited here as Raymond Williams, Christopher Hitchens, John Rodden, and Bernard Crick, etc. Still, I would like to explore some definitions for the utopian and dystopian genres in general to demonstrate why *1984* might have actually started as a utopian work.

Even though there are countless definitions of utopia and dystopia, I found Helga Nowotny's definitions the most thought-provoking. Nowotny believes that “[m]ost of the social utopias of [the 19th century] remain attached to the ideal of social happiness which would be brought about by following the laws, whether it be the laws of the natural sciences which were to be exploited technologically, or the laws of the nascent, positive social sciences” (9). Based on her definition, it is necessary to follow certain laws, society needs to have its set of rules, there must be structures that people must follow, and people need regulations in order to feel safe and provided for. This “social happiness” can happen if people feel that the government in charge takes care of them, looks after them, and cares about their problems, but it cannot be one-sided. A well-functioning society is needed to create a less chaotic world as well, and this process of becoming respectful and well-behaved starts at the level of the individual.

Up until this point, utopia is quite similar to dystopia. The prefix *dys-* refers to illness or abnormality, and Nowotny provides the definition of dystopia as follows: “Dystopia can be read as the dysfunctional version of a science and technology having fallen victim to the surplus of order and control that we have seen inherent in utopian thought” (15). Dystopia therefore is much more radical and extreme, full of unnecessary regulations, and the order does not benefit the common person, rather helps the government or leader stay in position and keep the power over the masses.

One aspect of these two genres Nowotny's definitions lack is the human constituent. She mostly brings examples from scientific fields; however, I believe that science has less importance in the transition from utopia to dystopia than what she attributes to it. Technological devices can be found both in, for example, Thomas More's *Utopia* (agricultural tools, for instance) and in *1984* (telescreens), but what changed is the human mindset, and the reason for which these devices are used. At the beginning of her essay, Nowotny mentions one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, Ernst Bloch (3), and she further explains that based on Bloch's works, there can be two "breeding ground[s]" differentiated for "utopian projects" (5). As she explains it, nature (or rather natural sciences) and society provide the establishments of "laboratories" (5).

However, the word "nature" reminds me of the universality of people's natural rights; I do not attempt to go into the depths of philosophy, but Nowotny's next explanation of Bloch's view made me realise a distressing fact. She goes on further, and states that "despite [the society's] attempts to order, it remains recalcitrant, incoherent, beset by passions and irrational impulses. One of the deeply rooted utopian prospects of science is to transform these passions, to instil the kind of rational order into society that would ensure the realization of the common good" (5). When people's natural rights are violated, utopia turns into dystopia. This natural right is, according to my opinion, among other things, the fulfillment of the aforementioned desires, which, although it is solely present in the individual, can also be linked to the collective society. The health of the individual also depends on the fulfillment of these desires, within certain limits, of course, provided by rules. For this reason, people should not be restricted in having personal space, dreams, and hobbies, as it helps them to play certain roles in society, or to belong to a community. A well-functioning society must take care of the individuals first, it needs to fulfill not only their physical, but also spiritual needs as well.

Dystopia often criticises and works as a satire of the political regimes of the 20th century: Daphne Patai argues that "dystopias provide a framework for levelling criticisms at the writer's own historical moment" (86). In the case of Orwell himself, he provides a critique of the Stalinist regime (which was a reason for concern in his era) in both of his most known novels, *1984* and *Animal Farm*. Utopias, on the other hand, set an example of what a perfect and ideal world should be like. Although *1984* is a piece of dystopian fiction, the concept of utopia was able to take root in the novel as well: the image of the Golden Country often appears intertwined with nature. Compared to the grey walls of concrete buildings, covered with posters of the face of Big Brother, a simple forest or a clearing seem like a refreshing

utopistic environment. For Winston, utopia meant endless peacefulness, without fear and sorrow: “He was in the Golden Country, or he was sitting among enormous glorious, sunlit ruins, with his mother, with Julia, with O’Brien – not doing anything, merely sitting in the sun, talking of peaceful things” (347).

Now I would like to turn to utopia and dystopia for one last time. Another interesting aspect of Nowotny’s definition was that contrary to 19th-century scholars who believed in the exclusivity of utopia imagined in the distant, unreachable future, she believes that both utopia and dystopia can now refer to our present, or near future as well. As she puts it, “[t]he category of the future is shrinking towards becoming a mere extension of the present” (16). Of course, this extension can be mostly seen in the field of science and technology, in the name of scientific revelations and the development of technical devices, which are now far more obtainable even by the common person than before, which can be clearly defined as utopian. Countless other changes happened since then as well, even in economy or society. The latter includes, for example, the reception and acceptance of people of colour, feminist views, and the more positive reception of LGBTQ+ people. They all lead to a more positive, progressive utopian world. *1984* is a description of a possible future as well, in its own way: it shows what could have been the manifestation of Karl Marx’s Socialist theory. Nowotny’s quote leads to my next chapter, where I take a closer look at why *1984* is not only a dystopian fiction, but it works as a political satire as well, why Orwell’s initial views on Socialism changed, and how it is portrayed in his novel.

Chapter 2: Historical Context and Narrative Strategies

2.1 Orwell and the Theory of Socialism

Socialist theory and utopian Socialism are concepts which are both explored by 18th- and 19th-century scholars and philosophers. I would not like to delve into the differences between these notions due to their philosophical depth, however, Kurt Bayertz’s and Robert Conquest’s essays were of great help in my research. According to Bayertz, Socialism in theory is “generally called utopian, that is [it] posit[s] an ideal future in which all the evils of early industrial capitalism would be overcome and all the social conditions necessary for the happiness of mankind would exist” (94). This description usually refers to the 19th or 20th centuries, where the industrial revolution made many people (even children), exploited by capitalists, work in horrible conditions. Nowotny’s view shows that we are finally living in

better conditions than our ancestors, with more freedom and opportunities in life – there are, of course, exceptions, but it is generally true in many countries. As we are living a somewhat comfortable life today, it is quite incomprehensible for us that people used to live in such awful conditions.

As Conquest states, Orwell's view was that "the poverty and distress he saw in England was attributable to capitalism, and would be cured by the socialist state. So he was indeed a keen advocate of Socialism – though definable (as he put it) as justice and liberty" (126). This quote explains that Orwell indeed saw an escape in Socialism, he truly believed in it, however, his novel, *1984* gives voice to a disillusionment caused by the Stalinist deformity of Socialist theory, as well as radical Communism. The novel was banned in several countries, therefore Orwell's aim was not to open the people's eyes living in those specific countries ruled by a Communist regime, but, as Conquest writes, "the really extraordinary thing was not that Orwell was essentially right but that so many Westerners were so spectacularly wrong" (129). The goal to achieve with his novel was to show this part of the world rather than convince people to take part in a possible revolution. Gorman Beauchamp joins Conquest in this idea, stating that "*1984*, then, is not a realistic novel, but an ideological satire; not simply a prophecy, but a warning" (3). The second part of this quote is the one I would like to now refer to – this warning was addressed to the Western countries rather than people living under totalitarian dictatorship.

2.2 A Lack of Actions

What went wrong with this promising theory then? One of the most important aspects Bayertz mentions is the discrimination against the proletariat, which is also present in *1984*, as the working class is completely alienated from the members of the Party. In early socialist theories, when it comes to the equality of the working and middle classes, Bayertz states that the proletariat is often left out. He differentiates between 18th- and 19th-century Socialist theories and 19th- and 20th-century Socialism. He further notes that "[Socialist theories] did not make appeal to the proletariat (as did the later socialism), but to all reasonable and just-minded men, including the propertied classes" (94). It was like Marx's criticism of the Socialist theory as well. Bayertz formulates it thus: "Convinced that a radical transformation of society was necessary, Marx held the theories which were intended to bring about such a transformation insufficient" (97). As Bayertz continues later, it was mostly possible because "[the worker] wanted to have a concrete goal, he did not want only to learn theory, but also to be motivated emotionally" (106). Therefore the notion of utopia (as Socialist theory was a

utopian idea rather than an achievable goal) was not enough for the working classes, because philosophy will not feed them and make their lives easier – for them, Socialist theories were just empty promises. They wanted to see concrete actions they could believe in, not some person preaching almost at the same level as aristocracy. In theory, the middle class wanted to overthrow their oppressors, but they might not have shared their wealth with underprivileged classes. For this reason, Bayertz further comments on Marx's view, stating that "[he] raised the question of who was to be the 'emancipator', that is, of who would be the bearer of the transformation of society. His answer was that it could only be the proletariat" (97). It is, however, questionable, whether the proletariat would even have the knowledge and courage to rule a whole country in the case of a possible revolution, or if they would just collapse under the mental pressure and newly gained absolute freedom.

The need for a possible revolution was also debated. Marx supported the idea of a revolution, as Bayertz writes: "Whereas Marx had held that a revolution was necessary (that is, an interruption of historical continuity), many Social Democratic thinkers tended towards an evolutionary conception of history" (102). Is a revolution even necessary? Maybe that is the reason why Orwell chose to end his novel the way he does: hopelessly and pessimistically, after a doomed revolution, because it was not needed in the first place. According to the Social Democratic philosophy, "the socialist goal of the workers' movement no longer appeared as something to be forced into existence by action, but as something guaranteed by the automatic movement of history" (Bayertz 102). Based on this quote, time could have solved some of the problems. Would a possible uprising have helped or hindered the work of time? Opinions are divided on this, based on the quotes mentioned above. However, as I see it, history is created by people, people are the ones who influence the progress of history, not time. Of course, retrospectively, it might seem like time is the main driving force, but in reality, it is not so.

It is not essential to know the historical context of the novel, similarly to *Animal Farm*: both novels are enjoyable even without a thorough background knowledge, because the structure of a dictatorship is almost the same in every country ruled by a regime. However, the historical context adds to the understanding of the novel and to why it ended the way it did. The readers long for a happy ending, they root for the characters, they wish the characters' success in the rebellion – however, it cannot be achievable, because it reflects the real world and politics. The world seems merciless and hopeless, especially at the beginning of the Cold War. Everyone is scared of the nuclear bomb, everyone is worried about their families, their jobs, their future.

1984 refuses to give hope, or some sort of compassion to its readers: it is not a call for rebellion, overthrowing aristocracy or upper classes, but instead functions as an eye-opening satire of what the world might become. As for the idea of rebellion, it is necessary to explore why Socialist theory did not work neither in the novel, nor in real life: the title of Goldstein's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* starts with the word "theory", and as Marx advocates, a theory must be put into action. The failure of rebellion we encounter in the fictional world of *1984* can be accounted by the infiltration of the Party's spies in the midst of the rebels. As members of the Brotherhood have only a limited knowledge of others, this aforementioned infiltration dooms their spread and it ultimately makes the shift from theory to practice impossible. 😊

2.3 Narrative in *1984*

1984 is more than dystopian fiction, as Bernard Crick explains in his essay. He provides examples of different readings of the novel:

[*1984*] has been read as deterministic prophecy, as a kind of science fiction or a dystopia, as a conditional projection of the future, as a humanistic satire on contemporary events, as a total rejection of socialism of any kind, and as a libertarian socialist – almost an anarchist – protest against totalitarian tendencies and abuses of power both in his own and in other possible societies. ("Nineteen" 146)

His observations, in my opinion, capture the complexity of *1984*. When it comes to the reading of *1984* as an ideological satire, Crick offers a complete list in his essay ("Nineteen" 147–148) to demonstrate, with the help of close reading, the aspects in which the novel can be considered as a satire, reflecting on real-life political events. One of his discoveries I find quite interesting: as Crick defines it, the "proletarianisation" of people can be considered an ironical touch to what Marx and his contemporaries thought about the proletariat being the liberator. According to Crick, one of Orwell's main motivations to include satire in his novel was that "industrial society had turned people into proles: '... films, football, beer and, above all, gambling filled the horizon of their minds. To keep them in control was not difficult'" (153).

Their lives are simply meaningless – it is ironic that even though they represent the most substantial layer of society, therefore they have more physical power, they do not intend to organise a revolution, which might be their predestined fate, as it is explained by Marx. "Proles", as this abbreviated form is used in *1984*, are completely fine with their lives being

seemingly effortless, comfortable (compared to the routine and hard work the party members have to deal with every day), similarly to the majority of today's world as well. "If there was hope, it lay in the proles!" (1984 229) – writes Goldstein in his fictional work, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. The "proles" make up the largest percentage of the population. They live without the telescreens monitoring them, and what is more, they can decide whether they want to own one or not (100–101).

The various social classes are symbolized by the alcoholic beverages associated with them: wine belongs to the Inner Party, gin is consumed by the Outer Party members, and the proles drink simply beer. It can be also seen as a stereotype of a British person in the 20th century. Orwell might have intended them to be the objects of laughter – what is satirical in this aspect is that the real-life nation the proles represent is not aware that they are being ridiculed and mocked, and they often laugh along with Orwell at the proles' existence.

However, Crick notices another problem in satire. In a political satire, as *1984* clearly is, you have to know the circumstances of the novel's birth. In fact, Crick states that "a general difficulty with satires is that they depend greatly on contemporary references which time can erode or misconceive, and warnings depend on plausibility in the circumstances of the day (now often misunderstood, underestimated or re-imagined)" ("Nineteen" 148). For this reason, they are highly subjective, and without any background knowledge, the reader might fall into the writer's trap: influencing the readers into believing the writer's opinion, view, and subjective reality, without drawing their own conclusions. The reader only gets to see one side of the story, which might have been exaggerated (that is one of the most important characteristics of the genre of satire itself), or some parts might be left out. Therefore, political and ideological satires cannot be considered a truthful portrayal and description of historical events, but then again: can we really believe in history being faithful to the events that really happened? Or what we read in history books is always a subjective truth, and historians and writers alter history in a way that benefits them?

For this reason, the reader must look at a historical event from many perspectives, must not believe everything that the historian states, and must be very objective, unbiased, and must question everything. Nonetheless, Orwell captures Stalinism in the second part of the 20th century so accurately that, according to Conquest, "[scholars] are often told that Russians and East Europeans could not believe that Orwell had not lived in the Soviet Union" (129). His novel very much resonates with the events that happened under Soviet rule. Conquest brings examples of some similar aspects, including such statements as "[t]he Unperson was a common Moscow unphenomenon" (130), or the organization of Spies being

“based on the heroic denouncers of parents in the USSR” (130). The reason why Orwell had chosen the genre of satire to be the core of his novel, then, was not that he was an advocator of only one side, but instead testifies to his vast knowledge about the Soviet Union.

In satire, the readers often forgive the writers for their errors, lack of knowledge, harsh criticisms, and blind fanaticism. Even though none of these can be found in *1984*, satire and fiction themselves work as a shield against the writer’s arch enemy: censorship. Referring to Crick’s quote about the diversity and complexity of the genres in *1984*, it can be said that Orwell’s main intention was to entertain people, make them laugh, and ridicule the characters’ cowardice, which sometimes distracts the reader from the real message of the novel. Therefore, the genre of satire is just a cover that can be applied to literary works, allowing the reader to see in it whatever meaning they want.

Chapter 3: The Imagery of Big Brother and Goldstein

In this chapter, I focus on the unequal power dynamics between the Party and the middle class, in the context of preventing a rebellion. I intend to investigate the following questions: why is it necessary to stifle the slightest desire to rebel and why can these weapons be effective against the middle class? The first step to establish a dictatorship, and afterwards to maintain power might be to appoint/create a leader and at the same time fabricate our own enemy-figure. It is also the first step to prevent the organization of a rebellion, and for this reason we have to think in extremes: the leader must be very good and kind to the people, who saves us from the evil enemy. So in the following, I take a closer look at the image of the novel’s two polar opposites: Big Brother and Goldstein.

We suddenly wake up after a long journey in London, the capital city of Airstrip One, in 1984. As we move our numb limbs, rubbing our eyes, we catch a glimpse of the face of an authoritative man on a huge poster. We almost feel his deep dark gaze looking at us. This is the first encounter with Big Brother – or at least, with his image. Under his face, a caption is written in all caps: “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (*1984* 3). Big Brother is the main figure – or, so to say, manifestation – of the Party itself; we never get to see him in person, but he is the face of every act of the Party, and that distinguishes him from being a traditional “cult leader” or dictator. He neither appears in public, nor gives public speeches on national marches, moreover, there are not any pictures published of him in newspapers, which would usually be favored by a dictator in order to appear as a loving father-figure and a generous leader – Big Brother does not need this strategy. However, we might see him in films during

sessions of Two Minutes Hate, but there is no real evidence to prove that it is not an actor playing him. This sort of mysticism benefits the image of Big Brother: the Party can alter his face to fit into the idea of the middle and working classes, he has no real body which would age or change (for instance, he cannot gain or lose weight). This timeless image is necessary to establish some sort of security and consistency. He thus surpasses the person, the human: he becomes an idea and an ideal leader, unshakable, unchangeable.

The party members follow him blindly, and do not ever question him – however, because they never get to see him, some of them may doubt the existence of Big Brother, which can be seen in a conversation between Winston and O'Brien:

‘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. (1984 272)

As long as the Party lives, the image of Big Brother cannot be destroyed or forgotten – his existence is a personification of the Party itself, and in this sense, in comparison, Winston's life is not long-lasting. His life, as well as the lives of the majority, can be erased, therefore they do not exist. O'Brien could erase Winston's life in a moment, and no one would notice that he does not exist anymore. Mostly, because it was usual that people did not arrive at their workplace, and no one questioned it, because they were afraid of the consequences, or trusted the Party to make the right decision. Moreover, the point of this dialogue is not whether Winston really lives or not, but the fact that to trust the Party and Big Brother you have to question even your own existence, you have to lie to your own senses. Winston did just that: he accepted what O'Brien stated, therefore Winston lost his ability to perceive reality as it is. Party members (the proles could preserve some parts of their individual existence) consider Big Brother a God-like figure in a sense: Big Brother has the right to decide their fates. Why is it important to manipulate people, why does the Party need them to follow Big Brother blindly? Because if people lose their ability to think for themselves, if they do not have free will, they do not even know that they would have other options as well.

Winston is once more deprived of his perception, meaning that his memory is challenged by O'Brien during the torture. O'Brien denies the existence of the three men (namely Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford), but Winston remembers otherwise. They were arrested after Goldstein's escape, accused of false charges, vanished for a year – when they returned after their disappearance, they suddenly confessed everything they were accused of

(1984 78). Their innocence was proven by a photograph which Winston saw with his own eyes, although O'Brien convinced him otherwise (259). It is easier to influence Winston in this regard: this time he relies only on his memory, which can be manipulated more efficiently, because his memory fades, and he is not even sure that it happened. This process of "memory manipulation" can indicate what is happening on a broader level, due to history itself being collective memory. It is constantly rewritten, and because everything seems black and white, people lose their ability to think critically: they do not need it anymore, the Party provides them with the "facts" they must believe.

First and foremost, they have to believe that the arch enemy of the Party (and thus all the people) is Emmanuel Goldstein, one of the former leaders of the Party, "almost on a level with Big Brother himself" (1984 13). Even though he is the main enemy figure of the Party, many similarities can be drawn between Goldstein and Big Brother. Goldstein, similarly to Big Brother, does not own a body. We cannot see him alive (even though, as Big Brother, he is also portrayed by actors in the propaganda films), therefore, we might even question his existence, and whether he is only fabricated by the Party to frighten people. If the Party is so indestructible, and therefore Big Brother is immortal, then why does the Party keep him alive? Why do they not execute him? The reason might be that the Party uses him as a scapegoat, party members point a finger at him and he is blamed for every inconvenience that the people have to deal with. If Goldstein did not exist, then the Party would have to take all the responsibility for their actions. And another thing: hate brings people together. They feel united in turning against a common enemy.

If you want to restrict people and their right to choose a leader, make them think in extremes, make them look at the world in black and white, instead of thinking critically, make them question their own senses. The process of manipulating people is not cruel, it does not need any blood spilled, but it successfully prevents them from ever daring to think about a rebellion. Everything starts with taking away people's own perceptions and thoughts, while the Party feeds them its opinion. The Party takes away all their confidence and belief in their own senses, making them feel like they are worthless and insignificant (see again the dialogue between Winston and O'Brien). In a world like this, it is hard for the people to even form the question whether organising a rebellion would be possible.

Big Brother is also able to sense and feel everything, even the innermost thoughts and feelings of the people: his main devices for this purpose are the telescreens, which are placed in every person's private home, as well as public places. Paranoia is a part of everyday life, because "[e]ven from the coin the eyes pursued you. On coins, on stamps, on the covers of

books, on banners, on posters, and on the wrappings of a cigarette packet – everywhere” (1984 29). In the next chapter I take a look at why it is almost impossible for a rebellion to emerge, and to go against the methods the Party uses.

Chapter 4: Weapons of Manipulation

4.1 Direct and Indirect Instruments

As long as the Party is in charge, it uses every weapon at its disposal to keep the power in hand. We can divide the instruments of power into two groups: direct and indirect, depending on how people feel the effects, whether they experience it first hand or it affects their minds. Direct weapons include surveillance, brute force, abuse and labour camps, while indirect methods include censorship, propaganda, manipulation and compulsory participation in events. Indirect instruments prevent the sin, nip it in the bud, so that the sinful thought cannot take hold, they thus influence the people’s subconscious; direct instruments are the final stage, carrying out the punishment. The most effective physical weapon among these instruments is Room 101, which turns normal human beings into people who could betray even their loved ones in order to be saved.

“‘You can take ... them and cut their throats in front of my eyes, and I’ll stand by and watch it. But not Room 101!’” (1984 249) – the idea of being in Room 101 immediately changes the way people think about the values of family, friendship and love. In the room, people are confronted with their worst nightmare: a reflection of their repressed fears, which is why it is so frightening. As O’Brien states, “‘[y]ou know what is in Room 101, Winston. Everyone knows what is in Room 101’” (273). In reality, however, no one knows what is in Room 101, until they experience it – this contradiction proves that the Party is always one step ahead of people who fell out of its favour. Room 101 is a personalised nightmare, which always changes for the prisoner’s “benefit”. Why does the Party need to go to such extremes? Although it might look like Room 101 is only for breaking the captive’s mind, making them suffer and confess crimes they did not even commit, it has another reason as well. It is to show that the Party knows the people more than they know themselves – it detects people’s deepest fears and uses them against the prisoners. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “101” means the most basic knowledge of a subject, and in this context it is definitely accurate. Room 101 works as a demonstration of what the Party is capable of. Even the

readers might be afraid of this notion, and they might start wondering what if they get in this room, whether their thoughts will be used against them.

Although they cannot cause physical pain, indirect weapons still bring more harm to people than the direct ones, because they destroy the capacity for human thinking, and they are built into the consciousness of the people step by step, imperceptibly. Censorship and propaganda are some of the most striking ones in this group; they are present mostly in the field of literature, but also infiltrate the private sphere, forbidding the writing of personal diaries. This is similar to what is happening on the broader level, when it comes to rewriting history. Crick notices this idea as well, and refers to Winston's action at the start of the novel: "Thus the authenticity of memory, thus the diary: the attempt to write the diary begins the main thread of the plot in which private memory is defended against the official attempts to rewrite history; and these become parallel themes" ("Nineteen" 152). Kim Becnel joins Crick in this idea, stating that "Winston seems to believe that truth and history lie in the individual citizen's observations and memories. Were they allowed to express these, presumably they would arrive at some sort of collective interpretation" ("1984" 75). Therefore, as Winston starts writing his diary addressing the future (and the yet unborn) readers (*1984* 9), he tries to capture history through his own experiences. This is the only attempt in the novel not to erase history, but to record it in its true essence.

Another important aspect, more collective than diary writing, is the printing press or literature. Books became mass products (*1984* 136), not a form of artistic expression anymore; there is no longer any need for bookshelves, however, the empty space is still perceivable in people's homes (7), which represents the educated, literate past. The fact that the place of the intended bookshelves is still there, not completely rebuilt, means that the people are still longing for knowledge, and they still have a desire for learning. However, instead of literature, people can only read ordinary propaganda.

There can be decent propagandistic stories written, with acceptable characters and moral values, but the aim of propaganda is not to show the depth and complexities of human minds, create morally grey characters, to go against stereotypes and bias, and reject clichés. Literature is sometimes cruel to its characters: they suffer traumas, others break their hearts, and sometimes the evil wins, while in censored propagandistic media the "good" always *has to win* (in this case the Party or Big Brother, but in the real world it can be any dictator of any century or today), otherwise the creators of that piece have to suffer. Even though censorship restricted the writers in past centuries as well, they could still present different values, lovable characters, heroes, even antagonists, who might still arouse emotions in us today.

4.2 Influence Through Newspeak

But the manipulation does not start at the level of propaganda. A new language, Newspeak is constructed by the Party to restrict the vocabulary (therefore the thinking as well) of people, as well as a new philosophy (similarly to Stalinism in the Soviet Union, or the still present Juche in North Korea) emerges, English Socialism, or as it is known in the novel, Ingsoc. The language of Newspeak and the principles of Ingsoc closely intertwine – the simplification of language prevents people from even thinking about certain things, because there is no proper term for them, or they create terms that had no significance before. Newspeak concepts limit the expression of thoughts, as well as their pragmatic meanings – the contexts in which the words and thoughts are formed do not matter.

By constructing this language, the party has created different concepts that provide a space for more powerful tools of control, although it has not yet reached its final form (*1984* 53). Luis Alfredo Velasco Guerrero also recognizes the danger of using rhymes in everyday speech; characters of *1984* use ready-made rhyming phrases, which further rob them of original thinking: “people not only do not have to worry about searching for new words but they also do not have to worry about the rhyme of their sentences, as these phrases are already organized in a resonant way” (135). For this reason, even though people rarely notice it, they become sort of “lazy” while using language: they do not have to think of what they would like to express, because the Party came up with a pattern that thinks instead of them. The aforementioned poetry and literature lost their values as well, because Newspeak lacks the beauty and sophistication a language otherwise includes.

When considering the language use propagated by the system of *1984*, the theory of linguistic relativity, or in an other name, the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis adds further insight into that. It has two variations that are known today, namely strong and weaker versions. The strong version, which is often rejected by linguists today (including Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker), deals with how the language determines thought, and claims that people cannot think of certain notions that they do not have a word for in their language. Even though it cannot work in the real world, in that of the world of *1984*, as it is fictional, it might be an existing idea. If we do not know the meaning of an idiom or word in another language, we still can explain it in a longer sentence: this is not possible in the world of *1984*, because there are no other cultures and languages that coexist with this one. Thus, the people of *1984* do not feel the influence of foreign languages and cultures, and fail to wonder at this colourful difference. Although you can find segments of English (called Oldspeak) in the novel, the

Party is trying with all its efforts to erase it, thus making it impossible to compare languages and question the meaning of words. This is the aim of Ingsoc as well: to determine what sorts of morals and values people must follow, leaving them no alternative.

Why is it so important for the Party to limit human language? Why is it necessary when it comes to the prevention of a rebellion? As Jean-Jacques Courtine realises, “[p]ower must thus become master of language since language is the living memory of man and offers him a space for inner resistance. ... Language threatens the totalitarian enterprise” (70). Based on his recognition, we can state that contrary to history, which can be altered easily, language is a somewhat “living fossil” – although languages went through significant changes over thousands of years, they were more constant than history. Even though there were attempts to create artificial languages (the Esperanto language, for instance, which has a greater cause than Newspeak: instead of limiting people’s thoughts, it was created as a second lingua franca, with the aim of connecting people), language is not simply a human creation, but an organic entity that changes through centuries, and could exist even without any human intervention.

The society of Oceania is shaped by the doctrines of the Ingsoc, the sacred philosophy of the Party. It exists, however, in each of the three states, under different names: “In Oceania the ... philosophy is called Ingsoc, in Eurasia it is called Neo-Bolshevism, and in Eastasia it is called ... Obliteration of the Self” (1984 205). It is a relatively new philosophy, as the word “Ingsoc” appeared only after the Revolution, since Winston “did not believe he had ever heard the word Ingsoc before 1960” (38). According to Orwell, many similarities can be drawn between the fictional Ingsoc, real-life totalitarianism and nationalism: in the case of a totalitarian regime, Abbott Gleason writes, “political power was in the hands of a dictator or ‘leader’ and a non-traditional ruling elite; the mass of the population was not only politically powerless but deprived of all intellectual and cultural resources” (148). These cultural and intellectual resources include forms of entertainment: theatrical plays, films, or even concerts. These events often work as a meeting ground for people, where they can share their opinions and beliefs, have a great time together, but most importantly: forget about their daily, mundane tasks. However, in 1984, the Party regulates the enjoyment of leisure time and the nurturing of interpersonal relationships.

The philosophy of Ingsoc covers the preferred collectivistic, and despised individualistic principles as well. Individualistic values are condemned, and fundamentally positive qualities such as individuality are portrayed in a negative light: in Newspeak, it is called *ownlife* (1984 85). The same goes for sexuality and desire (71) – these are part of the

private life of the individual, they do not contribute to the development of the Party, and so it is a sin to experience them. Personal space is further restricted by people being only allowed to own a limited number of personal belongings (215). One of the most striking signs of collectivism is the mandatory wearing of uniform: the Party's dark blue overalls are almost shameful to the people. Besides, it is the Party that owns and distributes all the goods and wealth, and thus has power over the people. Death comes to the individual, but the Party is immortal as an idea. The Party controls life and death, and intervenes in the fate of people, influencing even their relationships – which I cover in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Destruction of Interpersonal Relationships

Another tool in the hands of the power is the organisation of events in which the participation of all party members is compulsory: the two main events are Two Minutes Hate and Hate Week (*1984* 3; 11). Two Minutes Hate is part of everyday life, but Hate Week requires a lot of preparation (154–155). However, instead of building interpersonal relationships and providing a place to deepen relationships, as the Party should, these events are solely for observing people's emotions and thoughts. People have more power in a group than on their own; although the Party advocates collectivist views according to Ingsoc principles (this includes, for example, the uniform regulations, the organisation of community programmes, communal meals, the rejection of *ownlife*), they want people to remain isolated in their relationships. This contradiction also breaks the sacredness of family.

Family is the strongest “institution”: family members can go to extremes for each other, even sacrificing themselves. Even though the Party did not take away children physically, they did turn them against their parents through the organisation from a very young age: the Party now infiltrates homes alongside telescreens, and what the device cannot detect, the children can – home stopped being a shelter from the struggles of everyday life. For this reason, can we call the children cruel? Can we say that they are cold-hearted murderers in a way? Over the decades, there were many examples of why children act like this. In North Korea, for example, if they snitch on their parents, they get a bowl of rice – but there was no mention of the children of *1984* getting any reward. They can be easily influenced, however, due to the lack of experience in life or the lack of a sense of guilt. The concept of family is also deformed, and for this reason, children cannot really comprehend their actions, because for them it is completely normal and natural.

Both Evelyn Fox Keller and Crick provide answers to why the institution of family has changed, but they look at it from different perspectives. Keller believes that motherhood is a greater power than a political party: “Most commonly, this alternative conception of power [*for* the benefit of someone rather than *over* them], although it is often not thought of as such, is associated with the practice of motherhood” (261–262), while, according to Crick, “[h]ierarchy destroys fraternity” (“Nineteen” 149). The lack of both concepts can be applied here, because they both contribute to the fact that the Party took over the role of the family – there are no mothers, fathers, and siblings any longer, only “comrades”. Crick goes even further, and notices that ““Big Brother is watching you’, but not watching over you as a brother should” (149). Thus, the whole idea of the family changed and became the new, acceptable norm. The word “brother” is not used to describe a secure, loving relationship, but rather the personification of the Party, who can be called anything but a caring brother.

Crick’s comment is satirical in a sense: Big Brother is indeed watching you, every minute of the day, through telescreens and the Thought Police, but not for your benefit. It functions similarly to an older brother who watches and bullies you in order to find something to complain about and then tell the parents, or an overly sensitive younger brother who likes to annoy his older sibling. Either way, it cannot be called a healthy family. The Party needs to maintain power, so it uses all its resources to observe people, keep them on a leash, manipulate them through propaganda, deprive them of their own lives, obtain information and use it against them, breaking all moral values, including interpersonal relations. For a while, it succeeds in preventing a rebellion from breaking out, but sooner or later a rebellion would be organised, coming from the very people whom the Party has shaped into seemingly heartless crowds – the next chapter is about these characters.

Chapter 6: The Manipulation of Characters

Alongside Goldstein or Big Brother, O’Brien is also a symbol. In the eyes of the individual, he is a symbol of lies, deceit and hatred, yet from the perspective of the Party he is loyal. He is at the opposite pole from the protagonist, his ideology is the same as the Party’s, he believes in it, although at the beginning he convinces us of the opposite: “O’Brien’s political orthodoxy was not perfect. Something in his face suggested it irresistibly” (1984 13), states Winston as he first sees O’Brien. That makes Winston and Julia believe that he is on the right side and can be trusted. Similarly to what the Party does to people on a greater scale, O’Brien gets inside Winston’s and Julia’s minds to use their thoughts against them, and

eventually turns them against each other; he destroys all resistance from within, without feeling any guilt. In the end, this is what makes *1984* so cruel – people seize every moment/opportunity to gain control over others.

The resistance comes from within, and this is what the Party feared: Winston and Julia are both ideal citizens, but they ignite the fire of resistance in each other as soon as they met. The power is trying with all its strength to cast humanity out of the people, without any success, which further proves Orwell's view: "Orwell did not believe that poverty and class oppression (which he fiercely believed were real forces in the history of the West) had dehumanised people completely" (Crick 152). In the end, Julia and Winston stay human, and that is what matters. Even though they seemingly betray each other while they are tortured, and they think they lost all their humanity, their guilt proves that they are still capable of feeling a wide range of human emotions – love, sensuality, regret, and sadness. Although they lost the physical act of rebellion, they eventually won: the Party could not break them completely, Winston and Julia both stay true to their human nature.

After their torture, Winston and Julia become strangers once again and confess to each other: "'I betrayed you,' she said baldly. 'I betrayed you,' he said" (369). Although some may think that these words were true and it means that they really did betray each other, we cannot blame them. They did not do it consciously, they were forced into reacting this way. They did not want to hurt each other knowingly, it just slipped out of their mouths, which they later regretted – as this dialogue proves. Because they both confessed to each other what they had done, they were able to feel guilt, and therefore we can say that they remained human, because they admit that they made mistakes during their tortures. O'Brien and the Inner Party's torture was not to kill them, but to tear them apart. They succeeded, the Party won the battle – but the final triumphs were Winston's and Julia's.

The Party has every instrument of power, including direct and indirect weapons, however, there is only one at the middle class' disposal (namely rebellion against the system), which further contributes to the unequal distribution of power. The basis of rebellions is often provided by relationships – family relations, friendships, and romantic relationships. Therefore, the Party puts a lot of energy into destroying these connections. People in *1984* do not learn what love is, they are not taught what love is or how to show it, because they never experience friendships or parental love. Both Winston's and Julia's behavior is almost childish, opposing the Party like a teenage child opposes his parents. Politics and the Ingsoc ideology sneak into the private life of the people as well. Not necessarily doing the right thing, but Winston and Julia take every opportunity to oppose the Party's principles. This also

counts as rebellion to some extent, as Winston tells Julia: “I hate purity, I hate goodness! I don’t want any virtue to exist anywhere. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones.” (1984 132). It does not mean that Winston rejects any morality, but the Party urges him to live an “ethical” life (which is, in the novel, defined as living without any desires, and being in an abstinent marriage – these are the two concepts Winston refers to the most), and he rebels against everything that comes from the Party.

What is the reason why they cannot overthrow the Party? The inconsistency and instability of their relationship hinder them from succeeding their rebellion, and their selfishness do not help it either: “You don’t give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself” (1984 305). It is easy to say that you care about someone, until a difficult situation comes, and as long as you do not have to sacrifice yourself. Winston and Julia were not enough, they cannot change the world by themselves, because the world order is already established and predetermined by a greater power. Orwell compares this feeling of inability to chess:

White always mates, he thought with a sort of cloudy mysticism. Always, without exception, it is so arranged. In no chess problem since the beginning of the world has black ever won. Did it not symbolize the eternal, unvarying triumph of Good over Evil? ... White always mates. (302)

This game of chess represents the predestined fate of the characters. Whatever they try to achieve, they cannot succeed, because there are greater forces who/that control everything from the background – Winston tries to convince himself thusly. Furthermore, this scene provides the story with a positive ending as well, meaning that the war between the Party and the people is not over yet, because *good always wins*: it is only a matter of time, and a few more brave souls, and the regime falls.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

1984 by George Orwell is indeed a shining example of 20th-century dystopian fiction, its significance is proved by award-winning film adaptations (including the one written and directed by Michael Radford in 1984), and its world inspired many dystopian writers: the most prominent writer being Margaret Atwood, who references *1984* in her novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Orwell envisioned a world that exists to this day in totalitarian countries. He combined history, politics, and philosophy to create a society that was almost real.

The novel fits all kinds of societies: the meaning of the novel has been altered many times to fit into the ideologies of certain nations (for instance, in the Soviet Union, where the novel was read as a propagandistic piece written about the United States), because regimes can be found anywhere in the world. It does not offer a solution, but gives a warning and a description about the possible future. Individually, people are powerless, and as the world of *1984* works according to collectivist ideas, which emphasise the importance of communities, the individual is left alone and deprived of any kind of relationship, which further hardens the ability to rebel and find people who share your beliefs.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, many dystopias start as utopias. The novel could have depicted an utopistic world: in the beginning, communism, which serves as inspiration for the Ingsoc ideology, was based on equality. Certain notions of utopia still exist in the novel, such as the image of the Golden Country, which Winston often dreams of. However, it was/remained only as a vision, and the people never got to experience it.

The paper focused on how the power dynamics work against the success of a possible rebellion, how unbalanced the power relations are, and how hard it is to overthrow an unjust ruling force as an ordinary person. I looked at different narrative strategies and readings of the novel, and in some cases I depicted some similarities between real-life political ideologies and those represented in the novel. In the third chapter, I examined the symbolism behind the image of Big Brother and Goldstein, and I explored the way the Party can keep the power in its hands, how it manipulates people's thoughts (using propaganda, censorship, and brute force), and how it sculpts individual people to fit in masses while destroying interpersonal relationships. In the fourth chapter, I delved into why the Party can manipulate these characters, and why I believe that the rebellion had some sort of personally significant success after all. ☺

In conclusion, *1984* works as a critique of political ideologies and figures, while maintaining a dystopian worldbuilding. Being a satire, the novel does not end in a catharsis: the act of rebellion is defeated before it could have started. Winston and Julia do not even have any chance to win the rebellion itself in the first place, because their organisation is lesser in numbers than that of the Party, they do not have access to any weapons, and the party members working undercover in the Brotherhood are not helping either. Big Brother survives, and with him the Party is still in charge, thus the middle class remains oppressed, and the working class neglected. Neither Winston nor Julia was truly defeated, not because of the suppression of the rebellion, but because they remain faithful to their human selves: they both have their faults (we might look at neither of them as good people), but by admitting and

regretting these they are one step ahead of the Party in terms of humanity. Winston is supposed to be the undefeatable hero, however, he accepts his fate, and what is more, embraces it: in the end, he was not enough as an ordinary person to go against the whole ruling force, and the machine of power ground him.

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