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We Love Big Brother: An Analysis of the Relationship between Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four And Modern Politics in the United States and Europe

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We Love Big Brother:

An Analysis of the Relationship between Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

And

Modern Politics in the United States and Europe

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Abstract: In recent months since the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the United States in November 2016, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has seen a resurgence in sales, and terms invented by Orwell or brought about by his work, such as "Orwellian," have re-entered the popular discourse. This is not a new phenomenon, however, as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has had a unique impact on each of the generations that have read it, and the impact has stretched across racial, ethnic, political, and gender lines. This thesis project will examine the critical, popular, and scholarly reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* since its publication 1949. Reviewers' and commentators' references common ideas, themes, and settings from the novel will be tracked using narrative theory concepts in order to map out an understanding of how the interpretations of the novel changed over time relative to major events in both American and

world history. I conclude that, per the arguments of Professor Richard A. Posner in 1999, *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* success and influence can still be attributed to its unique depiction of the logic of totalitarianism, providing readers with an understanding of how a purely totalitarian society would function both physically and, more importantly, psychologically in the minds of the population.

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Introduction:

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has long been regarded as one of the most influential pieces of modern literature. Its impact on political discourse can be felt still today, as even those who have not read the novel are regularly exposed to terms like "Doublethink," "Orwellian," and "Memory hole," all of which originated from Orwell's depiction of a totalitarian dystopia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Furthermore, the book's influence can be felt in the many different groups and ideologies that claim it, as well as the book's author, as their own, in the sense that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Orwell are frequently presented as champions of many different causes and ideologies by a variety of people. The focus of this thesis project is to study that influence across the sixty plus years since the publication of the novel in 1949. Though Orwell himself passed away long before he could witness major historical events like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fall of the Berlin Wall, or the September 11 terrorist attacks, his final novel has been viewed by thousands of readers, authors, and scholars through the lens of those events. The question thus emerges, what relationship is there between current events and the reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by successive generations of readers and scholars?

The goal of this thesis project is to explore the question of whether there is a correlation between major world events and the public reception of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This goal will be accomplished through a qualitative study of the reviews, articles, and scholarly literature written about the novel in each generation starting from the book's publication in 1949. This portion of the thesis project will analyze the critical response to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by examining a series of reviews, articles, and pieces of scholarly literature regarding the novel. These articles and books come from a variety of time periods, authors, and locations. Each one was selected in order to provide a glimpse into the views of certain writers and their ideologies in

different time periods and how they corresponded to the themes, motifs, and narrative elements in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Writers and politicians of every generation have attempted to claim Orwell as their own, but they have focused on different aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in order to make their claims. In other reviews, writers apply the contemporary issues of their day to the novel, arguing that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is relevant for supporting their cause or for tearing down a cause that the writer of the review is in opposition to.

In tracking how various writers respond to and interpret *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, I have focused on references, both explicit and implicit, to current events from the given writer's time period and employ narrative theory concepts to analyze which aspects of the novel are emphasized or de-emphasized. Narrative theory concepts are not typically considered in the writing of political science theses, but to this project those concepts, ranging from the concept of the unreliable narrator to that of symptomatic reading, are indispensable. By applying these narrative theory concepts, the analysis of the critical history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* takes on a more scientific focus, as one can study these reviews through the lens of critical narrative theory. A comprehensive analysis of these reviews yields a pattern that supports the claim that authors from similar time periods examined *Nineteen Eighty-Four* through similar lenses based on the events that those authors lived through. The narrative theory pillar of the analysis thus strengthens the critical history pillar. Narrative elements, including those which are emphasized and de-emphasized in a given piece of critical literature, are a sign of what aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are at the forefront in the author's mind. This can only lend support to an analysis of that critical history, and when combined with a historical analysis of the time period in which a given review was written, may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the context of the critical literature surrounding *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Literature Review

This literature reviews covers several categories concerning one of the most influential novels in recent literary and political history. Thus, for the sake of organization and clarity, this literature review is broken into sections covering various aspects that scholars have chosen to focus on when studying George Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Although the scope of this thesis project does not include analysis of certain elements studied within this literature review, such as the personal history of George Orwell, the literature remains relevant for the reason that it ties into Orwell's political leanings and the way that those leanings are mentioned in reviews of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Furthermore, while a comprehensive understanding of Orwell or even *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not necessary for one to fully understand this thesis project, this literature remains a useful piece of background information to characterize *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the world in which it was written, published, and subsequently reviewed and studied for decades thereafter. For clarity, I have organized this literature review into three parts, similar to how this thesis project is organized into chapters for the sake of organization and coherence.

George Orwell as a Political Scientist and a Historian

It should come as no surprise that a considerable number of articles and books have been dedicated to the study of George Orwell as a man and an author, which is to say that they have analyzed his personal history and how the experiences in his life may have impacted him as a writer, including when he authored *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These sources range from biographies to works studying the events going on during the formative years of Orwell's life and even analyses of earlier texts that Orwell either authored or all but explicitly stated were influences upon his life and his writing. For example, in *Orwell and the Art of Writing*, Jeffrey Meyers writes of both Orwell and Somerset Maugham, "Like Maugham, Orwell trusted his audience to

share his values and understanding of the world, but had a far more didactic bent, a crusading spirit that sought to cut through cant and intensify political consciousness” (Meyers, 2011, 170). This “crusading spirit” may seem at odds with the tone of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* given the crushingly dreary and bleak depiction of the future, but fits neatly with the notion that Orwell himself was a crusader against totalitarianism. Abbott Gleason wrote of how Orwell hardened his views against fascism and totalitarianism when he fought for that “crusading spirit” in the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1937, when he served as a Corporal for the Republican government, only exiting the conflict when he was declared medically unfit to continue following an attack in which Orwell was shot in the throat (Jacobs, 2001, 1). Within this essay, Gleason analyzes the current events surrounding Orwell as he grew up and began writing. In particular Gleason makes special note of the Cold War, which was already looming as a global threat even before the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the year 1949.

My research has also uncovered multiple articles that examine other works that influenced Orwell, many of them authored by close friends or people that Orwell himself held in high esteem. H.G. Piers Stephens’s essay, “Nature and Liberty: The Golden Country in George Orwell’s 1984 and an Alternative Conception of Human Freedom” is notable for the reception, including by Orwell, of James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution*. That work of political theory, published in 1941, sought to predict how the world of the future might look, paying particular attention to the future of capitalism. Orwell himself authored a response to the book in 1946 entitled, “Second Thoughts on the Managerial Revolution.” In that response Orwell directly attacks many of Burnham’s predictions, accusing him of being alternatively pro-Nazi or pro-Communist, but most importantly for the purposes of my research concluding that the world is moving toward oligarchy and the establishment of three superpowers. This prediction, Gleason

argues, fits neatly into the setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is set in a world trapped in perpetual conflict with the three superpowers, Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, making endless war upon one another (Gleason, 2005, 78).

From these essays we can conclude that Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with political objectives in mind, namely combatting fascism and totalitarianism through his works. This will provide further context for analysis on other critical reviews and scholarly literature regarding *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Totalitarianism in Nineteen Eighty-Four

One compelling argument for Orwell's influence over time is that Orwell outlined a society that contained, if not the details of what a totalitarian society taken to the extreme might look like, then at least the logic of what such a world would resemble. Richard Posner offers such an argument in "Orwell versus Huxley: Economics, Technology, Privacy, and Satire," writing, "The political significance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as of Orwell's earlier political satire, *Animal Farm*, is to depict with riveting clarity the logic of totalitarianism—not its practice or its prospects, but the carrying of its inner logic to extremes that are sometimes almost comic, though darkly so" (Posner, 1999, 200). This argument addresses one possible objection against *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* significance, namely that the world Orwell predicted in 1949 has not occurred, or that because the timeline of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* did not occur in the real world as it did in the novel that the book is less relevant as a tool for understanding current events. Writing on *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance in studying the election of Donald Trump, for example, Josephine Livingstone states, "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* came out in 1949. Orwell commented on the world as it was. He wrote out his fears of nuclear war, and the danger of dictatorship in states where much has been destroyed" (Livingstone, 2017). The notion that

Orwell is depicting the logic of totalitarianism rather than simply his contemporary moment in history, however, is very compelling, because that leaves *Nineteen Eighty-Four* unrestricted from the requirements that it must predict the future. Posner's hypothesis allows Orwell to present an intensely grim but largely symbolic future that may still come to pass.

The idea that Orwell is depicting some form of logic, not tied to any one ideology or belief system, is echoed in the critical reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and its place in political theory and political discourse. When political theorists and commentators speak of "doublethink" or "Big Brother," they are not referring merely to the characters and concepts depicted within Orwell's novel, but also how those terms and ideas may be applied to the real world, as in a political theory. Doublethink is defined as "A simultaneous belief in two contradictory ideas," while Big Brother is defined as "The leader of an authoritarian statement or movement" or "an all-powerful government or organization monitoring and directing people's actions" (Merriam-Webster). Reviews like that of Diana Trilling (1949), one of the first American critics to review the novel, show that Orwell's depiction of a dystopian society, though it uses socialism as an example, is not predicated on the rise of any one ideology or system of belief. When Posner speaks of the logic of totalitarianism, and when those ideas are echoed in the critical history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is an acknowledgement of a political logic to the novel's depiction of the future. Arguments like those presented by Posner speak to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not merely as a work of fiction, but as a work of political theory. Other pieces of the critical history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* echo this sentiment, namely that to attempt to judge *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a prediction for the future is to miss the point of the novel entirely. In a retrospective of *Time Magazine's* November 1983 cover featuring Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Lily Rothman writes, "Obsessing over how [the year 1984] matched up to its fictional depiction was missing

point, the article posited. ‘The proper way to remember George Orwell, finally, is not as a man of numbers-1984 will pass, not Nineteen Eighty-Four-but as a man of letters...who wanted to change the world by changing the word,’” wrote Paul Gray (quoted in Rothman, 2015). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the argument goes, exposes the reader to the underlying logic of totalitarianism and how it operates. This is a view that will be reflected in one form or another in several areas of the novel’s critical history, which is covered in a later section of this thesis project.

Nineteen Eighty-Four may also be viewed as an intensely emotional book in that it conveys many strong emotions and motifs that last in the reader’s mind after completing the novel. “Doublethink” and “Big Brother” are both ingrained in the modern political discourse, but their importance is no accident on Orwell’s part. Rather, one of the objectives of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, according to one critic, was to create an emotional state for the reader, one of oblivion and hopelessness that is punctuated only by brief respites of hope or satisfaction before the reader is plunged back in. Alfred Sandoval Gomez, the author of “George Orwell and 1984: A Personal View,” quotes Eric Fromm as saying, “George Orwell’s 1984 is the expression of a mood, and it is a warning. The mood it expresses is that of near despair about the future of man, and the warning is that unless the course of history changes, men all over the world will lose their qualities, will become soulless automatons, and will not even be aware of it” (Gomez, 2013, 38). The dark mood and warning of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* combine with the focus on totalitarianism noted by Posner to leave a lasting impression on the reader.

Research Design

In discussing the research design for this project, it is important to note from the outset that this project involves considerable research into scholarly literature, a critical history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and George Orwell's novel itself. For this project, I posit that there is a relationship between political events in the real world and the reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Such a project carries an assumption that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a politically relevant novel and its popularity is tied, in some way, to the domestic, international, and geopolitical situation of the world at the time of reading.

My research process consisted of searching for newspaper and online articles, articles for academic journals, and books that chronicled the history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and its reception. I divided the novel's lifespan into decades, namely 1949-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, and 2010-2018. One decade is studied in each chapter of this thesis. I aimed to include between eight and twelve articles for each decade in order to study a wide range of articles. I also sought to include a diversity of publication dates, meaning that I sought to include articles from across each decade. Though some articles are concentrated around a specific time period, such as New Year's Eve of 1983-84, I sought to create a pool of research that was diverse, in both publication date and the source of the article itself, both across the lifespan of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and within each decade since its publication in 1949.

This project has consisted of significant inductive research. I have analyzed themes from the Cold War to American politics to "The War on Terror" of the twenty first century and the surveillance state, especially after the revelations of former National Security contractor Edward Snowden. Each of these events have been analyzed in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and vice versa.

This thesis project has been built on dozens of case studies, snapshots of history where events, both major and minor, affected the popularity and relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and, crucially, how readers and scholars interpreted the novel and used it to understand events in their own lives. I have read each of these pieces of literature multiple times in order to identify common narrative theory concepts, themes, and interpretations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These articles come from scholars, experts, critics, and unspecialized journalists. This broad net is cast in order to obtain a holistic understanding how American and Western European readers of various eras interpreted *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and how the novel informed their view of current events.

There are several areas and aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that have direct correlations to world history. The controversial torture policies of the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA, are compared to the thought police and their torture and brainwashing of Winston Smith in the basement of the Ministry of Love. Similarly the omnipresent surveillance state that exists in Oceania is compared to the national security apparatus of the United States, as exposed in the Edward Snowden leaks that came out in 2013. Jeffrey Meyers quotes a review that speaks to this connection between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the real world, writing, “The frightening aspect of George Orwell’s imaginary world is that it is somewhere-in and around us” (262). It is this understanding of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that drove this thesis project.

This thesis posed unique challenges even from the design stage. I have studied *Nineteen Eighty-Four* since I was in high school and the novel has become one of my favorite books. Maintaining a healthy neutrality and gathering data and information in as close to an objective manner as possible. Narrative theory concepts were a major component of minimizing bias, as they are defined by a third party in Abbott (2015) and provide specific reference points to

compare and contrast articles. To highlight several narrative theory concepts that are heavily used in this project, “authorial intention” is defined as “the author’s intended meaning or effects,” “crux” as “a major point of disagreement in the text,” and “symptomatic reading” is defined as “decoding a text as symptomatic of the author’s unconscious or unacknowledged state of mind.” (Abbott 187, 189, 196) Furthermore, totalitarianism is defined as a centralized system of governance requiring absolute obedience and subservience to the state. As mentioned earlier in this design, a person reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in New York in 1965 may have a very different interpretation of the important themes and ideas than the same person reading the same book in 2015. If, however, several authors from the same time period focus on the same narrative theory concept or concepts, that may be a sign that the authors are viewing the novel through a similar lens of current events. By using this approach it will also diminish the opportunity for biases on the part of the researcher to creep in and taint the research. The scope of this project precludes the consumption of every piece of existing literature, and thus this project focuses on the research that I feel is most relevant to the subject and the pieces of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s critical history that I feel are most useful to the testing of the hypothesis. I chose articles through a lengthy search process, using databases recommended by the University of Connecticut library as well as search engines like Google and Bing. I then poured through those articles, eliminating those with only superficial references to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Orwell and focusing on those pieces that contain either substantive analysis of the novel, historical analysis of the novel, or analysis of contemporary events in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

One strength of this approach will be an ability to analyze the major world events since *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s release in 1949, as well as being able to utilize the entire novel and all of the themes, ideas, and characters contained within. This, I believe, will yield a better

understanding of the connection between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the real world compared to a project of more limited scope, such as studying exclusively *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the context of the twenty first century. One weakness to this approach is that it has been impossible to quantify and operationalize many of the variables with which I will be working. Much of this project relies on qualitative research drawn from reviews and news articles, meaning that it will be extremely difficult or impossible to draw the kind of mathematical or statistical connection between *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, events in the world, and the public reaction to the book.

Publication data I hoped to gather for this thesis has not been available. Ultimately, this critical reception has yielded new insights into *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s connection to the world as well as a new understanding of how readers view the novel in the context of the events in their own lives and time periods.

In order to argue that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was viewed through various lenses and filters constructed by contemporary events throughout the novel's lifetime, it first ought to be established that the novel carries a considerable influence in American culture and public discourse. John Rodden covers this very topic in his book, *The Politics of Literary Reputation: The Making and Claiming of 'St. George' Orwell*. Rodden writes:

Probably no other modern English-language writer's work has been so woven into the texture of the popular imagination. Teenagers have tuned out and floated off on the waves of rock star David Bowie's apocalyptic hits 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' and 'Big Brother.' Concerned citizens, alarmed about reports of massive CIA-FBI-KGB computer files and worldwide undercover spying operations, have warned that the spectre of Oceania is not just far-fetched science fiction...Bureaucrats traffic in Newspeak, politicians orate in doublespeak, government agents eavesdrop like Thought Police (Rodden, 1990, 16).

The considerable sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as evidenced by the novel remaining in print since its publication, combined with its obvious influences in cultural commonplaces like those

described by Rodden, speak to its significance. Rodden goes on to explain how the novel has carried an appreciable political weight in addition to being a cultural force.

So thoroughly have the catchwords and model of Orwell's dystopia permeated our collective consciousness that '1984' immediately evokes-or did until the long-awaited arrival of the year-numerous fearful associations...Even people who have never read the book will admit to having paused momentarily in vague anxiety at the mere mention of that numerical swastika of the totalitarian age (17)

Rodden notes that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not merely an especially significant work of fiction, but that it is a symbol. Orwell, Rodden argues, has branded a year with something akin to the mark of the Nazis, a symbol that has not wavered as a lasting signal of hate and oppression. The parallels to Posner's argument on the novel's appeal and influence lying in its understanding of the logic of totalitarianism are evident. Thus the foundation for this project is established, that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has measureable influence and weight as seen in examples like those cited by Rodden. For the purposes of this thesis project, the actual meaning of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or what George Orwell intended the novel to be, is not the focus. Rather, this project is more concerned with how various people and the literary public at large interpreted the novel and what importance they placed on it. Although it is not crucial to have read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or have an in-depth understanding of its themes, motifs, or author to understand this thesis project, it is worthwhile to understand the context in which Orwell authored the novel and a brief history of how the novel was interpreted and, according to Orwell at least, misinterpreted at the time of its publication. Rodden describes how Orwell's novel and the man himself were appropriated or adopted by various ideologies and views.

With the exception of the Marxist Left, however, the coveted (and presumed) patronage of the patron saint [George Orwell] was to know no bounds. . .Prominent Labour Party supporters and democratic socialists, liberals and neoliberals, conservatives and neoconservatives, anarchists, the 'younger' generation of writers, composition teachers, journalists, literary intellectuals and leading opinion-makers, Catholics, and Protestants, Humanists and Personalists

all soon beat a path to Orwell's grave, exalting him not only as a literary model but as a human one (21-22)

Stories like those presented by Rodden speak to the influence of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and establish a foundation for the analysis of the critical history of the novel. That critical history in the following chapters includes analysis of how and when the novel was claimed by various groups or interpreted within the context of certain events. The majority of reviews and articles I have found for this thesis project come from American and Western European writers, hence why I have chosen to narrow the scope of this project to those works, with some exceptions. In the first chapter, I define the narrative theory concepts that I will use throughout subsequent chapters charting the novel's reception in each decade.

Chapter I: The Immediate Reaction of 1949 and the 1950s

The analysis of the critical reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may most logically begin with the first reviews written after the novel's publication in June of 1949. For this section, the reviews that will be analyzed come from Jeffrey Meyers' collection, *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage*. Frederick Warburg was the author of one such review from June 1949, published in *Publisher's Report*. In his review of the novel, Warburg includes the line, "The political system which prevails is Ingsoc=English Socialism. This I take to be a deliberate and sadistic attack on socialism and socialist parties generally...and it is worth a cool million votes to the conservative party; it is imaginable that it might have a preface by Winston Churchill after whom its hero is named" (Meyers, 2011, 248). The note about viewing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an attack on socialism is of particular interest for the purposes of this project. In 1949 the Cold War was already brewing between the United States and Soviet Union and other sources confirm that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was received and viewed largely through the lens of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Rodden writes, "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* was warmly welcomed on the Right as not only anti-Communist but also anti-socialist...[Orwell's publisher Frederic] Warburg attributed Orwell's vitriol entirely to his ill health and feared that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was 'worth a cool million votes to the Conservative party'" (Rodden, 1990, 25). The interpretation of the novel as an anti-communist piece of literature is continued in Warburg's review. Warburg writes using the abbreviated version of the novel's title, "1984 by the way might well be described as a horror novel, and would make a horror film which, if licensed, might secure all countries threatened by communism for 1000 years to come" (249). This type of interpretation and analysis was common, and speaks to the political situation that existed when *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published.

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, the narrative theory concepts involved in *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* critical history are a measure of how the focus of these reviews have changed over time. Even these early reviews showcase examples of narrative theory concepts, starting with authorial intention. H. Porter Abbott defines authorial intention as, "The author's intended meanings or effects," adding, "We seem strongly inclined, in spite of all arguments, to read for authorial intention. Witness, for example, how authors continue to be praised or blamed for the meanings and effects readers attribute to them" (Abbott, 2015, 188). Considering Rodden's writings on the subject of how Orwell was adopted by myriad causes and groups, one can imagine Abbott writing the definition of authorial intention with Orwell himself in mind. Throughout these reviews considered in this and subsequent chapters, authors outline their search for Orwell's intended meaning in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and any emphasis or de-emphasis on Orwell himself speaks to the political climate that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was born into. Some reviews will focus closely on Orwell's beliefs, while others push the author to the side in favor of substituting interpretations that more closely align with contemporary events. Still others will argue that Orwell himself is the reason that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* cannot be a guide for understanding totalitarianism because he could not imagine the twists and turns that the future would yield. Some of these reviews will showcase another narrative theory concept, namely intentional reading, defined as "An interpretation that seeks to understand a text in terms of the intended meanings of its implied author" (192). To understand what Orwell meant was a point of emphasis for reviews in this early period and monitoring how the critical history's use of "intentional reading" changes reveals a shifting dynamic that emphasizes or de-emphasizes Orwell himself as the issues facing the world shift and change and the world moves further and further away from 1949.

While Warburg speaks broadly about the message of the novel, other reviews draw direct parallels between the novel and real-world institutions and countries, namely the Soviet Union. Julian Symons wrote in 1949 for the *Times Literary Supplement*, a British publication, “Orwell’s book is less an examination of any kind of Utopia than an argument, carried on at a very high intellectual level, about power and corruption...the censorship of Oceania does not greatly exceed that which has been practised in the Soviet Union...’Doublethink,’ also, has been a familiar feature of political and social life in more than one country for a quarter of a century” (256). This review draws direct comparisons between Oceania, the world in which *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s story exists, and the real-world Soviet Union. However, this review also criticizes certain motifs within the story, namely the concept of Room 101, the torture chamber in the basement of the Ministry of Love that confronts victims with their worst fear. For the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston Smith, this means a cage of rats that threaten to burrow into his skull. Although this is meant to horrify, Symons calls it “comic,” writing, “This kind of crudity...will never do; however great the pains expended upon it, the idea of Room 101 and the rats will always remain comic rather than horrific” (257). As one of the more memorable moments of Winston’s climactic imprisonment, this motif, and how it is treated across the critical history, is a marker for indicating the treatment of state-sponsored violence and torture. Although Symons may have had few reasonable fears regarding being captured and tortured by secret police, future reviewers see it differently, as I will explain in future chapters.

The first American critic to appear in this chapter is Diana Trilling, who wrote in 1949 for *The Nation* about *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s political messages regarding the future of the world and a future of totalitarianism and leftist governments. Trilling writes, “Mr. Orwell is fantasizing the fate not only of an already established dictatorship like that of Russia but also that of Labor

England...This assimilation of the English Labor government to Soviet communism is surely from any immediate political point of view, unfortunate. On the other hand...we must recognize that the generalization in the lesson Mr. Orwell is teaching is a proper one” (260). This review is, in a way, unique in the sense that it notes that Orwell is targeting the English Labor party but then goes on to suggest something closer to Orwell’s stated intentions, which is that the novel is not directly anti-Labor or anti-Socialist but rather anti-totalitarianism. Trilling writes, “We are being warned against the extremes to which the contemporary totalitarian spirit can carry us, not only so that we will be warned against Russia but also so that we will understand the ultimate dangers involved wherever power moves under the guise of order and rationality” (261). Trilling argues Posner’s point decades before it was hypothesized, namely that the novel’s appeal lies in its portrayal of the “totalitarian spirit,” a synonym for Posner’s “totalitarian logic.” Rather than tying the novel to any one ideology, Trilling and Posner both see *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a general critique of totalitarianism, untethered to any one ideology.

Trilling is not the only reviewer to connect *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to socialism or leftist governments and politicians. Daniel Bell of the *New Leader*, an American socialist magazine, who published his review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in June 1949, echoed similar sentiments to Trilling, drawing direct comparisons between Oceania and the world of 1949. Bell writes, “When Thomas More in 1516 described an imaginary island, he called it Utopia, which in Greek means, literally, ‘nowhere.’ The frightening aspect of George Orwell’s imaginary world is that it is somewhere-in and around us” (262). This view of Orwell’s work is another example of the narrative theory concept of symptomatic reading, defined by Abbott as “Decoding a text as symptomatic of the author’s unconscious or unacknowledged state of mind, or of unacknowledged cultural conditions” (196). In writing that Orwell’s world is “in and around us,”

Bell implies that the real world is closer to that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* than readers may initially realize. Bell goes on to claim that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* goes as far as to represent only things that already exist or will soon exist in 1949. He writes, “Is this our world-to-be? Is this Socialism? Many will protest that Orwell has written an effective picture of totalitarianism, but not *democratic* Socialism. But other than our protestations of sincerity and intentions of decency, what concrete dikes are we erecting against the rising flood-tide of horror?” (265). These broad themes, including the view that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is directed as a broadside against socialism and communism, are repeated in later reviews. Bell’s reference to the “picture of totalitarianism” parallels Posner’s argument about the novel’s depiction of the logic of totalitarianism. However, Bell’s is also the first review in this critical history that outlines specific events, agencies, and groups that may be traced or viewed in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These groups include the British Labor party and the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency, better known as the CIA, in the United States of America. Bell writes:

Is, for example, the action of the British Labor government in creating a wage freeze the imposition of controls whose consequence is the acceleration of power concentration and the total state? Or is the creation of a central intelligence agency in the U.S.-voted recently by Congress-with the power to plant agents in every voluntary association in the country, including trade unions, another step toward that end? Are not these irreversible steps, and hence, the danger that we are being warned against? (265).

This view of the novel, intended as a connection between the novel and an unstated attack on socialism, is an example of symptomatic reading. The ways in which authors interpret Orwell’s “unacknowledged state of mind,” as Abbott puts it, will be worth tracing across the critical history of the novel. In this case, Bell makes it clear that he sees *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a direct assault on socialism and raises the question of whether specific developments in the world like the formation of the CIA are the type of developments that Orwell warned against.

One review that deserves special attention in this section is that of Philip Rahv in *Partisan Review*, a left-leaning American magazine, published in July 1949, for the reason that Rahv delivers the most explicit critique of socialism and totalitarianism in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* of any reader in this initial period. Rahv also draws direct comparisons between motifs and themes in the novel and real-world policies in the Soviet Union. Rahv, an English Professor at Brandeis University in Boston, refers to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a critique of socialism, but also compares the novel to other works viewed as anti-socialist or anti-communist. Rahv writes, “*Nineteen Eighty-Four* chiefly appeals to us as a work of the political imagination...It documents the crisis of socialism with greater finality than Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*, to which it will be inevitably compared” (268). This is not the only review to reference the work of other authors writing dystopian fiction, as we shall see in future reviews. Rahv is the first reviewer in this account of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s critical history to use the narrative theory concepts of antagonist and character. Abbott defines character as, “Human or humanlike entity. . .Characters are any entities involved in the action that have agency” (Abbott 188). For antagonist, Abbott defines the term as, “The opponent of the protagonist. He or she is commonly the enemy of the hero” (187). Rahv takes special note of the character of Big Brother, the unseen yet seemingly all-knowing dictator of Oceania whose face is plastered across London alongside one of the motifs of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, “Big Brother is watching you,” as well as Emmanuel Goldstein, the unseen leader of the rebellious group called the Brotherhood.

Big Brother, the supreme dictator of Oceania, is obviously modeled on Stalin, both in his physical features and in his literary style...And who is Goldstein, the dissident leader of Ingsoc against whom Two Minute Hate Periods are conducted in all Party offices, if not Trotsky, the grand heresiarch and useful scapegoat, who is even now as indispensable to Stalin as Goldstein is shown to be to Big Brother? (269).

The comparison of Big Brother and Stalin, as well as Goldstein and Trotsky, draws direct parallels between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the world of 1949, as well as the history of Oceania and the history of the Soviet Union. Future reviews will differ in their interpretation of Big Brother and what he represents. This will be an indicator of how Big Brother is viewed as time passes. Further reading of the review reveals how Rahv uses *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a springboard to criticize other left wing institutions, publications, and countries. Rahv writes, “What is ‘doublethink,’ actually, if not the technique continually practiced by the Communists and their liberal collaborators...Nor is it a technique available exclusively to Soviet citizens. Right here in New York any issue of *The Daily Worker* or of *The Daily Compass* will provide you with illustrations of it as vicious and ludicrous as any you will come upon in Orwell’s story” (269). These criticisms directed at other publications are one element of Rahv’s review, but perhaps more notably he directly compares the policies of the Party in Oceania to the policies of the Politburo in Russia. Rahv writes, “In Oceania ‘the only recognized purpose of marriage was to beget children for the service of the Party.’ The new Russian laws regulating sexual relations are manifestly designed with the same purpose in mind” (270). The analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the context of Soviet domestic policy may be viewed as another example of the narrative theory concept of symptomatic reading.

Remaining with Rahv’s review for the time being, it is worth noting that Rahv, like many other reviewers and readers, feels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is especially significant because of its relevance to the world of 1949. Rahv writes, “The diagnosis of the totalitarian perversion of socialism that Orwell makes in this book is far more remarkable than the prognosis it contains. This is not to deny that the book is prophet; but its importance is mainly in its powerful engagement with the present” (270). This view may be taken as another example of authorial

intention, with the comparison of Orwell to a doctor and totalitarianism to a disease threatening to infect a patient. Rahv goes on to cite several events from the final chapters of the novel as especially significant, namely the torture of protagonist Winston Smith in the basement of the Ministry of Love at the hands of a member of the Thought Police in whom Winston had previously confided in. Rahv recounts this section in graphic detail:

The meaning of the horror of the last section of the novel, with its unbearable description of the torture of Smith by O'Brien, the Ingsoc Commissar, lies in its disclosure of a truth that the West still refuses to absorb. Hence why the widespread mystifications produced by the Moscow Trials ('Why did they confess?')...In the prisons of the M.V.D. or the Ministry of Love suffering has been converted into its opposite--into the ineluctable means of surrender. The victim crawls before his torturer, he identifies himself with him and grows to love him. This is the ultimate horror. (271)

This is the first example in this critical history of a reviewer focusing on the narrative theory concept of constituent events. Abbott defines constituent events as, "Essential to the forward movement of the story...they are not necessarily 'turning points,' but at the least they are essential to the chain of events that make up the story" (180). There can be little doubt that Winston's torture and brainwashing in the final chapters of the novel qualifies as such an essential event and as a turning point in the story. Rahv uses the scene to draw direct comparison to the real world sham trials and kangaroo courts of the Soviet Union, as well as the torture methods employed by Soviet secret police and intelligence agencies. Rahv's interpretation of this scene is also the first occasion where two interpretations of a scene directly clash. Unlike Symons, Rahv views the torture of Room 101 not as something "comic," but "the ultimate horror." Though Rahv and Symons reviews were published within weeks of each other, one possible explanation for their divergent views on this issue may be Rahv's focus on the real-world torture and punishments inflicted by the Soviet Union and the KGB on its prisoners and enemies. This is also the first example in this chapter of the narrative theory concept of a crux,

which Abbott defines as, “A major point of disagreement in the interpretation of a text. Cruxes are sometimes characterized by a gap in the narrative” (189). In the analysis of this critical history, these cruxes in interpretation will provide an understanding of how the perception of key scenes, characters, and motifs in the novel change over time.

Rahv concludes his review with a return to the analogy of Orwell as a doctor and totalitarianism as a disease, as well as a parting shot aimed at left-wing groups. He writes, “This novel is the best antidote to the totalitarian disease that any writer has so far produced. Everyone should read it; and I recommend it particularly to those liberals who still cannot get over the political superstition that while absolute power is bad when exercised by the Right, it is in its very nature good and a boon to humanity once the Left, that is to say ‘our own people,’ takes hold of it” (273). Like Bell’s totalitarian picture and Symons with his totalitarian spirit, Rahv’s totalitarian disease is another phrasing of Posner’s totalitarian logic. When Rahv encourages people of separate ideological backgrounds to read the novel, he does so because it has a utility and appeal that stretches across those boundaries.

In observing, documenting, and analyzing this critical history, it is worthwhile to not only take notice of the content of the reviews, but the background of the reviewers themselves and the publications they are writing for. Samuel Sillen wrote a review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1949 in *Masses and Mainstream*, a Marxist journal founded in 1947. This background may help to explain why Sillen’s review is decidedly more negative than some other reviews in this chapter. Sillen writes, “There is a hideous ingenuity in the perversions of a dying capitalism, and it will keep probing for new depths of rottenness which the maggots will find ‘brilliant and morally invigorating’” (276). This speaks to the narrative theory concept of theme, defined by Abbott as “A subject that recuts in a narrative through implicit or explicit reference” (196). Like other

reviewers from this early time period, Sillen interprets *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an attack on socialism, but unlike his peers he pens an attack on Orwell's novel itself and those that have praised it, hence why he includes the line "The maggots will find 'brilliant and moral invigorating.'" Sillen also laces his criticism of the novel with unsubtle criticisms of George Orwell based on Orwell's personal history prior to authoring *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Sillen writes, "The author of this cynical rot is quite a hero himself...During World War II he busied himself with defamation of the Soviet Union" (275). This is an example of two narrative theory concepts, those being authorial intention, as Sillen seeks to charge Orwell with being anti-communist, and the concept of the implied author. Abbott defines the implied author as, "The image of the author constructed by the reader as he or she reads the narrative. The implied author might as easily (and with greater justice) be called the 'inferred author'" (191). Unsurprisingly, Sillen's view of Orwell colors his opinion of Orwell's work. Sillen is the first author in this chapter to explicitly reference other reviews and publications and then imply that those writers are using the novel to support their own Cold War agendas. He writes:

The editorial writers of *Life* have shrewdly seized upon Orwell's generalized attack on the "welfare state" to attack not only the Soviet Union but [Henry] Wallace and the British Laborites. "Many readers in England," says *Life*, "will find that his book reinforces a growing suspicion that some of the British Laborites revel in austerity and would love to preserve it—just as the more fervent New Dealers in the U.S. often seemed to have the secret hoe that that depression mentality of the '30's, source of their power and excuse for their experiments, would never end" (276).

This type of analysis would speak to another kind of symptomatic reading, as Sillen argues that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* fits into a defense of a dying economic system in capitalism. As a work of literature it may be unsurprising to learn that Sillen is not a fan, calling the novel, "Threadbare stuff with a tasteless sex angel" (275). Regardless, this review is useful for

providing a glimpse of how groups and people with different ideologies from 1949 view *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and its meanings.

If Sillen's background and personal beliefs may inform his review, the same may be said for Golo Mann, a German historian who published his review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in *Frankfurter Rundschau* in November of 1949. Mann was born in Germany but fled amidst the rise of Adolf Hitler, traveling to the United States and eventually joining the American armed forces and participating in World War II as a propagandist. Mann's review brings a uniquely personal interpretation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* based on comparisons of the novel to Nazi Germany. Indeed, one of the earliest lines of the review is, "Germans...perhaps more than any nation can feel the merciless probability of Orwell's utopia" (277). This implies that those who have personally suffered under totalitarianism, like the novel's protagonist, better understand Orwell's message and more acutely appreciate the possibility that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is more prophetic than some may like to admit. This is an example of the narrative theory concept of voice, or "The sensibility through which we hear the narrative" (197). Personal experiences like those of Mann may color how he views the novel, but the fact that Mann relates the novel to his personal experience of Nazi Germany is also worth noting. Future reviewers also link *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to personal events and histories. Future chapters will compare those voices and use them to analyze the changing lens through which authors view the novel.

Mann makes special note of one section of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, that in which Winston Smith reads, nearly uninterrupted, several pages from a book that he is led to believe is authored by Emmanuel Goldstein, leader of the rebellious Brotherhood. Mann writes, "At this point everything becomes confused and unbelievable, for Goldstein writes so well and truly, and expresses Orwell's own opinions so clearly, that no super-Goebbels could have written his book.

The torture chambers of the Thought Police are equally unconvincing; sadists like Koestler and Malraux, with their experience of civil war, are much more successful in this respect” (280). This line speaks to two new narrative theory concepts, homodiegetic narration and distance. Abbott defines homodiegetic narration as “Narration from...within the diegesis—that is, a character in the story” (191). For distance, Abbott explains that there are multiple uses for the term, but for the purposes of analyzing this quote it means, “The distance between the narrator’s moral, emotional, or intellectual sensibilities and those of the implied author” (189). Within one section of the novel, Winston reads directly from Goldstein’s book, resulting in a scene in which a character within the story reads several pages aloud from an in-universe book. Winston narrates the story of Goldstein, explaining the Party and the world of Oceania as well as the other totalitarian super-states that dominate the world. That this aspect of the novel receives special attention is worth noting. Mann’s focus in this quote, however, is on the distance between Orwell and the in-universe book’s supposed author, Goldstein, suggesting that the gap between Orwell and Goldstein is so narrow as to not necessarily exist. Orwell, in effect, inserts himself into the story to speak directly to the reader for several pages regarding the political and economic conditions that might lead to a world resembling *Nineteen Eighty-Four* becoming reality.

Further in the review one finds another example of symptomatic reading as Mann checks off a list of Orwell’s influences and summarizes the message of the novel not as an anti-communism or anti-socialism, but as a broadly anti-totalitarian novel that can be applied to many different kinds of governance. He writes, “Orwell borrowed from present-day Russia more than from any other country for his fictitious description of the future. He also borrowed some things from Fascism and Nazism...The author is too deeply and too seriously an enemy of Bolshevism and of any kind of mass tyranny for his book to be merely anti-Russia...Orwell’s only theme is

the totalitarian danger that lies within ourselves and in all the political systems of our time” (281). In this paragraph Mann forms a crux with authors like Sillen, who argue that Orwell wrote explicitly and exclusively with the intention of attacking socialism and the Soviet Union. The final line speaks, in a way, to the argument of this thesis project, which is that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* carries a message that is not limited to one time period, ideology, or group of issues. Though Mann does not elaborate on whether that message will connect, he hints that Orwell’s understanding of totalitarianism and larger message are worth emphasizing.

Herbert Read’s review in *World Review*, published June 1950, a full year after *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published, also speaks to Orwell’s personal history. “Fundamental to Orwell,” Read writes, “is a love of humanity and a passionate desire to live in freedom” (284). Read, a British Broadcasting Company, or BBC, broadcaster, is glowing in his praise of Orwell and description of Orwell as one who fights against tyranny, in contrast to the characterization presented by Sillen. Read continues, “Orwell was a humanitarian-always moved by sympathy, by human love. The inconsistencies of his political opinions sprang from this fact. Consistently he would have been a pacifist, but he could not resist the Quixotic impulse to spring to arms in defense of the weak or oppressed” (285). In this way Read is explicitly arguing that he is presenting Orwell’s true thoughts and feelings and, perhaps more importantly, his motivations in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. That makes this review one example of the use of authorial intention. Indeed, Read goes as far as to present Orwell as a hero in and of himself, like a 20th Century Paul Revere warning the world of the plight of totalitarianism. Read writes, “In his last years he saw only the menace of the totalitarian State, and he knew he had only the force left to warn us. It is the most terrifying warning that a man has ever uttered, and its fascination derives from its veracity” (285). Read only alludes to the idea of the totalitarian logic of the novel, but

repeatedly refers to Orwell's enemy as totalitarianism rather than communism. The final line of Read's review speaks to the novel's appeal resting in an underlying truth to the novel, just as Posner's argues that the novel imparts an understanding of the logic of totalitarianism.

Another special mention as far as the background of the author of a review must be made for James Walsh, who published his review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in January of 1956 in *Marxist Quarterly*. As the name of the publication suggests, this *Marxist Quarterly* leans towards the left. Walsh takes a critical view of the novel, alleging that it is an attack against international socialist groups. He writes, "It is directed, remember, not against the Soviet Union or even the British Community Party alone, but against 'English Socialism'" (287). This represents another example of a reviewer reading for authorial intention. Walsh goes as far as to describe some of the ideas and themes of the novel as disrespectful to those Soviet citizens and soldiers who died in World War II. He writes, "The passage and the book are an insult...to the countless thousands of people who perceived what the Nazis were about, refused to be bought or tortured into submission, and gave their lives in defence of humanity" (289). This reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also an example of the narrative theory concept of voice coming into play, as Walsh directly insults Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, decrying Orwell as, "a mind which is so limited by the nature of prejudices arising out of his status in capitalist society that he is incapable, despite a certain fluent strength, of producing anything which can legitimately be described as a work of art" (290-291). It is also fair to characterize Walsh's statements as an example of utilizing the narrative theory concept of the implied author, or the author that the reader constructs in their mind as they read the narrative. Statements like these are useful in spite of and partly because of Walsh's personal attacks because, when used in combination with other reviews, they reveal attitudes and views about Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* possessed by

pro-socialist and communist groups like the ones that were the target audience of *Marxist Quarterly*. Walsh does, however, imply a series of narrative theory concepts in his analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Walsh notes several of the major entities and character of the novel, writing:

The whole paraphernalia of the destruction of facts by the Ministry of Truth, the business of Big Brother, who may or may not exist, of the anti-communist Trotskyite ‘Brotherhood’, which also may or may not exist, of wars that may or may not be in progress and which are changed with such bewildering frequency- all this makes difficult reading, but in the present world situation, in the situation of the cold war, some of it inevitably sticks” (292)

These examples can be understood through the narrative theory concepts of entity, the antagonist, and symptomatic reading. Walsh notes the Ministry of Truth, Big Brother, whom other reviewers have already examined in this critical history, and the “anti-communism Trotskyite ‘Brotherhood.’” The reference to the Brotherhood is of particular note because it supports a view expressed earlier in this critical history by Rahv, namely that major figures in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, such as Emmanuel Goldstein and the Brotherhood, have parallels to real-world Soviet figures and institutions. That two writers on seemingly opposite ends of the ideological spectrum come to the same conclusion regarding the interpretation of a character is worth noting, and future views of those characters may be compared to those expressed by Walsh and Rahv. The example of symptomatic reading comes in the final line of the quoted paragraph, “In the present world situation, in the situation of the cold war, some of it inevitably sticks” (292). Despite the previous attacks on Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, even Walsh admits that the novel is relevant to the world of 1956, when Walsh’s review was published. Without those real world conditions, he argues, the book would not carry the weight and influence that it does. The final notes worth taking for this thesis project from Walsh’s piece are predictions about the future of the novel. He writes, using the abbreviated version of *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four's title, "1984 thrives on a situation, and that situation will be changed only by the rising movement of the people themselves, against the cold war and its policies, for peace and socialism" (293). This prediction is worthwhile not necessarily because it connects to any narrative theory concepts, although it does express another example of symptomatic reading in that it argues changing cultural conditions will lessen the influence of the novel. Rather, it is useful for comparison to future reviews, especially those that occur in the aftermath of major developments in the Cold War or after the Soviet Union has ceased to exist as a national entity.

In considering this initial group of reviews, Posner's hypothesis that *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* appeal lies in its understanding and depiction of the logic of totalitarianism seems to be supported by the critical literature. Several writers describe Posner's idea in different words, using terms like the totalitarian picture or the totalitarian spirit, but these writers are describing an intangible quality to the novel that crosses ideological boundaries. However, the entity through which most of these readers understood the novel is unquestioningly the Soviet Union and the Cold War. Sillen and Walsh, writing from the extreme left-wing perspective, interpret the novel exclusively as an attack on socialism, while Warburg, Symons, and Rahv all describe the value of the novel as a work depicting the horrors of the Soviet Union. Even when authors such as Trilling attempt to explain the novel's value as a broader understanding of totalitarianism, they cannot avoid the direct comparisons that can be drawn between Oceania and the Soviet Union. This is not surprising, of course, as the Soviet Union was viewed as the most clear and present danger to freedom and democracy in the western world at the time that these articles were written. In subsequent chapters, we see how the increasing historical distance from the Cold War context provides new opportunities for interpretations and analyses of the novel free from the direct threat of Joseph Stalin and will yield new interpretations and an opportunity

for some to have a dialogue about not only the threats of the Soviet Union but whether totalitarianism might take form in any ideology or system of governance.

Chapter II: Thoughtcrime and Nineteen Eighty-Four Through the 1960s

The world of the 1960s saw tremendous upheaval through the disassembly of many colonial governments, the escalation of the Cold War, and the rise of American Civil Rights organizations to national prominence. Each of these events characterized the view of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the message of its author. The first article for this section, however, examines one of America's close neighbors and a significant force in the Cold War in the context of Orwell. A *Chicago Tribune* editorial published on November 23 of 1960 titled "Right Out of Orwell" argues that Fidel Castro's anti-American propaganda constitutes its own form of the Ministry of Truth, meaning that the creation and railing against of foreign enemies dissuades potentially rebellious or revolutionary Cuban citizens from engaging the totalitarian government itself. The editorial reads, "Fidel Castro, the paramount Cuban beard, has rung the alarm alerting Cubans to an 'imminent' invasion supposed to come from the United States," and the article goes on to decry the proposal of an American-led invasion of Cuba as ridiculous, "The fact that we haven't long since tossed Castro out on his ear is the best evidence that we'll leave that job to the Cuban people themselves" ("Right Out of Orwell, *Chicago Tribune*, November 23, 1960). The fact that the United States would initiate an invasion of Cuba, commonly known as the Bay of Pigs invasion, is worth noting but is not directly relevant to this piece except as an example of American propaganda.

The casual reference to Castro as "the paramount Cuban beard" is a mockery of Castro's appearance that sets the tone for the piece within the first half a dozen words ("Right Out of Orwell," *Chicago Tribune* November 23, 1960). The article does go on, however, to draw

explicit comparisons between the thought police and Castro's own secret police, "Like all dictators, Castro thinks he can get more mileage by keeping his abused countrymen in a lather. In addition to scaring up an external menace, he encourages Cubans to suspect everyone around them at home...In Castro's Cuba, George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-four' has become a reality" ("Right Out of Orwell," *Chicago Tribune* November 23, 1960). The use of Nineteen Eighty-Four as a tool for understanding totalitarian governments is not uncommon, as comparisons have already been drawn in chapter one of this thesis between Big Brother and Stalin and the Party and Nazism. Future comparisons and analyses will be useful for further understanding of the way in which both scholars and the literary public understand authoritarianism.

On the subject of surveillance and privacy rights, Glendy Culligan writes in March of 1964 for the *Washington Post* regarding the power of governments with surveillance abilities over those citizens being surveilled. Rather than projecting forward decades into the future, Culligan argues that the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is leaking into the reality of 1964 well ahead of schedule. She writes, "[Orwell] created the slogan 'Big brother is watching you' as the most horrendous symptom of a people's loss of freedom. Yet today, 20 years before Orwell's prophetic deadline, a great many brothers big and small are watching everyone of us, despite our illusion that democracy guarantees privacy to its citizens" (Culligan, 1964, A4). Themes of privacy rights and government surveillance will only become more prominent as we draw closer to the 2010s and the revelations of Edward Snowden.

Culligan focuses on the laws and protections granted to citizens of the United States rather than the precise methods and technologies that governments use to observe those citizens. She writes, "Privacy is a more complex right than other civil liberties because the concept is neither defined nor guaranteed by our Constitution; while violations are devious and in some

cases intangible” (A4). One major focus of Culligan’s piece that is not covered in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, however, are the surveillance and tracking technologies used by private corporations, the proverbial “little brothers” of 1964 according to Culligan. She writes of private industries exploiting surveillance data and monitoring consumers, “According to the evidence, the number of people who ‘have a little list’ on which you may find yourself is truly astonishing...The prospect of so much civil espionage can scarcely be pleasing to any self-respecting individual, or to any citizen concerned with the shape of his society” (A4). Even in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the theme of private corporations surveilling consumers was not addressed. The only interaction Winston Smith has with any business is the bookshop that is ultimately revealed to be a thought police trap.

Culligan makes an argument at the end of her piece that both ties back to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s depiction of the role of the individual and is remarkably timeless. She writes, “As an aid to either form of control, our laws should be refined to meet the challenges of technology...In the long run only a wholesale retooling of the individual conscience can make big brother machines obsolete” (A4). The power and responsibility of the individual is explored in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and is emphasized in some of the critical literature examined to this point, and becomes a crux of interpretation upon to which we can analyze views of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by successive generations dealing with surveillance from brothers both big and small. Culligan’s argument ties back into Posner’s because Culligan uses the novel as a reference for an issue that is not directly addressed in the novel itself. Were *Nineteen Eighty-Four* a piece of fiction that was only meant to communicate a story with specific motifs and ideologies rather than a broader logic of totalitarianism, Culligan would have no use for the novel since it does not even reference the issues of private industry surveillance that she discusses in her article. The

fact that she nevertheless includes *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in her article speaks to a broader, less immediately obvious appeal held by the novel. When Culligan writes a plea asking for the “wholesale retooling of the individual conscience,” she requests that the reader of the article understand that there is a subtext to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that ought to inform our understanding of the world, much like Posner’s account of the novel’s depiction of the logic of totalitarianism.

Like Culligan, Flora Lewis examines the surveillance apparatuses in Great Britain and the United States in an article for the Washington Post that was published on March 8 of 1964. Lewis’ description of the intelligence agencies spying on the citizens they are sworn to protect parallels descriptions of the unknowably massive and powerful thought police of Oceania. She writes, “Nonsecurity prying and spying are being organized on a rapidly developing scale...Public and private agencies, including intelligence and counterintelligence services dealing exclusively with business secrets, employ 50,000 full-time snoopers” (Lewis, 1964, E7). Lewis’ reference to “private agencies” parallels Culligan’s concern with business interests spying on their consumers, while the growth of the national surveillance systems is touched upon frequently in the article. Lewis concludes her article with an analysis from John Bulloch of the *Daily Telegraph*, summarizing Bulloch’s findings as, “Britain had not yet reached George Orwell’s 1984 but had gone well beyond what most people take for granted the properties of 1964. It is, he said, ‘just about 1980, I would judge’” (E7). This article makes use of storyworld, as it focuses directly on the world of Oceania and the thought police. Lewis uses time as an analogy for the progress of the world towards totalitarianism, implying that one can look at the state of the world of 1964 and follow a thread, or logic, that shows what lies at the end of that path of development.

One portion of the world that has thus far not received significant analysis in the reviews is the developing world. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Orwell touches on the fate of the regions outside the control of the three superstates of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, outlining how those peoples are constantly caught between the battles of the superpowers. The superpowers themselves, Orwell explains, also seek to control those lands and peoples for their natural resources and the cheap labor that enslaving those populations would provide. Abdus Salam, writing for the *Times of India* in November of 1964, uses *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a lens for understanding the struggles of the developing world.

Orwell may have erred in not gauging the vehemence of urges in political self-assertion, but basically, I believe, his picture may not be far from the truth... There can be no two opinions about the cold war: it is a heartless and cynical thing to say, but a state of tension among the great powers has by and large proved to be a blessing for the majority of the developing countries. It was the Second World War which led to the death of colonialism (Salam, 1964, 8).

Themes of oppression and political power are discussed intensely in Salam's piece. He goes on to argue that Orwell's view, as expressed in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, was that economic power and class divisions are responsible for much of the world's conflict and suffering.

The task of eradication of world poverty is urgent, and its crux is provision of investment capital... Unless there comes a revolution of thought among us, increased prosperity will make not the slightest difference to the conflicts of the poor among themselves. It will, however, make some of them internally more stable, more able to resist intervention by the superpowers. (8)

Though most authors and analysts of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* identify themselves with Winston Smith and his class, the outer party, Salam, intentionally or otherwise, draws comparisons between the developing countries of the world and the proles. There is a basic resource disparity between the developed and developing nations, Salam echoes Orwell in arguing, even to the point of relying on the history of the relationship between classes. Salam writes, "For reasons which go back into history, the material resources of this globe have come

to be very unevenly distributed. There is, at present, a tremendous disparity between the rich and poor in the ultimate criteria of prosperity—the reserves of arable land” (8). Further analysis of these themes in future pieces of critical literature can yield a more complete understanding of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s impact on those outside the traditional circles of literary study and analysis.

Another editorial from the *Chicago Tribune*, this one published in March of 1966, compared developments in privacy rights and government abuses of surveillance powers to the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The piece focuses on the revelations of Missouri Senator EV Long, and details the claims, “Agents in many branches of the government are trained in electronic eavesdropping, wire tapping, and lock picking, and are sworn to lie about it if they are detected or challenged” (“You Don’t Have to Wait Until 1984,” *Chicago Tribune* March 19, 1966). The piece outlines the various means by which the government is capable of listening in on its citizens and the abuses of the agents who oversee those means, but critically for this thesis it also draws direct comparisons between the US government and its intelligence agencies and the thought police envisioned in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This comparison originates with Senator Long, who is quoted in the piece as saying, “Big Brotherism...is spreading around the world quickly enough without our speeding it up” (“You Don’t Have to Wait Until 1984,” *Chicago Tribune* March 19, 1966). The editorial takes that comparison and fleshes it out, noting that the government that ruled Oceania could only survive through total surveillance like the surveillance described by Long. This is not the first time surveillance has been brought up in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as Daniel Bell referenced the creation of the CIA, imbued with wide-ranging powers of surveillance and infiltration on American soil, as “the danger that we are being warned against” (Meyers, 2011, 265). The article then engages in a reading of Orwell’s

intentions, a clear example of authorial intention, by arguing that he did indeed write *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a prediction of at least a possible future. The authors write:

When Orwell wrote in 1949, he thought it might take 35 years-until 1984- for the all-encompassing totalitarian despotism to achieve full sway. Of course, tyranny had become firmly rooted in Russia, in the eastern European communist satellites, and in Red China. It had imposed itself on Germany in Hitler's time and in Italy in the days of Mussolini. It has risen since in communist Cuba, and authoritarianism is installed in much of Africa. We might have fancied that the United States would be exempt from these feverish fantasies, but we are on our way" (*Chicago Tribune* March 19, 1966).

This presents a crux with several other authors in the interpretation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a prediction rather than a piece of speculative dystopian fiction, but it is also one of the first articles to explicitly outline how the real world might come to resemble the world depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The *Chicago Tribune* is not, however, the first to ponder how realistic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may be. In the previous chapter both Mann and Bell highlighted how realistic Orwell's depiction of totalitarianism really is, as well as how dire the threat of such a world coming to be. Even more significant for analyzing Posner's hypothesis is the quoted paragraph comparing the tyranny of Russia, China, Germany, Italy, Cuba, and Africa. These countries were ruled by substantially different ideologies but the article boils them all down to totalitarian states. This implies that Orwell is not merely writing a novel so that readers may understand communism or socialism, but a broader understanding of how all totalitarian states ultimately function, an interpretation which fits with Posner's thesis.

David Kubal, writing for the scholarly journal *The Review of Politics* analyzes Orwell not as a prophet but as a man that sought to encourage all readers of his literature to improve their lives and change their priorities. Kubal writes, "The critics who interpret [*Nineteen Eighty-Four*] as a prediction do so because they equate Winston Smith with the author. They ignore, on the other hand, Orwell's celebration of an indomitable life force present in the proles whom even the

party cannot bring into submission” (Kubal, 1967, 116). This presents both an example of authorial intention and a crux, as Kubal’s interpretation of the proles as a symbol of hope that lifts the novel from absolute, crushing hopelessness contrasts sharply with the analysis of Gomez as presented in the introduction to this thesis. Gomez characterized the mood of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as “Near despair about the future of man” (Gomez, 2013, 38). The implication of authorial intention lies in the interpretation of Orwell himself and whether he breathes his own worldviews to life through protagonist Winston Smith. Though Kubal does not outright disagree with other critics who argue that the book is distressing or sad, he does argue that Orwell is attempting to compel readers to focus on a different way of living. He writes, “Orwell...has shown us how to live more humanly and honorably in what he himself called ‘the age of the unresolved dilemma, of the struggle which never slows down and never leads to a decision’” (117). Kubal is not quite clear enough in his writing to firmly say that he is referring to something like Posner’s concept of totalitarian logic, but one could view Orwell’s reference to “the struggle which never slows down and never leads to a decision” as the conflict of freedom against totalitarianism. The question of Orwell’s purpose in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is raised almost constantly in both critical literature and more broadly published articles and reviews.

Some literary critics focused less on the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and more on the mindset of its author, as was the case with Jonathan Cape in an article for the *Times of India* that was published in July of 1968. The piece concerns a conversation with a biographer of Orwell, George Woodcock, and a bold description of what Orwell’s political beliefs would be if the man were alive to witness the specific problems known to the denizens of 1968. Cape writes, “Orwell was...the spokesman of an entire generation but not typical of it. This, as Woodcock rightly stresses, is the mark of the exceptional writer...Orwell never sought to be all things to all men,

yet it is odd that men with wildly different opinions sought inspiration from his books” (Cape, 1968 11). This is an example of authorial intention, as the piece concentrates heavily on what Orwell’s intentions were in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as well as his other novels. Cape draws direct comparisons between the political themes of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, writing, “The former was written because Orwell felt that in 1943 the English were allowing their admiration for the Russians to blind them to the faults of the communist regime. In one sense *Nineteen Eighty-Four* contradicts *Animal Farm* for in that nightmarish book Orwell has shown the culmination of his vision of the evils of a class-divided society” (11). Here we see more use of authorial intention, as Cape directly ascribes purpose to Orwell’s work. Cape extends a bold claim, suggesting that, “It is beyond question that if Orwell had been alive to-day, his political opinions would have been approximately those of Malcolm Muggeridge, J.B. Priestley and the former Lord Altrincham,” each of whom were a left-wing figure in British politics or entertainment at the time that Cape wrote his piece (11). Future appropriations of Orwell and suggestions of what his opinions would be if he were only alive to express them will be outlined in future chapters as examples of crux and authorial intention, which can then be used to characterize popular views of Orwell and what he means to each generation.

Cape is not the only author who focused heavily on Orwell. Writing for the *New York Times* in October of 1968, arts critic Hilton Kramer examines Orwell through his own letters and works, and concludes, “Orwell writes as a deeply committed but completely disabused Socialist who had a profound, unsentimental sympathy for the working classes, a genuine respect for their style of life, and a positive loathing for political slogans-whatever their source-that did violence to their actual condition” (Kramer, 1968, B1). Like others in this chapter, Kramer views Orwell as something close to a prophet, and in his descriptions of the author there is a perceptible

undercurrent of extremely positive evaluation, as though Kramer were writing a letter of recommendation to be packaged with Orwell's application for sainthood. Kramer writes, "There are writers whose importance is confirmed by the vicissitudes of our interior life...But there are others whose importance is confirmed by the march of events. Writers of this persuasion have a special affinity for dealing with the tyranny of history over the fate of whole societies" (B1). In these first two quotes we see examples of authorial intention and symptomatic reading, as Kramer attempts to interpret Orwell's life and writings in light of cultural conditions that Orwell may or may not have focused on in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* itself. Like other works in this chapter, Kramer ventures to claim that Orwell did intend to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a prediction for the future, but goes even further in claiming that the events that transpired between the book's publication in 1949 and 1968 vindicated Orwell's predictions. Kramer writes, "Among the English writers of his generation, none was more alert to the external pressures of history than George Orwell, and none succeeded so brilliantly in creating a body of work that in substance was a virtual lexicon of these pressures and in style such an effective antidote to their demoralizing power" (B1). In the previous chapter, Rahv also compared Orwell and totalitarianism to a doctor attempting to treat a disease, and Kramer echoes that point.

Nineteen Eighty-Four serves as both inspiration and a tool for analysis of another piece from the *New York Times* published at the end of the 1960s. C.L. Sulzberger writes of Andrei Amalrik, a Soviet citizen and anti-Communist revolutionary, who uses and critiques Orwell's novel to forecast the downfall of the Soviet Union. Sulzberger introduces the connection to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, writing, "Any reader of [Amalrik's] article cannot doubt that Russia's toughly intolerant regime will not wait long before it again sends Amalrik to jail. For, using George Orwell's famous fictional date of 1984, he arrives at conclusions cataclysmic for Russia"

(Sulzberger, 1969, 54). Amalrik, according to Sulzberger, envisions the demise of the Soviet Union through a lengthy war between the Soviet Union and China, one that will see the breakaway of Soviet satellite nations and even portions of Russia on the Pacific coast.

Undeniable comparisons can be drawn between Amalrik's analysis of the Soviet Union and Oceania, starting with thought police detective O'Brien's infamous assertion that the Party seeks power not for the sake of helping anyone or executing any agenda, but for its own sake.

Sulzberger writes, "[Amalrik] begins by asserting that Soviet bureaucrats 'once having gained power, possess a brilliant capacity for keeping it in their own hands but have no idea whatever of how to use it' and 'regard any kind of new idea as an assault on their own rights'" (54). The narrative theory concepts that may be analyzed from this piece include theme, namely the control of power and that of war as a unifying force, as it in Orwell's novel, or a dis-unifying force, as Amalrik claims that war will precede the breakup of the USSR.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to focus on the growing threat of technological surveillance referenced in the articles from the 1960s surveyed here compared to those from 1949 through 1959. Long before the Internet was invented authors and scholars were keenly aware of threats to their privacy and of the power of both the government and private industries to conduct surveillance on them. The CIA and Castro are both alluded to or directly compared to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the novel is used as a reference point to help readers understand authors various points about surveillance, technology, freedom, or totalitarianism. These comparisons and uses of the novel speak to an appeal that persisted and even grew after *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had been in circulation over a decade. Together these articles provide more evidence for Posner's argument that *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* appeal is directly tied to the malleability of its themes and their ability to be applied to a wide range of events and situations.

Chapter III: We Have Always Been At War, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* through the 1970s

The 1970s saw tremendous turmoil in the world, including the Vietnam War, Watergate scandal, and Iran Hostage Crisis. The world also ticked one decade closer to the year 1984, a date that had been associated with Orwell's novel long before 1969 turned to 1970. As a result, writers and scholars alike began analyzing the ways in which the world was or was not coming to resemble the setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which leads to some of the analysis found in this chapter.

Language and Newspeak are both a focus of Anthony Sampson's "The Language of Cogs in the U.S. Machine," a piece published November 11 of 1973 in the *Los Angeles Times*. In the midst of the investigation into the Watergate break-in that would eventually force President Nixon to become the first president to resign from the presidency, Sampson writes about the language used by those being investigated when they testified before Congressional committees, comparing that language and the environment of the White House to Newspeak and the conditions of the Ministry of Truth. Sampson writes, "George Orwell, when he wrote his book '1984' a quarter of a century ago, foresaw how important the use of language would become as a means of controlling thoughts and attitudes" (Sampson, 1973, K3). He elaborates on the point to identify how the language used by the officials in the Nixon administration was designed to change the way they thought of themselves, their role in government, and their responsibility for the crimes committed. Sampson writes:

Now, 11 years before Orwell's deadline, the elements of his 'Newspeak' can be traced through transcripts of the Watergate hearings... The most striking characteristic of this Waterspeak is its acceptance of government as being essentially a machine, a complex piece of engineering rather than a collection of people... The mechanical verbs, such as operate, terminate, evaluate, enhance the impression of a computer center, and the passive tense reinforces the attitude that

there was no personal responsibility, that the staff members were simply cogs in a machine (K3).

The discussion of government workers as “cogs in a machine” inevitably draws comparisons to the attitudes expressed by Winston Smith as he works at his job as a historical revisionist at the Ministry of Truth. The theme of individuals being parts of a larger apparatus and the motif of Newspeak can both be analyzed from these paragraphs. Sampson concludes his article by emphasizing this parallel:

George Orwell, when describing ‘Newspeak’ in ‘1984,’ imagined it as a deliberate language of misrepresentation and euphemism, invented by the Ministry of Truth. Perhaps what actually has happened is less obviously alarming, but more subtle. For Waterspeak seems to indicate how men in power can become conditioned by language to regard themselves as part of a machine in which individualism is...inoperative (K3).

These paragraphs speak to the motif of Newspeak and the theme of individual power and responsibility while connecting both to the Watergate break-in, one of the seminal moments of the 1970s.

Bronson P. Clark, executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, penned a piece for the *New York Times* near the conclusion of the Vietnam war in 1973 in which he raised direct comparisons between the public statements of the Richard Nixon administration and propaganda from Big Brother and the Party. Clark’s opinion piece, titled “War is Not Peace,” focuses directly on the changing standards for peace in the twentieth century and what is celebrated by groups like the Norwegian Nobel Committee. Clark focuses specifically on the award being given to Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s secretary of state, and North Vietnamese official Le Duc Tho. He writes:

Orwell warned us that the dreadful day would come when war would be called peace and peace, war. The Nobel Peace Prize committee’s homage to the ‘talents and goodwill’ of Le Duc Tho and Henry Kissinger for their skillful negotiations lasting more than three years led us at the American Friends Service Committee

to wonder if it should be called the ‘Nobel Negotiating Prize.’ But Peace Prize?
(Clark, 1973, 37)

The motif of language and Newspeak are implicitly referenced in this paragraph, as Clark’s criticism centers on championing two officials whose governments are engaged in active conflict as champions of peace, much like how the Ministry of Peace in Orwell’s novel is responsible for conducting the Party’s wars around the world. Clark continues, focusing on the rhetoric from Kissinger promoting Nixon’s moves towards peace. He writes, “[Kissinger] gave thanks to the President for the conditions which made it possible to bring the negotiations to a ‘successful conclusion.’ What were these conditions? . . . They included the unleashing of the one of the most savage bombing raids in the history of war, only last Christmas” (37). These comments include an implicit discussion of doublethink, as Kissinger promotes a message of peace while the administration he works for is in the midst of escalating the Vietnam War.

Considerable amounts of ink will be required to detail the next piece in this study, an opinion piece published in *The Washington Post* by Nicholas Von Hoffman on June 17, 1974 in the months leading up to the resignation of President Richard Nixon over the Watergate scandal. The reason that this article receives more space than others is that this opinion piece, perhaps more than any other single item from the 1970s examined in this thesis, touches upon many of the different features of the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and draws unique comparisons between the real world and its fictional counterpart, including specific features of the Inner Party of Oceania and the United States government. Von Hoffman’s piece begins with a summary of American attitudes towards the novel and how they use it to scrutinize the government and the society around them. He writes:

1984 is the description of our life after the political apocalypse and, as such, no Biblical promise of paradise is believed with more tenacious faith. 1984 is the common doom that Americans of every political persuasion believe is being

prepared for them by their enemy, the government. Each new incident of wiretapping, snooping, computer control, or official doublethink...is seized upon by most of us as evidence that 1984 has come one day closer. (Von Hoffman, 1974, B1)

The motifs listed just in this paragraph, including doublethink and wiretapping, dovetail with the theme explored in many commentaries of *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* parallels to reality and the dangers of a powerful centralized government. However, Von Hoffman's analysis takes a sharp turn into the history of Orwell's novel and why it may be, if not out of date, then at least not an especially useful one to compare to the real world. He writes:

Now it is only 10 years away, but anyone who reads the book and compares it with what is going on has to conclude that 1984 is way behind schedule. The world that George Orwell warned us about was a perversion of the Socialist dream. Big Brother himself, in so far as he resembled anyone, reminded the reader of Stalin...Doubtless, it was as a convinced Socialist that Orwell wrote his warning. (B1)

This paragraph contains examples of narrative theory concepts such as antagonist and authorial intention, and it notably contains another example of an author comparing Big Brother to Stalin in both physical appearance and authoritarian style. There is also an example of theme, as Von Hoffman directly describes the dystopia present in Oceania as a "perversion of the Socialist dream" as opposed to a direct attack on Communism as some earlier authors have suggested. Writers including Warburg, Rahv, Walsh, Cape, and Sulzberger all variously identify *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* purpose as an attack on Communism or Socialism itself, in sharp contrast to Von Hoffman's interpretation of the novel. This debate forms a crux for the interpretation of the novel, placing Von Hoffman on the side of those authors who viewed the novel as a broader attack on totalitarianism rather than a specific attack on Socialism or Communism. Like Lewis in the previous chapter, Von Hoffman uses history as an analogy to understand the progression of the real world towards *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* world. Unlike Lewis, who argued that the world was far closer to Orwell's imagined dystopia than most

realized, Von Hoffman uses the analogy to suggest that Big Brother and the Party were growing tardy in their preparations to take over the real world. This, we will see, is part of a broader argument during this decade dismissing the comparisons between the real world and Orwell's fictional world.

The focus of Von Hoffman's argument quickly shifts from the reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to a comparison of the Inner Party of Oceania and Nixon Administration. The comparison is none too kind to the American government, as Von Hoffman writes, "But this is 1984 gone screwy, the inner party ratting, spying, and screwing each other in the most non-monolithic way. The tools that, according to the prophecy in the book, they were going to use to enslave us, they are using on each other." (B1-B6) This comparison is merely the tip of Von Hoffman's literary and political spear, as he goes on to make broad statements about the incompetence of the United States government and the degree to which the American people understands the inner workings of said government relative to the Party and the citizens of Oceania. Von Hoffman writes:

In 1984 the government knows everything about us. In 1974 we know everything about the government. The Orwellian despots...keep their control over the citizenry by the most intimate knowledge, not only of deeds but thoughts and emotions. Our government, with all its data banks, knows less and less about us. We know everything about them" (B6)

Writing this thesis from the twenty first century, it is impossible to ignore the chilling differences between the world of 1974, at least according to Von Hoffman, and the world of 2018. The power of the federal government and the understanding that governments have of their citizens private lives and intimate moments are a point of emphasis in future articles from subsequent decades. To return to the article, themes of surveillance and privacy are the focal

points of this paragraph. At the conclusion of his piece, Von Hoffman draws direct comparisons between the leaders of Oceania and the United States in 1974. He writes:

Big Brother is so remote that poor Winston isn't even sure he exists... [Nixon] can't rule us, we can't even take him seriously because we know so much about him. It is the exact antithesis of the all-seeing telescreen in 1984, where Big Brother maintains his power, not by covering up his mistakes but by rewriting them out of history. So different from Mr. Nixon, that meticulous collector of his own most convicting evidence (B6)

This contrast of the Party and the American government comes just months before Richard Nixon would become the first president to resign the office, which he did in August of 1974. Von Hoffman uses the narrative theory concepts of antagonist in *Big Brother*, motif through the telescreen, and theme through historical revisionism. Von Hoffman's tone in this final paragraph borders on mockery of Nixon and how his administration, which sought to use corrupt tactics to influence the outcome of an election, attempts to emulate the Party but falls so far short that it is borderline comical. Watergate was one of the most significant events of the 1970s, and in this moment Von Hoffman signals that he believes it to represent, at least temporarily, the triumph of Western democracy and its supporters over the would-be Big Brothers of the world. The people, he seems to say, and the institutions that support democracy, have withstood the assault by Nixon. This opinion piece provides a stark contrast when compared against the reviews and articles printed in the immediate aftermath of *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* publication, and one possible explanation could be that it was not so difficult for those writers, less than five years removed from the Second World War, to imagine that the Cold War could end in something like Orwell's dystopia. With the comfort of twenty five years of historical distance, Von Hoffman can address the similarities between Oceania and America, not the Soviet Union, and conclude that America's defenses have survived. Whether those defenses hold in the mind of readers and the public will be a constant question throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In contrast, Valerie J. Simms's 1974 article for the scholarly publication *Ethics* carries a somber title, "The Moral Implications of Despair." Within this piece, Simms simultaneously provides a review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* reception among the English and American press as well as a study of Orwell and an analysis drawing on of several narrative theory concepts that have been highlighted in previous chapters of this thesis. Simms discusses James Walsh of *Marxist Quarterly*, whose review is analyzed in chapter one of this thesis project, referring to his review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as, "An ample supply of hysterical, sympathetic, and useless commentary" (Simms, 1974, 294). She then uses Walsh's review to launch into a short summary of the Western reaction to the novel, writing, "Many British and American newspapers and magazines gave an exuberant welcome to what came to be seen as the opening salvo of the Cold War" (294). One only needs to recall the authors already listed and analyzed in this thesis to conclude that Simms' argument has merit. Warburg, Symons, Trilling, Bell, Rahv, Walsh, and Sillen all perceive *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as at least a partial attack on the Soviet Union and authoritarian communist governments in Eastern Europe. Simms addresses another question that has been asked within some of the articles analyzed for this thesis, "To what degree, if at all, was Orwell's 1984 a political prediction or projection?" (294). Simms does not provide a direct answer but rather raises questions about whether Orwell truly despaired about the future of mankind by referencing other writings and letters from the author.

The claim that 1984 is a prediction by Orwell of the future becomes immediately suspect. It seems improbable that Orwell should have come to believe in the inevitability of the 'Black Millennium;' when, even after the publication of the novel, he was expressing his solidarity with those humanists who 'have in effect chosen man' (302-303).

This presents a crux in interpretation, wherein Simms disagrees in the interpretation of the novel with the *Chicago Tribune* editorial published in 1966 and analyzed in chapter two, as well as

with Kramer's article, both of which address *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a prediction rather than a piece of dystopian fiction speculation. Simms' analysis continues in that regard while pausing briefly to mention the use of terror as a weapon for political subjugation and brainwashing, writing, "It is important to note in passing that Orwell has O'Brien utilize terror (the rats in Room 101) to break Winston in 1984. Following Orwell's own analysis, one can assume that 1984 is 'only saying that one particular set of revolutionary leaders has gone astray'" (299). Simms argues that Orwell does not decry all of socialism, but is instead, as Kramer argues, fighting against a totalitarian version of socialism that perverts the ideology itself. Simms' reference to the torture of Room 101 does not go into detail, but in the context of the article itself Simms views the torture itself far more gravely than Symons, who called it "comic" and a piece of "crudity" (Meyers 257). This presents a crux and an analysis of a theme, and the mention of O'Brien constitutes an example of the use of the narrative theory concept of the antagonist.

Simms continues her analysis by focusing more on Orwell's decision to set his novel in England and why, exactly, he chose to make the Party a socialist institution.

The question has been raised as to why Orwell set the novel in England and named the ruling ideology 'Ingsoc' or English socialism. The fact that he did so is a point of great importance to the Western Left... Throughout his career, Orwell spoke unendingly about the need to oppose the dangerous elements of the fashion of the day. The fashion of his day was socialism (304-305).

Simms elaborates on this decision, explaining that Orwell could have chosen to imbue the Party and Big Brother with one of several ideologies. The reason that he chose socialism and the reason for the novel being set in England, Simms argues, has to do with the time and place that Orwell himself originally wrote the novel.

Making 1984 a vigorous representation of the evils of capitalism, which he regarded as a thoroughly dead horse, would have been an unacceptable waste of his time and talent. And who, in 1945-49, argued for the worth or vitality of

fascism or National Socialism-the other major contenders? Orwell did what he thought needed doing, not what no one thought needed doing...The novel was set in England precisely because it was by far the most unlikely place for such a social system to evolve...Orwell had remarked many times the isolation and ignorance of the world of the English...He thought the English had to be made to 'pay more attention to the world and less to their own backyards' (304-305).

These paragraphs speak to a focus on authorial intention, as Simms argues that Orwell intended *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a wakeup call to Westerners, and setting or storyworld. The storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is stated to be drawn the way it is directly because of Orwell's own setting and belief that totalitarianism could occur there. Finally, the theme of socialism is explored and analyzed, and Simms comes to the conclusion that Orwell was not an ardent anti-socialist, but instead sought to address the nearest ideology that totalitarianism could use as a vessel. This dovetails with Posner's argument that depicting the logic of totalitarianism is the source of the novel's enduring appeal, as Simms seems to argue that Orwell believed the logic of totalitarianism could take root anywhere and with any ideological face, including in London.

Like other commentators in this thesis, Joe Alex Morris Jr was looking towards the future when he authored "A View of 1984--if Trends Continue: Forecast Grim but Governments Hope to Avert Oil 'Armageddon'" in the *Los Angeles Times* in September of 1974, only weeks after Nixon's resignation. Morris' gaze in to the future concerns a massive looming economic catastrophe that could, he argues, lead to political changes. In his introduction, Morris writes of a future in which Western Europe is dominated, not militarily by the Soviet Union, but economically by the Middle East.

George Orwell had a quite different vision of 1984. But many financiers and economists warn that, if present trends continue unabated, the true state of the 10 years hence could well be closer...Alarmist? Perhaps. But increasingly, responsible and knowledgeable men in Europe are talking of what could be described as the coming Armageddon. Or more precisely, the oil Armageddon" (Morris, 1974, G1).

Morris then recounts a brief history of the oil crisis and the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, better known both then and now as OPEC.

What is happening is both terrifyingly simple and incredibly complicated. But it boils down to one brutal prediction from the World Bank: the soaring price of oil should result, by 1985, in a staggering \$1.2 trillion draining out of the rest of the world into the hands of a few privileged countries with massive petroleum reserves (G1).

Within these paragraphs Morris indulges in the themes of economic crisis and resource concentration in Western Europe, which differs from the analysis Salam provided in the last chapter because Salam focused on developing nations, while Morris confines his analysis to Western Europe and the United States of America. Most alarming, Morris writes, are the potentially substantial political changes that could occur in the face of economic strife and how such hardship could empower extremism.

Political outcroppings of extremism are also beginning to show. The neo-fascists in Italy appear to be winning more respectable support as the democratic parties prove increasingly incompetent to solve the economic crisis. In Britain, often thought of as the most stable democracy in the world, two well-known old soldiers have created uproars with their plans for a citizen's militia to break the stranglehold they see the trade unions exercising over the country. Such talks are at least premature. But talks of another Great Depression with all its social and political consequences is becoming more open (3).

The threat of extremism and empowering radical ideologies results from comparison to themes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and such concerns about internal political actors who could destabilize the West are reflected in other authors, though none take the economic angle that Morris does.

Leonard Silk also focuses on the economic angle of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, namely in the power of the Party over all private enterprise. Though the focus of his piece is primarily the transition of national economies away from New Deal-style government influence and control

and towards models that emphasize individuals and private enterprise, Silk's article contains a series of comparisons and statements about *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that still reveal its influence at the time of the article publication in the *New York Times* in September of 1979. First, Silk takes an approach as yet unseen in this thesis as to the question of whether Orwell was a prophet, writing, "1984-the year of George Orwell's totalitarian nightmare for the industrial countries- is only half a decade away. The true function of the prophet is not to predict the future but to warn against and ward off its horrors. In that sense, Orwell was a successful prophet" (Silk, 1979, D2). Here Silk establishes his own corner of the debate about *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* place as a prediction, suggesting that while the world has not come to resemble the world of Orwell's novel, it has still helped observers to identify and evade some of its dangers. Thus we see an example of a crux, or disagreement, in interpretation over the status of the novel as prophecy. Silk takes his argument a step further, arguing that economic systems that prioritize the influence of the state are totalitarian and those that work in the opposite direction, promoting individuals and private businesses, are the opposite. He writes, "Instead of plodding on down the totalitarian road, the United States, Britain (Orwell's Airstrip One, an outpost of the American Empire)...and the other western democracies have been shifting the balance of their economies away from the state and toward the private enterprise and individual freedom" (D2). This is an example of theme, specifically the dangers of an authoritarian or simply overly powerful government. Silk elaborates further on this point, including charting the obstacles that must be overcome for industrialized countries to avoid resembling Oceania.

The road back from an Orwellian world will be difficult and hazardous, no less in the West than the East. The problem is not one of simply breaking the power of the state of restraining individual and industrial demands for government aid and protection but of creating workable models by which modern economies can function effectively, combining both private and public enterprise. (D2)

Thus Silk makes the case for economic systems that work against the political structure of the Party in Oceania, and links the systems present in Orwell's dystopia to some forms of economic control exercised by governments of many different ideologies. Economic systems and strife are the focus of several authors analyzed for this chapter. Like Silk, Morris wrote how economic domination over western nations by the Middle East was a greater threat than military domination by the Soviet Union. Simms wrote that Orwell's selection of economic system for Oceania was made primarily because it would resonate most with the western readers of the late 1940s. The varying interpretations of these details in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from authors in the 1970s speak to an increasing focus on economics in the real world. Their readings of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* thus reflect those concerns.

The next piece to analyze *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reaches conclusions unique among the papers and articles presented thus far in this thesis. William Attwood, writing for the *Los Angeles Times* in December 1979, launches the assertion that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is nowhere close to reality. Furthermore, Attwood asserts that Orwell's depiction of a dystopian future seems absurd if taken as a prediction. He writes, "Big Brother's nowhere in sight, and Orwell's nightmare vision now seems almost ridiculous...But when these words were published 30 years ago, soon after Hitler and during the darkest days of Stalinism, people wondered what terrors lay in the then-distant future. Orwell's world sounded almost plausible" (Attwood, 1979, J1). This leads to a crux, or disagreement, in that Attwood is nearly condescending about the viability of Orwell's future, and the reference to Stalinism qualifies as a recurring theme. Attwood does, however, make reference to elements of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and uses them to make broad statements about the state of the world. Attwood writes:

We've lost both our innocence and our swagger. Others have worked harder and caught up. Feisty new nations have proliferated. We've found out what chronic inflation is like. We've been bloodied in a futile, unwinnable war. We have discovered that omnipotence is a myth. In short, we've joined the rest of the world, so to speak, by finally sharing some of those universal experiences from which the fortunes of history and geography had so long sheltered us (J2).

Attwood's explicit references to economic strife, constant warfare, and surveillance technology constitute recurring themes concerning each of those three things that will be developed by writers in future decades. Attwood's arguments line up with those of Simms, who argued that readers saw *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as they wished to see it while ignoring the parts that did not match their interpretation, and contrasts sharply with the interpretation of Von Hoffman, who gladly celebrated the triumph of America's democratic institutions over the tyrannical forces of Richard Nixon.

Abe Peck adds his name to the list of commentators and authors attempting to determine how close the world is to being ruled by Big Brother in a piece published in December of 1979 for the *Chicago Sun-Tribune* titled, "How Close are We to Orwell's 1984?" Peck goes through a list of features of the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and compares them to equivalent features in the real world of 1979. On the Cold War, Peck writes, "Superpower vs superpower. Orwell divided the planet into three zones-Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia-in a state of permanent conflict designed to divert attention from domestic matters. Today, NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the Third World (including China) offer a parallel" (Peck, 1979, 28). The theme of warfare is explored in this section, but Peck quickly moves on to other bullet points, including energy crises, conflict over resources, and the "rewriting of history," as Peck argues that United States history has been periodically rewritten to emphasize or de-emphasize certain historical events and figures in order to promote prevailing ideologies and movements at the time that the historical accounts are written (33). Peck also remarks on the surveillance society of *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four and the growing surveillance networks that were being developed in the 1970s, writing, “In ‘1984’ Winston Smith was socially controlled by everything from sensors to spies...The government’s COINTEC (counterintelligence) program and other projects seem to augur ‘1984.’ So have some tactics used by police, credit bureaus, and private investigators” (28). These are all examples of the theme of surveillance.

Ultimately, however, Peck stops well short of arguing that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a realistic depiction of what the world would look like in five years. Instead, he argues the opposite, suggesting that Orwell’s depiction of technology is, though partially in line with reality, not completely represented by the actual uses of technology in 1979. Peck quotes an unlikely source, Nazi Germany’s Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production Albert Speer, as saying, “The more technological the world becomes, the more essential will be the demand for individual freedom and the self-awareness of the individual human being a counterpoise to technology” (33). Peck analyzes the theme of surveillance technology but ultimately concludes that it is something that can be used to better the powers of individual freedom and freedom of thought in contrast to other authors, like Culligan, who see advancing technology as something that must be constrained by new laws in order to protect privacy rights and individual freedoms. This point results in a crux that will become a centerpiece in commentaries during subsequent decades for analysis of the role of technology and whether it exists on a scale such that individual liberty can become unbalanced.

It is no surprise that two of the most significant issues of the decade, Watergate and Vietnam, feature heavily in the articles analyzed for this chapter. For the first time the bulk of articles are drawing comparisons not between Oceania and the Soviet Union but Oceania and the United States itself. Multiple authors analyze the use of doublethink, compare Nixon and Big

Brother, or use the ousting of Nixon to declare victory over the threat of Big Brother. The comparisons between the United States and Oceania do not cease with the end of the Nixon administration or even the end of the decade. As we will see, such comparisons will become more common as the power of governments to spy on their own people, and to inflict previously unthinkable destruction on the world, grows.

Chapter IV: The Brotherhood, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Through the 1980s

It comes as no surprise that readers, critics, and scholars became increasingly fascinated with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as they approached the titular date. Dozens of pieces were authored reflecting on Orwell's impact on the literary and political world and comparing the setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to the geopolitical situation that the people of the 1980s found themselves in. This approach led to a series of analyses, proclamations, and predictions that have proven tantalizing to read and write about.

Melvin Maddocks begins this chapter with a comparison of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the actual year in an issue of the *Christian Science Monitor* from January 13, 1983. First, Maddocks notes that Orwell is, in some respects, a literary Rorschach test, in that one can look at Orwell and his works and see what one wishes to see. Orwell's writings, Maddocks argues, are so diverse that if one conducted enough research, quotations supporting nearly any position could be reached. He writes, "By selective quotation, one can look in the mirror and find the Orwell of one's choice, and in the months ahead we may anticipate a libertarian Orwell, an anarchist Orwell, and personages even more specific, like the nuclear-freeze Orwell" (Maddocks, 1983). Maddocks uses this argument as the springboard for a discussion of authorial intention, a discussion of the interpretation of Orwell while the man was still alive, and finally a promotion of a view of Orwell as a man who rose above politics. Maddocks writes:

Splitting up Orwell - right and left and every which way - can make for lively sport. But the game of Orwell's-on-my-side-no-he's-on-my-side didn't work too well even when Orwell was alive. There was something about him that simply went beyond politics. Despite his pragmatic style, Orwell had a touch of the tortured mystic. Mr. Howe comes close to acknowledging this as the root of Orwell's despair when he quotes a brooding passage written nine years before '1984': 'There is little question of avoiding collectivism.' (Maddocks)

In writing, “There was something about him that simply went beyond politics,” Maddocks elevates Orwell from a mere author or political scientist to a high-spiritual figure in his power and moral influence. Maddocks continues his piece by weighing in on the discussion of Orwell as a prophet, coming down hard on the side that argues Orwell offered a warning of a possible future rather than a prediction of how the future would actually turn out. In fact, Maddocks rebukes those who attempted to cast various political groups or ideologies as the threat to western democracy and, in the process, ignoring the real themes of the novel regarding totalitarianism. Maddocks writes, “Orwell exaggerated his warning for effect, and his interpreters today are all too eager to go along with his exaggeration in order to build the most melodramatic case against those enemies they choose to cast as Big Brother. In sober fact, 1984 is nowhere near as bad as ‘1984’” (Maddocks). The reference to Big Brother marks another example of the use of the narrative theory concept of the antagonist, but this time Maddocks refuses to identify this figure with any specific political leader.

Though Maddocks does not delve into an exploration of the character of Big Brother or the thematic or symbolic themes surrounding the supposed dictator of Oceania, the mere reference is enough to signal that the character is still one of the most memorable parts of the novel, a fact which has its own implications. Maddocks concludes his piece with a reminder that Orwell warned against no single ideology or political faction, but against totalitarianism in all its forms. He writes, “As we approach the historical 1984, Orwell’s fantasy seems valuable less as a political prediction than as a moral statement. Perhaps what he was writing, at heart, was a post-technological fable of the Tower of Babel. If so, to appropriate ‘1984’ narrowly for today’s partisan concerns would make us guilty of our own “doublethink” (Maddocks). Maddocks dismisses fears that Orwell’s version of the future could still come true while ascribing a

different meaning entirely to the novel, referencing the biblical story of God taking a people with one common language and confounding it so that they can no longer understand each other. This speaks to a symptomatic reading of the text in that Maddocks is equating newspeak to a biblical story meant to confuse the population. Through the discussion of Orwell's work as a moral statement, Maddocks also uses the narrative theory concept of authorial intention. Maddocks also raises, perhaps unintentionally, a counter-argument to Posner's hypothesis regarding the novel's depiction of totalitarian logic being at the center of its appeal. Orwell is, Maddocks argues, in some ways all things to all people and groups. It is possible that readers are less focused on the subtle, insidious power of totalitarianism and more a reading of their own nightmares presented within the novel, but Posner's hypothesis still carries considerable weight because of the ways in which the entire body of authors within this thesis analyze and interpret the novel's political message in different ways. Though a person with seemingly any ideological background might be able to say that Orwell held similar views to their own, Posner also posits that part of the logic of totalitarianism is that it is not restrained to any one ideology. Thus, Posner's hypothesis still holds water.

The next piece of this analysis is authored by Adam Clymer, who wrote for the *New York Times* in December of 1983. This is the first of four pieces to have been published on the precipice of 1984 or in its immediate aftermath. Clymer writes, "Americans are increasingly concerned about threats to privacy, and about a third of the public believes the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and telephone companies 'probably share' information on individuals with others, according to a poll conducted by Louis Harris and Associates" (Clymer, 1983, D24). This passage implicitly acknowledges themes from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including privacy rights and government surveillance, but at this point in the piece

Clymer does not directly suggest that Orwell is on the mind of any of the survey respondents. It is clear, however, that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was on the minds of those administering the survey, as Clymer writes, “Results of the Sept. 1-11 survey of 1,256 people, paid for by Southern New England Telephone Company, were released today as the Smithsonian Institution opened a four-day symposium on ‘The Road After 1984: High Technology and Human Freedom’” (D24). The title of the symposium, “The Road After 1984,” suggests that there is a sizable number of people concentrating on what the world will look like in the year of Orwell’s dystopian fiction and, critically, what the world will look like afterwards. Though Clymer only speaks implicitly about the future of the world and the relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he does draw a final, explicit line between the symposium, American society, and Orwell’s novel, writing, “Participants will examine various aspects of society in light of George Orwell’s novel ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four,’ which foresaw an almost all-powerful government” (D24). This quote finalizes the link between the world of 1984 and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a novel and an idea in the mind of authors, policymakers, and the public at large. Even in an article that does not even directly reference the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s depiction of totalitarian logic is felt so strongly that a symposium on human freedom and technology is named after the novel in a play on words.

Mark Feeney wrote for the *Boston Globe* and published “George Orwell’s Ironic Legacy” in December of 1983. Feeney writes a sweeping retrospective of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an examination of its author, as a political treatise, and as a cultural touchstone for the latter half of the twentieth century. First, Feeney concentrates on the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, explaining that its plot is secondary in importance and cultural relevance to the setting of the novel. He writes, “What makes ‘*Nineteen Eighty-Four*’ so remarkable has nothing to do with plot, of course, and everything to do with setting. After all, the reason boy loses girl has nothing

to do with jealousy or fickleness-it's because of intervention by 'Thought Police'" (Feeney, 1983, A13). Here Feeney not only undertakes an analysis of the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including a brief summary of the major plot points and motifs of the novel, but emphasizes it as the most important aspect of the novel because the plot itself is not especially unique, but the setting that it occurs against makes the novel unique. Feeney shifts his focus to Orwell himself. "If one had to assign a political ideology to Orwell, those two words, 'common decency,' would suffice" (A13). This begins a longer analysis as Feeney attempts to understand Orwell and his motivations in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, writing, "As Winston Smith had rats for his private terror in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four,' Orwell had his own special fear: 'The thing that frightens me...is [the intelligentsia's] inability to see that human society must be based on common decency, whatever the political and economic forms may be'" (Feeney A14). These quotes stand out as some of the most in-depth explorations of authorial intention and symptomatic reading. Feeney continues his analysis of Orwell and goes as far as to state that almost no other author could have assembled a work as politically and culturally significant as *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

The 20th Century was not designed for such a man. This point about Orwell is crucial. Only a man so attached to the past could have envisioned a future as horrifying-and made it as persuasive-as that found in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'...While any objective person might grasp the horror in totalitarianism, it could still appear to be a part of a logical progression...If only as a set of chronological facts. It took a person like Orwell to see totalitarianism as something exotic (A14).

This paragraph lends strong support to Posner's hypothesis. Feeney concurs that there is a depiction of totalitarianism within the novel that is unique, but goes on to argue that only Orwell could construct such a depiction. This would explain why no novel has captured our imaginings of totalitarianism quite like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has over the last seventy years. Feeney goes on

to lend his opinion to the discussion of Orwell as a prophet versus Orwell as a political scientist, aligning his views most closely with those of Silk and Kubal, who argued that Orwell did not attempt to predict the future but, in writing a dystopian vision of said future, hoped to avert its realization. Feeney writes, “Orwell took the recent past at its ugliest and extrapolated from it to arrive at a conceivable-but not inevitable-future. He did not predict; he merely drew out implications...In picturing an evil so extreme, Orwell hoped to choke off its possibility” (A14). In this analysis, Feeney implicitly argues that the world of December 1983 does not match the setting of Oceania, acknowledging that the conditions that led to Orwell’s dystopia did not come to pass. Still, Feeney argues that there is a value to Orwell’s novel that transcends time. He seems to reach out to address the subject of this thesis in his conclusion, writing:

The worth of the particular truths he told will not doubt fluctuate as they seem more or less relevant with the passage of time; perhaps one day, as 1984 recedes into history, our need for the message of ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four,’ as well as his other books, will go with it. Orwell’s act of telling those truths, however, is something whose worth is, and will always remain, incalculable (A14).

Here Feeney implicitly acknowledges that there is a political logic that runs through *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and that said logic has maintained the novel’s appeal throughout decades.

However, he also indicates that said logic may ebb and flow as the world faces greater or lesser threats from totalitarianism. He also implies, in his final line, that in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell may himself have prevented a totalitarian dystopia from coming to pass. Though it is impossible to know how true that claim may be, the question of the relevancy and cultural power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that lies at the heart of this thesis project is clearly addressed in Feeney’s commentary.

Throughout the literary and political history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, reviewers and scholars have attempted to compare Orwell to others, including Aldous Huxley and Anthony

Burgess. The next piece in this chapter, however, concerns a conference comparing Orwell to Franz Kafka. Walter Goodman authored this article on December 30, 1983, for the *New York Times*, and covered a series of speakers at the Modern Language Association of America conference discussing how Orwell's dystopia differed, or bore similarities, to 1983. Goodman writes, "The panel's first speaker was Prof. Gene Bell-Villada of Williams College. He began by making fun of the doctrine...that totalitarianism was not susceptible to change. He cited in rebuttal the openness in Yugoslavia, the protests in Poland, the reforms in Hungary and the 'incremental gains' in the quality of life in the Soviet Union" (Goodman, 1983, B3). This is the first in a series of notes regarding contemporary issues and possible thematic counterparts in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Just as Posner argues in 1999 that totalitarianism can take many forms, Bell-Villada provides evidence for that argument by suggesting that totalitarianism that is in place can still change and morph into something new. Goodman continues, "Orwell's vision, [Bell-Vida] contended, is more likely to be realized by the libertarian right than by the Stalinist left and could already be seen in such phenomena as Watergate, urban slums, multinational conglomerates and sophisticated techniques of surveillance" (B3). This quote speaks to an interesting inversion of analyses of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from decades prior. While most reviewers and scholars from 1949 and the 1950s viewed Orwell's dystopia as a direct attack on Communism, Goodman recounts how sufficient time has passed that other scholars may see the novel as something more likely to grow from ideological roots planted at the other end of the political spectrum. The article goes on to touch on technology. In particular, Goodman highlights those speakers who compare the infamous, omnipresent telescreens from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to simple American televisions.

On Wednesday, Professor Miller returned to his theme: American television is carrying the nation to the same end as the omnipresent telescreens of 'Nineteen

Eighty-Four' - making everybody love Big Brother. American viewers, he said, are thus participating in their own 'dehumanization.' He concluded with a twist on a famous line from 'Nineteen Eighty-Four:' 'Big Brother is you watching!' (B3).

This quote marks a noteworthy moment in the history of technology as a tool for cultural influence and both government and private surveillance. Goodman, or at least the speaker, lines up beside Culligan and Lewis, covered in chapter two of this thesis, as someone who identifies technology as a growing threat to personal freedoms, including the right to privacy. Peck and Attwood, covered in chapter three, either see technology as a non-threat or an active aid to the citizenry in knowing more about their government. This forms a significant crux stretching across decades and one that seems to be tied to the era in which each article is being written. Goodman continues with a focus on Professor Alex Zwerdling, who draws comparisons between the Party and Nazi Germany, and adds further weight to the arguments advanced by Feeney, namely that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is meant to be a prediction only in the sense that Orwell is seeking to deter such a reality from coming to be. Goodman writes, "Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt and psychoanalysts such as Erich Fromm, Professor Zwerdling interpreted what goes on between Winston and O'Brien, the personification of totalitarianism, who tortures Winston into submission, as a form of sadomasochism" (Goodman B3). The reference to the antagonist also becomes an allusion to the theme of the novel through the identification of O'Brien as "the personification of totalitarianism." Goodman continues his recounting of the event, writing:

Orwell, [Zwerdling] held, had been influenced by contemporary analyses of the Nazi concentration camps, where, according to some, the victimizers' will to power and the victims' need to submit operated in tandem to keep the system functioning...Professor Zwerdling interpreted Orwell's novel not as prophecy, but as a nightmare that could help today's reader to comprehend the deeper nature of the fanaticism and terrorism that still afflict the world (B3)

Goodman's account of the speakers provides an insight into popular views of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* at the eve of the titular year and provides a catalogue of the major themes and issues that the novel caused the speakers to focus on, including Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Watergate, technology, and Nazism.

The next article for this section comes from an editorial published on January 1, 1984, by the *New York Times* titled, "The Message for Today in Orwell's '1984.'" The editorial begins by establishing that Orwell did not intend his dystopian novel as a prophecy.

'1984' is a political statement. It contains no prophetic declaration, only a simple warning to mankind. Orwell did not believe that 35 years after the publication of his book, the world would be ruled by Big Brother, but he often proclaimed that '1984' could happen if man did not become aware of the assaults on his personal freedom and did not defend his most precious right, the right to have his own thoughts" ("The Message for Today in Orwell's '1984,' *New York Times*, 1984, A16)

Here the *New York Times* editorial aligns itself with other authors who have professed that Orwell spoke of a potential future if the forces of totalitarianism were allowed to prevail. It is noteworthy that the editorial begins with a focus on the right to personal freedom and the right to freedom of thought, rather than the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or any of its characters. The *New York Times* piece does, however, compare the superstates in Orwell's world to those that existed in the real world on January 1, 1984. The authors write:

Oceania looks very much like an extended version of NATO, at least in its geography. Eurasia is obviously the Russian zone of influence, and Eastasia the Far East. At the time of the publication of the novel, the North Atlantic alliance was being formed, Russia had entered the arms race and China was still in the grip of civil war, but it was already clear that Mao Tse-Tung would defeat the demoralized armies of the Nationalists...Orwell's imaginary States do not exist, but the world order of 1984 resembles in some ways the world of '1984.' Indeed, there are two major world powers with a third one on the rise. They seem to divide the world into three zones of influence (A16).

Though the authors state that the outlines of the real world match those of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, they do not go so far as to say that said outline will lead to a geopolitical situation like that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The division of the world into zones of influence speaks to the similarities between the fictional situation and the real-world one, but left unsaid is the possibility for the world to develop into one that could resemble *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The authors do not explore that possibility, instead opting to argue that the loftiest goals of foreign policy, peace on Earth, cannot come to pass unless the world moves away from the principles and ideas that drove Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

World order and peace cannot be established if the nations of the world are not willing to solve their conflicts without the use of violence; if the world powers are not willing to abandon their expansionist aims to reduce simultaneously their nuclear arsenal, and reverse the buildup of conventional weapons; if the industrial nations are not willing to transfer some of their technological know-how to underdeveloped countries, if the people and their leaders are not willing to moderate their religious, ethnic, cultural and national fervor for the well-being of the others and the peaceful coexistence of all the peoples of the world (A16).

Several themes and narrative theory concepts can be drawn from this paragraph. First, the nuclear arms buildup is compared to the ceaseless production and equally ceaseless destruction of men, arms, and materials in the endless wars that exist in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The article echoes the arguments made by Salam in 1964, namely that the developing world is in danger of being crushed between the super-states if the developed world does not share some of its knowledge and wealth. Finally, an allusion is made to the orthodoxy of the Party and worship of Big Brother when the article references the zealotry of world leaders. All of these are direct comparisons, or messages drawn from, the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The article concludes with an affirmation that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will remain relevant going forward, but only until such a time that the world decides to bring about world peace. The conclusion reads:

Perhaps, one day, in the 21st century, the people of the world will agree that the time has come to establish a new world order. In the meantime nations and people can only continue the dialogue that is going on in different parts of the world and in the United Nations and that keeps the hope for peace and justice alive. And citizens can continue to heed the warnings of ‘1984’” (A16).

In this final passage, the authors make the case for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a piece of fiction with staying power, but a power that is directly tied to the state of the world and the way that it is viewed by its people. This observation seems appropriately relevant for this thesis project and is a thread worth monitoring going forward. Though the world has changed drastically since 1949, no one could reasonably argue that the human race has achieved anything approaching world peace in that time, and thus the novel has remained relevant throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. Returning to the editorial, it concludes with a warning, urging readers that they must continue to “heed the warnings of ‘1984,’” suggesting that the threat of Orwell’s dystopia is still very real, at least in the year 1984 (A16).

Maddocks becomes the first author to make repeat appearances within this thesis, but not without good reason. Maddocks authored “Gandhi, Orwell, and the view after 1984” over two years after his previous article on Orwell while expanding his views on the man in the context of Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi. Citing Orwell’s own writings, Maddocks outlines how Orwell was slow to give praise to Gandhi and was quick to point out the shortcomings of his strategy of peaceful resistance. Maddocks writes in the February 8, 1985 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*:

If he was stern on Gandhi the man, Orwell- haunted by his ‘1984’ vision of a police state that would make Hitler look quaint - was equally reluctant to accept uncritically Gandhi's doctrine of ‘passive resistance.’ He argued that, ‘applied to foreign affairs, pacifism either stops being pacifist or becomes appeasement.’ He was extremely skeptical of what he took to be Gandhi's working premise - that “all human beings are more or less approachable and will respond to a generous gesture.” (Maddocks, 1985)

This presentation of Orwell seems to suggest that the author valued justice over peace, an argument echoed by Dwan, as discussed in this paper's literature review. Maddocks goes on to elucidate Orwell's conclusions about Gandhi, that the man was not naïve but rather dedicated to a political objective that matched Orwell's own, even though Gandhi used different methods.

Maddocks writes:

Yet, when all his grumblings were done, Orwell recognized that Gandhi was no innocent who believed that peace could be established by a sweet smile that went around the world. Satyagraha, sometimes translated as 'passive resistance,' more nearly means 'firmness in truth,' it seems, and Gandhi assumed that only those who were strong - indeed, capable of violence - could also be capable of nonviolence...[Orwell] had one hope - resting upon this canny eccentric he did not really like and his quasi-religious ideals that he could not really believe in. A reader feels what it cost Orwell to conclude: 'I do not feel sure that as a political thinker he was wrong. . . . It is at least thinkable that the way out lies through non-violence.' (Maddocks, 1985).

This article speaks less to any direct interpretation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and more an attempt to analyze Orwell himself through the novel and a comparison to a contemporary who died only months before *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published. Maddocks offers a contrast of Gandhi and Orwell and concludes that both men sought the same thing: to resist and defeat tyranny. The different, Maddocks argues, is the method by which each man engaged in their struggle. For Orwell, at least, there was a begrudging respect for Gandhi's methods.

One of the more notable political scandals of the 1980s concerned the Iran-Contra affair, in which elements of the Ronald Reagan administration secretly sold weapons to Iran and used the proceeds to fund the Nicaraguan anti-Communist guerilla group known as the Contras, in defiance of Congressional order prohibiting such funding. That is the subject of Tom Wicker's July 11, 1987 opinion piece for the *New York Times* titled, "War Ain't Peace Yet." The piece is

less concerned with the scandal itself and more so with the testimony provided to Congressional investigators by Colonel Oliver North, who had implemented the clandestine funding effort.

It was gross all right, but the "grossest misjudgment"? No, that came when this military officer sworn to uphold the law decided that the President of the United States was above the law. Hence, as a member of the President's personal staff, the colonel also saw himself as above the law Colonel North even believed that Mr. Reagan's staff was not bound by the President's executive order restating the legal requirement that a Presidential finding be issued for any covert operation. No such finding, of course, was ever issued or signed for the diversion of profits from the arms sales to Iran...Believing that none of these restrictions applied to the President, the colonel had no qualms at the time, and expressed none in his testimony, about lying and misrepresenting to Congress the covert activities of the National Security Council staff, about deceiving the American public, or about destroying documents that he could say he did not know might become evidence in a criminal prosecution. (Wicker, 1987, 31)

This is the setup to multiple comparisons between North's testimony and the actions of the Reagan administration and those of Big Brother and the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Wicker writes:

By such doublethink, the colonel insisted to the committees that raising funds from foreign governments and private citizens in lieu of Congressional appropriations was complying with the "letter and spirit" of the Boland Amendment. His action in taking intelligence from the C.I.A. or the Defense Department, which were forbidden to give information to the so-called "resistance," and conveying it himself, also complied with "letter and spirit." (31)

The use of the term "doublethink" is significant in this paragraph for the reason that it asserts that high-ranking members of the United States government were actively, knowingly engaged in illegal behavior while simultaneously believing it to be the right course of action. Wicker concludes his piece by directly comparing North to Big Brother, writing, "As Big Brother used to say in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four,' 'War is Peace.' Colonel North now adds 'Defiance is Compliance.' Fortunately, his kind don't yet have Big Brother's power to make it stick" (Wicker 31). Wicker's article is not the first to use the narrative theory concept of antagonist or highlight

motifs like doublethink, but he is one of the only writers to argue that officials like North are actively pushing doublethink and Big Brother-style policies on the American people, which speaks to a level of distrust of the American government that has not arisen since Watergate, in contrast to Von Hoffman's analysis in 1974, where he seemingly gloated about the triumph of the American people over the Orwellian Nixon administration. Wicker is far more subdued in his analysis, concluding that the American government does not "yet have Big Brother's power," but leaves the door open as far as the potential for the government to gain such power (31).

The next article in this chapter is a seemingly novel one on its face, but carries significant cultural analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. On July 22, 1987, *The Christian Science Monitor* published a review of an Americanized version of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the silver screen by John Beaufort. Beaufort is lukewarm on the adaptation as a whole, but highlights several edits as glaring omissions from the original novel. He writes, "While '1984' grows increasingly horrifying, it seldom becomes emotionally engaging. Furthermore, granted the difficulties of dramatizing so complex a novel, the adapters could be challenged for omitting such scenes as the poignant encounter between Winston and Julia after their mutual betrayal and subsequent reprogramming" (Beaufort, 1987). It is worth noting that Beaufort considers the post-"reprogramming" scene near the end of the novel to be significant enough to note in the movie review. This is another example of the narrative theory concept of character, as Beaufort focuses on the final time that the reader sees Julia, at the same time she is at her lowest point. Beaufort goes on to analyze the decision to move the setting for the movie from London to New York City, quoting the filmmakers and their beliefs on Orwell's intentions in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Regarding the decision to transport Oceania to New York, Zizka and Landenson state that “Orwell found an American Oceania quite easy to imagine.” They quote the novelist as follows: “In the USA, the phrase. . . ‘100 percent Americanism’ is suitable and the qualifying adjective as totalitarian as anyone could wish.’ The adapters find contemporary examples of Orwell’s state-created “Doublethink” in such phenomena as ‘a permanent state of unwinnable war with another superpower; the feverish development of awesome weapons in the name of peace; the word ‘freedom’ used by current religious groups to describe total capitulation to their rigid moral codes; even phrases like ‘pro-life,’ ‘the free world,’ and ‘freedom fighters,’ especially considering some of the countries and groups to which these terms are applied. Like all great art, ‘1984’ offers timeless perceptions about human nature.’ And in 1987, as in 1948 or 1984, audiences are still free to witness and examine, to agree or disagree.’ (Beaufort, 1987)

There are a number of ideas and concepts to draw from this final paragraph in Beaufort’s piece. First, he takes special note of the filmmakers drawing comparisons between the Cold War and the perpetual conflict between Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia. Second, the filmmakers identify the idea of “100 percent Americanism” as a totalitarian concept in that those who do not fit into a certain ideological, religious, or cultural section of the populace are less American. This piece is especially significant to Posner’s hypothesis. Beaufort is the first writer to directly state that Orwell would view Americanism, a principle championed by many over the course of America’s history, as something totalitarian. This establishes that totalitarianism can take form even in a country perceived to be a bastion of democracy like the United States or, as in the novel, Great Britain. Finally, Beaufort offers his own view of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a piece that provides “timeless perceptions about human nature” (Beaufort 1987). Beaufort not only

views *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a work with tremendous relevance to the 1980s, but one that will continue to have relevance going forward.

Gerald Jonas writes on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from the “ten thousand feet view,” which is to say, from a philosophical perspective analyzing the overall impact of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from 1949 to the date of the article, “A Book Fair With its Eye on the Future,” when it was published in the *New York Times* in 1989, then projecting its relevance forward into the future.

Jonas writes:

George Orwell's '*Animal Farm*' is a parable of totalitarianism in the form of a fairy tale; his '*Nineteen Eighty-Four*,' another cautionary tale about totalitarianism, borrowed the manner of science fiction to make its nightmarish future more plausible. Although '*Animal Farm*' is the more profound book, there is no question that '*Nineteen Eighty-Four*' had a greater impact" (Jonas, 1989, C1)

Jonas minces no words in applying his own opinion to Orwell's works, but even though he describes *Animal Farm* as the “more profound book,” he acknowledges that it was the later novel, dealing exclusively with humans in a totalitarian society, that has resonated with the literary and scholarly public since its publication. Jonas references the theme of totalitarianism and reiterates, though with different language, Feeney's argument that the novel's setting is the driving force behind its relevance. However, Jonas openly questions whether *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will remain as relevant as readers grow further and further removed from the year that the novel is set in. Jonas offers no concrete answer to that question, only offering the query itself as a glimpse into the future.

Has *Nineteen Eighty-Four* lost its hold over readers because its imagined future has clearly not come to pass on schedule? Would today's readers fall more easily under its spell if it were reissued under the title “2084?” Or must every generation write its own cautionary tales using whatever material is at hand? (C1)

This final passage also speaks to the political logic of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as it questions whether the novel will retain its relevance moving forward. Multiple authors have now openly wondered whether *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance is, at least in part, attached to its presence as, at least in part, a prediction of the future. Later reviews will show that yes, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will retain its pertinence, though future authors will emphasize different sections, themes, and ideas from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* than earlier authors.

The arrival of the year 1984 seemed to carry a significance for the writers of the 1980s. Most of the articles discussed in this chapter focus either on comparing the real world to Oceania and subsequently dismissing Orwell's predictions or clarifying that Orwell did not intend *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a literal prediction of the future. Most also question the novel's relevance moving forward if it can no longer be used to speculate about the year 1984, though some note that there is an undercurrent present within the novel that carries the reader through ideas and themes even without the fear that our 1984 could become like Orwell's imagined year. We shall see in future chapters that this undercurrent gives *Nineteen Eighty-Four* considerable influence moving into the new millennium, a reflection of Posner's argument that the novel's appeal is based on such an undercurrent that flows into tributaries of every generation.

Chapter V: The Thought Police, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the 1990s

Considering its title, “Why George Orwell was Right,” E.J. Dionne Jr.’s article on Eastern Europe, published January 14 of 1990 in *The Washington Post*, is surprisingly upbeat and optimistic about the future of the world. This is because Dionne focuses on the other side of the dystopia presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, namely the social democracy that Orwell himself professed to believe in. Dionne writes, “Think of the upheaval in Eastern Europe as George Orwell’s revolution. For the revolutionaries of 1989 have been fighting the same battle Orwell fought for most of his adult life-against communism and for the much maligned philosophy known as ‘social democracy’” (Dionne, 1990, B01). The revolutionaries of whom Dionne speaks were those involved in the Autumn of Nations, a series of uprisings in Communist countries in Eastern Europe and Asia between the late 1980s and early 1990s, meaning that Dionne’s article was published in the midst of this action. Dionne’s piece is also the first article written post-fall of the Berlin wall that divided East and West Berlin, a tremendous symbolic victory over Communism. Thus Dionne ascribes two beliefs to Orwell himself, that of a man who “fought for most of his adult life against communism” and a man who supported “the much aligned philosophy known as social democracy” (B01). Authorial intention is once again a focus of this piece. Dionne goes on to quote Orwell directly about social democracy and its implications, and references to the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are palpable. Dionne writes:

“Social Democracy, unlike capitalism, offers an alternative to Communism,” Orwell wrote in 1948, “and if somewhere or other it can be made to work on a big scale-if it turns out that after all it is possible to introduce Socialism without secret police forces, mass deportations and so forth-then the excuse for dictatorship vanishes.” Communism, Orwell wrote, would ultimately be upended by a reformist system that would provide “economic security without concentration

camps.” That is exactly what the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are searching for now (B01).

Dionne takes a new approach to Orwell as far as authorial intention. While authors writing in previous generations, particularly those closest to the novel’s publication, argued for Orwell as a guard against the threat of Communism, Dionne presents Orwell as a man seeking to achieve similar results to Communism without the brutal methods and abuses described in his dystopia. Barely forty years separate Dionne and Warburg, among the first writers analyzed in this thesis and who described Orwell’s book as being “worth a cool million votes to the conservative party” (Meyers, 2011, 248). Gradually we begin to see the interpretation of Orwell himself move away from strict ideological lines and towards an attempt at a more nuanced understanding of his intentions and personal beliefs. Dionne even speculates in his closing paragraph that Orwell would welcome the arrival of the European Union, though a total of forty three years separate his passing and the EU’s founding in November of 1993. As Maddocks said in chapter three, Orwell is, in many ways, a human Rorschach test. Dionne is not the first, and certainly not the last, writer to project beliefs Orwell professed to hold in the 1940s onto events nearly half a century hence, and this phenomenon will only grow more noticeable as this analysis continues into the late 1990s and the twentieth century.

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s did not put an end to so-called Cold Warriors, those who remained prepared to fight the Red Menace even as the Soviet Union itself gradually collapsed. These people are the subject of Joel Achenbach’s piece in August 1991 for *The Washington Post*, and both Achenbach and the subjects he is writing about hold Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* very near to their hearts. One early paragraph in Achenbach’s piece reads:

The Bomb. Sputnik. Khrushchev pounding his shoe at the United Nations. The Missiles of October. It was easy to forget after all these summits and handshakes

that not so long ago the Soviet Menace was part of the mainstream consciousness, recognized by the Foreign Policy Establishment, feared by school kids. It is easy to forget that not so long ago the great fear of mankind was totalitarian rule...Orwell was writing, in 1948, about Stalinism (Achenbach, 1991, E01).

It is significant that Achenbach states directly that Orwell's focus was Stalinism. In the critical literature thus far we have observed authors gradually move away from a focus on Communism and towards a broader interpretation of Orwell's novel as a work that rails against totalitarianism of all forms. Achenbach, in looking to the past, resurrects the views widely articulated at the time of the novel's publishing by focusing on Communism. This paragraph speaks to both authorial intention and theme, as Achenbach resurrects the United States' fears throughout the Cold War of Soviet domination over the world. The subjects of this piece, members of the "John Birch society," are less concerned with physical domination of the United States, however, and more concerned with internal strife and subversion. Achenbach elaborates, quoting from member Tom Eddlem on his fears about the Soviet Union:

Not so much a military takeover but a subversion factor. We're not worried about the 'Red Dawn' scenario [Soviet paratroopers landing in Colorado]. Our position has been that the main threat to the United States has not been fallout, it's sellout. It's the Soviet KGB apparatus. The fact that they would get agents of influence high within the U.S. government' (E01).

There are multiple directions one could take in interpreting this paragraph. Simms wrote in 1974 how Orwell sought to imbue readers of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with an understanding that totalitarianism could happen anywhere, hence why he set the novel in London. This paragraph might seem to suggest that Orwell's goal was accomplished, as Tom Eddlem at least is concerned about his government and possible abuses of power. However, Eddlem is more concerned with Soviet agents infiltrating the government and taking it over, whereas Orwell never suggests that foreign agents were needed to create Oceania, the Party, or Big Brother. Fear of subversion was, in fact, a propaganda tool used by the Party, but Achenbach does not explore

that connection. One may say that Eddlem presents a continuing fear of totalitarianism and an understanding that the threat has not ceased with the end of the Soviet Union, though Eddlem himself is only aware of one possible route to totalitarianism. Were Golo Mann, from chapter one, or Walter Goodman, from chapter four, present to speak with Eddlem, they might warn him that totalitarianism can creep up from entirely domestic forces, with no foreign agents required.

V.C. Letemendia's main focus in "Orwell's Neglected Commentary," published in the Winter 1992 edition of the *Journal of Modern Literature*, is not *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but Orwell himself and his slightly-lesser known novel *Animal Farm*. Though this piece draws comparisons between *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, its main utility for this thesis project is its analysis of Orwell himself and his intentions in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Letemendia's description, followed by quotations from Orwell himself, of the fate of the animals at the end of *Animal Farm* closely mirrors the description of revolution provided in "the book," ostensibly authored by Goldstein but in reality a Thought Police trap as well as a way for Orwell to speak directly to the reader without actually breaking the fourth wall. Letemendia writes:

The animals' fate seems to mirror rather closely that of the common people as Orwell envisaged it some six years before commencing *Animal Farm*: 'what you get over and over again is a movement of the proletariat which is promptly canalized and betrayed by astute people at the top, and then the growth of a new governing class. The one thing that never arrives is equality' (Letemendia, 1992, 127).

On its own this paragraph is interesting from the perspective of one who studies Orwell, but when combined with a later paragraph from Letemendia's piece it provides considerable insight into Orwell's goals in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

What upset [Orwell] most was not the 'barbaric and undemocratic methods' of Stalin and his associates... The real problem, in his view, was that Western Europeans could not see the truth about the Soviet regime, still considering it a

Socialist country...Both workers and the intelligentsia had to be disabused of this illusion which they held partly out of willful misunderstanding and partly because of an inability to comprehend totalitarianism (131).

Letemendia reiterates an argument advanced by Warburg at the time of the novel's publication. At that time, Warburg wrote, "1984 by the way might well be described as a horror novel, and would make a horror film which, if licensed, might secure all countries threatened by communism for 1000 years to come" (Quoted in Meyers 249). Letemendia argues that Orwell did not intend *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a novel that would bring down Communism or end totalitarianism, but rather warn the people of still-free countries that they were in danger of succumbing to the same fate as those in Eastern Europe. Thus, Letemendia's interpretation of Orwell's authorial intention matches up with that of Warburg and other authors who have argued that Orwell intended the novel as a warning against totalitarianism rather than a prediction of the future. Letemendia supports Posner's argument when she writes how Westerners had an "inability to comprehend totalitarianism." If such ignorance existed, it would make sense that Orwell would seek to educate. Like others, Letemendia views Orwell's writing as targeted towards more than just the Soviet Union or Communism, but rather a criticism of those revolutions that install totalitarian dictators:

Animal Farm was intended to have a wider application than a satire upon the Russian regime alone. Yes, it did indeed imply that the rule of the pigs was only 'a change of masters.' Yet it did not condemn to the same fate all revolutions, nor for a moment suggest that Farmer Jones should be reinstated as a more benevolent dictator than Napoleon. According to Orwell's letter, the problem examined by *Animal Farm* concerns the revolution itself (136).

This article dovetails with the Dionne piece examined earlier in this chapter, as both argue that Orwell envisioned a possible future in which democratic socialism could provide some of the benefits that Communism claimed without succumbing to the totalitarian nightmare described in

Nineteen Eighty-Four. Both Letemendia and Dionne describe Orwell as a man who was not a champion of capitalism or a champion of the status quo, but rather a man who feared that the revolution would yield results no different, or in the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* substantially worse, than before.

The threat technology poses to personal freedoms, including privacy rights, has been argued among the authors analyzed thus far in this project. Steve Coll, however, focuses on one of the first real-world examples of a surveillance state in his piece, “Britain’s Omnipresent Private Eyes,” published in *The Washington Post* on August 8 of 1994. The piece concentrates on rising surveillance usage in the town of King’s Lynn, a seaport town in the United Kingdom. Coll writes:

Closed-circuit television has long been used in Europe and the United States to monitor such vulnerable crime venues as banks, retail outlets, airports and subway systems. But in Britain the concept has extended to cover entire towns and city centers - parking lots, streets, high-crime housing projects, industrial areas, sports complexes, churches, graveyards and small alleyways (Coll, 1994, A01).

The comparisons between near-omnipresent surveillance technology in the UK and similar technologies in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are drawn with ease. Coll immediately does so, comparing the government’s newfound power to monitor the citizenry to the powers provided to the Party in Oceania. Coll writes, “Civil libertarians fear that Britain is fulfilling the prophecies of George Orwell’s novel ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’ in which the writer warned against a totalitarian state in which an all-seeing Big Brother keeps an omniscient eye on the citizenry” (Coll A01). These lines reflect a focus on the motif of surveillance and technology being used to observe citizens. Though the surveillance technologies Coll describes in his piece are not used inside private homes, unlike the telescreens in Oceania, the author makes special note that the surveillance system is used to control behavior and enforce punishments for undesirable behavior. Coll

writes, “Originally installed to deter burglary and car theft, in practice the cameras have been used to intervene against what town officials call ‘anti-social behavior,’ including many such minor offenses as littering, urinating in public and evading meters in town parking lots” (A01). Though it would be an exaggeration to say that the officials monitoring the people of King’s Lynn were enforcing the will of Big Brother, their own guidelines describe the system as an effort to combat “anti-social behavior.” Thus Coll implicitly notes that the government of the town is attempting to enforce its own kind of political orthodoxy. Coll even quotes government officials arguing for the surveillance system by suggesting that only the guilty would fear being watched.

Town officials insist they don't overuse the video cameras to pursue minor offenders and that, in any event, the public wants King's Lynn to be free of litter and similar irritations...Home Minister Maclean vowed in his recent speech that ‘law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear from the presence of these watchful guardians. Only those engaged in wrongdoing should be fearful’ (A01).

There are totalitarian undertones to Maclean’s speech, to the point where it is difficult not to read the description of the surveillance technology as “watchful guardians” and not think of the infamous “Big Brother is Watching You” posters pasted across Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Though Coll does not state it outright in his article, the rising use of surveillance technology to monitor citizens and influence their behavior does indicate that Orwell was correct to fear that governments would use surveillance powers to monitor and attempt to control the citizenry if given those powers. Though previous authors have taken care to note that the United States and Western Europe do not resemble Oceania, the themes from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are reflected in places like King’s Lynn.

John R. Pfeiffer’s review of Peter Stansky’s “Nineteen Eighty-Four Ten Years Later” was originally published in 1995 but was resurrected and reprinted for the 1997 issue of *Utopian*

Studies. Within the piece Pfeiffer reviews Stansky's work while offering his own thoughts on the novel, intermixed with quotes from Stansky. Early on Pfeiffer contrasts Orwell himself and Winston Smith, the main character, writing:

Winston Smith is clearly a translation of Orwell the writer. Both were minor state functionaries, but Winston is different from Orwell. Orwell as a policeman in Burma actually had power and the duty to execute it. In the 1930s Orwell saw poverty and its effects, the message of his earlier books coming to life in the Depression and the rise of Fascism. Orwell's profound admiration for a socialist state arose in his time in Barcelona. He saw socialism's brief flowering there. Very soon he saw its betrayal by leaders greedy for power. This progress is at the core of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (Pfeiffer, 1995, 237)

This paragraph speaks to examples of authorial intention, symptomatic reading, and, critically, distance. Each of the items cited in this paragraph can be directly contrasted with Winston. Orwell had power while Winston has none, Orwell understood the wide-ranging effects of poverty while Winston struggles to determine what is even true, and Orwell witnessed the betrayal of socialism by greedy leaders while Winston was raised in that society prior to the novel's opening. In this respect, Pfeiffer argues that Winston is Orwell himself in a different world. One of Pfeiffer's concluding paragraphs offers his thoughts on the utility of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the 1990s:

Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1994 continues to be about 1948. It is not about the future actual, but about the future potential. Moreover, because its warning was heard, some things, potentially bad, did not happen... We have not, for example, internalized a set of conformities to the needs of the state. Most individuals are still free to think as they wish. Though there is indeed less freedom of speech! Furthermore, the dictatorships around the planet in 1994 do not seem to be the threats they represented in 1984. Even so, the rewriting of history by states or official historians continues, and it does change the past. A more subtle, but equally mordant threat to an amity in the world community (237).

In a few words Pfeiffer cleanly sets himself on the "future potential" side of the discussion about Orwell's supposed prognostications about the future in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as opposed to the "future actual" side (237). There are multiple references to motifs from the novel, including

suppressions of freedoms, rewriting history, and the threat of totalitarianism, but Pfeiffer does acknowledge that the world is not that in which *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is set. The mere fact that Big Brother is not plastered across London and the Thought Police are not dragging dissidents away to be reeducated, however, is not sufficient for Pfeiffer, who in the final line of the quote warns that similar threats still exist and may develop into greater concerns.

Since the first chapter covering the reviews from 1949 and the 1950s, the articles featured in this project have progressively moved away from comparing figures and motifs from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to similar figures and motifs from the Soviet Union. Joshua Rubenstein reverses this trend in a book review published in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 29, 1997 in which he describes the role of Joseph Stalin in influencing Orwell and inspiring the character of Big Brother. The book is *The Commissar Vanishes* by David King, but Rubenstein takes the tactics and beliefs outlined by King and draws comparisons between Soviet society and that of Oceania. Rubenstein writes, “Years before George Orwell wrote his chilling account of ‘1984,’ Joseph Stalin understood that ‘who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past.’ Ordinary censorship of news reporting and the arts does not begin to describe the conformity Stalin imposed on Soviet society and culture” (Rubenstein, 1997, A20). These lines emphasize how Stalin and the Soviet Union in particular weighed on Orwell’s mind. This interpretation creates a partial crux with Simms, who argued that Orwell focused on socialism because it was among the most popular ideologies at the time of writing but only one of many that could result in totalitarian dictatorship. Rubenstein, by contrast, emphasizes the especially horrific tactics of Stalin and his secret police. These lines bring up narrative theory concepts of authorial intention and symptomatic reading. Rubenstein highlights several similarities between real-world Soviet tactics and motifs in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. He writes, “Promoting Stalin was

easy compared to the work required to eliminate all traces of his victims. Photographs and paintings were either doctored or removed from display as successive purges targeted once-honored party officials” (A20). These lines describe a cruder version of Winston Smith’s own job at the Ministry of Truth, in which he edits historical articles to better suit the Party’s objectives and match their propaganda. A recurring motif throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a photo of several disgraced Party officials that proves the Party has manipulated the truth, a one for one comparison to Rubenstein’s description of Stalin altering history to purge those who have fallen out of favor from even the history books.

Rubenstein concludes his article with a direct comparison between Stalin and Big Brother himself:

Writing in the late 1940s, when Stalin’s prestige was at its height, Orwell took it upon himself to portray totalitarianism in all its overblown splendor. ‘The past is whatever the records and memories agree upon,’ Orwell’s hero Winston Smith comes to understand. ‘When it has been recreated in whatever shape is needed at the moment, then this new version is the past, and no different pasts can ever have existed.’ Winston Smith has only a moment to ponder Big Brother’s manipulation of history before the Thought Police descend on him. Stalin’s security officials were not as efficient (A20).

The timing of this article is especially interesting, as the Soviet Union had long since broken up by the article’s publication in 1997. It may be that books like *The Commissar Vanishes* and articles like Rubenstein’s were more available and encouraged in the aftermath of the Cold War than at its peak or even when tensions merely simmered beneath the surface of international politics. Still, Rubenstein’s message in his concluding paragraph seems clear. The only difference between Big Brother and Stalin, he seems to say, is that Stalin’s secret police were not nearly as efficient as the Thought Police.

One of the most memorable and salacious events in the final decade of twentieth century American politics was the Monica Lewinsky scandal, in which then-President Bill Clinton engaged in an affair with assistant Monica Lewinsky. Many articles were written about the affair, what it meant politically, and so on, but Dennis Farney and Gerald F. Seib examined the response to the scandal in their February 16, 1999 piece in the *Wall Street Journal* titled “Diminished Returns: The Stature Debate.” Within, Farney and Seib focus on how both the American media and political bodies responded to the scandal and what it said about the changing nature of American culture and the way that Americans process the news.

There were no transcendent figures in the tortuous impeachment saga of President Clinton, no statesmen such as those who emerged from the Watergate struggle. The reason goes well beyond the substantive differences between the two cases to a much broader cultural change that was gathering force even during Watergate a quarter-century ago. American political and media culture now destroys heroes even in the act of celebrating them... This is an era that inexorably hollows out the hero into the celebrity (which is another, opposite, thing); which devalues news into entertainment; which can transform even an impeachment drama into just another televised spectacle (Farney et al, 1999, A1).

Allusions to Orwell later in the article indicate that the implicit references to doublethink and propaganda are not accidental. Americans, the article suggest, have become accustomed to viewing significant political crossroads as pieces of entertainment and mere drama to enhance the experience of life. The authors warn that, should this trend continue, it could have dire implications for American democracy. In doing so, they compare Orwell’s vision with that of Aldous Huxley and his 1932 novel *Brave New World*:

Democracy is dialogue. But there are two distinctly different ways that the dialogue can die. In his book ‘Nineteen Eighty-four,’ George Orwell posited one: a boot-in-the-face dictatorship that represses its citizens and denies them the truth. This dark vision hasn't come to pass. In most of the world, in fact, the movement is toward more and more openness... But nearly seven decades ago, Aldous Huxley wrote another book, ‘Brave New World,’ that posited a different threat: a society so flooded with trivia that its citizens can no longer distinguish between fact and factoid. This is happening... Neil Postman, today chairman of the

department of culture and communication at New York University, wrote in 1985 that the Huxley thesis had prevailed: ‘Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture’ (A1).

These paragraphs address the relevance of Orwell to politics as the world moves further and further away from the world in which he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and even the year in which he set the novel. Farney and Seib conclude that, when it comes to the Lewinsky scandal at least, Americans have more to fear from Huxley and Mustapha Mond than they do from Orwell and Big Brother.

In sharp contrast to the views articulated by Farney and Seib, Simon Davies authored an article for the *Los Angeles Times* in June of 1999 titled, “Perspective on Technology; Big Brother Truly is Watching You.” Within this piece, Davies reflects on the growing power of surveillance technology and the ever-increasing capacity for computer databases to store information on the world’s populace. Davies writes, “To the digital generation, the all-seeing, all-knowing Big Brother is represented by large computer systems. Each adult in the developed world is located, on average, in 300 databases. As these databases converge with the telecommunications spectrum, nearly everyone becomes entangled in a web of surveillance enveloping everything from our bank accounts to our e-mail” (Davies, 1999, 5). This view of Big Brother as a symbolic representation of surveillance power makes for an interesting contrast when weighed against Rubenstein’s interpretation of the character as a stand-in for Joseph Stalin. Davies goes on to elaborate on in-depth comparisons between *Nineteen Eighty-Four’s* storyworld and the world of 1999:

Superficially, Orwell got it wrong. 1984 came and went with many of our freedoms apparently still intact. But a closer reading of the book reveals that at a fundamental level, we are nearer to Big Brother than we might imagine...In

Orwell's fictional Oceania, a mass of "telescreens," complete with microphones and speakers, watched over every square inch of public and private space... Compare this with the present day, where hundreds of thousands of cameras have been placed on buses, trains and elevators. Many people now expect to be routinely filmed from the moment they leave the front gate. Hidden cameras are now being installed unhindered in cinemas, alongside roads, in bars, dressing rooms and housing estates. Once viewed as a blunt tool of surveillance, such devices in the space of 15 years have become a benign, integral part of the urban infrastructure. It is the integration of surveillance with our day-to-day environment that is most telling. And it is the passive acceptance of the surveillance that Orwell feared most" (5).

There are multiple references to motifs like the telescreens, themes of surveillance, and authorial intention within this paragraph. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, democracy's greatest victory since the conclusion of World War II, Davies asserts that the world's surveillance apparatus resembles that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* more than ever before. Davies continues his analysis, arguing that surveillance technology is changing and improving alongside the growing willingness of the population to submit to an authoritarian symbol or figure:

Disclosure of your identity sits at the heart of all technology. Earlier this year, privacy campaigners revealed that Intel's Pentium III chip contained an ID number capable of tracking the registered owner's movements around the Internet. But the nightmare vision of Big Brother could only transpire if every entity--citizen, state and corporation--was working in partnership to achieve an alleged 'common good.' The world of 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' could occur only if everyone became agents of the state... It does not require much imagination to see such a trend. Citizens and businesses routinely are advised that they have a responsibility to support authoritarian measures. At a variety of levels, we are all expected to become partners in surveillance. And that is the crux of the Big Brother nightmare (5).

Davies presents a new view of Oceania and the Party, one that emphasizes not the more physical attributes of the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but rather the mindset of the population. Nowhere in his piece does Davies make note of the Thought Police, O'Brien's torture techniques, or the constant state of war enveloping the entire world in perpetuity. Davies highlights *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a work written by a man with tremendous fear that the world

population would come to embrace Big Brother willingly over time, and even though the physical battle has been won over totalitarianism twice in the twentieth century, the psychological, ideological battle goes on.

The argument presented by Davies is repeated in different words and made from a different perspective in Paul Steinberg's article for the September 1999 edition of *The English Review* titled simply "Nineteen Eighty-Four." The article is presented as a simple book review, but goes beyond an analysis of plot and characters to explore a miniaturized version of this very thesis project, asking why Orwell has remained relevant from the start of the Cold War until after its conclusion. Steinberg offers one possible answer:

The relevance of this deeply moving and not inconceivable vision of the human condition struggling against an inimical society lies in the fact that many aspects of 'Ingsoc' can be witnessed today. Orwell acts as an exposé of painful truths. His prose is plain and clear, and, through Winston, the reader's own assumptions about freedom, justice and individuality are tested against an intolerant political system. As we go into the twenty-first century, it is essential that today's teenagers are aware of tomorrow's threats to society. The need to thwart Orwell's prognostication will stay with humanity so that 2+2 never equals 5 (Steinberg, 1999, 18).

With this single paragraph Steinberg asserts several things about *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. First, he argues that the novel is written for people who already have some ideas and are probably fond of ideas like freedom and individuality. The struggle to achieve and preserve these ideas transcends any single period of modern human history, which explains why the novel has remained relevant. Furthermore, Steinberg asserts that Orwell was, in part, correct in predicting how certain aspects of the future would turn out, though he offers no opinion on whether Orwell intended to say that a Big Brother-type figure would rule the world within twenty five years of the novel's publication. Finally, Steinberg asserts that *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* importance and relevance is as great or more so than any point in the Twentieth Century, as his final line indicates that he

believes the threat of two plus two equaling five, meaning that the Party has achieved total domination over rational thought, will continue to be present, just as it was throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.

Within this chapter we have observed a continued interest in using *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to understand democracies and totalitarian trends in otherwise free societies, but we have also seen an emphasis on using *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a mirror for understanding ourselves. Winston Smith is called the embodiment of Orwell, Letemendia calls on readers to comprehend totalitarianism as Orwell does, while Davies describes how Orwell's nightmare could only come to pass if we as a citizenry endorsed it and allowed ourselves to actively participate in it. The most compelling quote in service of Posner's hypothesis about the logic of totalitarianism is also the last quote in this chapter, when Steinberg writes, "The need to thwart Orwell's prognostication will stay with humanity so that 2+2 never equals 5" (18). With this line Steinberg declares that humanity will need to resist not only an ideology or a politician, but totalitarianism itself in all its forms. A *New York Times* editorial published in 1984 questioned if there might come a day when the world has become a better place and readers no longer need *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a reference for understanding totalitarianism. By Steinberg's analysis, *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance might go on forever. While we cannot know that, we do know that the novel retained its influence and then grew it in the new millennium.

Chapter VI: Who Controls the Past? Nineteen Eighty-Four and the New Millennium

Jennifer Howard opens the literary history of Orwell, at least for this thesis project, in the twenty-first century with a discussion of writing. Although the references to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are few and the analysis of the novel even less abundant, the article nonetheless carries beliefs and attitudes about Orwell and his writing, if only in some cases because of the quotes and passages that Howard chooses to highlight in her piece, published December 17, 2000 in *The Washington Post*. In the section of article most relevant to Orwell, Howard writes:

Orwell's four stated reasons for writing are worth repeating here: "1). Sheer egoism. Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood, etc etc. It is humbug to pretend that this is not a motive, and a strong one . . . 2) Aesthetic enthusiasm. Perception of beauty in the external world, or, on the other hand, in words and their right arrangement. Pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story. . . . 3) Historical impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity. 4) Political purpose--using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after. . . . No book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude (Howard, 2000, 10).

It is notable that, after half a century of authors, scholars, and critics mostly attempting, with some exceptions, to place their own values and beliefs onto Orwell that Howard takes him at his word and relies entirely upon his own quotations and writings. The first of the four reasons for writing, according to Orwell, may be interpreted as Orwell viewing himself, or at least hoping that he would come to be perceived, as a major figure in the fight against totalitarianism. Had he survived past 1950, Orwell's views on those authors who saw him as a prophet attempting to predict the future would make for fascinating reading. Reasons three and four for writing are especially significant in the context of studying *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Reason three, "Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity," could

almost be written by Winston Smith himself if asked to explain his journal (10). The theme of truth versus propaganda is constantly alluded to or directly raised by characters in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. According to Orwell, the mere act of writing may be considered a criminal act, and Winston is ultimately arrested in part for simply possessing the journal in which he writes about his life. Finally, reason four, “Political purpose--using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense” and “Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after,” is explicitly political and directly related to the reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. By highlighting these quotes, Howard asserts that Orwell sought to alter the direction the world. Howard aligns herself with previous authors like Simms, Pfeiffer, and Warburg, all of whom believed Orwell sought to dissuade readers from embracing even seemingly-beneficial totalitarian policies and rhetoric.

While Howard sought to understand Orwell’s mental state and intentions through his own expressed reasons for writing, Geoffrey Wheatcroft sought to better understand Orwell through one of his contemporaries, James Burnham, author of the noted work, *The Managerial Revolution*. In a Wall Street Journal article dated July 16, 2002, Wheatcroft explores Burnham’s 1941 novel, in which Burnham predicted that the world would be split up into superstates and dominated by rigid class structures. Wheatcroft notes that Orwell wrote about Burnham and his work in several essays, and that the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* itself has many similarities to the future described by Burnham. Wheatcroft compares the two writers as prognosticators of the future.

Burnham was confuted by events. Admittedly, his belief in the 1940s that the market economy was doomed was shared across the political spectrum, not least by George Orwell, who was critical of Burnham but also fascinated by him and who pilfered the vision of "The Managerial Revolution" in “Nineteen Eighty-Four.” And yet Orwell turned out the more far-seeing (Wheatcroft, 2002, D6).

Wheatcroft inserts himself into the argument of Orwell as a political writer speculating about the future versus Orwell as a prophet in a unique way, not going so far as to argue that he truly believed Big Brother would take over the world within twenty five years but that many of Orwell's predictions outside the novel would come to pass. Wheatcroft writes:

Like many former Bolsheviks, Burnham could never quite shed his belief in the invincibility of communism, and he maintained until the end that any form of detente, or the smallest concession to the Soviets, would hand them outright victory. It was Orwell who predicted that Soviet Russia would finally either democratize itself or collapse. Burnham died in 1987; he only needed to live a couple of years longer to see Orwell proved right" (D6)

Wheatcroft emphasizes the view that Orwell was correct in his predictions about the ultimate fate of the Soviet Union. Though Wheatcroft does not offer any explicit endorsements about the relevance of Orwell moving forward, the assertion that Orwell's long-term predictions were correct imbues Orwell with greater credibility and an implied suggestion that the author should still be taken seriously even half a century after his death.

Glenn Frankel undertakes a much shortened and in some ways miniaturized version of this thesis project in an article published on June 25, 2003 for *The Washington Post*, a piece that serves as an examination of Orwell on what would have been his one hundredth birthday.

Frankel references or alludes to several narrative theory concepts, studies *Nineteen Eighty-Four* through its author and vice versa, and reflects on the impact that the novel had; an impact that persisted through 2003. Frankel begins his piece using Orwell's own words.

"Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent," George Orwell wrote in 1949. He was referring to the recently assassinated Mohandas Gandhi, but these days the same test might well apply to himself, for in the 53 years since his death Orwell has become a secular saint, acclaimed by the political left and right and many in between, revered as a seer and truth-teller, honored for his moral courage, his razor-sharp intellect and his diamond-hard prose...Based upon his self-critical writings and the accounts of those who knew him, Orwell

was a strange and difficult person who had few friends...And, oh yes, let's not forget this: As a prophet he was almost always wrong; 1984, as we now know, looked nothing like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. . .And yet the book still resonates in our nightmares and our lexicon. Big Brother, the infamous Ministries of Love and Truth, the memory hole, the Thought Police and Hate Week all remain part of our vocabulary. And Orwell's own name has become the gold standard adjective to apply when measuring the gulf between political language and moral reality (Frankel, 2003, C01)

Frankel's first lines harken back to John Rodden, who called Orwell "St. George" in the title of the work referenced in the introduction to the critical history analysis of this section. Rodden, like Frankel, notes that dozens of groups, from every spot on the ideological spectrum, claimed Orwell as their "patron saint" (Rodden, 1990, 21-22). However, Frankel is harsher on Orwell as a predictor of future events than even other writers and scholars who dismiss Orwell's prognostications. Writers as recently as Davies argued that, though *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* storyworld did not come to pass by the year 1984, there were still important motifs and themes from the novel that rang true. Frankel offers his own explanation for why the novel has remained relevant:

Orwell called [*Nineteen Eighty-Four*] a satire, but it holds up best as a portrait of the power and psychology of totalitarianism, which he depicts this way: 'To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them' (C01)

Frankel's reference to the "psychology of totalitarianism" can be directly compared to Posner's ideas regarding the logic of totalitarianism. Frankel describes the mindset of those who have fully succumbed to the indoctrination of the totalitarian state while Posner seems to focus more broadly on why the novel is appealing to non-subjugated Westerners, and both Meyers and Davies explicitly write about Orwell's intended audience being those Westerners. Ultimately, however, both Posner and Frankel agree that the novel's staying power is sourced from its understanding of how totalitarianism functions. Frankel writes on the reception that *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four received when it was published and how that differed from Orwell's beliefs and those expressed in the novel:

“Nineteen Eighty-Four” brought Orwell huge profits and huge fame, especially in the United States, where readers saw it as an undisguised attack on the Soviet Union and on the left in general by a reformed prophet they presumed had once been a socialist but had come to see the error of his ways. When the facts didn't fit this interpretation, his American publishers simply engaged in some Orwellian deletions. Symons points out that the 1956 Signet paperback contains Orwell's famous claim that ‘every line I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism,’ but deletes the remainder of the sentence: ‘and for democratic socialism as I understand it’ (C01).

This final paragraph is an accounting of the reception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and how certain reactions to the novel were encouraged by the novel's publisher. Frankel does not go so far as to say that Orwell was not as much of a political scientist as students are often taught, but he, like Dionne, believes that Orwell had an idea for what would a government should look like, rather than simply an idea of what it should not look like.

If Harry Strub's article in the 2004 issue of *Utopian Studies* sounds like Rodden, it is likely because Strub is reviewing Rodden while offering commentary on those views and inserting his own opinions about Orwell and the reason that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has remained relevant. Strub writes of the novel and its author, “The American mass media were largely responsible for reinvigorating record sales of the novel and for getting Orwell ‘unpersoned’ to the status of a commodity. Both the novel and the man increasingly were exposed and extolled as artifacts of popular culture” (Strub, 2004, 151). The use of the term “unperson” is an interesting one, because it is a callback to *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* Thought Police, whom Winston tells the reader vaporize their captives from existence, as though they had never been a part of Oceania at all. By using this term, Strub implies that Orwell the man has been completely disregarded in favor of Orwell the saint or perhaps simply Orwell the man who can be used to support any

ideology or position. Strub goes to praise the power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in that it resulted in the use of new terms to describe things and ideas that previously required sentences or paragraphs to fully explain, before he notes how those terms are sometimes abused:

Three broad interest groups emerged to lobby Congress to regulate access to the rapidly expanding electronic markets: Bell Telephone and its regional affiliates, American newspapers and publishers, and the major cable companies. The turf war raged over whether the freedom to offer information services (by Bell) would lead to unfair monopolization. Rodden describes how the combatants adopted boldly Orwellian tactics while claiming to expose the menacing Orwellian threat posed by their rivals. The battle highlights *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance as a source of compelling linguistic devices (151).

This paragraph highlights examples of voice and theme, as Strub illuminates how Orwell's style illuminated social and political developments while also exposing how propagandists and authoritarians seek to deceive others. Strub includes a recounting of Rodden's interviews and experiences with Cold War East Germany and the regime that its citizens lived through:

Familiar Orwellian themes are illustrated through these German tales: the frequent falsification and re-writing of history; the indoctrination of the young in the schools with relentless, ritualistic Party sloganeering (i.e., duckspeaking, and double thinking masked as dialectics); political control, political correctness and the corruption of language; the extinction of independent thought; mass conformity and obedience for fear of punishment; and, finally, the absence of heroes and the death of hope. Orwellian tactics are re-encountered in describing how the post-communist government engaged in necessary cleansing of all academic and government personnel who had served as Marxist and Party officials" (152).

Within this paragraph Strub implicitly refutes the idea that Orwell was writing specifically about Stalinism or even Communism, but rather about totalitarianism, or at least the kind of totalitarianism that took hold of Adolf Hitler's Germany and Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. Each of the things described in this paragraph are found to be themes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including "the absence of heroes and the death of hope" (Strub 152). The novel's final line can

be interpreted as just that; the extinguishing of all hope, smothered by the single, overriding emotion Winston feels at the novel's conclusion: his love for Big Brother.

While other authors from this chapter have analyzed Orwell and have made some comparisons between the technologies available to the Party and those available to Western governments, none has yet been as explicit in those comparisons as June Deery, who wrote for *Utopian Studies* in the publication's Winter 2005 issue. Deery quotes from American novelist Thomas Pynchon in his analysis of how deceptions in the naming of certain industries in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be compared to similarly nondescript or misleading names of modern American government agencies, writing:

Pynchon takes the opportunity afforded by this retrospective to point to trends in the twenty-first century which echo Orwell's fictional scenario. He points to the irony in present-day America of having a "war-making apparatus named 'the Department of Defense.' Or a 'Department of Justice' whose operatives in the FBI have a well-documented history of human rights and constitutional abuses. He remarks with some despair: "Every day public opinion is the target of rewritten history, official amnesia and outright lying, all of which is benevolently termed 'spin,' as if it were no more harmful than a ride on a merry-go-round. We know better than what they tell us, yet hope otherwise" (xiii). The tone can also become more bitter. "It has become a commonplace circa 2003," Pynchon observes, "For government employees to be paid more than most of the rest of us to debase history, trivialize truth, and annihilate the past on a daily basis." (Deery, 2005, 122)

This paragraph draws direct comparisons between the nefarious branches of the Party and law enforcement and military agencies of the United States government. One could almost substitute Pynchon's writings on the state of the American people for Winston's journal and tell the story of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in twenty first century America rather than late twentieth century Britain. Allusions are made to motifs like doublethink, propaganda, the rewriting of history, and abuses of power by government officials. Pynchon's descriptions seem to suggest that large chunks of Oceania have been lifted from the fictional world and integrated into the United States

government. Deery uses the rise of surveillance technologies like those in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to reinforce her argument:

Pynchon cites media technologies such as interactive flat-screen TVs and the Internet as instruments of surveillance. Orwell's predictions about the political use of these technologies appears to have been accurate. Hence today, 'News is whatever the government says it is, surveillance of ordinary citizens has entered the mainstream of police activity, reasonable search and seizure is a joke. And so forth' (xvi). However, to Pynchon's mind, the more important assessment is Orwell's acuity as a social prophet, one who goes beyond technological details to peer into the most fundamental elements of human nature and the larger fields of force which influence our behavior. In this regard, he accords Orwell considerable insight, though he notes that he did underestimate the influence of religious fundamentalism in late twentieth-century geopolitics (122).

In warning the reader about the growing threat of surveillance technology, Deery joins Lewis (1964), Culligan (1964), and Goodman (1983) as authors and scholars who view said technology as a serious threat to personal freedoms and privacy. Unlike Frankel (2003), who all but calls Orwell a fraud of a fortune-teller, Deery gives Orwell high marks for his predictions about the future, both in the development of technology and the shifting cultural attitudes of the populace. Deery suggests that there are some elements of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that have been absorbed by the twenty first century, focusing especially on the concept of doublethink:

What is insidious, what Orwell was warning against, is that those who are being thus transformed will not be aware of it. If any resistance exists, it will simply be co-opted by the practice of doublethink...Heed Orwell's warnings before it is too late. Writing forty years later, Pynchon sees the light as even dimmer but, somehow, continues to hope" (123).

Deery's view of Orwell as an extremely relevant author extends to the point of raising the alarm within the article, pleading with the reader to "Heed Orwell's warnings before it is too late" (123). In this way, Deery emphasizes that Orwell's message is not only relevant to readers in 2005, but is perhaps more relevant than ever before.

Several scholars and critics have made throwaway references to Orwell's depiction of women in his novels, but Thomas Horan is the first to do an in-depth analysis of sex and desire as driving forces behind Winston Smith's rebellion in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Writing for *Extrapolation* in its Summer 2007 issue, Horan compares the protagonists of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*, each of which feature a male protagonist being awakened from the brainwashing of the state through a female character. First, Horan clarifies that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not meant as a prediction, arguing that it is really just an example of a cautionary type of political fiction. From there, Horan explains that the protagonists of these dystopian novels, including Winston Smith, are not awakened by any politician or internal epiphany, but rather an encounter with an external figure who entices them to break the rules of the society in pursuit of some form of romance. Horan writes, "The story of D-503, like that of Winston Smith and John the Savage, indicates that the breaking of sexual taboos leads to political upheaval because whatever else they can control, governments--no matter how absolutely pervasive--can never fully regulate the sexual instincts and indiscretions of their citizens" (Horan, 2007, 314). Horan's analysis is unique in that it suggests there are some areas of the mind that totalitarian governments will always struggle to control. Even a single area of free thought like desire, Horan explains, seems to propel these protagonists towards revolutionary thoughts, much like how Winston only decides to actively seek out the Brotherhood after being engaged in a romantic relationship with Julia for a prolonged period of time. Horan goes on to offer each fictional totalitarian government's response to desire and its power to promote revolutionary thought:

Under torture, Winston has clearly abandoned the hope of overthrowing the Party by force, violence, or any political act. But even though he realizes that the humanity will eventually be expunged from his heart, mind, and body, he knows that some spiritual common worth may still remain among the living. In

attempting to recreate the idea of this shared dignity, writers of projected political fiction typically rely on Judeo-Christian religious symbols and pastoral settings. It is this egalitarian, quasi-mystical, universal human nature that sexuality awakens in projected political fictions. Because every person has this spiritual space somewhere deep inside him or herself waiting to be unlocked by desire, these dystopic governments must be committed to the colonization of the sexual instinct right down to the last individual” (314).

This entire article speaks to the motif of desire and the theme of forbidden emotions and desire, but this paragraph in particular argues that what is true of Winston Smith is true of every single person in Oceania. Thus, unless O’Brien and the Thought Police are committed to subjecting every citizen of Oceania to the tortures of Room 101, Horan would argue that the Party can never truly succeed in abolishing rebellious thought. Horan explains Orwell’s position as articulated in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, writing, “As with the other books in this study, Orwell asserts that as much as totalitarian regimes need to control the flow of desire, they can never do so absolutely. Sexual hunger always reemerges as the catalyst for rebellious tendencies” (316). Thus, Horan argues, totalitarianism will never be able to fully take hold without the complete shutdown of human emotions like desire. At the conclusion of his study, Horan offers one final comparison between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and our reality, writing:

The year 1984 has come and gone. With market-based democracies dominating the globe at the start of the third millennium, the reality of political tyranny in the West has seemingly receded. Still, it behooves us to notice that the potential tools of tyranny are multiplying at an unsettling rate. In my office, there are no memory holes to incinerate incriminating or subversive documents, but, increasingly, all of our personal and public information is stored in electronic databases or networks that can be erased or altered with a few keystrokes. Books, which can be hidden or preserved, bear the durable mark of print, and must be found out and destroyed copy by copy are being replaced by more compact yet infinitely more fragile and malleable forms of digital media (319).

With this warning, Horan asserts that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains relevant in the mid-2000s due to its predictions of the growing power of surveillance technology and the progression of other technologies, like information storage, towards a more malleable system. Thus Horan

argues that while the human spirit cannot be completely suppressed, the danger of a radical ideological group like the Party attempting to bring about such a world as the one in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is still very real.

Andrew N. Rubin focuses less on the impact of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the world of the 2000s and more on the ways in which the novel was exploited by anti-communists during the Cold War throughout the twentieth century. Writing for the *Journal of Comparative Poetics* in 2008, Rubin explains his view that Orwell was used as a tool of imperialist British interests, and in particular by Britain's Information and Research Division, or IRD.

The result of Orwell's collaboration with the IRD was that Orwell's works became immensely important to, and even helped to structure, Britain's endeavors abroad, where the IRD recast the interests of the Foreign Office to conform to the dictates of American hegemony and anti communism in particular. Refashioning Britain's relationship to its colonies and former colonies in terms of various communist threats enabled Britain to both reassert its waning imperial power through the discourse of anti-communism, and ensure American support for its authority in countries such as Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Iran, Kenya, Malaya, and Indonesia (Rubin, 2008, 78).

This paragraph contains an example of voice, as Rubin reads *Nineteen Eighty-Four* through the lens of someone analyzing the novel's impact on foreign countries and efforts by the British government to contain communism. Rubin goes on to explain similar impacts in the United States, writing, "The United States, on the other hand, employed Orwell's work as a means of controlling and extending its political, economic, and, to a lesser extent, cultural authority through the very process of the transmission of Orwell's work" (83). Rubin goes to explain that Orwell himself was willing to submit his writings for the use of anti-communist propaganda, in sharp contrast to the arguments of Dionne and Frankel. This forms a crux in the interpretation of Orwell's own beliefs and attitudes about the world. Rubin argues that Orwell was anti-communist in his writings and allowed his writings to be used as an anti-communist weapon for American and British governments seeking to control overseas groups, particularly

those in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Rubin writes, “In 1951, the US Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote that works like *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ‘have been of great value to the Department in its psychological offensive against Communism’ (88). These lines harken back to Warburg (1949), who wrote about the political power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a tool for securing countries in both the West and elsewhere against communism. Even in 2008, nearly two decades after the conclusion of the Cold War, Rubin argues that the novel is inseparable from its political roots, and he argues those roots are firmly tied to anti-communist efforts.

Nina Power offers a perspective on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that focuses simultaneously on the novel’s legacy in Great Britain and the universal impact of the novel on populations across the world. The article was published in *New Statesman* on June 1, 2009, and references several inventions unique to the twenty first century, such as reality television.

Sixty years after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is hard to think of any major institution not open to the epithet "Orwellian". From Channel 4's barely ironic Big Brother to the ever-increasing surveillance measures of a paranoid and cloyingly invasive state, Orwell anticipated a peculiarly British nightmare, in which class and the smell of cabbage just never seem to go away, no matter how post-industrial we try to be (Power, 2009, 49).

This paragraph contains a reference to the narrative theory concept of character through the mention of Big Brother, as well as a reference to authorial intention through the notion of Orwell depicting a “peculiarly British nightmare” (49). Just as Power argues that there are some elements of Orwell’s storyworld that have made their way into the real one, she argues that Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, has taken form in reality, though not the form that Orwell imagined.

We are certainly surrounded by (even trapped in) a language designed to bamboozle, baffle and blindside--a lexicon that serves the same purpose as

Newspeak, namely to make impossible all modes of thought other than that of the reigning ideology. But here it is not so much a question of attenuating language as expanding it. Recent years have seen an astonishing proliferation of coinages, buzzwords and neologisms. Rather than seeing a carefully controlled reduction in the number of officially sanctioned words, we are instead overwhelmed by wave upon wave of faddish expressions and tautologies--a kind of junk syntax in which there is no more reason for a word to be in one part of a phrase than another. (49)

Explicit references are made to the motif of Newspeak within the context of a larger examination of how the theme of language and its use can determine the avenues of thought that a society uses to explore problems. Just as Oceania has limited the ability of the individual to even think traitorous thoughts, so too has modern language encouraged distraction from any and all of society's most significant ills. Power writes:

The more our economic confidence fades and the less we believe that genuine social progress is possible, the more we are encouraged to keep talking at any price, even (or especially) if no one is listening. Anything to block out the worrying idea that not only are we [Britain] a bit-player on the world stage, but we don't even know how to begin to solve some of our most basic social problems: poverty, housing, health and education" (Power 49).

Power's description of the British population resembles that of proles, the people outside the Party who are permitted freedom because the Party does not see them as real people capable of organizing any cohesive resistance, as represented by one of the Party's many slogans, "Proles and Animals are Free." Power describes how changing language, whether inspired by government design or by our own need to push away problems, is steadily bringing the world closer, at least in some respects, to that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The final article for this chapter comes from John Pilger, who authored a piece for the *New Statesman* on January 4, 2010 that primarily concerns the 2000s and draws comparisons between major events and Orwell's work. The body of the work opens with a bold declaration about the Obama administration, as Pilger writes:

Barack Obama is the leader of a contemporary Oceania. In two speeches at the close of the decade, the Nobel Peace Prize-winner affirmed that peace was no longer peace, but rather a permanent war that ‘extends well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan’ to ‘disorderly regions, failed states, diffuse enemies’. He called this ‘global security’ and invited our gratitude. To the people of Afghanistan, which the US has invaded and occupied, he said wittily: ‘We have no interest in occupying your country’ (Pilger, 2010, 16).

The point is blunt, but implicates the American people and many in the world in accepting a new form of orthodoxy. Though the people of Oceania are expected to be in full support of a perpetual state of war and engage in doublethink regarding whether their current enemy had once been an ally, the United States military spent most of the 2000s occupying various countries in the Middle East without a formal declaration of war and with, at least initially, overwhelming public support. Pilger elaborates on the comparison between Oceania and the United States:

In Oceania, truth and lies are indivisible. According to Obama, the American attack on Afghanistan in 2001 was authorised by the United Nations Security Council. There was no UN authority. He said that ‘the world’ supported the invasion in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks. In truth, all but three of 37 countries surveyed by Gallup expressed overwhelming opposition. He said that America invaded Afghanistan ‘only after the Taliban refused to turn over Osama Bin Laden’. In 2001, the Taliban tried three times to hand over Bin Laden for trial, Pakistan's military regime reported, and they were ignored (16).

This paragraph contains allusions to the destruction and editing of history to suit the Party’s needs. The theme of editing history, Pilger argues, is brought up every time a politician offers spin on an issue, lying about the past in order to promote some future objective. The idea that the American people are willing to tolerate such maneuverings and revisions, and has even come to expect them, is a sign of how the population has become conditioned for the acceptance of lies and the promotion of doublethink according to Pilger.

At the conclusion of this chapter we may confidently say that our understanding of Orwell has changed since 1949 and the way in which we use *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has changed

to a similar degree. In this chapter authors have not interpreted or used *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an attack on America's enemies, but as a tool for critiquing the United States, Great Britain, and Western democracies in danger of embracing totalitarian policies or trends. There is also a renewed emphasis on attempting to understand the human condition, or spirit, through *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as Horan (2007) and Deery (2005) do. More authors use *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a tool for understanding totalitarianism in general rather than any one country or ideology. Howard (2000) and Frankel (2003) both interpret Orwell as a man attempting to write about a broad truth or understanding about something in our society, perhaps in our very DNA. This shared understanding about the nature of freedom, how it is something that must be fought for every day, blends with Posner's arguments about Orwell's focus on the logic of totalitarianism. Taken together, Deery's writings about the perpetual attack by totalitarian forces on a free, democratic society and Horan's writings about how our shared human spirit will be able to resist Big Brother generate, but do not answer, the question of whether we might never cease fighting totalitarianism in one of its many forms. If that were the case, then *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance might go on just as long as that fight against totalitarianism.

Chapter VII: Who Controls the Present? Orwell in the 2010s and Present Day

This final chapter of the critical history section of this thesis project will study the reaction to major events in the 2010s, from 2010 to 2018, including the Edward Snowden leaks that revealed a vast domestic surveillance operation within the United States, the Arab Spring revolutions, and the election of President Donald Trump. The first article that I will examine for this chapter concerns the former issue, as Ian Crouch bluntly asks in his June 2013 piece for *The New Yorker*, “So Are We Living in 1984?”

Crouch begins his piece with an allusion to the connection between themes like surveillance and personal freedom and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, writing, “Since last week’s revelations of the scope of the United States’ domestic surveillance operations, George Orwell’s “Nineteen Eighty-Four,” which was published sixty-four years ago this past Saturday, has enjoyed a massive spike in sales” (Crouch, 2013). Crouch takes that connection and draws direct comparisons between Winston Smith, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Edward Snowden, the National Security Administration contractor who in 2013 exposed a vast domestic surveillance operation being conducted by the United States government. Crouch writes:

Thinking about Edward Snowden on Sunday, it wasn’t much of a leap to imagine him and his colleagues working in some version of Oceania’s Ministry of Truth, gliding through banal office gigs whose veneer of nine-to-five technocratic normality helped to hide their more sinister reality. Holed up in a hotel room in Hong Kong, Snowden seemed, if you squinted a bit, like Orwell’s protagonist-hero Winston, had he been a bit more ambitious, and considerably more lucky, and managed to defect from Oceania to its enemy Eastasia and sneak a message to the telescreens back home (Crouch)

This paragraph contains references to narrative theory concepts like character and storyworld, as Crouch draws explicit comparisons between Snowden and Winston Smith, as well as comparing the real world to Orwell’s storyworld. Crouch goes on to highlight concepts like antagonist and motifs like doublespeak in reference to the Obama administration:

Words...are manipulated by the three branches of government to make what might seem illegal legal—leading to something of a parallel language that rivals Orwell’s Newspeak for its soulless, obfuscated meaning. And, indeed, there has been a hint of something vaguely Big Brotherian in Obama’s response to the public outcry about domestic surveillance, as though, by his calm manner and

clear intelligence, the President is asking the people to merely trust his beneficence—which many of us might be inclined to do. Even Winston, after all, learns to love Big Brother in the end (Couch, 2013).

Like Pilger (2010), Crouch notes that President Barack Obama's actions could be compared to those of the Party's leadership, symbolized by Big Brother, including the demand that the population place their faith in the leadership unquestioningly. Crouch echoes Tom Wicker (1987) in his analysis of Colonel Oliver North in the aftermath of the Iran-Contra scandal, stating that government officials have convinced themselves of whatever they need to in order to make their actions legal, and are attempting to get the general population to accept that reasoning as well. Despite these concerns, however, Crouch concludes that while a dystopian, authoritarian regime of the kind that Orwell describes is still possible, it is not yet a reality that modern Americans face:

Still, all but the most outré of political thinkers would have to grant that we are far from the crushing, violent, single-party totalitarian regime of Orwell's imagination. In one of the more chilling passages in the novel, the evil Party hack O'Brien explains, 'We are not interested in those stupid crimes that you have committed. The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about.' The N.S.A., on the other hand, is primarily interested in overt acts, of terrorism and its threats, and presumably—or at least hopefully—less so in the thoughts themselves. The war on terror has been compared to Orwell's critique of 'the special mental atmosphere' created by perpetual war, but recently Obama made gestures toward bringing it to an end. That is not to say, of course, that we should not be troubled by the government's means, nor is it clear that the ends will remain as generally benevolent as they seem today. But Orwell's central image of unrestrained political power, a 'boot stamping on a human face—forever,' is not the reality of our age' (Crouch, 2013).

Present in this paragraph are references to recurring themes from the commentaries surveyed in this thesis, such as an all-powerful government and its interest in controlling the thoughts and actions of its citizenry, as well as authorial intention. Crouch ultimately does put his faith back in the government, however, namely in his belief that the Obama administration would bring "perpetual war" to an end and that even the vast spying operation Snowden reveals is "generally

benevolent” (Crouch, 2013). These ideas reflect a cautious faith in the government and the belief, at least in this piece, that the foundations of democracy separating our world from that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are durable and intact.

If Crouch waffles on the question of whether we are living in the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Lewis Beale minces no words answering that question in his opinion piece, “We’re Living ‘1984’ Today,” which was published on CNN’s website on August 3, 2013. When Winston is imprisoned in the basement of the Ministry of Love, he encounters his former neighbor, Parsons, who is so brainwashed by the Party that he is certain that he is guilty despite no evidence being presented against him. Beale alludes to this scene.

There are those who say that if you don't have anything to hide, you have nothing to be afraid of. But the fact is, when a government agency can monitor everyone's phone calls, we have all become suspects. This is one of the most frightening aspects of our modern society. And even more frightening is the fact that we have gone so far down the road, there is probably no turning back (Beale, 2013).

Not only are we living in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, according to Beale’s headline, but there is seemingly no going back. The surveillance apparatus revealed by Snowden is seemingly all-encompassing, but Americans viewed the issue as insufficiently significant to vote exclusively based on privacy rights. The notion that the innocent have nothing to fear harkens back to the comments of House Minister Maclean, who declared, as quoted in Coll’s 1994 piece, “Law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear... Only those engaged in wrongdoing should be fearful” (Coll, 1994, A01). This attitude reflects a seemingly limitless faith in the government, beyond even that expressed by Crouch. This faith approaches that of Parsons, who is so certain in the rightness of the Party that he concludes he himself must be guilty simply because he has been accused and arrested. Beale argues further that even the limited freedom of the Proles is beyond Americans’ grasp in 2013, and true privacy is unobtainable except by completely removing

yourself from modern society. He writes, “Unless you spend your life in a wilderness cabin, totally off the grid, there is simply no way the government won’t have information about you stored away somewhere. What this means, unfortunately, is that we are all Winston Smith. And Big Brother is the modern surveillance state” (Beale, 2013). The reference to Winston Smith is an example of the narrative theory concept of character, while the reference to Big Brother is an example of antagonist. The implications of this explanation are frightening, because Winston, from the moment he scrawls an anti-Big Brother creed in his journal, believes himself to be doomed, and that it is only a matter of time before the Thought Police apprehend him for his thoughtcrime. If the US population is Winston Smith, then we all are necessarily doomed, and it is only a matter of time before we are apprehended and re-educated. Curiously, Beale compares all of us to Winston while Crouch compared Snowden, who revealed the extent of the state spying operation, to the protagonist. For Beale, the entire population embodies Winston as a prisoner of Big Brother and a cog in his machine that operates out of fear. For Crouch, Snowden is the only man to step out of line and speak against the state surveillance operation. Of secondary importance in the quote is Beale’s reference to Big Brother as “the modern surveillance state” (Beale, 2013). No longer is Big Brother a stand-in for Stalin or even a representation of totalitarianism, but rather a representation of a genetic contemporary surveillance state that, like Big Brother, is always watching.

Like Rubin (2008), John Newsinger examines the legacy of George Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s role in twentieth century politics. Unlike Rubin, however, Newsinger focuses on the reasons that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has remained relevant and views Orwell’s novel as a driving force rather than a tool of Western governments. One early line from Newsinger’s October 2013 article in the *Journal of Contemporary History* reads, “Orwell could not be

honestly reduced to the status of a Cold War foot-soldier” (Newsinger, 2013, 892). This forms a crux, or disagreement, in interpretation with Rubin, who argued in 2008 that Orwell gained prominence in part because he was promoted by American and British propaganda outfits, and with Sillen (1949), who argued in 1949 that Orwell was a tool of Wall Street capitalist interests. Newsinger explains Orwell’s lasting appeal, arguing that it is because Orwell was independent of both the United States and Soviet Union that he is beloved and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is still acclaimed. He writes of the novel’s impact in the 1970s, “The political context was also important: the American War in Vietnam and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Orwell’s writings seemed to critically address both of these episodes, or at least provide the intellectual resources for an independent stance, critical of both Washington and Moscow” (892). This speaks to the political logic of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, how it seems to address issues that Orwell could not have foreseen when he wrote the novel in the late 1940s. Like Letemendia (1992), Dionne (1990), and Strub (2004), Newsinger argues that Orwell is not attacking socialism, but rather those that pervert socialism’s goals for their own ends.

This is not to say that Orwell became a 'Stalinophobe', sacrificing all other loyalties, beliefs and commitments on the altar of hostility to the Soviet Union. He was never to abandon the Left and go over to Conservatism as many others did. Instead, his critique of Stalinism remained situated within the parameters set by anarchist and Trotskyist accounts of the Russian Revolution and of the Soviet Union. *Animal Farm*, for example, is not a rejection of revolution, but the betrayal of the revolution (893).

This paragraph contains examples of authorial intention and an analysis of the themes of *Animal Farm*, which relate back to Orwell’s own beliefs. Newsinger directly contradicts Rubin’s argument, specifically referencing how both the CIA and British IRD used Orwell’s work:

[Orwell’s goal] in writing both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* had always been, primarily, with combating the influence of Stalinism over the Left. In the hands of the CIA and the IRD, his books became a weapon to be used not just against the Soviet Union and the Communists, but against the Left itself,

indeed against the very beliefs that Orwell had himself championed and had hoped to rescue from Stalinism. In this sense, his work was certainly 'subverted.'" (893).

This paragraph includes further notes about authorial intention, as well as a refutation of Rubin's arguments. Though Orwell may have been subverted for the purposes of Western propaganda, Newsinger argues, his own beliefs were still concentrated more on warning against the threat of totalitarianism rather than the threat of communism. Thus Newsinger argues that there was a greater purpose to the novel than only fighting against one ideology, dovetailing with Posner's argument for Orwell as a teacher of how totalitarian logic works.

Multiple authors discussed in this thesis project have analyzed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as it compares to other dystopian novels. Josephine Livingstone joins Farney and Seib (1999) as well as Horan (2007) through her article "Grave New World: Why 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' is not the book we need in the Trump era," which was published in the *New Republic* on January 26, 2017 less than a week after Donald Trump's inauguration as President of the United States following the 2016 election. Livingstone opens her analysis by recounting her own experience with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Turning the book and thumbing its ragged spine, what do I remember? The revelation that Winston has been recorded in his subversion with Julia, yes. The catchwords: Newspeak, Ingsoc, Thought Police, Ministry of Love. A roiling feeling of injustice. But the only part engraved on my memory is the torture, specifically Winston's vision of his own spine snapping as his body is stretched and the spinal fluid dripping out. I remember that part because I was a child, and it frightened me (Livingstone, 2017).

The most notable excerpt from this paragraph concerns the torture scenes late in the novel. Symons called those scenes "comic" and "crude" in 1949, while Rahv called it "the ultimate horror," and Mann called it "unconvincing" in the same year. For Livingstone, however, it is simply frightening. The bodily horror of Winston being physically abused in intrusive and destructive

ways is the focus of the paragraph, not the effect it has on his psyche or any relation to modern politics. Livingstone then highlights similarities and differences between the world of Oceania and the world of Donald Trump's America.

Like the authorities in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Trump convinces his followers to forget their prior enmities and alliances. Russia has always been our friend, not our enemy. Also, Trump's obsession with the Mexican-U.S. border echoes Big Brother's policy of perpetual war. Lying outright to the citizenry is, yes, 'Orwellian.' But there is no Amazon.com in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, because it is not a novel about globalized capital. Not even slightly! *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does not pastiche a world ravaged by capitalism and ruled by celebrities—the kind of world that could lead to the election of someone like Trump. Instead, it depicts suffering inflicted by state control masquerading as socialism. Remember, the banned book that opens Winston's mind is called *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchal Collectivism*. That book, mixed with Winston's own memories, supposedly reveal the true history of his world. (Livingstone, 2017).

Livingstone directly references both the theme of socialism and the storyworld of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. She directly compares Donald Trump and Big Brother through their perpetual direction of the population against foreign and often unseen enemies. However, Livingstone also argues that the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could not result in a leader like Trump because there is little concept of self-worth, let alone celebrity, in Oceania. Livingstone broadens her analysis to comment on Orwell's intentions and beliefs in writing the novel in the 1940s, but then argues that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is no longer a useful guide for understanding politics in the twenty-first century.

Nineteen Eighty-Four came out in 1949. Orwell commented on the world as it was. He wrote out his fears of nuclear war, and the danger of dictatorship in states where much has been destroyed. He pointed to the problems inherent in superstates and the fragile alliances that govern world politics. Mostly, he wrote in cipher about Russia. The moustachioed Big Brother looks like Stalin, the author of *Oligarchal Collectivism*, Trotsky. Oceania's changing allegiances with other superstates directly comments on Russia's new relationship with Germany after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, an agreement of non-aggression that in turn was abandoned when Germany launched a war against the USSR in 1941. The Thought Police are based on the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), which actually used riled-up rats in their interrogations (Livingstone, 2017).

Thus Livingstone argues that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is no longer applicable to the modern world. In some ways she answers the question posed by Jonas (1989) when he asked whether each new generation would need to write their own version of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in order for the novel to retain its relevance over time. Livingstone goes on to argue that Huxley's *Brave New World* is more applicable to modern society, in large part due to the same concerns raised by Horan (2007), namely that society will be too conditioned by cultural conflicts and obsessions to organize any meaningful resistance to an authoritarian regime. In her conclusion, Livingstone restates her view that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is no longer the text through which those seeking to understand authoritarian regimes can gain insight. This idea runs counter to the theory proposed by Posner in the introduction that *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s popularity and influence are not directly tied to how similar the novel's world is to the real world but rather to an intimate understanding, or logic, of how totalitarian regimes operate. Though Livingstone's article is not the first to suggest that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has lost its relevance, it is the first in the twenty-first century to argue that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* should be left in the twentieth century.

If Livingstone is opposed to using *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a lens for understanding the world, Ron Charles is eager to explain why readers still view the novel as relevant. The headline of his January 2017 article in the *Washington Post*, "Alternative Facts and Orwellian Fiction: A Lot of People are Buying Both," suggests that that the Trump administration and Orwell go hand in hand. Charles begins his article with an allusion to Newspeak, writing, "Almost 70 years after '1984' was first published, Orwell suddenly feels doubleplus relevant. Considering the New Trumpmatics, it's impossible not to remember Winston Smith, the hero of '1984,' who predicted, 'In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it'" (Charles, 2017, C1). Charles draws direct comparisons between the motif of

Newspeak and the use of terms like “alternative facts,” a term used by Trump Administration Advisor Kellyanne Conway in January of 2017 to describe an exaggeration by then-Press Secretary Sean Spicer. Charles contradicts Livingstone’s argument that Orwell was writing exclusively with the world at the time of the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in mind, countering that Orwell was not writing with any single ideology in mind.

Orwell wasn't writing about a particular party. Although he was inspired by full-scale abuses in the Soviet Union, Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, he was also borrowing from the methods of communication control he had witnessed in Britain. He was describing, in other words, the basic function of power, the tendency of leaders and governments – ‘from Conservatives to Anarchists’ - to cement their authority by controlling our language and by extension our thought and behavior (C1).

With this paragraph Charles establishes himself in the same camp as Simms (1974) and Maddocks (1983). These are the authors who make the case for Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a novel with utility beyond 1949. In addition, the quotes about Orwell writing about the “basic functions of power” parallel Posner’s own arguments about Orwell writing not about the details of how a totalitarian regime operates but the attributes it has and the influence it uses against its people (C1). Charles concludes his piece with a reminder that the United States is not yet Oceania, again using Newspeak as the lens for examining the text’s applicability to the modern United States.

Fortunately, we're not living under the dystopian terror that Orwell described in "1984." Our new leader is not the manufactured icon of a supreme state. He's a supernova of insecurities, tweeting out his insults and threats to increasingly perplexed citizens who still - for the moment, at least - enjoy the right to object in whatever language they choose (Charles C1).

Like Livingstone (2017), Charles compares Big Brother to Donald Trump only to find the latter lacking in the qualities that made Big Brother the figure that inspired fear in Winston Smith. Whereas Big Brother is an omniscient figure of authority, Trump, according to Charles, is a

supremely human figure with obvious flaws. More importantly, the people still have the means, including the language, to publicly resist that figure of authority without fear of reprisal.

In one of the final articles to be examined for this thesis, Tim Conley constructs a miniaturized version of this thesis project, or at least posits some of the ideas described by other authors and scholars surveyed here in his February 2017 article titled, “Fact or Fiction: Are We Living in an Orwellian Era?” The article was published in the *Globe and Mail*, a Canadian newspaper. Conley begins his piece with a brief overview of the novel’s plot and major motifs and themes, then explains that the novel’s popularity and continued relevance in the twenty-first century are not tied directly to any one aspect of the novel, but rather comes from disagreements about how the novel and those motifs ought to be interpreted.

If we want to understand why so many people seem to feel that Orwell's novel matters amid the rise of an authoritarian leadership deeply opposed to differing points of view, the first thing to understand is this division: Everybody understands that Big Brother is bad, but there is disagreement as to exactly who and what he is. Mr. Trump's election is itself the result of this disagreement. To Trump supporters, Washington's career politicians and bureaucrats are an oppressive menace to be overthrown. To others, Mr. Trump's rapid-fire executive orders and policy-as-tweet approach are alarmingly in tune with Big Brother's credo, ‘ignorance is strength.’ (Conley, 2017)

This approach to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests that the disagreement over the interpretation of the novel’s themes, characters, and motifs are a crucial part of why the novel has been so influential since its publication. Though Conley limits his analysis to the twenty-first century, we have seen throughout this thesis a history of disagreement over the interpretation of the novel, including Orwell’s intentions in writing it. This argument may also contradict Posner’s argument that the key appeal of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is its understanding and depiction of the logic of totalitarianism. If different groups from the same generation focus on different aspects of the novel to support their views, then they might be following different lines of political logic.

From a different angle, however, one may argue that those disparate groups are viewing the same logic of totalitarianism but emphasizing or de-emphasizing various aspects of it. There may be no way to get a comprehensive answer to that question, but Conley's argument nonetheless ties into Posner's in that it argues the reception and influence of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are not tied to any concrete predictions but rather an understanding of how totalitarianism works and how it can manifest itself in myriad ways. Conley goes on to attempt to explain why Orwell and other dystopian writers are experiencing what he sees as a renewed popularity in the twenty-first century and why fiction as a genre is uniquely equipped to handle those questions about totalitarianism, freedom, and knowledge.

The renewed popularity of dystopian novels such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (from which Orwell took much of his own novel), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is interesting not because any one of these books represents a comprehensive guide to surviving (let alone overturning) the Trump presidency and all of the abuses of power that it will doubtlessly license. It's interesting precisely because at the moment in history when people feel that the simple right to determine facts and reality is under attack, they are turning to fiction...Fiction shows us, as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does, the nature of freedom. The exploration of "what if," of alternative possibilities and alternative points of view (rather than "alternative facts"), affirms that truth is elusive, perhaps sometimes even indeterminate, but worth seeking out and not to be taken on trust. There's a striking paradox at the heart of Orwell's novel: reading and writing are means of discovering truths and ourselves, but they can be used against us, as Winston's diary is. Goldstein's book is a trap. Pornographic novels are mechanically churned out to provide distraction for the workers: fiction as escapism. Yet Orwell sounds this cautionary note in a novel. (Conley, 2017)

Though other pieces of his article may be used against or in conjunction with Posner's hypothesis, in this paragraph Conley aligns himself firmly with Posner. When he writes, "At the moment in history when people feel that the simple right to determine facts and reality is under attack, they are turning to fiction...Fiction shows us, as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does, the nature of freedom," Conley is speaking of the logic of totalitarianism and the force that must necessarily

stand on the opposite end of the spectrum, the logic of freedom or, as Conley describes it, “the nature of freedom” (Conley, 2017). Novels like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provide insights into the world as it could be, not necessarily how it was or shall be. The fact that the threat of totalitarian domination has persisted in some form for the entirety of the novel’s lifespan, whether from the Soviet Union, private corporations, or western governments, only enhances the interest in the novel and accounts for why its popularity has ebbed and flowed without ever leaving the public consciousness entirely. This leads to the question of why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has taken the lead among these novels as references for studying the logic of totalitarianism, a question that is not directly answered in any of the works studied for this thesis but one that I will attempt to answer in my own analysis at the conclusion of this thesis. What Conley does explain, however, is the reason why fiction like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the foremost resource for study among both scholars and the general public, that reason being that novels offer parallels to our own reality and suggest that threats plainly visible in the real world may lead to a future like the one presented only in fiction.

James Topham attempts to present a straightforward review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in his article titled simply “Review of 1984,” published in *Thoughtco* in August of 2017. Yet even the act of writing this article speaks volumes about the condition of the United States in 2017, not to mention the implicit references and allusions that Topham makes. Early in the article Topham argues two points. First, he argues that socialism is critical to the understanding of the novel, which forms a crux with authors like Mann in 1949 and Simms in 1974, both of whom argued that socialism was only one head of an authoritarian beast that could take any ideological form. He writes:

1984 is a horror story and a political treatise. The socialism at the novel’s core is integral to Orwell’s meaning. Orwell warns against the dangers of authoritarianism. The author’s dystopian state offers a devastating view of a society where one is unable to say what one thinks. The population must slavishly believe in a single party and a single ideology, where language is degraded to such a state that it only serves the government. (Topham, 2017).

Though Topham does not go into detail on the point, his reference to Newspeak is useful as a marker to indicate that the perversion of language for the Party's own ends sits in the forefront of Topham's mind. In the quoted paragraph Topham argues simultaneously that socialism is critical to understanding Orwell's intentions in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and that Orwell wrote a warning against a greater evil than just socialism: authoritarianism. This is a blend of views, mixing together authors like Simms who argued in 1974 that authoritarianism, not socialism, is the main subject of Orwell's novel, and those early writers in the 1940s and 50s like Warburg, Symons, and Bell, who argued that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was primarily an attack on the Soviet Union and socialism without significant consideration of the idea that the book was an assault on totalitarianism and authoritarianism rather than any single manifestation of those things. Topham seeks to recognize the origins of Orwell's work while still adapting it to modern times, thereby leaving the door open for the question of whether *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is still useful for understanding the modern world.

In some respects, the real world is better primed to resemble Oceania than it has been at any point in the past. Yet it still resembles something very different. Crouch (2013) explains that the surveillance system used by National Security Administration is at least as effective as the telescreen system employed by the thought police of Oceania while at the same time concluding that Orwell's fantasy is not our reality. Charles (2017) states that alternative facts are a new manifestation of newspeak and Conley (2017) argues that the literary community and the reading public at large is turning to dystopian literature like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* precisely because they feel that democratic and free institutions are under attack. At a minimum, these articles establish that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is as relevant as ever. Beyond that, authors are increasingly searching for the reason that the novel remains a staple of our cultural and a touchstone for our

understanding of politics and dystopia. Posner's hypothesis is challenged, argued around, and endorsed by some, but remains the most compelling argument for *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* continued influence and power over readers.

Conclusion: Evaluating the Reasons for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s Influence and its Future

From the beginning readers and authors understood Orwell as a man spearheading a strong political message. Warburg (1949) said that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was sure to be a boon to the conservative party, while others saw similarities between real-world institutions and the imagined police forces and agencies of Orwell's fantasy. In each generation since the novel's publication we have seen authors express sentiments similar to Rahv's (1949), namely that the novel has a "powerful engagement with the present" (Meyers, 2011, 270). This idea is echoed in each and every chapter of this thesis project. Even as the details of the circumstances in which Orwell authored *Nineteen Eighty-Four* fade, authors continue to see his work as extremely relevant to understanding contemporary events and modern politics. The line that Conley wrote about the Trump administration and the American public's understanding of totalitarianism could easily be applied to any and every era since the novel's publication.

Precisely at the moment in history when people feel that the simple right to determine facts and reality is under attack, they turn to fiction...Fiction shows us, as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does, the nature of freedom...that truth is elusive, perhaps sometimes even indeterminate, but worth seeking out and not to be taken on trust. (Conley 2017)

The significance of this understanding is directly related to the longstanding response to the novel's political logic. Whenever the threat of totalitarianism emerges, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reemerges as a tool for focusing discussion and a lens for understanding current events. Similar arguments are made in 1949 and 2017 about surveillance technology, freedom, privacy, and totalitarianism. The subjects and details may change, but the spirit of the arguments are essentially identical across *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s lifespan. Authors, scholars, and the broader literary public have turned to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* time and time again throughout recent history. They disagree, squabble, and interpret the novel in sometimes wildly different ways, but

readers from schoolchildren to scholars always return to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a common foundation for understanding a certain brand of politics.

At the outset of this thesis project I expected the interpretations of Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to change over time and they did so. What was surprising was how those interpretations changed. In 1949 writers concentrated heavily on Orwell and his intentions in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Read (1949) called Orwell a humanitarian, while Walsh (1949) criticized Orwell's novel based on Orwell's political beliefs and background. Even in the 1960s "Orwell" was synonymous with his novel, as in the case of the 1960 *Chicago Tribune* editorial "Right Out of Orwell." Sampson (1973) describes how Orwell was a prophet, Simms (1974) ascribed choices like the setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to Orwell's belief that the British people needed a wake-up call to the dangers of totalitarianism. By the late 1970s, however, we begin to see some writers moving away from Orwell and begin evaluating *Nineteen Eighty-Four* independently of its author. Silk (1979) asks "How close are we to 1984?" Clymer (1983) only references Orwell at the end of his article about surveillance technology and privacy rights. Coll (1994) focuses almost exclusively on the technology of Orwell's world with little interest in the author's personal history or style, while Letemendia (1992) and Howard (2000) both focus almost exclusively on Orwell's writing style and what it says about his beliefs and intentions. Only in the 2000s and 2010s do most writers begin moving away from analyzing Orwell and instead focus on the novel without analyzing its author. Deery (2005) analyzes Oceania's institutions and compares them to the United States's, Pilger (2010) does something similar with only tangential mentions of Orwell, and Crouch (2013), in sharp contrast to the 1960 *Chicago Tribune* editorial title, asks, "Are we living in 1984?" The steady de-emphasis of George Orwell is a subtle but noticeable trend since the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There is a possible

explanation for this. Orwell the man can be tied directly to a time period, a single period in history that existed with its own set of issues. It makes sense that writers in 1949 would focus on Orwell, as they shared the time period that Orwell wrote the novel in. Over time, however, emphasizing Orwell also means limiting the ability of writers to explore contemporary events in the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell the human being passed away in 1950, but the influence of his story is still felt today. *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* endurance relies on a plot, motifs, and themes that transcend a single geopolitical situation. Characters like Winston Smith and Big Brother, themes like surveillance, and motifs like doublethink can all be analyzed or applied to events across the twentieth and twenty first centuries, but Orwell the man cannot escape his own lifespan, hence why writers focus on Orwell less and less as they grow further from his world.

One of the most infamous and memorable characters from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Big Brother, the supposedly omniscient but perpetually absent leader of Oceania. There is no hard proof within the novel that Big Brother is real, and that opens up considerable room for interpretation on the part of writers and scholars across the novel's lifespan. Authors like Warburg (1949) sees Big Brother as a literal representation of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator at the time of the novel's publication. However, Von Hoffman (1974) sees Big Brother as a representation of a ruthlessly efficient authoritarian state in his comparison of Richard Nixon and Big Brother. Pilger (2010) directly compares President Barack Obama and Big Brother while Beale (2013) states outright that Big Brother is the surveillance state. These interpretations are some of the most transparent markers indicating shifting issues and fears among writers and scholars. When the greatest threat to Western democracy was military invasion by the Soviet Union, writers saw Big Brother as Joseph Stalin, the personification of the Red Menace. Over time the threat from the Soviet Union was overshadowed by the threat posed by corruption in the

government, then the threat of the government surveilling its citizenry and observing their most intimate thoughts and actions. The interpretations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are tied to real world events, hence why the interpretations of Big Brother change over time in response to new events and changing circumstances. For these writers, Big Brother is the manifestation of the most present danger at the time of writing. In that way, Big Brother will always be watching.

One crux in interpretation that was surprisingly scarce in the reviews collected for this thesis project was the view of Orwell's depiction of Winston Smith's torture in the basement of Oceania's Ministry of Love. Symons (1949) derides the scene, calling it "comic" (257). Rahv (1949) describes it as one of the most significant scenes in the novel because it shines a light on the techniques that Soviet interrogators use in the real world to force political prisoners to confess to crimes they never committed. In sharp contrast to Symons, Livingstone (2017) describes the scene as one of the most memorable and horrifying of the entire novel. The relationship between writers and the torture scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, I believe, related to the familiarity of the writers with real-world incidents of torture. Symons was a fiction writer while Rahv sought to explain the grim atrocities of the Soviet secret police and intelligence agencies. Finally, Livingstone lived through the revelations of the mistreatment and torture that took place at Guantanamo Bay, a United States prison off the coast of Cuba. The more aware the writer is of real-world incidents of organized torture, the more revolting the torture scene in the Ministry of Love.

Another key question that must be answered in this conclusion is what Orwell meant to each generation. To the writers of 1949 and the 1950s, Orwell was considered by most to be a bulwark against communism and the threat of the Soviet Union. Once again we may return to Warburg's (1949) quote about the novel's political utility, that it was "worth a cool million votes

to the conservative party” (Meyers, 2011, 248). In the 1960s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* represented the growing threat of new technologies, as evidenced by Culligan (1964) and Lewis (1964). The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s all saw *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stand for various forms of government corruption, overreach, and abuses of power. In the 1970s that was exemplified by Von Hoffman (1974) and Watergate, in the 80s by Tom Wicker (1987) and the Iran/Contra scandal, and in the 1990s by the Monica Lewinsky scandal chronicled and analyzed by Farney and Seib (1999). The 2000s saw *Nineteen Eighty-Four* be analyzed as a work that reflected the history of the twentieth century and then as a novel that contained themes that could be broadly applied to the twenty first century, as evidenced by Deery (2005). Finally, the 2010s saw articles like Crouch’s (2013) and Livingstone’s (2017) describe a reemphasis on surveillance and government powers over the monitoring of the population and the implications of that power and what it means to a population like the United States that faces the risk of totalitarianism on the part of an otherwise-democratic government.

In each decade Orwell and his novel have meant something different, a reflection of real-world events and issues that change year to year. The articles analyzed for this thesis are a reflection on both how writers and scholars interpreted Orwell and a reflection of the conditions in which they wrote and how *Nineteen Eighty-Four* influenced their understanding of those conditions. Orwell was not, ultimately, a prophet, but there is some value in Feeney’s (1983) interpretation of Orwell, in that Orwell sought to describe a possible future that could take place at any time, thus averting such a future from taking place by warning the population ahead of time. Just as totalitarianism is a shapeshifting form that can emerge from many ideologies, the interpretations and analyses of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have changed in order to better understand and defend against those threats.

That brings us to the final, critical note that this entire thesis has built towards. How should we evaluate Richard Posner's hypothesis? Restating it here may provide clarity: "The political significance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*...is to depict with riveting clarity the *logic* of totalitarianism--not its practice or prospects, but the carrying of its inner logic to extremes that are sometimes almost comic, though darkly so" (Posner, 1999, 23). After reviewing articles and publications from the last sixty eight years, I conclude that Posner's explanation offers the best answer to the question of why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has remained relevant for such an unusually long lifespan. Conley's (2017) words regarding the "nature of freedom" echo similar sentiments expressed by Posner himself.

Orwell's satire of communism has lost its urgency, but his reminder of the political importance of truth...remains both philosophically interesting and timely in an era in which textbooks are being frantically rewritten to comply with the dictates of political correctness. That truth shall make us free, and that ignorance is weakness (to reverse one of the slogans of the Party), have rarely been as powerfully shown as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (34)

Posner originally wrote those words in 1999 and they only seem truer in 2018. The threat of communism has been all but eradicated save for isolated states like Cuba and North Korea, but *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* unique presentation of totalitarianism and freedom keep it in political and literary discussions of contemporary events. If we take Posner's hypothesis as correct, that our collective fascination with Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stems from the novel's depiction of the logic of totalitarianism, we must then ask if there will come a time in the future when Orwell's final novel will be superseded by another piece of art. Or, one might ask, will *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ever be superseded?

The *New York Times* editorial (1984) analyzed in chapter four wondered if there might come a time when a "new world order" would form and that such a world would no longer need *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a touchstone for political and cultural understanding (*New York Times*,

1984, A16). I do not believe that such a world order will ever come to be. Those factors that concerned authors from each decade, including surveillance technology, government overreach, corruption, foreign enemies, and radical domestic political groups all still exist today. In some cases those threats have undeniably grown, such as surveillance technology. Deery (2005) points out that some aspect of our society and our collective consciousness is being attacked by totalitarian elements every day, writing, “Every day public opinion is the target of rewritten history, official amnesia and outright lying, all of which is benevolently termed ‘spin,’ as if it were no more harmful than a ride on a merry-go-round” (Deery, 2005, 122). The threat of totalitarianism has existed since long before Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but such fears have seemingly more grown more acute and targeted in the sixty nine years since the novel’s publication. The threat of lies, propaganda, torture, and overall fear has ebbed and flowed over time but has never truly left the public realm. If anything, the tools that can be used to execute Posner’s totalitarian logic are only becoming more sophisticated and effective. Thus if the threat from totalitarianism has not ceased and shows no signs of ceasing in the future, and if Steinberg (1999) is correct when he writes, “The need to thwart Orwell’s prognostication will stay with humanity so that 2+2 never equals 5,” then we may conclude that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may never lose its relevance and influence (Steinberg, 1999, 18).

Though Orwell may eventually fade from history, there will always be a need for a novel like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, because neither the threat of totalitarianism nor the urge to combat it will ever leave humanity. Only at a time when we have purged the threat of totalitarianism from the world or have been so completely subjugated as to know no other way of life will *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or some future novel better equipped to address issues and themes that we cannot imagine now, lose its influence and purpose. As long as we exist somewhere in between absolute

totalitarianism and absolute freedom, readers, scholars, and the wider book-reading community will always have need for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. From the date of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s publication, writers, scholars, and critics have sought to understand Orwell's purpose in writing it, and I am now prepared to take Orwell at his word when he states, as relayed by Howard, that his goal was to "push the world in a certain direction." (Quoted in Howard, 2000, 10) Orwell wrote a novel that transcended his own time period and the issues of his day by writing with the goal of reaching a wide audience, including those audiences that he would not live to see. I have now learned that *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s appeal transcends time period, ideology, and even the issues of the day. For decades and possibly centuries to come, readers will face the threat of totalitarianism, perhaps in ways they cannot fully articulate. When they do, history tells us that they will turn back, time and again, to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

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