



## **Revisiting 1984: Satire and Retrofuturism**

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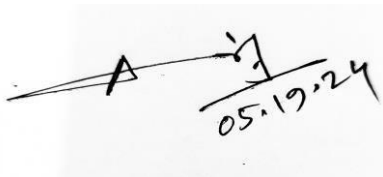
This thesis is submitted to the Department of English, Daffodil International University, during the Spring 2024 for the partial fulfillment of Bachelor of Art (Hons) in English.

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## Approval

I am requesting approval of the proposed thesis report titled " Revisiting 1984: Satire and Retrofuturism". The objectives outlined in the proposal are clear and promising, indicating a thorough exploration of satire and retrofuturism in 1984.

The objectives of the thesis are to understand the satire in a dystopian world that points the human flaws, tragedies and sufferings. Uniquely this thesis also delves into the retrofuturism aesthetic of the novel which builds the world envisioned by George Orwell.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Islam Laskar', with a date '05.19.24' written below it. The signature is written over a horizontal line.

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Ariful Islam Laskar

Asst. Professor

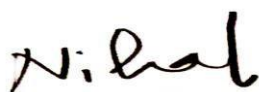
Department of English

## Declaration

I, Kazi Noor-E-Nihal, hereby declare that I have read the guidelines for project paper submission of the Department of English, Daffodil International University and that I accept all the mentioned terms and conditions. My thesis titled “Revisiting 1984: Satire and Retrofuturism” is my contribution to the field of exploring the depiction of a politically indulged satirical world with fictionalized futuristic technologies in a literary work. While completing this study, I consulted with necessary and relevant sources, which are properly cited in the paper. I have not copied anything in my work and cited works that I have collected.

This project is completed during the Spring 2024 semester under the supervision of MD. Ariful Islam Laskar, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Daffodil International University, as requirements for the partial fulfillment of my Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in English. This paper or any part of it has yet not been submitted anywhere else for degree, scholarship or publication of any kind.

I take all the responsibilities for this work.



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## **Acknowledgment**

I am very grateful to Allah for giving me life and blessing me with every step.

I want to give the warmest thanks to my respected supervisor, MD Ariful Islam Laskar, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Daffodil International University, for giving me the opportunity to write my thoughts on the work and guiding me in every way possible. Without his help and support, this work would not have seen the light of day.

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**ABSTRACT**

**Revisiting 1984: Satire and Retrofuturism**

**Supervisor: MD Ariful Islam Laskar**

George Orwell's *1984* is an all-time classic tale about a dystopian future where an oppressive force rules the world. The novel is a satirical take on society under the totalitarian regime. It was published in 1949, but the story takes place in 1984. The book demonstrates satire in depicting society, politics, humanity, and technology. *1984* also envisions a future dominated by surveillance technologies, and this is where the concept of retrofuturism comes into play. The core of my research aims to delve into the novel to analyze the satire coupled with the technologically dystopian future. Furthermore, this thesis also aims to focus on Orwell's work on retrofuturism and how it predicted mass surveillance, which is very common in the modern world.

**Keywords:** 1984, Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell, satire, retrofuturism.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction:**

1984 is a dystopian novel by George Orwell, published in 1949. It dives into a world ruled by a totalitarian government. The grim future of the tale is dystopian, full of surveillance, and with no resemblance to humanity. The dictators in the novel are known as *The Party*. The Party is supposedly led by ***Big Brother***, who is omnipresent and watches everyone.

Winston Smith, the protagonist, lives in a fictionalized London ruled by the Party. He works in the Ministry of Truth Records Department, and his job is to rewrite history according to *The Party's* guidance. Sometime in the novel, Winston falls in love with a woman named Julia. Their tragic romance sets the story in motion.

Orwell utilizes satire to critique propaganda, language manipulation, and the cult of personality. He also demonstrates his ability to use technology to complement the satire. To exemplify this, London is filled with telescreens, a television-like device constantly preaches *Big Brother's* propaganda. The concept of surveillance was not new, but his implementation is so thought-provoking that it feels like a cautionary tale.

*Big Brother* broadcasting propaganda everywhere through telescreens is an example of retrofuturism, a concept that explores the future through the eyes of an older generation. Such broadcasting surveillance technology did not exist in 1949, and Orwell predicted how state-wide surveillance would work in the future.

The satirical element of this literary work stems from political agendas. Mostly Orwell has depicted his satirical perception of the totalitarian reigns of Fascism and Nazism. Although *The Party* is not written as a parody of either group, *The Party* follows the ideals of *INGSOC*, which is short for the *Newspeak term* of English Socialism. *INGSOC* practices authoritarianism and preaches it as socialism. In reality, dictatorship is against socialist beliefs. The satire here utilizes actual life events happening at the time of its writing, but it is not directly based on them. The total control of *The Party* imposed on everyone is how *Stalinism* worked. *Stalinism* is the political policy initiated by Joseph Stalin, the leader



of the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s to 1953. His reign was characterized by total control of the economy, authority, and cult of personality.

*INGSOC* and *Big Brother* are very likely based on *Stalin's Stalinism*. Orwell has witnessed many wars, such as the First World War I, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the Cold War. War experiences shaped his writings as one of his famous works, *Animal Farm*, is a political allegory. The book is based on Fascism and its adverse effects and is inspired by the events of the Spanish Civil War in which he volunteered. *1984* is also his final work before his death. This thesis analyzes Orwell's use of satire and how he shaped the dystopian world of 1984 with retrofuturism.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Methodology, Rationale, Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Research Methodology:**

Qualitative analysis of the literary text will guide this thesis. It will also incorporate publications on satire and retrofuturism including books, news and articles. Additionally, the study will search the internet for trustworthy information on the topic, utilizing an analytical method. This will head the study to the appropriate direction.

#### **2.2 Rationale of the Study:**

Satire means depicting human flaws through mockery, ridicule, and caricature to provoke a response. Satire has been used in many mediums with shifting meanings. It comes from the Latin word "Satura," coined by the Roman rhetorician. Often, satire is used as a subtle way to deliver a serious message. The complexity of the genre is employed in a multitude of art forms, ranging from literature to film and media. Sometimes, it can be not easy to pinpoint the author's intention for satirizing. Satire as a literary device is very effective for writers. It is not limited to using humor as the only way to disseminate its message but is open-ended to employ diverse literary devices.

Retrofuturism has been around for a while. It depicts a perception of a future through the past era. It gained popularity in the mid to late 20th century when many mediums showed a future with flying cars, robot servants, space travel, and so on. Retrofuturism is often written with a sense of optimism. However, some works are not so optimistic about the future. Orwell's vision of technology in "1984" is somewhat retrofuturistic. There, he combines surveillance and control mechanisms with outdated technologies. For example, telescreens can monitor citizens all the time and everywhere. However, its appearance is that of an old CRT monitor or television. Technology was rapidly developing during Orwell's era, although it would take several decades to catch up with his vision of surveillance and he based it on the technologies

of his time, the 1940s. This juxtaposition of more advanced functionality with older design elements complements the retrofuturistic aesthetic.

*1984* is primarily a political satire. Orwell's fictionalized version of the future depicts a devastating landscape of the world run through propaganda. These events originate from the contemporary issues Orwell experienced. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany very likely inspired the in-universe INGSOC. However, Orwell does not explicitly state the political policies he parodies in the novel. INGSOC is the political policy The Party practices. Regardless, the extreme lengths INGSOC goes to enforce its power are not far from the truth. Nazi Germany, for example, prohibited anyone from making any negative remarks about Nazis or Hitler. INGSOC's power leads people to abide by the propaganda posters of Big Brother to participate in two minutes of hate speech. Although Winston is unsure if Big Brother exists as an individual, Big Brother embodies a dictatorship entity. The entire novel satirizes totalitarian regimes with in-universe propaganda like "*War is Peace*," "*Freedom is Slavery*," and "*Ignorance is Strength*". These highlight the lengths the oppressors would go to for people submitting to them. Orwell satirizes the totalitarian government's intrusion of privacy and people's lives through constant surveillance, telescreens and the thought police, although to an exaggerated degree. The Party also creates Newspeak, a language that transforms existing words into their perceived meaning. With Newspeak, the Party can force people into complete drones to fulfill their obligations. The novel also satirizes the concepts of authoritarians forcing their beliefs onto people with the *Doublethink*. The meaning of *Doublethink* is that people must accept whatever the Party speaks of regardless of the truth. The Party's poor treatment towards the impoverished people is the reflection of the totalitarian government's manipulation of the masses to keep them out of the loop so they can keep being the elite rulers to stay in power.

This paper aims to dissect the novel's satirical and retrofuturistic element. The research will expand upon portraying a severe issue through exaggeration while including Orwell's use of technologies accompanying his vision of the future.

### **2.3 Literature Review:**

*1984* is a satire that satirizes society at its core. However, it has been challenging to define it as such. Many of these articles focus on the work's nature of anti-totalitarianism. This case is likely due to Orwell's portrayal of satire, which is quite subtle yet obvious. Orwell's previous work *Animal Farm* is also an excellent political satire. *1984* is different because it is set in a dystopian future, a future that is quite unimaginable although plausible. Regardless, *1984* satirizes politics, society, humanity, and everything else.

Crick, Bernard asserts, "Freedom and truth are the great and obvious affirmations. Not merely their defence but examples of their use run through all Orwell's writings and the way he led his life, and at the very least *1984* is a satire of all attempts to justify the unfree and the untrue." (Bloom, 2004, p 75). As satirical take can be quite complicated to understand, Orwell described his book as a "satire", and a display of the "perversions to which a centralized economy is liable," while also stating he believed "that something resembling it could arrive". According to West, WJ (1992), "Modern historians reading the account of Orwell's world here will be struck by the way Orwell's satire has provided a genuine understanding of the kind of realities which are most difficult to uncover." (p 16) regarding the satirical tone.

Analysis of retrofuturism in *1984* is very scarce. A meticulous explanation has yet to be demonstrated. Examples of retrofuturistic works include Harrison, Harry's *The Stainless Steel Rat*, King Stephen's *The Stand*, Huxley Aldous's *Brave New World*, etc. This thesis aims to study and shed light on the aesthetics behind the way Orwell envisions the technology of the future. Aldous's *Brave New World* published in 1932 is one of the prominent works of this niche. It is set in a world that uses futuristic technologies and is dictated by the concept of consumerism, instead of *1984*'s direct totalitarianism.

Orwell's work contains references to real-life events. A satirical take on politics is nothing out of the ordinary, and *1984* expands upon them. Historically speaking, *1984*'s creation was heavily influenced by the events of World War II and its aftermath. He picked up elements

from his surroundings and utilized them to shape his dystopian world. This thesis illustrates satire and retrofuturism in the work, juxtaposing the past and what the future meant in the 1940s. The main goal of this paper is to unfold the essence of 1984 through an analysis of its satirical future. Regardless, it serves as a catalyst for future investigations, presenting an alternative approach to exploration.

#### **2.4 Contribution to the Field:**

Authors have used satire to represent contemporary issues in their works. Orwell is regarded as one of the prominent satirists of the modern era. Satire is often humorous in nature, but this does not have to be the case for every work. His works *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949) are political satires. *Animal Farm* uses animals as a vessel for human errors. With this approach, Orwell expressed his disapproval of totalitarian regimes. Many authors have done their part in the depiction of evil and corruption, but the way Orwell represents humanity at its grimmest in *1984* is fascinating. The modern era greatly appreciates Orwell's illustration of politics and society. The Party portrayed in the novel is, in a sense, a parody of totalitarian groups, and the retrofuturistic world is a great addition. This retrofuturism aesthetic is predominantly utilized in the science fiction genre. While such works envision a future with over-the-top futuristic technologies, Orwell keeps a grounded approach. Retrofuturism in literature requires further exploration. This work has chosen satire of this novel to excavate the grounded reality behind tragedy and retrofuturism for its use.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Satire in 1984**

Satire means depicting human flaws through mockery, ridicule, and caricature to provoke a response. Satire has shifting meanings. It comes from the Latin word *Satura*, coined by the Roman rhetorician *Quintilian*. Often, satire is used subtly to deliver a serious message. The genre's complexity is employed in many art forms, from literature to film and media. Sometimes, it can be challenging to pinpoint the author's intention for satirizing. Satire as a literary device is very effective for writers. It is not limited to using humor as the only way to disseminate its message but is open-ended to employ diverse literary devices. Forms of satire exist, such as Horatian satire, Juvenalian satire, and Menippean satire. Horatian satire is lighthearted. Its satire relies on making fun of a caricature in a gentle way. This humor provokes laughter within the audience and performers. Examples of Horatian satire include sketches from the American television show "Saturday Night Live." Menippean satire contains multiple layers of humor, irony, and parody to critique societal norms, values, and beliefs. Juvenalian satire is dark. It relies on the author's use of humorous and, at times, exaggerated measures to invoke thoughts. George Orwell's 1984 is an example of this.

A satirical work typically has elements that provoke laughter, and 1984 lacks this aspect. Many critics do not find 1984 satirical. An early reviewer of the work, Pritchett, V.S, said a satirical pamphlet' and added, "The duty of the satirist,' he writes, 'is to go one worse than reality.'" (Greenberg, 1992, p 82). The satire here is not meant to be a lighthearted take on politics. To understand the purpose behind the satire, "The purpose of Orwell is never to create a comic atmosphere but to give a message for the betterment of humanity. His attitude is never that of good-humored acceptance but one of indignant protest. He aims to expose, to deride, and to condemn." (Ahmed, 2004, p 113).

#### **3.1 1984 as a Political Satire**

Orwell satirizes the oppressive power of tyrannical government. The Party serves as the in-universe representation of totalitarian authorities like the Nazis and the Stalinist Russia. As

stated earlier, Orwell does not specify who he based his satirical implementation of The Party when he started working on 1984 in 1948. Although it can be presumed, it loosely refers to Stalinist Russia. The Party enforcing its inhumane rules upon helpless citizens is reminiscent of Stalin's total control of public and private life. The Soviet state would enforce censorship upon media, education, economy, and even personal beliefs. This is depicted in the novel through The Ministry of Love, except there is nothing about "love." This interior ministry serves as the vessel for pledging the citizens to kneel before Big Brother.

One of the satirical takes on such matters is portrayed through the drastic language change. Greenberg (1989) in his *1984 and the Tradition of Satire*, "Juvenal lashes out at builders who secure contracts 'by swearing black is white', while Jane Austen's villain Lady Susan uses her 'command of Language [. . .] to make Black appear White'" (p 92). Orwell illustrates this change of vocabulary through Newspeak, a propaganda language created by the Party. For example, INGSOC stands for English Socialism in Newspeak terminology. Other changes include *Bellyfeel*, *Blackwhite*, *Crimethink*, *Duckspeak*, *Ownlife*, *Goodsex*, and *sexcrime*. With these words, Orwell satirizes the change of certain words that the government deems unfit. For example, in 1949, the United States replaced its *Department of War* with a *Department of Defense*, and in 1984, President Reagan first tested an intercontinental ballistic missile paradoxically named the *Peacekeeper*. In the novel's third chapter, one of Winston's colleagues, Ampleforth, is arrested for including the word 'God' in the dictionary: *'I have been able to recall one instance—a possible instance. It was an indiscretion, undoubtedly. We were producing a definitive edition of the poems of Kipling. I allowed the word 'God' to remain at the end of a line. I could not help it!'* (Orwell, 2014, p 231) Ampleforth said to Winston. Historically, Stalin's regime included change in the Russian language, albeit not to the extreme level of Newspeak.

The satirical dystopian world goes further into oppression on how it handles the youth. In 1984, children are groomed to what can essentially be described as a drone. Earlier in the story, Winston gets to fix his neighbor, The Parsons' sink, and two of their children play with him and accuse him of being a 'thoughtcriminal.' Winston's monologue to the situation goes like this, 'It was somehow slightly frightening, like the gamboling of tiger cubs which will

soon grow up into man-eaters' (Orwell, 2014, p 23). Later in the story, Parsons tells Winston, *"Did I ever tell you, old boy," he said, chuckling round the stem of his pipe, 'about the time when those two nippers of mine set fire to the old market-woman's skirt because they saw her wrapping up sausages in a poster of B.B.? keen as mustard! That's a first-rate training they give them in the Spies nowadays—better than in my day, even. Whatd'you think's the latest thing they've served them out with? Ear trumpets for listening through keyholes My little girl brought one home the other night—tried it out on our sitting-room door, and reckoned she could hear twice as much as with her ear to the hole. Of course, it's only a toy, mind you. Still, gives 'em the right idea, eh?"* (Orwell, 2014, p 62). In 1984, children are trained to obey Big Brother and abide by the Party ideology. A youth organization called The Junior Spies teaches children to embrace the Party and spy on their parents against the principles. Children of Oceania are educated to report anyone doing the slightest bit of disobedience against the Party. They will be subjected to thoughtcrime. This scenario is explored further during the novel's third chapter when Parsons' daughter arrests him. Parson and Winston end up at the same place, and he describes his daughter reporting him to the thought police. Parsons said to Winston, *"Down with Big Brother!" Yes, I said that! Said it over and over again, it seems. Between you and me, old man, I'm glad they got me before it went any further. Do you know what I'm going to say to them when I go up before the tribunal? 'Thank you,' I'm going to say, 'thank you for saving me before it was too late. "'* also added, *"She listened at the keyhole. Heard what I was saying and nipped off to the patrols the very next day. Pretty smart for a nipper of seven, eh? I don't bear any grudge for it. In fact, I'm proud of her. It shows I brought her up in the right spirit, anyway."* (Orwell, 2014, p 233-234). Here, Parsons' denial of the truth is shown, as it should be his fear of what his daughter has become. Instead, he is proud of her and, to an extent, himself for doing the supposed right thing. Orwell here satirizes the indoctrination of children, which has similarities with *The Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls*. Although it is not explicitly said to be the inspiration, Nazi Germany would teach youths antisemitic beliefs and other propaganda and also would employ similar tactics to make the German youth follow Nazi principles and make them soldiers.



The novel takes place in fictional London, located in Oceania. Oceania represents various totalitarian states that enforced strict policies on their citizens. Oceania comprises the Americas and the Atlantic islands, including the British Isles, Australasia, and the southern portion of Africa. As this is meant to be a satirical representation of a totalitarian state, Orwell has employed similarities of the contemporary issues seen in Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, and even Imperial England. Oceania was founded with an anti-capitalist mindset, but that soon turned into a dictatorship regime. In his previous work, *Animal Farm* (1945), Orwell displayed the rise of corruption through the rotten personal beliefs of the dictators. In 1984, The Party is said to be ruled by Big Brother. Oceania consists of provinces like Airstrip One, previously known as England. However, none of the provinces have individual rulers. Instead, The Party controls the Oceania as a whole. Everything in Oceania is a satirical presentation of a dystopian world as it serves as the embodiment of people's fear in a totalitarian government. This is also a hint of the early days of the Cold War (1947-1991) as it can be said Orwell based the future where the war was won by the socialists.

The Party, which serves as the opposing force of the book, is a satirical depiction of a totalitarian government. Orwell does not imply which group in particular inspires this villainous faction. At its core, the Party is a group that enforces policies that they deem best for the people. Of course, this is not the case, as everything they do is nothing but self-serving. The Party makes the language change to their liking, erases and modifies history, controls every minute detail of its citizens, and makes sure no one gets away with bad-mouthing the Party. Orwell is known to be not siding with the Soviets, unlike his peers. This is evident in *Animal Farm*, where every character is a satire of political figures. In 1984, The Party is essentially a satirical version of such groups. As mentioned at the start of the thesis, Stalinism is very much in common with the practices of the Party. Like its fictional counterpart, Stalinism implemented totalitarian rule in Russia. The Stalinist Russia would fully control the lives of everyone. The leader Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), after Lenin's death, seized power by eliminating potential rivals and having centralized control over Russia. Stalinist Russia suffered numerous atrocities through war and a lack of human rights. Stalinism and Stalin can be said to be the satirical inspiration behind The Party, and Big Brother.

### 3.2 1984 as a Social Satire

Satire is not limited to a specific topic. In 1984, the satire is not only about politics but society as well and Orwell also expresses its satirical depiction. 1984 takes place in a dystopian future where the Party dictates the society. The laws themselves eradicate nature and science. Orwell imagines a society where people are essentially a herd of sheep led by wolves.

In the novel, citizens of Oceania engage in two minutes of hate. This hatred-fueled festival is a daily ritual centered around hating a man named Emmanuel Goldstein. *"As usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, had flashed onto the screen."* (Orwell, 2014, p 11). Goldstein is the enemy of the Party and was once a member turned rogue. The Party preaches that Goldstein is a rebel leading an opposing force called The Brotherhood. Everyone is encouraged to hate Goldstein, associating every problem imaginable with him. Goldstein serves as a scapegoat for society, and the Party uses him to manipulate people into abiding by their principles. In this dystopia, the Party is projecting themselves as God and Goldstein as Satan. Gottlieb, Erika summarizes the situation as "The Two Minutes Hate, the daily ritual of public worship, is predicated on such polarization. By attributing satanic powers to Goldstein, the Prime Enemy, Big Brother, who admittedly had started his career as a mere mortal, could imperceptibly arrogate to himself the power of supernatural goodness, the power of the Sacred. "All that is needed that a state of war should exist," states Goldstein) Book (168), revealing the meaning of the paradox "War is Peace." (Bloom, 2007, p. 52). Much later in the novel, Winston begins to question whether Goldstein is real or not. He asks about his whereabouts to O'Brien, to which he answers vaguely, *'Yes, there is such a person, and he is alive. Where, I do not know.'* (Orwell, 2014, p 171). He could have been a creation of the Party to set an example of a traitor. Another man, named Comrade Ogilvy, the Party preaches as a role model. Ogilvy has accomplished every achievement possible at a young age. Funnily, Winston questions the existence of Ogilvy, which he does not even remember or hear of before the Party starts talking about his contributions as a model citizen.

The society here has been embedded with the paradoxical philosophy of *"War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery; Ignorance is Strength."* This is an example of doublethink at an extreme

level. Winston initially agrees with the constant propaganda streamed through the telescreens. However, as the plot progresses, Winston questions the validity of the slogan. As he gets deeper into the rebellion, he understands why the Party has been preaching to them. Every word in the slogan is contradictory. To stay in war allows the Party to expand its power. The Party rules Oceania, which, at the novel's start, is at war with Eurasia. However, the enemy party can switch to an ally instantly, with the Party denying a war ever existing. This is how suddenly Oceania was not at war with Eurasia; instead, they have always been at war with Eastasia. The Party deems personal freedom as the cesspool of chaos. They preach individual freedom is nothing but misery and leads to unhappiness. As such, the Party has everyone conform to their obligations so they can be free from *"themselves"*. The Party promotes ignorance among people to manipulate them. Ignorance helps the Party to control people by manipulating history. If nobody is there to doubt the facts about history, the Party has total power over controlling the truth. These words form the slogan for Oceania, and they are the tool that will have people abide by every bit of the Party's guide. Orwell summarizes the totalitarian states' tendency to keep getting into wars, *"All that is needed is that a state of war should exist"* (Orwell, 2014, p 192) and satirized this as it reflects the people's tendency to follow dictators blindly.

In 1984, having any sort of sexual activity is prohibited. The Party does not allow citizens to conceive a child through sex. In the future, there will be no human relations. There is no bond between friends, parents, lovers, and children; only love exists towards Big Brother. In this world, "The sex instinct will be eradicated" and *"We shall abolish the orgasm"* (Orwell, 2014, p 267). Julia is one of the members of the Anti-Sex League. The purpose of the Junior Anti-Sex League is to eradicate sex among people. With this, the Party can manipulate people and ensure that no emotional attachment forms among individuals. The only love and bond everyone should have been for Big Brother. Orwell shows a world where having something truly personal is not a fundamental right but rather a prohibited deed. This hypocrisy extends further when Julia reveals her past sexual encounters with other members of the Party. Often, the people in charge do not even follow the rules.

The citizens of Oceania must be taught complete submission to the Party and Big Brother. Youths are taught to spy on their parents. As mentioned earlier in the story, Winston meets the Parsons' children while playing with him; they seem totally in love with the propaganda. These children have no idea and never will about the reality of their world. They were disappointed because they missed the hanging of war criminals. The organization that infiltrates the children's minds is The Junior Spies. They are taught to report their parents to the thought police. This is a society where nobody is trustworthy. The Party has successfully achieved emotional control. Even when Parsons is captured, he is not scared of the fact that his daughter has betrayed him but gleefully cheers that he has raised her according to the Party's principles. Such indoctrination in this dystopian future is a parody of how totalitarians influence the people, and targeting the youth guarantees a successful invasion of the mind. Raising the young with such a mindset ensures the Party's stay in power and potentially stops any opposition.

1984 also satirizes how totalitarian government manipulates the truth. As a satire that subtly takes a jab at society, Orwell has shown a world that is persistently manipulated through governmental affairs. The Party has made several ministries that serve as their mean of control and conquer. All of these ministries are paradoxically named, "*Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation* (Orwell, 2014, p 214)".

One of them is called The Ministry of Truth. The novel puts it as "*Ministry of Truth, is as necessary to the stability of the regime as the work of repression and espionage carried out by the Ministry of Love.*" (Orwell, 2014, p 211). Winston works at the Ministry of Truth. His job is to rewrite the history according to the words of the Party. The building that housed the ministry is also depicted as a chilling architecture. The novel describes the building as "*An enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air*" With the top of the structure bearing the slogan "*WAR IS PEACE; FREEDOM IS SLAVERY; IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH*" (Orwell, 2014, p 5-6). The ministry does what it aims: to prove the truth by any means necessary. The slogan the Party preaches every moment is promoted by the ministry. The idea of  $2+2=5$  stems from such ideology.

The ministry modifies entertainment, fine arts, news, media and educational books. The propaganda has them changed according to their will. The paradoxical ideologies are written in such a way that to prove them otherwise begs the question of whether what they are saying is even real. Whatever the Party says is the ultimate answer. If the answer is wrong or illogical but the Big Brother deems it otherwise, the writers at the ministry must comply with the Big Brother's wish and make it accurate. One of Winston's colleagues, Parsons, represents a typical employee of the ministry. The novel describes him as an *"active man of paralysing stupidity,"* but his enthusiasm makes him very reliable to the point that *"more even than on the Thought Police, the stability of the Party depended"* (Orwell, 2014, p 22). The Ministry of Truth exists to prove the invulnerability of the Party. Should there exist any form of inaccuracy in the Party, the citizens might figure out the actual truth. To reign with an iron fist, the Party ensures people must be kept in the dark, and the truth must be altered. The satire here is truth manipulation by the totalitarian government.

The Ministry of Peace is a department that deals with wars. Despite its name, it does the exact opposite. This is another example of how the Party has paradoxically named everything. The Ministry of Peace is not concerned with establishing peace. Instead, it exists to promote war. The ministry enforces the Party's ideology and maintains the warfare through military means. It is never meant to achieve a peaceful victory or state of affairs but to prolong war activities so the Party can be at the top of power. One of the significances of the Ministry of Peace is how it depicts the model citizen, Comrade Ogilvy, *"At nineteen he had designed a hand-grenade which had been adopted by the Ministry of Peace and which, at its first trial, had killed thirty-one Eurasian prisoners in one burst."* (Orwell, 2014, p 46). This description of the enigmatic state here is proof of the Party's use of terms that contradict their purpose. Orwell intended to be this way. The Party is and never will be interested in peace as this will bring them control over anyone.

The Ministry of Plenty is responsible for maintaining food and economic stability. Despite its name, it does not distribute its services equally, instead creating scarcity among the citizens. Wilding (2008) states "He also shares London's basic premise that the surplus has to be expended, that the oligarchy will never distribute wealth equally but will find ways to consume

the surplus while preserving poverty.” (p 42) One of their scams includes lotteries with big prizes they offer to the proles, which is very popular. In the book, *“Winston had nothing to do with the running of the Lottery, which was managed by the Ministry of Plenty, but he was aware (in-deed everyone in the party was aware) that the prizes were largely imaginary.”* However, they are never awarded, and the Ministry of Truth publishes the scam by announcing winners every week: *“Only small sums were actually paid out, the winners of the big prizes being non-existent persons. (Orwell, 2014, p 85)”* Creating artificial shortages to assure the Party is taking care of the people, the ministry makes sure Oceania's citizens lack necessities. It exists to convince people that they are living in perpetual prosperity. This assurance is far from the truth as they never deliver their promise.

Ministry of Love, or Miniluv, in Newspeak, is one of the ministries. It is responsible for capturing thoughtcriminals. Like every other ministry, this one is too contradictory as it serves no purpose for spreading or promoting love. The Ministry of Love exists to find and capture those who are against the Party and make them suffer for the crime of violating the obligation to unthink. It identifies the criminals and makes them a threat to the Party's authority. The ministry does everything unimaginable to the victims in order to make them surrender. It employs various forms of torture, brainwashing, and psychological manipulation to break the minds of the citizens to comply with the Party's principles. This is also the place where Winston receives his punishment in the final act of the novel. O'Brien makes use of every method to have Winston on the Party's side before releasing him as a new man. Orwell demonstrates the horror of a totalitarian government's ability to do the absolute worst to its people if it brings them full power.

A satirical society in a totalitarian state is not going to be complete without its depiction of the people. In 1984, the people are divided as expected from such a society. The Party has made sure one group gets alienated from the other. In this way, they have absolute control over their lives, leaving no individualism. The highest privileged members of the society are called the Inner Party members. These people hold the power and authority. Inner Party member enjoys all sorts of privileges Outer Party Members or the proles cannot. One of the benefits of belonging to such a class is that they enjoy living somewhat normally, having the

Party less control over them. They are also not susceptible of thoughtcrime and are invulnerable to surveillance. Inner Party members are groomed from a young age to be the ones with the Party. O'Brien is an Inner Party member. Outer Party members are people who hold government jobs, bureaucrats, and other state institutions. Outer party members have far less power and are subject to the punishments should they break the law. They are beneath Inner Party members, and despite this, they have very few facilities compared to their superiors. Unlike them, they are prone to surveillance and control. Outer Party members are constantly monitored by the surveillance and informants. Anyone making the fatal error of disobeying Big Brother will face the consequences. In case of a member going rogue, the Party punishes them through torture, brainwashing, and other horrific means. Outer Party members have modest apartments. They, as expected, do not get to enjoy the luxuries Oceania has blessed upon the Inner Party members but have much better than the proles. They receive basic rations but lack the comfort of the elite. As with the Inner Party members preaching constant propaganda, the Outer Party members have to oblige them on a regular basis. The protagonist, Winston, is an Outer Party member. Lastly, proles are the most underprivileged group of people. Proles, short for proletarian, serves as the working-class people of Oceania. The novel describes them as *"In the terms of our earlier classification, the roles are the Low: for the slave population of the equatorial lands who pass constantly from conqueror to conqueror, are not a permanent or necessary part of the structure."* (Orwell, 2014, p 207). The proles work is viewed as the low-class people engaging in manual labor. They are not working for or with governmental affairs. Proles are mostly ignored. Their needs are not paid attention to, and they are not given much thought. Mostly, they spend their time on day-to-day tasks, not bothered at all by politics and world affairs. The Party distracts them with alcohol and cheap entertainment. However, the satire here lies in the fact that despite being ignored, they have the potential to revolt against the oppressor. This potential is also thought thoroughly as the Party has managed to silence their concern with propaganda with manipulation and surveillance. Regardless, their sheer number and freedom compared to the Outer class leaves them the ability to form against the Party. In 1984 proles serve as a sign of hope. Every dictatorial regime has a group of underthought people who can be the to take down the evil, and the proles portray that. Orwell represents the last bit of humanity in

this dystopian world with the proles. They are the satirical take on the victimized class who can never question authority. The authority has given them supposed opportunities, sustainable enough not to complain. These class distinctions satirize and critique society. The society in which people are manipulated, conformed, and rejected of their most fundamental rights. Oceania's entire society is satirical about totalitarian management. To control every individual, they must lie and manipulate every second. The ministries exist to ensure the Party's orders are distributed fruitfully while having the opposite namesake.

Finally, the ultimate fear that has been cast upon the mind of the citizen is the enigmatic Room 101. The Room 101 is a torture chamber. Located in the Ministry of Love, this room is so scary that even one of the prisoners is willing to betray his family so he does not have to be taken there. In the final portion of the novel, O'Brien takes Winston to the room. O'Brien then reveals it as a torture room that preys on the victim's biggest fear: *"The worst thing in the world," said O'Brien, 'varies from individual to individual. It may be burial alive, or death by fire, or by drowning, or by impalement, or fifty other deaths. There are cases where it is some quite trivial thing, not even fatal.'* (Orwell, 2014, p 283). In Winston's case, it is rats. O'Brien places a cage like device in front of Winston, and the rats begin to crawl towards his face. Winston, so far has been reluctant to give up rebellion and information about Julia. But as the torture begins, his fear consumes him to the point he can no longer bear the sight of rodents. O'Brien successfully extracts information out of him and he betrays Julia. Winston giving up Julia this way proves that the Party has been effective at manipulating the system. The Party knows how to get an answer out of its victims, and fear effectively brings it out.

Orwell satirizes the ministries as a way of critiquing how the autocracies abuse power through dehumanizing means. This atmosphere creates a world where human life has no meaning as it lacks freedom and individuality, and most of humanity does not know how humans should progress. Then-contemporary totalitarian reigns inspire this dystopian life. The novel mainly depicts a city that has lost its touch with humanity. He paints the world to emphasize unchecked power, pointing out his fears of such a world and satirizing it to critique a story about how absolute power corrupts absolutely.



### **3.3 Psychological Exploration of the Characters**

Although a satire, 1984 also explores the psyche of the characters. Orwell features characters that portray different ends of the spectrum.

Winston Smith, the protagonist, is an eye for the readers to get familiar with the world. Winston is an Outer Party member, and as a result, he is a perfect middleman in looking into the dystopian society. Winston is a man who is very much aware of everything wrong with the world. His thoughts and eagerness to find his past make him very volatile in a place where doing so will see him getting vaporized. Despite the risks, Winston follows his guts and starts making a journal. Winston is very persistent in his goal of knowing the past. To understand the world before the Party came into existence and to learn and reconnect with his mother. This explores the human side of a man who should have lost that long ago. However, this also starts his downfall. Being more human only gets him closer to his eventual dehumanization process. He falls in love with Julia, whom he initially wanted to kill out of paranoia, and he puts his trust in people like Mr. Charrington and O'Brien. Winston makes the best out of the situation through the plot's rising action. He is now more rebellious and begins to have an actual relationship with Julia. He believes O'Brien shares his hatred towards the Party and sees him as his friend. The good times do not last for long as O'Brien shows his actual side and punishes Winston for conspiring against the Party. In the climax, Winston, who has built everything up to this point, crashes. O'Brien tortures him to the point of him betraying Julia. In the end, Winston becomes what he has been trying to avoid: a practitioner of Big Brother. Orwell wrote that the protagonist is very human and relatable. Winston is a man stuck in a palace where he is forced to do whatever the upper echelon wants while having no control over his life.

Julia is the deuteragonist in *1984*. Julia is initially introduced as a foil to Winston. In her earlier appearances, she is shown to be indifferent to the other Outer Party members. Gradually, Winston notices her observation of him and concludes that she is a spy. However, after Julia reveals her feelings for Winston, his perception of her changes, and the two form a romantic bond. Julia, unlike Winston, is more hedonistic. She plans to plot against the Party due to their restrictions on everyone. She aims to seek pleasure and thrill, so she has to stop the Party's surveillance of personal lives. Julia also encourages Winston to pursue the

newfound adventurous spirit and enjoy everything. This happiness is, however, short-lived as O'Brien soon captures them. In the torture chamber, O'Brien tells Winston that Julia has already given him up, reflecting her self-preservation nature. Julia's personality is much more optimistic, albeit rebellious, than Winston's. She seeks freedom and plans every attempt to overthrow the tyrants. Her reason for betraying Big Brother is not to discover the past or the truth like Winston's, but rather for the thrill. Julia's character explores the human desire for adventure. Orwell represents the female lead as a strong, independent woman, although her goal ultimately fails thanks to the Party's upper hand.

O'Brien is the antagonist. Initially introduced as an unlikely friend of Winston, soon his true colors are shown. There are several hints and foreshadowing of his betrayal. At first, O'Brien seems to have taken an interest in Winston. This interest is not disclosed fully, and Winston assumes he, too, is against the Party. However, Winston sees that, unlike other Outer Party members, O'Brien lives well off. He enjoys the luxuries Inner Party members do. Despite the unmistakable hint of untrustworthiness, Winston continues to reveal his plans to betray the Party. O'Brien capitalizes on Winston's trust and ultimately captures him and Julia. Mr. Charrington is also revealed to be working with him. In the climax, O'Brien tortures Winston to make him conform to the Party. O'Brien is the representation of a loyalist. His psyche revolves around the betterment of his group over the concern of others. O'Brien saw Winston and Julia as a means to infiltrate commoners' minds and utilize them to the fullest. Orwell depicts a man devoted to believing in tyranny and oppression. "*Reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal.*" (Orwell, 2014, p 248) O'Brien tells Winston as he turns up the dial to inflict pain on him. His calm demeanor juxtaposed with torturing Winston with no remorse makes him a good antagonist of the dystopian tale.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Retrofuturism in 1984**

Retrofuturism is the concept of a past's depiction of the future. Although 1984 is not primarily a retrofuturism focused tale, the technologies featured in the novel are ahead of the time of its release, which is 1949. After all, the story takes place in the future year of 1984, and Orwell envisions a future where technology has evolved into a dangerous surveillance medium for the Party to manipulate everything. Oceania has the picture of Big Brother plastered everywhere and put on the telescreen along with the architecture used, depicting a futuristic style that stems from a concept based on the contemporary world of the 1940s.

The main device used by the Party to preach its policies is called the telescreens. The telescreen is a device that looks like a television and constantly streams propaganda. The device is literally everywhere. From the streets of London to the homes of citizens, there is no way of avoiding telescreen. Big Brother is always watching through the telescreen. *“The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely.”* (Orwell, 2014, p 3). The concept of having such a device reflects the totalitarians control over the minds of people. The telescreen is an imaginative television from the future where instead, of showing free media, it is only used as a vehicle for transferring propaganda. The technology of delivering news everywhere and all the time is not something that Orwell experienced in his lifetime. Orwell envisions the tyrannical power getting its grip on technology and television.

The architecture of Oceania is an example of a retrofuturistic world. The ministries which carry out the not so noble deeds of the Party are presented as an imposing figure. *“All four of them simultaneously. They were the homes of the four Ministries between which the entire apparatus of government was divided.”* (Orwell, 2014, p 5) The ministries are the place where the Party plans and executes its policies. To explain how imposing these structures are, The Ministry of Love's building is the most frightening one, and it is not available to enter unless an official business, and even then *“Only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors, and hidden machine-gunnets. Even the streets leading up to*

*its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.*” (Orwell, 2014, p 5). This envisioning of a bleak future is very benefiting with the inclusion of menacing looking buildings. The geometric architectural styles also reflect the time this work was written as these architectural elements are borrowed from that era.

Along with the telescreen, the Party also employs various forms of surveillance. Oceania is full of spies, and to aid their mission effectively, they have microphones hidden and placed everywhere “*There were no telescreens, of course, but there was always the danger of concealed microphones by which your voice might be picked up and recognized; besides, it was not easy to make a journey by yourself without attracting attention.*” (Orwell, 2014, p 116). The idea behind technological depiction stems from the author’s experience. 1984 also subtly satirizes future. The state wide surveillance in Oceania is Orwell painting the way humans might use technology. Technology as a whole has been rapidly developing since the industrial revolution. In the 1980s, humanity sees the fastest progression of technologies with various corporations pushing new ideas to appeal to consumers. That is how our world experienced that revolutionary decade. Orwell’s world however instead visualizes “Technological totalitarianism destroys individuality and free thought.” (Multani,2020, p 2). Technology has evolved to a state where it is now in control of people. Oceania’s aesthetic is that of constant propaganda. According to Yeo, Michael (2020) “Any medium that can propagate messages can be used for propaganda. So too can every communication genre, from news to novels and from social marketing to social networking.” (p 3). The idea of telescreen is just an exaggerated version of existing medium of communication. Instead of these devices serving their purpose as broadcasting news and entertainment, it just spread what Big Brother wants the people to see and hear. From the very beginning of the novel, Orwell introduces us with the technologies of 1984. Everything and everywhere is the omnipresence of Big Brother. And the phrase “*BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU*” (Orwell, 2014, p 2) encapsulates the atmosphere. In Orwell’s mind, the future is grim and the technology is not used for the betterment of the humanity, instead it is used in a very contradictory manner. In Orwell’s era, the technology for advertising already exists in the form of radio or much later, television. 1984 blends the aesthetics of the past and future creating a timeless retro-futuristic dystopian world.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion**

*1984* is one of the most thought-provoking works of literature. Orwell paints his mind in words describing how he perceives the world. That perception is the contemporary world of the 1940s, where the war has left a devastating mark in human history. He has seen the destruction humans are capable of, and if given the authority to the wrong hand, things will only go south. *1984's* dystopian world is Orwell's satirical mind. The Party, INGSOC, Oceania, The Ministries, etc., are fragments of a fictional future scenario. Orwell satirizes everything about totalitarian regimes, which has the possible inspiration from Joseph Stalin's Stalinism. Stalin, too, ruled Soviet Russia with an iron fist. Retrofuturism is best depicted in *1984* as technology has advanced far enough to be used as a weapon to disrupt the normalcy of humanity. Despite not being a scientific exploration work, Orwell complements his futuristic world with constant surveillance. The technologies he envisions do not exist at the time of writing the novel. In his vision, *1984* is full of intrusion into personal lives. Privacy does not exist anymore, not even in the minds, as they will know when citizens rebel. Even the concept of technologies being used as a spying tool is very innovative considering when its publish date. It is a satire, and everything is exaggerated to provoke the horrifying realities of an authoritarian rule. But it is a matter of how the satire is portrayed. Instead of finding laughter, Orwell instills realism. He also shows his creativity through future depictions of technology. In a nutshell, *1984* is a timeless classic. Its satire is relevant in modern times, and its retrofuturistic aesthetic provides the readers with enjoyable storytelling. The work is a testament to Orwell's writing ability with an approach to satire.

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