

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Language, Thought and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, PhD

Zpracovala:

Simona Sailerová

Studijní obor:

Anglistika a amerikanistika

Praha, srpen 2018

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 17.8. 2018

Chtěla bych poděkovat vedoucímu práce PhDr. Zdeňku Beranovi, PhD za jeho podporu, trpělivost a laskavost.

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

Abstrakt

Na základě rozdílů mezi kulturami s primárně ústní tradicí a kulturami s tradicí písemnou tato práce zkoumá, jak samotná podstata písma a písemných záznamů, společně se všemi výhodami, přinesla i jistou rozlukou v lidském vnímání, myšlení a vědění a jejich vztahu k vnějšímu a vnitřnímu světu. Potenciální slabiny, které toto vytváří, jsou zneužity Stranou v románu George Orwella *1984* a použity jako prostředek k nastolení a udržení její nadvlády. Jazyk je jedním z jejích hlavních nástrojů a také zásadní téma v románu. Práce se zaměřuje na následující aspekty a jejich vztah k jazyku: paměť a záznamy, čas a změna a význam a vědomí.

Na rozdíl od prchavé povahy mluveného jazyka, písmo (a další druhy záznamů) umožňuje slovům, aby existovala jako objekty nezávislé na jejich „mluvčích“ a na kontextu, ve kterém vznikly. Rapidní pokrok v produkci textů a v gramotnosti umožnil vytvoření rozsáhlého souboru záznamů, daleko většího a (ideálně) mnohem spolehlivějšího, než je kapacita individuální paměti. Kromě zjevných výhod, které to přináší, existuje – díky trvalosti textů a prestiži spojené s gramotností – představa, že externí záznamy jsou nadřazeny paměti jednotlivce. Podporováním této představy a zároveň úplnou kontrolou nad záznamy, a tedy možností je dle libosti měnit, se Straně podaří zpochybnit individuální paměť a tím získat kontrolu nad myslí jednotlivce.

Písmo také ovlivnilo pojetí času ve společnostech s písemnou tradicí, což dalo vzniknout představě času jako lineární sekvence diskrétních jednotek, podobné písmu samotnému, a tato představa se stala součástí příslušných jazyků. To mělo za následek snížení citlivosti mluvčích k vnímání postupné změny, což přineslo myšlenku fixní, neměnné pravdy a následně vznik soupeřících ideologií. Ty jsou v románu *1984* reprezentovány rozdělením celého světa do tří velmocí, které jsou však všechny víceméně stejné. V rámci každého státu existují pouze dvě střetající se ideologie – v případě Oceánie představované Velkým bratrem a Emanuelem Goldsteinem. Specifický význam je potlačen používáním jazyka newspeak a povzbuzují se pouze nerozlišené, slepé emoce, kterými je možné zvenčí manipulovat a změnit je jak v lásku (tj. oddanost Velkému bratrovi), tak v nenávist (vůči čemukoli jinému). To vše způsobuje, že jsou členové Strany naprosto odloučeni od vnímatelné reality a od vědomých procesů, a tedy jsou neschopni na tom cokoli změnit, jak se hlavní hrdina románu marně pokouší.

Pokud je výchozím bodem realita, ke které se myšlení i jazyk vztahují, pak realitu a přemýšlení o ní může spojovat a vyjadřovat jazyk. Ale pokud je výchozím bodem umělý, nepřirozený, manipulativní jazyk newspeak, pak tento jazyk od sebe realitu a myšlení odtrhuje. Stejně tak pokud je výchozím bodem dogmatické myšlení, tak se od sebe odtrhuje realita a jazyk.

Abstract

By considering the differences between oral and literate cultures, the thesis explores how the very nature of writing and written records, alongside their advantages, has introduced a certain divergence in human perception, thinking and knowledge and their relation to the external and internal world. The potential liabilities this creates are exploited by the Party in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and used as a means of establishing and maintaining their dominance. Language is one of their main tools, as well as a major concern in the novel. The thesis focuses on the following aspects and their relation to language: memory and records, time and change, and meaning and consciousness.

As opposed to the fleeting nature of spoken language, writing (and other kinds of records) allows words to exist as objects independent of their "speakers" and the context in which they were produced. The rapid advances in text production and literacy have enabled the creation of a vast body of records far greater and (ideally) more reliable than the capacity of individual memory. Apart from the obvious advantages, due to the permanence of texts and the prestige associated with literacy, there exists the notion that external records are superior to the memory of an individual. By encouraging this notion and at the same time having a complete control over records and therefore the ability to change them at will, the Party manages to invalidate individual memory and thus control the mind.

Writing also influenced the concept of time in literate societies, which gave rise the idea of time as a linear sequence of discrete units, similar to writing itself, and this notion became incorporated into the respective languages. That, in turn, desensitized the speakers to the perception of gradual change and brought about the idea of a fixed, unchanging truth and consequently the emergence of competing ideologies. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, those are represented by the division of the entire world into three superpowers, although they are all very much the same. Within each state, there exist only two conflicting ideologies – in the case of Oceania represented by the faces of Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein. Specific meaning is suppressed by the use of Newspeak and only an undifferentiated, blind, emotion is encouraged that can be externally manipulated and turned into either love (i.e. devotion to Big Brother) or hatred (for anything else). All that makes the Party members completely detached from perceivable reality and from conscious processes, and thus unable to change anything about it, as the novel's protagonist attempts in vain.

If reality is the starting point to which both thinking and language relate, then reality and thinking about it can be brought together and expressed by language. But if the starting point is the arbitrary, unnatural, manipulative language Newspeak, then reality and thinking are pulled apart by it. Similarly, if the starting point is dogmatic thinking, then it is reality and language that are pulled apart.

Contents

1. Introduction: The Principles of Newspeak... and of Oceania	8
2. Memory and Records	11
3. Time, Change and Language	21
4. Meaning and Consciousness	32
5. Conclusion: Crystal Spirit vs a Boot Stamping on a Human Face	42
6. Bibliography	44

1. Introduction: The Principles of Newspeak... and of Oceania

George Orwell, in his famous essay “Shooting an Elephant”, describes his experience from the time he spent as a British police officer in Burma. One day he is called upon to deal with a runaway elephant that has been threatening people. When he gets to him, he can see that the elephant has already calmed down and no longer poses a threat and that it is neither necessary nor desirable to shoot the animal. But he shoots him anyway, urged by the expectations of the hyped up crowd gathered behind him:

Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd – seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the ‘natives’ and so in every crisis he has got to do what the ‘natives’ expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it.¹

While this insight into the relationship between freedom and power may have been formulated in retrospect (the essay was first published in 1936), Orwell, nevertheless, left Burma in 1927 to become a writer,² and throughout his writing there can be found a concern with the superficial mask or structure of power and the face or meaning behind it; a concern with external, often automatized, socially conditioned behaviour and the impact of it on one’s consciousness and conscience. Often it takes the form of a criticism of social class or hierarchy, as in many of his essays and articles but also quite markedly in Orwell’s first novel *Burmese Days*, in which Flory, the protagonist, tries to defy the rules of club membership, only to be eventually failed by his own shortcomings.³ On other occasions, Orwell discloses and satirizes the twisting and gradual abandonment of once noble revolutionary ideals, most famously in *Animal Farm*. Dorothy in *A Clergyman’s Daughter* becomes aware of the contrast between the observance of religious routines and a private faith, and sets out to try and resolve it.⁴ *Down and Out in Paris and London* shows how the external manifestation of poverty shapes other people’s attitudes, which further impose on the poor their condition.⁵ And last, but certainly not least, Orwell often

¹ George Orwell, “Shooting the Elephant,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 23.

² George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell*. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005) 49.

³ Craig L. Carr, *Orwell, Politics, and Power*. (New York: Continuum, 2010) 22-23.

⁴ Woodcock 87.

⁵ Carr 40.

considers how power affects the relation between form and meaning in the use of language, particularly in political writing and propaganda and in (self-)censorship.

As an appendix to the nightmare vision of the world described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell constructs a nightmare English grammar, “The Principles of Newspeak”. One approach towards such nightmares, frequently applied, is to try and find arguments that would prove their unreality and impossibility given by, as Patrick Reilly puts it, “certain inbuilt guarantees – epistemological, psychological, moral – which preclude the possibility of such degradation.”⁶ However, Reilly continues, “[n]ot only [...] can the worst thing in the world happen, but its probability increases in proportion as it is derided as merely a bad dream – Room 101 is built with the inadvertent planning permission of those who glibly deny its possibility.”⁷

The same applies to language, which Orwell describes in “Politics and the English Language” as “a tool which we shape for our own purposes.”⁸ By using the word “tool”, Orwell points out that language is something that humans make by and for themselves, rather than something that exists independently, is governed entirely by its own principles and is just passively used by humans as it is. Crediting humans with the creation of language invites a question: How can there be any “inbuilt guarantees” if no one has *built* those guarantees *in*? While the contribution of a single individual to the creation of language may be – with the exception of the likes of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Orwell himself – insignificant, barely noticeable, it is the cumulative effect of these individual contributions that makes and shapes the language. And if individuals ignore their capacity to co-create language by expressing their own thoughts as clearly and sincerely as they can, as Orwell requires, they themselves become the tools that others can use for expressing *their* thoughts.

Not relying on any supposed inbuilt guarantees, Orwell is keenly aware of the inherent pitfalls of language and the fallibility of its users. While in “Politics and the English Language” he suggests strategies for avoiding those pitfalls, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* he imagines a world where such efforts have failed and the things that had previously been taken for granted – the basic assumptions about the nature of language, humans and reality – have simply ceased to work because they are only a mask that falls off if the face behind it fails to grow to fit it, to paraphrase Orwell. He endows the novel’s “hero”, Winston Smith, with a set of beliefs and

⁶ Patrick Reilly, “*Nineteen Eighty-Four*: The Insufficient Self,” *New Casebooks: George Orwell*, ed. Graham Holderness et al. (London: Macmillan, 1998) 123.

⁷ Reilly, 123.

⁸ George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 348.

values that he himself had inherited but which his experience from Burma, the Spanish Civil War and war-time as well as post-Second World War Britain made him recognize as gravely mistaken. Winston, on the other hand, refuses to see the groundlessness of his beliefs, despite the reality in which he is living, and that is precisely what makes him an easy target for his tormentor, O'Brien: his willingness to completely ignore reality in favour of a set of reassuring beliefs. When O'Brien painfully demonstrates to him that individual beliefs cannot provide enough reassurance to withstand confrontation with reality, he simply changes one set of dogmatic beliefs for another, one that has the power to effectively ignore reality and therefore does not have to confront it.

Physically, Winston is afraid of rats and that makes him betray Julia, as he knows and admits he will. Intellectually and morally, though, he is afraid of being wrong, but this is a fear, a possibility that he refuses to admit to himself, which allows O'Brien to exploit this fear without Winston's knowledge. Winston is desperate to prove that he is absolutely, undeniably right, which proves to be of greater value to him than those values he wants to be right about. Rather than keeping his individual truth and accepting its limitations, he accepts the complete opposite of what he believed. He accepts as truth not something that can be validated but something that cannot be proved wrong – because individuals have lost their power to contradict it. This, Orwell seems to suggest, is the only way in which truth (or rather being right) can be absolute.

There are only three interconnected pairs of obstacles to overcome: memory and records, time and change, and meaning and consciousness. This thesis attempts to show that the possibility of overcoming them is part of the very nature of language because language can just as well mediate between individual mind and external reality as it can separate the one from the other. The choice, however, is not made primarily within language itself but by the individuals who use it. It is only when it becomes the prevailing choice that language can become just as tyrannical as the Party's rule. Words are given the unquestionable power of authoritarian judgement and at the same time a lack of meaning that resists contradiction. They, admittedly, give that power to the person who uses them, but only as long as that person is willing to give up their freedom to choose what they themselves wish to say, what they mean – that is the appeal of Newspeak. Meaning (in the limited sense in which the words refer to anything) grows and shrinks to fit the mask of the right words. While Orwell is concerned with some specific grammatical issues which may assist this process, they are only the suggested, possible tools. It is the conscious and often unconscious shaping that really matters.

2. Memory and Records

One of the most glaring absurdities upon which the Oceanian society is built is the (mis)use and (dys)function of texts and records. This can be interestingly explored by considering some of the differences between (primarily) oral and literate societies, and the effect of writing and literacy on a society as a whole, as well as on individuals within that society. The British anthropologist Jack Goody studied this issue extensively. He mentions the “apparently failing memories of literate societies where people can depend for recall upon what has been written down in a book.”⁹ That is how memory and records might function in an ideal world. In the dystopian world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, however, the relation between memory and records is thrown off balance and their functionality is impaired. On the one hand, Oceania certainly has the features of a literate society in which the reliance on and trust in external records far exceeds the capacity and reliability of individual memory and is allowed to supplement and then replace it (which reduces the requirements for and demands on individual memory and – together with the practice of doublethink – suppresses the functionality of individual memory). On the other hand, Oceania is very much an oral society, as there are no reliable records, but at the same time it lacks the benefit of reliance on individual memory and what Goody calls “technologies of the intellect”¹⁰ of either oral or literate societies.

In the introduction to his *Myth, Ritual and the Oral*, Goody writes that the “interaction between technology and analysis is a key aspect of [his] study of variation in parts of oral cultures”. Similarly, the interaction between technology and *the prevention of analysis* is a key aspect of Orwell’s study of the impact of variation in cultures that are pseudo-oral and pseudo-literate at the same time. Goody comes to the conclusion that “[f]orgetting requires invention, creation; creation probably requires some forgetting.”¹¹ It is the second part of this statement that the Party seems well aware of. In order to make place for their creation in the never-ending reciting and rewriting of the myth of Big Brother, they systematically enforce forgetting: in people’s minds, in externally existing records and objects, as well as in language itself. The Ministry of Truth – the place whose main purpose is to ensure that truth is forgotten – thus remains one of the few places that have any use for individual creativity.

Winston is one of the many people whose job it is to keep that machinery of forgetting in motion. And while the forgetting is achieved simply by destroying an unsuitable document, by

⁹ Jack Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 65.

¹⁰ Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral* 102.

¹¹ Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral* 66.

automatically sending it down a memory hole, it is the creation of replacement memories that requires special effort and skill. Winston is, in a way, a retrospective reporter who falsifies facts. He has no moral qualms about it because the documents have already been forged so many times before that any further lies do not make a difference to him. He simply enjoys the intellectual challenge of his job:

Winston's greatest pleasure in life was his work. Most of it was a tedious routine, but included in it there were also jobs so difficult and intricate that you could lose yourself in them as in the depths of a mathematical problem – delicate pieces of forgery in which you had nothing to guide you except your knowledge of the principles of Ingsoc and your estimate of what the Party wanted you to say. Winston was good at this kind of thing. On occasion he had even been entrusted with the rectification of the *Times* leading articles, which were written entirely in Newspeak.¹²

But he is also a sort of a novelist. Since the invention of the printing press, literature has been reproduced with increasing speed and ease. Orwell goes one step further and introduces novel writing machines, automatizing not only the *reproduction* but the very *production* of literature, leaving no place in it for individual creativity and invention. He writes in “The Prevention of Literature”:

It would probably be not beyond human ingenuity to write books by machinery. But a sort of mechanizing process can already be seen at work in the film and radio, in publicity and propaganda, and in the lower reaches of journalism. [...] Even more machine-like is the production of short stories, serials and poems for the very cheap magazines. Papers such as the *Writer* abound with advertisements of Literary Schools, all of them offering you ready-made plots at a few shillings a time.”¹³

He gives examples of various strategies by which it is done and concludes by saying that “[i]t is probably in some such way that the literature of a totalitarian society would be produced, if literature were still felt to be necessary. Imagination – even consciousness, so far as possible – would be eliminated from the process of writing.”¹⁴

Such qualities and skills, however, are not rendered completely useless in Oceanian society. On the contrary, they play a vital role. But instead of the production of (what is admitted to be)

¹² George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (London: Penguin Books, 2013) 51. All future references included in text.

¹³ George Orwell, “The Prevention of Literature,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 338.

¹⁴ Orwell, “The Prevention of Literature” 338.

fiction, they are put to use in producing (what is presented and accepted as) facts. Winston is, indeed, a fiction writer, prides himself in his inventiveness and in his achievements and is even feeling competitive about his creations. When tasked with correcting the report of a speech given by Big Brother, “Winston decided that it would not be enough simply to reverse the tendency of Big Brother’s speech. It was better to make it deal with something totally unconnected with its original subject. [...] What was needed was a piece of pure fantasy.” (53) And he goes on to invent the character of Comrade Ogilvy and has Big Brother, in his typical style that Winston can easily imitate, praise Comrade Ogilvy’s life and death as a model Party member. “It was true that there was no such person as Comrade Ogilvy, but a few lines of print and a couple of faked photographs would soon bring him into existence.” (54)

Just as language is made by its users, so is the persona of Big Brother a collective creation of those who help to give him voice and make him seem real and faultless. Winston, on the one hand, claims to hate Big Brother and wants to rebel against him, but on the other hand, he is completely oblivious to the fact that he is one of his loving parents. He certainly does not see in his work, as Orwell suggests, that “[a]bove quite a low level, literature is an attempt to influence the viewpoint of one’s contemporaries by recording experience.”¹⁵

In “Writers and Leviathan”, another essay that considers the effect of orthodoxy and totalitarianism on literature, Orwell suggests that “whatever else [a writer] does in the service of his party, he should never write for it. He should make it clear that his writing is a thing apart. [...] To suggest that a creative writer, in a time of conflict, must split his life into two compartments, may seem defeatist or frivolous: yet in practice I do not see what else he can do. To lock yourself up in an ivory tower is impossible and undesirable.”¹⁶ And “[f]or most people the problem [of having to separate their job from politics] does not arise in the same form, because their lives are split already. They are truly alive only in their leisure hours, and there is no emotional connexion between their work and their political activities.”¹⁷

But in the totalitarianism of Oceania, this kind of splitting is no longer possible for the writer. Winston certainly manages to separate his work from the political activities which he pursues in his free time; however, he does not wish to see the ivory tower which he has locked himself in. He is a schizophrenic, a doublethinker, a Party member whose job it is to deny the very ideas that he values in his free time. He seems to agree with Orwell that “[i]n the past, at any rate

¹⁵ Orwell, “The Prevention of Literature” 334.

¹⁶ George Orwell, “Writers and Leviathan,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 457-8.

¹⁷ Orwell, “Writers and Leviathan” 458.

throughout the Protestant centuries, the idea of rebellion and the idea of intellectual integrity were mixed up. A heretic – political, moral, religious, or aesthetic – was one who refused to outrage his own conscience.”¹⁸ He starts to feel nostalgic about the conscience that he continues to silence and so he tries to find some pieces of true history. The various objects from the past, as well as various past values may seem familiar enough to the reader, but it is important to realize that they are alien to the Oceanian society, that they have no place there, no function, no recognized value.

A fiction writer in his day job, in his free time Winston is an archaeologist, a curator in the museum of humanity. He digs in his own memory and in Mr. Charrington’s junk-shop, hoping to find a few physical, mental and moral artefacts from a past which may not be so distant but which has been vaporized, obliterated very thoroughly. And what does he find in his excavations? His most treasured finds seem to be a notebook and pen, a glass paperweight, a photograph which proved that official reports were false, the notion of selflessness (or rather the very idea of distinguishing between selfless and selfish actions, i.e. the idea of considering what effect one’s behaviour may have on another person), the possibility of (making) love that is not one’s duty to Big Brother, and a belief in truth that bears at least some relation to external reality.

If Winston is the curator, it is Big Brother and the Party who run and own the museum, as well as the repository from which Winston is allowed to take a few items for (what he assumes is) his private exhibition. And while those items in themselves have no value for the Party, their occasional limited display certainly does. Just as the figure of Goldstein is kept alive as the enemy to be constantly – yet never completely – defeated by Big Brother, so are objects and ideas associated with the past, with oldthink, allowed some degree of existence, only to be destroyed by the Party in its rituals of power worship and manifestation of power for the sake of power. Winston is allowed, even encouraged temporarily to maintain a belief or a faint hope that past ideas and values can still have some meaning and that he can still have his own consciousness, a part of himself that the Party cannot access and cannot break. He is, however, doomed to fail on both counts because meaning and consciousness are the very things that the Party has – for decades – been undermining and destroying. Winston believes his rebellion against Big Brother is his own, conscious decision. But O’Brien explains to him that he has been watching him for seven years and that finding potential heretics and leading them on only

¹⁸ Orwell, “The Prevention of Literature” 329.

to be able to crush them and thus demonstrate their complete power over them is precisely what the Party does and will continue to do. (307)

Winston's rebellion is connected with two texts that he believes to be, like himself, at least temporarily beyond Party's reach: his diary and the (at first) mythical book written by the heretic Goldstein. But both turn out to be something quite different. Theo Finigan writes in his article "‘Into the Memory Hole’: Totalitarianism and *Mal d’Archive* in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*":

In opposition to the totalitarian destruction of public history and personal memory, the novels' respective protagonists attempt to institute archives of their own. In their diaries and journals, which they explicitly imagine as documents for a future history beyond the reach of the regime's control, Winston Smith and Offred the Handmaid seek to shore up fragments of the shattered past by attending to those fossilized remains that do persist, sedimented in memory, language, and materiality. In this context, then, "archive fever" might also signify an ethically informed passion for the "right" archive (Derrida 91). In other words, both novels raise the possibility that the archive could function as the means of a historiographic corrective that would counter the totalitarian manipulation of history noted by Arendt with a supposedly more accurate—and thus anti-totalitarian—record of authentic individual experience.¹⁹

Winston believes he is writing for posterity and is free of suspicion. He realizes that he is bound to be found out, arrested and killed eventually but he sees that as a distant future. The idea that the process may already be well under way just does not occur to him and he naively overlooks any inconsistencies that would warn him. He believes himself to be (at least in a limited sense) free until his loss of freedom is irrefutably proved to him by his arrest. That, Orwell suggests, is far too late. Winston realizes that "[f]or some reason the telescreen in the living room was in an unusual position" (8, italics added) that allowed him to find a place where he (supposedly) could not be seen and he admits that "[i]t was partly the unusual geography of the room that had suggested to him the thing that he was now about to do" (8) (i.e. write in the book), but he does not stop to wonder why that may be. He is spellbound by the beauty and antiquity of the book that was "lying in the window of a frowsy little junk-shop in a slummy quarter of the town (just what quarter he did not now remember) and [he] had been stricken immediately by an

¹⁹ Theo Finigan, "In to the Memory Hole: Totalitarianism and *Mal d’Archive* in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*," *Science Fiction Studies* 38.3 (2011): 435-6, JSTOR
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5621/sciefictstud.38.3.0435>> 30 May 2017.

overwhelming desire to possess it.” (8) When he is startled from his writing by a knock on the door, which he assumes must be the Thought Police, he goes to answer the door, recklessly leaving the diary open so that the page with “*DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER*” written all over it could be seen from the door – because “even in his panic he had not wanted to smudge the creamy paper by shutting the book while the ink was wet.” (24)

The other text of Winston’s rebellion, Emmanuel Goldstein’s *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, is the only piece of what could be considered true history. As it is not part of the Ministry of Truth’s archives, it is not subjected to the usual “rectification”. But even when the text remains the same, the meaning of it changes completely, with fatal consequences for Winston. Craig L. Carr summarizes this in *Orwell, Politics, and Power*:

Orwell builds this little book into his story to provide a bit of historical background that explains the evolution of Oceania. There is considerable irony in this, of course, since Goldstein’s book is officially presented as the bible for a revolutionary conspiracy dedicated to putting an end to the reign of Big Brother. There is no such conspiracy, of course, and the book was actually prepared by elements of the inner party. It is, in reality, *their* bible, detailing their triumph and displaying the logic and political philosophy of Oceania. More importantly, Orwell intended it to be something like *possible* history. Following a tradition that begins with Aristotle and is developed importantly by Machiavelli, political conflict is presented as a form of class struggle. The high wants to retain its position of privilege; the middle struggles to change places with the high; and the low yearn for equality insofar as they have any political consciousness at all. [...] In a curious twist on the Marxist account of the process by which the proletariat presumably comes to consciousness, the greater the impoverishment of the low, the less the high have to fear from them. [...] This leaves only the middle as the political enemy of the high, and thanks to new developments in the technology of power, the high are able to enslave the middle and continually oppress it in a fashion that guarantees the oligarchical structure of Oceania will not be destabilized. [...] Their ability to refine the new technologies of power at their disposal allowed them to transcend the half-hearted tyrannies of the past and achieve one of the great goals of political thought: a stable and enduring political order.²⁰

²⁰ Carr 10-12.

The only thing that changes about the book is its author. When Winston thinks it was written by Goldstein, he automatically adds to the description of events the implied author's implied condemnation of them, and the authority of that condemnation is enough for him to be convinced that there really exists the conspiracy against Big Brother that he has been wishing for, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary which he could otherwise have extracted from the text itself. And it is at that moment, when he thinks that his hopes have been proved right, that he is arrested and thus receives the definite proof of his loss of freedom and a proof that it was precisely those hopes and dogged beliefs that have been making him draw the wrong conclusions all along. By continuously dismissing, doublethinking individual discrepancies, he does not recognize their disastrous sum total.

When considering the different roles and forms of personal narratives in Oral and literate cultures, Goody writes:

It seems natural that we should create a narrative summary of our lives, for incorporation in a CV, for presenting to an analyst, for elaboration in a diary or an autobiography. But how far are such narratives called for in purely oral cultures? I can think of few if any situations where this happens. It is I, the anthropologist, the psychologist, the historian, who tries to construct life histories (like other histories) from the fragments of knowledge that have come my way, or from the arduous struggle of asking questions and getting one's respondent to respond, to articulate for me what no other situation would prompt him or her to do. Life histories do not emerge automatically; they are heavily constructed. [...] The history does not exactly traduce the 'facts', but it gives a narrative shape to the fragments of experience that present themselves in quite a different way."²¹

In Oceania, the constant feed of information leaves hardly any opportunity for creating one's own personal narrative, either in writing or in one's mind. But while the lacking need in oral cultures for that kind of conscious construction still allows people to have their own, unsystematic memories, in Oceania individual memories cannot withstand the overwhelming input and accepted authority of contradictory, changing, "true" information. And that cannot leave a person's identity unaffected. Stanley B. Klein explains the interrelation of personal memories and the self: "On the one hand, the self is held to be a product of memories of one's personal past [...]. On the other hand, the act of remembering a personal past logically

²¹ Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral* 131-132.

presupposes a sense of self. [...] Memory requires more than mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in my past. [...] The concepts of self and memory thus are interdependent, neither completely separable from the other.”²² When personal memories start to be invalidated and corrupted, it sets off a chain reaction in which the self is undermined, which makes further eradication of memories easier, and that, in turn, leads to a further disintegration of the self. This process is what turns people into the dummies that Winston sometimes manages to recognize in others with no more than a “curious feeling”:

As he watched the eyeless face [the impression of eyelessness was created by the light reflected from the man’s glasses] with the jaw moving rapidly up and down, Winston had a curious feeling that this was not a real human being but some kind of dummy. It was not the man’s brain that was speaking, it was his larynx. The stuff that was coming out of him consisted of words, but it was not speech in the true sense: it was a noise uttered in unconsciousness, like the quacking of a duck. (63)

While Winston has to rely on the elusive fragments of his biased memory to construct his own identity and personal narrative, O’Brien has access to the meticulous records of the Thought Police, which show that the Party has, after all, some use for the concept of truth related to external, observable events. He uses the records at his disposal to show Winston the contradiction between his idea of himself as a humanitarian hero and the means by which he was prepared to commit his acts of heroism. When Winston and Julia visited him at home in order to join the Brotherhood, a conspiracy against Big Brother, O’Brien asked Winston: “You are prepared to give your lives?”, “You are prepared to commit murder?”, “To commit acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people?”, “To betray your country to foreign powers?”, “You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases – to do anything which is likely to cause demoralisation and weaken the power of the Party?”, “If, for example, it would somehow serve our interests to throw sulphuric acid in a child’s face – are you prepared to do that?” (199) Winston answered positively to all of those questions. And it is the record of this conversation that O’Brien plays to Winston in the Ministry of Love when he claims moral superiority over the supporters of Big Brother and their lies and

²² Stanley B. Klein, “A Self to Remember”, *Individual Self, Relational Self, Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikies and Marilyn B. Brewer, 44-45.
<https://books.google.cz/books?id=FZVACwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22a+self+to+remember%22&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQ8oyJq_TcAhVBYVAKHfD3DYkQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=%22a%20self%20to%20remember%22&f=false> 21 Feb. 2018.

cruelty. (309-310) This contradiction between superiority and commonness might be hinted at by Winston's name: as D.J. Taylor points out in a note to the text, Winston suggests Winston Churchill, whereas Smith would be recognized as the most common surname. (356) In this way, Winston Smith is similar to the many portmanteau words which "in thus abbreviating [them] one narrowed and subtly altered [their] meaning, by cutting out most of the associations that would otherwise cling to [them]." (351) He is a compound of Winston Churchill and (perhaps John) Smith, but the meaning of both parts is obscured and altered.

Yet, at this point, it is hardly surprising that Winston is deluded about his current situation and future prospects, given the sparse and discordant memories that he has. The Party slogan which says that "[w]ho controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (284) applies to individuals as well as the entire society. Klein et al. "explore this interdependence [between memory and time] by examining what happens when the relation between memory and time breaks down. In particular, [they] describe effects wrought by catastrophic memory loss on an amnesic patient's ability to remember the past and imagine the future."²³ They explain that

[o]ur experience of personal identity depends, in a fundamental way, on our capacity to represent the self as a psychologically coherent entity persisting through time, whose past experiences are remembered as belonging to its present self [...]. The experience of self-continuity, in turn, provides the mental scaffolding from which we can imagine possible future states in which we might be involved [...]. Indeed, a case can be made that information storage is intrinsically prospective, used to support future decisions and judgements that cannot be known in advance with certainty [...].²⁴

The authors clarify the difference between episodic and semantic memory, stating that "[a] key distinction between episodic and semantic memory is in the nature of subjective temporal experience that accompanies their retrieval [...]."²⁵ Episodic recollection is linked to an awareness of one's own time and "thus enables a person to mentally travel back in time to relive previously experienced personal events".²⁶ On the other hand, "retrieval from semantic memory does not entail awareness that one is in a mental state that represents something in one's past.

²³ Stanley B. Klein et al. "Memory and Temporal Experience: The Effects of Episodic Memory Loss on an Amnesic Patient's Ability to Remember the Past and Imagine the Future." *Social Cognition* 20.5 (2002): 354. <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7af1/9340dc91b9188bb2672acb4fa152a9fc6ce8.pdf>> 30 Jul. 2018. 354.

²⁴ Klein et al. 353-355.

²⁵ Klein et al. 355.

²⁶ Klein et al. 355.

Rather, it is experienced as a generic knowledge about the world (e.g., facts, people, events) without an accompanying thought that this information is known because it has been experienced before [...]. [It allows] one to orient events in time without reexperiencing them as part of one's personal history [...]."²⁷ The authors hypothesized and confirmed that a patient's impaired episodic recollection would diminish his capacity to correctly answer questions about his personal future, i.e. in a way that would not be contradicted by the facts of his past, such as in the patient's claim that he was going to visit his mother that evening, although she had died two decades earlier.²⁸

Returning to Winston, the explanation provided by Klein et al. seems to describe his condition perfectly. The way he, encouraged by the Party, throws not only physical evidence but also his personal experience into a memory hole creates in him a completely misguided perception of the present and his present self, which makes his hopes about his future equally misguided. He relies on the semantic memory created by the Party, on knowing the facts, but keeps hardly any personal memories that would confirm or rather disprove those assumed facts.

²⁷ Klein et al. 356-357.

²⁸ Klein et al. 365.

3. Time, Change and Language

It is not just the relationship between memory and time that becomes forcibly distorted in Oceania, but also the very notion of time. This brings back the issue of orality versus literacy and also of language in general. When languages are described as either living or dead, the core of that distinction lies in (the lack of) change. Living languages change and develop as they are used by speakers who acquire them as their mother tongue. Dead languages, on the other hand, do not have any native speakers; they can still be learnt and (passively) used by individuals, but their grammar and vocabulary are accepted as fixed and unchanging. In Newspeak, the Party is, again, trying to create a conflicting mixture of both: a dead language that would be the mother tongue of (superficially) living individuals who accept its fixed rules and fixed phrases that determine what can be said, and are oblivious to the notion of change and invention. When Winston and Julia look at the vigorous prole woman and say “We are the dead,” (252) it suggests a similar distinction at the level of society.

Goody describes how the introduction of literacy to non-literate African societies affected their concept of time:

Islamic literacy introduced a fixed calendar which set aside the solar system and placed its ceremonies on a lunar cycle. Typically non-literate societies adjust the two by the process of fudging; the harvest moon appears when the harvest is ripe. Only literate societies have to wrest the month away from the moon or the year from the sun. [...] Writing thus allows the development not only of history in the technical sense [...] but also its tool, chronology. Finally, graphic time-measurement divides the day into periods no longer determined by diurnal activities but by formal criteria; in oral societies, the time words cluster around the points where there is a shift from one mode of activity to another, as in the plethora of terms describing the coming of day, first-light, day-break, dawn, etc., words that are largely redundant in an industrialized and electrified society. But under Islamic literacy it is the religious act of prayer that now marks out the day into defined periods, to form divisions of a more abstract character. [...] Because their religion is literate, their conceptualization [of time] can be more ‘abstract’, more divorced from other aspects of ‘reality’ than the alternative systems found within the same society.²⁹

²⁹ Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 132-137.

Oceanian time is organized, as Finigan puts it, by “the ubiquitous telescreen [which] functions as a monstrous alarm clock, reminding Winston that time does not belong to him. The two-way telescreens also enable a series of broadcasts that further dissects the day according to the Party’s strict timetable. The workday is punctuated by the ‘Physical Jerks’ [...], as well as by the ‘Two Minutes Hate’ [...]”³⁰ The artificiality of time, its dissociation from the natural world and the Party’s control over it is emphasized in the novel by the motif of (artificial) light and the (lacking) counterpart of darkness.

When Winston is in the countryside he “pick[s] his way up the lane through dappled light and shade, stepping out into pools of gold wherever the boughs parted.” (133) He is unaccustomed to it and it makes him feel uncomfortable (“Already on the walk from the station the May sunshine had made him feel dirty and etiolated, a creature of indoors, with the sooty dust of London in the pores of his skin.” (137)), but the time is his own and he can instinctively orient himself in it: “[h]e had no watch, but it could not be fifteen yet.” (136) The natural environment even inspires honesty in him: “He did not feel any temptation to tell lies to [Julia]. It was even a sort of love-offering to start off by telling the worst.” (139)

Back in London, however, Winston submits again to Party time and ignores the clues he might take from the remnants of the real, natural world that are still allowed there. The extent of his ignorance becomes obvious in the scene preceding his arrest and shows that Winston, who then tries to convince O’Brien that external reality exists and matters, is already incapable of actually seeing, perceiving that reality. Before his arrest, he fell sleep when a “yellow beam from the *sinking sun* slanted in through the window and fell across the pillow.” (247, italics added) And although he woke up “with the sensation of having slept for a long time, [...] a glance at the old-fashioned clock told him that it was only twenty-thirty.” (249) This brings to mind the phrase “even a broken clock is right twice a day”. In Winston’s case, it could be paraphrased as “even a clock that tells the right time is of no use when one ignores the difference between day and night”. With all the prescribed activities that he just automatically, unconsciously carries out when he is told, and the unambiguous 24-hour clock, he is so unaccustomed to a notion and perception of time related to the natural alternation of day and night, light and darkness, that he fails to even consider the possibility that it might already be morning when the telescreen does not wake him up. Instead, he instantly comes up with a way of ignoring and explaining away the external clues:

³⁰ Finigan 436.

The sun must have gone down behind the houses; it was not shining into the yard any longer. The flagstones were wet as though they had just been washed, and he had the feeling that the sky had been washed too, *so fresh and pale was the blue between the chimney pots*. Tirelessly the woman marched to and fro, corking and uncorking herself, singing and falling silent, and pegging out more diapers, and more and yet more. He wondered whether she took in washing for a living, or was merely the slave of twenty or thirty grandchildren. (150, italics added)

In nature, day is day and night is night and there is hardly any doubt about that. With artificial light, this is decided by the person who has their finger on the switch. In Oceania, this person is Big Brother and the Inner Party, acting on his behalf, and they have their fingers on every switch, they have power over (electric) power and they determine what power the citizens are given by frequent power cuts. The Ministry of Love, the place where there is no darkness, is thus a manifestation of the Party's complete suppression of any kind of external, objective, natural, inherent truth, as well as the means by which they ensure that superiority. It represents their complete elimination of any opposition, as well as of the very idea that there naturally exist opposing forces, tendencies or values which a person could and should try to recognize.

Winston is eager to meet O'Brien in the place where there is no darkness. A connoisseur of the past, he gradually gets to know the verses of an old nursery rhyme. Julia tells him how it ends: "Here comes a candle to light you to bed, here comes a chopper to chop off your head!" (168) But while, on the one hand, he makes considerable effort to interrogate an old prole to get to know some real truth about the past, on the other hand, he does not even stop to wonder about the juxtaposition of light and impending death in that verse. When it is repeated by the voice from the telescreen as Winston and Julia are being arrested, its reference to their doom becomes explicit. But it also shows that a vital change has occurred between the time in which the verse may have originated and the time it is heard from the telescreen: a change that massively increases the extent and probability of the danger which the verse vaguely relates to light. The simultaneity of the change from a candle to the omnipresent artificial light in the Ministry of Love, and from a chopper to the sophisticated means of both physical and psychological torture in the same place, is what Carr refers to when he "juxtapose[s] Orwell's recognition of new technologies of power with his anticipation of changes in what [Carr calls] the psychology of power".³¹

³¹ Carr 9.

The change that Orwell imagines taking place here involves a shift away from thinking about power as a means to some desired end and toward thinking about it as an end in itself. [...] Power is desirable, this is to say, because with it one can get whatever else one wants. Responsibility typically accompanies political power, at least ideally. But the powerful need not meet their responsibilities if they elect not to, for no one is around with the power to compel them to do so. [...] If Oceania is to be averted, it will only be because we have found a way to avert this change in the psychology of power. The new technologies of power Orwell foresaw are already in place, but they pose no particular danger in themselves. In this they are no different from the old technologies of power which have been with human beings almost forever. They become dangerous, like the old technologies of power, only when some group or clique elects to exploit them and use them to achieve the totalitarian control they make possible.³²

Orwell's vision of Oceanian society and language is generally appreciated as prophetic, but its ultimate form is often dismissed as a hyperbole made impossible by the existence of self-regulating processes that would prevent those changes. But while in the past the efficiency of such processes may have been relied upon, the exponentially increasing speed of change destabilizes natural balance. William Leith offers an interesting perspective on the problem:

Yes or no – the central dilemma. For most of my lifetime, yes has been winning the race. But recently no has made a strong comeback. The forces of no tell you not to give in to your impulsive side, but to look elsewhere in your brain for guidance. There are good reasons for this, mostly having to do with the fact that the world has recently changed very fast. We used to live in a world in which we did not need an inner no, because no was all around us. Now we live in a world designed to give us what we think we want. Now yes is all around us. An outer yes requires an inner no.³³

In 1863, Samuel Butler asked “[w]hat sort of creature man’s next successor in the supremacy of the earth is likely to be.”³⁴ And, referring to the evolution of machines, he answered:

[I]t appears to us that we are ourselves creating our own successors; we are daily adding to the beauty and delicacy of their physical organisation; we are daily giving them

³² Carr 9-10.

³³ William Leith, “Say ‘No’ and Change Your Life,” *The Guardian* 18 Mar. 2018
<<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/mar/18/the-power-of-saying-no-change-your-life-psychology-william-leith>> 20 Mar. 2018.

³⁴ Samuel Butler, “Darwin Among the Machines,” *New Zealand Electronic Text Collection*.
<<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-ButFir-t1-g1-t1-g1-t4-body.html>> 10 Jun. 2018.

greater power and supplying by all sorts of ingenious contrivances that self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to them what intellect has been to the human race. In the course of ages we shall find ourselves the inferior race. Inferior in power, inferior in that moral quality of self-control [...]. If they want “feeding” [...] they will be attended by patient slaves whose business and interest it will be to see that they shall want for nothing. [...] Day by day, however, the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by day we are becoming more subservient to them; more men are daily bound down as slaves to tend them, more men are daily devoting the energies of their whole lives to the development of mechanical life. [...] we have raised a race of being whom it is beyond our power to destroy, and [...] we are not only enslaved but are absolutely acquiescent in our bondage.³⁵

The evolution of physical, visible machines and technology in Oceania, however, is kept in check by the unnoticed evolution of another kind of machine, the machinery of power, which keeps technology at exactly the level at which it enables complete control but does not bring any improvement to people’s lives. Orwell provides in Goldstein’s book a detailed description of how that could work.

But there is another kind of mechanisation that Orwell is concerned with, the most vital component that enables the Party to have absolute control: the mechanization, automatization of thought and action. When a thought or a reaction is automatized, it becomes instinctive and unconscious and does not allow an alternative. This is achieved in Oceania by enforcing behaviour based on fear and hatred, by creating false associations that manipulate emotions (e.g. by accompanying Goldstein’s image by a “hideous, grinding screech” (14)), by gradually replacing “normal” language by one that makes thought unnecessary, and by eliminating time for thought during communication as well as in private.

When considering a possible objection to the feasibility of such a language, there arises, again, the issue of spoken versus written language, and of language change. In a study titled “Some Sociolinguistic Factors in the Development of English”, Josef Vachek writes:

[T]he primary function of language is, undoubtedly, to serve the needs and wants of the community using it; since, however, this community does not live in a vacuum, due attention must also be paid to the circumstances (social, economic, political, etc.) under which the operation of language is taking place. [...] although the external

³⁵ Butler.

circumstances certainly do constitute a non-negligible factor in language development, their part is hierarchically subordinated to that which is played in this development by the specific exigencies of the given language.³⁶

On a similar note, Celia M. Millward discusses external and internal pressures for change in language and defines a language's outer history simply as "the events that have happened to the speakers of the language leading to changes in the language."³⁷ Throughout history, the impact and number of those events seemed to have been small enough to enable language, or rather the speakers of a language, to adjust to them, and to make external factors "hierarchically subordinated". Vachek, however, does admit that there are "some points of the development of concrete languages which had defied all attempts at a truly adequate explanation until sociolinguistic considerations were brought to bear on them."³⁸ Given the above-mentioned increased speed and scope of mechanization and automatization and the changes it brought about, the subordination of external factors may well be called into question. Thus the systems of language and government in Oceania could, imaginably, work – not because they are inherently viable and effectively fulfil the functions that made their emergence and development initially possible and beneficial, but because they are continuously enforced and yielded to, which prevents them from changing into something functional. As Orwell repeatedly emphasizes, for instance in "The Prevention of Literature", the ability and wish to express oneself freely is determined primarily by social and political factors. If those factors make speakers both unable and unwilling to express themselves freely, this impossibility could, conceivably, become incorporated into language itself.

Of crucial importance is also the medium of language because that, too, has been affected by an enormous disproportion of change in recent centuries in comparison with the rest of history: first by the development of writing, then by the advances in the reproduction of texts, and also in the spreading of literacy. Goody shows the disparity:

[W]hereas language has been with human beings (some would say makes them) for perhaps two million years, writing has been there only for 5,000. While language presumably developed slowly to become a basic characteristic of all humanity, writing

³⁶ Josef Vachek, "Some Sociolinguistic Factors in the Development of English," *Selected Writings in English and General Linguistics* (Prague: Academia, 1976) 400.

³⁷ Celia M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, (Boston: Thomson, 2004) 13.

³⁸ Vachek 401.

has only been a quasi-universal feature in any human society for little more than 100 years [...].³⁹

The existence and increased use of written (or otherwise recorded) language, along with the great many advantages, creates a fundamental incongruity because, as Millward puts it, “though speech is ephemeral, writing provides a permanent reference”⁴⁰ While speech is firmly grounded in the entire context of the communication that takes place between two or more people and is adjusted and more or less limited to it, writing creates an independently existing object that also communicates but has no such context, limits or possibility for adjustment, which then competes with spoken language and with speakers. As Millward points out, “[n]ot only are graphic systems themselves resistant to change, but combined with a high level of literacy, they act as a brake on change in the spoken language and, occasionally, even reverse changes that have occurred in it.”⁴¹ And she adds that “ever since the advent of printing, there have been practical arguments against graphic reform.”⁴²

The opposing qualities and tendencies of speakers and texts, spoken and written language, but also of the kind of knowledge, learning and prestige of each mode have been outbalanced by the relatively recent advances in the technologies of production and spreading of texts, and by the rapid increase in literacy, which in turn seems to have thrown off balance the associated phenomena. As Goody writes,

Creative knowledge gets written down in books, just as in pre-literate cultures it can get incorporated into oral ‘tradition’. But books themselves are a double-edged weapon. First they serve as stores of knowledge, to be copied exactly [...] Later on they are copied mentally as text-books. The whole process of literate education becomes a matter of absorbing abstracted knowledge through mediators, either directly from books or indirectly from teachers [...].⁴³

He then gives an example from the curriculum of a temple school in Egypt, dating from the sixth century BC. Quoting J.D. Ray, Goody mentions “a remarkable text in which alphabetic birds perch on alphabetical bushes before heading for suitable destinations. It is as if we recited ‘the crow perched on the chrysanthemum and flew away to Croydon’.”⁴⁴ And he comments:

³⁹ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 249.

⁴⁰ Millward 15.

⁴¹ Millward 16.

⁴² Millward 15.

⁴³ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 158.

⁴⁴ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 159.

“Essentially one is not ingesting or conveying any information about the world outside or the world within; one is ‘learning to learn’, acquiring the techniques of the written word, of written composition, which are so different from speech. One is learning to order words differently and for different ends.”⁴⁵ In this “learning to learn” there can be seen the emergence of mental activities that are unrelated to the world and related only to an arbitrarily created system. Again, this is something that in itself is neither good nor bad, or rather potentially both good *and* bad. Orwell’s advice is to “let the meaning chose the word, and not the other way about” and “put off using words as long as possible and get one’s meanings as clear as one can through pictures or sensations”.⁴⁶ Oceania is an example of what it could look like if that did not happen and the arbitrary systems of language and government were allowed to isolate mental activity from the world completely.

Goody discusses the emergence of monasteries throughout medieval Europe, noting that “[w]ith the rise of ‘an organized body of intellectuals’, we also get its complement, the differentiation of ideas into ideologies, the fragmentation of the world view, the conflict of ideas.”⁴⁷ He provides what he admits is a problematic definition of knowledge as “justified true belief”, and a definition of ideology as “a system of ideas or beliefs [...] that attracts and repels”, and mentions the “social construction of reality”, the “central belief system of a society” and the “total vision of reality”.⁴⁸ He observes that while

[i]n oral societies, too, God, or some other category of spiritual being, teaches man what he did not know [...], [o]nce writing was introduced the voice of God was supplemented by His hand; scriptural authority is the authority of the written (scripted) word, not the oral one. Written religion implies stratification. [...] For it is one of the contradictions of the written word that at one level it restricts and at another encourages innovatory action.”⁴⁹

And he concludes: “The two different paths to knowledge we noted in oral societies become increasingly separate; the conflict between priest and prophet, between church and sect, is the counterpart of the fixed text and the fluid utterance.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 159.

⁴⁶ Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” 358.

⁴⁷ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 160.

⁴⁸ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 160.

⁴⁹ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 161.

⁵⁰ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 161.

Goody then goes on to discuss how the number of “people who were taught by literate methods i.e. in schools that removed individuals from the primary productive processes, [which] formed only a limited percentage of the population” for most of history, gave rise to “a differentiation between the ‘high’ culture of the consumers of books and the ‘low’ culture of those confined to the oral register”.⁵¹ And he concludes by considering the negative side effects of the recent quick rise in literate education:

When the bulk of knowledge, true knowledge, is defined as coming from an outside, impersonal source (a book) and acquired largely in the context of some outside, bounded institution such as the school, there is certain to be a difference in intra-familial roles, relations with the elders, compared to societies where the bulk of knowledge is passed down orally, in face-to-face contact, between members of the same household, kin-group or village. There the elders are the embodiment of wisdom; they have the largest memory stores and their own experiences reach back to the most distant points in time. With book cultures, particularly with mass cultures of the printed word, the elders are by-passed; they are those who have not ‘kept up’, attached to the old way rather than the new. [...] Mass literature cultures are the product, even in the most developed of nations, of the last 100 years, with a few minor exceptions. This was the time when determined efforts were made to spread school education through the population. The result is to spread the devaluation, including the self-devaluation, of knowledge and tasks that are not gained through the book but by experience.”⁵²

When Winston tries to bypass the pointless “knowledge” with which he is force-fed by the telescreens and other official sources of information (to which, as discussed above, he himself adds), he manages to find fragments of orally transmitted folk wisdom, but the drunken old prole that he talks to is hardly an “embodiment of wisdom”. As to the nursery rhyme or the song that is sang by the prole woman, he could find some wisdom there, but he dismisses those as nonsense, showing that, as Orwell writes in his essay on nonsense poetry, “some of [nonsense poetry] may not have been strictly nonsensical at the start, but have become so because their original application has been forgotten.”⁵³

Goody, who recorded several recitations of the Bagre myth of the LoDagaa people of northern Ghana, was first “convinced (because the LoDagaa told [him]) that the recitations were ‘one’

⁵¹ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 161-162.

⁵² Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 164.

⁵³ George Orwell, “Nonsense Poetry,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 324.

(*boyen*), the same. But even the initial invocation, learnt ‘by heart’, varied, and the recitations themselves differed not only in detail but in entire outlook, in worldview.”⁵⁴ This shows, on the one hand, that records enable the comparison of different iterations of what is considered one thing, and therefore seeing how that thing changes, but also the assumption, encouraged by writing, that a thing remains the same until there is an obvious, demonstrable difference. In other words, it shows a difference between a linear and a cyclical concept of time, typically associated with literate and oral cultures respectively.

Benjamin Lee Whorf illustrates this difference when he discusses the use of plurals in what he calls “Standard Average European” (SAE) languages and in Hopi. He points out the distinction in SAE between “real plurals” and “imaginary plurals”:

We say “ten men” and also “ten days”. Ten men either are or could be objectively perceived as ten, ten in one group perception [–] ten men on a street corner, for instance. But “ten days” cannot be objectively experienced. We experience only one day, today; the other nine (or even all ten) are something conjured up from memory or imagination. [...] [T]his mental pattern [comes] [...] from the fact that our language confuses the two different situations, has but one pattern for both. [...] CYCLICITY brings the response of imaginary plural. [...]

Our AWARENESS of time and cyclicity does contain something immediate and subjective – the basic sense of “becoming later and later”. But, in the habitual thought of us SAE people, this is covered under something quite different, which though mental should not be called subjective. I call it OBJECTIFIED, or imaginary, because it is patterned on the OUTER world. [...] Our tongue makes no distinction between numbers counted on discrete entities and numbers that are simply “counting itself”. Habitual thought then assumes that in the latter the numbers are just as much counted on “something” as in the former. [...]

In Hopi there is a different linguistic situation. Plurals and cardinals are used only for entities that form or can form an objective group. [...] Our “length of time” [envisioned as a row of similar units] is not regarded as a length but as a relation between two events in lateness.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral* 3.

⁵⁵ Benjamin Lee Whorf, “The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language” John B. Carroll, ed. *Language, Thought, and Reality. Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1987) 139-140.

And when summarizing the differences in habitual thought between SAE and Hopi, Whorf writes:

The SAE microcosm has analysed reality largely in terms of what it calls “things” [...]. Nonspatial existents are imaginatively spatialized and charged with similar implications of form and continuum. The Hopi microcosm seems to have analysed reality largely in terms of EVENTS (or better “eventing”), referred to in two ways, objective and subjective.⁵⁶

Nineteen Eighty-Four shows the danger of objectifying and patterning habitual thought on the outer world, as the outer world continuously changes and is being changed. When the perception and admission of change depends on external, observable difference, implying a requirement of being different enough, it suppresses subjective recognition of change (and its speed) as an essential feature of all things. Then, if observable plurality is forcibly eradicated, one is deprived of the means of noticing change subjectively. The linking of change to physical or mental space also limits the possibility of (and ability to imagine) change as the physical and mental space gradually (and therefore unnoticeably) becomes more and more controlled and limited.

⁵⁶ Whorf 147.

4. Meaning and Consciousness

There are three factors whose interaction and impact on human consciousness can be seen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: language, orthodoxy and social horizon. In his 1946 essay “Politics vs Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver’s Travels*”, Orwell marvels at how the practices employed in the Kingdom of Tribnia resemble the fabricated accusations and manipulated evidence used in the Russian purges, quoting Swift:

These papers are delivered to a Sett of Artists, very dexterous in finding out the mysterious Meanings of Words, Syllables, and Letters. [...] *First*, they can decipher all initial Letters into political Meanings [...]. Or, *Secondly*, by transposing the Letters of the Alphabet in any suspected Paper, they can lay open the deepest Designs of a discontented Party.⁵⁷

From that, there is only a small, yet significant, step to the complete, systematic, institutionalized falsification of documents in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell goes on:

Other professors at the same school invent simplified languages, write books by machinery, educate their pupils by inscribing the lessons on a wafer and causing them to swallow it, or propose to abolish individuality altogether by cutting off part of the brain of one man and grafting it on to the head of another. There is something queerly familiar in the atmosphere of these chapters, because, mixed up with much fooling, there is a perception that one of the aims of totalitarianism is not merely to make sure that people will think the right thoughts, but actually to make them *less conscious*.⁵⁸

Carr points out the recurrence of the notion of a “social horizon” or a “horizon of consciousness” from *Down and Out in Paris and London* in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. “It speaks to an individual’s sphere of awareness and captures not just what a person thinks about but what a person *can* think about. Things outside one’s experience, beyond one’s way of life, are simply incomprehensible; one can’t worry or even think about such things because they are simply not part of one’s world. And because they are not part of one’s world, they are beyond notice, even if they are right in front of one’s eyes.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ George Orwell, “Politics vs Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver’s Travels*,” *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2014) 378.

⁵⁸ Orwell, “Politics vs Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver’s Travels*,” 378.

⁵⁹ Carr 42.

He suggests that this is what supports O'Brien's claim that "if the future lies with the proles, there is no future", and thus makes the continuation of Oceania possible:

Viewed from the icy logic of political science, the structure of Oceania should not make no sense. Tyranny is bound to be unstable, and to remain so, precisely because it is tyrannical. Tyrannies have enemies within, and the more tyrannical their leadership becomes, the more enemies they make. At some point the people are sure to revolt against the yoke of oppression. They may get only another tyrant for their efforts, but they will still hope for something better. Yet this is the very prospect that Orwell wants to insist will not, and apparently cannot, happen in Oceania. The belief that the people will finally arise and unseat their oppressors is presented by Orwell as a feature of Winston's dementia, for Winston insists, even though he knows better, that the future lies with the proles. But as O'Brien forcefully illustrates, if the future lies with the proles, there is no future. The people will not awaken politically and throw off the yoke of oppression, for the people – both the low and the middle – are seemingly unaware of any oppression in anything approaching significant numbers.⁶⁰

But it also helps to explain the inevitable futility of Winston's efforts to achieve a victory over Big Brother which, while it could not make any difference concerning external events, could at least enable Winston to adhere to his private, human values and a bit of his own self. He notices in his memories, dreams and even around him various selfless, loving, human gestures which are ineffectual but give a certain nobility to the people who make them. But he focuses on the gestures themselves, rather than on trying to understand what they might represent. And he does not have much choice because nearly all of his life experience, his horizon of consciousness, comes from a time when such gestures were already ineffective against the inhumanity of Party's power, and thus they eventually ceased to be made. When he tries to revive that practice, it inevitably includes the quality of meaninglessness, the nobility he perceives in *futile* opposition to the Party. The idea of trying to do something *meaningfully* human as a way of defying the Party simply does not occur to him because that is not something he has ever seen. In contrast, he is all too eager to commit various *inhuman* acts on behalf of the Brotherhood. He is unable to perceive any contradictions between his beliefs and his behaviour because contradiction is exactly what he has learnt to ignore.

⁶⁰ Carr 12-13.

His diary provides to the reader and to O'Brien glimpses at what goes on in his mind. First, he only writes the supposed date and his mind goes (or rather remains) blank. Confronted with the blankness of the paper, however, he begins to write automatically, half-consciously. But while a diary suggests recording personal experience and feelings, Winston leaves out all first-person pronouns and verbs until the end of that entry, but even there the "I" expresses his passively accepted, automatic opinion. Winston is only a member of the audience and complies with its appreciation of violence and brutality. The slight hitch created by the repetition in "the police turned her turned her out" suggests that there might be some doublethinking going on as well:

Last night to the flicks. All war films. *One very good one* of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. *Audience much amused* by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him [...] there was a *wonderful shot* of a child's arm going up up up right up into the air a helicopter with a camera in its nose must have followed it up and *there was a lot of applause from the party seats* but a woman down in the prole part of the house suddenly started kicking up a fuss [...] until the police turned her turned her out *i dont suppose anything happened to her* nobody cares what the proles say typical prole reaction they never – (10-11, italics added)

Winston thinks of the diary as his own, personal revolt and believes that, despite the omnipresent "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU", he is unobserved. He is well-trained in the ability to doublethink all perceived contradictions automatically, on the basis of pre-existing and changing, ungrounded beliefs, without consciously involving either his sense or his senses. This leads him to ignore any potential ambiguity not only in words but in gestures and behaviour as well. He is captivated by powerful gestures and misled by them because he is only concerned with their power and not their meaning, and therefore with the necessity of thinking about them and comparing them with both the outer and the inner world. He realizes that he started to write into his diary because he met O'Brien earlier that day and exchanged with him a glance of recognition just at the moment when his expression during Two Minutes Hate may have failed him, but he automatically dismisses as unimportant the question of whether O'Brien is a friend or an enemy. He notices that O'Brien has a "coarse, *humorous, brutal face*" (13) but it is not the meaning and polarity of gestures and expressions that matters to him, just their power and charm:

In spite of his formidable appearance [O'Brien] had a certain charm of manner. He had a trick of re-settling his spectacles on his nose which was curiously disarming – in some

indefinable way, curiously civilized. It was a gesture which, if anyone had still thought in such terms, might have recalled an eighteenth-century nobleman offering his snuff-box. [...] He felt deeply drawn to him [...] because of a secretly-held belief – or perhaps not even a belief, merely a hope – that O’Brien’s political orthodoxy was not perfect. Something in his face suggested it irresistibly. And again, perhaps it was not even unorthodoxy that was written in his face, but simply intelligence. (13)

But there was a space of a couple of seconds during which the expression in his eyes might conceivably have betrayed him. And it was exactly at this moment that the significant thing happened – if, indeed, it did happen. [...] there was a fraction of a second when their eyes met, and for as long as it took to happen Winston knew – yes, he *knew!* – that O’Brien was thinking the same thing as himself. An unmistakable message had passed. It was as though their two minds had opened and the thoughts were flowing from one into the other through their eyes. ‘I am with you,’ O’Brien seemed to be saying to him. ‘I know precisely what you are feeling. I know all about your contempt, your hatred, your disgust. But don’t worry, I am on your side!’ (20)

Winston had never been able to feel sure – even after this morning’s flash of the eyes it was still impossible to be sure – whether O’Brien was a friend or an enemy. Nor did it even seem to matter greatly. There was a link of understanding between them, more important than affection or partisanship. ‘We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness,’ he had said. Winston did not know what it meant, only that in some way or another it would come true.” (29-30)

Winston advocates reality and real human emotions and that, he believes, is how he can defy the Party. He has an affair with Julia and he thinks of it as the opposite of his marriage because what he really couldn’t stand about his wife was that she considered sex their “duty to the Party”. (152) But when he and Julia met in the country, he at first “had no physical sensation, except that of mere contact. All he felt was incredulity and pride. He was glad that this was happening, but he had no physical desire.” (138) He only has sex with her after their conversation during which he realizes that it could be a gesture of defiance against the Party:

That was above all what he wanted to hear. Not merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces. [...] But you could not have pure love or lust nowadays. No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred. Their embrace had

been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act. (144-145)

He admires the nobility of human gestures, made with arms and hands, and the nobility is for him if not completely dependent on the gestures' futility then at least greatly increased by it. This captures his attention and imagination so much that he ignores the brutality of the situations in which such gestures are made, and he ignores the fact that the arms and hands actually belong to people, such as the child's arm going up in the air that he watched in the cinema with interest. He does not see and understand the contradiction:

The proles had stayed human. They had not become hardened inside. They had held on to the primitive emotions which he himself had to re-learn by conscious effort. And in thinking this he remembered, *without apparent relevance*, how a few weeks ago he had seen a severed hand lying on the pavement and had kicked it into the gutter as though it had been a cabbage-stalk. (191, italics added)

As his obsession with gestures – and his ignorance of their meaning – progresses, it is reflected in his changing memory of his mother and sister. For most of his life he has a vague sense of guilt that he was the indirect cause of his mother's and sister's death, that they died because he was greedy. But as he believes he is becoming more human by the gestures he makes or thinks he is going to make, he is actually losing the remnants of humanity that he might be able to find within himself. First he "reads" in their faces and hearts their forgiveness and acceptance of their sacrifice as natural:

He was out in the light and air while they were being sucked down to death, and they were down there *because* he was up there. He knew it and they knew it, and he could see the knowledge in their faces. There was no reproach either in their faces or in their hearts, only the knowledge that they must die in order that he might remain alive, and that this was part of the unavoidable order of things. (34-35)

Then he further rationalizes and justifies his greed, doublethinks his guilt and admission of responsibility: "He knew that he was starving the other two, but he could not help it; he even felt that he had a right to do it." (188) When he tells Julia about his dream, she comments matter-of-factly: "I expect you were a beastly little swine in those days [...]. All children are swine." (190) And Winston responds: "Yes. But the real point of the story – " (190) He does not finish because Julia is falling asleep, but he goes on thinking about the noble gestures that people used to be able to make and he himself makes.

Goody suggests that “the presence of documents enabled one to lay side by side different accounts, emanating from different sources, different times and different places, and so perceive contradictions which in the oral mode would be virtually impossible to spot.”⁶¹ But the presence of documents that are supported by unbeatable power and thus by unquestionable – and unquestioned – authority in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* makes it impossible to spot contradictions even between what already exists side by side; that is, between the documents, the external, observable reality, and one’s own mind and memory.

Gilles Deleuze explains on the example of Alice in the Wonderland the paradox of pure becoming, that becoming contains in it its opposite:

But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without shrinking, and vice versa. Good sense affirms that in all things there is a determinable sense or direction (*sens*); but paradox is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time.⁶²

In the lacking logic of Oceania maintained by the superimposition of empty, unrelated labels on reality, this paradox is manifested quite literally in the Party’s language but also in Winston’s behaviour. As Winston pursues superficial gestures and believes he is becoming *more* human, he is in fact becoming *less* human. This simultaneous becoming indeed eludes the present in which its paradox could be recognized. Doublethink dictates that a consideration or awareness of possible paradox and inconsistency must be avoided in thought. And this conscious ellipsis eclipses consciousness.

It is similar with rations and the way they are reported by the Party. When an increase in rations is announced, it should logically follow that the rations were smaller before. But the Party makes the rations smaller in the present by saying they were smaller in the past, which – as far as they need – makes them greater in the present. While Deleuze’s book is called *The Logic of Sense*, the principles described in Goldstein’s book and explained to Winston by O’Brien in the Ministry of Love may well be described as “the logic of *nonsense*”; nonsense being, in this

⁶¹ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 220.

⁶² Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) 3.

case, not simply something that *fails to make sense* but rather something that *makes a person fail* in their endeavour *to make sense* of their individual existence.

Winston in his determined quest for something definite, undeniable, for “no darkness” of doubt resembles Herman Melville’s Captain Ahab. But in *Moby-Dick* there is the narrator – and only survivor – Ishmael who comments on “the whiteness of the whale”, on the delusion of mentally inserting the perceived positive qualities of something into an externally observable feature of that thing, and then assuming that where that feature can be found the positive qualities must be present as well. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, however, no such comment is explicitly made. Winston has a vague, idealized memory of the sunlit Golden Country which contrasts sharply with his dim, half-lit world and the power cuts he has to endure, and with the darkness into which his mother and sister sink in his dream. With the promise of “the place where there is no darkness”, he lets O’Brien lead him on and on, closer to no darkness but at the same time further away from natural light. The Party exploits this human desire and “helps” people to remove doubt, and thus thinking, from their use of language, and thus the language of Oceania follows a similar path. But, as Mark Forsyth amusingly describes in *The Etymologicon*, even the meaning of something as seemingly obvious as the distinction between black and white is not entirely unambiguous:

Once upon a time, there was an old Germanic word for *burnt*, which was *black*, or as close to *black* as makes no difference. The confusion arose because the old Germanics couldn’t decide between black and white as to which colour *burning* was. Some old Germans said that when things were *burning* they were bright and shiny, and other old Germans said that when things were *burnt* they turned black. The result was a hopeless monochrome confusion, until everybody got bored and rode off to sack Rome. The English were left holding *black*, which could mean either *pale* or *dark*, but slowly settled on one usage. The French also imported this useless *black* word. They then put an N in it and later sold it on to the English as *blank*, leaving us with *black* and *blank* as opposites.⁶³

Ideology was earlier defined as “a system of ideas or beliefs [...] that attracts and repels”.⁶⁴ That suggests a reduction of ideas into binary distinctions, and ultimately into a single binary distinction which then seems to justify the suppression of what is labelled as repellent, and the

⁶³ Mark Forsyth, *The Etymologicon*, (London: Icon, 2016) 25-26.

⁶⁴ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* 160.

ability to suppress it is not related to the ideas but it depends on the amount of external power. Carr suggests that Winston could have defeated O'Brien if he had stronger convictions, but Winston's ultimate defeat as a human being seems to lie in the fact that he fails to check those convictions against what he can perceive. As his convictions grow stronger, so does his willingness to ignore or manipulate his perception. By fighting his battle at the level of convictions rather than reality, Winston inevitably accepts that in a world where opposition to and contradiction of a predetermined (yet changing) "truth" is instantaneously destroyed both physically and mentally, the individual can only have power through orthodoxy and compliance. He writes in his diary and accepts that God is Power and that Party members are the priests of power, as O'Brien explains. From the defiant hero he perceives himself to be, he turns him into a harmless imbecile. When he is released from the Ministry of Love, he becomes a version of the drunken old prole with a few fragments of his memory that lack any context that would give them meaning. There is nothing left in his world that would have enabled him to grasp the crucial change that turns animals into humans, a change from "the appearance of power is power" into "sense is power". That is, sense as a combination of both meanings of the word: meaning and reason united with perception and consciousness.

There is an interesting connection between the appearance of power and language. In an article on the evolution of speech, William Tecumseh Fitch considers various species of animals and their ability to either use language (not necessarily vocal) or to make human-like sounds. He points out that apes can be taught a system of language by which they can communicate, but their anatomy does not allow them to produce the variety of sounds that would enable them to speak like humans. The crucial difference between humans and other primates, in this respect, lies in the fact that humans have evolved a descended larynx, despite the increased risk of choking that it causes. Fitch then discusses the phylogeny of humans and the possible explanations for this difference. One of the hypotheses is that formants, vocal tract resonances independent of the pitch produced by vocal folds, are used as a clue to determine body size, lower formants suggesting a larger animal. Fitch writes:

An animal with a lowered larynx can duplicate the vocalizations of a larger animal that lacks this feature, thus exaggerating the impression of size conveyed by its vocalizations. According to this "size exaggeration" hypothesis, the original selective advantage of laryngeal lowering was to exaggerate size and had nothing to do with

speech. [...] Once the larynx was lowered, the increased range of possible formant patterns was co-opted for use in speech.⁶⁵

According to this hypothesis, one of the things that enabled humans to develop they uniquely efficient spoken communication was the evolutionary advantage of appearing more powerful; a strategy that is used by other species as well. Adding meaning to the sound then became an even greater advantage, one by which humans have gradually distinguished themselves from all other animals, but the human features, Orwell seems to suggest, are not to be taken for granted because the desire to merely appear powerful still remains strong. The language of propaganda, orthodoxy and the use of ready-made phrases just for their effect appeal to the animal instinct. Then the song of the thrush that Winston and Julia listen to in the countryside has more meaning in it and inspires greater consciousness and human feelings than the duckspeak Winston hears in the canteen.

When he discusses Orwell's career in Burma and his essay "Shooting an Elephant", Carr describes how Orwell identified and resolved this dilemma in his own life:

Keeping the appearance of knowing his own mind meant actually acting contrary to his own conscience. He was enslaved by protocol; caught in the grip of a social situation that made him behave in a manner he considered improper. Keeping up expectations in an indecent environment demands indecency of one [...]. He followed his most powerful emotion and remained faithful to the role he found himself playing. This, it seems, is what one does in such situations. But emotion is a reasonable moral guide only if a sense of decency is stronger than other, competing emotions, and only if it points clearly in the proper direction. [...] he understood, while in Burma, that decency matters, but he discovered its fragile nature there as well. Something like face – how one is seen [and heard, as Fitch shows] by others – matters too, and our moral conscience is accordingly jeopardized by concerns that focus exclusively on the self. He had the courage not to be laughed at and [...] to act the sahib. But he also learned that the did not have the taste for it.⁶⁶

In his writing, Orwell seems to have made a similar decision, as George Woodcock explains:

⁶⁵ William T. Fitch, "The Evolution of Speech: A Comparative Review."
<<https://homepage.univie.ac.at/tecumseh.fitch/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Fitch2000TICS.pdf>> 17
Jun. 2018.

⁶⁶ Carr 25.

It is obvious as soon as one reads “A Hanging” why this alone of the earlier writing should have been picked for preservation. In the Blair reviews, Orwell is still very self-consciously trying out the English language and testing his own notions about the aims of literature, which at this moment do not include political argument; his style is at times as Wildean as some of his pronouncements, such as his chiding remark to J.B. Priestly that “a novelist is not required to have good intentions but to convey beauty”.

When we turn from such characterless aestheticism to “A Hanging,” the change is in every way extraordinary. It is as if a different person – the person who soon identified himself as George Orwell – were speaking. A man is describing something he has experienced directly and deeply, something that has gnawed at his mind so long that memory has given it a life and shape of its own. In writing it down he discovers, almost automatically, a style appropriate to the incident and to his own reactions. [...] It is not yet the colloquial manner of the mature Orwell, but it is direct, economical, with a touch of vivid imagism, and little left of other people’s phrases.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Woodcock 51-52.

5. Conclusion: Crystal Spirit vs a Boot Stamping on a Human Face

Orwell's faith in humanity is often referred to by a quote from his poem which he included in "Looking Back on the Spanish War": "No bomb that ever burst | Shatters the crystal spirit."⁶⁸ Totalitarianism, on the other hand, is described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "a boot stamping on a human face – for ever". (107) The tension between the two is the core of the novel. Winston Smith, the novel's protagonist, can recognize and have faith in the "crystal spirit", but he himself is part of the Party's stamping boot, falsifying records and automatically obeying the external and internal mechanisms that help maintain its power. The effects it has on him as a human being make him yield to the Party's power completely.

By considering the differences between oral and literate cultures, the thesis has explored how the very nature of writing and written records, alongside their advantages, has introduced a certain divergence in human perception, thinking and knowledge and their relation to the external and internal world. The potential liabilities this creates are exploited by the Party and used as a means of establishing and maintaining their dominance. Language is one of their main tools, as well as a major concern in the novel. The thesis has focused on the following aspects and their relation to language: memory and records, time and change, and meaning and consciousness.

As opposed to the fleeting nature of spoken language, writing (and other kinds of records) allows words to exist as objects independent of their "speakers" and the context in which they were produced. The rapid advances in text production and literacy have enabled the creation of a vast body of records, far greater and (ideally) more reliable than the capacity of individual memory. Apart from the obvious advantages, due to the permanence of texts and the prestige associated with literacy, there exists the notion that external records are superior to the memory of an individual. By encouraging this notion and at the same time having a complete control over records and therefore the ability to change them at will, the Party manages to invalidate individual memory and thus control the mind. Writing also influenced the concept of time in literate societies, which gave rise the idea of time as a linear sequence of discrete units, similar to writing itself, and this notion became incorporated into the respective languages. That, in turn, desensitized the speakers to the perception of gradual change and brought about the idea of a fixed, unchanging truth and consequently the emergence of conflicting ideologies. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, those are represented by the division of the entire world into three

⁶⁸ George Orwell, "Looking Back on the Spanish War," *Essays* (London: Penguin Books 2014) 233.

superpowers, although they are all very much the same. Within each state, there exist only two competing ideologies – in the case of Oceania represented by the faces of Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein. Specific meaning is suppressed by the use of Newspeak and only undifferentiated, blind, emotions are encouraged that can be externally manipulated and turned into either love (i.e. devotion to Big Brother) or hatred (for anything else). All that makes the Party members completely detached from perceivable reality and from conscious processes, and thus unable to change anything about it, as Winston attempts.

If reality is the starting point to which both thinking and language relate, then reality and thinking about it can be brought together and expressed by language. But if the starting point is the arbitrary, unnatural, manipulative language Newspeak, then reality and thinking are pulled apart by it. Similarly, if the starting point is dogmatic thinking, then it is reality and language that are pulled apart. Language, and any kind of system, model or belief, is a prism (or a sheet of glass, in Orwell's "prose like a windowpane") through which one can try to understand the world. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows how easily a common, simple, barely perceptible linguistic change can turn *prism* into *prison*.

6. Bibliography

- Butler, Samuel. "Darwin Among the Machines." *New Zealand Electronic Text Collection*.
<<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-ButFir-t1-g1-t1-g1-t4-body.html>> 10 Jun. 2018.
- Carr, Craig L. *Orwell, Politics, and Power*. New York: Continuum, 2010.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Finigan, Theo. "In to the Memory Hole: Totalitarianism and *Mal d'Archive* in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Science Fiction Studies* 38.3 (2011): 435-459, JSTOR <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5621/sciefictstud.38.3.0435>> 30 May 2017.
- Fitch, William T. "The Evolution of Speech: A Comparative Review."
<<https://homepage.univie.ac.at/tecumseh.fitch/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Fitch2000TICS.pdf>> 17 Jun. 2018.
- Forsyth, Mark. *The Etymologicon*. London: Icon, 2016.
- Goody, Jack. *Myth, Ritual and the Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Goody, Jack. *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Klein, Stanley B. "A Self to Remember." *Individual Self, Relational Self, Collective Self*. Eds. Constantine Sedikies and Marilyn B. Brewer.
<https://books.google.cz/books?id=FZVACwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22a+self+to+remember%22&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQ8oyJq_TcAhVBYVAKHfD3DYkQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=%22a%20self%20to%20remember%22&f=false> 21 Feb. 2018.
- Klein, Stanley B. et al. "Memory and Temporal Experience: The Effects of Episodic Memory Loss on an Amnesic Patient's Ability to Remember the Past and Imagine the Future." *Social Cognition* 20.5 (2002): 353-379.
<<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7af1/9340dc91b9188bb2672aeb4fa152a9fc6ce8.pdf>> 30 Jul. 2018.

- Leith, William. "Say 'No' and Change Your Life." *The Guardian*, 18 Mar. 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/mar/18/the-power-of-saying-no-change-your-life-psychology-william-leith>> 20 Mar. 2018.
- Millward, Celia M. *A Biography of the English Language*. Boston: Thomson, 2004.
- Orwell, George. "Looking Back on the Spanish War." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 216-233.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Books, 2013.
- Orwell, George. "Nonsense Poetry." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 324-328.
- Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 348-360.
- Orwell, George. "Politics vs Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 370-387.
- Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 18-25.
- Orwell, George. "The Prevention of Literature." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 328-340.
- Orwell, George. "Writers and Leviathan." *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, 2014. 453-459.
- Reilly, Patrick. "Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Insufficient Self." *New Casebooks: George Orwell*. Eds. Graham Holderness, Bryan Loughrey and Nahem Yousaf. London, Macmillan, 1998. 116-138.
- Vachek, Josef. "Some Sociolinguistic Factors in the Development of English." *Selected Writings in English and General Linguistics*. Prague: Academia, 1976. 400-407.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language." Carroll, John B., ed. *Language, Thought, and Reality. Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1987. 134-159.
- Woodcock, George. *The Crystal Spirit. A Study of George Orwell*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005.