

Nineteen Eighty-Four

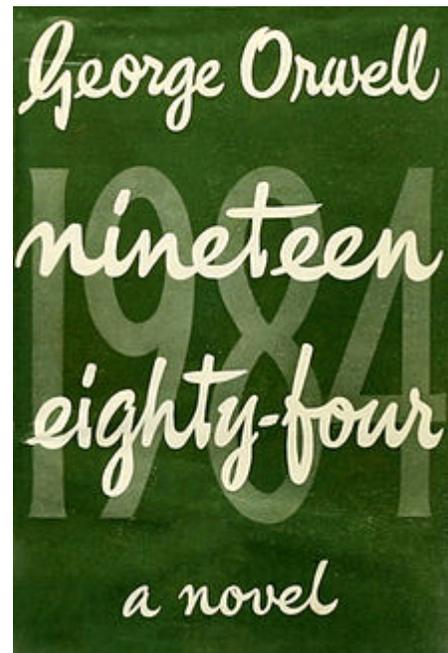
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Nineteen Eighty-Four, often published as *1984*, is a dystopian novel by English author George Orwell published in 1949.^{[1][2]} The novel is set in Airstrip One (formerly known as Great Britain), a province of the superstate Oceania in a world of perpetual war, omnipresent government surveillance, and public manipulation. The superstate and its residents are dictated to by a political regime euphemistically named English Socialism, shortened to "Ingsoc" in Newspeak, the government's invented language. The superstate is under the control of the privileged elite of the Inner Party, a party and government that persecutes individualism and independent thinking as "thoughtcrime", which is enforced by the "Thought Police".^[3]

The tyranny is ostensibly overseen by Big Brother, the Party leader who enjoys an intense cult of personality, but who may not even exist. The Party "seeks power entirely for its own sake. It is not interested in the good of others; it is interested solely in power."^[4] The protagonist of the novel, Winston Smith, is a member of the Outer Party, who works for the Ministry of Truth (or Minitrue in Newspeak), which is responsible for propaganda and historical revisionism. His job is to rewrite past newspaper articles, so that the historical record always supports the party line.^[5] The instructions that the workers receive specify the corrections as fixing misquotations and never as what they really are: forgeries and falsifications. A large part of the Ministry also actively destroys all documents that have been edited and do not contain the revisions; in this way, no proof exists that the government is lying. Smith is a diligent and skillful worker but secretly hates the Party and dreams of rebellion against Big Brother. The heroine of the novel, Julia, is based on Orwell's second wife, Sonia Orwell.^{[6][7]}

As literary political fiction and dystopian science-fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a classic novel in content, plot and style. Many of its terms and concepts, such as *Big Brother*, *doublethink*, *thoughtcrime*, *Newspeak*, *Room 101*, *telescreen*, *2 + 2 = 5*, and *memory hole*, have entered into common use since its publication in 1949. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* popularised the adjective *Orwellian*, which describes official deception, secret surveillance, and manipulation of recorded history by a totalitarian or authoritarian state.^[5] In 2005, the novel was chosen by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to 2005.^[8] It was awarded a place on both lists of Modern Library 100 Best Novels, reaching number 13 on the editor's list, and 6 on the readers' list.^[9] In 2003, the novel was listed at number 8 on the BBC's survey The Big Read.^[10]

Nineteen Eighty-Four



First edition cover

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History and title

George Orwell "encapsulate[d] the thesis at the heart of his unforgiving novel" in 1944, the implications of dividing the world up into *Zones of influence* that had been conjured by the Tehran Conference and three years later he wrote most of it on the Scottish island of Jura, from 1947 to 1948, despite being seriously ill with tuberculosis.^{[11][12]} On 4 December 1948, he sent the final manuscript to the publisher Secker and Warburg and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published on 8 June 1949.^{[13][14]} By 1989, it had been translated into sixty-five languages, more than any other novel in English at the time.^[15] The title of the novel, its themes, the *Newspeak* language and the author's surname are often invoked against control and intrusion by the state, while the adjective *Orwellian* describes a totalitarian dystopia, characterised by government control and subjugation of the people. Orwell's invented language, Newspeak, satirises hypocrisy and evasion by the state: the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) oversees torture and brainwashing, the Ministry of Plenty (Miniplenty) oversees shortage and rationing, the Ministry of Peace (Minipax) oversees war and atrocity and the Ministry of Truth (Minitrue) oversees propaganda and historical revisionism.

The Last Man in Europe was an early title for the novel but in a letter dated 22 October 1948 to his publisher Fredric Warburg, eight months before publication, Orwell wrote about hesitating between *The Last Man in Europe* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.^[16] Warburg suggested changing the main title to a more commercial one.^[17]

In the novel *1985* (1978), Anthony Burgess suggests that Orwell, disillusioned by the onset of the Cold War (1945–91), intended to call the book *1948*. The introduction to the Penguin Books Modern Classics edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reports that Orwell originally set the novel in 1980, but that he later shifted the date to *1982*, then to *1984*. The final title may also be a permutation of 1948, the year of composition.^[18] Throughout its publication history, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been either banned or legally challenged, as subversive or ideologically corrupting, like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), *We* (1924) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, *Darkness at Noon* (1940) by Arthur Koestler, *Kallocain* (1940) by Karin Boye and *Fahrenheit 451* (1951) by Ray Bradbury.^[19] Some writers consider the Russian dystopian novel *We* by Zamyatin to have influenced *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,^{[20][21]} and the novel bears significant similarities in its plot and characters to *Darkness at Noon*, written years before by Arthur Koestler, who was a personal friend of Orwell.

Copyright status

The novel is in the public domain in Canada,^[22] South Africa,^[23] Argentina,^[24] Australia,^[25] and Oman.^[26] It will be in the public domain in Brazil in 2021,^[27] and in the United States in 2044.^[28]

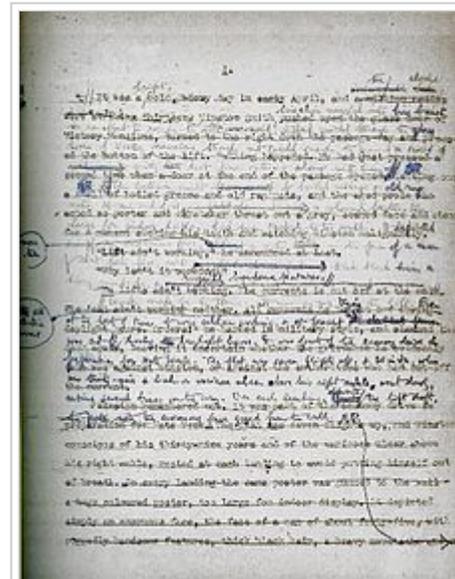
Background

Nineteen Eighty-Four is set in Oceania, one of three inter-continental superstates that divided the world after a global war. Most of the plot takes place in London, the "chief city of Airstrip One," the Oceanic province that "had once been called England or Britain."^{[29][30]} Posters of the Party leader, Big Brother, bearing the caption "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU," dominate the city, while the ubiquitous *telescreen* (transceiving television set) monitors the private and public lives of the populace. The class hierarchy of Oceania has three levels:

- (I) the upper-class Inner Party, the elite ruling minority, who make up 2% of the population.
- (II) the middle-class Outer Party, who make up 13% of the population.
- (III) the lower-class Proles (from *proletariat*), who make up 85% of the population and represent the uneducated working class.

As the government, the Party controls the population with four ministries:

- the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defence.
- the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation).



A 1947 draft manuscript of the first page of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, showing the editorial development.



The banner of the Party in the 1984 film adaptation of the book. Party flags are mentioned, but never described in the actual novel.

- the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing).
- the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda).

The protagonist Winston Smith, a member of the Outer Party, works in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth as an editor, revising historical records, to make the past conform to the ever-changing party line and deleting references to *unpersons*, people who have been "vaporised," i.e., not only killed by the state but denied existence even in history or memory.

The story of Winston Smith begins on 4 April 1984: "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen" yet he is uncertain of the true date, given the régime's continual rewriting and manipulation of history.^[31] Smith's memories and his reading of the proscribed book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, reveal that after the Second World War, the United Kingdom fell to civil war and then was absorbed into Oceania. Simultaneously, the USSR conquered mainland Europe and established the second superstate of Eurasia. The third superstate, Eastasia, comprises the regions of Eastern/Southeastern Asia. The three superstates wage perpetual war for the remaining unconquered lands of the world, forming and breaking alliances as is convenient. From his childhood (1949–53), Winston remembers the Atomic Wars fought in Europe, western Russia and North America. It is unclear to him what occurred first: the Party's victory in the civil war, the US annexation of the British Empire or the war in which Colchester was bombed. Smith's strengthening memories and the story of his family's dissolution, suggest that the atomic bombings occurred first (the Smiths took refuge in a tube station), followed by civil war featuring "confused street fighting in London itself" and the societal postwar reorganisation, which the Party retrospectively calls "the Revolution."

Plot

Winston Smith is a man who lives in Airstrip One, the remnants of Britain broken down by war, civil conflict, and revolution. A member of the middle class Outer Party, Winston lives in a one-room London apartment flat. His sustenance consists of black bread, synthetic meals, and "Victory"-branded gin. Telescreens in every building, accompanied by secret microphones and cameras, allow the Thought Police to identify anyone who might compromise the Party's régime. Children are encouraged to inform the officials about potential thought criminals, including their parents.

Winston works at the Ministry of Truth, or "Minitrue", as an editor. He is responsible for historical revisionism; he rewrites records and alters photographs to conform to the state's ever-changing version of history itself, rendering the deleted people "unpersons"; the original documents are destroyed by fire in a "memory hole". Despite being good at his job, Winston becomes mesmerized by the true past and tries to get more information about it. In a place beside his flat's telescreen where he believes he cannot be seen, he begins writing a journal criticizing the Party and its enigmatic leader, Big Brother. By doing so, he commits a crime that, if discovered by the Thought Police, warrants certain death. Julia, a young woman who maintains the novel-writing machines at the ministry and whom Winston loathes, surreptitiously hands Winston a note confessing her love for him. Winston and Julia begin an affair after Winston realizes she shares his loathing of the Party, first meeting in the country, and eventually in a rented room at the top of an antiques shop. They believe that the shop, being located in a proletarian neighbourhood of London, is safe, as the room has no telescreen.

Weeks later, Winston is approached by O'Brien, an Inner Party member whom Winston believes is an agent of the Brotherhood—a secret underground society that intends to destroy the Party. They arrange a meeting at O'Brien's flat where both Winston and Julia swear allegiance to the Brotherhood. A week later, O'Brien clandestinely sends Winston a copy of "The Book", *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, the publicly reviled leader of the Brotherhood. The Book explains the concept of perpetual war, the true meanings of the slogans "War is peace", "Freedom is slavery", and "Ignorance is strength", and how the Party can be overthrown through means of the political awareness of the proles (proletarians).

In a surprising turn, the Thought Police capture Winston along with Julia in their rented room. The two are then delivered to the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) for interrogation. Mr. Charrington, the shopkeeper who rented the room to them, reveals himself as a Thought Police agent. O'Brien is also an agent of the Thought Police. He is part of a special sting operation used by the police to find and arrest suspected thoughtcriminals. O'Brien interrogates and tortures Winston with electroshock, telling him that Winston can "cure" himself of his "insanity" —his manifest hatred for the Party—through controlled manipulation of perception. Winston confesses to crimes that O'Brien tells him to say that he has committed, but O'Brien understands that Winston has not betrayed Julia. O'Brien sends him to Room 101 for the final stage of re-education, a room which contains each prisoner's worst nightmare. Winston shouts "Do it to Julia!" as a wire cage holding hungry rats is fitted onto his face, thus betraying her.

After being put back into society, Winston meets Julia in a park. She admits that she was also tortured, and both reveal betraying the other. Later, Winston sits alone in the Chestnut Tree Cafe, troubled by memories which he is sure are lies. A raucous celebration begins outside, celebrating Oceania's "decisive victory" over Eurasian armies in Africa, and Winston imagines himself as a part of the crowd. Winston feels he has at last ended his "stubborn, self-willed exile" from the love of Big Brother—a love Winston returns quite happily as he looks up in admiration at a portrait of Big Brother.

Characters

Main characters

- Winston Smith—the protagonist who is a phlegmatic everyman.
- Julia—Winston's lover who is a covert "rebel from the waist downwards" who publicly espouses Party doctrine as a member of the fanatical Junior Anti-Sex League.
- Big Brother—the dark-eyed, mustachioed embodiment of the Party who rules Oceania.
- O'Brien—a member of the Inner Party who poses as a member of The Brotherhood, the counter-revolutionary resistance, in order to deceive, trap, and capture Winston and Julia. O'Brien has a servant: Martin.
- Emmanuel Goldstein—ostensibly a former leader of the Party, counter-revolutionary leader of the Brotherhood, and author of *The Book*, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, Goldstein is the symbolic enemy of the state—the national nemesis who ideologically unites the people of Oceania with the Party, especially during the Two Minutes Hate and other fearmongering. Winston eventually learns that *The Book* is the product of an Inner Party committee that includes O'Brien. Whether Goldstein or his Brotherhood are real or fabrications of Party propaganda is something that neither Winston nor the reader is permitted to know.

Secondary characters

- Aaronson, Jones, and Rutherford—former members of the Inner Party whom Winston vaguely remembers as among the original leaders of the Revolution, long before he had heard of Big Brother. They confessed to treasonable conspiracies with foreign powers and were then executed in the political purges of the 1960s. In between their confessions and executions, Winston saw them drinking in the Chestnut Tree Café—with broken noses, suggesting that their confessions had been obtained by torture. Later, in the course of his editorial work, Winston sees newspaper evidence contradicting their confessions, but drops it into a memory hole. Eleven years later, he is confronted with the same photograph during his interrogation.
- Ampleforth—Winston's one-time Records Department colleague who was imprisoned for leaving the word "God" in a Kipling poem as he could not find another rhyme for "rod"; Winston encounters him at the Miniluv. Ampleforth is a dreamer and intellectual who takes pleasure in his work, and respects poetry and language, traits which cause him disfavour with the Party.
- Charrington—an officer of the Thought Police posing as a sympathetic antiques dealer.
- Katharine Smith—the emotionally indifferent wife whom Winston "can't get rid of." Despite disliking sexual intercourse, Katharine married Winston because it was their "duty to the Party." Although she was a

"goodthinkful" ideologue, they separated because she could not have children. Divorce is not permitted, but couples who cannot have children may live separately. For much of the story Winston lives in vague hope that Katharine may die or could be "got rid of" so that he may marry Julia. He regrets not having killed her by pushing her over the edge of a quarry when he had the chance many years previously.

- Tom Parsons—Winston's naive neighbour, and an ideal member of the Outer Party: an uneducated, suggestible man who is utterly loyal to the Party, and fully believes in its perfect image. He is socially active and participates in the Party activities for his social class. He is friendly towards Smith, and despite his political conformity punishes his bullying son for firing a catapult at Winston. Later, as a prisoner, Winston sees Parsons is in the Ministry of Love, as his daughter had reported him to the Thought Police, hearing him speak against the Party in his sleep. Even this does not dampen his belief in the Party, and he states he could do "good work" in the hard labour camps.
- Mrs. Parsons—Parsons's wife is a wan and hapless woman who is intimidated by her own children.
 - The Parson's children—members of the Party Youth League, representing the new generation of Oceanian citizens, without memory of life before Big Brother, and without family ties or emotional sentiment; the model society envisioned by the Inner Party.
- Syme—Winston's colleague at the Ministry of Truth, whom the Party "vaporised" because he remained a lucidly thinking intellectual. He was a lexicographer who helped develop the language and the dictionary of Newspeak, in the course of which he enjoyed destroying words, and wholeheartedly believed that Newspeak would replace Oldspeak (Standard English) by the year 2050. Although Syme's politically orthodox opinions aligned with Party doctrine, Winston notes that "He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly." After noting that Syme's name was erased from the members list of the Chess Club, Winston infers he became an unperson.

The world in 1984

Ingsoc (English Socialism)

In the year 1984, *Ingsoc* (English Socialism), is the predominant ideology and pseudophilosophy of Oceania, and Newspeak is its official language, of official documents.

Ministries of Oceania

In London, the capital city of Airstrip One, Oceania's four government ministries are in pyramids (300 metres high), the façades of which display the Party's three slogans. The ministries' names are antonymous doublethink to their true functions: "The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation." (Part II, Chapter IX — *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*)

Ministry of Peace

The Ministry of Peace supports Oceania's perpetual war against either of the two other superstates.

The primary aim of modern warfare (in accordance with the principles of doublethink, this aim is simultaneously recognized and not recognized by the directing brains of the Inner Party) is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent in industrial society. At present, when few human beings even have enough to eat, this problem is obviously not urgent, and it might not have become so, even if no artificial processes of destruction had been at work.

Ministry of Plenty

The Ministry of Plenty rations and controls food, goods, and domestic production; every fiscal quarter, the Ministry publishes false claims of having raised the standard of living, when it has, in fact, reduced rations, availability, and production. The Ministry substantiates the Ministry's claims by revising historical records to report numbers supporting the current, "increased rations."

Ministry of Truth

The Ministry of Truth controls information: news, entertainment, education, and the arts. Winston Smith works in the Ministry's Records Department, "rectifying" historical records to concord with Big Brother's current pronouncements, thus everything the Party says is true.

Ministry of Love

The Ministry of Love identifies, monitors, arrests, and converts real and imagined dissidents. In Winston's experience, the dissident is beaten and tortured, then, when near-broken, is sent to Room 101 to face "the worst thing in the world" – until love for Big Brother and the Party replaces dissension.

Doublethink

The keyword here is blackwhite. Like so many Newspeak words, this word has two mutually contradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts. Applied to a Party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it means also the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary. This demands a continuous alteration of the past, made possible by the system of thought which really embraces all the rest, and which is known in Newspeak as doublethink. Doublethink is basically the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.

— Part II, Chapter IX – *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*

Political geography

Three perpetually warring totalitarian super-states control the world:^[32]

- **Oceania** (ideology: Ingsoc, i.e., English Socialism); its core territories are the Western Hemisphere, the British Isles, Australasia, and Southern Africa.
- **Eurasia** (ideology: Neo-Bolshevism); its core territories are Continental Europe and Russia, including Siberia.
- **Eastasia** (ideology: Obliteration of the Self, i.e., "Death worship"); its core territories are China, Japan, Korea, and Indochina.



Perpetual War: The news report Oceania has captured Africa, 1984.

The perpetual war is fought for control of the "disputed area" lying "between the frontiers of the super-states," it forms "a rough parallelogram with its corners at Tangier, Brazzaville, Darwin and Hong Kong,"^[32] thus Northern Africa, the Middle East, India and Indonesia are where the super-states capture and utilise slave-labour. Fighting also takes place between Eurasia and Eastasia in Manchuria, Mongolia and Central Asia, and all three powers battle one another over various Atlantic and Pacific islands.

Goldstein's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, explains that the superstates' ideologies are alike and that the public's ignorance of this fact is imperative so that they might continue believing in the detestability of the opposing ideologies. The only references to the exterior world for the Oceanian citizenry (the Outer Party and the Proles) are Minitrue maps and propaganda ensuring their belief in "the war."

The Revolution

Winston Smith's memory and Emmanuel Goldstein's book communicate some of the history that precipitated the Revolution. Eurasia was formed when the U.S.S.R. conquered continental Europe, creating a single nation stretching from Portugal to the Bering Strait. Eurasia does not include the British Isles because the United States annexed them along with the rest of the British Empire and Latin America, thus establishing Oceania and gaining control over a quarter of the planet. Eastasia, the last superstate established, emerged only after "a decade of confused fighting". It comprises the Asian lands conquered by China and Japan. Although Eastasia was prevented from matching Eurasia's size, its larger populace compensates for that handicap.

The annexation of Britain occurred about the same time as the atomic war that provoked civil war, but just who was fighting whom in this war is left unclear. Nuclear weapons fell on Britain, an atomic bombing of Colchester is referenced in the text. Exactly how Ingsoc and its rival systems (Neo-Bolshevism and Death Worship) gained power in their respective countries is also unclear.

While precise chronology cannot be traced, most of the global societal reorganization occurred between 1945 and the early 1960s. Winston and Julia once meet in the ruins of a church that was destroyed in a nuclear attack "thirty years" earlier, suggesting 1954 as the year of the atomic war that destabilized society and allowed the Party to seize power. It is stated in the novel that the "fourth quarter of 1983" was "also the sixth quarter of the Ninth Three-Year Plan," implying that the *first* quarter of the *first* three-year plan began in July 1958. By then, the Party was apparently in control of Oceania.

The War

In 1984, there is a perpetual war between Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, the superstates which emerged from a global atomic war. The book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, explains that each state is so strong it cannot be defeated, even with the combined forces of two superstates—despite changing alliances. To hide such contradictions, history is re-written to explain that the (new) alliance always was so; the populaces accustomed to doublethink accept it. The war is not fought in Oceanian, Eurasian or Eastasian territory but in the Arctic wastes and in a disputed zone comprising the sea and land from Tangiers (northern Africa) to Darwin (Australia). At the start, Oceania and Eastasia are allies fighting Eurasia in northern Africa and the Malabar Coast.

That alliance ends and Oceania, allied with Eurasia, fights Eastasia, a change which occurred during Hate Week, dedicated to creating patriotic fervour for the Party's perpetual war. The public are blind to the change; in mid-sentence an orator changes the name of the enemy from "Eurasia" to "Eastasia" without pause. When the public are enraged at noticing that the wrong flags and posters are displayed, they tear them down—thus the origin of the idiom "We've always been at war with Eastasia"; later the Party claims to have captured Africa.

Goldstein's book explains that the purpose of the unwinnable, perpetual war is to consume human labour and commodities, so the economy of a superstate cannot support economic equality (a high standard of life) for every citizen. By using up most of the produced objects like boots and rations, the "proles" are kept poor and uneducated so that they will not realise what the government is doing and they will not rebel. Goldstein also details an Oceanian strategy of attacking enemy cities with atomic rockets before invasion, yet dismisses it as unfeasible and contrary to the war's purpose; despite the atomic bombing of cities in the 1950s the superstates stopped such warfare lest it imbalance the powers. The military technology in 1984 differs little from that of World War II, yet strategic bomber aeroplanes were replaced with Rocket Bombs, helicopters were heavily used as weapons of war

(while they did not figure in WW2 in any form but prototypes) and surface combat units have been all but replaced by immense and unsinkable Floating Fortresses, island-like contraptions concentrating the firepower of a whole naval task force in a single, semi-mobile platform (in the novel one is said to have been anchored between Iceland and the Faroe Islands, suggesting a preference for sea lane interdiction and denial).

Living standards

The society of Airstrip One and, according to "The Book", almost the whole world, lives in poverty: hunger, disease and filth are the norms. Ruined cities and towns are commonplace—the consequence of the civil war, the atomic wars, and purportedly enemy (but quite possibly self-serving Oceanian) rockets. Social decay and wrecked buildings surround Winston; aside from the ministerial pyramids, little of London was rebuilt. Members of the Outer Party consume synthetic foodstuffs and poor-quality "luxuries" such as oily gin and loosely packed cigarettes, distributed under the "Victory" brand (This was a Parody of the low-quality Indian-made "Victory" cigarettes that were widely smoked in Britain and by British soldiers during World War II. The fact that these were smoked was because it was easier to import these from India than it was to import American Cigarettes from across the Atlantic due to the War of the Atlantic). Winston describes something as simple as the repair of a broken pane of glass as requiring committee approval that can take several years and because of this anybody living in one of these blocks usually does the repairs themselves (Winston is called in by Mrs. Parsons to repair her sink which had been blocked). All Outer Party residences include telescreens that serve both as outlets for propaganda and to monitor the Party members; they can be turned down, but they cannot be turned off.

In contrast to their subordinates, the Inner Party upper class of Oceanian society reside in clean and comfortable flats in their own quarter of the city, with pantries well-stocked with foodstuffs such as wine, coffee, and sugar that are denied to the general populace.^[33] Winston is astonished that the lifts in O'Brien's building function, that the telescreens can be switched off, and that O'Brien has an Asian manservant, Martin; indeed, all of the Inner Party are attended to by slaves captured in the disputed zone, and "The Book" suggests that many have their own motorcars or even helicopters. Nonetheless, "The Book" makes clear that even the conditions enjoyed by the Inner Party are only *relatively* comfortable and would be regarded as austere by the standards of the pre-revolutionary elite.^[34]

The proletariat, or "proles", live in poverty and are kept sedated with alcohol, pornography and a national lottery (whose winnings are never actually paid out, a fact obscured by propaganda and lack of communication between various parts of Oceania). At the same time, the proles are freer and less intimidated than the middle class Outer Party: they are subject to certain levels of monitoring but are not expected to be particularly patriotic, lack telescreens in their own homes, and often jeer at the telescreens that they see. "The Book" indicates that this state of things derives from the observation that the middle class, not the lower class, traditionally started revolutions. The model demands tight control of the middle class, with ambitious Outer Party members neutralised via promotion to the Inner Party or "reintegration" by Miniluv, while proles can be allowed intellectual freedom because they lack intellect. Winston nonetheless believed that "the future belonged to the proles."^[35]

The standard of living of the populace is low overall. Consumer goods are scarce, and those available through official channels are invariably of low quality; for instance, despite the Party regularly reporting increased boot production, upwards of half of the Oceanian populace goes barefoot. The Party claims that this poverty is a necessary sacrifice for the war effort, and "The Book" confirms this is partially correct, since the purpose of perpetual war is consuming surplus industrial production. Outer Party members and proles occasionally gain access to better-quality items through the market, dealing in goods pilfered from the residences of the Inner Party.

Themes

Nationalism

Nineteen Eighty-Four expands upon the subjects summarised in the essay "Notes on Nationalism"^[36] about the lack of vocabulary needed to explain the unrecognised phenomena behind certain political forces. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Party's artificial, minimalist language 'Newspeak' addresses the matter.

- Positive nationalism: Oceanians' perpetual love for Big Brother; Neo-Toryism, Celtic nationalism and British Israelism are (as Orwell argues) defined by love.
- Negative nationalism: Oceanians' perpetual hatred for Emmanuel Goldstein; Stalinism, Anglophobia and antisemitism are (as Orwell argues) defined by hatred.
- Transferred nationalism: In mid-sentence an orator changes the enemy of Oceania; the crowd instantly transfers their hatred to the new enemy. Transferred nationalism swiftly redirects emotions from one power unit to another (e.g., Communism, Pacifism, Colour Feeling and Class Feeling). This happened during a Party Rally against the original enemy Eurasia, when the orator suddenly switches enemy in midsentence, the crowd goes wild and destroys the posters that are now against their new friend (Eurasia) and many say that this must be the act of an agent of their new enemy (and former friend) Eastasia. Even though many of the crowd must have put up the posters before the rally, they now say that the enemy has always been Eastasia.

O'Brien concludes: "The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power."

Futurology

In the book, Inner Party member O'Brien describes the Party's vision of the future:

There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.

— Part III, Chapter III, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Censorship

A major theme of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is censorship, especially in the Ministry of Truth, where photographs are modified and public archives rewritten to rid them of "unpersons" (i.e., persons who have been arrested, whom the Party has decided to erase from history). On the telescreens figures for all types of production are grossly exaggerated (or simply invented) to indicate an ever-growing economy, when the reality is the opposite. One small example of the endless censorship is when Winston is charged with the task of eliminating a reference to an unperson in a newspaper article. He proceeds to write an article about Comrade Ogilvy, a made-up party member, who displayed great heroism by leaping into the sea from a helicopter so that the dispatches he was carrying would not fall into enemy hands.

Surveillance

The inhabitants of Oceania, particularly the Outer Party members, have no real privacy. Many of them live in apartments equipped with two-way telescreens, so that they may be watched or listened to at any time. Similar telescreens are found at workstations and in public places, along with hidden microphones. Written correspondence is routinely opened and read by the government before it is delivered. The Thought Police employ undercover agents, who pose as normal citizens and report any person with subversive tendencies. Children are encouraged to

report suspicious persons to the government, and some even denounce their parents. Surveillance controls the citizenry and the smallest sign of rebellion, even something so small as a facial expression, can result in immediate arrest and imprisonment. Thus, citizens (and particularly party members) are compelled to obedience.

The Newspeak appendix

"The Principles of Newspeak" is an academic essay appended to the novel. It describes the development of Newspeak, the Party's minimalist artificial language meant to ideologically align thought and action with the principles of Ingsoc by making "all other modes of thought impossible." (For linguistic theories about how language may direct thought, see the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis.)

Whether or not the Newspeak appendix implies a hopeful end to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains a critical debate, as it is in Standard English and refers to Newspeak, Ingsoc, the Party, etc., in the past tense (i.e., "Relative to our own, the Newspeak vocabulary was tiny, and new ways of reducing it were constantly being devised," p. 422); in this vein, some critics (Atwood,^[37] Benstead,^[38] Milner,^[39] Pynchon^[40]) claim that, for the essay's author, Newspeak and the totalitarian government are past.

Sources for literary motifs

Nineteen Eighty-Four uses themes from life in the Soviet Union and wartime life in Great Britain as sources for many of its motifs. American producer Sidney Sheldon wrote to Orwell in the early 1950s, interested in adapting the novel to the Broadway stage. Orwell sold the American stage rights to Sheldon, explaining that his basic goal with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was imagining the consequences of Stalinist government ruling British society:

[*Nineteen Eighty-Four*] was based chiefly on communism, because that is the dominant form of totalitarianism, but I was trying chiefly to imagine what communism would be like if it were firmly rooted in the English speaking countries, and was no longer a mere extension of the Russian Foreign Office.^[41]

The statement "2 + 2 = 5," used to torment Winston Smith during his interrogation, was a Communist party slogan from the second five-year plan, which encouraged fulfillment of the five-year plan in four years. The slogan was seen in electric lights on Moscow house-fronts, billboards and elsewhere.^[42]

The switch of Oceania's allegiance from Eastasia to Eurasia and the subsequent rewriting of history ("Oceania was at war with Eastasia: Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia. A large part of the political literature of five years was now completely obsolete"; ch 9) is evocative of the Soviet Union's changing relations with Nazi Germany. The two nations were open and frequently vehement critics of each other until the signing of the 1939 Treaty of Non-Aggression. Thereafter, and continuing until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, no criticism of Germany was allowed in the Soviet press, and all references to prior party lines stopped—including in the majority of non-Russian communist parties who tended to follow the Russian line. Orwell had criticised the Communist Party of Great Britain for supporting the Treaty in his essays for *Betrayal of the Left* (1941). "The Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939 reversed the Soviet Union's stated foreign policy. It was too much for many of the fellow-travellers like Gollancz [Orwell's sometime publisher] who had put their faith in a strategy of construction Popular Front governments and the peace bloc between Russia, Britain and France."^[43]

The description of Emmanuel Goldstein, with a "small, goatee beard," evokes the image of Leon Trotsky. The film of Goldstein during the Two Minutes Hate is described as showing him being transformed into a bleating sheep. This image was used in a propaganda film during the Kino-eye period of Soviet film, which showed Trotsky

transforming into a goat.^[44] Goldstein's book is similar to Trotsky's highly critical analysis of the USSR, *The Revolution Betrayed*, published in 1936.

The omnipresent images of Big Brother, a man described as having a moustache, bears resemblance to the cult of personality built up around Joseph Stalin.

The news in Oceania emphasised production figures, just as it did in the Soviet Union, where record-setting in factories (by "Heroes of Socialist Labor") was especially glorified. The best known of these was Alexey Stakhanov, who purportedly set a record for coal mining in 1935.

The tortures of the Ministry of Love evoke the procedures used by the NKVD in their interrogations,^[45] including the use of rubber truncheons, being forbidden to put your hands in your pockets, remaining in brightly lit rooms for days, torture through the use of provoked rodents, and the victim being shown a mirror after their physical collapse.

The random bombing of Airstrip One is based on the Buzz bombs and the V-2 rocket, which struck England at random in 1944–1945.

The Thought Police is based on the NKVD, which arrested people for random "anti-soviet" remarks.^[46] The Thought Crime motif is drawn from Kempeitai, the Japanese wartime secret police, who arrested people for "unpatriotic" thoughts.

The confessions of the "Thought Criminals" Rutherford, Aaronson and Jones are based on the show trials of the 1930s, which included fabricated confessions by prominent Bolsheviks Nikolai Bukharin, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev to the effect that they were being paid by the Nazi government to undermine the Soviet regime under Leon Trotsky's direction.

The song "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" ("Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you, and you sold me") was based on an old English song called "Go no more a-rushing" ("Under the spreading chestnut tree, Where I knelt upon my knee, We were as happy as could be, 'Neath the spreading chestnut tree."). The song was published as early as 1891. The song was a popular camp song in the 1920s, sung with corresponding movements (like touching your chest when you sing "chest," and touching your head when you sing "nut"). Glenn Miller recorded the song in 1939.^[47]

The "Hates" (Two Minutes Hate and Hate Week) were inspired by the constant rallies sponsored by party organs throughout the Stalinist period. These were often short pep-talks given to workers before their shifts began (Two Minutes Hate), but could also last for days, as in the annual celebrations of the anniversary of the October revolution (Hate Week).

Orwell fictionalized "newspeak," "doublethink," and "Ministry of Truth" as evinced by both the Soviet press and that of Nazi Germany.^[48] In particular, he adapted Soviet ideological discourse constructed to ensure that public statements could not be questioned.^[49]

Winston Smith's job, "revising history" (and the "unperson" motif) are based on the Stalinist habit of airbrushing images of 'fallen' people from group photographs and removing references to them in books and newspapers.^[51] In one well-known example, the Soviet encyclopaedia had an article about Lavrentiy Beria. When he fell in 1953, and was subsequently executed, institutes that had the encyclopaedia were sent an article about the Bering Strait, with instructions to paste it over the article about Beria.^[52]



Nikolai Yezhov walking with Stalin in the top photo from the mid 1930s. Following his execution in 1940, Yezhov was edited out of the photo by Soviet censors.^[50] Yezhov became an "unperson."

Big Brother's "Orders of the Day" were inspired by Stalin's regular wartime orders, called by the same name. A small collection of the more political of these have been published (together with his wartime speeches) in English as "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union" By Joseph Stalin.^{[53][54]} Like Big Brother's Orders of the day, Stalin's frequently lauded heroic individuals,^[55] like Comrade Ogilvy, the fictitious hero Winston Smith invented to 'rectify' (fabricate) a Big Brother Order of the day.

The Ingsoc slogan "Our new, happy life," repeated from telescreens, evokes Stalin's 1935 statement, which became a CPSU slogan, "Life has become better, Comrades; life has become more cheerful."^[46]

In 1940 Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges published *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* which described the invention by a "benevolent secret society" of a world that would seek to remake human language and reality along human-invented lines. The story concludes with an appendix describing the success of the project. Borges' story addresses similar themes of epistemology, language and history to 1984.^[56]

Influences

During World War II (1939–1945) Orwell believed that British democracy as it existed before 1939 would not survive the war, the question being

"Would it end via Fascist *coup d'état* from above or via Socialist revolution from below"?

Later he admitted that events proved him wrong: "What really matters is that I fell into the trap of assuming that 'the war and the revolution are inseparable'."^[57] Thematically *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945) share the betrayed revolution; the person's subordination to the collective; rigorously enforced class distinctions (Inner Party, Outer Party, Proles); the cult of personality; concentration camps; Thought Police; compulsory regimented daily exercise and youth leagues. Oceania resulted from the US annexation of the British Empire to counter the Asian peril to Australia and New Zealand. It is a naval power whose militarism venerates the sailors of the floating fortresses, from which battle is given to recapturing India, the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire. Much of Oceanic society is based upon the USSR under Joseph Stalin—Big Brother; the televised Two Minutes Hate is ritual demonisation of the enemies of the State, especially Emmanuel Goldstein (*viz* Leon Trotsky); altered photographs and newspaper articles create unpersons deleted from the national historical record, including even founding members of the regime (Jones, Aaronson and Rutherford) in the 1960s purges (*viz* the Soviet Purges of the 1930s, in which leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution were similarly treated). A similar thing also happened during the French Revolution in which many of the original leaders of the Revolution were later put to death, for example Danton who was put to death by Robespierre, and then later Robespierre himself met the same fate.

In his 1946 essay "Why I Write," Orwell explains that the serious works he wrote since the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) were "written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism."^{[2][58]} *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a cautionary tale about revolution betrayed by totalitarian defenders previously proposed in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and *Animal Farm* (1945), while *Coming Up for Air* (1939) celebrates the personal and political freedoms lost in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Biographer Michael Sheldon notes Orwell's Edwardian childhood at Henley-on-Thames as the golden country; being bullied at St Cyprian's School as his empathy with victims; his life in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma and the techniques of violence and censorship in the BBC

as capricious authority.^[59] Other influences include *Darkness at Noon* (1940) and *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945) by Arthur Koestler; *The Iron Heel* (1908) by Jack London; *1920: Dips into the Near Future*^[60] by John A. Hobson; *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley; *We* (1921) by Yevgeny Zamyatin which he reviewed in 1946;^[61] and *The Managerial Revolution* (1940) by James Burnham predicting perpetual war among three totalitarian superstates. Orwell told Jacintha Buddicom that he would write a novel stylistically like *A Modern Utopia* (1905) by H. G. Wells.

Extrapolating from World War II, the novel's pastiche parallels the politics and rhetoric at war's end—the changed alliances at the "Cold War's" (1945–91) beginning; the Ministry of Truth derives from the BBC's overseas service, controlled by the Ministry of Information; Room 101 derives from a conference room at BBC Broadcasting House;^[62] the Senate House of the University of London, containing the Ministry of Information is the architectural inspiration for the Minitrue; the post-war decrepitude derives from the socio-political life of the UK and the USA, i.e., the impoverished Britain of 1948 losing its Empire despite newspaper-reported imperial triumph; and war ally but peace-time foe, Soviet Russia became Eurasia.

The term "English Socialism" has precedents in his wartime writings; in the essay "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius" (1941), he said that "the war and the revolution are inseparable... the fact that we are at war has turned Socialism from a textbook word into a realisable policy" – because Britain's superannuated social class system hindered the war effort and only a socialist economy would defeat Adolf Hitler. Given the middle class's grasping this, they too would abide socialist revolution and that only reactionary Britons would oppose it, thus limiting the force revolutionaries would need to take power. An English Socialism would come about which "will never lose touch with the tradition of compromise and the belief in a law that is above the State. It will shoot traitors, but it will give them a solemn trial beforehand and occasionally it will acquit them. It will crush any open revolt promptly and cruelly, but it will interfere very little with the spoken and written word."^[63]

In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "English Socialism" – contracted to "Ingsoc" in Newspeak – is a totalitarian ideology unlike the English revolution he foresaw. Comparison of the wartime essay "The Lion and the Unicorn" with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows that he perceived a Big Brother régime as a perversion of his cherished socialist ideals and English Socialism. Thus Oceania is a corruption of the British Empire he believed would evolve "into a federation of Socialist states, like a looser and freer version of the Union of Soviet Republics."^[64]

Critical reception

When first published, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was generally well received by reviewers. V. S. Pritchett, reviewing the novel for the *New Statesman* stated: "I do not think I have ever read a novel more frightening and depressing; and yet, such are the originality, the suspense, the speed of writing and withering indignation that it is impossible to put the book down."^[65] P. H. Newby, reviewing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for *The Listener* magazine, described it as "the most arresting political novel written by an Englishman since Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome*."^[66] *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was also praised by Bertrand Russell, E. M. Forster and Harold Nicolson.^[66] On the other hand, Edward Shanks, reviewing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for *The Sunday Times*, was dismissive; Shanks claimed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* "breaks all records for gloomy vaticination."^[66] C. S. Lewis was also critical of the novel, claiming that the relationship of Julia and Winston, and especially the party view on sex, lacked credibility, and that the setting was "odious rather than tragic."^[67]

In other media

Nineteen Eighty-Four has been adapted for the cinema twice, and for the radio and television at least twice.

Cultural impact



Wall of an industrial building in Donetsk, Ukraine

The effect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the English language is extensive; the concepts of Big Brother, Room 101, the Thought Police, thoughtcrime, unperson, memory hole (oblivion), doublethink (simultaneously holding and believing contradictory beliefs) and Newspeak (ideological language) have become common phrases for denoting totalitarian authority. Doublespeak and groupthink are both deliberate elaborations of *doublethink*, while the adjective "Orwellian" denotes "characteristic and reminiscent of George Orwell's writings"

especially *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The practice of ending words with "-speak" (e.g., *mediaspeak*) is drawn from the novel.^[68] Orwell is perpetually associated with the year 1984; in July 1984 an asteroid discovered by Antonín Mrkos was named after Orwell.

In 1974 David Bowie released the album *Diamond Dogs*. It is thought to be loosely based on the novel 1984. It includes the tracks "We Are The Dead", "1984" and "Big Brother". Before the album was made Bowie's management (MainMan) had planned for Bowie and Tony Ingrassia (MainMan's creative consultant) to co-write and direct a musical production of Orwell's 1984, but apparently Bowie loathed doing anything on assignment and showed his disinterest by not getting out of bed to work on the project. Orwell's widow was appalled at the idea and refused to give MainMan the rights.^[69]

In 1977 the British rock band The Jam released the album *This Is the Modern World*, which includes the track "Standards" by Paul Weller. This track concludes with the lyrics... "...and ignorance is strength, we have god on our side, look, you know what happened to Winston."

In 1984, Apple Computer made a Super Bowl advertisement for the Mac, stating that "1984 won't be like '1984'". The ad was suggesting that the Apple Mac would be freedom from Big Brother, the IBM PC.

In 1984: *Love Is (Suicide)* by Iain Williams & the 1984 Project.^[70] *Love Is (Suicide)* was recorded by Iain Williams & the 1984 Project at Trident Recording Studios in Soho, London, in January 1984. The dance track was co-produced by Fiachra Trench and Iain Williams (Big Bang). Musicians who played on the track include: Lelo - lead vocal (vocalist from Lelo & the Levants), Hans Zimmer - Fairlight CMI synth, Hans Zimmer - LinnDrum, Alan Murphy - lead guitar & rhythm guitar (Level 42), Shirley and Dee Lewis (Backing vocals) and Iain Williams on grand piano. The 9-minute recording constructed around repetitive chord structures was an experiment in producing a rhythmic, minimalistic dance track aimed specifically for dance clubs. Iain cites his inspiration for the recording as coming from, "*various components, including the 'music with repetitive structures' principle of American composer Phillip Glass along with a lyrical essence of George Orwell's dystopian novel 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' - the songs lyrics are an observation of the S&M-style relationship between the novels two main characters, Winston and Julia.*"^[70] This 9-minute version of the song has a 2-minute electric guitar solo at the end of it played by Alan Murphy, during which Alan lets rip. Two alternative versions of *Love Is (Suicide)* exist, both



"Happy 1984" stencil graffiti, denoting mind control via a video game controller, on a standing piece of the Berlin Wall, 2005.

recorded at different periods with different lead vocalists. Louis Wellsted sang on an earlier 4-minute version of the song recorded at the BBC Maida Vale Studios in 1982 that was broadcast on BBC Radio 1, and Iain's band You You You recorded a version of the song in 1987 with vocalist Karen O'Connor.

In 1984, the book was made into a movie which starred John Hurt as the central character of Winston Smith. In 2006, the movie version of *V for Vendetta* was released, which has many of the same running themes and principles as *1984* and also stars John Hurt taking on the role of the leader of a totalitarian party, though the film is based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore and David Lloyd.^{[71][72]} An episode of *Doctor Who* called "The God Complex" depicts an alien ship disguised as a hotel containing Room 101-like spaces, and quotes the nursery rhyme as well.^[73]

In September 2009, the English progressive rock band Muse released *The Resistance*, which included songs influenced by *1984*.^[74]

References to the themes, concepts and plot of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have appeared frequently in other works, especially in popular music and video entertainment. An example is the worldwide hit reality television show *Big Brother*, in which a group of people live together in a large house, isolated from the outside world but continuously watched by television cameras.

In November 2011, the United States government argued before the US Supreme Court that it wants to continue utilizing GPS tracking of individuals without first seeking a warrant. In response, Justice Stephen Breyer questioned what this means for a democratic society by referencing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Justice Breyer asked, "If you win this case, then there is nothing to prevent the police or the government from monitoring 24 hours a day the public movement of every citizen of the United States. So if you win, you suddenly produce what sounds like Nineteen Eighty-Four..."^[75]

The book touches on the invasion of privacy and ubiquitous surveillance. From mid 2013 it was publicized that the NSA has been secretly monitoring and storing global internet traffic, including the bulk data collection of email and phone call data. Sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* increased by up to 7 times within the first week of the 2013 mass surveillance leaks.^{[76][77][78]} The book again topped the Amazon.com sales charts in 2017 after a controversy involving Kellyanne Conway using the phrase "alternative facts" to explain discrepancies with the media.^{[79][80][81][82]}

It is also seen in the book how mass media was a catalyst for the intensification of destructive emotions and violence. Since the 20th century news and other forms of media have been publicizing violence more.^{[83][84]} It is no coincidence that in the same year, the Almeida Theatre and Headlong staged a successful new adaptation (by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan) which twice toured the UK and played an extended run in London's West End.

1984 vs. Brave New World

In the decades since the publication of *1984*, there have been numerous comparisons to the Aldous Huxley novel, *Brave New World* which was published 17 years earlier in 1932.^{[85][86][87][88]} They are both predictions of societies dominated by a central government, based on extensions of the trends of their times. But the ruling class of *1984* use brutal force, torture, and mind control to keep rebellious individuals in line, while *Brave New World* rulers keep citizens in line through addictive drugs and pleasurable distractions.

In October 1949, after reading *1984*, Huxley sent a letter to Orwell stating his belief that it would be more efficient for rulers to stay in power through the softer touch—allowing citizens to self-seek pleasure as a means of control rather than brute force, allowing for a false sense of freedom:

Within the next generation I believe that the world's rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging and kicking them into obedience.^[89]

Elements of both novels can be seen in modern-day societies, with Huxley's vision being more dominant in the West and Orwell's vision more prevalent with dictators in ex-communist countries and the theocracies and dictatorships of the Middle East, as pointed out in essays that compare the two novels, including Huxley's own *Brave New World Revisited*.^[90]

See also

- Closed-circuit television (CCTV)
- Culture of fear
- Language and thought
- List of stories set in a future now past
- Mass surveillance
- New World Order (conspiracy theory)
- Utopian and dystopian fiction
- *Moscow 2042*
- *The Glass Fortress* (2016 film)
- *We*
- *Wir* (1982 film)

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