

Big Brother of the Twenty-first Century: A Critical Analysis of  
George Orwell's *1984* with the movie *Snowden* and Netflix  
Documentary *The Social Dilemma*

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in English

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis titled **Big Brother of the Twenty-first Century: A Critical Analysis of George Orwell's *1984* with the movie *Snowden* and Netflix Documentary *The Social Dilemma*** submitted by Sadiqa Sattar ID: 16103031 of Summer 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
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## Abstract

This dissertation looks at Orwell's *1984*, the movie titled *Snowden* and the Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma* with an aim to outline the similarity between Orwellian Big Brother and the social media platform that we use today. The main objective of this research is to delineate that the surveillance policy, mainly the algorithm system - used by top tech-giant companies is being utilised as a weapon to control human mind in order to establish power over people all over the world. The purpose is to show that the human psyche has become an object to regulate human actions which ultimately making an individual a prisoner of its own mind. Also, this surveillance system is making human being as commodities in this capitalistic digital world. Likewise, the invisible Big Brother, the networking system to which the entire world is subjugated now by providing personal information of each individual; its constant gaze is inducing human mind through manipulation and destroying the notion of self of every individual by presenting a utopic world in front of it which is ultimately - a dystopia. Though critics have read and claimed *1984* always from authoritarian perspective indicating mainly the political chaos, this research will critically analyse the novel *1984* using Foucault's panopticon, Gramsci's hegemony and Freudian psychoanalytic theory which will give an epistemological insight into how the reality of twenty-first century and the upcoming days have been depicted in Orwell's prescient writing *1984*. This thesis shows how the surveillance policy of digital/virtual world acts as Orwellian Big Brother and its grim impact on the psychic condition and behavioural changes of the tech-savvy generation of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# Table of Contents

|                                                                     |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Declaration.....</b>                                             | <b>ii</b>  |
| <b>Approval .....</b>                                               | <b>iii</b> |
| <b>Abstract.....</b>                                                | <b>iv</b>  |
| <b>Acknowledgement .....</b>                                        | <b>iv</b>  |
| <b>Table of Contents .....</b>                                      | <b>vi</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>                                | <b>1</b>   |
| a) Speculative Fiction and Science Fiction.....                     | 2          |
| b) Utopia and Dystopia.....                                         | 3          |
| c) Dystopian Fiction and Contemporary Literature.....               | 5          |
| d) Dystopia and Psychology.....                                     | 6          |
| <b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>                            | <b>9</b>   |
| a) Orwell’s Contribution in 20th Century and Beyond.....            | 10         |
| b) Similarity between Orwell’s Insight and Freud’s Perspective..... | 12         |
| c) Foucault’s Panopticism and Orwell’s Depiction .....              | 13         |
| d) The Chosen Text and its Reflection today .....                   | 15         |
| <b>Chapter 3: Methodology: .....</b>                                | <b>18</b>  |
| a) Theorist’s Perspective regarding Power and Human Mind .....      | 18         |
| b) Surveillance Capitalism and Algorithmic Control .....            | 19         |
| c) User-centric Design and Biometric control .....                  | 21         |

|                                                                                 |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 4 : Analysis.....</b>                                                | <b>24</b> |
| a) Big Brother of 20 <sup>th</sup> century and in 21 <sup>st</sup> century..... | 24        |
| b) Virtual World and Our Mind.....                                              | 27        |
| c) Capitalistic Notion of The Party and the Virtual World .....                 | 31        |
| d) Behavioural Changes of Today's Generation.....                               | 33        |
| <b>Chapter 5: Conclusion .....</b>                                              | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Works Cited.....</b>                                                         | <b>37</b> |

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Literature, has always been an exquisite window for readers to acknowledge authors' perspective regarding speculated aspects – as each author from each period presents new point of views. It functions like a bridge between writer's thought and readers' comprehensibility which articulates the concept of the literary text and through the lens of protagonist, readers visualise peoples' desire, hope, prediction, anxiety and political turmoil etc. of the period during the literary work was produced. From Middle English period to Post-modern age, variations of literary texts associated with many literary movements have transcended different views of writers in which some writers criticised the existing system in a mocking tone and some presented the revolutionary changes either in fantasy or in the devastating portrayal of society. For instance, the allegorical narrative poem “Piers Plowman” (1370-90) by William Langland represents the social stratification and the corruption of Church of 14<sup>th</sup> century England in the series of dream visions exaggerating mainly Estate Satire. Afterwards, Renaissance Period witnessed the revival of the classics and followed by it the literature of Neo-Classical or Enlightenment Period began the talk of rationality and progress. Then, Romantic writers like Blake, Wordsworth, Keats have depicted nature as the centre of the appreciation whereas in Victorian era, Industrial Revolution replaced humans with machine and emerged the sense of advancement. Above all, Modern period – ‘the age of anxiety’ provides a whole new perspective and experimental ideas of intellectuals in opposition to all other literary movements which has made this era more realistic to understand and relate the existing phenomena with it. Therefore, these ideological differences as well as history play a major role in intellectual works along with initiating the pathways of numerous genres.

Amongst various genres, science fiction, widely known as sci-fi; has become a genre of itself during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century labelling the tag – ‘speculative fiction’ in it. Ketterer in an article titled “Science Fiction and Imagination” has defined sci-fi and speculative fiction stating



that “The science fiction ‘label denotes books with things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go’; alternatively, speculative fiction ‘employs the means already more or less to hand, and takes place on Planet Earth’” (246). So, this means speculative fiction that deals with imaginative and futuristic concepts along with the prediction of its existence has preceded to the formation of other genres later such as utopia and its binary opposite – dystopia. The dystopian work which I will be focusing on in my dissertation is George Orwell’s *1984*. Through the critical analysis of this text only from surveillance perspective, I will be displaying how the portrayal of Orwellian Big Brother has come true in a roundabout way from late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards to till present day through weaving algorithmic networking system and how its gaze is establishing supremacy over individuals by destroying the notion of Self and by shaping the unconscious mind of an individual from each corner of the world; likewise, Big brother did to Winston Smith in the lens of telescreen.

#### **a) Speculative Fiction and Science Fiction:**

The very first aspect that comes forward whilst discussing utopia and dystopia, is the origin of speculative fiction and how it is different from science fiction. Generally, Science fiction is a fictional work based on scientific principles that can further be extended with numerous visions, whereas speculative fiction, as the name suggests, speculates on a real world aspect by drawing a picture of what the future can hold if these aspects continue to exist and expand with time. Speculative fiction is considered as a genre of itself as it deals with certain inceptions predicting ‘what if it really occurs’ and presents a controversial aspect in fictional manner which somehow internalises the real world aspect in it. In the article titled “The Uses of Genre and the Classification of Speculative Fiction” the author Gill clarifies the distinction between science fiction and speculative fiction by stating that “their emphasis is not so much on possible though fictional matters as on events that are impossible under the physical laws

and constraints of our ordinary world. Science fiction, characterized solely by its dependence on scientific method, does something basically different from speculative fiction” (72). Thereby, Gill also quotes Renin in the same article where Renin specifies the theme of speculative fiction as following:

The key emphasis in this definition is on speculative representation of what would happen had the actual chain of causes or the matrix of reality- conditions been replaced with other conditions. In this sense, speculative fiction is similar, but identical, to the concept of possible worlds, because possible worlds are logically possible even though they may be non-actual (qtd. in Gill 73).

Therefore, the underlying meaning of speculative fiction gets albeit much clearer view from scholars which ultimately unfolds its pathways further to divide the sub-genres of it.

#### **b) Utopia and Dystopia:**

Under the umbrella of speculative fiction, the two distinct genres – utopia and dystopia reinforce similar ideas paradoxically unlike the heads and tails of a coin. The most challenging part in discussing dystopian literature is first finding an adequate and comprehensive definition to set thematic limits and expectations. Determining a perfect broad definition can help readers to access literature easily in order to analyse the effect and purpose. If utopian literature aims to represent an ideal world, so as its characters are ideal. Hence, dystopic elements are being overflowed within it even after exploring the ideal and improved society. In opposition, dystopian literature depicts a world in which individuality and freedom are sacrificed for the advancement of a centralised government. Though utopian literature and its leaders quote this sacrifice as the best interest of people which portrays the same image as dystopia. To create a homogenous society, regardless of intentions, is ultimately a dystopic nightmare even after the text is displayed as a utopic dream.

In an article titled “Structural Roots of Visions of the Future: World-System Crisis and Stability and the Production of Utopian Literature in the United States, 1883-1975” it is defined that “We have given this term a positive connotation to mean expanding the universe of ‘what is possible’ by favourably depicting alternative social arrangements” (Drass 423). This means traditionally, utopias focus on what exists, what is good, and what is possible. They answer questions about, and offer solutions to, the ways a society can improve itself amidst ineffective practices. On the other hand, in another article titled “Authority & Utopia: Utopianism in Political Thought” Sargent states that “‘Dystopia’ or ‘bad place’ emerges as a response to utopianism and utopian thinkers. Dystopian thinkers have viewed utopias as ‘the sacrifice of the real for the ideal’ (577). Therefore, dystopian thinkers have supposed we could not move from the real to a utopia without costly unreliable violence, that we could not insure the maintenance of’ such a society without an oppressive leader, and further, that these ideals which seem acceptable in the abstract, are actually destructive in the real world. Therefore, “too much unity or identity of interests can lead to social defects, such as loss of individual identity” (Richter 5). For this reason, dystopias began to take the shape of warnings which can be seen in our lives today as we tend to become someone else to impress others rather being an individual owing own qualities. Dystopian thinkers have warned against the relinquishing of individual freedom for the sake of a utopic social stability that can never truly be realised. This essential warning translates into several themes and characteristics which is found within twentieth century literary dystopias.

### **c) Dystopian Fiction and Contemporary Literature:**

From the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, literature started to appear with a mirror reflection of ongoing historical, political and cultural changes tending to view society from a new dimension with an aim to deliver intrinsic message to the readers to delve deeper into the meaning of literatures and associating it with the contemporary timeline to which author indirectly emphasises. Although dystopian works produced in this this time frame have more modern concepts but the ancestral source of dystopia can be found in a prominent eighteenth century literary work. It is considered that *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) – a classic of English literature by Jonathan Swift reveals the European social and political reality of his time is a science fiction, thus, a true dystopia of that time. Behind the tales of a traveller it reiterates certain aspects of the English and Irish contemporary society. In 1921, the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* was published. This dystopia talks about the citizens of a totalitarian society who lead their lives devoid of passion and creativity (mainly denial of individuality) and there the protagonist D-503 – an exception who discovers his individual soul reveals the odd conventions of this totalitarian system and the consequences of defying it. Hence, 20<sup>th</sup> century has surpassed all its limits with prominent dystopian works chronologically like *The Time Machine* by H.G.Wells (1895), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and many more. In all of these dystopian writing the most reciprocal feature is all these dystopian works have a message to let readers know about the concealed fact or a vision which may turn into reality means – the future prediction. A statement that justifies it is mentioned by Geetha in the "Introduction" of her article titled "Theory of Dystopia Unfolded - A Bird's-eye View of Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's "The Insect" which says,

Writers like H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Margaret Atwood, and others have portrayed fictional futuristic societies which serve as fair warnings to real societies

and people of the respective ages. The consequences often portray loss of identity, individuality, human tendencies, basic human instincts, morality, and culture in general (117).

Nevertheless, dystopian fictions are associated with the very real world exaggerating human instincts and mind.

#### **d) Dystopia and Psychology:**

Aforementioned all dystopian fictions more often present the internal function of the human mind as the cognitive function of a human being can give broader explanation of the conscience of the protagonist as well as author rather incorporating different mechanisms and ideas to show the consequences drawn in the narratives. Therefore, the cognitive thoughts of the protagonist help to visualise its readers the expected foretelling view and also manipulates them to decide whether the portrayal of fictional society is a utopic view or a dystopic nightmare relating to the present days. The connection between dystopian work and psychology lay on the very central point which is how ideology constructs the psychic condition – ‘the unconscious’ of the protagonist and how it influences this covert part of the mind into action which means – arising ‘the consciousness’ to speculate the odds and troublesome issues of the society. However, ideology and human mind are interchangeably connected to each other and the functionality between these two are backed up by external mechanisms such as, war, political views, social and cultural issues etc. Jovanović in the chapter titled “How Ideology Shaped Psychology in Times of Wars and after Wars” to the book *Psychology and Politics* defines how political spheres influence the mind to conceptualise the existing condition and redefine it by stating that “[...] it is important to bear in mind that political events are not entities that exist independently from the ways people understand them; on the contrary, their very existence is relative to the observer, as is any other social fact in a socially created reality”

(169). Suffice to say, all literary works focus is always on the protagonist's perspective and action but in terms of dystopian literature it encapsulates the mind of the character itself, how it thinks and how it operates.

In my thesis I chose *1984* as the main text which undoubtedly falls under the spectrum of dystopian literature. In this text, the psychological conditioning of an individual is the prime concern and the central focus of the ruling power as the exceptional character of this novella – Winston Smith; whose portraiture of mind shows the invisible superiority of totalitarian government and their controlling method of each individuals' life. Though none can ever deny the fact of Orwell's serious warnings of totalitarian governments' control and the destructive consequences. From my perspective, psychological conditioning is the predominant characteristic in *1984* except its political views. The reason behind choosing this text is to relate the portrayal of Orwellian Big Brother as a metaphor with the trending virtual world – Social media platform and its functionality in order to depict how tech companies utilise our psychology just as Big Brother; showing a utopian world in front of us through implementing AI (artificial intelligence) mechanisms along with establishing surveillance capitalism which ultimately diminishing the sense of individuality and freedom of each individual. Through the control of the mind, the system is also able to control the body making the body as a symbol of control just like the protagonist of *1984* – Smith who was tortured first mentally and then physically. Walsh's statements in his book titled *From Utopia to Nightmare* justifies this new outlook which says, "Utopians tend to believe that man is exceedingly plastic. His nature is a fiction. With very broad limits, at any rate, he can be shaped and conditioned to fit happily into whatever society one chooses to create" (71). Hence, if utopias and dystopias are seen in one line, then this is true for dystopias as well.

Therefore, my thesis will outline how the social media platform itself is the Orwellian Big Brother which Orwell predicted in *1984* and also how this surveillance policy is using

human psychology as a tool to modify and create an individual to live and establish a dystopic world accepting it as a utopic one. To critically analyse this different point of view, the movie titled *Snowden* and the Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma* have been used to present a realistic approach on this aspect. The aspect that I shall highlight in this dissertation through in depth analysis of the aforementioned three primary sources would be how psychological control through surveillance policy and the superiority of totalitarian government over individuals – two major themes of the novel *1984* have been revived more widely in twenty first century through the implementation of algorithmic system set by Social networking sites and also depicting that the behavioural changes of the generations of 21<sup>st</sup> century have much relevance with the citizens of Orwellian society.

The question that I will attempt to answer through this paper is:

- “How *1984* is more relevant today to due surveillance capitalism?”

The aim is to justify that the prediction that Orwell inferred in the novel has been proved true in its words reiterating the fact that the human mind is the only striving force by which any superior power oriented entity or government can deconstruct the sense of individuality and freedom of a person and can restore capitalism by using human being as commodity based on their own consent. Thus, the covert (the unconscious) and the overt (the consciousness); these two parts of the mind are the main target of digital platforms today to construct mental imprisonment like Bentham’s panoptic prison in order to supervise and dominate individuals and tactically emerging the totalitarian regime through the realm of globalisation. Therefore, to justify so, I will attempt to present a few examples taken from *Snowden* and *The Social Dilemma* along with examples taken from our real life to show how they are reflected in *1984*.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

“According to Madam Pomfrey, thoughts could leave deeper scars than almost anything else.”

— J.K. Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

As Rowling refers a wound in human thoughts lasts greater than a wound in body. To emphasise on this fact, I believe the concept of human psychology and its functionality has always been an astounding arena of research for writers and critics from different periods plus disciplines as the interesting part in it is – to critically analyse and understand human mind, nonetheless one requires to build a bridge parallel to his own mind and to the other's. Dystopian fictions that speculate a social problem taken from the very real world and portraying it through fictional characters strike mostly the mind of its readers with an aim to warn them about the dangers that the future can hold if the present habit persists. While the discussion is about twentieth century literary works mainly dystopian fictions; the name – George Orwell is predominantly penned by many scholars and researchers in multiple resources and reviews where many theories and ideas are being examined in relation to Orwell's depiction regarding future and connecting his thought with real life events. Hence, critics have viewed Orwell's work from numerous lenses in which Bentham's panopticism, Foucault's surveillance theory and totalitarian perspective; these three are highly appreciated and being analysed in Orwell's narratives. Though two more critical aspects – similarity between Orwell and Freud's perspectives and the ideological control over psychology; have been implemented on other areas in fragmented manner by many scholars which have helped me to critically scrutinise Orwell's top notch literary work *1984* and presenting a new point of view which makes this research one-of-a-kind.



Therefore, this chapter contains a brief overview of the relevant critical theories and ideas which I shall be referring to throughout my thesis as that helped me to give new insight in my study. However, what makes this research different from existing analysis is – how Freudian psychoanalysis can be implemented to examine as well as determine the similarity between totalitarian control of Orwellian Big Brother and with the very existence of social media control in 21<sup>st</sup> century where surveillance capitalism is being utilised as a tool to control an individual's life and choice by reshaping their mind spontaneously which is depicted by Orwell in his novel in an extensive way. Since, I have divided this chapter into three parts in which the first section demonstrates the position Orwell holds in twentieth century and beyond and the reason behind it, the second section outlines the connection between Freud and Orwell as well as Foucault and Orwell. Moreover, it speculates how these two theorists' thoughts are being reflected in Orwell's words and the last section marks out how Orwell has given emphasis on 'the unconscious' (which Freud denotes as the covert part of the human mind) through Winston Smith and eventually hinted us how the technological advancement will adapt the theory of Freud by the formation of surveillance capitalism in 21<sup>st</sup> century which makes 1984 a foreseeable thesaurus. Lastly, my point of departure is the section where I contemplate my reasons for choosing Orwell as the primary text to justify how Orwell's prediction in 1984 is visible in 21<sup>st</sup> century where the algorithmic control of social networking sites functions like a spider web through which each person from any corner of the world is being scrutinised and being manipulated psychologically like the telescreen did to every Oceanian citizen in 1984.

#### **a) Orwell's Contribution in 20th century and Beyond:**

In modern and postmodern literary era, predecessors of George Orwell can see the terrific portraiture of dystopic world within a moment once they hear his name. Therefore, Orwell is the person whose prophetic vision and narratives have always influenced readers and scholars from any discipline to think repeatedly about him in order to evaluate his prediction

with the contemporary situation and to define how his foreseeing statement can become this much true. In relation to this aspect, in an article titled “Modernists and the New Millennium: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives on Orwell, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway” M. Kirschen denotes that “Orwell’s work is indispensable when examining the literature of progress from the early twentieth century” (161).

There is no ground in which one can state that Orwell’s vision cannot be associated with modern world rather it is evident that the sketch of future that he had drawn through characters of his novels has been renewed in today’s world as if the body got the soul in it. M. Kirschen quotes Ronald Berman where Berman [...] claims it is impossible “to study the fate of progress over time and the devolution of ideas without including Orwell” (qtd. in M. Kirschen 159). Therefore, it confirms that Orwell holds a very concentric position to relate his perspective in evaluating any sort of literary work which talks about certain issues of the society. Notwithstanding, most of the contemporary aspects such as technological and authoritarian control, loss of individualism, identity crisis, surveillance etc. are being highlighted in intellectual writings by many writers like Orwell from early to late 20<sup>th</sup> century but the feature that differs Orwell from others is that he has shared ideas and beliefs that can be manifested in any realm of change that takes place beyond his literary time frame. M. Kirschen points out Berman’s quotation where he states “Referring specifically to Nineteen Eighty-Four, [...] Orwell wrote not about the progress of technology, but rather the progress of ideas: “The story resists technological futurism — there are no spaceships or platinum suits with diagonal zippers. It is thoroughly conventional” (qtd. in M. Kirschen 159). A review paper titled “1984” REVISITED: TOTALITARIANISM IN OUR CENTURY” which has led my insight deeper in understanding Orwell’s stand further his literary framework because the author Irving Howe mentions in the review “Thus “the trivialization” of Orwell’s text in our day “makes our world seem no different from the world within the text” (96). Thereby, it

clarifies that by rereading Orwell's texts, readers can easily depict the parallel transition between the portrait of fictional society and the society we live in and also helps them to examine his prophetic vision which is nonetheless being pictured in reality. However, Orwell's contribution in seeing the grim changes taking place in future beforehand has provided a space to evaluate his perspective with Sigmund Freud and Michael Foucault which also encapsulates the similarity of thoughts amongst these three.

### **b) Similarity between Orwell's Insight and Freud's Perspective:**

Hence, unlike other authors Orwell himself obviously took inspiration from ancestral writings but he has surpassed his thoughts way ahead of his time for which theorists' perspectives can be compared to his vision as well. The masterpiece of Orwell's entire authorial lifetime – *1984* not only discloses his political views, dictatorial oppression over individuals and atrocious consequences of the repressed society but also presents the internal world of an individual's mind represented through the portrayal of protagonist – Winston Smith. The prime emphasis on the diminishing process of Smith's individuality and privacy displayed in a hyperbolic manner is undoubtedly similar to the thoughts of Sigmund Freud who has introduced us with the cognitive process of human mind. Roazen in an article titled "Orwell, Freud, and 1984" has mentioned that "it is Orwell's masterpiece 1984, published in 1949, ten years after Freud's death, that retains its uncanny, horrifying—and one might say its Freudian—air" (35). This statement ensures that Orwell's writing is highly appreciated in a broader sense while dissecting different aspects and theories which relates to Freud's thoughts.

Sigmund Freud – the founder of psychoanalysis who has illustrated the covert and overt part of human mind and how it works, has much influences on Orwell indirectly. It can be depicted as Orwell stated in the text through Winston's voice, "'They can't get inside you,' she had said. But they could get inside you" (367). This refers that Orwell has emphasised more on

the techniques of how Big Brother controlled and supervised power over Oceanian citizens instead of indicting only the theme of totalitarian regime. With this, he clearly claims that human mind is the entity in which power can be manifested significantly rather physically. So, it is evident that Orwell may not be logical like Freud in medical terms but “Freud’s visual talents fulfill Orwell’s dictum [...]” (Roazen 38).

In addition, Roazen also denotes the similarity of thoughts between Freud and Orwell “Above all, the psychologies of Orwell’s 1984 and that of Freud’s system are remarkably similar. [...] both Orwell and Freud retain a fragmentary hope that psychology can improve mankind’s lot” (40). I believe this is the point where I have found a lead to analyse that Orwell has focused more on psychological conditioning which is reflected in his writing. Furthermore, Orwell defines the techniques of the power policy of Orwellian Big Brother by stating that “The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about” (Orwell 319). It means Orwell himself has mentioned that the controlling power of Big Brother is associated with thoughts of its citizens which refers fairly the covert part of a human being which is introduced by Freud as ‘the unconscious’. Inspection through constant gaze with a motive to capture the unconscious instinct manipulates an individual which eventually bring changes in behaviour. As we can see that Smith’s denial of Big Brother’s supremacy in Oceania at first turns into his acceptance of the regime and its control over his life which is mentioned in the last line of the text where Orwell states, “He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother” (376). On similar note, Roazen asserts this as well by saying Orwell like Freud thought that “the key issue was not behaviour but inner feelings” (40).

### **c) Foucault’s Panopticism and Orwell’s Depiction:**

The psychological paradigms introduced by Freud has encouraged many intellectuals and twists with Foucauldian perspective as Foulcaut’s view regarding surveillance mechanism

can be linked with Freudian outlook. It is because Foucault's surveillance theory not only reinforces the image of the structural view of Bentham's prison showing how an individual can be gazed in it without being knowing and seeing the observer; but also provides an insight that this surveillance theory functions through the projection of power; the power that consumes the mind of the observed. In this regard, Michael Foucault in his famous book titled *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* mentions "Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives 'power of mind over mind' " (364-365) which justifies this aspect that to gain power strategically it is required to project the power over the mind. This can be seen in text where Orwell has brought Foucault's surveillance theory in his writing stating through the lens of protagonist that "All sensations seemed to be magnified" (Orwell 227).

Therefore, Foucault's surveillance theory is interconnected with Louis Althusser-French Marxist as well whose definition of ideology strengthens the construction of this theory tremendously to determine that "the power of mind over mind" can be perfectly endeavoured if and only if the consent of the citizens (ideological structure) can be received. Bertans in in chapter 4 of the book titled *Literary Theory: The Basics* states that "For Foucault the Panopticon stands for the modern world in which we, its citizens, are 'the bearers' of our own figurative, mental, imprisonment. As with Althusser, we are complicit in our own confinement" (151). This refers us that ideological control is the device through which the covert part of an individual can be manipulated resulting in the full-fledged formation of Foucault's surveillance theory. Bertan also asserts "Ideology convinces us that we are whole and real, that we are the 'concrete subjects' we want to be. No wonder, then, that we see whatever ideology makes us see as natural, as belonging to the natural, harmonious order of things" (87). This theoretical insight can be seen unambiguously in Orwell's writing as well where Smith declares that "I understand HOW: I do not understand WHY" (101). So, it means that the ideological control

shapes the mind of Winston but does not leave a scope to him to comprehend why it functions like that. However, we can definitely stress on this fact that these two theorists' insights have assisted Orwell more to predict a future that can emerge based on Foucauldian surveillance theory and Freudian psychoanalysis; and likewise *1984*, we can see this in 21<sup>st</sup> century where all individuals are under observation of an invisible gaze which is implemented through social networking sites where we are the bearer of our own mind and act upon the way the algorithm regulates our mind.

#### **d) The Chosen Text and its Reflection Today:**

The reason for choosing *1984* as the primary text is to show how its prophecy is visible in the era in which we live today. Hence, many scholars consider this text as the bible which foresees what may happen in future. This thought has immensely provoked my insight to relate this text with the existing communication system that we call social media; where an individual devotes oneself to the Orwellian algorithm control which mainly manipulates individual's thought process. In the book titled *Imagining Surveillance: Eutopian and Dystopian Literature and Film* the author Peter Marks has revealed in a specific chapter named "Nineteen Eighty-Four" that,

Surveillance scholars sometimes vent their frustrations at the hold the novel has on our imaginations, especially given that the contemporary world of surveillance is far more variegated than Orwell proposes, with computers, the Internet, mobile phones and social media only part of a vastly more sophisticated and nuanced world than Orwell imagines. Such scholars have reasons to be frustrated. In the twenty-first century, the age of Big Data is transforming the way surveillance functions, and although the term obviously echoes Big Brother, it produces resonances Orwell did not hear (81).

This refers us that Orwell did not label the term perfectly in his time but suggested his readers to detect his indication in order to comprehend the core existence of Big Brother within us. The article titled “Surveillance, Classification, and Social Inequality in Informational Capitalism: The Relevance of Exploitation in the Context of Markets in Information” in which it is emphasised through a statement that says “For instance, insights into the use of personal information through social media providers are obfuscated through complicated terms of use and privacy statements. Using social media is thus largely based on an "uninformed consent" (Sevignani 89). This clarifies that in order to establish capitalism, we, the individuals share personal information in social networking systems ignoring fully the concept of privacy and give consent (hegemony as Gramsci noted) to the very system which ultimately regulates our mind and deconstruct individuality. Moreover, Marks says, Modern consumer capitalism and social welfare require the aggregation and transmission of personal information and the construction of ‘digital doubles’ just as ‘doublethink’ to track our movements and provide information and services. For all this, Nineteen Eighty-Four’s enduring cultural place suggests that “it still has something to tell readers about the complexities of surveillance: about what is; about what can be seen, or kept invisible; about the monitoring of spaces and status of privacy; about the reach and limitations of technology, and about the many ways in which surveillance complicates concepts of identity” (81-82).

Therefore, accessing privacy of an individual like the telescreen of 1984 is the main pathway of social media where freedom is represented as a myth. To illustrate this, in an article titled “Foucault Reads Freud: The Dialogue with Unreason and Enlightenment” WRÓBEL asserts “Freedom thus become synonymous with an interiority to be recreated in relation to an external world to be internalised [...] rather freedom as the interiorization of the outside if and only if the outside allows for play, and lets itself to be played with” (284). However, Foucault’s perspective regarding Freud assists Orwell much positively because two of the theorists’

contemplations got an image though Orwell's diction in his writing. "In 1966, Foucault saw in psychoanalysis a critical science, directly addressing the issue of unconsciousness, that is directing our attention to a place by definition inaccessible to any other theoretical cognition" (WRÓBEL 272-273).

The existing literature on text and the relevant theories along with scholars' concepts have been incredibly helpful for my research in terms of providing direction accurately. My purpose throughout this literature review has been to concise and analyse the literature that discuss ideas relevant to my research. Consequently, I have also brought a new look to examine this text in a different angle addressing the ideas which have done in several studies previously but in scattered ways. That is, I have tried to fill the gap in my thesis showing that surveillance capitalism is being imposed in today's world to regulate the individual's life like the panopticon in order to establish capitalism broadly in the realm of globalisation and to fulfil this goal 'the unconscious' thus, the covert part of human mind is being utilised for which the algorithmic control of social networking system works as fuel; thus, this algorithmic control eminently symbolises Orwellian Big Brother of 1984.



### Chapter 3: Methodology:

The research methodology for my thesis has been qualitative. Existing data and literature has been reviewed and analysed for the purpose of this research, further supported by an in-depth textual analysis of the text and critical analysis of other two primary sources which are – Netflix documentary and the film; within the theoretical framework discussed later in this chapter.

#### a) Theorist's Perspective regarding Power and Human Mind:

'Panopticism' – introduced by French philosopher Michel Foucault in the late twentieth century; a discussion of surveillance policy; is a pictorial presentation of the very known Bentham's Panopticon – the prison in which the observer is the ruler and the observed is always at gaze. The famous book titled *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (1975 – 1977) where Foucault has outlined precisely the purpose of surveillance theory "he 'the observed' is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (361). The prime motive of surveillance is establishing power over the mind of a human being. To illustrate this fact, Foucault has also clarified that the panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; "it is a way of making power relations "function in a function", and of making "a function function through these power relations" (Foucault 365). In addition, French Marxist Louis Althusser's theory of ideological control which is later to be found similar to the term 'hegemony' – coined by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci has much relevance with panopticism. As Gramsci denotes that power gets the power over people by the consent of people. Indeed, this is inevitable as the consent given by an individual automatically establishes the power over mind. As discussed in earlier chapter, the aspect of projecting power over human mind of any individual is paradoxically interlinked with Freud's notion of psychoanalysis theory which refers to the cognitive procedure of human thoughts. In this theoretical approach, Freud has described how the unconscious influences consciousness to act upon the instinct, plus introduced with three metaphorical parts of human

mind: id, ego and super-ego; and with some defense mechanisms which are reflected through behavioural changes when the conflict between unconscious and consciousness is too much for a person to handle.

In relation to these existing theoretical approaches, a new outlook towards globalisation has appeared in twenty first century which has been recognised widely as ‘surveillance capitalism’ – a term coined by Shoshana Zuboff. In Zuboff’s theory, it is a capitalist market in which tech giant companies use the personal data of mass people which they provide with their own consent completely ignoring their privacy issue and being clustered in all time gaze of the companies’ algorithmic control which eventually transforms the commodified reality into behavioural data for analysis to progress the sales of the companies. From her perspective, it is a specific logic of ‘capitalist accumulation’. Therefore, all these theories and approaches function as a base to consider Orwell’s depiction of the dystopian society in *1984* as a revival in the reality of today’s modern world and also it serves a large scope to the readers to relate the fictional surveillance policy with this new ‘surveillance capitalism’ of 21<sup>st</sup> century in which mass people are mirrored portrait of Oceanian citizens.

#### **b) Surveillance Capitalism and Algorithmic Control:**

Surveillance capitalism is acknowledged as a theory itself where the gaze of tech giant companies over mass people and the use of their personal data for accelerating the profit of companies have become a controversial aspect and been regarded an ethical issue in the eyes of many critics of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The use of personal data by financial markets has gone beyond anyone’s control as the spectrum of technological advancement has dissolved masses in the utopic vision of an advanced society, thus, it has become a dilemma to decide whether conveying personal data in social networking sites is beneficial for an individual or it is a new way to be entrapped in the regime of a new sort of totalitarian control. To illustrate this, Gerry Canavan quotes Manuel Castells in an article titled “Capital as Artificial Intelligence” where

Castells states “Financial markets, by and large,” anyone's control. They have become a sort of automaton, with sudden movements that do not follow a strict economic logic, but a logic of chaotic complexity” (qtd. in Canavan 685). In the same article, N. Katherine Hayles has proposed the term ‘cognitive nonconscious’ to describe the kind of unthinking decision making agents, like markets, that arise as an emergent property out of systems of complex interactions (686). Moreover, Hayles has referred market as a ‘biological organism’ which is adaptive and flexible; while not being self-aware, it nonetheless possesses a kind of cognition, with “sensing, processing, communicating, and actuating capabilities that surpass or in fact bypass human agency” (qtd. in Canavan 686). So, it means that the companies which use personal data of masses as all seeing agent have set the algorithm system of social networking sites in a spectacular way in which every individual’s cognitive process has been scrutinised to shape their perspective as well as it controls them to be stick to the digital platform always believing it as a part and parcel of life just as the telescreen set by the Party to scrutinise the movements of all people. We see this concept is being penned in Orwell’s writing as well where Winston says, “All the beliefs, habits, tastes, emotions, mental attitudes that characterize our time are really designed to sustain the mystique of the Party and prevent the true nature of present day society from being perceived” (Orwell 265). Although it is reflected in our reality as well since we the individuals are believing as well as accepting news and offers referred as suggestion in social networking sites like Facebook, You Tube, google etc. which come repeatedly in news feed if we type the phrase once in the section bar. It clarifies that the algorithm denotes an individuals’ choice and dislikes and set it as a constant model to provide similar things to the user. Nonetheless, ‘the Party’ of *1984* did the same act to motivate its citizens by designing Party’s perspective constant and unalterable in their eyes. In addition to this, Eran Fisher in his chapter titled “Can Algorithmic Knowledge about the Self Be Critical?” of Matteo Stocchetti’s book outlines “The algorithmic episteme is mobilized to produce knowledge not merely about

the objective world, but also increasingly about the internal world of individuals, about the self” (111). This is undoubtedly true and justifies the relevance between the character portrayal of Winston Smith and the generation of 21<sup>st</sup> century where the inner self is controlled by the system which not only intend to change a person’s thought but also instigates to think like the proposed concept. He additionally elaborates this by saying “An ever-increasing number of digital tools are developed to know our subjectivity: our tastes, wants and weaknesses” (111).

However, Canavan has also emphasised on capitalistic control of social networking system stating that the spontaneous organization of market forces as they emerge, evolutionarily, from the salutary or maladaptive decisions of individual actors within the system is no less definitive than the deliberate decisions of a planned economy; and he has labelled ‘market hegemony’ is thus revealed as itself a kind of totalitarianism, simply a benign one, an authoritarian logic [...] because it represents a ‘combination of knowledge more extensive than a single mind can master’ (690). Roazen in this regard asserts that in 1984 one of the Party’s central aims had been “how to discover, against his will, what another human being is thinking” (38). We see this in the text as well where Winston says, “To keep your face expressionless was not difficult, and even your breathing could be controlled, with an effort: but you could not control the beating of your heart, and the telescreen was quite delicate enough to pick it up” (Orwell 100). Likewise, the constant surveillance of the telescreen which can detect the heartbeat of a person, the gaze of social media today works in the same way by tracking each person from any corner of the world.

### **c) User-centric Design and Biometric Control:**

In the ‘Introduction’ part of the book *Life by Algorithms*, the authors claim:

More deeply, however, computers offer a model of cognition that increasingly shapes our approach to the world, even when computers are not directly involved in information processing. Experts on artificial intelligence like to debate whether and

when computers will be able to think like human beings when, in reality, human beings are learning to think more and more like computers (Besteman and Gusterson 6).

Therefore, this technological progress that designs a person's interest symbolises what Orwell has portrayed through O'Brien's character which speculates how the Party controls the mind just as these tech-tools. The moment when O'Brien said, 'We control matter because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull. You will learn by degrees, Winston' (Orwell 334). It means that the unconscious (covert part of human mind) works step by step to convert the action into consciousness and thus reality seems to be natural to the spectator at the end. Similarly, another author Kelly A. Gates in her book titled *Our Biometric Future* states

These individualized uses of the technology are particular forms or aspects of what Foucault calls "technologies of the self," techniques that "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (128).

This clarifies that the generation of today's world are so enamoured in attaining perfection like the way the comrades were supposed to be perfect in front of telescreen regardless of their physical and mental strength because the Party made them believe in it as well we are also accustomed to what makes our existence more realistic in virtual world instead of real world. So, the reception of users' choice boosts the task of designing user centric model to more widespread implementation of biometric technologies has been what the biometrics industry refers to as "user acceptance" (Gates 125-126).

Therefore, aforementioned all the critics' views and scholars' concern regarding power dynamics over the mind of individuals and how it manipulates the mind which distorts the personality of a self is a clear representation of what Orwell dictated in *1984* through the

distorted image of Winston Smith when he accepted the regime of Big Brother in the end by surrendering himself because he wanted to exist just as we want to exist in the virtual world. Thus, surveillance capitalism is more determined in gaining power over each individual of today's world which has made it a mirrored reflection of Orwell's picturesque – the Big Brother.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

### a) Big Brother of 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 21<sup>st</sup> century:

“BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran” (Orwell 3).

From the very beginning of the novel, the way Orwell has drawn a frightening image of Big Brother in a poster whose eyes are stuck on its spectators emerges suspicion as well as curiosity amongst readers that influence us to delve deeper into the diction of the novel in order to know the characteristic of ‘Big Brother’ and the reason behind his horrific gaze. It is an undeniable fact that dystopian fictions always set forth facts of reality in an equivocal way so that readers thoughts would be provoked to relate the problems with the present situation of their time and investigate how modern civilisation resembles the historical past. Orwell’s *1984*, is a text in which the totalitarian control of Oceania is being exaggerated through Party’s slogans and regulations but what is not being analysed by most of the readers and critics which I have analysed – is the power secrecy of this autocratic regime lies on the mind of its citizens; depicting that the superiority of Party sustains only by controlling the thought process of its people. We see this in the text as well where it is stated by Smith: “If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable what then?” (Orwell 102). It means that the Party holds its power in every individual’s thought by which it can alter the facts into a myth or turning the falsified aspect into a fact at any time.

From my perspective, this horrific gaze of Big Brother which functions based on the constant surveillance theory symbolises our today’s world in which we the individuals are streaming on without any pause in different social networking sites where Big Brother is invisible, thus, the designed algorithm set by top tech-giant companies is scrutinising every individual’s mind, reshaping their individuality and making them to be solely devoted to the system from which they will never want to get away. As we know, the sketch of Big Brother

in 1984 does not only depict why the enormous face in the poster or in telescreen monitoring party members all day and night; but it has opened a window to us to see and comprehend what Orwell has tried to show through the eyes of the Big Brother. It is the constant surveillance system predicted by Orwell in which we will be subjugated to at one point and this aspect is not ephemeral at all in twenty first century where we are wired by wireless connection of social media in almost every sphere. A statement that has revived Orwell's visionary regarding autocratic control of Orwellian Big Brother is:

“There will come a time when it isn't ‘They’re spying on me through my phone’ anymore. Eventually, it will be ‘My phone is spying on me’.”

— Philip K. Dick

The quoted statement is profoundly ubiquitous if we actually notice and realise where we are existing today. The Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma* directed by Jeff Orlowski has revealed how we are becoming tech-driven humans by deconstructing our individuality and attributing the system to regulate our mind; losing the freedom of thoughts. Former designers and engineers of Google, Facebook, Instagram, Firefox and Mozilla labs etc. and some critics have given statements regarding social networking sites and its functionality to let the users know how the bulk amount of their personal data is being used to drive their perspectives and thought process with an aim to make profit for their business and to run on this procedure, they keep the users entangled with apps and sites 24X7 through delivering notifications. Therefore, the design of these social networking sites works as a tool through which it keeps its user engaged so that each of the users' instinct can be magnified and redefined as per choice. However, Foucault did not use the term “technology” in reference to electronic devices or software, but there is a sense in which the varied uses of computers, cell phones, MP3 players, e-mail, profiles on social network sites, and other hardware and software technologies are part of the ‘technologies of the self’ for a certain class of privileged, tech savvy individuals. For



instance, Orwell has also emphasised his vision regarding today's tech-savvy generation in text stating through Smith's perspective when he claims that every individual 'became simply a mouth that uttered, a hand that signed, whatever was demanded of him' (Orwell 306) which means that we and our thoughts are conducted by the coded algorithm of social networking sites which Orwell referred back almost 70 years back.

To illustrate this, in the book titled *Our Biometric Future* the author Kelly A. Gates has noted While biometric identification systems are being envisioned and designed mainly for large-scale, database-driven, institutional uses, developers have experimented with consumer applications—hardware and software systems designed and marketed for individual users (126). She also asserts which I find provocative enough for my research saying; we are encouraged to experiment with and make optimal use of new technologies, whether to express ourselves, increase our productivity, make more money, secure ourselves from threats, or otherwise better ourselves and make our lives more self-sufficient and complete (127). This concept is similar to Orwellian Big Brother as well as they propose a society where all the citizens are happy and against of their enemy – the Goldstien; with hatred they denounce him and proliferate the Party's supremacy over them accepting their own life fully peaceful in the Party's territory. On the other hand, the movie *Snowden*, directed by Oliver Stone where the main character Edward Snowden reveals how NSA (National Security Agency) store personal data of all individuals tracing from each corner of the world illegally and use it in the time when there is conflict with another state, thus, they maintain their surveillance activities through the use of social media. To emphasise on Snowden's revelations, the author Dominik Finkelde in his article titled "Reason, Anamorphosis, and the Snowden Case" states that

Snowden had found this ground was made clear during his first interviews on camera, when he asserted that his primary objective in leaking classified material was to expose

that the NSA had acted unconstitutionally under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) when it collected telephone metadata on almost all calls made within the borders of the United States (12).

I find this statement relevant to claim that the giant tech companies who are more concerned with the exposure of personal data of individuals is strengthening the surveillance policy by diminishing a person's individuality and freedom which is the basic right of a human being. "And even technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used for the diminution of human liberty. (Orwell 244). Therefore, Orwell has also indicated that power becomes established as a reign by deconstructing the self and freedom of others. On similar note, we observe this in today's reality where incorporating the surveillance system unethically, Biometric systems are being designed primarily 'to invest institutional users' with the enhanced capacity to control networks and information, to increase the scale and effectiveness of surveillance systems, and to secure forms of differential access to the resources of value in late capitalist societies (Gates 127 – 128). Thus this surveillance system of social media is undoubtedly acts like the Orwellian Big Brother for whom the human mind is a mere object to use as a weapon in order to diminish the individualism of human entity and their freedom.

#### **b) Virtual World and Our Mind:**

In the Netflix documentary, Google Former design ethicist – Tristan Harris states, "never before in history 50 designers made decisions in California that would have impact on 2 billion people. 2 billion people will have thoughts that they didn't intend to have because the designer and Goggle said this is how the notification work on your screen when you wake up to morning" (09:10 – 09:31). This clarifies that unlike Smith, our unconscious instinct is being utilised to have power over us and make us realise that this is how I want things to be in life which is already predefined by the algorithmic orientation. "This may be advantageously

expressed by saying that an individual process belongs to begin with to the system of the unconscious and can then, in certain circumstances, pass over into the system of the conscious” (Freud 72). What Freud meant is the covert part of human mind evokes tension or desires based on the circumstances and the unconscious motives reflect through consciousness later.

The urge of having a perfect life or society is a universal desire of men since centuries after centuries. This perfection represents a scenario that has every element in order, thus, a flawless orientation. However, this keenness shapes peoples’ mind in a hypnotic manner which results in believing and agreeing any kind of facilities offered by an authority or a system. In this regard, Fisher states that Psychoanalysis offers critical knowledge about the self by creating a space between ‘the actually existing self’ and the abstract, theoretical, even ‘utopian self’ (116). In text, it is referred by Orwell how the Party establishes its decision and make people believe in their rules regardless of the peoples’ consent - “In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it” (Orwell 102). Notwithstanding, my perception towards the grasp of Digital surveillance theory goes parallel with Fisher whilst he mentions, “The scientific episteme characterized the audience, it also helped in shaping a conception of self: individuals understand themselves through the way in which others characterize them. This is particularly true when such knowledge is translated into practice habitually encountered by the audience (114). In the same fashion, Orwell has coined the term ‘Doublethink’ stating All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. ‘Reality control’, they called it: in New speak, ‘doublethink’ (Orwell 44) which basically means two contradictory thoughts stand simultaneously and the citizens are bound to believe in both. Likewise, the conception of ‘Doublethink’; we also try to present ourselves in social networking sites expecting how others see us which is the ‘id’ of our mind (pleasure principle) as well as we also decide how we should show ourselves to the opponent which works as ego (reality principle). Therefore, the id portion of our mind expects how to be

regarded in others' eyes for which the ego takes it into account and plans according to it that derives as action through consciousness. Moreover, Orwell has referred to the consciousness in text stating through Smith: "That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed" (Orwell 45). This means that the unconscious influences Smith to reject the Party's superiority and at the same time, the overt part of the mind – the consciousness brings realisation in him depicting the super-ego (morality principle) to decide why he cannot rebel against Big Brother. As Big Brother is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world. 'His function is to act as a focusing point' for love, fear, and reverence, emotions which are more easily felt towards an individual than towards an organization (Orwell 261 - 262). This clarifies that the Orwellian Big Brother remains as a central to render power of the Party on the people of Oceania and similarly 'social media' acts as a digital big Brother of 21<sup>st</sup> century that monitors all remaining as a central point of gaze. That you will be fighting in the dark. You will always be in the dark. You will receive orders and you will obey them, without knowing why. Later I shall send you a book from which you will learn the true nature of the society we live in, and the strategy by which we shall destroy it' (Orwell 220). It means Orwell has predominantly referred how the gaze of surveillance will execute its power using thematic notion of light and darkness. Gates has also depicted which clarifies that this represents a deep distrust in the ability of the conscious mind to help in the understanding of the self, and 'a technological route to bypass consciousness' and understand the self on the basis of 'lively data', construed to be a more authentic, unbiased and reliable representation of the self (115). Therefore, it is evident that Orwell claimed that the main projection of power is always over unconscious part of human mind as it instigates the consciousness to show what is going on inside the brain. With this in mind a statement of the text symbolises this same aspect; "The

Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about. We do not merely destroy our enemies; we change them” (Orwell 319).

In 1984 science has almost ceased to exist; but the scientist of that time is “a mixture of psychologist and inquisitor,” who does research “studying with extraordinary minuteness the meaning of facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice, and testing the truth-producing effects of drugs, shock therapy, hypnosis and physical torture”. This is visible in Winston’s statement as well: “You will never have anything to sustain you, except the idea” (Orwell 222). Social networking sites enable users to engage in practices of self-monitoring and self-actualization, while also providing a means of keeping tabs on one another. By comparison of this aspect, the text refers, “For how could you establish even the most obvious fact when there existed no record outside your own memory?” (Orwell 45). It denotes that our memory can only exhibit what it thinks and except than this, no record or evidence would be regarded as a fact which is depicted in text – “Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the era sure was forgotten, the lie became truth” (Orwell 95).

Whilst using social media, we observe this feature most when rumours get more preferences to us than the real news of any subject. Incidentally, this phenomenon is being predicted by Orwell where he penned it in the text:

And when memory failed and written records were falsified—when that happened, the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist, and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested (Orwell 118).

More than electronic gadgets, our new personalized devices are part of the repertoire of mechanisms that we use to communicate and reflexively constitute ourselves, and especially to make our lives more productive, efficient, and entrepreneurial. This experimentation is not

unbounded; while we might be encouraged to experiment with biometrics, these technologies are ultimately designed to fix our identities, to bind our identities to our bodies and “make us identifiable across space and time’ (Gates 129). Hence, what proponents rather deterministically refer to as “user acceptance” of biometric technologies is in fact a complicated matter of creating the kinds of people who will use them: people appropriately concerned with their personal security, watchful of themselves and others, and mindful of a compelling need to continuously experiment with new technologies as a matter of their own self-expression and self-improvement. So, it means we acknowledge the artificial intelligence control as beneficial for us which is undoubtedly true and with our own consent, we give scope to tech companies to recapture our ‘self’ and ‘liberty’ which is backed up by textual evidence that denotes - ‘Everything depends on yourself,’ O’Brien had said; but he knew that there was no conscious act by which he could bring it nearer. (Orwell 351). Furthermore, sensing the magnitude of this problem Fisher also states same thing that,

Since there is no theory about the self, there is no a prior ability to know what kind of data might be relevant to knowledge about the self. Hence, algorithmic knowledge is inherently prone to collecting and processing as much data as possible. No type of data can be ruled out as too mundane or too esoteric as a means to understand the self (114).

### **c) Capitalistic Notion of the Party and the Virtual World:**

Harris also emphasised on the capitalistic notion of tech companies saying, “The classic saying is that If you’re not paying for the product, then you’re the product” (13:117 – 13:22). Internet users are not only invited to adopt online prototypes of facial recognition software, but also to experiment with these beta software applications and ‘offer feedback to developers, thereby participating in the development and evaluation of the technology’ (127). In the documentary, Cathy O’Nil – a data scientist says: “algorithm are opinions embedded in codes

and that algorithms are not objective. Algorithms are optimised to some definitions of success” (47:39 – 47:51). It reassures the fact that capitalism is the wheel for the tech giant companies to move forward in order to gain power over human lives and by utilising personal data, they can make changes and build a more advanced virtual world which will bring more money as well as users in this web portal. Furthermore, Orwell has also indicated the capitalistic view of the Party of Oceania regime stating; “but this would provide only the economic and not the emotional basis for a hierarchical society” (243) which means that the economic drive is more alluring to the Party than considering peoples’ emotions and desires. Moreover, Orwell has pictured how a person gives full access of their personal life to social networking platform which they provide on their own will. This concept is metaphorically represented as following:

We are not content with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul (Orwell 321).

The phrase – ‘we bring him genuinely heart and soul’ symbolises the activities of today’s generation as well where we wholeheartedly submit our inner self to the virtually constructed ‘self’. At one point when O’Brien stated to Smith, “You know the Party slogan: ‘Freedom is Slavery’. Has it ever occurred to you that it is reversible? Slavery is freedom. Alone. Free. the human being is always defeated” (Orwell 333). Through this statement we can comprehend that the interconnection between slavery and freedom has a vice-versa effect which defines that getting freedom means agreeing with the terms and conditions of a proposed system. Equally, we the twenty first century generation also participate in agreeing the terms and conditions offered by apps while installing on devices; which can have access over each and every detail

of the device. Therefore, submitting personal data can also be considered as a sort of slavery for which we get freedom thus access in every news and spectrum of information which is predicted in Orwell's writing. Thus, the capitalistic view of Big Brother as well as the Party is similar to what Zuboff called 'surveillance capitalism'.

#### **d) Behavioral Changes of Today's Generation:**

Fisher denotes that "The performative knowledge about the self, created through big data and algorithms, is a-theoretical, almost intently anti-theoretical. It is a regime of truth that does not purport to offer a causal theory of *why* individuals behave in a certain way, but rather offers an algorithmic discovery of *how* they behave, their data patterns" (116). With this object, I claim in my research that the changes occur in behaviour is a jarring reflection of the coded algorithm which denotes our psyche more than we denote on our own. In the same instance, Orwell has written "but once that minimum is achieved, they can twist reality into whatever shape they choose" (245). This clarifies that the minimum achievement of today's surveillance capitalism is gathering data from all people and in its accordance AI (artificial intelligence) receive the ability to reshape the individuality. 'All you care about is yourself,' he echoed (Orwell 369). The very crucial aspect of self-obsession has been brought by Orwell which resembles our perspective of how we only think for our own good ethically when the matter comes of comparison. For instance, the moment when Smith states; "or I shall have become a different person, with a different face" (Orwell 221) resembles the use of filters in different social media apps and other techniques which we use to represent ourselves in a beautiful way to the spectator. This alteration in facial expression not only changes our facial structure but also creates a distorted image of an individual in social media platform which is underlined in the Netflix documentary as well in which Jaron Lanier – the founding father of virtual reality has explained to the audiences. Thus, it arouses a sense of discomfort and lack of confidence to present the real image in sites rather than filtered version of it. Subsequently, this is similar



to Gates' thoughts as well where she states: "The relationship between image and reality remains an issue, to be sure, but it exists largely as a question of verification rather than as a technical accomplishment" (139).

Also, Orwell has speculated that the tension created in one's mind can be easily detected as he quoted: "Your worst enemy, he reflected, was your own nervous system. At any moment the tension inside you was liable to translate itself into some visible symptom" (Orwell 81). If we relate this quote with Orwell's diction then we can perceive that when anyone is disturbed with any issue, they simply share some heart breaking status or sad emojis in social media platform which is a one of kind defense mechanism of Freudian psychoanalysis – 'Regression' to let the friends know that he or she is upset with a status. This means that the privacy of a person no longer kept in one's control within as people want to get sympathy from others. Hence, spectators of these social media platforms believe and judge the facial expression rather understanding a person's thought just as Julia was used to judge people by their faces, and 'it seemed natural to her that Winston should believe O'Brien to be trustworthy on the strength of a single flash of the eyes' (Orwell 192). The notification and emoji design of social networking sites have immense impact on its users to cluster their attention with apps and modules which takes almost ten seconds time to divert their attention which was also predicted by Orwell in text: "Ten seconds would be enough. In that time the world inside him could turn over" (Orwell 354). However, one of the statement of O'Brien has been very thought provoking which is: "There are three stages in your reintegration,' said O'Brien. 'There is learning, there is understanding, and there is acceptance'" (Orwell 329). The three stages through which Big Brother established autocratic control over individuals aforementioned are – learning, understanding and acceptance. If we elaborate this, we can comprehend and relate this to our real life as we. For instance, tech savvy generation like us at first become excited when there is any new launch of apps or sites and try to acknowledge the system. Secondly, the less time

it consumes to understand, the more we appreciate it. Lastly, we completely SUBMIT ourselves into the proposed system which means our acceptance of invented facilities that which we utilise in our lives. As for example, the developments taking place in providing update version with advanced facilities; Facebook, Google, What's app, Instagram; these apps work as a medium to its subscribers/users thus, we are becoming endeavoured in it.

Finally, the virtual world that has generated a new 'self' of every individual through algorithmic control does not even exist in real world which Orwell has signified in his prescient writing *1984*. Orwell has also denoted this when Smith asked him of the existence of Big Brother and it is stated in text as following:

'Does he exist in the same way as I exist?'

'You do not exist,' said O'Brien. (Orwell 327).

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Dystopian fiction or speculative fiction, analysed in this paper, is a mirrored image of our world in which we exist today. We assume that this era has come a long way to be in this position but writers like George Orwell has penned the situation of today's world long before as a prediction when the word 'technology' was not even invented. They act as a historical guide and also a prophetic warning as to where humanity is headed now. The novel discussed in this paper target the use of surveillance theory to establish a full autocratic regime that has taken a new look under the veil of capitalism and globalisation which nonetheless has become the cause of destruction to our society in ways far worse than what have been depicted in the book. However, my concern primarily has been to highlight how tech companies of 21<sup>st</sup> century have acknowledged and been investing human beings like us as commodities to keep running their business on for which the system has taken control over human mind like the way Orwellian Big Brother did to its people to accept the Party's rule. The research and study has been done in hopes that we reach an understanding of how intrinsic surveillance policy can be day by day with new features on it, and how it may play a great role in the destruction of Self of an individual by diminishing the liberty as well as privacy by now we know it. To conclude, of all the severe concerns that we set on to understand the similarity between our reality and Orwell's prediction; we acknowledge that the tech driven society is moving towards a state where human mind is imprisoned by the coded algorithm and it is treated as an object to be ruled over, though, we can only hope that we make changes to this existing system and our perception before it takes a new realm to be appeared.

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