

**Contradiction through the Ages: Interplay of Politics in Literature and Reality in Light
of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games***

Zerin Tasnim

Student ID: 12103026

Department of English and Humanities

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BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games***

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Zerin Tasnim

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Abstract

The claim that a democratic state may make about its 'advanced' ways of 'governing' is where my research interest starts. Having lived in a faulty system all our lives we fail to notice the wrong being committed all around us. However, when we look not at just our personal lives, but at the bigger picture from perhaps miles away we can see all the factors that have caused the social system to break down. Novelists George Orwell and Suzanne Collins take us on such a journey through their respective books: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games*. These novels unhinge us from our society and place us at a more neutral position so that we may see beyond our limits and comprehend the gravity of the matter.

I have positioned the chapters of this paper so that they function like a telescope: one part coming out of the other, but helping us understand in depth the manipulations that autocratic governments of the novel take to in order to keep their positions of power, regardless of time and continent. This paper will look into the subtle power play at work in modern, democratic nations and show how fictions respond to reality. As a part of my research I have come to see that the tools that the governments generally wield in order to maintain their power-politics are such as 'surveillance' and 'propaganda', manipulation and distortion of 'history' and 'homogenization' of people in order to enforce one rigid constitution over everyone without any opposition from them. To look at these issues or interplays more accurately, I have incorporated Michel Foucault, Noam Chomsky and their notions on power and manipulation. Finally, I will be finishing off by turning the spotlight on some of our own democratic governments and how they are no better than the manipulative autocratic regimes that have been criticized in the novels.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The mechanization of all institutions and organizations, gatherings and socializations are driven by power politics.¹ Starting from a family to a multinational corporation, a detective agency to a country, a hierarchy of authority and influence holds them together and gets them functioning in an organized manner, and this in one word is known as governance.² This is an integral part of our lives and the amount of literature produced on governance and their power politics attests to the importance of it. What I intend to show in this paper; with respect to the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins; is how for most forms of governments “power is not a means, it is an end ... the object of power is power” and in order to reinforce it they will resort to various and any means (Orwell 332).

Governance or “the science of politics ... lays down which of the sciences there should be in cities, and which each class of person should learn and up to what level Since political science employs the other sciences, and also lays down laws about what we should do and refrain from, its end will include the ends of the others, and will therefore be the human good” (Aristotle 4). Although Aristotle is not a twentieth century philosopher, his definition is relevant because it sums up the basic criteria of any government. While it is the objective of governments to cater to the basic needs of people and look after them, most governments [irrespective of the system] have failed to do so. Aristotle makes this remark in his famous book the *Nicomachean Ethics*³ where he discusses the decorum that should be adhered to by various institutions, in this case the government. This comment of Aristotle’s by default makes the government the most powerful institution of a region and with this power that the governments harbor, different forms of governments [especially the so-called

¹ Power politics is the construction and management of government policies for the sole benefit of the political parties and not for the sake of the people as it ought to be.

² “What is Governance” by Francis Fukuyama deals with the definition of governance in detail. Fukuyama comments that the responsibility of a government is not mutually exclusive with that of the system it is representing; what is essential is that the government delivers its duty.

³ *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle

democratic governments] make the claim that they can run flawlessly and operate at unprecedented levels of accountability, transparency and good governance.

My aim is not to criticize any particular government, but to highlight how dysfunctional the idea of a democracy is. I pick democracy out of all the other forms of governments is because after decades of trial and error, deliberation over what is best for mankind and nominating democracy as perhaps the best and only solution for themselves, democracy seems to me to prove to be the most problematic of all the governments. I say this because democracy is despotism packed in a glittery wrap of superficial concepts such as freedom, liberty and empowerment. The governments in described in the novels that I have picked are similar in nature. While neither *Nineteen Eighty-Four* nor *The Hunger Games* is officially about democratic governments, they both consist of attributes that are evident in democratic societies such as manipulation and propaganda and other such tools that I have broken down and discussed in details throughout the paper.

What both these novels do talk about are autocratic and totalitarian governments who exert various schemes to remain the most influential actors in the social hierarchy. What I will do in the course of this paper is draw a parallel between the governments in the novels and the governments we see around us. Firstly, I will be showing through the novels to what lengths governments go to, to retain their power. I will be analyzing mainly how through surveillance, manipulation and distortion of history, and thereby homogenization of people [eliminating individuality], governments have been exploiting the masses. Secondly, I want to back up my literary criticisms with reference to factual evidence and events from our day and time.

1.1 Meet the Author: George Orwell and Suzanne Collins

Eric Arthur Blair who goes by the pen name of George Orwell had seen it all when it came to the way the world's superpowers were; and still are; treating and dealing with others. Orwell's birth in Bengal, in 1903 during the epoch of British Imperialism ensured that he was "brought up in an atmosphere of impoverished snobbery" in the class of 'sahibs' (Woodcock). Although he soon left for England, he never stayed for long in either place or post. While he was a prolific student, he was out and active in the fields as well, as he "went to Burma as assistant district superintendent in the Indian Imperial Police" (Woodcock). It is in his first novel *Burmese Days* that we see how through his job in the police he indentified, for the first time the atrocities of the British Raj.

Like most of his novels, *Burmese Days* is dubbed fictional, but there is no doubt that it has been inspired by his real life experiences during his stay in Burma. In protest to the wrong-doings of the empire, Orwell swapped a life of convenience for a life of hardship as he moved out to live with "the poor and outcast people of Europe" and an attempt to expiate his guilt at being a player in the empire dynamics (Woodcock). His changed lifestyle and consequently the demonstrations that he took to were not the only forms of protest, in fact he took a commendable interest in the social structures and voiced his outrage by means of what he loved and was most adept at – writing. Orwell joined the Independent Labor Party; which drove the British socialist and labor movement; and because of this he was a Democratic Socialist. It was the belief that the English Socialism was not equal to Soviet Communism.

Most of his novels were the products of "the three dragons against which George Orwell fought his good fight – European and especially British Imperialism; Fascism, whether Italian, German or Spanish; and Communism" (Ash xi). Albeit his novels are embellished with fictional characters and places, they are all inspired by events he had experienced first-hand. While his post in the Indian Imperial Police accounts for his distaste

of the British Imperialism, his experience in the POUM and the Spanish War exposed him and turned him against Communism and Fascism respectively.⁴ As Timothy Garton Ash says that after these events every “line of his [Orwell’s] writing was now to have a political purpose” (xiii).

While Orwell’s political orientation was determined by the experiences he had encountered first hand, Suzanne Collins’, the author of my second book in discussion, deliberates the “idea of the necessary or unnecessary war” inspired by her father. Her father, Michael Collins, was in the military and eventually took off to participate in the Vietnam War, and he had always encouraged Collins and her siblings to keep abreast of the political game (Driscoll). Born half a century after Orwell she had definitely not experienced the fascism of the Nazi regime, the World Wars or any of the massive warfares that Orwell had experienced. Collins was inspired by mostly her background as a student of Arts and Literature where she takes the Greek mythology and gives it a very modern twist as she constructs the ‘arena’ where 24 people are randomly picked to battle to death, which is televised for the entertainment of the Capitol elites. The arena is representative of the labyrinth, the 24 tributes are the sacrifices and the Gamemakers at the Capitol; who design and administer the Games; are symbolic of the Minotaur himself.

Collins says in her YouTube interviews regarding *The Hunger Games* series that it was partly inspired by the Greek myth of Theseus and Minotaur where seven girls and seven boys from the city of Crete would have to be annually cast into the labyrinth to be sacrificed in order to be spared the wrath of the beastly Minotaur.⁵ The concept of the novel had also formed itself when she was skimming through the channels on television and found the live coverage of the Iraq war and various other reality shows being broadcasted at the same time. Collins had realized that viewing warfare on real-time had a desensitizing effect on the

⁴ POUM is Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista [Worker Party of Marxist Unification]

⁵ Interview taken from YouTube channel *This is Teen*, recorded in September 2010. Question and answers about *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

viewers and she presents this thought through the audience in the Capitol, who watched the Games with a similar attitude; the greater the violence, bloodbath and casualties, the more entertaining it was for them.

Not only Collins but Orwell as well, found a way to criticize society through their works. His novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are but a vaguely encrypted criticism of the social structures and ideals that existed not only then, but even now. Although seemingly different Collins' and Orwell's work merge into one as they covertly hold governments accountable by pointing fingers at their propaganda. What Orwell has done in an attempt to criticize governments and try and account them for their actions, is left behind in his wake the legacy of the Orwellian regime. Neck deep in "surveillance, corruption [or misuse] of language and control of history", most totalitarian states, whether fictional or factual, are labeled Orwellian (Bennett). One would further explain that the term Orwellian is often used as a "pejorative adjective, to evoke totalitarian terror, the falsification of history by state-organized lying, and, more loosely, any unpleasant example of repression or manipulation" (Ash xii). However, the very previous line is where I find that the works of Collins and Orwell merge despite the different approach that each of them has used. The fact that both of them criticize totalitarian governments goes to show that despite belonging to different periods, the forms of government [that have changed and come to exist over time] and their consequences are almost equally negative.

While back in the mid to late twentieth century this definition of Orwellian could only point to Communist and Fascist states this definition can now be applied to almost all countries of the world irrespective of their structure of governance: from democracy to sultanate, they are now all in a perverted state and demands a re-mapping of their governance and power structures and both Orwell and Collins point an accusing finger at the authorities.

Chapter 2 A Reflection of Reality: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games*

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a dynamic novel composed of various elements each leading onto several comprehensive discourses all pertaining to our very reality. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is such a multi-faceted novel that deciding to put it in any one particular genre becomes a difficult task and therefore it “has been dubbed as a ‘political novel’ by some and as merely ‘an anti-communist pamphlet’ by others. If to some it was a piece of science fiction, to some others it was ‘apocalyptic in atmosphere’ (Sharma 186). Similarly Collins’ novel is said to be “a ferocious satire of showbiz culture [such as reality shows who are making money out of any talent from singing, cooking to even one’s intellectual capacity] and hypocritical politicians” as it depicts an authoritarian President ruling the country of Panem where the history is falsified and the people are at the mercy of the totalitarian government (Pinkerton). Despite the various dimensions available in the two novels, I will be exploring them mainly as one, a political fiction, and two, as a dystopian novel; which depicts a society where propaganda is the order of the day and citizens live in a dehumanized society where resistance to the junk that is being fed is almost mute; as these two are best-suited to address the parade of flawed and failed governances that we see in our society today.

2.1 Reality of Governance and its Crisis Mirrored in Political Fictions

While Orwell had succeeded in getting *Nineteen Eighty-Four* categorized into several genres by his diverse writing, this novel is mostly read and analysed as a political fiction because of the heavy social commentary that it undertakes. Also because he has managed to “awaken a new consciousness by highlighting the economic hardships and emotional humiliation encountered by the people belonging to the lower strata of the society” and has posed “subtle questions on the relevance of freedom when individual liberty is denied in a politicized society” *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is treated as a work of political fiction (Re-defined 25).

Political fiction “is a fairly new form of literary expression which has come into vogue in the post-War period of the twentieth-century” and has been “characterized by an intricately patterned interlocking of political ideology and existential concerns” (Re-defined 1). This genre was born out of the political instability that the world witnessed in the early parts of the twentieth century; namely the World Wars; creating a demand in the people to voice their pain and misery. Writers like Orwell took to using their craft to condemn a society which perhaps they could not otherwise affect in any other way. However, political fiction “has undergone tremendous metamorphosis since the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*” because this novel has decidedly drawn a line to separate pre-Orwellian novels from post-Orwellian novels as it makes a direct assault on the then-existing fascist and totalitarian states (Re-defined 13). The popularity of the book in no way is diminished because it speaks for the current day’s problems as well.

What *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has done is unveiled the political arena in all its true colours and so accurate was Orwell in capturing the political scene that even now, almost a century later, it is treated as a prophecy which people believe is being unfolded in front of their eyes. While Orwell’s books are “allegories of the Soviet Union; *Animal Farm* is about

Russian Revolution and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about Stalinism”; they could be seen as criticizing and applicable to any form of government present today because of the resemblance they all have in being totalitarian governments (Re-defined 13).

For a more comprehensive study and a more effective analysis political fiction can be broadly divided into two categories; “the conventional political novel and the adversary political novel” (Re-defined 7). While the first kind assumes that the problems are fixable, not a problem of the system, the second kind assumes that the problem is from within the core. The first kind “presumes that all is well with the Republic in spite of the troubling agitation of the surface” while the latter assumes that the Republic is “rotten to the core” (Re-defined 7). From my understanding of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it belongs to the second category because Orwell is not critiquing any single person or problem that can be easily remedied, but the structural formation of the government as a whole.

Also, the point where Orwell and I agree the most is where he says that “by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian” and every “new political theory, by whatever name it called itself [it] led back to hierarchy and regimentation” (Orwell 258). Therefore, the problem that persists in this novel and in today’s reality is not that of any particular government or party but of the flaw of the very governing systems themselves. Orwell at the same time has been “exploring the political experience and blended it with literary imagination”, and most importantly was making a social commentary (Political Fiction Re-defined 4).

I believe *The Hunger Games* also belongs to the second category of political fiction since the form of governance is flawed and the problem that is brought to our attention is not one that can be resolved with some touch-ups. In an online article on Forbes, staff writer John

Tamny does a brilliant job in summing up not only how the political front is impaired, but also tracing the mechanics that causes the systems of our society to fail.⁶ Tamny says that:

Even more than monetary debasement, the creation of food scarcity through unnatural barriers to production and trade is the easiest way for politicians to divide the citizenry, and to be fair, often results from monetary debasement. And with hunger a constant burden, politicians have created a situation whereby the brutalized citizens of Panem will do anything to eat, including killing their fellow citizens in government-organized games that so thrill the Capitol politicians (Tamny).

The politics that each of the governments play in the books is that of self-interest. It caters solely to their needs, whether it is financial or egotistical, at the cost of anything, even fellow human beings. Even though we know that such institutions are existent in our society the writings are dubbed political fiction is because of the element of creative imagination that is added by the authors to make the events more appealing, satirical and subtle when presenting it to the audience.

⁶ John Tamny's article on the online *Forbes*, "Suzanne Collins' 'The Hunger Games' Illustrates the Horrors of Big Government"

2.2 Dystopian Novel and the Depiction of Social Anarchy

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is most commonly said to depict a dystopia which would be a "futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral or totalitarian control" (Characteristics 1). This defines *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to the very letter as the protagonist, Winston Smith, brings to us the government of Big Brother which tries to project a "society [that] is an illusion of a perfect utopian world" (Characteristics 1).

Similarly, The country of Panem [which was previously North America], in *The Hunger Games*, has risen out of the ashes of a post-apocalyptic war and the government rules with an iron-fist from its capital, the Capitol. President Snow of Panem and the Big Brother have a lot in common as they operate the entire nation in a very rigid manner. Having divided and sectioned off its citizens into different districts and departments, President Snow and Big Brother both ensure that the citizens remain isolated from each other, unable to communicate and thereby organize any form of rebellion to overthrow them. While this comes off as a perfect method in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Hunger Games* ends with a more idealistic plot as the citizens from all the different Districts manage to come together in a rebellion that was being organized underground for almost a decade and succeed in toppling over the totalitarian government.

When reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* one gets a similar feeling that perhaps Smith will succeed in rebelling in some way. We see how from the very beginning Smith has done things like writing; blasphemous according to Big Brother; traitorous thoughts in a diary proclaiming how stifling life was under the Big Brother regime. His act of rebellion remained as much until he met Julia, a worker of the Party, who advanced Smith's subtle rebellion by engaging in unauthorized sex with him. Julia was an active member of several community clubs, namely the Anti-Sex League [much commended by the Party], in order to keep up the

pretense of being in favor of the ideas spewed by the government. With Julia by his side, Smith's ideas of an upheaval against the regime snowballed, until both of them were caught at their secret hideout and were then tortured into submission. Smith not only had sex, but also skipped his community activities [such as attending the mandatory once a week sports club, discussion club, etc.], spent time walking around places Party members were not supposed to be and was too much of a loner. However, the brief period of stepping out of line that Julia and Smith were so gleefully spending was not unnoticed by the Party; the Party just played along to see how long they could remain so smug.

While Orwell shows us that it was Smith and Julia who were defying the Party, Smith believed that the Proles [short for Proletariat] were the ones who could overthrow the government if anyone at all could do it. The Proles composed eighty-five percent of Oceania's population and believed that it was their collective consciousness; their realization that true power resided with them; that could generate a movement. However, Smith voices a very profound thought and this helps explain why at the end of the novel we do not see a rebellion. Smith says about the Proles, that "Until they become conscious, they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious" (*Orwell* 90).

What prevents the Proles from becoming conscious is the overpowering hierarchy of the Party not just within the institute itself, but also in the society. Thus the first aspect of a dystopian novel is that the liberty of the citizens are curbed or diminished. Not only did the Proles in Oceania have no influence whatsoever, they were not allowed to even have the slightest say in their very own matters. The government of Big Brother was composed of 'Inner Party' and 'Outer Party' members and then there were the Proles who were merely allowed to live; they had no role to play in society. The hierarchy that has been setup is evident when we see that even Outer Party members are not privy to an extended lot of privileges. What was produced for the Inner Party members was not for the Proles; we see

how there is a “whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama, and entertainment generally” (Orwell 55). Not just in the case of art and culture, but even in case of basic necessities such as bread, sugar and milk is there a massive discrimination.

We can see how Julia, Smith’s secret lover says that ‘real’ coffee and not Victory coffee was exclusive to only Inner Party members. Julia unwrapped and opened her bag of filched goods in such a ceremonious manner, not because the goods were expensive and a rare luxury that she could not afford, but because these items were simply unavailable to them. Julia says:

Real sugar. Not saccharine, sugar. And here’s a load of bread – proper white bread, not our bloody stuff – and a little pot of jam. And here’s a tin of milk.

...

It’s all Inner Party stuff. There’s nothing those swine [the government] don’t have, nothing (Orwell 177).

Thus, we see how the citizens are restricted in terms of both material opportunities and psychological or intellectual development, when the main objective of the government should actually be to cater to the needs of the populace.

The deprivation of the people and negligence towards their duty is also evident in *The Hunger Games* series. Often times the citizens cannot revolt even if they want to because of the constant deprivation they are trapped in. By constant deprivation I mean the cyclical process of being denied the basic rights of food, shelter, health care and protection that a state owes a person free of cost, with a minimum standard. *The Hunger Games* is one such literary example where the title manages to sum up the crisis of food. The winner of the annual Games is awarded an improvement in living conditions from their drab District homes to

quality living quarters and a lifetime of food supply while the others are left to fend for themselves or die trying.

This pyramidal structure of the populace [with the heavy-bottom comprising of the underprivileged masses] is the perfect recipe for a totalitarian regime. I say this because the more the people remain preoccupied with trying to make their ends meet, there will be lesser people trying to account the governments for their misuse of their position of power. This ignorance of basic needs is accompanied by certain motives supplied by the state – again a measure taken to further distract the people from the cunning strategy of the government. One such strategy is the hype created by the media [which is a tool of the state] about sporting events or festivals.

The media helps spread that certain things are more important than others; so much so that the object or the idea is portrayed as life itself. For instance, when TVCs continuously hammer into our heads ‘Bondhu cchara life impossible’ [Life is impossible without friends], those who are fed and those who are not, equally flock behind this idea and try and live in the simulacra created by the corporate sharks, backed by the governments.⁷ The concept that Jean Baudrillard builds of the simulacra is that the constructed world cannot be differentiated from that of reality thereby misleading people or giving them a false idea of space and time.⁸ Even Noam Chomsky points out how governments think: “We’ve got to prevent their roar and trampling. We’ve got to distract them. They should be watching the Superbowl or sitcoms or violent movies” (23). Also when celebrities sanction ideas, no matter how impractical they are, people follow it blindly. For example Bill Shankly, the manager of the Liverpool Football Club said *“Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that”* (Hemon). The problem with such promotions is that they undermine the gravity of life or

⁷ ‘Bondhu cchara life impossible’ [Life is impossible without friends] is the tagline of Telecom giant, Airtel frequently broadcasted on the private television channels of the country.

⁸ *Simulacra and Simulation* by Jean Baudrillard.

overrate the value of a sport; either way causing desensitization as the author Suzanne Collins pointed out. Therefore distracting the people from their true problems and giving them something superficial; creating for the people a simulacra or a make-believe world to exist in; to be excited about is perhaps the first foundation in establishing a dystopian society.

The second aspect of a dystopian society is the erection of a social enemy. This enemy is a construct of the government and the hideous attributes are also assigned to them so that the government may seem like the hero or savior in comparison to the fabricated enemy. We see how since “Oceania cannot provide its people even with enough necessities (as is clear from the shortage of cigarettes, white bread, sugar, coffee and tea to name a few) it tries to cover up its failures at another front – by starting a war, by capturing thousands of the prisoners of the enemy, sending them to concentration camps and shooting many of them” (Sharma 189). However, the biggest ploy is not in the government cheating them out of quality or necessary products but in the fact that Emmanuel Goldstein, ‘the Enemy of the People’ was created.

Emmanuel Goldstein, according to the Party has been against the formation of the state and is working underground with followers to overturn the most caring regime one could have, the Party. The problem is that this is all the information that the Party keeps spewing out; there are no details. This is because there is no Emmanuel Goldstein, enemy of the people, in reality. Orwell shows that there is a book written by Goldstein which Smith had managed to get at one point and he was excited that finally he would know how to join this underground group and help to overthrow Big Brother. However, the reality is that members of the Party had collaborated in writing it. When Smith was reading the book he often felt agitated because what was written were things he already knew: the “secret accumulation of knowledge – a gradual spread of enlightenment – ultimately a proletarian rebellion – the overthrow of the Party” but no details (Orwell 330). The chapters were all generalized and

had no specific plans that could be executed. This book, known as *The Book*, was merely bait by the Party to catch those who took to reading it.

The existence of a constructed social enemy is crucial to any dystopia because the despicability of the enemy is what holds the people with its government. For mainly two reasons the construction is effective. One, the fear of an anomaly as depicted by the government is what drives them towards the government. It even instigates in the populace a certain feeling of gratitude towards the leader. To enhance this point I would have to agree with Michel Foucault who says that the “adversary of the sovereign, the social enemy was transformed into a deviant, who brought with him the multiple danger[s] of disorder, crime and madness” (1641). In *The Hunger Games* the social enemy was the people themselves. The Capitol reiterates that the uprising the people had caused seven decades ago was the cause of their present demise. To stay safe and secure they had to give up their sovereignty and follow the leader, the Capitol. The masses of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the other hand are assured that by favoring Big Brother they will earn their welfare.

The construction of a social enemy is also evident in our society, in America alone, “over the last ten years, every year or two, some major monster is constructed that we have to defend ourselves against” namely countries like Iraq, who supposedly were ‘hiding’ nuclear weapons (Chomsky 38). Only after bombing the country flat after ten years do they say ‘sorry’ to whoever remains in that demolished land because after all there were no nuclear weapons. The people are never left without an enemy to hate and fear: Iraq, the Brotherhood, the ISIS, the illegal economic warfare of Cuba and on and on goes the chimerical list. This is not just the case with the US, but the world over.

In Bangladesh the scenario is no different. We are hoodwinked at every step. The governments pull off farcical stunts right before the elections on both a local and national level so that the people, even if temporarily, forget what is the more important of the two. We

must fear the displaced Rohingyas just because no country is willing to take them in and they are trying to seek refuge in our land. We must fear and help obliterate anyone who is in opposition to whatever the government says. Our twenty-first century democratic countries are no better off than Orwell's twentieth century communists. Anyone who says even a word against the government is an enemy of the state – there is no scope for your opinion.

This brings us to the next reason why the social enemy is so readily accepted. The reason people pick up on the social enemy unanimously is because the state deems that to be normal. To be against it is to be against the state itself. The Party organizes a weekly session dubbed the '2 Minute Hate' which promotes and ensures hatred between the people and Goldstein. Here we see how Smith and Julia each act out their hatred and disgust against the social enemy, because otherwise they would be labeled traitors and shipped off for persecution. Similarly in *Mockingjay*, the third book of *The Hunger Games* series, we see how those working against the Capitol were labeled rebellions with a distinct negative connotation.

Moving on, the next feature of the dystopian society is its pretension of being a Utopian society. While the illusion of the perfect world has pretty much all of the citizens of Oceania convinced, Smith and his secret lover Julia were not to be fooled by the double standards of the Big Brother regime. Unlike most of the citizens who had been brain-warped by the government, Smith and Julia were the only two characters in the novel that had the ability to see through the flimsy façade of the government. These characters did not receive any special training to be able to protect them from nonsense the state was feeding them; they merely had to detect the pattern of the state's works to see through the illusion. For instance, every time a reduction in a weekly food ration announcement was preceded by an announcement of how extremely well Oceania was doing at its overseas war front. The announcer says that "I am authorized to say that the action we are now reporting may well

bring the war within measurable distance of its end” (Orwell 33). It is clear from this that even though the Party government is failing to keep the society running; it uses distractions like this to hoodwink the citizens.

Similarly in *The Hunger Games*, a handful of people; the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, her friend Gale and the Victors [survivors of the deadly Games] from the Districts; identified the government for the monster that it was, and gradually a rebellion was sparked and the motion was set for liberation. In case of Katniss and Gale the illusion that the Capitol was their well-wisher was not as easily accepted because hunger was rampant in the Seams [the edge where Katniss and the people of District 12 lived] and it is always much more difficult to appease hunger than the other basic necessities.

Despite their comprehension that they were mere cogs in the Capitol’s machine they could not revolt. This was because, as the title suggests, trapped in a hunger cycle. How much of anything they could get was determined by the Capitol, yet often none of the allowances would reach them. In case any family wanted more food than their allocated amount they could opt for ‘tesserae’ – in exchange for every sack of food they would get, they would have to enter their names in the pool from which they are nominated for the deadly games. However, often this was not enough either and so Katniss and Gale would have to illegally cross the electric fence surrounding their district hunting for food in the surrounding wilderness. Despite leaving the citizens of Panem fending for them, the Capitol would always emphasize how they are more than kind and compassionate towards them. In fact, the Capitol also says that this compartmentalized way of keeping its citizens is for their own good. This worked in some of the Districts, while the others were not as easily convinced. Certain Districts were more well-fed than others; like District 2; because the Capitol took young men and women from there to put together their ‘police force’, the Peacekeepers. The rest of the

Districts were left to perish and survive on their petty survival tactics just like Katniss and Gale had to.

Next, I want to discuss a subtle indicator; that is present in both the novels; that symbolizes the uneven distribution of power. Although spatial dominance is not a conventional aspect of a dystopian society or novel, it so happens that the spatial composition and structural arrangement of the status somehow give us an idea of the unequal flow of power. The physical layout of the government edifices somehow reflect the power that they exercise. We can see at the very beginning of the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* how London is under the bureaucratic influence of the oppressive governance of Big Brother by looking at the descriptions of the four ministries. The Ministry of Truth was “an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 meters into the air” and with “three thousand rooms above ground level, and corresponding ramifications down below” (Orwell 5). This enormous construction is surrounded by “rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions” (Orwell 6). Not just the Ministry of Truth, but the ministry of Peace “which concerned itself with war”, ministry of Love “which maintained law and order”, and ministry of Plenty “which was responsible for economic affairs” all had equally dominating and intimidating structures and the “entire apparatus of government was divided” between them (Orwell 7). The reason I discuss the structure of the ministries as opposed to the structure of the houses of the populace surrounding them to such length is because I believe that the structure here is symbolic of the power structure or the bureaucratic domination that was mentioned in the definition.

Just like the congested houses that were crammed around the four gigantic ministries without having any effect or influence on the latter, the “swarming disregarded masses,

[which made up] 85 percent of the population of Oceania” had no influence over the handful of Inner Party members even though the Proles had a system of their own wherein they traded and carried out other social activities (Orwell 89). In fact, no one seemed to have any power or say in anything besides the section they were designated to and this goes to show how compartmentalize the structure was – blocking off everyone from one another. This is reminiscent of the twelve Districts of Panem, where each district is specialized in a particular trade such as luxury good for the Capitol residents, weapons, electronics, fishing, and so on in Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively and yet none of the Districts can enjoy the goods or services produced by the others because any sort of communication between them has been deemed illegal by the Capitol.

Again, commenting on the structure of the power-zones, although they [the structures of Oceania] “vertically dominate, the movement is usually downward, the downward movement of the dystopia, where only oppression and subordination, not release, are possible” (Erickson 28). The Training Center [is where the tributes from the Districts are brought in and groomed for a week before letting them in to the arena for battle] is a building growing in several floors both below and above the ground. We see in the novel that the hospital “is far underground, even beneath the gym where the tributes practiced ... the windows of the lobby are darkened” owing to the fact that they must be several hundred meters underground (Games 346). Even when the participants of the Games would be up on the rooftop of the tall Training Center, the Capitol would ensure that their strength is not forgotten, because “Some kind of electric field” was meshed around the entire building to prevent anyone from escaping (Games 81).

The Arena, a remake of the Greek labyrinth; where the Capitol sent in the tributes to battle to death for entertainment and to reiterate how powerful they were; could be accessed only by moving “down into a tube underground into the catacombs that lie beneath the arena”

(Games 143). This, therefore, symbolizes how the Capitol held them all in low esteem and glory that the Victors would have would come to them only with leave from the Capitol.

Having seen how the people of Oceania are bureaucratically dominated, let us now look at the technological control that is common of a totalitarian dystopia as per the definition. Although I will be dealing with the panoptic surveillance of the technological devices used throughout the novel, I have to say how technology is wielded as a tool of total control. For instance, the Thought Police introduced by Orwell are the people who detect the slightest change in attitude, both psychological and physical. They do so by means of the numerous 'tele screens'; a two-way television that allows Party members to observe people; that are setup in both public and private places keeping everyone under their supervision.

With advanced technology the 'Thought Police' had the ability to read the minds of the people; which I believe is perhaps by reading one's body language and facial expression; and accordingly condition them in favor of the Party. In fact how "often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork" but this had everyone on their toes and on the lookout for any out of place behavior (Orwell 5). *The Hunger Games* also has its fair share of technological manipulation as they are constantly under the scrutinizing eyes of the Capitol by both hidden cameras and Peacekeepers, who happen to patrol the streets day in and day out. Since the technological aspect of a dystopian society remains incomplete if we do not study how it is an important tool in safeguarding surveillance and propaganda, I have taken a separate chapter dedicated to address the respective issues.

2.3 Surveillance and Propaganda as Tools of Domination

I have already looked at how one, thought and freedom is restricted, two, how a social enemy is created; three, how the dystopian society is painted as utopian; four, how there is a spatial domination and finally, five, how technology inadvertently aids the totalitarian regime to maintain its façade. This chapter delves deeper into the machinations of the dystopian regime in order to further explore the technological exploitation that I have come across in the two novels. The very first thing that struck me was the vast amount of control that the governments managed to exert on its people without triggering their suspicion. What has happened is that by means of propaganda, surveillance has been installed into the society at all levels quite efficiently. Surveillance and propaganda go hand in hand to groom the populace in favor of whatever it is that the governments have planned.

The term propaganda was first circulated in 1622 when the Vatican ventured to establish “the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, meaning the sacred congregation for propagating the faith of the Roman Catholic Church” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2). However, propaganda soon lost its unbiased meaning and began to have negative connotations as the dynamics of world politics began to change. Propaganda is of many types and can therefore be placed on a color spectrum ranging from white to black with gray in the middle.⁹ White propaganda is when true information is broadcasted from a known source and for purposes of spreading the fact and not gearing or leading the target audience towards anything. Black propaganda “includes all types of deceit” with the very purpose of getting the target audience to believe in what is being broadcasted; and in between White and Black Propaganda lies Gray Propaganda the source of which “may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain” (Jowett and O’Donnell 20). All three of these propaganda are evident in the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games*.

⁹ *Propaganda and Persuasion* by Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell

If we first look at *Nineteen Eighty-Four* we will see how Black Propaganda is evident throughout the novel. Propaganda takes place for one, in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth, the very ministry where Winston Smith is employed. What Smith does is rewrites parts of history in order to pass “lies as facts. Statistics, reports about the war, historical records, and so on, are not simply false; they are lies because they are known to be false. However, the object is not just to propagate facts (or lies) but to propagate values, or value judgments” by subtly steering the populace towards one pre-planned psychological goal (Yeo 52). Sending out prepared messages with the motive of scamming others or forcefully getting people to side with you is propaganda. This happens in *The Hunger Games* as well where the supposedly “important government message[s] on television ... [are] mandatory to watch” and the people must act in accordance with the commands delivered (*Games* 80).

Although the corruption of facts is not as high in *The Hunger Games* as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there is the constant reiteration of how the Capitol is all-mighty, all powerful. Since the end of the warfare – that led to the birth of Panem with the Capitol as its head seventy-four years before the setting where the story started – the Capitol had declared their victory and said that of the thirteen districts that had rebelled only twelve now remained. This is because the last and thirteenth district had been decimated in the airstrikes. The Capitol harped on this in order to frighten the people of Panem into submission and prevent further revolutions. This is perhaps the biggest show of Black Propaganda by the Capitol. The Capitol basically attempts to instill in the people a fear and respect for them and cultivate in them a feeling of helplessness and insecurity; a dependency on the Capitol not only for essentials, but even for their lives. Thus the aim of propaganda to program the minds of the populace is achieved.

Propaganda is not only directed towards the masses in general. Those who are circumspective, like the Big Brother, have programs tailored for different types of target audience as well. For instance, Smith says how by “early conditioning, by games and cold water, by the rubbish dinned into them at school and in the spies and the Youth League, by lectures, parades, songs, slogans, and martial music, the natural feeling had been driven out of them [the children]” (Orwell 86). For teenagers and young adults there are separate community groups like the Anti-Sex league; of which Julia was a member; which promoted amidst the people hatred for sex because like all other aspects of life, the Party also wanted to be able to control the birth. For the Party reproduction “will be an annual formality like the renewal of the ration card” (Orwell 337).

However, the question that arises at this point is why the people just accept whatever is propagated. While Smith and Julia do take personal forms of retaliation, the vast majority are not only not bothered, but seem to be oblivious to the fact that a particular message is being drilled into them for an ulterior motive. Here is where the idea of surveillance steps in. The word surveillance rightfully brings to mind the idea that was left to us by Jeremy Bentham years ago. His idea of the Panopticon; the circular prison building with a singular, tall watch-tower placed in the centre availing it a vantage point to simultaneously keep an eye on all the prisoners; which was later polished by Michel Foucault and has become the greatest tool of surveillance. The idea that someone monitors a person at all times automatically makes the person check his behavior.

However according to Bart Simon “Panopticism, as a totalizing system fails without ... [a] sophisticated cultural apparatus for reminding citizens that they are being watched” and Big Brother has implemented this very tactfully (14). The very first page of the novel shows us posters where “the enormous face [of Big Brother] gazed ... [and it] was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move”

(Orwell 3). No matter where Smith went; even from inside his building he could see that the “black moustachio’d face gazed down from every commanding corner” and to reiterate the point the posters were all captioned with the simple intimidating fact: BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU (Orwell 4). While this is just reminding the people of where they stand, there are the ‘cultural apparatuses’ that Simon says must exist in a society. These ‘cultural apparatuses’ could be educational institutions or governmental tools with which people can be controlled. One such cultural apparatus for the Capitol was the annual Games because President “Snow thought that the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control” (*Mockingjay* 169). Through the Games he not only monitored the people, but he also sent out an overt message saying that they were superior to the citizens.

The first apparatus that we come across in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the telescreen. It is a television except that video transmission goes both ways and it remains turned on forever. Telescreens are put up in people’s rooms, work places and in recreational centers so that the people can be monitored at all times. The Party not only monitored what the people were doing, where they were going, but also monitored the body language of the people on receiving news broadcasted by them. The smallest negative or non-confirmative behavior could result in them being tortured for having committed the FACERIME which could be anything from a “nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself ... [to even] look incredulous when a victory was announced” (Orwell 79).

Despite the gaze on the people being so vigorous, what allowed Smith to get away is the fact that he knew exactly what aspects he had to keep under control in order to escape arrest. The interesting fact as Simon points out is that the “more one knows about how one is supposed to behave the more one is able to conform, but by the same token one is also more able to feign conformity” (8). This is exactly what we see Smith doing, and even more so Julia, who takes part in various community activities with a lot of zeal and enthusiasm so as

to deflect any sort of suspicion from her despite her outright dislike for them. Smith and Julia know what are the tell-tale signs of a deviant and so they make sure that they cover their tracks.

While this had given Smith and Julia a sense of confidence and they felt like they had outdone the Panoptic structure, they were actually far from it and that is what results in their ultimate fate. One would naturally think that if “visual detection [of non-conformity] is not possible then there can be no threat of retribution and the simple panoptic machine fails”; however we see how Big Brother has employed Thought Police to control the THOUGHTCRIME (Simon 8). THOUGHTCRIME is the wayward thoughts that a person may allow him or herself to have even if their actions are downright legal; so we see how The Party has not only the physical sphere, but even the psychological sphere of possible retaliation covered. Therefore we know that Smith’s blasphemous thoughts against Big Brother when he first opened up in a diary did not go unnoticed; the party workers just played along to see how far he went in defying them. O’ Brien, a member of the Inner Party [who had lead Smith into believing that he was an ally, but later turned out to be a Party member] had framed and caught Smith and actually physically tortured him into submission and conformity as we see at the end of the novel. Self-policing then is not the only force at work; on detection of the crime there is the external stimulus in the form of physical torture and punishment.

Now shedding some light on *The Hunger Games* we see how the cultural apparatuses; without which the Panoptic system will fail; are less subtle than that of the Big Brother regime.¹⁰ The first cultural apparatus is perhaps the Peacekeepers: the Capitol-trained policemen dressed in white who patrol the districts. They are an extension of the Capitol’s arm and they enforce the law with iron fists. The Capitol kept the people of each district

¹⁰ “The Return of Panopticism: Supervision, Subjection and the New Surveillance” by Bart Simon.

huddled together in their districts enclosed by tens of feet of electrified fence shooting into the air, so that it would be easier to keep an eye on them. Even when Katniss and Gale would often sneak into the woods beyond the fence whenever the electricity was turned off, Katniss would think, “even here, in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you” (*Games* 7). The people not only feel that they may be overheard, but the sensation of being watched is always present and so we have Katniss thinking before acting that she probably is “not alone though. No they’ve surely got a camera tracking” her every move (*Games* 168). This line is reminiscent of a similar line by Smith: there “was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched” or not (Orwell 5). If I were to refer to our reality I would have to say how grave it is. With the advent of close circuit TV [CCTV] cameras we are no better off than Oceania under the scrutinizing gaze of the Big Brother. Not only do we have CCTV cameras monitoring us at all times they also have “computers attached to these machines [that] contain a template of what should be determined ‘normal’ behavior for a person. If anyone behaves differently, those actions are immediately detected” and are written off as a potential threat (Hawks 3).

As if monitoring is not a rigid state apparatus in itself, the Capitol regime takes ‘teach them a lesson’ to a whole new level. On an annual basis one girl and one boy; of years twelve and onwards; from each of the twelve districts would have to be given to the Capitol as tributes to battle to death in the annual Hunger Games and act as a reminder to the people of their supposed wrong-headedness. This was not only a reminder to the districts of their inferior position, but was also a means of entertainment for the vain and superficial people of the Capitol. It is when the tributes have been selected that we can fully understand the meaning of surveillance – nothing goes unrecorded and everything is “televised live by the state” all over Panem (*Games* 18). In fact, when they are sent into the arena where the games take place it becomes worse. Each of the tributes are injected with a “metal tracking device

deep under the skin on the inside of [their] forearm ... [because] now the Gamemakers will always be able to trace” their whereabouts in the arena and their every defiant word and action will be penalized by inflicting pain on them, or better yet, their loved ones (*Games* 142). This was above all an apparatus to ensure that was implemented to ensure that the people were monitoring and keeping their behavior in line with that dictated by the regime.

While surveillance in a panoptic society quintessentially expects people to be self-policing which we see in both the novels, there is a substantial amount of physical and psychological reinforcement going on in order to ensure that the laws of each of the states’ are implemented. Although Panem undergoes a full-fledged rebellion, both the States of the novels are perfect examples of a Panoptic society because it is hailed as successful only when the “panoptic machine make[s] one visible but it also hides the operations (the motives, practices and ethics) of the supposed viewer” (Simon 4). Even though the characters from both the novels had acknowledged the atrocity of the governments, the inner mechanisms of the Party was revealed only partially, and of the Capitol completely, but only at the end of the three-book series.

Although it is often argued that the primary difference between an autocratic and a democratic government is that the former forcefully implements its rules and the latter uses guile and trickery, we see how the Big Brother regime was subtle in its way of controlling its subjects. However, a democracy is even more subtle in its ways of propaganda. The secret technique of democracy is the magic word: freedom. A democracy allows one to pick from between a few political parties and says that the people are ‘free’ to choose whomever they want and “once they’ve lent their weight to one or another member of the specialized class they’re supposed to sink back and become spectators of action, but not participants” (Chomsky 14). This non all-inclusive attitude towards the people exists not only in politics but all spheres of life. What one ought to eat and how one ought to spend their vacation:

everything is dictated through the media, except that the people are 'free' to do as they please. One is 'free' to say what they please, except that which is against the government; one is 'free' so long as they are not holding the main power players accountable or are not causing losses for these profit-driven power-houses. Thus there is no better propaganda than the propaganda of 'freedom'.

2.4 Manipulation and Distortion of History

Thus far I have shown how essential propaganda and surveillance is for the existence of a totalitarian regime. A distortion of the facts is naught but another form of propaganda in disguise. A “term used to describe propaganda is disinformation. Disinformation is usually considered black propaganda because it is covert and uses false information” as does both the Big Brother and Capitol regimes and all the governments of our world as well (Jowett and O’Donnell). While the ultimate objective of all governments is to remain in power eternally, the basic idea of information distortion is to: one, provide the populace with only one view and leave no scope for speculation, and two, to be able to make ruling easier for the totalitarian regimes.

A distortion could range from a mere switching of certain details to formulating a completely new proposition and establishing it as the truth – all of which we can find in these two novels. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows us how the Big Brother regime lies about the ration that they are handing out to their citizens. For instance, due to production shortages and a budget deficiency [because Oceania is at all times engaged at war with some distant enemy] the Party had to reduce the chocolate rations down to 20 grams. However, the sound-boxes all over the buildings were broadcasting that people were thanking “Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to twenty grammes [*sic*] a week” when in reality it had been decreased (Orwell 74). It is as if broadcasting the lie, constantly being drilled into the minds of the populace over an official voice-overhead allows for the lie to become a fact and even a much-appreciated fact at that. This effect has not happened at once; it is the result of years and years of constant drilling in of lies by the government that has molded the citizen into accepting whatever the Party tells them.

While this is a small-scale scam, the Party entrusts its workers to commit to greater fabrications. Even though the novel shows Smith as someone conscious of the iniquity of the

government, he cannot divorce himself from the framework of his job. Smith and his entire department has to rewrite history and events in books, magazines, papers, billboards, flyers and any written document whatsoever often overnight depending on the magnitude of the event. What Smith had to do was create “delicate pieces of forgery” (Orwell 56). Smith would create an entire person just based on the standards set by the Party so that when people would read of them, they would be inspired to become like those fabricated-idols. Not just Smith but his entire department, but the entire Ministry of Truth; which is ironic because they are manufacturing lies; was involved in the “process of continuous alteration [of]... every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date” (Orwell 51). This goes to show how the alteration of information was not a onetime affair; rather it is continuously reinforced and maintained for their benefit.

Sometimes, the changes that Smith and his department had to make were bigger than individuals or ration announcements; it had to do with the countries with which they were engaged in war, or not. For instance, “Oceania is always at so-called war – sometimes with Eastasia, and at others with Eurasia. The enemies change places overnight. This is a known technique with kings and modern day prime-ministers” (Orwell 189). This is better understood with reference to the particular incident in the novel, when the streets were jam-packed with people celebrating their victory against an Eastasian enemy. The streets were covered in festoons and posters all bearing the insignia of and giving thanks to Eurasia for their help in the war, when all of a sudden the Party realizes that for strategic reasons they had to change sides. Instead of explaining the matter to the populace, an official announcement was made saying that Eastasia was their ally, and Eurasia was their enemy, and all the banners and decorations hanging throughout the streets was some massive stunt that the enemy must have pulled off – they must therefore be vigilant. In an instant the crowd

turned violent and a passive crowd was moved to hysterical heights and began tearing at the banners, all in agreement with what the announcement said.

A similar kind of mutability of the past was going on in the Capitol as well. Just like the Party, the Capitol also believed that “if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth” and because of this reason in all the mandatory official broadcasts they made or the obligatory communal gatherings that the Capitol arranged for, would begin with the reminder how the Districts were suffering because of their own unjustified rebellion from seventy-five years ago (Orwell 44). The annual Hunger Games were not just a means of keeping the citizens suppressed, but also a link forever leading back to the constructed history narrated by the Capitol, thus leaving no space for argument or speculation.

The measures that we have seen the regimes take, such as the erection of a social enemy, technological control and distortion of history in order to reinforce their rule are all mostly physical measures. However, the effects of these are taking place in the heads of the people. The fact that the reality, of the past and the present, is being crafted at the regime’s convenience is what Orwell calls “Reality control” or “DOUBLETHINK” (Orwell 44). This is how the regimes manage to first infiltrate and then conquer the heads of its citizens and achieve their goal of leaving them with only one, convenient view of history or things in general. Even though both the novels have protagonists who somehow manage to refrain from being completely brainwashed by the regimes, they lack any idea of their past and history thereby suffering from identity crisis, especially in the case of Smith. Even though he has some insignificant memory of his mother, he can barely recall much about the state itself. This perhaps is attestation of how effective the surveillance and distortion of information machinations of the state is.

Both of the cases presented to us through these novels are extremely reminiscent of real life incidents that have been taking place over decades. Noam Chomsky highlights how DOUBLETHINK works in the real world. In his book *Media Control*, Chomsky tells us of the South Vietnam tale – how the US found it difficult to explain why they went to war with Vietnam. Since the then government of US had to come up with something plausible, they said in their defense that “If we’re bombing South Vietnam, that’s because we’re defending South Vietnam against somebody, namely, the South Vietnamese, since nobody else was there” (Chomsky 31). This falsification of reasons as to why the US army was even there in South Vietnam is how history is distorted in real life. The truth is absolutely unhealthy for the existence of such regimes; in fact, the reality is deadly for them, thus the adoption of fact mutation.

Not just in the US, but even in Bangladesh it is difficult to find one version of history upon which everyone unanimously agrees. In Bangladesh of “the three main politically contesting histories, each [derived from the mainstream parties] now has its own version” rendering the politically neutral person confused and lost (Chowdhury). This is not only about being confused with respect to one’s identity and being historically lost, but also often rendering people anti-state or a political nuisance. When one of the parties are in power the other two versions of history become moot and anyone even caught discussing them or heard disagreeing with the politically correct history is heavily penalized; read: sent to jail. In cases, like these it is next to impossible to speak up against the state because of the way the false history or the idea is safeguarded by the state.

Just like the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has erected the idea of Big Brother, the almighty, all powerful, guardian of the people, our governments create hollow ideas and establish them as the benchmark for the ideal citizen. Similarly, just as the Big Brother regime will put you through unspeakable torture if you disagree with them, our governments

will do the same. Our governments invest in campaigns “mobilizing community opinion in favor of vapid, empty concepts like Americanism [or in our case Bangaliana]” that lead to one feeble common ground where they can draw in all the people and anyone who opposes this becomes an ‘enemy of the state’ and just like Smith and Julia was subjected to inhuman torture (Chomsky 21).

We often fail to realize that “the picture of the world that’s presented to the public has only the remotest relation to reality. The truth of the matter is buried under edifice after edifice of lies upon lies” (Chomsky 33). Those who do detect a fraud are often left doubting themselves because the remaining majority seems to be convinced alright. However, sometimes the fabrications are too flimsy and we have the mainstream media; the very tool with which the states do their dirty work; exposing them. A song by the American punk rock band Green Day refers to the US policies and says they ‘don’t want to be an American idiot’ because anyone who gets fooled by the American propaganda has to be just that. The following lines speak volumes:

I’m not a part of a redneck agenda.

Now everybody do the propaganda.

And sing along to the age of paranoia

...

Don’t want to be an American idiot.

One nation controlled by the media.

Information age of hysteria.

Calling out to idiot America (ll. 12-14, 21-24).

This song brilliantly sums up my paper as it refers to how America, a democratic nation, uses media and propaganda to create hysteria and paranoia amongst the people without their detecting it.

2.5 Homogenization: Mass Producing Citizen Psychology

The idea of homogenization does not deal with a separate concept, rather it is a follow-up of the notion that regimes undertake surveillance, propaganda and manipulation of history in order to make their position of power permanent. Homogenization is a combination of manufactured consents and uniformity that transforms a person into a robot-like piece in the regime's game of power. What they do by 'manufacturing consent' is establish a statement amidst the people and pass it as the standard and everything else as the deviation.¹¹ The deviation is deemed not only wrong, but also criminal [punishable by law] and so ensures that everyone adheres to the benchmark no matter how wrong it is. The Party attempts to annihilate individuality by means of "(i) developing scientific techniques to the extent of mechanizing society and (ii) applying mechanical rules on the human beings" (Sharma 192). We see this in the novel where if the "Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears [it was obligatory upon the person to follow it because it]... was their final, most essential command" (Orwell 103).

In Oceania, people are not allowed spare time because the Party fears that they may think for themselves and discover the designs of the Party. Therefore "a Party member had no spare time, and was never alone except in bed ... it was assumed that he ... would be taking part in some kind of communal recreation: to do anything that suggested a taste for solitude, even to go for a walk by yourself, was always highly dangerous" (Orwell 104). No non-conformity was permitted in Oceania. The party worked to suppress OWNLIFE "meaning individualism and eccentricity" and this is something all regimes would be scared of given that it is thoughts, and not swords that bring about revolutions (Orwell 104).

This is important because the power that the regimes seek "is not power over things, but over men" (Orwell 336). The primary goal is therefore to find the most efficient way to

¹¹ *Media Control* by Noam Chomsky

exercise this power. It is easiest to control people when they offer the least resistance, and that can be achieved when the human intelligence is taken out of the equation. Again, if I may refer to Chomsky's book, *Media Control* we will see how he speaks elaborately about this very idea that the people are treated much like a 'bewildered herd' who have to be defended from themselves and so it becomes essential that those in the governments "drive the stupid masses toward a world that they are too dumb to understand for themselves" (12).

The idea of homogenization works a lot like the manufacturing of products on an assembly line where the first product is very much like the next and the last. If there is an anomaly it is easily gotten rid of as we see happens in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. When amidst the mass-produced citizens of Oceania Smith's aberration [his dislike for the Party and his willingness to participate in an uprising against the government in any way he could in case an opportunity presented itself] was detected he was tortured as long as "his memory was not satisfactorily under control" (Orwell 48). The only reason the Party let Smith live was because he had ultimately given up his reservations about the Party and given into the haze of the Big Brother regime.

The end result of homogenization and distortion of history is basically the same since homogenization is what the regimes aim to achieve through the fabrication of facts and history. In reality, countries create a very dramatic and emotional history and try and latch every single citizen onto it and create a homogenized base like that of nationalism. Although depending on the party in power our historical facts change, each of them tell us that as Bangladeshis we are united and so must all adhere to the very same principles and notions irrespective of our ethnical, religious or social backgrounds. However, it is not unity that they aim at; it is uniformity that they aim at.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

Orwell and Collins have successfully highlighted the worst of an autocratic regime. The media propaganda, the breathing-down-the-neck surveillance, the overwhelming distortion and manipulation of history and the demolition of any kind of individuality all contribute to the maintenance of the highly autocratic regime. While this comes as no surprise, the problem lies in the fact that a democratic government; which is meant to be all-inclusive, transparent and catering to the needs of the populace just like a good government is supposed to; is as good as, if not worse than an Orwellian regime. In fact, as we have seen, it is as good as the Capitol: a regime inspired by the mythological tale of the Minotaur. As many claims a democratic state may make about its 'advanced' ways of governing, its deviousness is as same as that of much criticized totalitarian regimes.

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