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Introduction

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* follows our protagonist Winston Smith, as he is trapped under the totalitarian regime of the one and only Party of Oceania. We follow Winston as he struggles to keep himself grounded in truth and reality, where his only options of rebellion against the Party are miniscule, like the act of keeping a diary or having a love affair with Party comrade Julia. All of which culminate in the biggest act of resistance one can possibly hope to accomplish in Oceania, as Winston joins the Brotherhood with his comrade O'Brien and gets his hands on the infamous Book of Goldstein. But O'Brien isn't who he's made himself out to be, when he is revealed to be a spy, compromised by the Party after all, and Winston is captured and tortured, slowly forced into the defeat he anticipated since the start. In the end, he loved Big Brother.

Orwell's dystopia truly holds no punches, and that is the reason that why after all these years, it is still extremely relevant. Symons, in the introduction to the novel, notes that "The

dismal conditions of everyday life in 1984 were a replication of what the author saw around him in 1948" (Symons, p.xx). People from all walks of life are captivated by his way of writing, from the people currently living under such dictatorial rule, to people that fear it deeply. In this article, I'll be examining how Orwell illustrates the connections between the past and human memory and consciousness, and how exactly this translates into Winston's few attempts at defiance to the Party, as Winston himself ponders: "If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable what then?" (Orwell, p.55).

I'll be examining these ideas through analysis of three of the novel's key motifs. Firstly, Winston's diary. I'll be looking at what its function is to Winston, what exactly it represents and how it helps him resist the Party. Then I'll move into Winston's place of work, The Ministry of Truth, and examine how it shapes Winston in accordance with his rebellion and what his work means in regard to protecting his mind from corruption. Furthermore, I'll look at Goldstein's Book, and the importance of it to Winston, how it is portrayed textually as a counter to the workings of the Party, and then I'll present and give arguments for my own theory on the true meaning of the book's existence. Finally, I'll do a close reading on a part of a scene towards the end of the novel, where I feel Winston's defeat is made most clear, and how this defeat is tied into the destruction of his memory and consciousness.

I'll be working extensively with three secondary sources throughout the article: Bernard Crick's "Nineteen Eighty-Four: context and controversy", Diletta De Cristofaro's "The Politics of the Archive in Nineteen Eighty-Four" and Tereszewski's "The Confines of Subjectivity: Spaces of Resistance in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*". Given Orwell's detailed world building, I have to first explain some "in universe" terms which I didn't get the chance to fully flesh out, that I'll explain here in simple terms: thoughtcrime – thoughts going against party doctrine, thought criminal – one who engages in thoughtcrime and thought police – the eliminators of thoughtcrime.

Winston's Diary

"'Who controls the past' ran the Party-slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'" (Orwell, p.37). A frightening concept indeed. The meaning of the statement being that the nigh omnipotent Party of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, having near infinite control over the inner workings of its state, has the control over every single historical record, or as Diletta De Cristofaro calls it in her chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four, The Politics of the Archive in Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the "public

archive", gives them the power to constantly revise the past to fit the current Party narrative (Cristofaro, p.51). Cristofaro explains how Derrida's idea of the ones having control over the archive, essentially the past, also holds a political power for the very reason that they can choose to change it whenever they seem fit. She mentions the idea of the Party's past being essentially self-referential, claiming that since the Party has no connection to a fundamental reality, not even a "connection that is contained in a direct lie" (Orwell, p. 43), and that it could "be read through Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation" (Cristofaro, p.53). The idea being that, by the Party constantly writing and re-writing books, newspaper articles etc., it is become impossible to find any trace to the past in the current propaganda the Party publishes. It is become distorted through so many layers that the past, in accordance with Party principles, "had been actually destroyed" (Orwell, p.37). With the past destroyed, the Party seeks an eternal present, unchanging into infinite time, which can be most quickly and efficiently summarized by O'Brien's statement of the Party goal being symbolic of "a boot stamping on a human face -- for ever" (Orwell, p.188). Cristofaro claims that the Party has done away with "futurity", which can be seen through O'Brien, who, while recruiting Winston and Julia to the Brotherhood, says to Winston that he will "work for a while, [he] will be caught, [he] will confess, and then [he] will die», completely adhering to the Party's notion on determinism, nothing you can do can actually change anything. Winston seemingly accepts, as we realize after the fact as O'Brien courting Winston into the dogma of the Party. However, we find that Winston does not adhere to this determinism by looking at the recurring motif of his diary.

Winston is spurred onto getting the book that will become his diary by a multitude of factors. Firstly, he notes on the age of it, that it had been "yellowed by age" and it hadn't been in production for "at least forty years", though Winston presumes it "much older than that", and also describes the pen he uses as an "archaic instrument" (Orwell, p.8). This leads us to believe that Winston sees the diary as a manifestation of the past, which is also corroborated by Cristofaro, noting that it "represent[s] the resurfacing of the real past" (Cristofaro p.59). Another reason Winston got to writing the diary, was the place he noticed at his apartment, a place that the all-watching telescreens couldn't see him. This creates a parallel between the future technology of the telescreen, and the past of the diary.

Now that we know what got Winston to write the diary, we can look at the function of it. Winston sees the diary as an act of defiance to the Party. "It's a little chunk of history that they've forgotten to alter" (Orwell, p.152). Ultimately, it serves to record his memory, what Cristofaro refers to as the "private archive" (Cristofaro, p.51), and to keep his consciousness.

He notes “It was not by making yourself heard but by staying sane that you carried on the human heritage”, which is reflected in what Winston writes in the diary, which we’ll expand on later (Orwell, p.30). The act of owning a diary in Nineteen Eighty-Four is seen as a political act, Winston even noting that it is “punished by death” (Orwell, p.8). This is interesting because it creates a juxtaposition in the reader’s mind. In our world, the act of keeping a diary is, in most circumstances, a very mundane task, something most elementary schoolers try at least once. Cristofaro notes that one of Winston’s goals is to create an “alternative archive” to combat the Party, seeing as he changes the demographic of his diary from the future, to also include the past, Cristofaro notes that by keeping an alternative archive, the Party’s hold of the past becomes weakened (Cristofaro, p.61). This idea also breaks with the previously explained point on the determinism of the Party. Winston is using the diary, a representation of the old, to document the present, for the future. It itself symbolizes the flow and change that time brings. Cristofaro also mentions the fact that Winston’s sacrifice might have led to something, as it is mentioned in the afterword “Appendix of Newspeak”, which is seemingly written from a post-Ingsoc perspective.

Now we move on to what Winston writes in his diary. The first thing we notice is his stream of consciousness style, again showing the diary’s function of collecting his thoughts and preserving his consciousness, mentioning his “restless monologue” (Orwell, p.9), and we see that in the way he writes, “shedding first its capital letters and finally even its full stops” (Orwell, p.10). He is noted to be writing in sheer panic, which reinforces the juxtaposition highlighted earlier of Winston’s approach to diary writing compared to our own. The actual contents of his writing are even more interesting: He recalls a night at the movies, wartime movies, which we can probably assume is more Party propaganda, seemingly documenting it. What’s noticeable is Winston’s noting of how the other people in the crowd responded to what was being shown, he notes the clapping and laughing of Party members, and the complaints of a prole woman. Winston seems to not only wanting to record his own thoughts and experiences but are also focused on others.

After he is done writing, a memory had “clarified itself in his mind” (Orwell, p.11), it seems that the act of writing in and of itself had made Winston’s memory become clear, which solidifies the idea of writing to keep ahold of his consciousness, his private archive. Winston notes that “Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull” (Orwell, p.29), which he later in the novel will realize, not even that is true, because of the concept of *doublethink*. Doublethink, or reality control, is the idea of holding two contradictory thoughts in your head at once and believing them both to be true. It is essential

for the Party to have this sort of control over one's mind, especially in Winston's line of work, which we'll get into shorty, and we see that the three slogans of the Party as prime examples of this idea: "War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength". The three slogans are, of course, highly contradictory, but with doublethink, which the Party has instilled in its citizens since a very early age, it makes complete sense. Through Goldstein's book, which we'll also talk about later, we see the same idea with the four Ministries: "The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation. These contradictions are not accidental, nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy; they are deliberate exercises in doublethink" (Orwell, p.150)

Ministry of Truth

On the topic of the Ministry of Truth, doublethink is an essential component to it, especially the Records Department, where Winston is situated. The Ministry of Truth needs its workers to actively engage in doublethink to not be aware of the historical manipulation that they're committing. In short, as the workers at the Ministry of Truth get the historical documents they need to rectify, they must do the task, then forget that they ever did the task, then forget about the act of forgetting it. Cristofaro talks about the importance of Winston's work at the Ministry of Truth, as it collaborates her point, and to an extent mine, that one of the Party's primal functions is the destruction of the archive (Cristofaro, p.52). The work Winston does at the Records Department is the primary reason that the Party can work the way it does, he himself is a crucial piece to the machine he hates so much. The outcry he feels is vented within the two-minute hate, in which Winston takes the fury that the image of Goldstein creates in him and points it at the Party, at Big Brother, he says: "Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police" (Orwell, p.16). Winston sees this as aggressing on the Party, but according to Goldstein's Book on the matter of the two-minute hate, that is exactly the function of it: "The discontents produced by his bare, unsatisfying life are deliberately turned outwards and dissipated by such devices as the Two Minutes Hate" (Orwell, p.147), and Winston's only saving grace is his interlocking with O'Brien, believing him to be a friend, tying it into him being compelled to write the diary, and this will come up when we look more closely at Goldstein's Book.

His work at the Ministry also illustrates another parallel between his public work of destroying the archive, and his private work of recording memory. Bernard Crick outlines this

in his chapter Nineteen Eighty-Four: context and controversy, in The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell, where he writes "the attempt to write the diary becomes the main thread of the plot in which private memory is used to defend against the official attempts to rewrite history; and these become parallel themes" (Crick, p.152). Although Crick's reading is influenced by his belief that novel partly satirizes the modern idea of mass-produced writing. As we learn of the other departments at the Ministry of Truth, we can see Cricks reading of the novel come to light. Many of the departments concern themselves with producing works for the proles, so-called "prolefeed", and Crick makes the assertion that the proles, in this sense, is analogous to the modern reader, being uninterested in writing that makes one think. It is unpolitical, uninteresting and has a "pacifying effect" (Crick, p.152), and that the proles are only interested in sports, beer, and gambling. The idea here is that, by feeding the proles, the masses, an endless slew of unimportant writing, it keeps them from getting too smart for their own good and revolting against the Party, which is why the proles that grow too intelligent are simply removed, all of which is mentioned in Goldstein's Book. This all draws back on the fact that when Winston wrote in the diary, his memory resurfaced. With memory comes consciousness, and with consciousness comes Party defiance.

I want to examine how memories relate to Winston's work at the Ministry a bit further, specifically through a scene in which Winston, going on with his usual business, receives an article posted in the *Times*, Oceania's newspaper, that has to be rectified. It is an image of three people, Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford at a Party gathering in New York. The three of them were later exposed by the Party as colluding with the current enemy state, Eurasia. Winston, however, recognizes the three people on the image, and compares the dates between when the article was published to when the three men were said to have been on Eurasian soil. He notes that these dates were the same and is now holding primary evidence of the Party's deception in his hands. He ponders with it for some time but eventually throws it into the *memory hole*, destroying it forever. This particular instance haunts Winston, but is also a situation he holds himself to, as it is the first, and only, time that he has held in his hands physical evidence against the Party. Even though the actual evidence was gone, no longer existing, Winston ponders if "the Party's hold upon the past [was] less strong, […], because a piece of evidence which existed no longer had once existed?" (Orwell, p.54). The implication here being that, even without the actual existence of the photograph, if it existed in his mind, as a memory, then it could amount to something. This is again pointing to Cristofaro's notion of the public vs the private archive, showing that the two are interlinked. In the end, Winston is shut down by O'Brien during the torture scene, where O'Brien again

shows him the photograph, then throws it in the memory hole. Here, Winston claims that the evidence still exists in the mind, but O'Brien engages in doublethink, saying that, even though he just saw and disposed of the photograph, he doesn't remember it.

The descriptions that Orwell gives us on the Ministry of Truth building is something I find interesting. The juxtaposition between the building and the rest of London is stark. The Ministry being "startingly different from any other object in sight", and the rest of London being described as having a "grimy landscape" and that he thought of London with a "distaste" (Orwell, p.5). He tries to get a memory of if London always looked this way, highlighting the parallel between the Ministry, the place opposite of his memory, and the rest of London. This is building on an idea that Marcin Tereszewski outlines in his paper titled "*The Confines of Subjectivity: Spaces of Resistance in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four*", where he architecturally analyses the ideas of the modernity of the Party versus the places which Winston finds solace. He notes the structure of the Ministry buildings "projects a sense of dominance" over the "Victorian buildings" of London (Tereszewski, p.59). Another thing he brings up is how Mr. Charrington's shop is often described as old, and then, by proxy, is juxtaposed to the buildings of the Party. Tereszewski goes on to relate this to the utopian ideals of modernist architecture, but I'm more interested in how it relates to Winston's mind, and we see this as he describes the room above Charrington's shop as "nostalgic", like it had awakened an "ancestral memory" (Orwell, p.49), further solidifying how the good of the past is nearly always connected to Winston's memory in some fashion.

Goldstein's Book

We've mentioned Goldstein's Book at multiple points during this article, and the reason is that I feel like it encompasses much of what my primary ideas are about. First, some notes on Goldstein. He is introduced as the enemy of the people, by the Party of course, and as Winston, and the reader, are strong opponents of the Party, it immediately gives us the sense of the man that the novel intends, that he is someone who we, the reader and Winston, should trust to help Winston in his journey against the Party. This is heavily affirmed in Part Two of the novel, when Winston and O'Brien meet up to discuss the Brotherhood, and when Winston receives the Book. The section before Winston gets and ultimately reads Goldstein's Book is about the sudden change in wars between the states, and when Winston gets back to Mr. Charrington's shop to read the book, he notes on the fact that he's all alone. All of these factors lead the reader into perceiving the Book as the complete opposite of the insanity of the

Party. This is also reflected in how the book early on really affirms Winston's already existence, specifically of the past, noting how the world now is worse than it was before, and Winston himself claiming that "The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already" (Orwell, p.?). O'Brien is, to Winston, someone who represents rebellion against the Party. Him referring to Goldstein as "our leader" would be more than enough to have Winston convinced. Winston mentioned that he couldn't see Goldstein's face without "a painful mixture of emotions" (Orwell, p.139), showing us the inner workings of Winston, his internal conflict between his hate for the Party, simultaneously being under Party rule for so long that his mind must be under control to some level. This is what I want to focus this section on. My assertion is that Winston, through dealings with O'Brien, and more specifically his writing in Goldstein's Book, has already had his mind compromised to some extent.

As we learn later in the story, after Winston and Julia are kidnapped by the thought police, Goldstein's Book is actually written by O'Brien, amongst other inner Party members. Immediately, the reader is prone not to trust it's validity because we distrust the Party and everything it is involved with. Which is why it's weird how Winston, when confronting O'Brien with the fact, simply accepts that what O'Brien is saying is true. This is partly because of Winston's relationship with O'Brien, being trusting of him, but I believe that it is also due to his reading of Goldstein's Book. My theory is that Goldstein's Book is made by the Party to act as a way of pushing the more difficult thought criminals to conform to doublethink. Firstly, we can argue about the validity of the book's contents. O'Brien claims that the book is descriptively accurate, just not prescriptively so. If we are to take his word, why would they willingly share these secrets with dissidents, if not for the purpose of some nefarious, ulterior motive? The contents of the book itself speaks on the doublethink that is held by inner Party members, claiming them to be both "competent, industrious, and […] intelligent", but also an "ignorant fanatic". It claims it is necessary for them to know that some "war news is untruthful", but that it is "easily neutralized by doublethink" (Orwell, p.134). O'Brien then, as an inner Party member, must know some truths about the war, and is himself practicing doublethink. For him to have the knowledge to write the book based on his knowledge of the truth, but by being so ingrained in doublethink that even if he knows that it is true, he simultaneously believes it to be false is not a stretch of the imagination. In his torture, he isn't trying to convince Winston of a lie that he knows and believes himself to be a lie, he believes that the lie is truth, like believing that if the Party willed it, two plus two would make five.

Secondly, we go back to the contents of the book, specifically, the chapters that we learn of. We know that the first and third chapter reference the Party-slogans mentioned previous: “Ignorance is Strength” and “War is Peace”. Of which we only finish the third, but we can make assumptions that the other ones, even chapter two which presumably covers the slogan left out, “Freedom is Slavery”, are structured similarly. As we assessed before, the three Party-slogans are themselves forms of doublethink. The one Winston finishes, chapter three, “War is Peace”, is about the war between the three superstates of the world, Oceania, Eastasia and Eurasia. It goes into detail on how the war is waged, and what for. It notes that the war is waged for labor power and resources that culminate at the borders of the three states, and notes that the states are all, in practice, unconquerable. This leads to the notion of an endless, continual war, for labor and resources to continue waging war more effectively, an endless feedback loop. The chapter concludes, noting that since they are all at perpetual war with each other, and that there are not many casualties, it would be about the same as if they all were at peace, proving true the Party slogan, War is indeed Peace. This, I believe, is the Party’s way of trying to get people like Winston, ones with “defective memory” (Orwell, p.171) to accept the ideas of doublethink more easily, by having the quintessential anti-Party manifesto ultimately come to the same conclusion as the Party. Winston is seen to agree with the book as we’ve seen, noting that “[t]he best books, […], are those that tell you what you know already”. Winston’s mind is – as of accepting O’Brien, who turned out to be not who he thought he was, Mr. Charrington, a spy for the Party, his antique shop, which contained a telescreen monitoring him, and Goldstein’s Book, cleverly disguised Party propaganda – compromised by the party.

Close Reading

Returning to the photograph Winston saw that day at the Ministry of Truth, I want to do a close reading on a passage that happens later in the novel. It is a scene relating to the photograph, namely where Winston and O’Brien are having their battle at the Ministry of Love, I chose this passage specifically because I believe it highlights many of the ideas brought forth in the previous sections, as well as the fact that it is in general, one of the more terrifying moments of the novel.

> *“An oblong slip of newspaper had appeared between O'Brien's fingers. For perhaps five seconds it was within the angle of Winston's vision. It was a photograph, and there was no question of its identity. It was*

the photograph. It was another copy of the photograph of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford at the party function in New York, which he had chanced upon eleven years ago and promptly destroyed. For only an instant it was before his eyes, then it was out of sight again. But he had seen it, unquestionably he had seen it! He made a desperate, agonizing effort to wrench the top half of his body free. It was impossible to move so much as a centimetre in any direction. For the moment he had even forgotten the dial. All he wanted was to hold the photograph in his fingers again, or at least to see it.

'It exists!' he cried.

'No,' said O'Brien.

He stepped across the room. There was a memory hole in the opposite wall. O'Brien lifted the grating. Unseen, the frail slip of paper was whirling away on the current of warm air; it was vanishing in a flash of flame. O'Brien turned away from the wall.

'Ashes,' he said. 'Not even identifiable ashes. Dust. It does not exist. It never existed.'

'But it did exist! It does exist! It exists in memory. I remember it. You remember it.'

'I do not remember it,' said O'Brien" (Orwell, p.172)

We see Winston here at his worst, the piece of evidence he had clung onto for all these years, he finally had the chance to lay his hands on it again, prove to himself that he isn't insane, that it is the whole world who is. But O'Brien destroys his hopes, his ideas, in a single sentence: "I do not remember it". The writing of Nineteen Eighty-Four does this constantly, it gives the reader a small hope to cling onto, a fraction of light in a sea of darkness, and then immediately crushes it, like it never existed in the first place.

The significance of the scene is huge, for Winston, the photograph was the only piece of tangible, physical evidence of his sanity. We see it as emblematic towards Winston's battle against Party doctrine, not his physical efforts, like joining the Brotherhood, but protecting his mind and consciousness from Party control. His proof against the Party needn't be physically

real, as long as it still lived on in his memory, that would be enough. But we see in the language used how awful Winston is off in this situation. If we contrast to the scene involving the photograph before, we see that, in the past, he held the photograph for "as long as thirty seconds" (Orwell, p.51), as opposed to here, where it only so much as grazes his angle of vision for "perhaps five seconds", and shortening by the sentence: "only an instant it was before his eyes", time is seemingly running out for Winston, and we see this in the confidence of the two statements, now it is only "perhaps", maybe alluding to Winston doubting himself, and his fading consciousness. But the realization of the existence of the photograph draws him back. He is now certain, there was "no question of its identity", and it is stated two times that "it *was* the photograph", he had "unquestionably" seen it etc.

In his regained excitement, he tries to reach out for it, but we are reminded of the situation he's in, and the language used is clear: he makes a "desperate, agonizing effort" to "wrench" himself out, but he's stuck, not being able to move at all. His physical jerking is emblematic of his mental state, he tries his hardest to resist O'Brien's doublethink, but again, it's no use. First O'Brien shuts him down physically, by making sure it is "impossible" for him to move, then shutting him down mentally, by exercising doublethink, and shattering Winston's hopes.

Conclusion

I feel like throughout this article I've come to learn a lot about how Orwell thinks, on both writing and on the human mind, he has an obvious sort of connection to the past that I feel is undeniable. We started by quoting Winston Smith "If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable what then?" and after going sifting through the text for hours on end I feel even more confident than when I started. If we look at the amount of evidence that supports the conclusion that yes, the past and the external world do exist in the mind, but as opposed to Winston, who ultimately fails and loses his mind, we must not give up the fight. So, what does this conclusion present us? Orwell's work is not necessarily a prophecy, but more of a guideline, a set of observations to make sure don't spin out of control. Symons noted, as previously stated, that "[t]he dismal conditions of everyday life in 1984 were a replication of what the author saw around him in 1948". If we look around us, we can also see such dismal conditions, maybe not in our privileged position under a democracy, but if we look out into the world, we see dictatorial leaders, of Russia, North Korea etc., acting out many of the same things that the Party of Oceania did. Orwell tells the

people trapped under such regimes to hold onto hope, and to hold onto oneself, one's mind, one's notion of truth.

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