The Decay of Language and Truth

Orwell's transition of thought from "Politics and the English Language" to *1984*

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> *Simplicity itself. Skin, debone, demarrow, scarify, melt, render down and destroy. Every adjective that counted, every verb that moved, every metaphor that weighed more than a mosquito—out! Every simile that would have made a sub-moron's mouth twitch—gone! Any aside that explained the two-bit philosophy of a first-rate writer—lost! … The point is obvious. There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.*
>
> Ray Bradbury, 1979

There is more than one way to burn a book—to reduce it to a pile of ashes without meaning, truth, or volition. One way is to burn the spines, the pages, and the ink. Char the story so that it cannot be passed on; toss it down a chute in a government-controlled building. Incinerate, vaporize the book, so that it never existed in the first place. Another way to burn books is to revise and rewrite its contents, and make it such that the only history is the latest edition. Yet another is to destroy the very language itself; to render every word to have contradictory meanings and yet have validity in each meaning, to melt the language down to be void of any excess or speciation, and corrupt any word that threatens to allude to a concept that may liberate one from fear or ideology. To burn language is to divorce words from meaning and truth. In post-World War II England, George Orwell meditated on the implications of the incineration of language in an ever-stratifying world.

In the utopian, dystopian, and anti-utopian genres, the concept of regulated language as a method for social control is an oft-expressed concern. The genre's analysis and criticism of regulated language serves to situate these literary works as both speculative fictions and

prophetic warnings, as well as to critique features of contemporary societies. For example, in *Brave New World* (1932), Aldous Huxley demonstrates the consequences of an unequal society in which access to language is restricted based upon a hierarchical system. In *Fahrenheit 451*, written in 1953, Ray Bradbury contemplates the prospect of eradication of the ability of the individual to question his government when language is physically destroyed in the form of burning books. George Orwell was an early contributor to this thematic legacy in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (hereafter, *1984*), famously drafted in 1948, and critiques the revision and reduction of language with the advent of "Newspeak," in the fictitious society of Oceania. Implicitly defined in their genres, each of these anti-utopian works are situated "elsewhere," but have inherent bearings on the present and proximal sociopolitical conditions of the reader. As literary critic Robert Philmus puts it in his comparative analysis of works of science fiction, "Visions and Revisions: (Re)Constructing Science Fiction," anti-utopian societies such as Oceania "provide precisely defined contexts for testing the limiting conditions of language as a function and guarantor of the sociopolitical order. [These] models of societies which would have language approach the extreme of total assent, so as to be capable of doing no more than reflect, and thus under-stand, the social order." (6). In other words, anti-utopian novels repeatedly share a similar characteristic: the use of language by a powerful institution as a method of control and technique of pacification of the masses, who, due to a bourgeoning lack of accessible language, lose the ability to question authority and ideology.

As a writer, Orwell is best known to have contributed to the anti-utopian genre through his consistent critique of the tendency of totalitarian states (and those states who exhibit totalitarian features) to reduce, censor, and limit the public's access to language. Orwell's

stinging criticism of those people and institutions who systematically abuse power still taunts the buried anxieties that lie at the heart of present-day nations. Many of his hundreds of publications focus on methods and abuse of power, and specifically the use of language to harness groups of people for the betterment of the powerful minority. Two such publications, "Politics and the English Language," and *1984*, were written during and in the wake of World War II, and preceding the era of the Cold War. Each of these periods of tension and demolition in English history highlighted growing anxieties of the consequences of propaganda and censorship as mechanisms for public manipulation. As power across the European continent was redistributed and restructured, there arose an incipient fear of the overreaching power of totalitarian governments. These anxieties are reflected in "Politics and the English Language" and *1984.* In the essay, Philmus argues that the public's anxieties surrounding regulated language and totalitarian control are reflected in Orwell's work. He writes that Orwell "perceives a deplorable connection between political abuses and abuses of language." (p. 6). This perception is first fleshed out in "Politics and the English Language."

"Politics and the English Language" focuses on the decay of language and its "contagion" in the heart of Western politics. It critiques the state of public, politically sourced language in 1946 to be something that "lacks precision," and therefore, allowed the powerful politicians in power to easily manipulate their citizens. The essay is split broadly into three parts: in the first, Orwell identifies the evidence of a decaying language, then discusses specific contributing factors to this decay, and concludes the essay with a sort of "call to action" of individual writers to correct their misuse of language. This correction, according to Orwell in his essay, allows the writer to have a chance at mitigating what he refers to as "present political

chaos." ("Politics"). While the specifics of the essay will be explored more precisely in the second section of this paper, it is important to note that the general argument of "Politics and the English Language" is that, although political language and writers have sunk into a hole of "slovenliness and vagueness" that has proven to be detrimental to our society, it can be remedied by the improved habits of the individual writer ("Politics"). Since Orwell thought that the volition of the individual writer could modify language, it thus follows that, in 1946 when he wrote this essay, he perceived language to be malleable and dependent upon thought and truth.

Two years later, Orwell wrote *1984* in what would appear to be a continuation of the assessment of controlled, reduced language as being an incendiary device—something that can be harnessed to aid the powerful and control the weak. "Politics and the English Language," and *1984*, however, are fundamentally different in thought. Instead of arguing that thought can determine the construction and efficacy of language, thus attributing agency to the individual writer like he does in "Politics and the English Language," in *1984*, Orwell moves to a more modern discursive assessment of language and power. He sounds a deafening warning that language is *the* predecessor for thought and ideology. In a novel that situates itself squarely in the anti-utopian genre as a catalyst for critique of modes of power in society, Orwell prophecies that the decay, reductive stripping, and rigid control of public language is the most essential method of systematic and psychological control of humanity. Instead of having faith in the posterity of individual free thought, Orwell moves to warn of a future bereft of individuality and truth when language is stripped down to its bones.

This paper will consider the means by which George Orwell's understanding of the relationship between language and ideology transitions from considering language to be a

malleable mechanism employed by individuals to acquire agency and liberty from the confines of ideology, to considering ideology to be ultimately in control of language. I will first consider the similarities between "Politics and the English Language" and *1984,* because Orwell's continuous return to a similar thematic concern with language across works indicates his perpetual anxiety that is not satiated with a single solution to the decay of language. I then consider the ways in which language made accessible to the public by the Party comes to infiltrate and consume the private consciousness of the members of Oceania. Then, I consider the possibility of truth in Oceania, and the ways in which Winston's writing functions to allow him tangible truths, but not individual liberty. Finally, I directly contrast Orwell's teachings in "Politics and the English Language" and *1984*, and the methods of control of language in each that contradict one another.

Similarities in "Politics and the English Language" and *1984*

In each work, Orwell analyzes facets of language through parallel means. By this, I mean that he critiques similar states of decay in language, but calls them different names and identifies different causes in each text. In "Politics and the English Language," he expresses his disillusionment with "meaningless words," or words that have taken on several different meanings that cannot be reconciled with one another. Similarly, in *1984,* he shows the negative effects of doublethink, which functions to allow the individual to paradoxically hold contradictory ideas in the mind, making one not possible without the other. In the essay, Orwell also critiques "pretentious diction" as something that glorifies inhumanity and hostility, a point that reemerges in *1984* in passages on propaganda and in scenes that depict how the "two minutes hate" serves to glorify war ideologies. "Politics and the English Language" dismisses

what Orwell considers to be "dying metaphors," or ready-made phrases and idioms that have no bearing on what they describe. This dismissal is similar to his critique of Newspeak and the Minitrue, which, through constant revision of historical accounts retold through stale or inapplicable imagery, evoke a "reduced state of consciousness" to pacify the masses who don't question the implication of the intended imagery. Although Orwell's theory of the relationship between language and ideology shifts from "Politics and the English Language" to *1984*, it is important to consider the parallels in each text. These parallels mark the facets of regulated language that Orwell finds to be most disturbing and interminable.

As previously mentioned, in his essay, Orwell expresses frustration with the tendency of political language to use "meaningless words" in speech. Orwell defined these words to be those that "… have several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another … [that] are often used in a consciously dishonest way." He gives the example of Fascism, and later democracy. In the example for Fascism, Orwell asserts that the word no longer means anything except something that is not desirable. In the case of the word "democracy," Orwell argues that the etymological history is tied to numerous systems of government to defend them as generally "good" entities. As a result, Orwell argues that "It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning." ("Politics"). This conscious uncoupling of a word from its intended definition allows for a voracious institution of power to control a large group of people. Due to the fact that the word "democracy" is divorced from its actual meaning, it no longer carries any import on its application. The public may call itself a democracy and believe it, because the word

now retains a lexical record with meanings that should not be able to be reconciled with one another.

Orwell revisits the concept of "meaningless words" in *1984* with the Party's implementation of the concept of doublethink. Doublethink, in the words of Winston, is the ability "To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies … that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce consciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed." (35). In, "Doublespeak and the Minority of One," literary critic H.K. Bhabba calls this collapse of the falsified and the historically accurate "paradoxical pluralities," and defines it as something that "condemns fiction and history to a dialogue from which neither one can recover … singularity of its vision." (187). Although Bhabba extends doublethink to an action that is spoken, his analysis of paradoxical pluralities explains and connects the conscious process by which the Party elicits doublethink to be possible. It is doublethink that allows the public to accept Party slogans such as "WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH," because Winston's generation — specifically, those caught between the salvaged and sparse memories of life before the war and the revised world after it has consciously created an accord between two opposing ideas, and have allowed them to be held equally in one word (4). The marriage of phrases such as "Ignorance is strength," in the words of the supposed Emmanuel Goldstein, is "…one of the chief distinguishing marks of Oceanic society … These contradictions are not accidental, nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy: they are a deliberate exercise in doublethink. For it is only by reconciling contradictions that power can be retained indefinitely." (216). Goldstein posits the state of the society under the control of Oceania

to be one of "controlled insanity" (216). This assessment harkens back to Orwell's disillusionment with "meaningless words" in "Politics and the English Language," because there, too, he notes that these words (which have the same characteristics of doublethink) enable a sort of "political quietism" or pacification of the masses in that they retain the ability to hold two contradicting ideas in the mind and of one word, and therefore lose the ability to question those who are in control.

The second facet of language that Orwell finds to be a contributing factor to its decay is the prevalence of "pretentious diction" by political figures. In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell defines "pretentious diction" as words that are "…used to dress up a simple statement and give an air of scientific impartiality to biased judgments … and are used to dignify the sordid process of international politics." ("Politics"). Essentially, he finds that "pretentious diction" serves to falsify cultural elegance for an otherwise dismal concept or event. Orwell's largest grievance seems to be the addition of Latinized or Greek words into the English language to give the appearance of a new concept to something rather than to put in the effort to describe it in plain English ("Politics"). He concludes that this practice increases vagueness in writing and speech, and laments the politician's ability to make the morbid sound decadent using this kind of reverent language.

Orwell's dissatisfaction with "pretentious diction" extends into *1984*, in which the Party utilizes what can only be described as "pretentious diction" for language that is made available to the public, like the "two minutes hate," and the Party's propaganda. An imperative feature of Party propaganda in Oceania is its function to cover the meaning or purpose of the announcement itself. As Winston puts it, the public participation of "deliberate noise" inspired

by the telescreen voice's encouragement of hate is to "drown the consciousness" of the people (16). "Two minutes hate" seemingly acts to reduce subversive behavior of the public by allowing them an outlet to express acute emotion, and this acute emotion is catalyzed by the pretentious diction of both the propaganda and the announcer on the telescreen. For instance, in the first example of the public reacting to "two minutes hate," the voice of Goldstein which spurs the outpouring of hatred is marked by "polysyllabic speech which was sort of a parody of the habitual style of orators of the Party." (12). This flowery speech (ridden with Newspeak, and thus still a byproduct of Party ideology) helps to create a primal reaction of hatred surrounding acts of war in the listeners. Though these feelings were not organically present in the public until being initiated by the glorifying speech, the fabricated desire to fight is equally as legitimate as if it had been organically contrived by the people themselves. Winston later remarks, upon observing the habits of those around him during these moments of obligatory hatred, that he himself could not help but to feel "a hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge hammer," which indicates how this glorifying, decadent language inspires the masses to fight on behalf of the Party in power and engage in "the sordid affair of international politics," as Orwell puts it in "Politics and the English Language." (14). It is this manner of language used by the Party that "glorifies war" and rationalizes its destructive consequences in Oceania ("Politics").

Finally, "Politics and the English Language" and *1984* share a similar anxiety regarding the increasing use of "dying metaphors" in language. In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell characterizes "dying metaphors" as a sort of umbrella term for words and phrase that one is used to seeing in texts. Although the essay itself is filled to the tip-top with artful metaphors of

Orwell's own creation—likening the overuse of Latinate words to convey intelligence to "fall[ing] upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up the details," —a reader is unlikely to find one that they've seen by any other writer before him ("Politics"). Orwell's contempt with these "dying metaphors" seems to be rooted in the fact that, as a piece of language intended to clarify, they instead "have lost all evocative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves." ("Politics"). This loss of evocative power leads to vagueness on the part of the writer. Since the writer is saved time and therefore sacrifices precision, people begin to accept the "dying metaphors" without considering the implications of their intended imagery, which may have no bearing on the subject being described. "This reduced state of consciousness," Orwell concludes, "… is favorable in political conformity." ("Politics"). In this conclusion, Orwell considers the curator of the language to be directly at fault for the negative impact on the public. The writer's audience loses the ability to distinguish reality from ambiguous imagery, and this imprecision leads to nearly effortless regulation of the audience by institutions in control—namely, totalitarian states.

Imprecision in "Politics and the English Language" likens, if perhaps more abstractly than previous examples, to the practice of revision and pacification by the Ministry of Truth (hereafter, Minitrue) in Oceania. Ironically, Winston, the presumed protagonist and skeptic of Party practices in *1984*, engages in this action of revision as his occupation. Winston translates previous records—that are now deemed erroneous by the Party—to Newspeak to "accurately" reflect the events of the Party's chosen historical narrative. In doing so, Winston evokes imagery that would be considered technically "dead" by Orwell's standards in "Politics and the English Language," seeing as this imagery no longer has any authority over events that the records

describe. For example, when the reader is first introduced to Winston's job at the Minitrue, he details fabricating statistics of boot production in Oceania for the purpose of propaganda that communicates great economic growth.

> … the Ministry of Plenty's forecast had estimated the output of boots for the quarter at a hundred and forty-five million pairs. The actual output was given as sixty-two millions. Winston, however, in rewriting the forecast, marked the figure down to fifty-seven millions, so as to allow for the usual claim that the quota had been overfilled. In any case, sixty-two millions was no nearer to the truth than fifty-seven millions … Very likely no boots were produced at all … All one knew was that every quarter astronomical numbers of boots were produced on paper, while perhaps half the population of Oceania went barefoot. And so it was with every class of recorded fact, great or small. (41).

Winston describes his acts of revision as "…not even forgery. It was merely the substitution of one piece of nonsense for another. Most of the material … had no connection with anything in the real world, not even the kind of connection that is contained in a direct lie." (40). This evocation of substitution of what is now considered to be "counterfactual" to something that conveys an image or idea that doesn't relate to the situation at hand is reminiscent of Orwell's warning in "Politics and the English Language." Although instead of naming these instances as "dying metaphors," he now considers the lack accurate representation in writing to be directly correlated with a loss of connection to reality. The implementation of "nonsense" not only creates a world where it is impossible to question the present ideology because of lack of contrary record, but also serves to dismantle the concept of truth in a world where precision is replaced by figures in writing that are intended to obscure the consciousness of the public. In

other words, elimination of record by totalitarian governments, along with the subsequent replacement with figurative language that has no accurate bearing on reality, makes it nearly impossible for the public to disentangle lies from reality. Winston later concludes that this revision and obliteration of record created a world in which "everything faded away into a shadow-world," as if clarity and truth is literally obscured by the imprecision of language, and thereby the "facts" themselves became figurative (41).

In each work, Orwell communicates his concerns about the decay of language, specifically language used by institutions of power, and its detrimental effect on the public. Orwell's consistent anxiety about the manipulation of language carries across multiple works, indicating his persistent, yet pliable thought. He shows how the masses' ability to question ideology and to distinguish truth from lies is diminished in a totalitarian society that strips language of its precision, and makes them susceptible to political conformity. Unlike "Politics and the English Language," however, *1984* considers the destruction of language to be something that cannot be overcome by either an individual or a writer. In writing *1984*, Orwell shows how the reduction of language equates to a reduction of consciousness in individual thinkers. Although he analyzes the facets of language through parallel means in each text, Orwell's theory of the relationship between language and power evolves to conclude that language is the foundation of ideology, and the language made available to the public limits consciousness for those oppressed individuals who seek truth in an institutionalized world. The persistence of this anxiety that spans Orwell's work is symptomatic of a problem of social regulation that he speculates has the capacity to prevail.

Public Language in *1984*

Orwell transitions from advocating for the individual writer to warning against the control of ideology over the individual writer. In doing so, he dismantles the understanding that the writer is not limited by the language made accessible to him. Orwell demonstrates the ways in which the private consciousness of the individual writer becomes indistinguishable from public language through instances of the effects of the Party limiting language in the public sphere. For example, Orwell uses images of the telescreen infiltrating Winston's thought and writing production. As Winston tries to direct his attention away from the telescreen to write, he muses, "The woman on the telescreen had started a new song. Her voice seemed to stick in his brain like jagged splinters of glass." (103). Orwell suggests through instances of the Party regulating, limiting, and stripping down language that is available to the public in *1984* that this tangle of public language and private cognition enables easier control of the public, because they are consumers of the language by the political party in power.

Critic Jean-Jaques Courtine discusses the concept of heresy as a public defamation of aspects of language in his essay, "A Brave New Language: Orwell's Invention of 'Newspeak' in 1984," (1986) translated by Laura Willett. He considers heresy to be adopted from canonical historical contexts by utopian writers, who borrow the idea to replicate a self-sufficient eradication of collective dissidence that may go against the ideology of those institutions that are in power. Similarly to the way in which heresy is criminalized in canonical tradition, Courtine asserts that utopian novels borrow the notion of elimination of contradictory ideas in an extreme totalitarian regime (69). A defender of the concept of Newspeak, which he hopes will grow into "Panoptic English," Courtine continues to note that the "purification of language thus constitutes

the imaginary horizon of totalitarian power, the final solution, the completion of the revolution, and the end of history." (71). Courtine concludes that "language purified of heretical thought," can never be realized in *1984* as long as Winston retains nostalgic language of Oldspeak (or, modern-day English), but that the intentional stripping of language made accessible to the public was a brave attempt at transparency of language, citing Syme's assertion that Newspeak is initially intended to provide simplicity (74). While Courtine's hopeful conclusion supports Orwell's way of thinking when he wrote "Politics and the English Language," I would argue that his assessment of a language void of heretical thought as being superior and transparent is not supported with textual evidence in *1984*, but rather rejected. I do, however, argue that Courtine's assertion that of defamation of language and heresy to be intrinsic thematic elements of the novel, and consistently reappear in instances of publicized language in the form of propaganda.

In the time that Orwell wrote *1984,* England was saturated with political propaganda in what was supposed to be a sovereign state of government. After the close of World War II and at the dawn of the Cold War, war propaganda—both in film and print—was used by governments and parties in power to inspire support for the war from the population. This is not the first time in Europe's history, however, that propaganda was used to influence the masses. In the 16th and 17th century, with the emergence of the printing press came the massive boom in circulation pamphlets to reaffirm collective morality in a pre-industrial society[1]. During this time, the Catholic Church arguably boasted near-total influence over Europe, and fought to keep it that way. One of the ways in which they aimed to maintain their power was to criminalize heresy, and

[1] Emile Durkheim, in his theory of the development of societies called *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), introduced the term "mechanical solidarity," which refers to pre-industrial societies that are defined by their homogeneity. These societies are characterized by their highly religious collective conscious, as well as the harsh nature of their punishments for social deviants. These societies rule with repressive sanctions and penal law. (Durkheim)

along with legislation, the Church made use of print propaganda to legitimize their persecution of heretics by demonizing them to the public. This effectively allowed for the justified persecution of heretical beings that threatened the control of the Catholic Church: witches. As Marxist-Feminist thinker Silvia Federici puts it:

The witch-hunt was also the first persecution in Europe that made use of multi-media, propaganda to generate mass psychosis among the population. Alerting the public to the dangers posed by the witches, through pamphlets publicizing the most famous trials and the details of their atrocious deeds, was one of the first tasks of the printing press … to whom we owe the most damning portraits of witches. But it was the jurists, the magistrates, and the demonologists, often embodied by the same person, who most contributed to the persecution (168)

This "mass psychosis" inflicted upon the population that directed hatred towards heretics is reminiscent of Winston's characterization of citizens of Oceania, where a "comrade" is likely equally as likely to turn another comrade into the Thought Police as they were to lend a cup of victory coffee. This is particularly poignant in the scene with Ms. Parsons, Winston's neighbor, who is perennially frightened that her own children will turn her in for displaying "symptoms of unorthodoxy." (24). Like the pamphlets that publish the witches most atrocious, heretical deeds, the "songs, the processions, the banners," that were plastered all over Oceania served to unite the masses under a shared hatred, so that their "ferocity turned outwards, against the enemy of the State." (24). In this totalitarian state, the citizens and the Thought Police become intertwined as a single entity, since they serve the same purpose and regurgitate a shared ideology of the state propaganda. In this manner, the citizens and the Thought Police are embedded as "the jurists, the

magistrates, and the demonologists, often embodied in the same person," in service of the Party (Federici 168). In times of witchcraft, public language in the form of pamphlets successfully demonized heretics and dissenters of the Church; arguably, in *1984,* public language in the form of propaganda vilified unorthodoxy in much the same way.

This politically sourced assail against heretical thought undoubtedly affected individual thinker in Oceania. In "George Orwell and the Art of Writing" (2005), Jeffrey Meyers examines the nature of public language and the ways in which it influences the writer, and concludes that Orwell's use of language itself is inherently political, and he isn't the only critical thinker to do so. Philmus, too, notes Orwell's discomfort with the proximity of political language and individual writer in his essay, "The Language of Utopia" (1973), writing that it has become the nature of literature to represent social organization (61). Meyers and Philmus insinuate that the language of propaganda has direct consequence on the nature of production by the writer. While it is clear that propaganda in *1984* has an adverse effect on the state of the consciousness of the masses, the idea that propaganda inherently influences the creation of the individual writer—and, concurrently, the individual's ability to dissent—is essential to understanding Orwell's assessment of language in *1984*.

An assessment of public language necessitates a return to the first instance of "two minutes hate," in the novel, a type of mandated propaganda by the Party. Its' "mandatory" nature is particularly unique to consider as a piece of propaganda, although its essence is a politically intentioned persuasion that blends the fictive and the informative (Wollaeger 5). This Party propaganda intended to inspire animosity from the outer Party members towards "crimes against the Party … acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations…" as Winston puts it, all of which are crimes

embodied in the face of Goldstein (12). This particular, calculated of portrayal of the Goldstein as an archetype of deviance and heretical thought functions to terrorize the public the same way pamphlets did in Europe during the witch-hunt: by constructing a scapegoat for the public to direct their hatred. During these "two minutes hate," the face of Goldstein parodies the Party language of Newspeak to call for Big Brother to be abolished. Winston finds himself displacing his hatred for the heretical face on the screen to Julia, who at the time in the novel represents his unorthodox sexual desire. Following the cessation of "two minutes hate," Winston is horrified at the malleability of his expression of hatred. His horror translates to a supposed act of rebellion, and Winston writes repeatedly "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER." (18). Though this is a decisive act against the Party, the act of writing immediately follows the propaganda of "two minutes hate," which makes it difficult to consider the two instances to be mutually exclusive. The fact that the act of rebellion and conscious hatred is adjacent to a predetermined expression of involuntary hatred inspired by propaganda suggests that Winston's writing is inherently influenced by the commonplace existence of propaganda.

The constancy of propaganda that shows influence in Winston's acts of rebellion invites the possibility of invasion of public Party ideology in what should be a personal and private space. The contemporary political analyst (and assumer of a pseudonym, much like Orwell himself), Jerry Mander, questions a very similar intrusion of modern day politics in his journal article "The Privatization of Consiousness" (2014). Instead of critiquing propaganda, like Orwell does, Mander critiques the intrusion of advertisements on the individual in the 21st century, and the ways in which this intrusion leads to greater access to control and influence over the masses for institutions in power ("Privatization"). Mander argues:

The imagery does not actually communicate through the language of logic or contemplation.

> Images ride a freeway into your brain and remain there permanently. No thought is involved. Every advertiser knows this. As a viewer, you may sometimes say, "I don't believe this," but the image remains anyway. (“Privatization”)

Mander asserts that the viewer has no choice or say in the matter of the way advertisements influence his life, because consciously or unconsciously, once viewed, the image and the language occupy a space in the psyche of the viewer. This likens to the constancy of telescreens in the homes of citizens of Oceania. Although they function in part to ensure that no space is safe from the eyes and ears of Big Brother, they also ensure that citizens have no choice but to view the propaganda of the Party; whether it be instances of “two minutes hate,” insistence on exercise for the sake of the Party, or “news” about the war. Once broadcasted through the telescreens, the propaganda and the public language of Newspeak begins to occupy a space in the private consciousness of citizens.

The mere presence of the telescreens isn’t the only method of control; they also surveil the public, constantly. Mander demonstrates a similar anxiety about the constancy of the public’s interaction with advertisements. Mander, writing after the age of Michael Foucault and thus being aware of Foucault’s reflection on Panopticism and surveillance, warns of corporations and institutions of power operating off the feedback from advertisements in the form of “clicks.” In other words, Mander asserts that advertisers are able to track the public’s responses to advertisements based on the ones with which they engage. Thus, the advertisers can cater specific types of advertisements towards each person, and create a greater profit margin for themselves, thereby growing in power. Mander warns that each engagement with advertisements

chips away at privacy, because it allows the advertiser insight into the viewer's preferences and consciousness, and thus gives the advertiser more power. In his essay, "Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 To 1945," Mark Wollaeger succinctly summates this phenomenon as it is portrayed in *1984*, writing:

> With Big Brother, Orwell simply anticipated Michel Foucault's extension of Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth-century fantasy of the panopticon from the prison to the whole of society, and "rectified" news, sad to say, was already a fact of life as Orwell was writing in 1948. More shocking is Orwell's implicit claim that modern propaganda is able to restructure desire to such an extent that the very concept of internalizing authority breaks down. By the end of *1984*, the distinction between private and public no longer exists: Winston Smith truly loves Big Brother. Authority cannot be internalized when authority has always and already occupied the inner life of the mind. (6)

Wollaeger considers the historical context in which Orwell wrote—wherein political propaganda is constantly gaining leverage proportionately with the influx of televisions, radio, and other banal tools of mass communication into the household—to be represented in *1984*. He argues that these tools are successful in dissolving the division of private and public consciousness, thus subduing individual opposition of totalitarian authority. Using Mander's warning against individual engagement with advertisements and the subsequent loss of privacy in conjunction with Wollaeger's assertion of such a phenomenon in *1984,* one can extrapolate the ways in which propaganda distributed without the consent of Party citizens via telescreens function to influence the private consciousness of the individual writer.

As Winston puts it, “there was no way of shutting [the telescreens] off completely.” (2). Like Mander’s analysis of advertisements occupying private space regardless of individual will, the telescreens are inescapable and inherently tied to private physical and mental spaces. Winston remarks that, “It was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away … anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide.” Since telescreens occupy every physical boundary within the city, there is nowhere that they will not witness individual feedback from their content. In this way, in order to avoid being vaporized, the public is forced to constantly control their “facecrime,” and limit the most amount of information they can from the telescreens (62). This, however, is an impossibility. As the novel points out, the telescreens are not noticeably present all of the time, and Winston seeks solace in Mr. Charrington’s attic, where he believes that there are none to surveil him. When the concealed telescreen repeats, “You are the dead,” to Julia and Winston, the immediate feedback is indicative of one of the following scenes in Minitrue and Room 101, when the Party is able to manipulate the language-able consciousness of Winston to mirror his greatest fears back to him, in order to facilitate control over him (221). Not only has the public language from the telescreens occupied cerebral space in Winston’s mind, but it has also become a refractory mechanism that rips privacy from the individual, and twists any heretical thought by the individual Party members to become a product of the Party, for the advantage of the Party.

The Party’s authority over language, even heretical thought, presents a complication when trying to distinguish the thoughts of the individual and the language of the Party. Aaron Rosenfeld considers Orwell’s paranoid language within the textual spaces of control in *1984*, and

addresses the effect of heavily regulated public language on private production of language in "The 'Scanty Plot': Orwell, Pynchon, and the Poetics of Paranoia" (2004). He talks of Winston's "self" being violated when his thoughts become public in his hideaway, when the hidden voice behind the picture in Mr. Charrington's attic regurgitates Winston's language, saying "You are the dead." Rosenfeld argues that this is demonstrative of "the end of a character as possession of agency, interiority, [with the loss of thought] … in short, in possession of itself." (339). He finds that Winston's thoughts not only appear in the world, but are indistinguishable from it because of the constant presence of the telescreens. Winston acknowledges this phenomenon himself when he considers destroying the evidence of his own heretical thought written down in his diary. After shooting a furtive glance at the telesceen, Winston muses "Whether he wrote DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER or whether he refrained from writing it, made no difference … The Thought Police would get him just the same." (19). Whether or not there was physical evidence of his thoughts made no difference; they were not his to conceal. According to Rosenfeld, it is this manner and lack of agency that strips the individual of possession and privacy. This assessment may be extended to thoughtcrime and heretical thoughts against Big Brother—since the Party is able to seize Winston's rebellious thought and utilize it as a means of control, his supposedly private, conscious acts of rebellion are no less public than the broadcasted "two minutes hate."

Orwell marries the poetic production of consciousness of Winston and the political consciousness of the Party, as evidenced by private consciousness being indiscernible from public language and public consciousness. The language of the Party made accessible to the public through sources such as "two minutes hate," the constant infringement of Party slogans,

and the inescapable presence of the telescreens infiltrates the consciousness of the individual, which enables ease of control by the Party. Even emotions of fear and doubt, supposedly borne from the very essence of the individual, are not in the possession of the individual, and are redacted into methods of subjection by the Party and delivered back to the individual via public language. As a writer, due to his accessibility to Party language and little else, Winston begins to regurgitate Party vernacular, language, and structure of thought, which I will discuss in the following section.

Of course, I do not intend to suggest that pamphlets, advertisements, and propaganda are equivalent or interchangeable, but rather that they share common characteristics. The pamphlets of the witch-hunt, the advertisements of the present-day, and the war propaganda of 1984 are all administered by an institution in power, for the purpose of that institution to remain in power and exercise control over the public. The pamphlets served the Catholic Church by instigating fear of persecution and death into heretics and those who delineated from the teachings of the Church, the advertisements in the present-day allow for corporations in power to take profit from individual consumers and eliminate their privacy, and the propaganda in *1984* dissolves individual thought in favor of the Party agenda. Each of these works of language shares a commonality in that they are circulated throughout the public for consumption by the masses (without their consent), they serve to advance the party in power and make control over the public easier, and they muddy the distinction between the private consciousness of each individual citizen and the language of the party in power. Courtine may consider a language void of heretical thought to be a more truthful, transparent language, but it would appear as if Orwell engages in a critique of this mode of public language. Most crucially, the predatory nature of the

public language in the form of propaganda, when successfully reproduced in the individuals of society, eradicates the possibility for individual dissention, and therefore individual thought.

Search for Truth, Individuality, and Personal Liberty

While scholarship surrounding *1984* often calls to question the lack of record and verification in the society of Oceania, very few address the search for verification and acts of seeking truth in the novel. Perhaps this is because many scholars consider Oceania completely void of truth altogether—which is a fair assessment, seeing as Minitrue exists primarily to mold records to fit the ever-changing position of the Party and the very concept of doublethink implies being conscious of the simultaneous facts and subjective falsehood of any given statement. The dissociation between fact and fiction hardly seems worth the effort in Oceania. As Winston puts it when describing Julia, a perpetrator against the Party, no less, "…she only questioned the teachings of the party when they in some way touched upon her own life. Often she was ready to accept the official mythology, simply because the difference between truth and falsehood did not seem important to her." (153).

One critic of the philosophy of literature, David Dwan considers the possibility of Orwell using Winston's language to make a case for truth in *1984*. In his article "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*," Dwan argues that "Orwell worried less about local violations of truth than about the disappearance of the concept of truth altogether," and plays with the tension that Winston experiences as he manufactures tidbits of tangible truth and discovers that true statements, such as 'water is wet,' does not necessarily amount to a description of conceptual truth (386). In other words, Dwan considers Orwell to be more concerned with the disappearance

of truth in the society of Oceania, but does not regard it to be an altogether lost cause. Dwan suggests that the need to seek truth is not only built into the fabric of human thought, but is a "fulcrum of freedom" and cites Winston's diary entry that "everything else follows" when two and two equal four (392). Essentially, Dwan argues that, in a search and acquisition of truth, Winston is able to gain a certain amount of personal liberty. Dwan writes that truth requires more than the absence of contradictions, which pushes back against the understanding that truth in Oceania is impossible, as long as doublethink is a facet of Newspeak. Conversely, critic and writer himself, Michael Clune situates emblems of truth to be present in Winston's own discoveries and written language, and establishes Winston's written language as attempts at tangibility, from which he extracts truth in his essay "Orwell and the Obvious" (2009).

Throughout the novel, Winston insists on describing the seemingly mundane in great detail, which could indicate that the abolition of history makes everyday parts of life show up with no background, and so are seen as new and exciting in every experience. Clune would argue that Winston's aforementioned written analysis that 'water is wet' is a product of lack chronicling on the subject, and therefore, an instance of a pursuit of personal liberty and truth since it is entirely unalike everything Winston has seen in print. He supports his argument alongside deconstruction theorists like Marjorie Perloff who consider context to make meaning malleable by saying that they, "understand poetic defamiliarization in terms of 'indeterminacy of meaning,'" (Clune 44). More simply, ambiguity in meaning is a product of defamiliarization, in Clune's opinion, and he would consider Winston's purposeful deviation from this ambiguity to be a product of his individuality and personal liberty. While Clune's argument explains Winston's over-description of the seemingly-mundane because it allows him a tangible

truth—albeit short-lived—it does not necessarily address his movement from realizing the absence of truth in some of these mundane objects, nor does it indicate a movement towards truth via writing, but merely a recognition of ambiguity. Clune references Winston's description of gin and coffee as evidence of a sort of reliance on and fascination with the mundane, but does not assess Winston's realization and separation of Party coffee from "real" coffee. Winston does not consider coffee to have a duplicity of meanings in one word; he intentionally separates them as regular and irregular, and is far more fascinated with the irregular "real" coffee, describing it as a "…rich hot smell which seemed like an emanation from his early childhood," indicating the involuntary nostalgia associated with what he considers to be "real" (141). This separation harkens back to Dwan, who suggests that truth is more than the absence of contradictions—therefore, more than the absence of doublethink and ambiguity—and that the capacity to seek truth is innately built into the human thought as a technique of freedom (Dwan 392). Since Winston can separate the two coffees into mundane and spectacular, Dwan would argue that he is able to wield his "fulcrum of freedom."

Although I argue that Dwan's assessment of truth in Oceania is more compelling than that of Clune, I maintain that Dwan's suggestion that Winston's writing is an acquiescence of power is too generous. Rather, I argue that instead of a "fulcrum of freedom," Winston's strength in writing lies in his language of dissent, and ability to think "otherwise" outside of the sanctioned Party notions. After declaring he understands "how" but not "why" the Party holds power, he takes to his diary, musing:

The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command. His heart sank as he thought of the enormous power arrayed against him, the

> ease with which any Party intellectual would overthrow him in debate, the subtle arguments which he would not be able to understand, much less answer. And yet, he was in the right. The obvious, the silly, and the true had got to be defended. Truisms are true, hold on to that! The solid world exists, its laws do not change. Stones are hard, water is wet, objects fall toward the earth's center. With the feeling that he was speaking to O'Brien, and also that he was setting forth an important axiom, he wrote:

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

(81).

Winston acknowledges the futility of his mental labor against the Party, but nonetheless recognizes his own desire for truth without ambiguity in the written word. He perceives that the strength of the Party language lies in Newspeak's uncanny "subtle" nature, or in other words, the arguments that have contradicting connotations built into them that hinder the listener from the ability to counter. His assertion that "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four," seemingly critiques his own occupation forging numbers and statistics to be consistent with the Party agenda. Calling his assertion a "truism" suggests that Winston finds that the ability to state a "truth" with certainty is what constitutes freedom, and something that is worth defending (no matter the degree of futility). He is conscious of the distinction of this production of writing as opposed to his earlier raw, primordial acts of hatred towards the Party, calling this declaration "axiomatic" by comparison. Winston's insistence on defending truisms is indicative the realization of his ability to dissent, and it is this ability that the Party and O'Brien find most threatening. In Room 101, it is the language and ability to dissent that O'Brien ensures is removed from Winston's consciousness. O'Brien, with the submission of Winston, removes

Winston's ability to "hold on" to truisms and makes it so that he can no longer think that two plus two make four, but instead, "sometimes five" (250). The fact that the language of dissent proves most threatening to the Party empowers this specific language act of Winston's, but that achievement of power is made null as Winston comes to truly love Big Brother. It is the language of dissent that is removed from Winston in Room 101; not his power to write or think, but his ability to think "otherwise."

Although it is one thing to seek any semblance of disappearing truth or ability to dissent in the totalitarian society of Oceania, it is another beast entirely to seek personal liberty and individuality. Countless scholars consider Winston's diary and his own production of language to be an act of rebellion, and an insistence of personal truth and liberty. After all, Winston commits a crime against the Party in full knowledge of its consequences, but still considers it a worthy endeavor. Winston himself questions his motives for the written word early on—knowing the inevitability and revision that all record is subject to, especially given Winston's occupation, he wonders why he bothers to write down his experience:

"He wondered again for whom he was writing the diary. For the future, for the past—for an age that might be imaginary. And in front of him there lay not death but annihilation. The diary would be reduced to ashes and himself to vapor. Only the Thought Police would read what he had written, before they wiped it out of existence and out of memory. … He was a lonely ghost uttering a truth that nobody would ever hear. But so long as he uttered it, in some obscure way the continuity was not broken. It was not by making yourself heard but by staying sane that you carried on your human heritage." (27)

Winston initially remarks that the act of writing was an act of truth, whether or not it will survive its inevitable burning. He writes for the "continuity," either of himself or, perhaps naively, of truth. Winston's intention in writing likens to Margaret Atwood's later dystopian concept of "literature of the witness," or an act of hope, for every story implies a future reader (Atwood 2017). Even though Winston knows that the story will likely be burned and forgotten, at the time of writing, he hopes that his account of Oceania holds at least the weight of the paper on which it is written, and that his individuality will be preserved in his experience.

Though consciously produced with the intent of truth and continuity of the witness, there is still a question of whether or not Winston's writing is successful in creating a plausible, lasting truth through record of individuality. Sociocultural philosopher James Tyner considers Winston's act of writing to be an absolute act of rebellion, and to be not necessarily an act of power over the party, but one of maintenance of personal liberty. Writing in the wake of Foulcauldian analyses on the structure of power in State systems, Tyner writes that, like Michel Foucault, the Party considers power not to be something to possess, but rather, a structure of social relations. Therefore, he challenges the traditional binary of discipline and resistance between the powerful and the powerless to be more of a bottom-to-top sanctioned flow of prohibition of freedoms—thus, distancing himself from Foucault. This is evidenced in the text, wherein Winston writes that he understands "how" the Party holds power but not "why," and O'Brien answers in interrogation after the written thought is made public, that the Party seeks power for the sake of power (80). Winston's act of writing is not to necessarily acquire power (for such an act would be essentially useless), but instead to maintain individuality and humanity through a personal liberty of writing. Tyner writes, "Accordingly, resistance is most effective when it is

directed at a 'technique' of power rather than at 'power' in general" (142). Essentially, he argues that maintenance of individuality through writing is what makes Winston a successful individual writer, and one that would do justice to the call to action in "Politics and the English Language." Tyner does not, however, consider the characteristics of language Winston uses to bear witness.

Political language and individual language production are intertwined, both in *1984* and in the marginal wartimes of Europe, as I established in the previous section. It is this manner of disentanglement that limits Winston's act of writing from being an act of personal liberty and individuality. Although writing is clearly an attempt at localizing tangible truth in a society of uncertainty, Dwan's analysis of the act of writing as a solution and guide to freedom overstates the effect of Winston's record. Aside from having the effect of allowing Winston to play a part in the revision of records on his own terms, the fact that his writing neither propels him from the traps of the Party nor is the sole incriminator him in Room 101 is indicative of how non-threatening the Party finds the act of writing. Even Winston's language of dissent is relatively easily eradicated from his consciousness when Winston is confronted with his fears in Room 101. Secondly, Winston's pieces of writing only contain elements found within the society of Oceania. Each act of writing records an instance of Party acts, or his rebellion from Party principles. For example, he records the night that he knowingly defied Party regulations and paid for a prostitute, indicating that he has the faculties to recall other memories to record. Upon closer reading, however, one may find that, even though Winston has the capacity for nostalgia, he never records a time outside of the glorious revolution of the Party. Though he revisits memories of his mother before the Revolution in his subconscious dreams, he never records such recollections. Instead he records Party histories and analyzes them for continuity of truth or

writes perversions of Party ideology—yet still using characteristics of the Party language of Newspeak, which I will discuss in the next section. Even after Winston puts forth his axiom of "Freedom is the freedom to say two plus two make four," he describes his supposed newfound individualism as "ownlife," which is Newspeak for oneness and eccentricity (81).

Although one could argue that Winston's particular "literature of the witness" along with his production of language of dissent offers a true record of the Party's tools of suppression against its people, Winston's writing does not establish him as an individual with personal liberties, but merely a product of Party rule that mirrors methods of control in written word. Since Winston is not able to wield his "fulcrum of freedom" to write outside of the context of the society he lives in currently, even though he has existed in two states of power, it thus follows that Winston is not able to conceive outside of concepts that are accessible to him via the language and ideas of the Party. He may be able to access tangible truths within the confines of the Party via his language of dissent, which is an accomplishment in and of itself, but this action is not inherently attached to personal liberty or posterity of individualism.

Language Begets Ideology – Orwell's Transitive Thought

To return to "Politics and the English Language," Orwell concludes with a call to action for individual writers, as previously mentioned. Integrating a counter-argument in his conclusion, he writes:

I said earlier that the decadence of our language is probably curable. Those who deny this would argue, if they produced an argument at all, that language merely reflects existing social conditions, and that we cannot influence its development by any direct tinkering with words and constructions. So far as the general tone or spirit of a language goes, this may

> be true, but it is not true in detail. Silly words and expressions have often disappeared, not through any evolutionary process but owing to the conscious action of a minority. ("Politics")

Orwell concedes that the "spirit" of the language of a society may be determined by the existing social conditions (or, in other words, the structure of the system in power), but that this manner of control does not extend to the details of the language itself. He writes that the individual writer has the capacity to make words disappear from the lexicon of those who speak the language, and later defines this action as "making pretentiousness unfashionable," and "scrapping … every word or which has outworn its usefulness." ("Politics"). In this, Orwell advocates for freedom of the individual writer through reduction of language for the supposedly innocuous purpose of absolute clarity. This sentiment does not survive the transition to *1984.*

In *1984,* Orwell introduces the character Syme, whom Winston considers a comrade whose company is "pleasanter than that of others." (48). Syme is a philologist—an irony that likens to the "firefighters" of *Fahrenheit 451*, in that their occupation in the anti-utopian society in which they operate is directly contrary to what the same title means in a modern society. Instead of concerning himself with conservation and survival of historical linguistics, Syme works for the Party to totally eclipse Oldspeak with Newspeak. Speaking of the newest edition of the Newspeak dictionary, Syme says "We're getting the language to its final shape," which would seemingly indicate a continuity in Orwell's thought that the individual has the power to manipulate language. Syme continues, "You think, I daresay, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words … cutting the language down to the bone … It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words." (50-1). Syme notes, however, that the nature of

Oldspeak still permeates Winston's thoughts, in addition to the integration of facets of Newspeak. He continues to say that Winston will begin to appreciate Newspeak and think with it when he sees the beauty of doublethink—in the ability to see and communicate both goodness and badness, light and dark in each word and the practice be orthodox. Not only does this indicate that evolution of language cannot happen on merely an individual level and instead on an ideological level, but it also alludes to the predatory nature of the integration of Newspeak. Syme's predictions are confirmed in Room 101, when O'Brien is only satisfied with the unconsciousness (or, dis-consciousness, more accurately) when Winston both hates and loves Big Brother without questioning it. Instead of having to acquire the Party practice of doublethink in Newspeak, it is indoctrinated into him, and already inscribed in his consciousness.

Additionally, Syme describes the intent of Newspeak in *1984*, confirmed by the Appendix of the novel, which also acts as a contradiction to "Politics and the English Language." In the essay, Orwell writes that reduction of language allows the thinker to be, "freed from the follies of orthodoxy," or, the follies and falsehoods of language that consumers of language generally accept to be admissible ("Politics"). Contrarily, Syme writes that "the purpose of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought[.] In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it." (52). Instead of advocating for the reduction of words to be expanding the free thinking and deviance of the writer from what is traditionally accepted by society, Orwell moves to demonstrate how reduction of vocabulary to make "the range of consciousness always a little smaller." (52). Syme continues, with the advent of the newest edition of Newspeak, "The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not

thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness." (53). In this, Orwell completely turns the "Politics and the English Language" conception that reduction of language saves the writer from orthodoxy on its head, and transitions to argue the complete opposite. Through Syme, Orwell's text satirizes the extremity of conformity to one ideological power to warn of a complete loss of individual thought.

Finally, in "Politics and the English Language," Orwell gives the reader six essential rules for the individual writer to follow for the purpose of facilitating a more truthful, meaningful language. The first of these three rules are as follows:

i. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

ii. Never use a long word where a short one will do.

iii. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out. ("Politics")

He ends the essay by saying, "but one ought to recognise that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end." ("Politics"). Not only does Orwell move from advocating for the reduction of language to warning of this possibility, but he also begins to warn of the lack of agency associated with reduction in language.

Winston's periodic diary entries seem to be manifestations of his supposed subconscious. He rarely produces script with an intent, but rather as an act of cathartic emotional release. These entries are considered to be reflections of the inner workings of his mind and the heart of his grievances with the Party, and therefore an individual rebellion. The language of these entries, however, betray the influence of the Party ideology, in the sense that he regurgitates the practice

and prose of the Party language. In his essay, "1984: Newspeak, Technology, and The Death of Language," (1989) Berel Lang uses the appendix of *1984* to debunk the possibility of Winston's entries as being a product of his individuality. Lang writes, "Totalitarianism … imposes external controls over both the collective and individual memory, and also demands control of the imagination … the act of writing thus come[s] to originate outside the writer." (175). This insinuates that acts of writing by Winston are products of the Party ideology as a result of the decay of language in Newspeak, which can be justified with the Appendix of *1984* that separates "A" vocabulary from "B" vocabulary. In other words, since Winston's writing is constructed to contain Newspeak, even if the content of the writing is skeptical of the Party, it is a mere perversion of Party ideology. Lang seems to consider the infiltration of Party language to be equal to the infiltration of Party thought in the individual.

The Appendix of "Newspeak" is intrinsic to the novel because it acts as rigid explication of specific facets of Newspeak that aren't elaborated upon in the third-person narration of Winston's psyche. The Appendix explains that Newspeak is made up of three parts, though this paper will focus primarily on two. "A" vocabulary is language that is centered on nouns, which cannot be ambiguous, but relies on doublethink, which contains "B" vocabulary, which Lang writes "is meant to challenge the assumption that words mean something by themselves." (173). In order to effectively reduce the language, nouns of "A" vocabulary contain facets of doublethink, or "B" vocabulary, which allows contrary etymological and connotative histories to be encapsulated in a single word. One of Winston's later, more purposeful entries in the diary uses both "A" and "B" vocabulary to communicate Winston's fear of thoughtcrime, in which he writes, "thoughtcrime does not entail death, thoughtcrime IS death." The "A" vocabulary is

represented by the word "death," because immediately following writing, the third person narrator muses, "Now that [Winston] had recognized himself as a dead man it became important to stay alive as long as possible." The principle of doublethink comes into play when the state of "death" becomes something that is both a state of termination and of conscious will. Winston has a will to live, but considers himself to be no longer alive. The fact that Winston uses "death" as a noun that is both unambiguous and yet pumped with connotation and implication to describe the state of himself shows the infiltration of the Party ideology of doublethink in his consciousness. The presence of "B" vocabulary is more concrete, since Winston uses a Party phrase: "thoughtcrime."

Winston's writing follows Orwell's aforementioned rules from "Politics and the English Language," seeing as he uses an unusual metaphor to equate thoughtcrime to death and he doesn't use extraneous language—neither long, pretentious words nor excessive explicating words are used in his writing. According to Orwell's own essay, this should lead to Winston's liberation from Party ideology, since his language is more transparent and supposedly inherently truthful. The presence of Newspeak in Winston's supposed private, written language, however, indicates that public language becomes inextricable from private language, and therefore Winston's own written words mirror the control of the Party. Instead of demonstrating a technique of resistance of power, Winston shows the infiltration of the Party ideology in himself as an individual, evidenced by the reduction, stripping, and decay of language. He may only conceive of concepts that he has the capacity to describe, and the language that he has access to only allows Winston to conceive of concepts that are directly related to or perversions of Party ideology. This indicates that, in *1984* and similar systems of control, that restriction and

reduction of language is the ultimate method of control over the public, since the availability of language inhibits or allows the capacity of thought in each member of the public. In other words, language reduction begets ideological control.

The question then becomes: why the transition in thought of the relationship between ideological control and language? Further, is it worth the trouble to ask such a question, since the answer is almost entirely speculative? As Winston would say, "Some kinds of failures are better than other kinds, that's all," and to favor action over inaction, even if it is futile (135). With that spirit in mind, I suggest that this shift in Orwell's thought is due to his own proximity to language regulated, diminished, and distributed by an institution in power, coupled with his declining health. Orwell, critic of propaganda both in its flowery, clouded nature in "Politics and the English Language" and in its predatory, numbing nature in *1984*, was also a producer of propaganda himself. From 1941-1943, Orwell worked for the Ministry of Information in the United Kingdom as a BBC Talk Producer for Eastern Europe, whose aim was to write propaganda for broadcast to India, where he lived at the time (Fleay & Sanders, 503). Although seemingly a willing participant at first, Orwell confided in his diary—an irony not lost on a reader of *1984,* knowing the nature of Winston's production of written language—that, "All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth." (Fleay & Sanders, 512). It would seem, at the close of his propagandist career, his anxiety surrounding the falsehoods of propaganda motivated his writing of both "Politics and the English Language" and *1984.*

Orwell died in 1950 after complications involving tuberculosis, which affected him during his entire authorship of *1984* (Keeble 394). I would posit that it was this state of loneliness, of solitude in sickness of the physical body, that at least partially influenced his

transitive theory of the relationship between language and power from his 1946 essay to *1984.* Throughout the entirety of the novel, Winston finds himself limited by his physical body; he detests the ugliness of himself and those around him, and he comes to be disgusted at the decay of his body in the scenes of Room 101 (271). This physicality is often what grounds him after a stint of writing, and he denotes it as his weakness, thinking "Your worst enemy … was your own nervous system. At any moment, the tension inside you was liable to translate itself into some visible symptom (63-4). I would suggest that Orwell, in his final years and in his own state of physical decay, recognizes the fragility of what constitutes being a "minority of one," or an individual thinker, and reflects this recognition in Winston (80). After writing that he understands "how" but not "why" the Party holds power, he famously refers to himself as a "minority of one," as perhaps being the only citizen who questions the authority of the Party (80). He continues to note, "The thought of being a lunatic did not greatly trouble him; the horror was that he might also be wrong." (80). It would seem as if Orwell recognizes his ideal self as the individual writer he describes in "Politics and the English Language," one who is artful, yet precise and truthful, and anointed power and authority by virtue of being a good writer. *1984*, on the other hand, realizes what I consider to be Orwell's fear—that writers, however precise and truthful, because of their weakness of physicality and mortality, are unlikely or unable to overcome ideological control of institutions in power.

Habits of Language

It would seem as though the tension between language and ideological control plagued Orwell until his death. His shift in assessment is a morbid one: from a more hopeful defense of the power of the individual writer, to a seemingly hopeless warning against the capacity of

language to overpower the individual consciousness when its structure and content is diminished to merely a refraction of ideology. Although *1984* is a speculative fiction, the uncanny resemblance of Oceania's features that reflect the world in which it was written while simultaneously attaching itself to a modern society is, in a word, frightening. Orwell's final analysis proves that there is more than one way to burn language—from the outside language of Party-sanctioned propaganda inward, to the produced language of the consciousness. And though a writer may wield his pen to jeer at the face of oppression, the habits of language—the worn-out imagery, the useless phrases, the ever-evolving personification of the power of the Party—will damn the ink to the veritable inferno, "into the dustbin where it belongs." ("Politics").

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