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Beneath Big Brother's Eyes

The Surveillance State in Dystopian Literature and Contemporary Culture

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Abstract

In recent decades, the field of Surveillance Studies has attracted interest from scholars of the humanities and literature to explore the impact of an evolving surveillance culture on individuals, society and power. This thesis will bring together aspects of dystopian fiction and surveillance theory. The thesis examines the representation of surveillance and totalitarian societies in the dystopian novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). The thesis also investigates the portrayal of surveillance technology in public and private spaces and establishes how the boundaries between public and the private spaces in the novels are eroded by surveillance methods and technologies which result in individuals feeling isolated and powerless. Dystopian fiction frequently addresses issues of surveillance, as the genre is inherently concerned with concepts of autonomy, identity, and power. The novels are investigated from the perspective of different aspects of dystopian societies, vertical and lateral surveillance, perpetual war, privacy, isolation, and control of language versus objective truth. The thesis also examines the correlation between the political circumstances prevalent at the time that the novels were being written as well as examining the ideologies and techniques employed by totalitarian regimes in their attempts to maintain power and control. These ideologies are compared to contemporary western society; they raise the question whether dystopian societies described in literature may be considered 'handbooks' for totalitarian states. The rapid development and convergence of digital technologies in recent decades has changed the structure of surveillance from a targeted, expensive activity to a culture of relatively inexpensive mass surveillance. The conclusion is that the top-down, vertical surveillance, of the totalitarian, panopticon type, described in dystopian literature is more covert and far reaching than most people are aware of on a daily basis, while lateral/participatory surveillance via social media and smart devices has become integrated into people's everyday lives to the extent that it is almost invisible.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades there seems to have been an increased awareness of and concern about the amount and extent of surveillance that individuals are subjected to in their daily lives and the impact that such surveillance may have on personal autonomy, privacy and freedom. This is evidenced by the number of titles concerned with privacy and surveillance that have been published and the evolution of a specific field of academic study, termed Surveillance Studies, which explores the relationship between individuals and the myriad of surveillance technologies to which they are subjected. This field of study has traditionally been addressed by social studies; however, in recent years there has been an increased focus on the concepts of surveillance, privacy and dissent in literature and the humanities. The concept of surveillance is not new, the first use of the term 'Surveillance Society' has been ascribed to Professor Oscar Gandy in 1985 and was later explored and expanded by David Lyon (Wood 179). It has also been proposed that the academic study of surveillance as a distinct topic, and its impact on individuals and on society, is a relatively new concept: "Surveillance Studies is new. That is to say, until very recently something called surveillance studies did not exist [...] over the past 20 years or so, surveillance has become an increasingly important topic within both academic and public debate" (Ball et al. 1). The relationship between individuals and surveillance, almost inevitably by the state, has been explored in dystopian literature since the beginning of the twentieth century. With the almost exponential development of technology in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, predictions of the future from science fiction writers of previous decades have increasingly become part of everyday life. Dystopian fiction, in particular from mid-twentieth century, frequently engages with the subject of state surveillance and control versus privacy and autonomy of the individual. The genre tends to focus on the political and addresses issues such as individual identity, privacy, control and power struggles between the state and the self. Concerns regarding state surveillance were exacerbated following revelations in 2013 by Edward Snowden of widespread covert gathering of personal data and communications by the United States government. This thesis will investigate aspects of dystopian fiction, surveillance

theory, privacy and autonomy and specifically explore how fundamental aspects of the society described by George Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have become integral components of everyday life in modern western societies. I will also investigate how the same techniques of surveillance, power and control were employed by Margaret Atwood in her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the following analysis it should become apparent how dystopian fiction affords a means of conceptualising and analysing how state and corporate controlled surveillance may be used to manipulate society and individuals through covert and overt means. I will explore the evolution of surveillance technology in public and private spaces and how they correlate to surveillance in cities and the workplaces, and also in the home and personal space. I will also examine how the boundaries between public and private life have become blurred to such an extent that individuals are not only perpetually monitored but actively participate in the surveillance culture that has evolved or been engineered in the first decades of this century. The concept of a 'surveillant assemblage', proposed by Haggerty and Ericson in the British journal of Sociology will be used in conjunction with the literary texts to describe the convergence of different technologies and techniques which, when combined together, can be considered holistically as a surveillance culture in which the concept of individual privacy is no longer a fundamental given or right. According to Haggerty and Ericson: "we are witnessing a convergence of what were once discrete surveillance systems to the point that we can now speak of an emerging "surveillant assemblage" [...] [which] operates by abstracting human bodies from their territorial settings and separating them into a series of discrete flows" (606).

On the 22nd of January 1984, an advertisement for the first Apple Macintosh computer was aired on national television in America during a break at the end of the third quarter of the Super Bowl. The advert was one minute long, depicted a Big Brother style character preaching on a large screen being watched by an audience of proletarian workers. An athletic woman (wearing a t-shirt with an apple logo on it) is chased by police in black riot gear, armed with truncheons and wearing visors, until she reaches the screen and smashes it with a sledgehammer just as the speech by Big Brother is coming to a crescendo. The advert was titled *1984*. In October of the same year a movie adaptation of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was released, directed by Michael Radford and starring John Hurt as Winston Smith, Richard Burton as O'Brien and Suzanna Hamilton as Julia. Between these two events, during the spring of that same year, while living in West Berlin, Margaret Atwood began writing *Offred*, a dystopian novel inspired by Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Atwood later changed the title to *The Handmaid's Tale*. Orwell could hardly have imagined that these events in 1984 would bear such little resemblance to the future imagined in his novel published in 1948, or that his novel would have such an influence on the culture and literature of the western world in the year 1984. This essay will compare the dystopian states imagined in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, investigate some of the tools and devices used by the authors when creating their dystopian futures, and consider how some of the themes and concepts evident in both novels are relevant in western societies today.

2. The End of History

To understand the background to the totalitarian society that Orwell depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it is necessary to explore his experiences in Barcelona during the Spanish civil war in the mid nineteen thirties. Dorian Lynskey, author of *The Ministry of Truth: A Biography of George Orwell's 1984*, traces the seeds of the novel back to Orwell's time as a republican volunteer in Spain. Orwell was shot in the throat by a sniper while serving on the frontline in Barcelona, but this physical trauma seemed to have less impact on him than the disconnect he experienced between the reality of events which unravelled around him in the war and the versions of events being published in the press, particularly the liberal British press of the time. He later expressed his concern and contempt for the media in an essay entitled "Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War":

In Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely denounced as cowards and traitors, and others who had never seen a shot fired hailed as the heroes of imaginary victories, and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened. (Orwell, "Looking Back")

Orwell seemed to have been deeply affected by the relationship between the narrative presented by those in power and the willingness of a supposedly free media, even in a free democratic country, to repeat that narrative regardless of its relationship to the truth.

In the essay he considers the implications of a society in which the people in power control both the narrative and the media and therefore control the truth. He was already making a distinction between a culture where the concept of truth becomes such an abstraction that it extends beyond the simple idea of 'an ordinary lie'. Orwell was questioning the trustworthiness of the connection between those in

power, the media, and the truth over half a century before the term 'fake news' became a part of everyday political rhetoric.

The implied objective of this line of thought is a nightmare world in which the Leader, or some ruling clique, controls not only the future but *the past*. If the Leader says of such and such an event, 'It never happened' – well, it never happened. If he says that two and two are five – well, two and two are five. This prospect frightens me much more than bombs – and after our experiences of the last few years that is not a frivolous statement. (Orwell, "Looking Back")

In this quote we already see the seeds of some of the ideas that later became central themes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The cult of personality assigned to a Leader by a ruling elite, the manipulation of history through control of media and therefore control of the truth and the relationship with the truth presented at the beginning of the novel when Winston Smith writes in his diary "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows" (Orwell 68).

In the same essay Orwell goes on to suggest "that the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. After all, the chances are that those lies, or at any rate similar lies, will pass into history" (Orwell, "Looking Back"). What is interesting here is the concept of an 'objective truth' and Orwell's concern that his experiences in Spain made him acutely aware that the reality he experienced bore no resemblance to the truth reported by the media and that the 'truth' that would be recorded into history was more likely to be the subjective truth controlled by the state. In his 2013 essay *Philosophy, Politics, and Objective Truth*, Peter van Inwagen observed that "The words objective truth are a reminder that the truth of a belief or statement is entirely a matter of how things are with its object, and has nothing to do with the state of its subject – the person who has the belief or makes the statement" (Van Inwagen 192). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the slogan of the Party reads as follows: "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 34). The implication here is that the figurehead Leader and elite clique who control political power, the military, and the media control not only the present, but also control the

future narrative. Inaccurate predictions of the future narrative could be altered by the media after the fact allowing the predictions to retrospectively match actual events, thereby reaffirming the infallibility of the Leader. In *The Orwell Conundrum*, Erika Gottlieb frames this concept as “whoever ‘controls’ the future – that is, whoever has the power to enforce belief in the predicted end – will also have power to interpret and falsify, that is, to ‘control’ the past” (71).

It is fair to surmise that his experiences during the Spanish civil war effected Orwell profoundly. In *Homage to Catalonia*, his memoir of the war published in 1938, he recounts “No one who was in Barcelona then, or for months later, will forget the horrible atmosphere produced by fear, suspicion, hatred, censored newspapers, crammed jails, enormous food queues and prowling gangs of armed men” (71). In *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, John Rodden quotes Orwell from his 1946 essay *Why I Write* stating that “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for Democratic Socialism, as I understand it” (70). In fact, according to Lynskey, Orwell once told his friend Arthur Koestler that “History stopped in 1936”, and as Lynskey himself added “History stopped, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* began” (33). Further seeds of the totalitarian regime of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are hinted at in the essay *You and the Atom Bomb*, published in the Tribune in October 1945. The essay is a thought experiment in which Orwell considered the implications of a state which was “at once unconquerable and in a permanent state of ‘cold war’ with its neighbours” (Orwell). He goes on to speculate on “the prospect of two or three monstrous superstates, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds, dividing the world between them”. In this response to the bombing of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, Orwell foresaw a stalemate in global geopolitical power which would “put an end to large scale wars at the cost of prolonging indefinitely a “peace that is no peace” (Orwell). Katherine Connor Martin, of the Oxford University Press, has suggested that Orwell was probably the first writer to use the term ‘cold war’ in the context which it later came to be understood to describe the political balance of power which emerged in the aftermath of the second

world war (Martin). With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union the cold war essentially ended in 1991. In 1992, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama, echoing Orwell's earlier statement that "History stopped in 1936", posited that "what we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such. That is, the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama). What Fukuyama was alluding to was the potential advent of a subtle global regime in which previous ideologies would be replaced by a globalised collusion of corporate and state entities. This universal Western liberal democracy is perhaps not quite the dystopian future that Orwell warned of, but it is certainly built upon some of the fundamental aspects of the totalitarian state described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

3. An 'Orwellian' Dystopia

The Oxford English dictionary defines the term dystopia as "An imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible", as opposed to the concept of Utopia which it defines as: "An imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect"(Dystopia, OED). The Cambridge dictionary elaborates on the definition of dystopia and describes it as "a very bad or unfair society in which there is a lot of suffering, especially an imaginary society in the future, after something terrible has happened; a description of such a society ..." ("Dystopia," Cambridge).

Dystopian literature became prominent in the 20th century in response to the rising political and social unrest in Europe which expressed itself through nationalist and fascist ideals coming to power. According to Tom Moylan, the roots of dystopian fiction are "[...] largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century... [such as] exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease... and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life" (qtd. in Booker 3). Gregory Claeys echoes this view and proposes that the genre of Dystopia emerged from the same set of problems as that of Utopias: "how to control industrialization,

widespread poverty, the concentration of wealth, and an increasing tendency towards collectivist solutions to these issues” (Claeys 274). In her work *Dystopian Fiction East and West_ Universe of Terror and Trial*, Erika Gottlieb identified a number of examples of dystopian literature from the mid twentieth century each of which permeated mainstream literature and a number of which are mainstays of English Literature curricula. The titles Gottlieb identified are, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931), George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949), Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*(1953), Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano* (1952), and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), (7). These titles all feature the notion that social control and power rests with a Leader or ruling elite who ultimately seek to regulate behaviour and repress imagination and thought and as a result cultivate an obedient society devoid of expression or individualism. Gottlieb argues that dystopian literature “projects the fear residing in its writers” and that “the society depicted in their works could become reality if such flaws are not unmasked” (7). She specifically focused on the concept of a “totalitarian dictatorship as experienced in the historical reality of Eastern and Central Europe and the USSR respectively” (7). By this logic, dystopian literature may therefore be considered as ‘strategies of warning’ that project a possible or seemingly unavoidable future, if certain aspects of the current society are not acknowledged and addressed. (4). Gorman Beauchamp reiterates the same idea in *1984: Oceania as an Ideal State* by suggesting that “Each dystopian writer selects the elements in his own world that seem to pose the greatest threat to liberty and dignity and then extrapolates these factors into a future where they are completely triumphant” (4). One of the threats to liberty and dignity, and by extension to a healthy society, common in dystopian fiction is that the truth cannot be trusted. The objective truth is the truth of the state, or rather there is no objective truth outside the narrative of the state. If the information presented by the state or media cannot be trusted, then history becomes subjective and people can no longer “differentiate between present and past, cause and effect, or lies and truth” (12). This distortion of the truth and by extension distortion of history leads to a corruption of a characters ‘window on the

past' which Gottlieb suggests divides into 'two time-planes' which underlines just how fundamental a truthful approach to history is to a healthy society (15).

Christine Lehnen, in her book *Defining Dystopia*, also proposes that 'a lack of privacy' and 'isolation' are commonplace in dystopian fiction and that surveillance technology is frequently employed in dystopian novels to isolate and alienate characters by removing their right to privacy. (18). This lack of privacy and associated alienation cultivates a society of distrust in which the state maintains the imbalance of power between the individual and the ruling elite. Organised dissent is not an issue for the state if individuals feel too isolated and afraid to communicate displeasure or distrust in the state with their peers or colleagues. This is a form of horizontal or lateral surveillance which functions along with vertical, and other forms of surveillance by the state. Further to this, Tom Moylan also notes that narratives set in dystopian societies often commence 'in medias res' within the 'nightmarish society', and that the narrative develops as the characters experience of alienation and isolation develops, followed by a growing awareness that the nightmare will continue and that there is nothing any individual can do to challenge or change the totalitarian status quo' (Moylan 148). One more aspect of dystopian literature is suggested by Keith Booker in his book *Dystopia*, where he suggests that dystopian fiction "needs to foreground the oppressive society in which it is set as a way to critique another society, typically that of either the reader or the author. In other words, the reader should transfer the critique of the bleak dystopian world described to that of their own" (5).

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* meets the criteria associated with dystopian literature to such an extent that the term 'Orwellian' is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as an "Adjective: Characteristic or suggestive of the writings of George Orwell, esp. of the totalitarian state depicted in his dystopian account of the future, *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949)" (Orwellian: OED). Again, the Cambridge dictionary provides a more elaborate definition "adjective: disapproving: used to describe a political system in which the government tries to control every part of people's lives, similar to that described in the novel "Nineteen Eighty Four", by George Orwell..." (Orwellian OED). The term is also described by Fritz Dufour "as an eponymic adjective

describing a situation, idea, or societal condition that George Orwell identified as being destructive to the welfare of a free and open society” (Dufour 193). Even though Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is considered a primary example of mid-twentieth century dystopian literature, it is quite probable that the term dystopia, as a term to describe the opposite of utopia, was not formally documented until it was proposed by J. Max Patrick in 1952, three years after the publication of Orwell’s novel (Negley, and Patrick 298). In a similar vein it has been suggested that the term totalitarianism was not a common term used in the English language until after the Second World War; when the term achieved a negative connotation in the sense that “sociologically and politically minded critics regarded totalitarianism as a dangerous phenomenon engrossed by evil and thereby opposed to independence and freedom” (Kamenka 821). It is interesting that the OED definition of Orwellian specifically uses the terms ‘dystopian’ and ‘totalitarian’ to describe the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Eugene Kamenka identifies some of the distinguishable factors of totalitarianism that separate it from other political systems as “the importance of the ideology that strives for a perfect final state of humankind, the positive connotation and role of propaganda, the exclusionary and arbitrary identification of minority groups that are deemed enemies of the government/system, the utilisation of terror as a means of physical and psychological control, and the putatively charismatic leader of the totalitarian system” (Kamenka 824). The key aspects of totalitarianism can be summed up as “the desire for complete control over the hearts and bodies, minds and souls, of the citizens of the nation” (Booker 119). The same concept is rephrased by Leslie Holmes in his work *Totalitarianism* in which he describes it as “a systematic ‘total’ control over society, a politicisation of all aspects of everyday life, where the individual is under extreme subordination of the government (Holmes 448).

Taking all of this into account, totalitarian regimes play a central part in dystopian fiction. The regimes described are often employed as a means to critique oppressive real-world societies. Dystopian literature encourages its readers to consider social and political tendencies that exist in society by describing an undesirable fictional future that may become reality if actions are not taken to prevent such an

outcome. While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been considered prescient and in hindsight has been described as a blueprint for a totalitarian state, it is perhaps misguided to consider it as a prophecy. In fact, the future predicted by Orwell was intended precisely to prevent the world it described from ever becoming a reality. In an interview with the *Literary Hub* website in April 2018 Margaret Atwood described the origins of *The Handmaid's Tale* and discussed what she was attempting to achieve with the story. She mentioned her "interest in dystopian literature, an interest that began with her adolescent reading of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*" (Atwood, 2019). The influence of Orwell is further affirmed by Earl Ingersoll in his essay on Atwood's "Echoes of Orwell" in which he quotes the novelist E. L. Doctorow, who wrote in the dust jacket blurb for the novel that *The Handmaid's Tale* "can be read as a companion volume to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" (Ingersoll 64). In response to a question regarding the notion of the novel as a prediction of the future or an allegory of the present Atwood echoed Orwell's response when questioned about his motives for writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Atwood's responded that "Any piece of speculative fiction, and there's a long tradition of it . . . is always based on a projection of elements that are in our society now" and that "there is in fact nothing in *The Handmaid's Tale* that human beings have not already done in one form or another" (Vitale). This sounds quite similar to Orwell's statement that he "did not believe that this kind of society will arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something like it could arrive" (Beauchamp 3). Both of the stories then are dystopian tales set in authoritarian societies where the individual is inferior to the system and in order for the totalitarian state to function, individuality needs to be repressed. (Sanders 14). As Irving Howe writes in *The Fiction of Anti-Utopia*, "These books try to present a world in which individuality has become obsolete and personality a sign of subversion" (308). To achieve a state of control where the individual is powerless against the power of the state a number of devices and constructions are employed by those in control. These range from overt and obvious restrictions on movement via barricades, armed guards and surveillance systems, to more insidious restrictions on language, literature,

communication and ultimately thought. Some of the tools employed by Orwell and Atwood will be reviewed and compared in the following paragraphs, the responses of the characters to their respective situations and their attempts to exercise freedom will be explored. The parallels between Orwell's 'Oceania', Atwood's 'Republic of Gilead', and post-cold war western society at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first century will be discussed from the perspectives of surveillance, isolation, perpetual war and the manipulation and control of truth in the digital era.

4. Surveillance

Under observation, we act less free which means we effectively are less free.

– Edward Snowden

The first revelation by *The Guardian* regarding covert surveillance disclosed by Edward Snowden was published on the sixth of June 2013 with the headline "NSA collecting phone records of millions of Verizon customers daily" (Greenwald). The following day the Guardian published an article with the title "NSA Prism program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and others" which stated that the National Security Agency had "obtained direct access to the systems of Google, Facebook, Apple and other US internet giants" via "a previously undisclosed program called Prism" which "allows officials to collect material including search history, the content of emails, file transfers and live chats" (Greenwald, and MacAskill). What Snowden had exposed was a complex global electronic surveillance system of a depth and extent that had hitherto been classified as top secret and clearly not intended to be public knowledge. According to the Department of Justice *Criminal Resource Manual* section 1077, Electronic Surveillance is defined as "the acquisition by an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device of the contents of any wire communication to or from a person in the United States, without the consent of any party thereto, if such

acquisition occurs within the United States when the communications are made under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy" (1077). This definition which references the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), specifically identifies 'consent' and 'reasonable expectation of privacy', which suggests that the NSA, via Prism, was electronically monitoring communications en-mass under the guise of FISA. At the time of Snowden's revelations Prism was the latest in a number of laws enacted in the US concerned with privacy, surveillance and freedom. The Echelon interception system was formally brought into use in 1971, and was superseded as early as 1974 The Privacy Act. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 was replaced by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act in 1986. Following the attacks on New York city in 2001, government agencies in the United States were awarded far reaching powers to monitor, surveil and apprehend individuals in the name of national security and anti-terrorism. The USA Patriot Act was passed in 2001 the Protect America Act in 2007, the Prism amendment to FISA was passed in 2008. The USA Freedom Act was enacted on the second of June 2015, one day after the Patriot Act had expired. Most recently the USA Freedom Reauthorisation Act was passed in 2020, less than a week before it was scheduled to expire. Of particular interest and the subject of much debate is the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA Patriot) Act signed by President George W. Bush in October of 2001 as a direct consequence of the terrorist attack on New York in September of that year. The Act curbed civil liberties and rights for US citizens and authorised the indefinite detention of non-citizens suspected of terrorist activities and subsequent trials by a military commission.

4.1 Covert Surveillance

We reach the first barrier, which is like the barriers blocking off roadworks, or dug-up sewers: a wooden crisscross painted in yellow and black stripes, a red hexagon which means Stop. Near the gateway there are some lanterns, not lit because it isn't night. Above us, I know, there are

floodlights, attached to the telephone poles, for use in emergencies, and there are men with machine guns in the pillboxes on either side of the road. I don't see the floodlights and the pillboxes, because of the wings around my face. (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 26-27)

This brief passage from *The Handmaid's Tale*, describing what may appear at first to be a rather innocuous scene of a roadworks, is actually a fascinating multi-layered description of a repressive police state. The most obvious hindrance is the physical yellow and black barrier blocking the road, the type that was used to protect people from the potential danger of falling into holes in the ground, now protects people from freedom of movement (if you cannot move about freely then neither can those who may be a threat to you). The sign which means Stop, does not actually say Stop: a red hexagon means stop. Even the most innocuous uses of language have been removed from Gilead. Words have been replaced by symbols, a red hexagon means stop, a golden lily is the sign for the Lilies of the Field shop (Atwood 34); the Milk and Honey store has a sign with three eggs, a bee, a cow (Atwood 34); a fish with a smile and eyelashes is painted on a sign for the Loaves and Fishes (Atwood 212). Finally, perhaps even more concerning, is the fact that Offred 'knows' that there are floodlights and men with machine guns in pillboxes even though she cannot see them because of her 'wings' which limit her vision and as a consequence modify her behaviour. Even though she cannot see the soldiers with guns, who by their very existence at this barricade pose a threat to the safety of anyone who does not comply with the rules, she assumes that they are there or 'knows' that they are there. This knowledge without confirmation serves to undermine any sense of certainty that individuals have about their safety or security. Just because you cannot see the soldiers does not mean that they are not watching you, and because your vision is always restricted by your clothing when you are outside, it is safest to assume that you are potentially always being observed. This is the basic panopticon model applied outside of a controlled prison setting yet by its very nature superimposing the oppressive and restrictive nature of a prison on a public space.

The idea of perpetual surveillance was obviously not a new concept when Atwood published her novel, but it was also not a new idea when Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As David Lyon states in *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*, “Since time immemorial, people have ‘watched over’ others to check what they are up to, to monitor their progress, to organize them or to care for them” (Lyon 22). In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham explored the subtle difference between the concept of ‘watch over’ and ‘observe’. He proposed a prison design known as a Panopticon, an architectural system of control which allowed a single guard at the centre of a building to observe all of the inmates of that building, without the inmates’ knowledge of whether they were being observed or not at any given time. This design, which nurtures uncertainty on the part of the inmates, was designed to motivate self-regulating behaviour; prisoners assumed that they were being observed at all times and behaved accordingly. Almost a century later, Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, argued that the panopticon model proposed by Bentham “not be understood as a building, but as a mechanism of power reduced to its essential form and a diagram of political technology” (Fontana-Giusti 89). Thomas McMullan, writing an article in the Guardian in 2015 as part of a series entitled *The Power of Privacy* observed that “As a work of architecture, the panopticon allows a watchman to observe occupants without the occupants knowing whether or not they are being watched. As a metaphor, the panopticon was commandeered in the latter half of the 20th century as a way to trace the surveillance tendencies of disciplinarian societies” (McMullan). It seems self-evident that the principles of the panopticon, first proposed by Jeremy Bentham almost a century and a half ago, have been central to the evolution of centralised state surveillance in the latter half of twentieth century, and fundamental to elements of dystopian literature.

4.2 Overt Surveillance

In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the state no longer requires barriers or restrictive clothing to modify the behaviour of its citizens. Surveillance is an overt and integral part of society for party members. Telescreens are omnipresent, installed in every

apartment, at every workstation, in all public (and private) spaces. A telescreen could be dimmed “but there was no way of shutting it off completely”; they “received and transmitted simultaneously” and there was “of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised” (6). In Oceania, the state has not replaced language with symbols; instead, it has manipulated language and imagery to serve its own ends. Large posters of an enormous face, contrived so that the eyes follow you about when you move, were located on every floor of every building informing citizens constantly that “Big Brother is Watching You” (5). If the constant fear of being observed or overheard is not enough to control behaviour then the threat of being exposed by the Thought Police or reported by “amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy” (12), instils a culture of fear and distrust amongst the population which minimises the risk of dissent or free thought. The level of distrust is so deeply rooted in the citizens of Oceania that a simple direct glance from a young woman is enough to convince Winston Smith that she is a spy, “She looked him straight in the face, then walked quickly on as though she had not seen him. There was no doubting any longer that the girl was spying on him. Whether she was really an agent of the Thought Police, or simply an amateur spy actuated by officiousness, hardly mattered” (84).

The danger associated with eye contact is even more evident in Gilead. The ‘wings’ that the handmaids wear not only restrict and blinker their vision but also hide their faces and particularly their eyes from view when their heads are bowed, the prescribed posture in public. Even other handmaids cannot be trusted. Offred’s daily shopping partner, Ofglen is “in truth my spy, as I am hers. If either of us slips through the net because of something that happens on one of our daily walks, the other will be accountable” (Atwood 25). In Gilead, just as in Oceania, there are multiple layers of surveillance and spying. As well as worrying about her shopping partner and the barricades and guards mentioned earlier, Offred’s primary concern are informants

called the 'Eyes' whose only visible presence are black vans with darkened windows and a white-winged eye on the side, which prowl the streets like "sharks on the prowl" (Atwood 219). But the unspoken understanding is that anyone could be an Eye, so the safest behaviour is to assume everyone is. This idea of the state perpetually monitoring its citizens was the realm of science fiction when *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written in 1948 and even by the year 1984, when Margaret Atwood wrote *The Handmaid's Tale*, it would probably have been considered conspiracy theory and certainly deemed futuristic. The first apple Macintosh computer had just been launched, the internet as an easily accessible medium was more than a decade away, and social media as we now understand it was almost a quarter of a century in the future. As mentioned previously, the first television advertisement for the Apple Macintosh was titled *1984*, was one minute long, aired only once on national television and depicted a Big Brother style character preaching on a large screen which is smashed by an athletic woman wielding a sledgehammer and wearing a t-shirt bearing an apple logo.

Almost three decades later, in 2013, Edward Snowden disclosed documents to *The Guardian* newspaper, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde* (as well as others) which proved that the US government had in fact been systematically monitoring communications for years and gathering information, without the knowledge or consent, of their own citizens. Amongst other things, the documents revealed that several telephone and communications companies provided the National Security Agency (N.S.A), a branch of the US government, with their customers' phone records, and that the N.S.A held the right to request user data from companies such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Apple. Moreover, not only did the US government spy on their own citizens, but they also monitored the communications of several world leaders and foreign governments (MacAskill). Snowden's revelations exposed the fact that the dystopian future imagined by Orwell via the panopticon mechanism of surveillance described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was a relatively crude and obvious form of surveillance when compared to the methods

actually employed by the state to monitor people's communications, movements, financial transactions and online activities.

4.3 Surveillance Capitalism

The extent to which individual's activities are monitored and the value of the data gathered became headline news once again in 2018 with the revelations by Channel 4 News that Facebook had allowed personal data of "up to 87 million users" (Kang, and Frenkel) to be sold to the English political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, which used the data to target users with biased stories designed to influence voting patterns and election outcomes. While the efficacy of the Cambridge Analytica 'psychographic' analysis has been questioned (Nyhan), the case exposed the extent to which people's online information was vulnerable and the ease with which personal information could be used without consent. In an interview with Matt Frei of Channel 4 News in September 2019, Shoshana Zuboff quoted a Facebook lawyer who stated, during a class action litigation case stemming from the Cambridge Analytica exposé, that "Users have no reasonable expectation of privacy" (Zuboff, 2019). This statement probably refers to the text in the Department of Justice definition of Electronic Surveillance which is formally documented in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978: Where the government has accidentally intercepted communications that "under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes.. the government is required to destroy those records, unless the Attorney General determines that the contents indicate a threat of death or serious bodily harm to any person." Zuboff argues that Facebook, along with other online social media and communications companies, use legislation that was intended to combat criminal and terrorist behaviour, to monitor, track and ultimately monetise the behaviour of its users. In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Zuboff describes a world in which surveillance capitalism is defined as "A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material

for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales”, “The foundational framework of a surveillance economy” and “A movement that aims to impose a new collective order based on total certainty” (9). Surveillance Capitalism proposes that data collected about an individual from their digital life will be “fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as ‘machine intelligence’, and fabricated into ‘prediction products’ that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later” (Naughton). The sources of this data include but are not limited to telephone conversations, online search history, social media activity, likes and affiliations, photographs posted online with location tagging, travel, accommodation and car rental booked online, goods and services purchased online, restaurant reservations, Uber transport, music and podcast preferences on audio streaming services, tv and movie preferences on video streaming services, home automation systems including security and video camera systems connected to Amazon Alexa, Google Play or Apple Siri. Zuboff’s ideas are relatively new and radical, but her argument is based on years of experience researching surveillance and her predictions regarding surveillance capitalism are the logical conclusion of the evolution of digital surveillance in recent decades.

In his article *You are the product*, John Lanchester argues that Facebook is the “biggest surveillance-based enterprise in the history of mankind” (Lanchester). Facebook uses all the data it collects to advertise products and he states that “even more than it is in the advertising business, Facebook is in the surveillance business” (2017). He goes on to suggest that in general people have become obsessed with sharing their lives on social media and with observing the stories that others post on their ‘feeds’. Our obsession with comparing our lives with others has developed to such an extent that we forget that the platforms being used to upload and share all of this personal information is owned by a small number of private corporations who collect, collate and categorise all of the data posted and use it to generate income. The evolution of social media in recent years has led inexorably to a society where we have all become the watchers as well as the watched. This correlates quite well with the concept of performative surveillance explored by John McGrath where he argues that

“we desire and enjoy surveillance” (McGrath). The extent to which horizontal or lateral surveillance has become a part of everyday life has been termed ‘participatory surveillance’, which is a concept developed by Mark Poster which he described as “individuals are constituted as consumers and as participants in the disciplining and surveillance of themselves as consumers” (Poster 93). Jade Hinchliffe in her essay on surveillance in dystopian fiction describes ‘participatory surveillance’ as “a marketing ploy which promises to give people a more personalised, tailored online experience but in reality uses personal information to target people with products” (Hinchliffe). This type of surveillance is generally considered consensual which distinguishes it from a concept known as ‘coercive surveillance’ which evolves from the ideas of Rosen and Santesso who described ‘surveillance as coercion’ as “watching people..not primarily to understand them and thus anticipate their actions, but rather in order to influence or control those actions through applied pressure”. They go on state that “Governments make full use of this kind of surveillance—but it belongs equally, if not more so, to the commercial sector: the tracking software, the loyalty card programs that register one’s every purchase, and the algorithms that aggregate one’s spending habits, all belong to this kind of monitoring activity” (Rosen and Santesso, 234).

4.4 Surveillance Culture

Surveillance should arguably be acknowledged as a paradox in the sense that it is most often associated with crime, national security, control, constraint, and the probing eye; however, people also find social benefit in surveillance when it comes to welfare, salary, or overall safety.

David Lyon, *Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*

We are all subject to Surveillance on a daily basis, from the first time we check our phones in the morning, asking Alexa or Google or Siri for information about the weather or traffic, checking social media, browsing the internet or posting stories to our online feeds. Once you leave the house your movements are captured on street cameras, and traffic cameras, your smartphone tracks your exact location and if you

wear a health monitoring wristband, with its associated software application, then you are probably being monitored all of the time. Government agencies and corporations are using increasingly sophisticated and interconnected computer systems and complex algorithms and databases to keep tabs on us all of the time. A few short decades ago the term surveillance was reserved for invasive police activities and intelligence gathering, it is now an unavoidable and integral feature of everyday life. As Eric Topol puts it, “for a few decades, we have been leaving digital bread crumbs everywhere” and in recent years these “breadcrumbs” have turned into “bread loaves” (Topol 174).

The concept of a ‘Surveillance State’ is as relevant now as it was in the postwar Orwellian period. Unlike the ‘Party’ in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* which installed and controlled the means of surveillance, the modern surveillance state is “heavily dependent on commercial entities—Internet and telephone companies—to provide the desired data” (Ball et al.). In Oceania it was only outer party members, representing less than 15% of the population, who were perpetually monitored. The vast majority of society, the working-class Proles (proletariat), make up 85% of the population and were not monitored by the ruling elite (the inner party). The state instead controlled the proles via cheap entertainment, pornography and the Lottery; “It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant” (Orwell, 57). In most modern states very few people are unaffected by the surveillant collusion of governmental and corporate agencies. In reality, much of the data collected and monitored by the state is actually information created and shared perpetually by the online activities of ordinary citizens. “We collude as never before in our own surveillance by sharing— whether willingly or wittingly, or not—our personal information in the online public domain. Surveillance culture helps situate this” (Lyon, 2017). If we accept this definition of state surveillance, then it has evolved beyond the relatively blunt and overt surveillance that we previously defined as “Orwellian.”

The concept of a 'Surveillance Society' evolved from the surveillance state as tools and practices started "spilling over the rims of its previous containers— government departments, policing agencies, workplaces—to affect many aspects of daily life" (Lyon, 2017). But the emphasis was still on how surveillance was carried out by state and corporate agencies in ways that increasingly touched the routines of everyday life, still deemed as vertical surveillance in the traditional panopticon model. The surveillance society was framed around the principle of us and them, where they are the unseen eyes and ears who monitor our movements, activities etc., while we are the ordinary members of society being passively observed. In his 1993 book *The Panoptic Sort*, Oscar Gandy used the term panoptic surveillance to describe a "complex technology that involves the collection, processing, and sharing of information about individuals and groups that is generated through their daily lives as citizens, employees, and consumers and is used to coordinate and control their access to the goods and services that define life in the modern capitalist economy" (15) In an article written quarter of a century later, entitled *Digital Citizenship and Surveillance | Surveillance Culture: Engagement, Exposure, and Ethics in Digital Modernity*, David Lyon observed that "This concept was often used in ways that paid scant attention to citizens', consumers', travelers', or employees' experience of and engagement with surveillance" (Lyon, 2017). What is interesting in this quote is the notion of 'engagement' with surveillance. This was probably critical aspect in the evolution from a surveillance state or society, to a surveillance culture.

In 1998 William Staples published *The Culture of Surveillance: Discipline and Social Control in the United States*, a few years later John McGrath used the term *Surveillance Culture* as a subtitle to his book *Loving Big Brother* (2004). Both books investigate the role of surveillance in our culture, Staples describing the relationship between surveillance and society as 'postmodern' while McGrath focused on the 'performative' aspects of surveillance, which addresses how individuals modify their behaviour in situations where they anticipate being observed. This goes beyond the concepts of the surveillance state and surveillance society to examine how people

engage, interact with and actually initiate surveillance activities. An unprecedented culture of surveillance has emerged at the beginning of the twenty first century. Just like London in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there are multiple levels of surveillance in operation in probably every major city today. The old-fashioned vertical, panoptic gaze of the state is accompanied by horizontal or lateral surveillance of people monitoring on each other on social media. The way that space is organised and controlled in most cities reflects both the panopticon model and the surveillant assemblage (a combination of vertical and lateral surveillance methods) evident in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The fact that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has become a best-seller again in recent years speaks to the continued relevance of Orwell's post-war warning. (de Freytas-Tamura). However, the almost exponential advances in surveillance technologies since the turn of the century have surpassed even his totalitarian vision. Despite the remarkable technological advances of the second world war, and the futuristic technologies portrayed in Oceania, Orwell could not have envisioned the complexity and interconnectivity of computers, devices, networks and optics which we now experience and rely on every day. Furthermore, his focus on state surveillance now appears almost primitive and simplistic in a society where state and corporate agencies collude on a grand scale to monitor the global population. Finally, Orwell's expectation that the working class, 'the proles', who represent the majority of the population in Oceania, would be exempt from surveillance. This does not reflect the reality of modern society where more than half of the world's population probably live in cities which are increasingly monitored with cctv and where anyone with a mobile phone is invariably tracked and monitored all of the time. As far back as 1997, David Lyon used the term 'data double' in his book *Surveillance Studies* to describe an "electronic profile, compiled from personal data fragments, of an individual person..which takes on increasing social significance as assessments and judgements are made in various contexts based on it" (199-200). In an article written in November 2001, which focused on the surveillance implications of the events of September 11, Lyon asserts that our bodies have become "a source of surveillance data" (Lyon, 2001).

Even though digital surveillance technology has been the primary source to create a data double, historically our bodies were always a source of surveillance data through census data and official records such as birth, marriage and death certificates. In their article *The Surveillance Assemblage*, Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson propose that it is through the convergence of numerous surveillance methods that a “complete picture of an individual” is created from “connected fragments of information” (Haggerty, and Ericson). While the concept of the surveillant assemblage is a much more accurate representation of modern society than Bentham’s panopticon model, the concept of the panopticon is still useful in surveillance studies. Foucault’s metaphor for Bentham’s panopticon prison, as a ‘mechanism of power’, is an example of vertical surveillance that demonstrates ways in which surveillance can be implemented effectively in controlled spaces.

Surveillance was previously considered to be a necessary strategy employed by the state to address issues of security and public safety. Security cameras at airports or in state buildings were deemed acceptable by most people. Increasingly however, technology has become a fundamental aspect of everyday life and has changed the way that we interact with others meaning that boundaries that were once clear are now ‘more indeterminate’ (Lyon, 1994). Contemporary surveillance is ‘mass surveillance’, which corporations now use to monitor consumer patterns and apply targeted advertising. Again, we come back to the current reality of surveillance capitalism which is focused less on tracking an individual, and more on collecting and collating bits of digital information, which can then be used to create a digital double of an individual. As Lyon has surmised “New technologies permit a relaxing of centralized, bureaucratic management supervision and monitoring. But they simultaneously make possible a new intensity of surveillance, penetrating much more deeply into the daily routines of workers” (Lyon, 1994).

The ‘culture of surveillance’ discussed above was becoming increasingly apparent at the turn of the century. The attacks on the twin towers in New York in 2001 and the advent of Web 2.0 (the basis for modern social media) in 2004 were both defining events in the shift in surveillance culture, particularly in America. This shift

towards digital state surveillance and the collusion between the state and the communications industry became front page news when Edward Snowden released top secret documents from the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013. The documents disclosed by Snowden brought questions of privacy rights in relation to digital data into the foreground of mainstream media and put governments on the defensive. In response to the revelations of state surveillance in the Guardian Newspaper, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron issued veiled threats to the media "I don't want to have to use injunctions or D notices or the other tougher measures if they don't demonstrate some social responsibility it would be very difficult for government to stand back and not to act" (Watt) and he encouraged a Commons select committee to investigate whether the Guardian newspaper had broken the law or damaged national security by publishing the files disclosed by Edward Snowden. In a country which prides itself on freedom of the press, this response by the Prime Minister speaks volumes to the import that the state assigned to covert surveillance, in stark contrast to the world of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where state surveillance was conspicuously overt. What Snowdens' revelations highlighted was the extent to which state surveillance could be employed to repress dissent and the remove fundamental democratic rights, in the name of state security and public safety.

5. Total Information Awareness & Pre-Crime

A fundamental difference between the behaviour of the NSA via Prism and the Big Brother regime of Oceania rests in the concepts of consent and privacy. While the NSA accumulated data covertly without the consent of the people it was surveilling, Ingsoc (the English Socialist Party), the official name of the party in control of England in Oceania, does not concern itself with covert surveillance, in fact the state advertises the fact that "Big Brother is Watching You" (Orwell 5). In an article published in *Forbes Magazine* in July 2013, a month after Edward Snowden's revelations to the media, James Poulos proposed that "Snowden's leaks were not important just because of what they contained, but because of what they represented — authoritative fact, as

opposed to the trashy, easily discredited theories of the conspiracy set". He went on to suggest that "Snowden's information had become too mainstream for people not to be totally aware of it" (Poulos). Snowden's revelations then may have marked a shift from covert state surveillance to overt surveillance. One example of this is the recent proliferation of video surveillance cameras in most urban centres. Cameras are often positioned in locations where they can be seen and are frequently accompanied by signs indicating that the area is being monitored. The general population are aware that they are being perpetually observed and the assumption is that people modify their behaviour accordingly. The comparison to the panopticon and to the "telescreens" in Oceania is obvious. Jonathan Ratcliffe, posting on the website cctv.co.uk in 2020 has calculated an approximate figure of "691,000 cameras in London (area) in 2020/21", which approximates to "1 camera for every 13 residents" (Radcliffe). While he admits that this figure is "far from certain" but, based on what we know about the number of cameras in 2002 and the city's growth since then, it "seems to be a sensible estimate". Given that cameras owned and operated by government bodies are a matter of public record, and so these figures can be accessed with a degree of certainty. The vast majority of CCTV cameras are not government operated but are instead owned and operated by private individuals and businesses. Cameras on business premises must be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and therefore the numbers for cameras on business premises are also available. However, domestic surveillance cameras do not have to be registered which means that there are potentially hundreds of thousands of unregistered private surveillance cameras in London. Radcliffe suggests that if surveillance levels continue to increase in line with population levels "we can expect the number of CCTV cameras in the capital to pass 1,000,000 in the next 5 years" (Radcliffe). This is not just a western culture phenomenon, in an article concerned with digital surveillance and the corona pandemic in 2020, Jennifer Daskal reported that "South Korean cities were estimated to have over 8 million CCTV cameras (one camera per 6.3 people) and further that in 2010 citizens "were captured on average 83.1 times per day and every nine seconds travelling, and the numbers are expected to be higher today" (Daskal).

Less obvious, perhaps, was the other topic of Poulos' article which expressed concern regarding a proposed Anti-Leaking (Pre-Crime) programme which the Obama administration was implementing in response to the Snowden revelations. This programme followed on from the Total Information Awareness (TIA) initiative which was implemented by the US Department of Homeland Security in 2002. John Poindexter, while serving as director of the Information Awareness Office, stated that the purpose of TIA was "to create novel methods for populating the database from existing sources, create innovative new sources, and invent new algorithms for mining, combining, and refining information for subsequent inclusion in the database" (McCulloch, and Wilson 79). While the TIA programme concerned itself with covert data surveillance (what later became Prism), the new Pre-Crime programme trained federal employees and contractors in "Combating the Insider Threat", by "paying attention to the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours - like financial troubles, odd working hours and unexplained travel - of co-workers" (Poulos). Employees were encouraged to report any 'suspicious behaviour' to insider threat personnel. Under the program, which was implemented with little public attention, security investigations could be launched when government employees showing 'indicators of insider threat behaviour' were reported by co-workers. Investigations could also be triggered when 'suspicious user behaviour' was detected by computer network monitoring and reported to 'insider threat personnel.' The Centre for Development of Security Excellence which was established in 2010 - became part of the newly created Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) established in 2019. Based on psychological profiles developed over years from numerous studies of public and private workers, who had been caught leaking classified information or engaging in sabotage, administration officials have implemented training for government employees to look for indicators based on these profiles and to report them so that the next violation can be stopped before it happens. Managers of special insider threat offices have 'regular, timely, and, if possible, electronic, access' to employees' personnel, payroll, disciplinary and 'personal contact' files, as well as records of their use of classified and unclassified computer networks, polygraph results, travel reports

and financial disclosure forms. This is eerily reminiscent of the threat of being exposed by the Thought Police in Oceania or, as mentioned earlier, by being reported by “amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy” (Orwell 12). In his State of the Union Address in 2002, as transcribed in the Washington post, President George W. Bush advised that “as government works to better secure our homeland, America will continue to depend on the eyes and ears of alert citizens” (Bush). In the same address he went on to proclaim that “Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun. This campaign may not be finished on our watch, yet it must be, and it will be waged on our watch” (Bush), which leads us to the next aspect of dystopian fiction.

6. Perpetual War

[I]t is necessary that he should have the mentality appropriate to a state of war. It does not matter whether the war is actually happening, and, since no decisive victory is possible, it does not matter whether the war is going well or badly. All that is needed is that a state of war should exist.” Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

In 2005, the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben published a book with the title *State of Exception*. The term is a more literal translation from the phrase ‘state of emergency’ introduced in the 1920s by the German philosopher Carl Schmitt, which was based on his belief that a government could be freed from any legal restraints to its power that would normally apply and essentially transcend the law in the name of the public good. He used the term to describe the ‘exceptional’ extensions of power employed by the US government in response to the attacks on the Twin Trade towers in New York in 2001, and argued that these extensions of power, with their associated curtailing of civil liberties and human rights, had the potential “to lead inevitably to a totalitarian regime” (Agamben 8). According to Agamben “the state of exception immediately assumes a ‘fictitious’ or political character, where a vocabulary of war is maintained metaphorically to justify recourse to extensive government powers” (50-51). Agamben goes on to argue that a ‘permanent state of exception’ has been

manufactured by successive governments which should be “understood as a fiction sustained through military metaphor” (680). In his article “Legalizing Lawlessness,” in which he investigates Agamben’s ‘State of Exception’ from a legal perspective, Stephen Humphreys argues that “the state of exception is gradually emancipated from its war context and is introduced during peacetime to cope with social disorder and economic crises” (Humphreys). This echoes the notion that “the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics” (Agamben 12). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the perpetual war being waged by Oceania described as “merely an imposture” (251) but “perpetual war is important ... because [it] ultimately keeps citizens poor to preserve a hierarchical society” (189). More recently, the use of drones to track people’s movements in Spain and the non-consensual location tracking of mobile phones in Denmark, during the recent “state of exception” associated with the Covid 19 virus, suggest that governments are willing to employ the latest technology to monitor its citizens at the expense of civil liberties. In February 2020, Sir Andrew Parker, MI5’s director general, “called on technology companies to find a way to allow spy agencies ‘exceptional access’ to encrypted messages” (Sabbagh). Although the USA Patriot Act expired on the first of June 2015, it was replaced the following day by the Uniting and Strengthening America by Fulfilling Rights and Ensuring Effective Discipline Over Monitoring Act of 2015 (USA Freedom Act). Kirk Wiebe, a former senior analyst at the NSA turned whistle-blower, stated in a letter to congress that he and fellow whistle-blowers Thomas Drake and William Binney, believed that the 2015 bill was a ploy by government officials “to keep the status quo in place” and that it “would not meaningfully curb NSA activities and recommend returning to a pre-9/11 legal framework” (Nelson). Wiebe went on to state that “well-funded government contractors and powerful, ‘co-opted’ lawmakers who lead key committees make up a virtually unstoppable surveillance-industrial complex” (Nelson).

The notion of a *Surveillance-Industrial Complex* was investigated by Kirstie Ball and Laureen Snider in 2013. In the book they argued that “Today’s ‘surveillance society’ emerged from a complex of military and corporate priorities that were

nourished through the active and 'cold' wars that marked the twentieth century.” And that, “Two massive configurations of power – state and corporate – have become the dominant players. Mass targeted surveillance deep within corporate, governmental and social structures is now both normal and legitimate” (1-2). This language is reminiscent of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s sentiments in his final televised address as president of the United States in January 1961. In his farewell speech Eisenhower warned “of the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist” and urged that “Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense” and that a well-informed society “must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex” (Eisenhower).

The abstract concept of war sustained via a ‘military metaphor’ is not a new phenomenon. In an article in the Guardian in January 2003, commenting on American President George W. Bush’s reference to a ‘war on terror’ during his address to Congress on the State of the Union, “Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun” (Bush); Jones suggested that the “whole idea of a ‘war on terrorism’ [was a] Ludicrous concept” and went on to argue that you “can wage war against another country” but that you “can’t wage war on an abstract noun” (Jones).

The United States seems to have a long history of declaring war on abstract nouns, in *State of Exception*, Agamben cites the inaugural speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, in which he asks congress “for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis – broad Executive power to wage war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe” (Roosevelt et al.). The emergency against which Roosevelt wished to wage war was the poverty of the great depression. Almost two decades later, Lyndon B. Johnson once again declared war on poverty during his inaugural speech in 1964 “This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that effort” (Matthews). Johnson reiterated his dedication to the ‘war on poverty’ for the rest of his term as president, however, he also introduced a ‘war on crime’ in 1967 and proposed “more vigorous enforcement of

all of our drug laws” in 1968. By 1971, Richard Nixon had elevated the ‘vigorous enforcement’ proposed by Johnsson, to “an effective war against heroin addiction” during a Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control, during which he also declared that drug abuse was “public enemy number one” (Nixon), the term ‘war on drugs’ was popularised by the press soon after Nixon’s speech. Ronald Reagan continued the ‘war on drugs’ during his presidency in the 1980s, and in 1994 Bill Clinton resolved “to reclaim our streets from violent crime and drugs and gangs” (Clinton). Following the events of September 11, 2001 in New York city terrorism became the primary abstract noun against which war would be waged for the following two decades. During his inaugural state of the union speech in January 2001, George W. Bush used the word ‘terror’ once, during the state of the nation speech the following year the terms ‘terror’ and ‘terrorist’ were used thirty-six times, and by the final year of his presidency seven years later Bush was still focused on terrorism, mentioning terror and terrorists twenty-four times. Apart from the numerous wars on ‘abstract nouns’ that the United States government has been waging for much of the twentieth century, the ‘military-industrial complex’ that Eisenhower warned of has also become a reality. In this century alone American troops or drones have been deployed in Afghanistan 2001-2021, Yemen 2002-present, Iraq 2003-2011, 2014-2021, Pakistan 2004-2018, Somalia 2007-present, Libya 2011, 2015-2019, Uganda 2011-2017 and Syria 2014-present (Kelly). All of these military engagements have been justified under the banner of the ‘war on terror’. The euphemistically named ‘defence budget’ which funds the military has increased from approximately US\$300 billion in 2001 to over US\$800 billion in 2022. On March 28, 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration submitted to Congress a proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Budget request of \$813.3 billion for national defence (Austin).

7. Privacy and Isolation

“Under observation, we act less free which means we effectively are less free.” Edward Snowden

On December 10, 1948, the same year that Orwell was writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 12 states that, “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks” (United Nations).

First issued in November 1950, The European Convention on Human Rights, Article 8, states that: “Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence” (Council of Europe). The fact that the United Nations and the European Convention both specifically identify privacy as a fundamental human right indicates that Orwell was not alone in his concerns that a loss of privacy represented a situation that signalled the possibility of an “emerging totalitarian state” (Giroux). When discussing surveillance, one of the most pressing topics, is the fundamental right of privacy, more specifically the importance of freedom and privacy from observation, disturbance, and public attention, as well as the freedom of speech (York).

In a video published in the Guardian Online on December 25, 2013, Edward Snowden warned of the increasing loss of privacy. “a child born today will grow up with no conception of privacy at all – they will never know what it means to have a private moment to themselves, an unrecorded, unanalyzed thought. And that’s a problem because privacy matters, privacy is what allows us to determine who we are and who we want to be” (Pitas). To support this position Sarah Igo has suggested that “Americans’ demands for privacy seem to have gone hand-in-hand with their decisions to sacrifice it over the course of the 20th century. “Citizens simultaneously shield and broadcast their private lives through surveys and social media, gradually coming to accept that modern life means contributing to—and reaping the rewards of—the data on which we all increasingly depend” (Igo). In his article *Repression By Any Other Name*, Ariel Dorfman postulates that surveillance leads to increased isolation in a society, that in any land where it is “ubiquitous and inescapable, generates distrust and divisions among its citizens”, and that it “curbs their readiness to speak freely to each other, and diminishes their willingness to even dare to think freely.” (Dorfman). In the following section I will specifically look at how privacy and isolation effect the characters in Oceania and Gilead and how they deal with surveillance and a lack of privacy in everyday life.

7.1 Trust and Loneliness

Due to the multiple layers of overt and covert surveillance which have been established in Gilead, trust has become associated with risk for its citizens. Language has become prescribed and behaviour has been modified through propaganda. Trust is at the heart of the sense of isolation that Offred feels, trust and risk are intimately linked to each other. Following the offer by the doctor to impregnate her during her monthly check-up Offred wonders why she is frightened “I’ve given no trust, taken no risk, all is safe” (Atwood 80). Later, during her first intimate moment with Nick, Offred again considers “Too much trust, too much risk, too much already” (Atwood 127). Even the privileged must take risks and resort to deception to circumvent the system which

has been prescribed. Serena Joy takes a risk by proposing to Offred that she find another means of getting pregnant "It could be someone we trust... I was thinking of Nick," she says, and her voice is almost soft. "He's been with us a long time. He's loyal. I could fix it with him" (Atwood 265). As it turns out Serena Joy's trust is misplaced and it is Offred's trust in Nick which has been well placed, her trust in him ultimately leads to her salvation. "Trust me", he says; which in itself has never been a talisman, carries no guarantee. But I snatch at it, this offer. It's all I'm left with" (Atwood 377). For most of the novel it is only alone in her room at night that Offred feels safe and unobserved, the time she has to herself, "The night is mine, my own time, to do with as I will, as long as I am quiet" (Atwood 49). In her little room she is unobserved, yet even there she imagines an eye in the ceiling from the remains of a light fixture "I looked up at the blind plaster eye in the ceiling" (Atwood 68). In her essay *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf speculated of a future where a woman could become a writer if she had "a room to herself and ... if she has five hundred a year of her own" (122). To be a writer for Woolf was essentially to be free. Offred has a room of her own, but doesn't have the materials to read or write, she is certainly not free even though she is not being constantly watched. Offred does have time to be alone with her thoughts, and it is during these times alone that she 'writes' her story, "All of it is a reconstruction. It's a reconstruction now, in my head, as I lie flat on my single bed rehearsing what I should or shouldn't have said, what I should or shouldn't have done, how I should have played it. If I ever get out of here--" (Atwood 173).

While Offred has a dull "oblong of tin" (Atwood 81) in place of a mirror in her little room, Winston Smith has a telescreen which is an "oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror" (Orwell 5). The telescreen transmits and surveils constantly, it can be dimmed but cannot be turned off, unless you are a member of the inner party like O'Brien "Yes," said O'Brien, "we can turn it off. We have that privilege" (Orwell 139). Unlike Offred's room, Winston's offers no solace or privacy (even though he fools himself otherwise). For Winston there is no respite from the noise of the telescreen, the voice of a woman singing while he attempts to write in his diary "seemed to stick into his brain like jagged splinters of glass" (Orwell 86). Winston finds privacy eventually in a

room above the junk shop from which he had purchased his blank 'diary'. He rents the room from Mr. Charrington, described as "a man of perhaps sixty, frail and bowed, with a long, benevolent nose, and mild eyes distorted by thick spectacles" (Orwell 78). Winston is aware of the risk he is taking returning to the junk shop, "The serious piece of folly had been to come back here in the first place, after buying the diary and without knowing whether the proprietor of the shop could be trusted. However –!" (Orwell 83), however indeed! The old man seemed to be trustworthy and as Winston observed "There's no telescreen!" (Orwell 81) in the room. Having started an affair with Julia, Winston now extends his trust in Mr. Charrington who seemed to understand that "Privacy was a very valuable thing. Everyone wanted a place where they could be alone occasionally" (Orwell 113). Apart from having sex with Julia in the little private room, Winston also reads to her from the copy of Goldstein's book that O'Brien has given him. Just as Offred's illicit time with the Commander is spent with words, playing scrabble, reading old magazines, so too is Winston's illicit time occupied with forbidden words and ideas. Ingersoll describes Winston's desire for privacy as "the obverse of the radical isolation imposed upon him as a party member" (66). The connection between sex and language is not subtle, Winston reads to Julia in bed, while Offred compares her desire for the magazines in the Commander's office "if it were sex it would be a swift furtive stand-up in an alley somewhere" (Atwood 269). Whereas Offred uses her sexuality with the Commander and Nick to gain things (hand lotion, magazines, information, safety from Serena Joy, information about her daughter), Julia's engagement in sex, and thus her rebellion against the doctrines of The Party "is grounded in her desire for pleasure and for the pursuit of a personal life" (Patai, 866). But of course, Winston's trust has been misplaced: just as O'Brien had used spectacles to hide his eyes, so too Mr. Charrington used thick spectacles as part of his disguise. When he finally reveals himself, the transformation is subtle but significant "Mr Charrington was still wearing his old velvet jacket, but his hair, which had been almost white, had turned black. Also, he was not wearing his spectacles It occurred to Winston that for the first time in his life he was looking, with knowledge, at a member of the Thought Police" (Orwell 180).

7.2 Mirrors, Reflections and Selfies

Writing about *The Handmaid's Tale* David Ketterer makes the observation that "The circular mirror comprehends and encompasses most of the novel's significant themes: viable ovaries, pregnancy, surveillance, imprisonment, hanged bodies, cyclical process . . . and finally the lies of human reality--the mirror conveys only images of reality and renders Offred as a distorted shadow" (Ketterer 212). While this may seem a bit fanciful, Ketterer does highlight the importance of mirrors, or the absence of mirrors in Gilead. Handmaids have no need for mirrors, vanity is unnecessary, and the uniform nature of the red and white habits that they wear defies individuality. The lack of mirrors is not just cosmetic, the leaders are learning from experience, "the mirror over the sink has been taken out and replaced by an oblong of tin, and the door has no lock, and there are no razors, of course. There were incidents in bathrooms at first..." (Atwood 81). Apart from the circular mirror above the mantle in the hallway of the Commanders house, Offred has no access to a mirror until the Commander asks her to put on makeup before taking her to Jezebels, he "holds a large silver-backed hand mirror" while she rubs "some of the lipstick along my cheekbones, blending it in" (Atwood 300). The mirror and the makeup are both forbidden items for a handmaid, allowing her to have access to them, the Commander is "showing off", trying to impress her. At Jezebel's women need to be aware of their appearance "they haven't removed the mirror, there's a long one. You need to know, here, what you look like" (314). It is at Jezebel's that "in this ample mirror under the white light" Offred takes a good look at herself and comes to the conclusion "I am a wreck ... I am a travesty, in bad make-up and someone else's clothes; used glitz" (330). This moment of recognition looking at her wrecked self in a mirror echoes Winston Smith's response to his reflection when he is forced to look closely at himself in a mirror following months of torture at the hands of O'Brien, "Before he knew what he was doing he had collapsed onto a small stool that stood beside the bed and burst into tears. He was aware of his ugliness, his gracelessness, a bundle of bones in filthy underclothes sitting weeping in the harsh white light; but he could not stop himself" (219). It is interesting

that, when faced with their individuality, both characters are repulsed by their reflections. This relationship with image and reflection is in stark contrast to the filtered social media accounts that people publish as 'mirrors' of their lives.

Yet it is a brief moment of eye contact maintained with Ofglen in the reflection of a pane of glass that ignites a spark of hope in Offred. "What I see is not the machines, but Ofglen, reflected in the glass of the window. She's looking straight at me. We can see each other's eyes. This is the first time I've ever seen Ofglen's eyes, directly, steadily, not aslant. She holds my stare in the glass, level, unwavering. Now it's hard to look away. There's a shock in this seeing; it's like seeing somebody naked for the first time" (Atwood 247). This moment of reflected eye contact establishes a trust between the shopping partners which emboldens Offred to communicate in a way that she had previously feared and fuels the risk taking independent individual streak within her which ultimately leads to her salvation. In a similar fashion the connection established through fleeting eye contact ultimately leads to Winston Smith's downfall in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "Momentarily he caught O'Brien's eye. O'Brien had stood up. He had taken off his spectacles and was in the act of re-settling them on his nose with his characteristic gesture. But there was a fraction of a second when their eyes met, and for as long as it took to happen Winston knew – yes, he knew! – that O'Brien was thinking the same thing as himself. An unmistakable message had passed" (17). Unlike the eye contact made between the two Handmaids in the glass reflection, it is only when the reflection from O'Brien's spectacles is removed that his eyes are exposed for Winston to make direct contact with someone who he suspects is a kindred spirit.

7.3 Language, Propaganda and Truth

As touched upon earlier, language cannot be separated from power since language is often used as an instrument of power to manipulate, control or silence. Nor can we separate language from memory since it is with language that we articulate our memories and share them with others. Language can also be used as a propaganda tool to help rewrite history, and indeed it has been used for all these purposes in both

the Republic of Gilead and in Oceania. Gilead has destroyed virtually all records of the past, and those that persist are used to aid the propaganda of the state. Oceania takes a more ruthless stance about the past, especially written records. Rather than destroy records, Oceania has instead revised and rewritten them, to serve the goals of the Party and Big Brother. Winston Smith works in the Ministry of Truth where his job is to rewrite, or "rectify" in the terms of the Party, old newspaper articles. "This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound tracks, cartoons, photographs -- to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date" (Orwell 35) As O'Brien, the spokesman for the Inner Party puts it "We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?" (Orwell 199). "Reality control", they called it: in Newspeak, 'doublethink' (Orwell 31). Newspeak was the gradual simplification of language, through the reduction of words in the dictionary, to "narrow the range of thought" and ultimately make thoughtcrime impossible because "there will be no words to express it" (Orwell 45) As explained to Winston by Syme, a co-worker at the Ministry of Truth "You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?" (Orwell 45)

In Orwellian terms, "doublethink" meant the mutual existence of two or more contradictory pieces of information in the mind of the thinker, this concept is exemplified by the three slogans of the party written on the enormous pyramid structure of the Ministry of Truth - "War Is Peace Freedom Is Slavery Ignorance Is Strength" (Orwell 7). The concept of doublethink depended on "an unwearying, moment-to-moment flexibility in 'the treatment of facts'" (Orwell 171). This description seems to apply fittingly to Offred's state of mind while musing about her beliefs alone in her room at night. "The things I believe can't all be true, though one of them must be. But I believe in all of them, all three versions of Luke, at one and the same time. This contradictory way of believing seems to me, right now, the only way I can believe anything. Whatever the truth is, I will be ready for it" (Atwood 135). This sounds very

much like the concept of doublethink. Even though it isn't as severe as Newspeak, Gilead has introduced new words which influence how people think and behave. If people are able to think of each other (especially women) as inhuman, as "things" and "its" and "Un's," then they are able to use and abuse each other with little guilt or remorse. Communication in Gilead seems even more claustrophobic and restricted than in Oceania, language is prescribed and people cannot talk openly to each other without drawing attention to themselves. People have had much of their verbal information limited through public censorship, and what is left has been subject to personal censorship. The handmaids can only speak to each other in responses suitable to their positions as surrogates, such as, "Blessed be the fruit," (Atwood 25) "May the Lord open," (Atwood 25) "Under his Eye," (Atwood 59) and "Praise be" (Atwood 364). Dead babies are called "Unbabies" (Atwood 144) or "shredders" (Atwood 278). The term "Unwomen" (Atwood 13) to describe women who are sent to the colonies to starve to death recalls the term "Unperson" (Orwell 77) in Oceania to describe someone who is not only dead but has been erased from history. And of course the most basic manipulation of language for the Handmaids is the deletion of their names. Any sense of individuality is removed and the Handmaid becomes the possession of her assigned commander. Offred, rather than her name being her possession, indicates that she is a possession of Fred.

Another tool employed by Atwood but notably missing from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the use of religious language and terminology in Gilead. Apart from the language prescribed by the state itself to describe classes of people, Guardians (of the Faith), Angels, Aunts, Handmaids; events such as the "Salvagings or Prayvaganzas" (29) and items like the names of cars "whirlwind, chariot, behemoth" (23), Atwood also creates a connection between the traditional religious use of words such as tempt or commit, and secular ideas of touch and friendship. Offred longs to "commit the act of touch" (14), associating touch with the idea of sin and later mentions the temptation of "friendship" (15). The aunts are obsessed with the notion of temptation: "What you don't know won't tempt you, Aunt Lydia used to say" (252). But then of course it could be argued that what the handmaids are told by the Aunts is as much propaganda as

what Winston Smith creates in The Ministry of Truth. The Aunts are only mouthpieces for the ideas of the patriarchal leaders of society. They “remind” the Handmaids of what society used to be like “the rules, rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew: Don't open your door to a stranger, even if he says he is the police. . . . Don't stop on the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble” (32-33). And Offred remembers Aunt Lydia reminding her girls that, “There is more than one kind of freedom. . . Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to, now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it” (33). This definition of freedom differs from Winston Smith's simple observation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when he writes in his diary “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows” (Orwell 68).

Writing in a diary without fear is the freedom that Winston actually craves. Even though the party attempts to limit freedom of thought through the implementation of Newspeak, it does allow written texts to be produced under strict control of the authorities. It is the act of writing a diary in Oldspeak, using language creatively to record his own version of history that makes Winston a criminal. In Gilead, not only are the Handmaids restricted from writing their own narrative, they are even restricted from talking openly to each other, of discussing or criticising or questioning the aims and behaviour of the republic. Because of this, the very act of storytelling, of recording her story on cassette tapes, is as strong an act of rebellion against the rules of the society as the written one is in Oceania. “By telling her story Offred demonstrates that she is able to take risks, find her voice and reconstruct the social order” (Hogsette, 264). As discussed earlier, it is only through taking the risk of trusting others that Offred and Winston hope to connect with the abstract idea of an underground brotherhood or sisterhood opposed to the state. In Winston's case he is lured into trusting the very people whom he most fears and should trust least; perhaps it should come as no surprise that he was easily identified and tricked by the party, even Julia was able to tell that he was a dissident “it was something in your face. I thought I'd take a chance. I'm good at spotting people who don't belong. As soon as I saw you I knew you were against them” (Orwell 101). Offred on the other hand, says

little but carefully observes and takes note of the numerous little deviations from the rules that are overlooked and which she ultimately uses to her advantage. The fact that Serena Joy smokes, the young guard at the barricade who makes deliberate eye contact with her, Nicks casual enquiry if she had a “nice walk?” (Atwood 60). As she observes “there is something you can depend upon: there will always be alliances, of one kind or another” (Atwood 166). And it is through these alliances and little trusts that Offred thrives “This is freedom....an eyeblink of it...This is conspiracy” (Atwood 180). It is the Commander who provides Offred with access to words and language, playing scrabble and acquiring old magazines for her to read. The Commanders office is described as “an oasis of the forbidden” (Atwood 177) confirming to Offred that those in high places can manipulate the rules and laws they themselves helped create, and if the rules can be manipulated then she can believe that others have manipulated them as well, and if others have manipulated the rules then here is hope.

In the interview “Truth and Power” from 1979, Michael Foucault states that like knowledge, truth is not an abstract entity but “a thing of this world” that is produced by multiple constraints, techniques, and selected authorities inducing at the end the effects of power (Foucault, 1982). According to Foucault, every society has its own ‘régime of truth’, which consists of a set of practices whose function it is to enable individuals to distinguish between true and false statements. It is such statements that underpin what is taken to be ‘common-sense knowledge’ within a society and thus accepted by society, and these statements are then distinguished from false statements by a range of different practices (Mills 74) Foucault’s interest originates in detaching the power of truth in order to assert that truth is constructed and maintained through a wide range of strategies supporting and affirming the truth, but at the same time excluding alternative versions of events (Mills 75). This is reminiscent of the phrase ‘alternative facts’ used by Kellyanne Conway in an interview with Chuck Todd on NBC News in January 2017. The phrase was used in response to an assertion by Todd that the White House spokesman, Sean Spicer, had uttered ‘proveable falsehoods’ regarding the attendance numbers at Donald Trump’s inauguration. Conways response that “Our press secretary Sean Spicer gave alternative facts”

resulted in comparisons with Orwell's 'doublethink' and online sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* spiked in the days following the statement. Karen Tumulty of the *Washington Post* described the term 'alternative facts' as a George Orwell phrase, while political historian Allan Lichtman referred to "1984 doublethink, where war is really peace, where famine is really plenty" (Stelter). In an interview with Olivia Nuzzi in *The New Yorker* magazine, Conway explained her interpretation of the term, "Two plus two is four. Three plus one is four. Partly cloudy, partly sunny. Glass half full, glass half empty. Those are alternative facts" (Nuzzi). In 2018, during an interview with Chuck Todd regarding Donald Trump's alleged collusion with the Russian government, attorney Rudy Giuliani used the phrase: "Truth isn't truth" (Gomez). It may be argued that Giuliani was alluding to the belief that in politics truth is a matter of interpretation. This is based on the concept of 'post-truth' which has been defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Post-truth). In his book *The Post-Truth Era*, Ralph Keyes asserts that "decades of official lies have left us morally numb" and that "Post-truthfulness exists in an ethical twilight zone. It allows us to dissemble without considering ourselves dishonest" (13).

8. Conclusion

Surveillance, power, control, and totalitarianism are fundamental elements of dystopian fiction in general and specifically within the dystopian novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the methods and ideologies employed by the ruling elite in both of these dystopian works provide insight into modern surveillance culture. Discussions concerning surveillance and its impact on privacy, autonomy, and individuality are increasingly relevant in the field of Surveillance Studies. Recent contributions from literature and humanities studies provide an alternative lens through which to evaluate the impact of surveillance on society, especially when compared to studies through the traditional lenses of social sciences and law. This thesis argues that analysis of dystopian literature

provides important insights into the field of surveillance studies. With the evolution of digital technologies, connected devices and social media at the beginning of the twenty-first century, surveillance has progressively become an integral part of people's everyday lives. Surveillance technologies are increasingly employed by a collusion of state and corporate agencies who operate a system of global mass surveillance, termed the 'surveillance-industrial complex', which is focused on means of monetizing digital identities and the data double. It seems evident that contemporary participatory surveillance practices are not as inclusive as they seem. The apparent autonomy associated with overt participatory and lateral surveillance activities, such as social media platforms, often hide the fact that these platforms are vehicles for covert vertical surveillance by the corporations that own the platforms.

Having established the importance of dystopian fiction to Surveillance Studies and demonstrated how surveillance has evolved since the mid-twentieth century, specific examples of surveillance techniques were analysed in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The topics of privacy, isolation, loneliness and trust and the concept of objective truth were discussed and analysed in the context of the texts of the novels, and these ideas were then applied to modern culture and the impact that the surveillance assemblage is having on society. Furthermore, the notion of perpetual war, even war on an abstract noun, was discussed from the perspective of Agamben's State of Exception, which seems to have become the de facto political ideology in western democracies in recent decades. The fact that sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* increased dramatically after the 2016 American Presidential election and the subsequent disputes over 'alternative facts' and 'fake news' seems to indicate that people still assign importance to literature when trying to address contemporary political issues. I would suggest that literature, dystopian fiction in particular, has a crucial role to play in provoking debates regarding surveillance privacy, autonomy and power. Perhaps it is time to explore and debate dystopian fiction and the insights it provides concerning surveillance and its impact on privacy, power and society, before the 'dangerous nightmare situation' Orwell described becomes a reality. As Orwell may have put it "don't let it happen. It depends on you."

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