

1984: Was Orwell Right?

Introduction

Comparing the current U.S. government to the Party of Orwell's novel *1984* is depressingly easy; the Internet is full of blogs and articles that do so. There are numerous valid points of comparison between the two governments, including: newspeak, media saturation, the constancy of war, internal enemies, (re)writing history, the shaping of youth, and government departments that torture and control. The comparison is not perfect; Orwell was not a complete soothsayer. As Erich Fromm expresses in the Afterword to *1984*, "George Orwell's *1984* is ... a warning ... that unless the course of history changes, men all over the world will lose their most human qualities, will become soulless automatons, and will not even be aware of it."¹ While the specifics of Orwell's future are unlikely to be realized in the real world, his general prediction must still be guarded against.

Newspeak

Many comparisons between *1984* and the current U.S. administration begin and end with language – what Orwell called Newspeak. It is certainly a logical place to start, given the insidious nature of linguistic changes, and their psychological importance. As Syme explains it to Winston Smith:

Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten . . . Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of

¹ Erich Fromm, "Afterword," in *1984*, George Orwell (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1950), 313.

consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.²

One of the clearest examples of the American version of Newspeak is found in the debate over changes in Social Security. Molly Ivins describes the situation:

[T]he president's Social Security plan [was initially described] as 'partial privatization,' since it would allow younger workers to put a third or more of their payroll taxes into private accounts. President Bush called them 'private accounts' ... Then, one day, some focus group showed that people, particularly older people, react negatively to any connection between Social Security and the word private. For some reason, people like the sound of 'personal accounts' better than they do 'private accounts.' ... So the Republicans ... all about-faced and started referring to the privatization of Social Security as 'personal accounts.' The Republicans in Congress, the president, the administration and all its media supporters, both paid and unpaid, now insist on referring to the partial privatization plan as 'setting up personal accounts.' This is the new political correctness.³

Journalists' reactions ranged from amusement to outrage when confronted by the fact that "whereas it was okay two months ago for reporters to use the term 'private accounts' they must now refer to them as 'personal accounts' because the president has now decided that that is the proper word."⁴ Both the 11th edition of the Newspeak dictionary and the changing edicts of the Bush administration rendered some words politically incorrect.

² George Orwell, *1984*, (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1950), 54.

³ Molly Ivins, "'Private accounts' becoming more personal," *Tulsa World (Oklahoma)*, January 28, 2005, A19.

⁴ Josh Marshall, *Talking Points Memo*, January 25, 2005, home page online: <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/004538.php>, accessed 3/19/05.

Further examples of “the constant abuse of language by the Bush administration”⁵ abound. Richard Cohen begins his catalogue of language shifts with “calling suicidal terrorists ‘cowards,’ [and] naming a constriction of civil liberties the Patriot Act...”⁶ The American Civil Liberties Union agrees with Cohen that the Patriot Act restricts civil liberties to an alarming extent.⁷ Cohen also points out Alberto R. Gonzales’ re-definition of torture, describing it as “brilliant ... so legally clever that only the dead could complain and they, of course, could not.”⁸ Other pundits have also commented on the shift in language. Noam Chomsky writes that the official and simple definition of terrorism “gives all the wrong answers ... as to who the terrorists are,”⁹ and because of that, “the official definition has to be abandoned,” in favor of one “that will give the right answers.”¹⁰ And Ivins notes:

This is twisting language for purely political purposes. ... Karl Rove, Frank Luntz and many other smart political operatives were perfecting the art of changing language for political reasons. Do people perceive most conservatives as mean? Then run on the slogan ‘compassionate conservative.’ It has no meaning, but it sounds better. People don't think the government should be involved in religion? Call it ‘faith-based policy.’ People are against more air pollution? Then call it ‘the Clear Skies Initiative.’¹¹

The use of language to change peoples' minds and perceptions of reality is clear in both Oceania and the United States. It is also hardly new – different interpretations of the

⁵ Richard Cohen, “Ugly Truths About Guantanamo,” *Washington Post*, January 4, 2005, A 15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ American Civil Liberties Union. *Summary of the USA Patriot Act and Other Government Acts*. PDF file, from homepage online: <http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree.cfm?ID=11813&c=207>, accessed 3/19/05.

⁸ Cohen, “Ugly Truths About Guantanamo,” A 15.

⁹ Noam Chomsky, *Media Control*, (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 80.

¹⁰ Ibid, 81.

¹¹ Ivins, “‘Private accounts’ becoming more personal,” A19.

Bible, for instance, have been serving political purposes for several hundred years. What is new about it is the mode of delivery.

Constant media barrage

The media has long been the instrument of propaganda, but in recent years its saturation of society – and its very technological scope – has increased. In *1984*, information is delivered through the telescreen, which is always projecting information about the war, showing violent movies, or providing false statistics. Telescreens are almost omnipresent in the Party of Oceania, Winston comments on the absence of one in the room he rents, oblivious to the presence of a hidden telescreen.¹² “The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely.”¹³ That ubiquitous media presence is very similar in the U.S. today, where there is more than one television in the average household¹⁴. When you are not within reach of a TV screen, there is almost always a radio, billboard, magazine, or advertisement there to continue the media saturation. And while the TV, unlike the telescreen, can be turned off, “[a] child today is born into a home in which television is on an average of more than seven hours a day.”¹⁵

¹² Orwell, *1984*, 97.

¹³ Ibid, 2.

¹⁴ InfoPlease, “United States”, home page online: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108121.html>, accessed March 21, 2005; CIA World Factbook, home page online: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>, accessed March 21, 2005; and World Bank data, home page online: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/report/tab19.pdf>, accessed March 21, 2005.

¹⁵ George Gerbner, “Marketing Global Mayhem,” in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed. Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 399.

Not just the quantity, but also the *quality* of Oceanic and American media is comparable. Winston wrote in his journal entry about going to a movie that might well have been shown in the United States:

Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him, first you saw him wallowing in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopter's gunsights, then he was full of holes and the sea round him turned pink and he sank as suddenly as though the holes had let in the water. audience shouting with laughter when he sank.¹⁶

Winston's American counterpart, watching the news, might see wars that "go on and on. In the news, we see less glory and more gore."¹⁷ For the citizens of Oceania, *gore is* glory. For the citizens of the United States, that transition may be underway. People view war footage from Iraq much as they would watch a video game or fictional movie. And the American media is certainly filled with gore. As Gerber reports, "Violence was the main theme of 40 per cent of home-shown and 49 per cent of exported programs."¹⁸

This kind of pervasive violence has two effects upon the population: First, it may "dull our reactions to the kind that is filmed not on a set but from Bosnia or Liberia or places in this country."¹⁹ Second, it may cause what Lifton and Falk refer to as the numbing of everyday life: "[T]he ordinary brain function of keeping out stimuli becomes

¹⁶ Orwell, 1984, 8.

¹⁷ Ellen Goodman, "In Defense of Casualty Pictures on TV," in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed. Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 395.

¹⁸ Gerbner, "Marketing Global Mayhem," 402.

¹⁹ Meg Greenfield, "TV's True Violence," in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed. Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 397.

strained by the image overload characteristic of our time.”²⁰ Such numbing can “become associated with apathy, withdrawal, depression, despair, or a kind of survivor half-life with highly diminished capacity for pleasure, joy, or intense feelings in general.”²¹ Lifton and Falk inadvertently, but accurately, describe the conditioned people of 1984; for Winston, this condition is only relieved by his relationship with Julia.²² If the American people continue to watch so much violence, will they, too, live a 'half-life'?

Eternal war

What the telescreen in 1984 and the TV in the United States bring to their watchers is news of a constant war. In the U.S., “From the start, Americans have constructed their creedal identity in contrast to an undesirable ‘other.’ America’s opponents are always defined as liberty’s opponents.”²³ This constant opposition is strikingly similar to the continual war of Oceania: “In one combination or the other, these three superstates [Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia] are permanently at war, and have been so for the past twenty-five years.”²⁴ This ongoing state of contention has its roots in the psychological need for an other against which to construct one’s own identity: “History shows us that, with few exceptions, social cohesion within tribes is maintained by paranoia: when we do not have enemies, we invent them. The group identity of a people

²⁰ Robert Lifton and Richard Falk, “On Numbing and Feeling,” in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 406.

²¹ Ibid, 404.

²² Orwell, 1984, 150.

²³ Samuel Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, no. 5 (September – October 1997), 28-30.

²⁴ Orwell, 1984, 185-186.

depends on division between insiders and outsiders, us and them, the tribe and the enemy.”²⁵

When Huntington wrote in 1997, he stated that “the United States lacks any single country or threat against which it can convincingly counterpose itself.”²⁶ That void has now been filled by the ‘war on terror’, currently directed against the Middle East, despite Huntington’s erroneous claim that “Saddam Hussein simply does not suffice as a foil. Islamic fundamentalism is too diffuse and too remote geographically.”²⁷

Indeed, Huntington’s prediction that “At some point in the future, the combination of security threat and moral challenge will require Americans once again to commit major resources to the defense of national interests”²⁸ has come true, in the country’s reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The United States has committed major resources (figures range from \$142 to \$275 billion by the end of the 2005 fiscal year²⁹) to defending national interests against the overblown security threat of terrorism and the dubious ‘moral challenge’ of Islam. The external enemy – Eastasia, Eurasia, or Arabia – has been identified, and is duly hated.

²⁵ Sam Keen, “Faces of the Enemy,” in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed. Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 408.

²⁶ Samuel Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” 29-31.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 49.

²⁹ National Priorities Project, “The Cost of War Notes and Sources,” *The Cost of War*, home page online: <http://costofwar.com/numbers.html>, accessed March 19, 2005; Congressional Budget Office, “Estimated Costs of Continuing Operations in Iraq and Other Operations of the Global War on Terrorism,” Washington, DC, June 25, 2004; and Center for American Progress, “The Opportunity Costs of the Iraq War,” *ProjectBillboard.org*, August 25, 2004.

Hate rallies: internal enemies

That hatred is not restricted to people of other countries. One of the major brainwashing tools used in 1984 is that of the Two Minutes Hate. In that program, the rebel figure Goldstein is the ultimate target of vilification – Oceania's internal enemy. “[T]he face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, had flashed on to the screen. There were hisses here and there among the audience. ... the sight or even the thought of Goldstein produced fear and anger automatically.”³⁰ Although the United States has no such required daily program as the Two Minutes Hate, the use of Goldstein as an internal enemy has been analogized with the hatred of John Kerry, 2004

Democratic contender for the Presidency:

The inaugural theme of tyranny and terrorism juxtaposed with freedom and security was music to the ears of the largely Republican crowd. The proudly partisan audience was unanimous in its choice of heroes and villains. They jeered when defeated Democrat presidential contender John Kerry appeared on a giant screen.³¹

This kind of 'unanimous' conformity mirrors what Solomon Asch found: “35 percent of those students conformed to group opinion in unambiguous matters and in direct contradiction of the evidence of their own eyes.”³²

If an individual will not suffice, another internal enemy for the United States is a whole cultural demographic: Hispanics. Huntington writes:

The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexican and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political enclaves –

³⁰ Orwell, 1984, 11-13

³¹ Adam Harvey, “Faithful Turn Up in Force,” *Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia)*, January 22, 2005, News 21.

³² Sarah McCarthy, “Why Johnny Can’t Disobey,” in *Culture, Communication and Conflict, Readings in Intercultural Relations, Revised 2d ed.*, ed. Gary R. Weaver (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 268.

from Los Angeles to Miami – and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge at its peril.³³

Although some people are “absolutely certain that Huntington will be proved wrong,”³⁴ his views are unfortunately popular. The danger of treating a large percentage of the American population as ‘other’ is clear – and is unfortunately similar to the treatment of the proles in *1984*. The enemy image can be directed both externally and internally, to great effect. And drawing lines of battle along cultural and ethnic lines is very effective, despite the strong American history of immigration.

Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present, controls the past³⁵

Control over history books is power, and that power falls into the hands of the winners of conflicts. The Party in *1984* believed this so thoroughly that it had the entire Ministry of Truth devoted to keeping the records of the past aligned with the current Party line:

Oceania was not after all at war with Eurasia. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Eurasia was an ally. ... Oceania was at war with Eastasia: Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia. ... The work was overwhelming... Everyone in the Records Department worked eighteen hours in the twenty-four.³⁶

In the United States, we have no Ministry of Truth. Instead, government officials contradict themselves with no fear of repercussions. Vice President Cheney, for example, claimed early on that “In Iraq, Saddam Hussein ... had long established ties with al

³³ Samuel Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, March/April 2004, 30.

³⁴ Peter Carlson, “Hey, Professor, Assimilate This,” *Washington Post*, March 9, 2004, C 01.

³⁵ Orwell, *1984*, 248.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 180-182.

Qaeda.”³⁷ Later, the 9/11 Commission found that “Contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda ... do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship,” concluding, “We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States.”³⁸

The insidious nature of such misinformation is clear in both fact and fiction. In 1984, “[i]n the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. ... The heresy of heresies was common sense.”³⁹ And in the U.S., the power of Cheney’s assertion is shown by polls indicating that Americans still think al Qaeda and Saddam were linked. “42% ... thought the former Iraqi leader was involved in the attacks on New York City and Washington. ... 32% said they thought Saddam had personally planned them.”⁴⁰ This belief is strongest within the currently dominant party: “The same poll in June showed that 56% of all Republicans said they thought Saddam was involved with the 9/11 attacks. In the latest poll that number actually climbs, to 62%.”⁴¹

Youth – hope for the future, or threat?

Children are frequently referred to as the hope for the future: they are expected to be more peaceful, more tolerant, to not be subject to the problems of their ancestors. But

³⁷ Richard Cheney, Remarks at a Reception for the James Madison Institute, Rosen Convention Center Hotel, Orlando, FL, June 14, 2004, available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/06/20040614-20.html>.

³⁸ Twelfth public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *Staff Statement 15*, June 16-17, Washington DC, 5. Available online at: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing12.htm>.

³⁹ Orwell, 1984, 80.

⁴⁰ E&P Staff, “Media Matters? Poll Shows More than 4 in 10 Still Link Saddam to 9/11”, *Editor & Publisher*, October 5, 2004. Available online at: http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000653667.

⁴¹ Ibid.

in 1984, the youth of the country, instead of being its hope, are its worst enemy. They are entirely subservient to the will of the government:

Nearly all children ... were horrible. What was worst of all was that by means of such organizations as the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages, and yet this produced in them no tendency whatever to rebel against the discipline of the Party.

On the contrary, they adored the Party and everything connected with it. ... All their ferocity was turned outwards, against the enemies of the State, against foreigners, traitors, saboteurs, thought-criminals.⁴²

While children in the United States today are not like Orwell's Spies, there is a disturbing trend toward excessive obedience. Sarah McCarthy claims that "[O]bedience is highly encouraged in matters petty as well as profound."⁴³ The importance of childhood socialization and disobedience is tremendous, McCarthy says: "If there is any lesson to be learned from the obedience-related holocausts, it must be that we can never underestimate the power of education and the socialization process."⁴⁴ Stanley Milgram studied obedience and found the results disturbing:

They raise the possibility that human nature, or more specifically the kind of character produced in American democratic society, cannot be counted on to insulate its citizens from brutality and inhumane treatment at the direction of malevolent authority. A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do, irrespective of the content of the act and without limitation of conscience, so long as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority.⁴⁵

Milgram describes a population that might allow a Nazi Germany – or an Oceania – to take power.

The children in 1984 are not merely outwardly obedient to the government, but also mobilized against thoughtcrime: "hardly a week passed in which *The Times* did not

⁴² Orwell, 1984, 24.

⁴³ Sarah McCarthy, "Why Johnny Can't Disobey," 266.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 267.

⁴⁵ Philip Meyer, "If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You? Probably," *Esquire*, 1970.

carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak – ‘child hero’ was the phrase generally used – had overheard some compromising remark and denounced its parents to the Thought Police.”⁴⁶ Similarly, while American high school students may still respect the freedom of *thought*, they are becoming increasingly suspicious of freedom of the *press* – a step in the wrong direction.

One in three U.S. high school students say the press ought to be more restricted, and even more say the government should approve newspaper stories before readers see them ... 36% believe newspapers should get “government approval” of stories before publishing; ... Asked whether the press enjoys “too much freedom,” not enough or about the right amount, 32% say “too much,” and 37% say it has the right amount. Ten percent say it has too little.⁴⁷

Bill Maher, in the *LA Times*, expressed the strange and frightening nature of this poll. “The younger generation is supposed to rage against the machine, not for it; they’re supposed to question authority, not question those who question authority.”⁴⁸ Maher went on:

And what’s so frightening is that we’re seeing the beginnings of the first post-9/11 generation – the kids who first became aware of the news under an ‘Americans need to watch what they say’ administration, the kids who’ve been told that dissent is un-American and therefore justifiably punished by a fine, imprisonment – or the loss of your show on ABC.⁴⁹

The youth of the country can save it – or they can turn all dissidents in to the appropriate authorities.

⁴⁶ Orwell, 1984, 24.

⁴⁷ Greg Toppo, “U.S. students say press freedoms go too far”, *USA Today*, January 30, 2005, available online at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2005-01-30-students-press_x.htm.

⁴⁸ Bill Maher, “Kids Say the Darndest, Most Stalinist Things,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 2005, Metro B 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The Department of Homeland Love

The appropriate authorities, of course, are the Department of Homeland Security – or the Ministry of Love. When the U.S.A. created the Department of Homeland Security, many regarded it as chillingly Orwellian. The euphemistic nature of the name of the department was the first clue as to its Orwellian nature, but other similarities between the Department and the Ministry have become apparent as the Department has grown in prominence. The Department, for example, states that it “has three primary missions: Prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage from potential attacks and natural disasters.”⁵⁰ Similarly, the Ministry of Love “maintained law and order.”⁵¹ The innocent-sounding mission statements of the Department and the Ministry are polite covers for their actual activities, though, which include detaining, questioning, and torturing anyone who may be a ‘threat’ to society.

“The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one,”⁵² we learn, long before Winston is tortured inside it. And in the last year, the American public has been horrified by – and then almost completely forgotten – the revelation that the U.S. government has been torturing prisoners in Abu Ghraib, Iraq as well as Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As Cohen notes:

Somewhere in the U.S. government is the person who came up with the idea of fusing the wail of an infant with an incessant meow from a cat food commercial to torment detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. ... The International Committee of the Red Cross has complained that some of

⁵⁰ Department of Homeland Security, *Frequently Asked Questions*, Homepage online: <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/faq.jsp>. Accessed 3/19/05.

⁵¹ Orwell, *1984*, 4.

⁵² Ibid.

what has been done at Guantanamo Bay – Guantanamo, not Abu Ghraib – was ‘tantamount to torture.’⁵³

Sam Keen gives us an explanation for this kind of behavior in his discussion of enemy image. Not only is it easier to harm someone who is out of your direct line of sight or otherwise dehumanized⁵⁴, but sometimes it is even seen as virtuous behavior: “The warrior engaged in righteous battle against the enemies of God may even see himself as a priest, saving his enemy from the grip of evil by killing him.”⁵⁵ This corresponds directly to O’Brien, in *1984*, telling Winston before he tortures him, “Don’t worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect.”⁵⁶

2005 is not 1984

Sadly, one of the major differences between Oceania of *1984* and the United States today is the difference of scale and penalty. Whereas, in *1984*, it is illegal to use any ‘unword’, in the United States it is merely censured. In the world of *1984*, you might be killed for thoughtcrime; in the U.S. it is very unlikely. The means for enforcing the approved vocabulary are subtler in the real world than they are in the novel – and as such, may prove to be more dangerously insidious.

Freedom is a concept that is seen very differently by the people of Oceania and the people of the U.S.A. The Party does not encourage or laud freedom: “As the Party

⁵³ Cohen, “Ugly Truths About Guantanamo,” A 15.

⁵⁴ Meyer, “If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You? Probably;” and Gary R. Weaver, “Social Psychological and Cognitive Approaches to Conflict,” Lecture to course SIS-641-001 Psychological and Cultural Bases of International Politics at American University, Washington, DC, 1 February 2005.

⁵⁵ Keen, “Faces of the Enemy,” 409.

⁵⁶ Orwell, *1984*, 244.

slogan put it: ‘Proles and animals are free.’”⁵⁷ The American government, on the other hand, sees freedom as an indispensable part of rhetoric, using the word constantly in speeches, press releases, and names for questionable actions (“Operation Iraqi Freedom”, for example). While American freedom is at risk, it still exists. Possibly the most important freedom that Americans are Constitutionally guaranteed (but Oceanians have not at all) is freedom of speech. As Bill Maher puts it,

...as a loser, I guess I have some “unpopular” opinions – and I’d like to keep them. I’d even like to continue to say them right out loud on TV, because if I just get up there every Friday night and spout the Bush administration’s approved talking points, that’s not freedom or entertainment. It’s Fox News.⁵⁸

As long as we have the freedom of speech and freedom to assemble, our chances of retaining our other freedoms are that much greater.

The final difference I note between Orwell’s world and the world we live in is that of surveillance and control of information. Orwell has Big Brother watching you. We, on the other hand, live in a reality that has been more accurately compared to Kafka’s *The Trial*. Control is divided in the hands of commercial interests and corporations, rather than consolidated into one governmental control agency. Rather than one Big Brother, we have many Little Brothers. They collect purchasing information, demographics, credit card data, Social Security numbers, video records of your transactions in their stores, signatures, and many other pieces of information, so as to better serve – or better control – you. The Little Brothers *are* watching you.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 72.

⁵⁸ Maher, “Kids Say the Darndest, Most Stalinist Things,” Metro B 15.

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