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TABOO IN GEORGE ORWELL'S *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR* AND ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited. I also confirm that no part of this BA thesis was generated by artificial intelligence (AI). Grammarly was used to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes.

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá, jak tabu pomáhá udržet totalitní moc v románech *Konec civilizace aneb Překrásný nový svět* od Aldouse Huxleyho a *Devatenáct set osmdesát čtyři* od George Orwella. Práce představuje různé mechanismy, které pomáhají dosažení a udržení totální moci státu tím, že identifikuje činnosti, věci a ideje, jež jsou v každodenním životě postav tabu. Jelikož se tabu často nacházejí na pomezí instinktů a společenských zvyklostí, zabývá se tato práce napětím mezi přirozenými lidskými sklony a mírou, do jaké jim společnost umožňuje volný průběh, nebo je naopak potlačuje. Cílem této práce je ukázat všudypřítomnost totalitní moci napříč různými oblastmi života a způsob, jakým je tabu využíváno k dosažení naprosté kontroly. Zároveň je zdůrazněno, že tyto přísné zákazy vedou k odlidštění jedinců žijících v těchto společnostech.

Klíčová slova: tabu, zákazy, totalitarismus, manipulace, odlidštění, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell

Abstract

This thesis analyses the role of taboos in maintaining totalitarian control in the fictional societies depicted in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. It explores various mechanisms through which complete state control is achieved and preserved by identifying the behaviours, objects, and ideas rendered taboo in the characters' daily lives. Since taboos often operate at the intersection of biological instincts and social constructs, the analysis focuses on the tension between innate human inclinations and the extent to which society permits or suppresses them. This analysis seeks to demonstrate the pervasive nature of totalitarian control across different realms of life and the way a taboo is used to achieve this control. It also emphasises the dehumanising effects of these prohibitions on individuals living in these societies.

Keywords: taboo, prohibitions, totalitarianism, manipulation, dehumanisation, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell

Table of Contents

Introduction *7*

1 Body *12*

1.1 Clothing 12

1.2 Health 16

1.3 Reproduction and Relationships 21

2 Thought *26*

2.1 Enforcing Orthodoxy 26

2.2 Control over History 30

2.3 Alternative Ways of Life 33

Conclusion *40*

Works Cited *44*

Introduction

This bachelor's thesis examines the role of taboo in sustaining totalitarianism in the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. Both works depict a dystopian future where the state attempts to control every aspect of its citizens' lives, and in both cases, taboos are crucial for achieving and maintaining this control. The exploration of taboo in these novels is particularly intriguing since taboo is typically analysed in literature focusing on the violation of established norms that are familiar to us. In contrast, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* illustrate a reality where elements considered ordinary, virtuous, or even noble by our standards are viewed as taboo and repressed. Identifying and organising these taboos into coherent categories forms the core of this thesis. By examining the behaviours and ideas deliberately rendered taboo in these novels, we gain a clearer understanding of the values and freedoms that the authors feared might be lost.

It is best to begin with a definition of the term "taboo." This term was first used in English in 1777 by Captain James Cook, who described it as "a [word] which […] has a very comprehensive meaning; but, in general, signifies that a thing is forbidden" (Cook 348). This simple definition remains valid today and can serve as a basis for understanding taboos. However, it is important to emphasise the social nature of taboo. This aspect is highlighted in the definition of taboo as "a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). Taboos foster social cohesion, as Valerio Valeri explains that they generally function to "keep the destructive powers of confusion at bay and help maintain the unambiguous categorisation that is a prerequisite of successful communication" (63). Taboos are a universal feature of any human society. However,

as Emmanuel Abeku Essel points out, "what constitutes such taboos and the sanctions for breaking them may vary from one culture to the other" (375). The continuum of severity regarding the transgression of various taboos across different societies is quite broad. Such transgressions may cause anything from embarrassment to deadly sin, resulting in repercussions that can range from awkwardness to capital punishment. I will elaborate on these differences in the subchapter "Different Ways of Life," where I will compare the nature of exclusion in *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* Oceania and *Brave New World's* World State based on Mary Douglas's distinction between "primitive" and "modern" cultures.

It is important to emphasise the aspect of irrationality in taboo, as Heinschink and Teichmann point out: "[t]aboos are, per definition, non-existing topics' that 'cannot be questioned as to their rational background" (qtd. in Horlacher et al. 6). Thus, taboos are qualitatively different from written rules such as laws, which are subject to rational deliberation. However, quite often, what is subject to legal penalties is also taboo; for example, murder is both against the law and taboo in most societies. What distinguishes laws from taboos is the degree of rationality and contemplation involved in engaging with them. The transgression of a taboo immediately produces bodily reactions and feelings in both the transgressor and the witnesses of the transgression—such as embarrassment, awkwardness, and potentially even fear. These unpleasant feelings serve as barriers to engaging in taboo activities, such as discussing certain topics or performing certain actions. In comparison, laws must be interpreted, which requires reasoning and takes more time. Nevertheless, the two phenomena are intertwined and influence each other. However, for the purposes of this thesis, everything that is forbidden is considered taboo, as codified law does not exist in the World State and in Oceania.

The absence of law in these societies arises from the fact that rational deliberation and legal structures could limit the absolute power of the establishment. Thus, the irrational nature of taboo makes it more desirable for totalitarian regimes like these. Clearly, rendering something taboo is a powerful means of preserving the status quo. If citizens were to engage with every aspect of a given socio-economic system rationally and critically, that system would quickly face destabilisation, and a change of regime would be imminent. Therefore, making the core tenets of a political system taboo to question is a step toward ensuring the system's longevity. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the concept of thoughtcrime, which means that every unorthodox or subversive thought is taboo for a Party member, serves as a prime example of keeping the core tenets of the regime unquestioned. The scope of what is considered thoughtcrime in Oceania is relatively large, encompassing compassion and love towards others as well as seeking knowledge of actual history. Similarly, Mustafa Mond, the dictator of the World State in *Brave New World*, must uncritically accept the state's definition of happiness. Although he is intellectually aware that true happiness may involve more than shallow pleasure, the preservation of stability and his own power compels him to accept this tenet of Fordian society as dogma. Any suggestion that challenges this notion must be rendered taboo—from the banning of subversive literature to the silencing of dissidents; all dissent must be suppressed to maintain order. These and other examples of taboo-driven control are central to the social fabric of both novels.

Methodologically, my research was straightforward. I studied various concepts of taboo and then systematically searched for instances of taboo within the primary texts. I analysed all relevant examples, considering how each contributes to the maintenance of the respective social orders.

From this process, a two-part structure emerged, forming the chapters and subchapters of this thesis: the realm of body and the realm of thought. The chapter “Body” directly addresses control of the body. It is important to note that this aspect is understudied in secondary literature, as most researchers focus on elements more suited for the second chapter on “Thought,” which concerns mental barriers. Nevertheless, these two realms, while distinct in focus, are deeply interconnected. The thesis can thus be read as a gradation of control—ranging from clothing regulations to bodily control and sexual norms, eventually extending to the management of relationships, worldviews, and individual identity. In both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, state control permeates every aspect of life. However, not all characters in these novels are fully integrated into their respective societies; these "outsiders," who become a taboo themselves, are discussed in the final subchapter.

As stated, both Oceania and the World State exert total control over their citizens’ lives, qualifying them as totalitarian states. The dystopian dimension of this control lies in its inevitable dehumanisation of the individual—a central message in both novels. Huxley makes this point explicitly in his essay *Brave New World Revisited*, where he states:

> *Brave New World* presents a fanciful and somewhat ribald picture of a society, in which the attempt to re-create human beings in the likeness of termites has been pushed almost to the limits of the possible. […] A great gulf separates the social insect from the not too gregarious, big-brained mammal; and even though the mammal should do his best to imitate the insect, the gulf would remain. However hard they try, men cannot create a social organism, they can only create an organization. In the process of trying to create an organism they will merely create a totalitarian despotism. (Huxley, *BNW Revisited* 22-23)

Orwell, although he did not live long enough to write a similar reflective piece, provides ample material within *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that demonstrates the inhumanity of the regime in Oceania—a theme that will be explored further in this thesis.

1 Body

1.1 Clothing

Clothing and fashion materialise social prohibitions and conventions, making them valuable subjects for studying taboos. Certain aspects of clothing reveal a lot about a society's norms and restrictions, such as visible signs of conformity, social status or strict gender differences. In this subchapter, I will illustrate how specific clothing-related taboos reinforce social stratification, economic systems, and boundaries on sexuality in the fictional societies of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Clearly, in both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, rigid social stratification is symbolised and enforced through clothing regulations. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there are uniforms in the form of overalls: Outer Party members wear blue, while Inner Party members wear black (Orwell 4, 13). Children of Outer Party members wear Spies' uniforms, consisting of "blue shorts, grey shirts, and red neckerchiefs" (Orwell 27). In *Brave New World*, clothing bears colour-coded caste distinctions: Alphas wear grey, Betas mulberry, Gammas green, Deltas khaki, and Epsilons black (Huxley, *BNW* 22, 54). From early childhood, individuals are conditioned through sleep-teaching (hypnopaedia) to accept these dress codes and their corresponding social roles (Huxley, *BNW* 20-23). Subsequently, social interactions are dictated by caste, and this conditioning makes any violation of clothing rules or ingrained etiquette unthinkable for most. Thus, while transgressing clothing rules is taboo, this fact is apparent only to the reader, not to the characters themselves. Unlike *Brave New World*, where conformity is instilled through psychological conditioning, fashion rules in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are enforced through fear, convention, and a lack of alternatives; wearing inappropriate clothing indicates thoughtcrime, which leads to severe repercussions from the Thought Police. Subsequently, transgression of

clothing rules is taboo in Oceania, and in contrast to the World State, it is apparent to the characters that it is so. However, clothing and the conventions surrounding it not only reinforce social hierarchies but also reflect the material conditions and economic doctrines of these dystopian societies. Most notably, the fashion market illustrates the differing manufacturing priorities of the World State and Oceania. While the World State prioritises consumer goods, Oceania focuses on military production. Consequently, consumer goods are abundant in the World State but scarce in Oceania.

This disparity shapes how people in each society relate to material goods, including clothing. In the World State, mending clothes is taboo and considered antisocial behaviour, as expressed in the hypnopaedic phrase "ending is better than mending" (Huxley, *BNW* 42). The taboo against mending in *Brave New World* is driven by a consumerist ethos. Allowing for variation in style to encourage consumerism is the reason why the segregation of different castes is only achieved by different colours, not rigid uniforms. The economy depends on the rapid deterioration and replacement of goods, ensuring that workers remain occupied and content. This cycle of induced demand is not merely an economic mechanism—it is also a fundamental social belief. In the World State, continuous consumption is equated with happiness and stability. This ethos is especially clear in everyday interactions. For instance, when Lenina wears a new Malthusian belt, Fanny immediately expresses a desire for one despite hers being only three months old (Huxley, *BNW* 43-47). As a "model citizen" (Bloom 17), Fanny Crowne embodies the World State's ideal—one in which even slightly aged possessions are considered undesirable. This reflects the societal obsession with novelty and perpetual consumption.

In contrast, in *Oceania*, mending is a necessity for survival. as "dealing on the free market" (Orwell 8) is officially forbidden. However, due to the chronic shortage of goods, even devoted Party members like Syme resort to purchasing essentials—such as razor blades—on the black market (Orwell 56). By criminalising necessary actions while making them unavoidable, the Party fosters a constant state of anxiety and uncertainty. Even routine shopping carries the risk of punishment—not always enforced, but always possible. This criminalisation of necessary everyday activities manufactures taboos where none would otherwise exist. These anxiety-inducing rules are a central theme of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, just as consumerism is central to *Brave New World*. Consequently, all this uncertainty and anxiety leads to internalised surveillance, which is the exact mechanism that enables Oceania's citizens to avoid thoughtcrime.

Beyond fostering fear, these prohibitions reinforce the Party's absolute control through artificially maintained scarcity. The political motivations behind this maintained poverty are explicitly stated in *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein. The text reveals that scarcity is a deliberate policy designed to "keep even the favoured groups somewhere near the brink of hardship" (Orwell 220-221) to increase the importance of small privileges and reinforce social divisions (Orwell 221). By making basic necessities a privilege linked to status, the Party ensures that disobedience comes with a high cost. This sharply contrasts with the World State, where material abundance removes the fear of deprivation, and social inequality does not breed resentment, as individuals are conditioned to desire only what they can obtain.

The last notable difference between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* is the attitude toward bodily beauty and eroticism, which significantly influences fashion. In *Brave New World*, revealing and playful outfits are the norm. Lenina Crowne's elaborate attire reflects this cultural standard (Huxley, *BNW* 42, 51, 124), as do the summer clothes worn by the women who visit John in his hermitage towards the end of the novel— "acetate-shantung pyjamas or velveteen shorts and sleeveless, half-unzippered singlets" (Huxley, *BNW* 225). These examples illustrate how the World State promotes a culture of sexual liberation, which is reflected in its fashion norms. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by contrast, Party overalls are designed to be sexless, concealing bodily features and suppressing individual expression. Makeup, perfume, and feminine clothing are considered taboo for female Party members (Orwell 73, 164). Julia's embrace of these items, therefore, represents an act of rebellion against the Party's principles of chastity. It is no coincidence that the Party overalls resemble the habits of monks and nuns in Christian monasteries; they are similarly designed to reinforce a moral code that views bodily attraction and erotic desires as dangerous transgressions.

Additionally, specific fashion accessories in both novels further symbolize societal taboos surrounding sexuality. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Julia's crimson Anti-Sex League sash serves as a public declaration of chastity. However, as Naomi Jacobs observes, the sash also paradoxically accentuates Julia's feminine figure, making her more attractive and thereby intensifying Winston's desire (8). This contradiction exemplifies the Party's deliberate use of repression to generate frustration, ensuring that even symbols of restriction inadvertently heighten desire. In *Brave New World*, Lenina's Malthusian belt functions as a counterpart to Julia's sash. While the sash signifies enforced chastity, the Malthusian belt symbolizes the World State's mandate

for sexual availability and contraception. It creates a societal taboo not of sexuality itself but of natural conception. By promoting a carefree and consequence-free sex life, the belt embodies the reversal of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s restrictions, illustrating the opposing ideological extremes of the two societies.

1.2 Health

The World State and Oceania impose radically different conditions on their citizens' bodies. While the Fordian society ensures a sanitised, comfortable existence to foster contentment and compliance, Big Brother's regime cultivates discomfort and deprivation to instil frustration and despair. While the Fordian society does everything possible to prevent its citizens from encountering anything that is taboo, Big Brother's society weaponises ordinary taboos such as dirt to elicit frustration, which is then channelled to Oceania's enemies in the form of hate. This subchapter examines how these societies regulate bodily experiences through four key areas: hygiene, medical treatment, attitudes toward death, and physical differences between social classes.

Hygiene and cleanliness are central points of divergence between the two societies. In the World State, cleanliness is not only a norm but an obsession, reinforced through hypnopaedic conditioning: "Civilization is Sterilization" and "Cleanliness is next to Fordliness" (Huxley, *BNW* 94, 104). Hygiene is ritualized and pleasurable, featuring hot baths, vibro-vacuum massage machines, and electrolytic shaving (Huxley, *BNW* 30, 123-124). Perfumes are widespread (Huxley 31, 87), eliminating all unpleasant smells. The lower castes maintain the state's pristine environment, as seen in the exaggerated image of them "busy revitrifying the surface of Great

West Road" (Huxley, *BNW* 53). This strict cleanliness shapes social perception—Lenina's disgust at Malpais highlights how deeply ingrained the taboo of uncleanliness is in her worldview (Huxley, *BNW* 92, 94). By contrast, hygiene in Oceania is neglected, with personal cleanliness hindered by scarcity and poor infrastructure. Razor blades are rare, soap is coarse, and plumbing failures result in cold water (Orwell 4). Despite exposure to these conditions, Winston's body resists: "the mute protest in your own bones, the instinctive feeling that the conditions you lived in were intolerable" (Orwell 84). Clearly, dirt and bad hygiene remain undesirable; yet, in typical *Nineteen Eighty-Four* fashion, because they are unpleasant, they are also omnipresent. This serves as a compelling example of weaponizing conventional taboos to evoke frustration and anger, which can then be directed toward Oceania's enemies. Furthermore, cleanliness symbolises privilege in largely squalid Oceania—Winston finds O'Brien's pristine apartment building unsettling (Orwell 195) as it denotes an unattainable level of power and authority. Therefore, in Oceania, cleanliness is both a luxury and a form of social control, reinforcing class distinctions.

The contrast extends to medical treatment. In the World State, disease, ageing, and physical imperfections are eradicated, with medicine aimed at eliminating discomfort rather than prolonging life. Individuals remain youthful until their controlled death at sixty through techniques such as hormone therapy, blood transfusions, and metabolic stimulation (Huxley, *BNW* 47, 95, 175, 177). Every harmful substance has a harmless surrogate: violent passion surrogates replace deep emotions, pregnancy substitutes mimic motherhood, and even champagne is not real (Huxley, *BNW* 152). Clearly, as stability and happiness are the supreme ideals of this Fordian society, everything disruptive or unpleasant is rendered taboo. Negativity

and sadness are strongly taboo. Therefore, these emotions must be eliminated entirely by soma, the World State's perfect drug. It induces instant happiness, has no negative side effects, and can be precisely dosed for the desired duration of escape. However, soma renders individuals incapable of dealing with adversity in any other way. This is tragically exemplified by Linda, whose addiction leads to her demise, while the DHC's fate is implied to follow a similar trajectory (Huxley, *BNW* 134-135, 181, 210-211). Thus, in the World State, citizens are kept blissfully unaware of any potential unpleasantness and are shielded from encounters with taboos. Consequently, rebellion is discouraged.

In contrast, in Oceania, power is attained through the infliction of suffering. This is clearly illustrated by O'Brian lecturing Winston: "How does one man assert his power over another, Winston? […] Exactly. By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough" (Orwell 305). He highlights that control through pain, rather than health, is the state's primary concern. Subsequently, medical knowledge is applied only in the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) for psychological research and torture techniques (Orwell 223). While the World State eradicates suffering, making discomfort taboo, Oceania relies on suffering to maintain control. The Party systematically exploits individual fears in Room 101, ensuring total submission, and even outside the Miniluv, poor living conditions and constant stress cause illness and accelerate ageing. Unlike the World State, which provides controlled, harmless pleasure, Oceania offers no surrogates, as the only plentiful thing in Oceania is the synthetic gin (Orwell 69), which is not harmless nor enjoyable, only numbing.

Death is traditionally taboo in most human societies. However, both Oceania and the World State eliminate traditional mourning and funerals, yet their approaches to death differ. In Oceania,

death is an unspoken but omnipresent threat linked to the concept of thoughtcrime, as dissent inevitably leads to execution. The dead are erased from existence or vaporized since all the records of them are erased. It is suggested that all the Party members will be vaporized in the end, as more characters end up vaporized than survive at the end of the novel. Conversely, the World State normalises death by conditioning its citizens from early childhood to associate death with pleasurable experiences. When death approaches, the dying sexagenarians are immersed in comfort and pleasant sensory stimulation to eliminate any distress (Huxley, *BNW* 174-182). The dead bodies are even utilitarianly repurposed as the phosphorus is harvested from them during incineration. While Oceania shrouds death in fear and secrecy, the World State integrates it into everyday life, reducing it to a physiological process devoid of emotional weight (Huxley, *BNW* 142). Despite these different reasons, both societies lack elderly individuals—Oceania eliminates them through purges, while the World State ensures perpetual youthfulness before a painless death.

Health and physicality serve as mechanisms of control, reinforcing rigid class divisions in both societies. In the World State, biological interventions, or more precisely, the maiming of lower-caste embryos, enforce hierarchy. Initially, lower-caste embryos are deprived of oxygen and nutrients to stunt their development (Huxley, *BNW* 3-5). Then, they undergo Neopavlovian Conditioning, which includes shock therapy to instil fear of books and nature in them, basically preventing them from intellectual pursuits, making them a taboo that is visible to the reader but not the characters themselves (Huxley, *BNW* 15-17). The Bokanovsky and Podsnap processes further ensure that lower-caste embryos are produced in large quantities sacrificing quality (Huxley, *BNW* 5). This eliminates individuality as the Bokanovsky group members all look the

same, and the mental impairment secures obedience. After all, they cannot do any other work than they are designed to (Huxley, *BNW* 196). Subsequently, social mobility is not merely discouraged—it is biologically impossible.

Oceania's approach is different, as due to the lack of biological engineering, the social hierarchy is enforced through deprivation and exclusion. This can be seen in the symbolism of different physical properties typical for each social class: The Proles, while physically strong—described with strong forearms (Orwell 100, 159) or "mare-like buttocks" (Orwell 250)—are intellectually stunted due to their lack of education and exposure to critical thought. Outer Party members, like Winston, are more aware of the Party's oppression but are, by and large, physically weak. The poor living conditions and constant stress ensure that they lack the strength to resist. In contrast, the Inner Party maintains both physical and mental superiority, exemplified by O'Brien's "prizefighter's physique" (Orwell 13) and his intellectual sophistication. These distinctions represent the power structure of Oceania: The Proles are neutralised through ignorance, while the Outer Party members are kept physically weak to rebel. In comparison, the Inner Party members are both strong and intelligent, mirroring their prominent position in Oceania.

A key difference between the two societies is how they justify lower-class oppression. In *Brave New World*, the inferiority of the lower castes is a biological fact, and their physical and mental limitations are naturalized. Nevertheless, slogans like "every one works for every one else" and "all men are physico-chemically equal" (Huxley, *BNW* 63,64) reinforce the idea that, despite their differences, all castes belong to the same society. In Oceania, however, class differences are not based on biological differences, which makes them more fragile and requires harsher enforcement. Subsequently, Proles' exclusion must be absolute. Thus, the Proles are not even

recognized as people by the Party members (Orwell 61). I will elaborate on Proles' position in the subchapter "Alternative Ways of Life."

Ultimately, both regimes manipulate health and the human body for political control. The World State optimizes bodies for contentment and stability, while Oceania withholds well-being to enforce subjugation. In both cases, the body is not an individual possession but a tool of power—regulated, manipulated, and used to maintain a carefully structured hierarchy.

1.3 Reproduction and Relationships

Family, as one of the most fundamental social institutions, traditionally provides identity, support, and emotional bonds. However, both the World State and Oceania systematically dismantled these ties to ensure absolute loyalty to the state. While the World State eradicates the family, replacing it with artificial reproduction, Oceania permits biological families but subverts them through indoctrination, turning children against their parents. Despite their different approaches, both societies destroy close personal relationships and make a taboo out of them. This chapter examines the taboos surrounding reproduction and relationships to illustrate how family bonds are dismantled in these two dystopias.

Reproduction in both societies is strictly controlled but through starkly different means. In the World State, natural birth is abolished, and people are manufactured in the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, where embryos are cultivated in bottles in a sterile factory environment (Huxley, *BNW* 1-15). This process eliminates familial bonds from the moment of conception. Children are "decanted" rather than born, and from infancy, they undergo Neopavlovian

conditioning, which is particularly harsh for lower castes, as was discussed above. They are raised in state-run facilities by caregivers whose relationship with them is purely professional. Any notion of a traditional family or having children naturally is taboo, to the point where even discussing it elicits discomfort. For example, when John commands a nurse to bring him to Linda and clarifies that she is his mother, the nurse becomes startled and blushes (Huxley, *BNW* 175). The most extreme manifestation of this aversion is the near-total eradication of fertility—most women are rendered infertile as "freemartins" (Huxley, *BNW* 10), while those who remain fertile are rigorously conditioned to use contraception (Huxley, *BNW* 67), always carrying it in their Malthusian belts, a fashion accessory already discussed in the subchapter "Clothing."

In contrast, Oceania lacks the technological resources to eliminate biological reproduction, so it maintains traditional family structures while undermining them. The Party ensures that parental authority is secondary to the state's control by indoctrinating children through the Spies, a youth organisation that trains them to be fiercely loyal to Big Brother (Orwell 29). Parents live in fear of their own children, who are encouraged to report any sign of dissent to the Thought Police, as seen when Parsons is denounced by his daughter (Orwell 268). Despite being told to care for their children in a seemingly traditional manner, parents experience a profound lack of trust, making their homes places of surveillance rather than refuge (Orwell 153). This exacerbates feelings of isolation and helplessness, creating a stifling environment where individuals face the ever-present fear of expressing something unorthodox. Notably, the abolition of family in *Brave New World* leads to a careless life devoid of responsibility, while in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the lack of trust within the family setting creates an oppressive situation where one must constantly police oneself to avoid expressing anything unorthodox.

Sexuality is also manipulated to serve the objectives of the regimes; however, each one does so in a distinct way. In the World State, promiscuity is encouraged while monogamy is stigmatised, reinforcing the consumerist ideology that people, like goods, are easily replaceable. The hypnopaedic slogan "everyone belongs to everyone else" (Huxley, *BNW* 34) reflects this principle. Romantic relationships are transactional rather than emotional, and any attachment is taboo, as seen in Lenina's conversation with Fanny, where she is chastised for exclusively dating Henry Foster for four months in a row (Huxley, *BNW* 33-43). Fanny's reproof of Lenina exemplifies taboo enforcement through societal pressure. Oceania, on the other hand, enforces strict sexual repression. The Party views sex solely as a duty to produce loyal subjects, stripping it of pleasure (Orwell 152). As Lerner observes, Ingsoc has reverted to the doctrine of the medieval church, with conception being the only excuse for sex (73). Moreover, the Party actively seeks to eliminate sexual pleasure altogether, as O'Brien chillingly declares: "We shall abolish the orgasm" (Orwell 306). This makes the pleasure clearly and unambiguously a taboo. Julia recognizes that this sexual repression serves a political purpose: "sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship" (Orwell 152-153). Unlike in the World State, where sexuality is commodified, in Oceania, it is controlled and suppressed to channel frustration into obedience. Both strategies ensure that personal desires do not interfere with state loyalty. A crucial observation in both novels is that taboos are inescapable. As Kaltenbrunner contends, "[o]ne taboo can be replaced by another... but taboos cannot be eliminated from people's lives" (qtd. in Horlacher et al. 14). *Brave New World* does not abolish taboos; it merely inverts them—abstinence, rather than promiscuity, becomes shameful. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Party enforces the opposite taboo, ensuring that even the desire for pleasure is criminalised. Both systems regulate human

behaviour by defining what is forbidden and what is mandatory, shaping individuals to fit the needs of the state.

Beyond family life and sexuality, even genuine friendships are subverted in these two dystopian societies. In the World State, even friendships are mainly transactional and shallow. This is demonstrated by Bernard's fate—when he loses access to John and can no longer offer anything of value, he is shunned similarly as he was before his trip to Malpais (Huxley, *BNW* 153). The only meaningful relationship in the novel is the one between the three outsiders, Bernard, Helmholtz, and John, suggesting that genuine connection is an anomaly in this world. Similarly, in Oceania, friendship is obsolete: "You did not have friends nowadays, you had comrades" (Orwell 56). Winston's remark exemplifies a state where people are primarily expected to be loyal to the Party rather than to one another; thus, friendship is rendered obsolete, and Party comradeship reigns. However, while relationships in the World State are eroded by lack of depth and overriding consumerist morale, in Oceania, they are actively crushed through terror. The Party ensures that no act of kindness goes unpunished, as seen in the prison cell scene where an overweight prisoner offers bread to a starving man, only to be denounced and taken to Room 101 (Orwell 269-271). The ultimate destruction of individuals is achieved through the betrayal of loved ones in room 101 (Orwell 329, 336). By forcing individuals to sacrifice their deepest connections, the Party ensures that only love for Big Brother remains.

The general trend in both societies is the same: to make the power of the state absolute, the close relationships between individuals must be abolished. This is achieved through the destruction of families in these two novels, which, as children have no experience of a close relationship in childhood, conditions citizens to not seek closeness and friendship with others in adulthood.

However, the lack of close bonds creates a void, which is filled with consumerism and shallow pleasure in the World State and war fever and leader worship in Oceania.

2 Thought

2.1 Enforcing Orthodoxy

In both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the enforcement of ideological orthodoxy is essential to the preservation of totalitarian control. Though the methods differ—Huxley's World State relies on biological engineering and pleasure, while Orwell's Oceania depends on language manipulation and fear—both societies suppress the conditions necessary for critical thought and individual autonomy. This subchapter examines the mechanisms by which these regimes uphold the ultimate taboo: independent thinking. By neutralizing dissent at its root, they strive to ensure unwavering conformity to collective ideology.

The World State achieves ideological conformity through bioengineering and psychological conditioning. As Mustafa Mond explains, citizens—particularly of the lower castes—live confined within the limits of their predestined roles: "Even after decanting, he's still inside a bottle—an invisible bottle of infantile and embryonic fixations [...] Each one of us, of course, goes through life inside a bottle. But if we happen to be Alphas, our bottles are, relatively speaking, enormous" (Huxley, *BNW* 196). Subsequently, the Alphas, with their lighter conditioning, are more prone to unorthodoxy. Their intellectual capacity is not suppressed; thus, they are required to make a greater effort to "behave like a babe in a bottle" (Huxley, *BNW* 129), which means childishly. If they do not, they risk exile. The rationale is simple: deep thought might lead to distress, which threatens the World State's highest value—happiness.

Concerning happiness in Ford's society, it is defined not as deep fulfilment or meaning, but as continuous immersion in pleasurable stimuli and the avoidance of anything unpleasant. This conception, aligned with Freud's view of happiness as the absence of pain (Firchow, *Science*

313–315), satirizes the consumer-driven optimism of 1920s America, particularly the culture of Los Angeles (Firchow, *Satire* 454–456). Huxley challenges this view throughout the novel—particularly in John's joy from manual labour at the lighthouse, and in the yearning for truth (Mustafa Mond) or beauty (Helmholtz Watson). The shallow happiness of the World State, which serves as its chief mechanism of control, resembles what we might now describe as inducing "brain rot"—a steady numbing through shallow entertainment and overstimulation that renders citizens incapable of critical thought. In this regard, Huxley's vision remains strikingly relevant.

Oceania, by contrast, pursues orthodoxy not through biology but through total control over language. Newspeak, the regime's artificial language, is designed to make heretical thoughts not only unspeakable but unthinkable. As Lillian Feder claims, language and culture in Orwell's dystopia become "mental barriers" that suppress the formation of selfhood (395). Central to this project is the principle of *crimestop*, the self-induced mental stopping of unorthodox thoughts—an internalized form of taboo. Once Newspeak is fully established, dissent is expected to vanish by default: "Crimes and errors […] would be beyond his power to commit, simply because they were nameless and therefore unimaginable" (Orwell 354). This reflects an extreme form of linguistic determinism, where the absence of words eliminates the ability to think freely. Yet this vision of total control over consciousness is ultimately undermined by the persistence of memory and cognition. As Feder argues, Winston's private recollections—charged with emotional and physiological resonance—become a form of resistance: "his individual memories, with their insistent physiological and psychological demands, become his sole avenue to the past and his entire background for trust in 'the evidence of [his] senses'" (Feder 400). These memories, she

contends, are the antidote to doublethink and serve as the foundation for his continued—albeit doomed—quest for truth and self-knowledge (Feder 401). Malcolm Thorp expands on this, arguing that despite O'Brien's claim of human malleability, the Party cannot change human nature: "Contrary to O'Brien's assertion, the Party cannot create human nature [...] What is manipulated in Oceania is the environment, not man's essence" (Thorp 14). Tony Jackson adds that Newspeak functions like courtroom testimony: highly formal, surveilled, and subject to retroactive punishment. "To speak Newspeak is to speak as if always on trial in a court of law" (Jackson 382). This atmosphere of perpetual suspicion ensures conformity not through genuine belief, but through fear and surveillance.

This contrast highlights the comparative advantage of *Brave New World*'s system of control. Unlike Orwell's regime, Huxley's World State does not merely enforce obedience; it biologically tailors its citizens to accept their roles. Yet even in Fordian society, a semblance of humanity persists among the few Alpha dissenters. The main difference between the two regimes is that in *Brave New World,* positive reinforcement is employed, whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* there is rather negative reinforcement, at least for the Party members. To put it simply, the oppression in the World State feels pleasant, unlike in Oceania.

Both regimes acknowledge the inevitability of dissent. In *Brave New World*, Henry Foster likens Bernard to a rhinoceros, remarking that some men "don't respond properly to conditioning" (76) and that Bernard is lucky to be useful enough to avoid being cast out immediately. This casual admission of uncorrectable nonconformity suggests that even the World State, despite its near-total behavioural control, accepts that a few will always resist. Similarly, O'Brien tells Winston there will always be heretics like him—only to be "defeated and humiliated over again" (Orwell

307). He imagines a world in which the Party becomes more intolerant as opposition weakens, requiring continuous repression. However, Laurence Lerner identifies a contradiction in O'Brien's assertion: if there is to be a steady supply of unorthodox faces to stamp on, how can Winston be the last man? (78–80). This paradox can be resolved by rejecting the idea that Winston is truly the last. As Lilian Feder argues, total control over language is fundamentally incompatible with human cognition (400,401). The control must then be continually enforced through fear and persecution. Consequently, Winston is not the last—there will always be more. Because the regime does not merely fight isolated individuals, but the nature of human thought itself, it is inherently unstable: the faces may outnumber the boots, and even the wearers of the boots may have faces (Lerner 79). By comparison, the World State appears more stable, with dissent arising only in exceptional cases—due to alcohol in Bernard's blood-surrogate or Helmholtz's excess competence—while the majority of the population is stunted, unable to think or feel deeply at all.

The persistence of dissent in both societies suggests that their models of control, despite their apparent completeness, do not fully satisfy the psychological and emotional needs of human beings. In Oceania, citizens are offered a transcendent purpose through worship of Big Brother and sacrifice for the war effort, while figures like Winston find meaning in rebellion. Yet the regime imposes blatant falsehoods as truth, severs personal relationships, and barely meets material needs—leaving profound emotional voids and uncertainty for everyone. By contrast, the World State fulfils every material desire, offering comfort and pleasure, but deprives life of deeper meaning and genuine human connection. These dissatisfactions ensure that, despite sophisticated systems of control, some individuals will always find the regime lacking.

Ultimately, even the most elaborately engineered regimes—like those in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—cannot fully extinguish dissent. As Thorp contends, the human element inherently limits the attainment of pure political power (14).

2.2 Control over History

History provides a source of identity and encompasses knowledge of alternative social arrangements from the past. However, totalitarian regimes seek to impose a uniform identity on their subjects while making alternative social arrangements taboo. Consequently, in these regimes, history must be strictly controlled. Both the World State and Oceania clearly exercise control over history, but they do so in different ways. In this subchapter, I will illustrate how the control of history varies between the two regimes.

In both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, control over history is exercised through either the discouragement or complete eradication of historical awareness. This policy is evident in the approach to historical education. In the World State, history is considered irrelevant for the general population. The official ideology, echoing Ford's saying, declares that "[h]istory is bunk" (Huxley, *BNW* 29), and that "generalities are intellectually necessary evils" (Huxley, *BNW* 2). Consequently, historical knowledge is systematically excluded from public consciousness. However, limited exceptions exist. Certain Alpha specialists, such as psychologists, may access historical material for research purposes—evident in Bernard's familiarity with the past during his visit to Malpais. Most significantly, the World Controller, Mustafa Mond, possesses an extensive understanding of history. However, Mond employs this knowledge selectively to

defend the regime's emphasis on stability and engineered happiness. He presents the past either as a catalogue of horrors that justify the current order or, in his final dialogue with John, as a warning that affirms the necessity of sacrificing freedom for security. His rationale echoes Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, who boasts that he and his Church have "vanquished freedom" to make humanity happy (258). Thus, Mond views himself not as a tyrant but as a caring protector of social harmony, while actively making the knowledge of history a taboo.

Oceania, in contrast, manipulates history instead of omitting it. The Party maintains control not by outright suppressing historical knowledge but by constantly reshaping the past to suit its current objectives, erasing any conflicting evidence. This ongoing falsification is institutionalized in the Ministry of Truth, where Winston works, and even he struggles to distinguish truth from fabrication despite being directly involved in rewriting the historical record. Characteristically, open discussion of the falsification process is forbidden (Orwell 49); this is enforced through the principle of doublethink, which requires Party members to alter facts and simultaneously believe that no such alterations have occurred. Unlike in the World State—where a select elite may access genuine historical knowledge—Oceania demands total adherence to historical revisionism across all strata of society. Even Inner Party members are compelled to internalize doublethink, obliterating any sense of an objective past. In this way, Oceania strives to enforce an absolute monopoly over the past, rendering history a tool of ideological permanence rather than inquiry or reflection.

Both Bernard Marx and Winston Smith are characterised by a shared emotional undercurrent of nostalgia. Lerner argues that nostalgia functions as a crucial source of pleasure in dystopias, while in utopias, it is rendered idle and treated merely as a diversion (74). This dynamic is

particularly evident in the contrasting perceptions of motherhood—a historical practice in the World State—held by Bernard Marx and Mustafa Mond. For Bernard, the World State is far from a utopia, and he responds with admiration when witnessing breastfeeding women in Malpais, a moment that evokes a vanished past. In contrast, Mond invokes the same imagery—childrearing within families—not with reverence but as a cautionary tale, using it to horrify and instruct the group of students in the Hatchery. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for Winston Smith, nostalgia is one of the few possible pleasures in his life (Lerner 72). His longing for the past manifests in a continual search for its remnants: through his personal memories, official history textbook and unsuccessful attempt to gain knowledge from oral history, his attempts to reconstruct history lead him closer and closer to danger. He is constantly drawn by Mr. Charrington's antique shop and quite childishly seeks to reconstruct the little nursery rhyme about the old churches of London (R. Plank 86). However, his efforts are all in vain, as the Party's relentless manipulation of the past leads to the destruction of all the historical sources.

The remnants of the past are indeed taboo in both fictional societies. In the World State, the most apparent example is the Reservation, which has limited access only for Alpha plus Psychologists like Bernard. Similarly, old literature is locked in Mustafa Mond's office. However, the crucial difference to Oceania is that the remnants of the past are preserved and even studied. The World State is still a highly rational society, at least in the upper Alpha echelons. Thus, destroying the historical sources and abolishing the possibility of their research would be too unscientific and barbarous. In comparison, Oceania is irrational and orthodox to the very top. The scientific way of thinking is to be abolished, and the possibility of objective knowledge must be denounced, all in the name of gaining absolute power for the Party. Tellingly, the relics of the past are used in

Mr. Charrington's shop as bait for thought criminals and destroyed once they served their purpose as the coral paperweight (Lerner 73). While citizens are blissfully unaware of the past in the World State, in Oceania, they are constantly manipulated through rewritten history.

Ultimately, the goal of rendering history taboo in both societies remains the same: to prevent people from questioning the status quo. As history showcases various societal organisations and, more broadly, different ways of life, it raises the question of whether things could be different. The concept of change itself, which is implicit in history, poses an inconvenience for both Ford's and Big Brother's societies—accepting the possibility of change implies the potential end of their own regimes, which is taboo. O'Brien claims that the Party's domination is eternal, and Mustafa Mond does everything he can to sustain the stability of the World State's regime. However, the greatest threats to the stability of these regimes arise from the limited nature of their core claims: the World State's happiness is merely shallow pleasure without a deeper sense of purpose. Similarly, while the Party in Oceania seeks eternal power, individual Party members, including those from the Inner Party, must remain eternally submissive, as they lack autonomy and must adhere to the regime's strict rules. Controlling history supports the preservation of these core taboos because, without critical engagement with history, it becomes increasingly challenging to engage critically with the present.

2.3 Alternative Ways of Life

If a political regime seeks total control over its citizens' lives, any alternative way of life to the official one must be rendered taboo. Consequently, people whose lifestyles are different are

ostracized. This subchapter examines the groups and individuals that live differently and have different sets of values compared to the dominant social orders in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*, exploring the mechanisms of their marginalization and illustrating why their ways of life are deemed unacceptable within the official societies.

First, it is important to acknowledge that the nature of exclusion differs between the societies of Ford and Big Brother. As discussed in the subchapter on health, exclusion in Oceania is harsher because the regime cannot rely on bioengineering to prevent deviance. In contrast, the World State marginalizes individuals only when it is absolutely necessary—when they become disruptive to social order—relying more on bioengineering and pleasure to neutralize dissent from the outset. British anthropologist Mary Douglas offers a useful lens through which to interpret this distinction. Her analysis of the concept of pollution, which can be applied more widely to any transgression of taboo, differentiates between "primitive" and "modern" cultures and identifies the differences in sanctions. She contends that in modern societies, pollution is primarily a matter of aesthetics, hygiene or etiquette—it may provoke embarrassment and social sanctions but rarely carries existential weight. In primitive societies, however, pollution is a religious offence of great weight (Douglas 73). Additionally, Webster, who studied taboos in the "primitive" cultures, contends that the transgression of taboo renders the offender symbolically untouchable until they undergo a ritual of purification (vii). It must be noted that this thesis does not endorse the use of the term "primitive" to describe societies at different stages of development. The term is employed here only to remain consistent with the terminology used in the source literature on taboo.

Applying these anthropological concepts, the World State aligns with Douglas's "modern" culture: transgressors like Bernard or Helmholtz are not treated as heretics; rather, they are excluded because of their improper etiquette, which is disruptive to social harmony. Oceania, by contrast, resembles a "primitive" culture in Douglas's model: being unorthodox in thought or behaviour is seen as a contaminating force that must be eradicated. The emphasis lies not on the harm caused, but on the impurity or transgression itself. To be vaporized is to become utterly taboo—an unperson. The ritual of purification is enacted in Room 101 of the Ministry of Love, followed by execution. The impure are not even permitted to die in their original state; instead, they must first be "corrected" and then killed—as punishment for the initial transgression. This framework clarifies the ideological severity of exclusion in each society. The World State, despite being totalitarian, appears relatively benevolent when compared to Oceania, which asserts ideological purity through aggressive, ritualistic violence.

With the differences in exclusion addressed, I will elaborate on the various groups in the novels who live differently from the official societies of the World State and Oceania, meaning they transgress the norms. I begin with the largest of these groups: the Proles. Functionally, the Proles are politically inconsequential—they constitute a population, not a citizenry. Lerner correctly contends that "[t]he Proles of *1984* have reverted to a time before the French Revolution, to a condition without general political ideas" (75). Indeed, the Proles live in political unawareness and are kept content through beer, pornography, and the lottery, all provided by the Party, which purposefully enables transgressions of its own taboos, but only for the Proles. William Plank rightly draws a parallel between the Proles and the citizens of the World State, as both groups are controlled through sexual gratification—pornography and omnipresent eroticism, respectively

(33). Another similarity with the World State is that the enforcement of order in the Prole's quarters more closely resembles Douglas's model of "modern" culture: it is geared toward preventing disruption rather than enforcing ideological purity. This stands in contrast to the Party members, for whom orthodoxy is essential, and deviation must be eradicated.

For this thesis, it is significant that the Proles possess their own set of taboos and social norms, which are entirely distinct from those of the Party and resemble more closely the taboos and social norms of our own. Subsequently, the Proles reject violent movies for children, wear no uniforms, and even embrace beauty accessories—none of which are permitted among Party members. They are not required to practice chastity or avoid sex for pleasure. The Proles also maintain genuine human relationships. Their children are not brainwashed by organisations like the Spies. In many ways, their lives are less constrained than those of Party members. For these reasons, Lerner argues that the Proles are neither the true victims nor the potential rebels of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (74). The Proles' relatively relaxed norms also make their quarters useful to Party members seeking to commit forbidden acts, such as participating in the black market—acquiring everything from razor blades to prostitution. Even Mr. Charrington's trap antique shop is located there. Orwell makes it clear that simply being seen in the Prole districts is compromising for a Party member. This fits into a broader theme: Oceania's London is divided sharply along class lines. The Prole quarters and the Inner Party sectors are both taboo spaces for someone like Winston, an Outer Party member.

Finally, regarding the reason behind the Proles' exclusion, the scene just before Winston's arrest, where he sheds his class prejudice and recognises the singing Prole woman as beautiful, is crucial (Orwell 250). This moment reveals why the Proles must be kept ostracised: too close a

contact might reveal that they are, in fact, human—and that, in some ways, they live freer and more authentic lives than Party members. Such a revelation is not conducive to maintaining Oceania's social order.

The next groups of people who are clearly foreign are the inhabitants of the other two world powers, Eurasia and East Asia in the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and the Savages in the case of *Brave New World*. The difference in attitude towards these foreigners underscores the difference in the nature of exclusion in Oceania and the World State. Big Brother's society views foreigners exclusively as enemies or, perhaps most kindly, as potential enemies. The full magnitude of Oceania's discontent is directed at them. These people appear in Oceania almost exclusively as prisoners of war, and no one talks to them; they are just there to be hanged triumphantly (Orwell 225-226). They are reduced to dehumanised targets of hate, and it is this intense hatred that maintains Oceania's social stability. As with the Proles, closer contact with foreigners would threaten to destabilise the society since it could lead to the realisation that the foreigners are quite similar to Oceanians, especially if *the Book* is correct about their regime being virtually the same, and discourage the war fervour against them.

In comparison, the Savages in Brave New World are not hated. They are simply viewed as a quaint, exotic and "funny" group of uncivilised people. In comparison to the foreigners in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we are given more information about Savages' life. They live in a stable ancient agricultural society and are highly religious. Firchow argues that their society also rejects individuality (*Satire* 458). Nevertheless, apart from the lack of individuality, it seems that their society is the polar opposite of the World State, as their social rituals are built largely upon sacrifice and suffering—in contrast to Ford's society's obsession with pleasure.

Subsequently, Savages' set of taboos is also the opposite: they value monogamy and thrift. They worship ancient gods and bear human sacrifices to them. Unsurprisingly, Lenina Crowne is unable to comprehend that they sacrificed a young and healthy boy and let an old man from the pueblo live in his elderly state. After all, the concept of sacrifice does not exist in the World State, and the prevention of everything unpleasant makes old age and violence unheard of. Only a dose of soma can help her forget all of these "too awful" sights she encountered (Huxley, *BNW* 122). The Savages also practice self-flagellation—an act the World State citizens find laughable, since, again, they are incapable of grasping its religious meaning. Unsurprisingly, the Savages hate people from the World State but are kept "perfectly tame" since they know that civilized people have gas bombs (Huxley, *BNW* 91). Clearly, the Savages' society is a "primitive" one, according to Douglas, as the breaching of taboo is a sin, which is to be punished—this is exemplified in the beating of Linda by the group of women for her adultery (Huxley, *BNW* 108-109). As Firchow contends, Linda's son John is shunned by the Savages, both because of the colour of his complexion and his mother's scandalous behaviour. Additionally, he is alienated from both the Savages' and World State's societies (Firchow, *Satire* 458). He personifies the irresolvable tension between the way of life of Savages and that of people from the World State. Perhaps, if he were permitted to go to the Falkland Islands with Helmholtz and Bernard, he would find a home. However, in the World State, he cannot find any peace for his contemplations, and despite all his efforts, he finally fails to live up to his strict rules. His suicide is the consequence of his inability to live on his own terms in the World State's society.

Ultimately, whether pitied, feared, or ridiculed, these alternative lifestyles must remain taboo because they represent a danger to hegemonic control precisely because they suggest that another way of life is possible—and, perhaps, even preferable.

Conclusion

This bachelor thesis has examined the role of taboo as a tool of control in the totalitarian regimes portrayed in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. While taboos exist in all human societies, totalitarian regimes rely on them in a unique way: to control every aspect of citizens' lives without allowing for rational scrutiny. The mechanisms through which this control is achieved were explored across the various subchapters of the thesis.

It was established that clothing regulations both reflect and enforce rigid social stratification in these fictional societies. Additionally, clothing taboos mirror the economic conditions and ideological doctrines of each regime, each tailored to elicit particular emotional responses: the World State fosters contentment, rendering its citizens complacent, whereas Oceania cultivates frustration, which is redirected as hostility toward the Party's enemies. These emotional dynamics serve as fundamental mechanisms of power retention.

The chapter on the body illustrates how taboos and the evocation of certain emotions influence everyday life. Beyond regulating clothing and economic behaviour, both regimes control the bodies of their citizens. In Oceania, individuals are made to suffer, while in the World State, they are shielded from anything unpleasant. This control extends to personal relationships and family life, both of which are systematically undermined to deny any loyalties other than to the state. Consequently, the state gains more influence over children than their parents. The World State pushes this even further than Oceania: natural conception and parenting are entirely taboo. Citizens are mass-produced in state-run facilities and raised in institutional settings. In contrast, Oceania's children are indoctrinated through the youth organization known as the Spies and ultimately serve as agents of surveillance. These conditions result in World State citizens who

are carefree and unburdened by responsibility, while those in Oceania live in fear, unable to speak freely—even in private.

The chapter on thought illustrated that orthodoxy, a defining feature of totalitarianism, is pursued through different means in the societies of Ford and Big Brother. Beyond emotional conditioning—addressed in the chapter on the body—citizens' capacity for independent thought is reduced. In *Brave New World*, this is achieved through bioengineering that predetermines social roles. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the mechanism is linguistic: the creation of Newspeak. This thesis contends that neither society fully achieves total orthodoxy—control is always incomplete.

World State's mechanism of control is harder to dispute since one can hardly reasonably argue against a fictional biohacking of human beings, which the novel presents as highly effective. The lack of effectiveness is disclosed by the author himself in the existence of a few dissidents from the Alpha caste. Clearly, without these dissenters, the society of the World State would be a termite hill outright, and its people would not be people anymore—they would all have been utterly dehumanized, stripped of human mental faculties and unrelatable to us as readers.

In contrast, Oceania's citizens remain biologically unaltered and are controlled primarily through language and fear, rather than biological manipulation. As such, the effectiveness of language-based control can be critically assessed through our understanding of human cognition. Drawing on secondary literature—particularly Lillian Feder's work—this thesis argues that total mental control through language alone is unfeasible. Human traits such as memory, logical reasoning, empathy, and the innate search for coherence make complete assimilation of Newspeak—a static

and emotionally sterile language—impossible. In reality, Oceania's control is sustained by fear, torture, and division. As Tony Jackson aptly observes, Newspeak functions like courtroom language: one speaks correctly out of fear of punishment, not because the language reflects natural thought (382).

The final two subchapters dealt with the taboo surrounding any knowledge of alternative social arrangements. In the discussion on historical control, it was shown how both regimes neutralize potential catalysts for change. They do so through different strategies: the World State adopts a seemingly rational and benevolent approach, yet its core taboos—especially those prohibiting the questioning of happiness—must remain unquestioned and strictly adhered to. Oceania, by contrast, embraces a fully irrational model by eliminating the very concept of objective truth. The ultimate taboo is denying the absolute authority of the Party. While the World State pursues eternal happiness—albeit a shallow one—Oceania seeks eternal power. In practice, however, this means eternal submission, as even members of the Inner Party lack autonomy and must obey the regime's strict rules.

Totalitarianism also requires the suppression of alternative contemporary ways of life. Based on anthropological distinctions, this thesis demonstrated that each regime engages in exclusion differently, shaping their attitudes toward foreigners. In Oceania, foreigners are scapegoated and made the focus of hatred—thus maintaining political stability by projecting discontent outward. Meanwhile, in the World State, there is no particular hostility toward its foreigners, the Savages. They are viewed as a quaint and exotic group of uncivilized people. However, they are also laughed at, since the values of the people from Ford's society prevent them from understanding

them. Subsequently, their religious devotedness becomes a source of mockery, fascination and even erotic frenzy depicted in the scene of the final party at John's hermitage.

To conclude on a reflective note, it is important to recognise that although taboos serve as effective tools of control in these novels, the possibility of their transgression persists; therefore, the nature of control through taboos is inherently limited. As long as there is a motivation for their transgression, it will occur. This thesis argues that such motivation exists within both the World State and Oceania, as fundamental human needs remain unfulfilled under these regimes. *Brave New World* depicts a society devoid of deeper meaning and genuine human connections, while *Nineteen Eighty-Four* portrays a world where the denial of objective truth, mistrust in personal relationships, and poorly met material needs foster significant uncertainty for all.

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