Adapting totalitarianism: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in Film Adaptations

(Schaefer)

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Introduction

After reading Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin's revolutionary dystopian work *We* (1921), British author Eric Arthur Blair began work on his own interpretation of a dystopian world, tentatively called *The Last Man in Europe,* and eventually published it as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on 8 June 1949 under his pen name George Orwell (McCrum). Reviews of that time reveal an instant critical acclaim (Meyers), with British critic V.S. Pritchett stating that "I do not think I have ever read a novel more frightening and depressing; and yet, such are the originality, the suspense, the speed of writing and withering indignation that it is impossible to put the book down" (Pritchett). *The New York Times* review of 12th of June 1949 mentions that while "[it] is a great work of kinetic[1] art," it also "may mean that its greatness is only immediate, its power for us alone, now, in this generation, this decade, this year, that it is doomed to be the pawn of time." Fortunately, this prophesy of immediate greatness has been firmly dismantled. Since 1949, the novel has been translated into 65 different languages and sold millions of copies worldwide, establishing it as a modern literary classic (McCrum). Several terms, such as *Newspeak* and *telescreen* have entered popular culture. In particular *Big Brother*, a term used for the unseen totalitarian dictator in the novel, is now often associated with the worldwide, ground-breaking reality TV programme *Big Brother*, created by Dutch TV magnate John de Mol. In this programme, strangers are put together in a house that is isolated from the world. During their three month stay, they are continuously monitored by cameras and microphones and producers, as the authority Big Brother, send them tasks (Endemol.com). The popularity of this show, as well as growing camera surveillance around the world, led to the term Big Brother becoming commonly associated with being watched by an all-powerful anonymous system, controlled by an equally powerful

[1] In this review, kinetic art is defined by what Stephen Daedalus, character in James Joyce's *A Portrait of a Young Man*, says about art and beauty. Kinetic, as opposed to static, art exists in "order to demand" meaning that it should be loathed or desired to achieve its particular function. In this particular case, it means that Orwell's story should be loathed; only then will people see the horrific totalitarian system for what it is.

and anonymous authority.. Even Orwell's own surname, in the form of adjective Orwellian, is used to denote a draconian totalitarian system that resembles *Nineteen Eighty Four's* Party (McCrum).

As a critical moment in the history of dystopian literature, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been adapted for TV and film a total of four times; three of the adaptations were released in the 1950s (Rodden 50). The first adaptation is a 1953 American television release, produced for the CBS Westinghouse Studio One series which featured many novel-to-film adaptations. The BBC adapted the novel for a second time in 1954, an event that resulted in a nationwide debate over its horrific content (Rodden). In 1956, the first cinematic adaptation of the novel was released, officially by a British studio but there are rumours that the C.I.A. might have funded this adaptation (Rodden). Thirty years later, British director Michael Radford adapted the novel for the fourth time, even filming certain scenes on the day that the novel described, before releasing it in, appropriately, October of 1984 (1:47:44 1984). These adaptations, however, have not been a part of the critical discussion over the years. Considering the novel has been praised and highly regarded as a staple in the dystopian genre, this comes as a surprise. John Rodden, author and researcher of Orwell-related artefacts, discusses the adaptations in relation to their reception in their own respective societies in his 1991 article "Vicissitudes Of Public Literary Reputation: Orwell On The Telescreen." This, however, only analyses the reception of the adaptations and its effect on George Orwell's reputation.

This paper will analyse the theme of totalitarianism and its portrayal in three of the abovementioned adaptations, namely the 1953, 1956 and 1984 adaptations. These adaptations have been chosen for their geographical differences, since the 1953 adaptation is the only American adaptation and the rest are officially British. Moreover, the significance of the 1984 adaptation being filmed in the year 1984 is also considered, as it had been the first

adaptation of the novel for over thirty years by that time. The 1954 adaptation has been discussed in Rodden's article in detail and, thus, will not be discussed in this paper. The paper will discuss how the adaptations of the 1950s are, in the context of their time, anti-communist propaganda, and that the adaptation in 1984 is influenced by technological advancements and exists as a commentary on the existing totalitarian states. Firstly, totalitarianism and its relevant characteristics in the novel will be explained. After that, two different scenes and one visual element will be discussed for their close links to the totalitarian system. The torture of Winston Smith by Inner Party member O'Brien examines the power of torture used to convert enemies of the state, while the scene in Room 101 shows how the Party turns their enemies into literal rats. Lastly, film adaptations have the benefit of visualisation, effectively showing how the Party works in non-verbal ways such as clothing, propaganda posters and telescreens.

Chapter 1: Totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Nineteen Eighty-Four starts its narrative with Winston Smith describing the state of his everyday life. He mentions the state's leader Big Brother, the propaganda posters, and attends the hateful meeting filled with screaming at pictures of the number one enemy of the state, Goldstein. The first chapter ends with Winston admitting to himself that he hates Big Brother and wants to join the underground rebellion to fight against the totalitarian system that Big Brother and his party have created. Totalitarianism, according to American-German political scientist Carl Joachim Friedrich, consists of "an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy" (21). The first four of these characteristics will be elaborated upon in this chapter, as they are relevant for discussing totalitarianism in the adaptations of the novel.

The ideology in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is based on creating and controlling the perfect society Oceania, adaptable to any whim of the government called Ingsoc, who are in constant war with Eurasia and Eastasia. Ingsoc, which is a wordplay on English socialism, is the "single party" (Friedrich 21) and is represented by one single "man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features" (Orwell 3) known as Big Brother. Oceanian society is divided in three different sections: the Inner Party, the Outer Party, and the proles. To regulate their civilians, the government lays down rules to which everyone has to adhere. The civilians are strictly monitored in every space they enter, public or private. If anything suspicious happens, they are put on watch and arrested. Ingsoc monopolises the communication between every member. Ingsoc's reason for this harsh oppression is expressed during the torture scene with O'Brien and Smith. Throughout the novel, Smith asks himself why the Party operates as it does, but eventually he himself comes to the conclusion that he always knew

> That the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority. That it sought power because men in the mass were frail, cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth, and must be ruled over and systematically deceived by others who were stronger than themselves. That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was better. (Orwell 300-301)

Smith's admission that he already knew the answer to his own question, points to indoctrination. The importance of the class division is emphasised: the weaker men need to be ruled over and systematically deceived by the stronger men. In this case, The Inner Party is the oligarchical government that supervises the other two sections, in particular the Outer Party. That section is constantly supervised by telescreens and are controlled by the Party, whereas the proles are not supervised or considered a threat at all. O'Brien is the only character of the Inner Party that appears in the novel: at first he appears as a possible rebel leader. However, he turns out to be a member of the Thought Police, tasked to attract thoughtcriminals by false flag operation. This proves his loyalty and passion for the Party itself, since he is willing to present himself as an enemy to arrest the people that are supposedly a threat to the Party.

The Thoughtpolice controls the minds of the civilians: they can hear every thought and see everything an individual does on a given day. They are the "terroristic police" (Friedrich 21). To achieve this, they use telescreens which are used as surveillance cameras as well as televisions on which they broadcast their propaganda. It is unclear if the telescreens are monitored every minute, but during a morning exercise session in which Winston participates, he is suddenly addressed directly by the instructor: this might imply that telescreens are similar to modern videophones.

The ironically called Ministry of Love, where Winston eventually is sent to after his arrest, is responsible for all the fear within Oceanian society. The Ministry of Love is known to arrest arbitrarily chosen, innocent individuals, such as Winston's mother and sister, to sow fear among society. Winston's family's living room is filled with rats after his family is taken away, and later in his life these rats, which he since associates with the disappearance of loved ones or pain of losing someone, return as his greatest nightmare in Room 101. This room is specifically designed as the last station the so-called thoughtcriminals need to go through before they are declared safe to return to society. This is all deceit, however, because an eventual execution is imminent for all thoughtcriminals. All of this, thus, is accomplished by the use of brainwashing: using fear and torture to make the dangerous individual pliable to the will of the government.

In short, the totalitarian system in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is governed by the Party, who are visually represented by a man called Big Brother. The Party itself is divided in the Inner Party and the Outer Party, of which the former rules over the latter. The last group is called the proles, but are not considered a threat to civilisation. Furthermore, through use of telescreens, the Thoughtpolice are able to locate any possible dissenters so that they can arrest them and brainwash them in such a way that only love for Big Brother will remain in the thoughtcriminals.

Chapter 2: The Torture Scene

Arguably one of the most famous scenes in recent literature, the torture scene of Winston Smith by Inner Party member O'Brien, reveals the excruciating way the Party controls dissenters. Smith is subjected to interrogation that is not aimed at uncovering the truth but at curing the Party's enemies. As O'Brien states, "we do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them" (Orwell 290). The purpose of the interrogation is to brainwash he enemies into thinking that the Party is the ultimate state of governance. To do so, the Party tortures them psychologically and with the use of an unspecified machine which sends shocks through the body, which results in a feeling of "being wrenched out of shape, the joints being slowly torn apart" (Orwell 281). One of the methods is the 2+2=5 test, where the Party member holds up four fingers and tells the dissenter that he is holding up five fingers. This is doublethink within Oceanian society: the dissenter sees four fingers, but if the Party wants him to see five, he sees five. If he responds with four, he will get electric shocks. This test will occur repeatedly until the dissenter does not even see four fingers anymore. The intentions of these torture methods, the loss of individuality and complete surrender to the Party, are similar to those found in historical sources. During World War II, the USSR used the electrical shock method in combination with brainwashing, resulting in "the victims' reaching a stage where they would be at a loss as to their own identity, doubt themselves, en produce genuine confessions, becoming, in a few words, 'dead souls'" (Lauret & Laserra, qtd in Cesereanu). Another allusion to USSR torture methods is the way O'Brien convinces Winston that Winston is diseased, at the very least "mentally deranged" (Orwell 282). According to Cesereanu "in the USSR, convicts with a conscience were committed to psychiatric asylums and subjected to abusive treatments, by virtue of the disease which was fabricated for them and which was termed 'atypical schizophrenia,'". A fate that many political detainees would be subjected to in their imprisonment. Orwell's knowledge of the situation seems extensive,

as the techniques that are used by O'Brien, in particular the electro shock machine, show great similarities with the torture techniques of the USSR. In adapting this scene, film makers are up for a challenge. The novel is extremely explicit in explaining the effects of the torture on Winston and his state of mind, but as film is limited in showing Winston's thoughts and still make his transition into the dead soul Winston has become at the end of the novel believable, it has to find other ways.

The American adaptation of 1953 situates Winston, played by Eddie Albert, simply on a chair with O'Brien, played by Lorne Greene, looming over him. The dialogue is quite forcefully delivered by Greene: nothing is left to interpretation. He even says directly to Winston that "now you must think, but I have not betrayed Julia," instead of Winston mentioning it himself. In the novel, Winston uses his love for Julia for a long time as a last resort to resist the Party's torture, whereas this adaptation leaves out the multiple weeks of the torture and, thus, Winston's last resistance is revealed quickly. The electrical shock machine itself consists of a dial, but only two thin threads are connected to Winston; every shock is caused by switching on the dial, and the only indication of pain is conveyed through Albert's acting. There is no sound coming from the machine. An electrical machine that is used for sending shocks into a human being would emit, at the very least, some electrical sounds.

The following adaptation in 1956 has the same aims as the 1953 version in terms of anti-communist propaganda. The 1956 adaptation situates Winston, played by Edmund O'Brien, once again sitting upright with O'Connor,[2] played by Michael Redgrave, walking around the room. In this case, there is more interaction with the camera; at one point, O'Connor directly speaks to the camera, only for Winston to answer directly to the camera as well (See Figures 1 and 2, Appendix). This does not necessarily signal a breaking of the

[2] O'Brien is renamed O'Connor in this version, presumably because of the lead actor's surname.

fourth wall, a term in drama that signifies the moment the audience is acknowledged by the actor, but it does have a certain effect on the audience in the same manner as breaking the fourth wall would do. In this scene, the audience is indirectly, since the actor does not acknowledge an audience but speaks directly to Winston, spoken to by the terrifying O'Connor, the symbol of communism, and this clearly causes a fear of communism in the audience. As O'Connor says to Winston, "never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of life, or laughter, or courage, or curiosity or integrity. You will be hollow. We will squeeze you empty and then we fill you with ourselves… with love of Big Brother" (1:12:07). Another noteworthy change in the 1956 adaptation in comparison with the 1953 adaptation is the introduction of the electro shock machine: it is not used in the beginning of the interrogation or even during the first round of the 2+2=5 fingers test, but rather later in the torture. It is clear that in this case, the machine is only used as a last resort. Winston is strapped to a chair in another room with the electrical shock machine attached to his head. Whenever the shock is applied, the doctors count to three and the footage of him begins to show noise. This treatment is similar to the electric chair, an execution method originating in the United States, in which electrical shock was applied to the prisoner to stop his or her heart (Cesereanu 130). Using a method similar to the electric chair, which American audiences would immediately recognise, this adaptation effectively alludes to the dead souls that the USSR created through torture. Smith is, similar to the detainees of the USSR, electrocuted to such an extent that he is reduced to an empty shell or "dead soul" (Cesereanu) as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.

The adaptation released in 1984 shows extreme faithfulness to its novel counterpart, especially in regard to the torture scene. It situates Winston, played by John Hurt, lying down on a wooden plank, with O'Brien, played by Richard Burton, sitting next to him. Director

Michael Radford commented on his adaptation and his interpretation of the novel during the Orwell Prize Festival in 2009, saying that

> Nothing that goes on in that film, wasn't happening in the year that I wrote it, 1984. […] Every image that I took was an actual image from real footage that was actually going on in the world in 1984. And for instance, I discovered one very simple thing, which I find extraordinary. It's that you can kill a man, but you can kill him honourably. […] One way to execute a man dishonourably is to take away his identity. […] I saw that when people wanted to kill more viciously than in any other way, this is what they did. In Nigeria. In South Africa (Radford 2:12 – 3:13).

Radford presents a new interpretation of the novel here: instead of using it as propaganda against Soviet communism like the film adaptations of the 1950s, the 1984 adaptation is a commentary on events in the year 1984. It is interesting to note that while the novel and the earlier film adaptations are 1950s interpretations of the future, the 1984 adaptation is filmed in the future the novel was speculating about. The result is that the novel's message, which is a warning against an oppressive system that could develop in the future, no longer works as a warning but instead as a reflection on the year 1984. If earlier adaptations aimed to prove the communist threat, then the adaptation in 1984 lets the audience reflect how that threat of oppressive governments may have developed over the years and how it might still be a threat in other countries such as Nigeria and South Africa in 1984.

The subject of identity loss is expanded upon in the 1984 adaptation, because it includes a scene where Winston's hair is roughly cut. To a modern audience, the effect of that scene is a reminder of the dehumanisation process in the concentration camps of the Second World War. When entering the camp, prisoners were given haircuts to suppress any kind of individualism (Jacobsen). As Radford mentioned in his interview, "one way to execute a man dishonourably is to take away his identity". In this scene Winston essentially loses his

identity when his hair is cut, and this is reiterated later when O'Brien says to Winston that he does not exist (1:28:30). Furthermore, when O'Brien leads Winston to the mirror, Winston is actually malnourished and unhealthy to such an extent that O'Brien proclaims him to be rotten and that Winston "reduced [himself] to [this state]" (1:35:10). Instead of having an identity, Winston is now only an empty shell.

All the adaptations are formed by the historical context of the time period they were released in. An explanation for the limitations in the 1953 American adaptation can be found in the 1930-1968 Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, which contained rules on what was inappropriate in films intended for an American audience. The Hays Code was divided into two sections: the "Don'ts" and the "Be Carefuls". In case of the Be Carefuls, "special care [was to] be exercised in the manner in which the following subjects are treated, to the end that vulgarity and suggestiveness may be eliminated and that good taste may be emphasized," (Lewis 302). A few Be Carefuls are important to note: "6. Brutality and possible gruesomeness; […] 9. Third-degree[3] methods" (Lewis 302). These rules of caution in respect to the amount of brutality shown and the use of interrogation methods influenced how much of the torture scene of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was able to be shown and, thus, limited its adaptation. Another aspect of this adaptation should not be forgotten. At the end of the film, it is mentioned that, "tonight's production of Westinghouse Studio One has been selected for viewing by American Armed Forces Overseas" (50:12). In 1953, the American forces were overseas fighting with South Korea against communist North Korea. Inclusion of extremely explicit torture scenes might have frightened the audiences too much: the case that had to be made was the frightening nature of communism, and not induce panic in audiences, who were already in fear of losing their loved ones.

[3] A euphemism for the "inflicting of pain, physical or mental, to extract confessions or statements." (Skolnick and Fyfe 45)

The 1956 adaptation was financed by American producers, and as a result reflects the time it was produced in. In the 1950s, United States senator McCarthy's policies were responsible for the so-called period of McCarthyism, in which the fear of infiltrated communist spies resulted in even innocent civilians being investigated (Doherty 16). This fed into an unprecedented fear of communism. Orwell's previous work *Animal Farm*, which included more direct allusions to communism by using animals as a metaphor, was included in Operation Mockingbird, an undercover operation of the C.I.A. that aimed to use the influence of the media to show the threat of Soviet communism. Some sources, such as John Rodden and the director of the 1984 adaptation of the novel Michael Radford, claim that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1956) was funded by the C.I.A. as well, with Rodden adding that it was specifically distributed during the Hungarian Rebellion (Rodden 99).[4] There is no conclusive evidence, unlike the 1954 animated adaptation of *Animal Farm*,[5] that the 1956 adaptation was funded by the C.I.A.

A short historical overview shows that this communist threat became less imminent while oppressive governments were still apparent in 1984. Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, worked closely with American president Ronald Reagan and held meetings with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to end the Cold War, which he eventually succeeded in in 1991 (Boyes). With the end of the Cold War in sight, Soviet communism was less regarded as a threat, at least in comparison with the 1950s Red Scare created by McCarthyism. In Nigeria, however, a right-wing nationalist group led by Muhammadu Buhari were in power from 1983-1985[6]. Buhari

[4] A revolutionary revolt against the established communist government.
[5] Daniel J. Leab's extensive research on the C.I.A.'s involvement in the funding of *Animal Farm* (1954) can be found in his book *Orwell Subverted: The CIA and the Filming of Animal Farm* (2007).
[6] According to Leo Dare, the Buhari government determined two causes for the problems in Nigeria: "economic mismanagement and lack of political and social discipline." The Buhari regime decided to declare the War on Indiscipline to fight against the latter problem, which resulted in outrageous cases where politicians were sentenced to a hundred years in jail for helping their political parties, or students who would be sentenced to twenty years for examination fraud. (Dare 26) Akinrinade adds that "The government also seriously curtailed

and his government ruled with an iron fist, aiming to diminish individuality, similar to the Party of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This also goes for South Africa in 1984, where according to Cock, torture was regularly used for political detainees, most of which were anti-apartheid activists. Eighty-five percent of a sample of 175 ex-detainees had suffered psychological torture and the torture methods included the use of electrical shock (Cock).

In short, adapting the torture scene between Winston and O'Brien proved to have limitations for the 1950s adaptations. In particular the 1953 adaptation was restricted by the Hays Code, but the scene was also limited due to the audiences' sensitivity to the struggles of the overseas fight in Korea of 1953. The adaptation of 1956 is also filled with anti-communist propaganda, with the frightening O'Brien speaking to the camera and, thus, having a confrontation with the audience. The inclusion of the electric chair, a symbol easily recognized by American audiences, also alludes to the tortures of the USSR. Lastly, acknowledging the ongoing human rights violations around the world put Michael Radford's adaptation in a new perspective. The fact that it is filmed in the future that was described in the novel emphasises the need to reflect on the year 1984 and its existing totalitarian states: that even though communism was less regarded as a threat, totalitarian states still were active in 1984. The loss of identity is instrumental in this adaptation for it is used to show how Winston and other enemies of states around the world are reduced to nothing and, thus, essentially are executed.

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press freedom and imposed a blanket ban on political activities, which was later extended to include a ban on debates on the political future of the country."

Chapter 3: Room 101

After being interrogated for an unspecified amount of time by the Thoughtpolice, Winston Smith is finally sent to a cell called Room 101. The purpose of the room is to destroy the enemy's last personal defence against Big Brother, which in Winston's case is his love for Julia. Tortured with his greatest fear, Winston screams out "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!" (Orwell 329). The room within the Ministry of Love is used to defeat the last doubts of the enemy, completing the circle of squeezing them empty. The origins of this room, according to Meyers, were Orwell's tedious meetings at 55 Portland Place in room 101 when working for the BBC during the early 1940s. The inspiration of the torture used in Room 101, however, sprang from a completely different source. Biographer J. West argues that Orwell was influenced by his conversations with his landlord Robin Fletcher, whom he met on the British island of Jura. Fletcher had been imprisoned in a Japanese concentration camp during the Second World War. In particular the scene in Room 101, the punishment of a mask designed to set loose ravenous rats upon Winston's face, could have been influenced by their conversations. O'Brien mentions that "it was a common punishment in Imperial China" (Orwell 329) This, together with the fact that in the novel Eastasia, which is the superstate consisting of modern day China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, is the enemy of Winston's state Oceania, could indicate that Orwell was influenced by the experiences of Fletcher as a prisoner of war in the Japanese concentration camp. Furthermore, the use of rats is of great significance in the novel as rats are commonly associated with betrayal, a theme that pervades the story. According to Besenski, "Winston's explicit fear of rats is linked to his own implicit rat-like behaviour. Through his work with the Ministry of Truth, Winston has continually demonstrated his ability to lie and to betray, which further links him to the rat that he fears" (30). This connection to rats is approached in different ways by the adaptations.

The 1953 adaptation shows how Winston keeps resisting the Party, even when he is sent to Room 101 and faces his worst fear. The adaptation moves from the torture scene into the Room 101 scene as one continuous line of action. O'Brien explains the room outside the Room 101 door and eventually throws Winston inside, whose screams are drained out by the screeching rats. When Winston exists the room, he screams "take Julia, put Julia in, not me, Julia, torture Julia," (45:10). The explicit mention of his experience being torture changes the viewer's interpretation of Winston Smith in comparison with the novel. In the novel, Winston begins his experience in the Ministry of Love conscious of the fact that he and all enemies of state are tortured, but as the interrogation progresses, he begins to fear that he could fall back into thoughtcrime at any moment. He does not realise anymore that he is being tortured, but fears his own ability of defying the Party. This adaptation, however, shows Winston as someone who, after all the torture, still acknowledges the fact that he is being tortured. This shows that Winston remains defiant until the end.

In the 1956 adaptation, the audience is positioned as Winston's terrifying rats and, thus, this camera angle functions as a warning for totalitarianism. In this adaptation, O'Connor leads Winston through a dark tunnel to Room 101. The tunnel resembles a sewer, which is one of the more common places to find rats, and thus portrays both O'Connor and Winston as two rat-like creatures within the Ministry of Love. When they arrive at Room 101, it becomes clear that the entrance consists of two sliding doors controlled by a rope in the hands of O'Connor. In the room itself, the camera is positioned inside the cage filled with rats, only having one small door slowly opening up. This position is similar to the fourth-wall breaking shots of O'Connor during the torture scene earlier: in this case, the audience is placed inside the cage with Winston screaming directly at the camera (See Figure 3, Appendix). In that way, this implies the audience is as bad as the rats inside the cage. It also

functions as a warning: if they were to be subjected to a totalitarian system, such as the Party, they would become caged as the rats.

The adaptation in 1984 uses Winston's dreams about Room 101 as a foreshadowing of his rat-like betrayal of Julia. Winston's dreams of the Golden Country, which the novel describes as an "old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a foot-track wandering across it and a molehill here and there" (Orwell 36), are only included in this adaptation. The use of animals to describe the place indicates some kind of connection to the rats, since rabbits and moles can be considered as being rat-like. Rabbits used to belong to the same family as rats, that of rodents, but have been established as another family group (McDonald). Nevertheless, both are quick, agile creatures who can cut across landscapes quickly and sneakily. Moles, as rats, are creatures that live underground. There is also the implication of the mole in the context of espionage: someone who has worked himself into a targeted organisation with the intent of information leaks. In this case, the Party members are infiltrating the minds of the dissidents to find information on any rebellion. The adaptation refers to these connotations by having Winston quickly associating the Golden Country with Room 101. The first time this Golden Country appears, Julia reveals her naked body to Winston. It is only after they have intercourse that Winston dreams of walking to a door with Room 101 on it with O'Brien, who opens the door and reveals the valley of the Golden Country behind it. From this point onwards, every time Winston dreams of Room 101, he connects it to the valley where Julia revealed herself to him. Having Winston dream that Room 101 is the Golden Country shows his escapism, especially when he ends up in the Ministry of Love. The next appearance of Room 101 and the Golden Country is when, in Julia's arms, Winston recalls his traumatic experience of losing his family and being left with rats. This is the first time the connection of Room 101 to the rats is made, and it foreshadows the betrayal of Julia. In the Ministry of Love, O'Brien begins to show up in Winston's dreams, in particular in the torture scene. In

Winston's mind, he does answer O'Brien's questions, but while doing so, he is absent-minded, lost in his fantasy world. It is only at the very end of the torture scene that this fantasy world of the Golden Country is broken: Julia is shot and dies in Winston's arms after they proclaimed their love for each other. It is at this point that the actual Room 101 is revealed as nothing more than a dark cell room, to be used as a torture room. Throughout this particular adaptation, the connection of the fantasy world of Winston, of his love for Julia and his fear of rats are combined with Room 101 to foreshadow Winston's betrayal and establish him as a rat. One of the earlier dreams also includes O'Brien telling Winston that "we shall meet in the place where there is no darkness" (Orwell 29), and ironically, Room 101 is the darkest room within the adaptation. O'Brien cannot see the darkness in this room, because he is part of the darkness, in this case the Inner Party. He is the one responsible for the tortures, and he will not stop at anything to empty the dissenters' minds and fill them with love for Big Brother.

These adaptations each show the importance of Room 101 within the narrative of the novel in their own ways. While the 1953 adaptation did not show the room itself, Winston is presented as someone who still resists the Party and, thus, in combination with the fact that the adaptation was anti-communist propaganda, Winston is the martyr who shows that resistance against communism and the totalitarian state is important. The 1956 adaptation presents Room 101 as a direct confrontation with the audience: the camera placement behind the bars of the cage lets the audience reflect on the real threat of totalitarianism. The inclusion of the dreams in the 1984 adaptation foreshadows Winston's betrayal of Julia. Moreover, the appearances of O'Brien in these dreams indicate the level of indoctrination of a totalitarian state: even dreaming of greener pastures will not eradicate the threat of a totalitarian state.

Chapter 4: Symbolical Ideology

To make the imagined totalitarian system credible, the novel describes it fictional word in significant detail. From the crumbling buildings, to the state of the different sections such as the proles; from the specifically made Victory gin, to the propaganda used by the Party. In this section, the design of the clothing, the poster of Big Brother, and the telescreen are discussed to show the different influences of history and technology throughout these adaptations. These three subjects have been chosen for their visual prominence on the screen.

4.1 Clothing

In the single-party run states such as the Soviet Union, the people are often seen as a collective (Shlapentokh 39). One of the ways to stress collectivity is the use of universal uniforms, because they reduce individualism and, thus, potential riots. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Outer Party members are distinguished by their blue overalls, with the members of the Junior Anti-Sex league wearing a "narrow scarlet sash […] wound several times round the waist of [their] overalls" (Orwell 12). The children of the Junior division, also known as the spies, are "dressed in the blue shorts, grey shirts, and red neckerchiefs" (Orwell 27). The last significant uniform is the one of the Thoughtpolice, who wear black uniforms, and iron-shod boots. In film adaptations, directors and their crew have the liberty to recreate this world according to their own particular vision, which is why these costumes differ in the adaptations. According to Chris Laverty, "Costume design need not be subtle. Particularly in science fiction, clothing is often used as visual iconography that speaks to the audience, though without breaking the fourth wall. When a world is unfamiliar or at the behest of its own rules and backstory, dress can fill in the blanks, as it were." The costumes in the novel are very simple, and in that way they leave a path open for the audience to imagine their own versions of them. Cinema interprets the descriptions and, in two of these adaptations in

particular, reminds most of the audience of a period that they just lived through: the Second World War. The 1953 U.S. adaptation in particular does not shy away from the comparison of the Inner Party to the Schutzstaffel[7] of the German Nazi Party: O'Brien in this version wears a uniform that resembles the uniform of the Mountain officers of the SS (Clancy). The white lining of the lapels, the big breast pockets and the light colour of the ensemble remind the audience of an all too familiar uniform (See Figures 4 and 5, Appendix). The women of the Outer Party are vastly different from their novel counterparts: instead of wearing a blue overall like their male colleagues, they wear a dress-like overall (See Figures 6 and 7, Appendix), which resemble the overalls of the female factory workers at the homefront (Brown 298). They also have a cap that resembles the one worn by Allied military women of several divisions in the army, such as the Women's Legion, in World War II (Brown 300). In this way, the costume design of this adaptation almost explicitly interprets the fight between the Inner and Outer Party as the war between the German and Allied forces. The women are not necessarily sympathetic, as they are still portrayed as extremely hateful during the Two Minutes Hate and Hate week. Julia is the only one woman defying Big Brother, but that does not mean other women do not. The clothing makes it easier for American audiences, for whom the adaptation was intended, to easily identify themselves with those women, and as a result they realise that this dystopian fantasy of totalitarianism could have happened to them as well.

Another significant detail is the use of a symbol patch; every member of either Inner or Outer Party has an emblem with the letters BB, meaning Big Brother, stitched just above their left breast pockets (See Figure 8, Appendix). As the costumes of the Inner Party members resemble the Nazi uniforms, this emblem seems an allusion to the yellow badge of the Jews. However, the Inner Party, who are the rulers of the system, are wearing these as

[7] Nazi Germany's military, commonly known as the SS.

well. The placement of the patch, over the heart, could imply that Big Brother is so integrated into the personal lives of Oceania's population that even their heart belongs to Big Brother. Moreover, the placement of the patch also creates the illusion of immediate fear. The fear that the Thoughtpolice, in service of Big Brother and pressing down on people's hearts, can find every thought of hatred or doubt towards Big Brother.

The 1956 U.K. adaptation is less apparent in its interpretation of costumes. The Outer Party members, both male and female, wear a universal uniform: a grey linen suit with a black turtleneck sweater. The female costume includes a grey linen hat (See Figure 9, Appendix). On the whole, it seems more like a business attire than the blue overall mentioned in the novel. The effect is that in particular the Outer Party members are less identifiable as the middle class workers they are modelled after in the novel. As a result, people in this adaptation look more glamorous than in the other adaptations. The actors themselves look well-fed in a world that is supposedly running on its last reserves. In the scene where Julia first shows her new dress, she looks the perfect housewife and has applied her make-up perfectly even though Party members are supposed to be unfamiliar with make-up. A review of *The Times* finds fault with the glamour of the film, saying that "From the point of view of the conventional film-maker, the two least important factors in George Orwell's 1984 are the most attractive. [One of them is] the love affair between Winston Smith and Julia […] and the love-affair is injected with the kind of synthetic idealism on which the cinema thrives" (1956). As the review mentions, this adaptation focuses more on the Hollywood love story than any other adaptation. Another noteworthy piece of clothing is the sash of the Anti-Sex League ladies (See Figure 10, Appendix). It seems an interesting allusion to the suffragettes of the 1900s, who also wore a white, green and purple sash around their torso (Goring 4). As Laverty has shown, costume design is never without subtextual implications, so the choice of having a female group of conservatives who argue against intercourse wearing a sash similar

to those of the suffragettes, many of whom were a part of the first feminist wave, is ironic. The Inner Party and the Thoughtpolice wear black military uniforms, reminiscent of the Allgemeine-SS[8] black uniform that was worn on ceremonial occasions (Lumsden). In comparison with the 1953 adaptation, however, these costumes are a more subdued versions of their inspirations (see Figures 11 and 12, Appendix).

Here again, the 1984 U.K. adaptation is the one most closely linked to its source. The Outer and Inner Party members are clothed according to the descriptions of the novel. Different washed out blue overalls of the Outer Party show the stages of inclusion in the Party. The more washed out the overalls are, the longer the character has been included as a Party member. Julia has indeed the red sash that is characteristic of the Junior Anti-Sex League as in the novel. This is the only adaptation that includes the introduction of O'Brien in "the black overalls of an Inner Party member" (Orwell 13). The intentional ambiguity of O'Brien's commitment to the Party is not seen in the other adaptations, which show O'Brien as a distinct villain from the beginning with his military style suits. The effect is that the 1984 adaptation is more ambiguous in its representation of a good and evil side, respectively. The Inner Party members are wearing the same clothes, albeit in another colour, as the Outer Party members, which results in more tension within the adaptation (see Figure 13, Appendix). The audience only can interpret O'Brien's actions as horrifying after the revelation that he is, in fact, not a member of any kind of resistance but one of the more staunch supporters of the Party.

4.2 Big Brother

The first time Big Brother is introduced, he is said to have "the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features" (Orwell 3). As

[8] The SS was divided into two groups: the Waffen-SS, also known as the military, and the Allgemeine-SS, established to support the police in maintaining order (Lumsden).

mentioned before, this description has led to many readers to identify Big Brother with either Soviet leader Josef Stalin or Soviet politician Leon Trotsky. It is remarkable that the image that reminded readers of the Soviet politicians, the thick moustache, has been deleted in both the 1953 and the 1956 adaptation of the novel (see Figures 14 and 15, Appendix). Especially in that particular period the depiction of the face with the moustache would have had communist connotations, in specific of the Soviet Union. The 1953 adaptation, which was created by an American cast and crew, is heavily influenced by the McCarthyism of the period. It is noteworthy, however, that the 1953 Big Brother does not look as menacing as he is in the novel. The poster is a painted close up of him, with big lips and nose, and with a seemingly blank stare. This depiction of Big Brother was matched in the 1956 adaptation: although the entire head of Big Brother is now visible, he has no moustache. The only adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that includes the moustache is the 1984 adaptation (See Figure 16, Appendix), which is an indication of the purpose of this adaptation: communism was less regarded as a threat as explained in the chapter on the torture scene, and therefore including the moustache would have been less regarded as a direct confrontation with communist leadership. Instead, it shows the faithfulness of the adaptation to its source material.

Another interesting idea that the 1984 adaptation has added is the use of a salute to strengthen the idea of the power of Big Brother. The first scene, where the people are having their Two Minute Hate, is filled with people randomly standing up, crossing their arms and throwing them up against Goldstein (See Figure 17, Appendix). In an interview at the Orwell Prize Festival of Oxford in 2009, director Radford explained that he dissected totalitarianism in five different aspects to portray it vividly on screen: there had to be a leader, an anthem, a flag, propaganda films, and a salute. Friedrich's definition of totalitarianism can be found in this as well: the leader is the one ruler, whereas the anthem and salute are ways for the

terroristic police to sort out the potential criminals. The propaganda films are part of the communications monopoly: they influence the hate against the enemies. The salute, according to Radford, "was a sort of doublethink salute, it means victory, but it also puts your hands in manacles. […] It also completely tightens you up. You cannot do anything else with [your hands]." The inclusion of the salute shows how stimulating the collective is. As Winston experiences in the novel,

> In the Two Minutes Hate he could not help sharing in the general delirium, but this sub-human chanting of "B-B!...B-B!" always filled him with horror. Of course he chanted with the rest: it was impossible to do otherwise. To dissemble your feelings, to control your face, to do what everyone else was doing, was an instinctive reaction. (Orwell 19-20)

In the novel, the chanting and Winston's reaction to it illustrate the horrifying nature of the situation, but the salute in the film version makes the population more aggressive and active against the images of the enemies. With their salute, they try to push away the images of the enemies and proclaim their victory. One person might not be noticed if he was not chanting along, but if that person does not stand up in a standing crowd, he or she is an immediate target for the Thoughtpolice. The connotations of the totalitarian salutes such as the Nazi salute also is powerfully vivid, especially in visual form.

4.3 Technology

It is important to note that when George Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he had grown up in a world in which public opinion was shaped by the radio, public speaking or posters. His invention of the telescreen, and especially its influence in the 1980s, has been regarded as a prophecy. According to Rodden, "whereas the Orwell of the 1950s had been held up as a Jeremiah warning against the dangers of collectivism, in the 1980s journalists and

entertainers hailed Orwell as a 'media prophet'" (62). The telescreen is the fictional forerunner of the modern television, and the technological advancement of the television is represented in the adaptations.

The novel describes the telescreen as "an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror" (Orwell 4). The 1953 adaptation takes this description literally; its telescreen is a large plaque, with smoke-like patterns moving around (See Figure 18, Appendix). As mentioned before, the goal of this particular adaptation was a warning for the threat of the communist takeover. The telescreen itself did not feature as prominently as it does in the other adaptations, because television's influence had not been as well established as it was to be in the 1980s.

The 1956 adaptation has an interesting take on the screen, as it presents a smaller, round screen with a flickering light (See Figure 19, Appendix). It seems to be a combination of two things: the round shape of an eye is combined with the light pattern of a lighthouse. Both are significant: an eye is, of course, associated with the all-seeing quality of Big Brother and the Thoughtpolice. Nothing will escape these observers. Secondly, a lighthouse functions both as a warning for nearby seamen as well as a protector of the land itself. It serves to give light in the darkness for protection, but can also function as a searchlight. In this particular context, this version of the telescreen suggests the eye of the Party, who strive to protect their system and at the same time present their people with a constant need for vigilance. This adaptation turns around the conventional idea of what the telescreen is and plays with other designs. This different design seems deliberate, because a television screen is used during the Two Minute Hate scene to show propaganda.

The telescreen of the 1984 adaptation stays true to the novel, albeit in a more grandiose way. In Winston's room, for example, the telescreen almost covers an entire wall (See Figure 20, Appendix). The contrast between this telescreen and the 1956 telescreen

illustrates the respective periods: whereas the 1956 telescreen's size is not larger than that of a clock, the 1984 telescreen covers an entire wall like a cinema screen. In the 1950s, the mass media influence of the television was only at an early stage, but televisions gained prominence rapidly. In the United States alone,

> The number of homes with TVs increased from 0.4 percent in 1948 to 55.7 percent in 1954 and to 83.2 percent four years later. No other household technology, not the telephone or indoor plumbing, had ever spread so rapidly into so many homes (Baughman).

In the 1950s, however, despite their popularity, televisions were not big machines. The 1956 adaptation thus shows a small screen in the form of an eye, as described above. By 1984, television had become a hugely influential media form, so prevalent in society that having a small 1950s television in this adaptation would not have been as frightening as the huge, wall-covering screen that is used. This telescreen cannot be ignored and no one can hide from it.

In short, the pattern of, in particular, the anti-communist propaganda is continued in these adaptations of the clothing, Big Brother and the telescreen.. The 1953 adaptation uses clothes similar to those of the Second World War: this positions the Inner Party as Nazi soldiers and the Outer Party as the Allied soldiers. The telescreen is less expanded upon for it seems less important to the total story, something that is continued in the 1956 adaptation. This adaptation also uses clothes reminiscent of the Second World War, but O'Connor's clothing is a more subdued version of the SS-uniform. The glamour of this adaptation is also found in the growing focus on the love story, making the adaptation a more subdued version of anti-communist propanganda. Only one element seems out of place in the context of anti-communist propaganda: the 1953 and 1956 adaptation both present Big Brother without the characteristic moustache, an element that would have had communist connotations. The 1984

adaptation acknowledges the growing influence of television by maximising the size of the telescreen. Moreover, it uses clothing to create more ambiguity between the Inner and Outer Party members.

Conclusion

Every adaptation interprets its source material in different ways. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, considered by many to be a political satire, has been styled to fit certain intentions. This paper aimed to show how the 1950s adaptations function as anti-communist propaganda in the Cold War, while also showing how the 1984 adaptation functions as a commentary on the totalitarian states of the year 1984 and presents the growing influence of technology.

The torture scene between protagonist Winston Smith and antagonist O'Brien shows the restrictions of television in the 1950s in terms of explicitly showing torture. Both the 1953 and 1956 adaptation present the situation with allusions, focusing on the actions of the actors instead of the technology used. The 1956 adaptation, in particular, is interesting because of its use in the Red Scare. Whether the C.I.A. was involved in the production or not, the adaptation still instills fear in the audience by having the antagonist speaking directly to the audience. The 1984 adaptation is the first adaptation that shows the torture scene explicitly, but instead of being used as anti-communist propaganda, it is used to show that torture and totalitarianism still existed in 1984.

Room 101, where enemies of the state are confronted with their deepest fears, shows how far the Party is willing to go. While the 1953 and 1956 adaptation once again show their limitations in showing actual rats, the 1984 adaptation greatly expanded upon the idea of Room 101, using it as a foreshadowing method that Winston Smith would eventually betray Julia in the room. The 1956 adaptation once again used the camera position as a direct confrontation with the audience; in this instance, they were the rats that Winston screamed at.

Visual representation of totalitarianism in these film adaptations are influenced by the creators, and these adaptations show the clear intentions of their creators. The earlier adaptations are influenced by the creators' intention of anti-communist and anti-totalitarianism propaganda: in both 1953 and 1956 the Party members are wearing uniforms

reminiscent of the Nazi costumes of the Second World War, albeit at different levels. Whereas the 1953 U.S. adaptation seems to recycle the actual costumes, the 1956 adaptation shows a more subdued influence. The 1984 adaptation shows the most faithful recreation of the novel in terms of clothing, as even O'Brien is clothed in the black overalls instead of a military uniform. In that way, O'Brien is not immediately established as the antagonist. Another significant detail is the iconic propaganda poster of Big Brother, which has been changed in the 1950s adaptations: the iconic communist moustache has been removed in both adaptations, which is surprising considering the anti-communist views that are voiced in the adaptations. Lastly, the telescreen, the iconic literary forefather of the television, shows an advanced understanding of the influence of television and media for the 1940s. Where the earlier adaptations are fairly faithful to the novel's description of the telescreen, the 1984 adaptation magnifies the telescreen into the size of a small cinema screen.

In short, all of the adaptations were influenced by their respective time periods. The earlier adaptations are deeply influenced by anti-communist sentiment. In particular the American adaptation of 1953 was upfront about its propaganda, whereas the English adaptation of 1956 seems more subdued. The 1984 adaptation shows the growing influence of technological advancement and the importance of recognising totalitarian states in modern times. Further research might include the 1954 BBC adaptation and its adaptation of the totalitarian system, or make a deeper analysis of the character of O'Brien within these adaptations. Furthermore, as plans for a new adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have resurfaced in 2012, an analysis of the historical context of this respective period in relation to totalitarianism might be an interesting point of discussion.

Appendix

The Torture Scene

Figure 1 O'Brien speaks to Winston in *1984* (1956)

Figure 2 The other side of the previous figure: Winston reacts to O'Brien in *1984* (1956)

Room 101

Figure 3 Winston screaming as he sees the rats in *1984* (1956)

Symbolical Ideology

Clothes

Figure 4 O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1953*)*

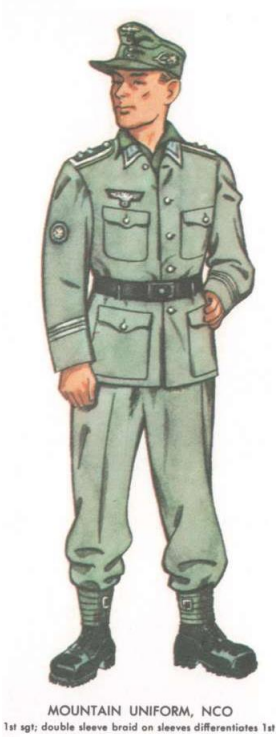

Figure 5 German Mountain uniform (Clancy)

Figure 6 Women's uniform in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

(1953)

Figure 7 Female factory worker at the home front in Texas, 1942 (Hollem)

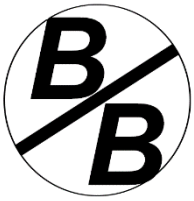

Figure 8 Big Brother patch in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1953)

Figure 9 Party member's uniform in *1984* (Murphy 1956)

Figure 10 Anti-Sex League Sash in *1984* (1956)

Figure 11 O'Brien in *1984* (1956)

Figure 12 Allgemeine SS uniform, 1932 (NSDAP)

Figure 13 Party member's uniform with O'Brien (Richard Burton) in his black overalls at the front in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

Symbols

Figure 14 Big Brother poster in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1953)

Figure 15 Winston runs past a Big Brother poster in *1984* (Brake 1956)

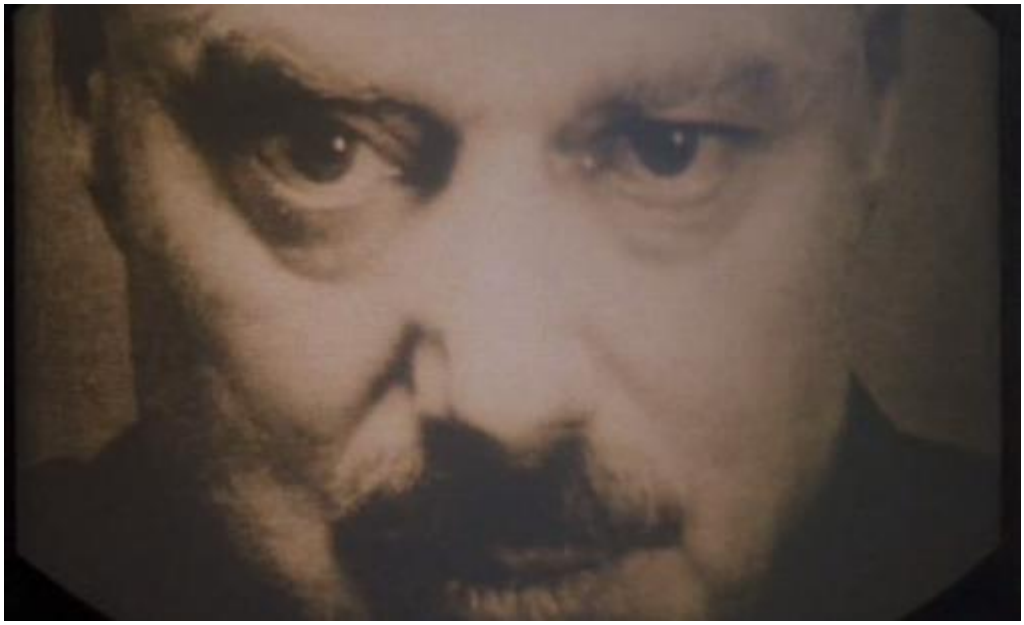

Figure 16 Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

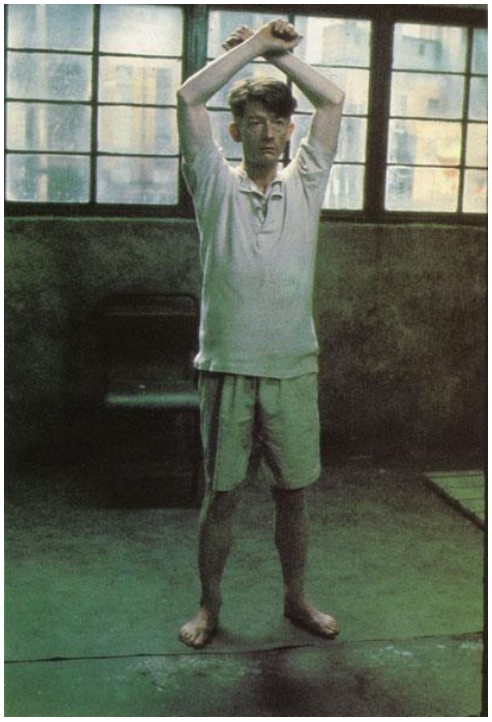

Figure 17 Winston salutes Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

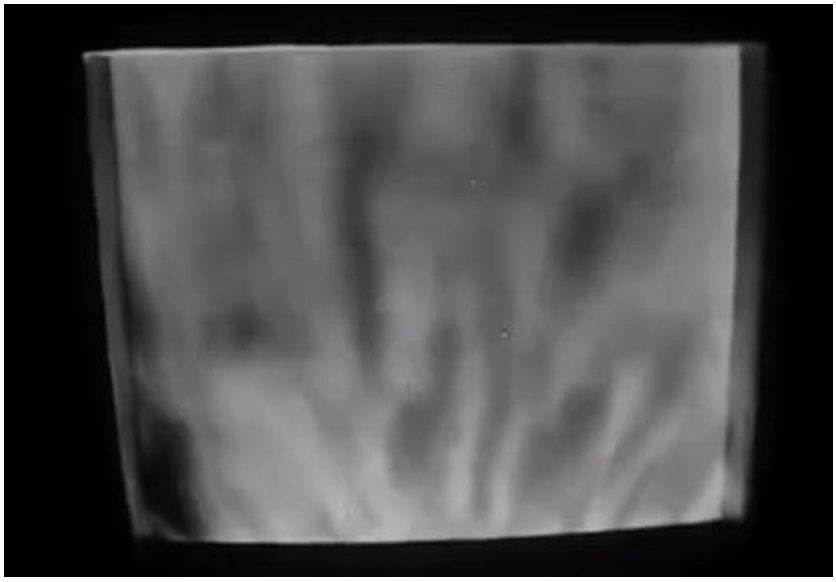

Figure 18 Telescreen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1953)

Figure 19 Telescreen in *1984* (1956)

Figure 20 Telescreen in Winston's room in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

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Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen

Versie september 2014

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De plagiaatregels gelden ook voor concepten van papers of (hoofdstukken van) scripties die voor feedback aan een docent worden toegezonden, voorzover de mogelijkheid voor het insturen van concepten en het krijgen van feedback in de cursushandleiding of scriptieregeling is vermeld.

In de Onderwijs- en Examenregeling (artikel 5.15) is vastgelegd wat de formele gang van zaken is als er een vermoeden van fraude/plagiaat is, en welke sancties er opgelegd kunnen worden.

Onwetendheid is geen excuus. Je bent verantwoordelijk voor je eigen gedrag. De Universiteit Utrecht gaat ervan uit dat je weet wat fraude en plagiaat zijn. Van haar kant zorgt de Universiteit Utrecht ervoor dat je zo vroeg mogelijk in je opleiding de principes van wetenschapsbeoefening bijgebracht krijgt en op de hoogte wordt gebracht van wat de instelling als fraude en plagiaat beschouwt, zodat je weet aan welke normen je je moeten houden.

Hierbij verklaar ik bovenstaande tekst gelezen en begrepen te hebben.
Naam: Laura Kouters Studentnummer: 3909670
Datum en handtekening: *18 Februari 2015*   

Dit formulier lever je bij je begeleider in als je start met je bacheloreindwerkstuk of je master scriptie.

Het niet indienen of ondertekenen van het formulier betekent overigens niet dat er geen sancties kunnen worden genomen als blijkt dat er sprake is van plagiaat in het werkstuk.