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Words as Weapons:

**An Analysis of the Discursive Practices of Power and Resistance Constituted
Through Speech Acts in the Dystopian Novels *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.**

Dedicated to Marjolein, Gwen & Natascha.

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Introduction

ix. 1984 & The Handmaid's Tale

In some of her groundbreaking works like *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *Between Past and Future* (1961) and *Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (1961), political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) reflected on the various methods used by totalitarian regimes and concluded that totalitarianism is never content to rule only by external means or a machinery of violence, because due to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion; “totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within” (Arendt 231). Totalitarianism is a complex term unifying and transcending a contrary relationship between the nihilistic will to power of party dictatorship and the rational, bureaucratic organization of state power (Resch 142).

In *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2003) totalitarianism is defined as: 1) Of, relating to, being or imposing a form of government in which the political authority exercises absolute and centralized control over all aspects of life, the individual is subordinated to the state, and opposing political and cultural expression is suppressed 2) A form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator (not restricted by a constitution or laws or opposition) and 3) Based on a political system in which ordinary people have no power and are controlled by the government (Summers 175). During the thirties, writers as George Orwell, Franz Borkenau, Arthur Koestler and Ignazio Silone, began using the term totalitarianism to denote the perversion of socialist ideals under Stalin and the paradoxical similarity between Stalinism and the political style and methods by which Hitler had “resolved” the contradictions of capitalism (Resch 142). The term totalitarianism shortly encompasses a militantly anti-liberal and anti-bourgeois philosophy hostile to ideas of individualism or individual rights. Unlike other forms of tyranny that occur under dictatorships, the key aspect of totalitarianism is the desire for complete control over the hearts and bodies, minds and souls, of the citizens of the nation (Claeys 119).

A totalitarian regime consists of a one-party state that has a complete monopoly over the economic, cultural and informational sources. It develops a cult of leadership, utopian propaganda and terror to intimidate the population in order to rise to power (119). The totalitarian state infiltrates the minds of its citizens through a

discourse that consists of an Utopian ideology, which is often framed around hostility towards any individual unable to find its place within the limited set of terms in the ideological paradigm that the totalitarian party has set to its people. Through a process of scapegoating the party enables the destruction of domestic enemies, such as the Jews under the Nazi's, the kulaks under Stalin or the intellectuals under the reign of Pol Pot (Atwood, *Silencing the Scream*, 45).

Because totalitarianism demands the absolute submission of its citizens to the state, the totalitarian government leaves no part of an individual's life uncontrolled. Totalitarian regimes implement surveillance techniques to annihilate the boundaries between the individual and the state (Claeys 119). Furthermore, totalitarian nations are devoted to maintaining their power by the means of surveillance, suppression of information and stark violence (Johnson 71). This way, the totalitarians poison their citizens into a state of lethargy, shatter their individuality and succeed in enslaving an entire population. As Luban puts it, Hannah Arendt judged totalitarianism to be a moral and "epistemological" crisis. She defines this "epistemological" crisis as the problem of understanding when "we are confronted with something which has destroyed our categories of thought and standards of judgment" (Dish 671).

Examples of such monolithic and dictatorial states, which have imprisoned their inhabitants and successfully shattered any form of individualism, known as Ingsoc and Gilead, are portrayed in the dystopian novels *1984* (1949) by George Orwell and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (1985). Set in a distant future, these fictional states have succeeded in marginalising its inhabitants to nothing more than little radars in a system, which should be controlled at all cost, if the system wishes to sustain itself. The citizens of Oceania and Gilead are enslaved, threatened and starved to an abusive degree by their government: it violates human rights.

In the corpus of dystopian literature, George Orwell and Margaret Atwood have reached a topicality by depicting hauntingly realistic portraits of ordinary people who lived their lives under the reign of a totalitarian society. Due to their pressing political urgency the novels never fail to generate new literary criticism that can be added to their wide reception (Rodden 11). Orwell's novel has been read as a warning, a deterministic prophecy, a humanistic satire on contemporary events, as well as a rejection of socialism and an anarchist protest against the abuse of power both in Orwell's and other societies (Crick 146). Nowadays, *1984* is a date that is regularly mentioned as an illustration of the ultimate warning against the dangers

posed by technocratic modernism, as “many people believe that the relentless advance of science and technology in recent decades have brought us to the very brink of the Orwellian nightmare” (Posner 1). Loosely based on *1984*, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is often defined as a by-product of a blossoming cultural feminism which shows that power is gendered. It became exemplary for a feminist turn in the dystopian tradition, as protagonists in dystopian novels tended to be male (Howells 164). As Howells puts it, the choice of a female character ‘turns the traditionally masculine dystopian genre upside down’, so that instead of Orwell’s analysis of the public policies and institutions of states oppression, Atwood gives a heterodox account by a Handmaid who has been pushed to the margins of political power (164). The Handmaid fights in order to preserve her sanity and critics have commented on Offred as a ‘developing consciousness’ (Johnsson 70). As Hansot argues, the genius of *The Handmaid’s Tale* lies in the ordinary quality of the dystopian lives it depicts: “Under the cover of the familiar routines of shopping, cleaning and cooking, handmaids develop hidden transcripts, short fragments of speech, small deviations in posture and glance” (57).

The term ‘dystopia’ or bad place was introduced by John Stuart Mill during a parliamentary debate in 1868 and entered the common currency in the twentieth century (Claeys 108). Dystopian fiction narrates the tale of a society ruled by a totalitarian dictatorship that puts its population continuously on trial. The dystopic society finds its essence in literal as metaphorical concentration camps, that is, in enslaving entire classes of its own citizens. Moreover, the dystopic society stands out in justifying violence by law and hereby preys upon itself (Gottlieb 41). Like a family that maintains its framework but is unable to fulfil its function to advance the good of each member of the family, the dystopia is a place of continuous conflict. In the words of Gottlieb: “the dystopian society is what we would today call dysfunctional; it reveals the lack of the very qualities that traditionally justify or set the *raison d’être* for a community” (41). As a result, the dystopian society is ultimately a death-bound society, where the ruling elite clings to its existence as parasites feeding on their own people, whom they kill in the process (Gottlieb 41).

The dystopian turn occurred due to social-political factors, as the combination of the rise of eugenics and socialism contributed to its development, but it has also been argued that the Utopian genre itself caused the dystopian turn. While utopias, anti-utopias and dystopias were written prior to his time, the prevailing manifestation until the first half of the twentieth century was Thomas More’s famous *Utopia*,

published in 1516 (Fitting 136). Utopias depicted worlds, which offered a blueprint for an alternative society and were juxtaposed to the author's society, thus offering social criticism and implicit suggestions for improvement (136). One could argue that many of us today live in the Utopias of the past, but because the liberal paradigm of stable democracy is itself also a Utopian ideal, it is susceptible to dystopian failure (Claeys 108).

In a nutshell, the dystopian genre offers a condensed guide to the multiple responses of fiction to Cold War realities. As Hammond points out, from 1945 to 1989 dystopianism was an 'Cold war literary mode' that grew rapidly in order to caution against contemporary developments, like the rapid flourishing of the utopian and idealistic blueprints for political change. Dystopian fiction, in other words, satirized the utopian aspiration to transform society (Hammond 64). As Talmon argues, the imaginative desire to create an improved society in which human behaviour was superior to the norm, implied a drift towards controlling behaviour which could result in some form of police state (Claeys 108).

The Russian Revolution produced an alternative to capitalism, but as the ideals in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) written by Karl Marx failed under the dictatorships of Stalin, Lenin and Mao, Marx's communism transformed from a revolutionary idea to a horrific state of affairs once practised. This left people disillusioned. The reality of the Soviet Union contributed to the rise of the anti-utopia, beginning with Yevegeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), followed by Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949) (Fitting 140). It is no wonder that after 1945, with the traumatic memory of the Holocaust, the reports of Stalinist atrocities and the insidious spread of US hegemony, the fear of political idealism intensified. Consequently, Orwell's *1984* was written after much of the scale of totalitarian brutality had been revealed (Claeys 118).

As a self-proclaimed antifascist and democratic socialist, Orwell was disturbed by the inhumane collectivism of the Soviet Union. In particular by the ruthless ends-over-means mentality of the Communist Party dictatorship and the total control exercised by the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet state (Resch 142). In a rather similar way, Atwood conceived the Republic of Gilead as a logical outcome of the theocracy of the fundamentalist government of the United States Puritan founding fathers (Shirley 857). During *1984*, the year in which critics looked back on George

Orwell's dystopia to assess how much of his vision we had escaped, Margaret Atwood sat down to write *The Handmaid's Tale* (Neuman 859).

Dystopianism in Ruth Levita's words not only 'represents the fear of what the future may hold if we do not act to avert catastrophe', but can also form what Gottlieb calls "an accurate reflection of the worst of all possible worlds experienced as a historical reality" (Hammond 665). One could argue that the primary function of a dystopia is to send out danger signals to its readers. In the words of Howells: "Many dystopias are self-consciously warnings. A warning implies that choice, and therefore hope, are still possible" (Howells 166). The stories do not convey one single political premise; the novels discuss a wide variety of themes that are interwoven in a brilliant way, containing the mass media, the destruction of history, the betrayal of the intellectuals and the debauching of language, as well as chosen ignorance and the denial of an objective truth. These themes are combined with love affairs, friendships, daily routines and personal memories (Crick 147).

1984 depicts a heartless world where children are trained to denounce their parents to the Thought Police; in the One State and the World State there are no true families or bonds of affection. The overall effect is that actions previously associated with the individual's private world become public domain, fully under the punitive control of the state machine. Even more important, by breaking down the private world of each inhabitant, the monstrous state succeeds in breaking down the core of the individual mind and what remains is the pliable, numb consciousness of mass man. Zamiatin, Huxley, and Orwell warn in unison that once we accept such a process, it could become world-wide and irreversible (Gottlieb 12).

Atwood's narrative utilizes many fundamental elements common in dystopias. Like *1984*'s Oceania, Gilead is always at war with external enemies. Moreover, it faces scarce natural resources and those who do not fit in society's norms are re-educated, expelled, or executed. Like *We*, *The Handmaid's Tale* presents totalitarian politics and repressive laws and similar to Huxley's *Brave New World*, Gilead is a hierarchical society with highly differentiated roles, status-rankings and permeated with ceremonial indoctrination (Johnson 71). Gilead is a totalitarian state and a true hierarchy: those at the top of society have power, those at the bottom are powerless (Somacarrera 53).

The novels narrate the stories of Winston Smith and Offred (formerly called June) living their lives under absolute despotism. In *1984*, Britain has been reduced to a satellite of the US and renamed as Airstrip One. Airstrip One is governed by a Party that, despite professing a form of Socialism, pursues power for the sake of power, and sustains it through propaganda, surveillance, and consequent terror (Hammond 665).

The government consists of four Ministries: the Ministry of Truth, the Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Love and the Ministry of Plenty (Orwell 4). The ministries are guarded by the dictatorial ruler and omniscient party leader known as 'Big Brother'. Big Brother, a mysterious fascist and invisible leader, keeps a close eye on Winston through telescreens and monitors every detail of his life. The Party has invented the language Newspeak. The social control is maintained by the Thought Police, who controls the slightest spark of independent thought. Winston is a member of the ruling Party Ingsoc in the nation of Oceania. Working at the Ministry of Truth, where his task is to alter historical records for the sake of the Party and translate them from Oldspeak to Newspeak, Winston is constantly confronted with the methods that Oceania uses to bend the truth in order for it to fit with their own ideological needs.

Upon entering his flat in the opening chapter of *1984*, Winston decides to keep a journal, even though he knows full well this is illegal. When a dark-haired girl named Julia, who works in the Fiction department, gives him a note telling that she loves him, they start a secret affair. As sex and love are for the majority forbidden by the state this is dangerous, but Winston and Julia find a safe place to hide, in a room above an antique shop. Throughout the narrative, Winston's resistance to the totalitarian regime grows stronger, but he and Julia are trapped by the prominent party member O'Brien and brought to The Ministry of Love, where Winston is tortured and brainwashed until he learns to love Big Brother's society again. Winston is treated as a small deviant in the system, who spends his remaining days as an alcoholic waiting for the definitive bullet in the back (Orwell 297).

Set in a futuristic United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century after a violent military coup has wiped out the President and the Congress, Gilead is a totalitarian regime run on patriarchal lines derived from the Old Testament and seventeenth-century American Puritanism. Combined with a strong infusion of the American New Right ideology of the 1980's, there are strict class differences among the imprisoned population (Howells 95). Everyone has been drafted into the service of the state. People are classified according to prescribed roles: Commanders, Wives,

Aunts, Handmaids, Eyes, Guardians and Econowives (Howells 95). The Commander's wives are of higher standing than the Marthas, or the domestic servants. If a Commander's Wife is unable to bear children, a fertile woman must be brought in to be impregnated by him. These women are the Handmaids, prepared only for pregnancy, their status and purpose made evident by their uniforms and their names (formed by Of plus the first name of their current Commander). To legitimate the Commanders power and their exclusive access to the Handmaids, Gilead's infrastructure requires a highly developed and complex structure of power (Johnson 71). Infertile women are enslaved in a society threatened with extinction where, due to pollution and natural disasters, the national birth-rate has fallen to a catastrophically low level (Johnson 71). Existing as an outgrowth of an Utopian attempt to purify American culture, the Gileadean regime views females who are associated with 'Mother Earth' as dark and native forces threatening patriarchal rule (Dodson 71).

Offred is enslaved in the ranks of the Handmaids and is assigned the task to bear children for elite groups. She has been trained in The Leah and Rachel Re-education Centre by the Aunts, a place where Offred and the Handmaids are treated like chattel, guided by Aunts with "electric cattle prods" (Dodson 75). The disciplinarian organization of the Handmaids collective resembles that of military forces, as Aunt Lydia announces at the beginning of the novel: "Think of it as being in the army" (Somacarrera 53). Offred describes herself as one of the 'two-legged wombs' and 'ambulatory chalices' (Atwood 128).

Since Handmaids are considered to be property of the Commanders, Offred's freedom is limited. The structure of the household isolates Handmaids: each is the only Handmaid in the house, usually disliked by the Commander's Wife, and more trouble than help to the Marthas, whose tasks include cooking the Handmaid healthy food and cutting it, because she cannot be trusted with a knife (Stillman 74). Defined in terms of her reproductive potential, the Handmaid has little to be other than a set of ovaries (Stillman 74). Offred's life changes when the Commander asks for her one evening and invites her to play Scrabble with him, an activity that is forbidden for women. They have secret meetings behind the back of the Commander's Wife, Serena Joy, and the activities of reading and Scrabble make Offred's life a little more bearable. When Serena Joy encourages Offred to visit their staff member Nick in order to become pregnant, Offred starts an affair with Nick as well. But once Serena

Joy discovers that her husband has taken Offred to Jezebel's, a place where Commanders mingle with prostitutes, she decides to send Offred away. Nick visits her and explains that 'The Eyes' coming for her are actually members of a subversive group called Mayday. Whether the black van will lead to Offred's freedom or her death remains uncertain. The novel finishes with an epilogue set in 2195. In the epilogue a history professor named Pieixoto uses Offred's story, which is found recorded on cassette tapes, as a case-study to explain and comment on the state of Gilead, which by that time has long vanished.

The narratives of the dystopian novels point out that large scale resistance is impossible to achieve for the protagonists, that unequal power relations permeate society and that individuals in totalitarian regimes are denied all agency (Howells 164). The narrators give eye-witness testimonies of the horrors of despotism and show how the regimes have turned their inhabitants into ghosts. From the beginning of Winston's narrative, he asserts that: "You have to live- did live, from habit that became instinct- in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every moment scrutinized" (Orwell 7). Likewise, from the start of Offred's narrative, she asserts that she is a prisoner: "I am a national resource" (Atwood 5). Gilead's power reaches into every thought and act of Offred's existence, taking resistance and neutralizing it or turning it into a support for the system (Johnson 71).

But in the words of Foucault: "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93) and both Winston and Offred make attempts to reclaim their sense of self through their focalisation by creating their own narrative, which they stunningly do so with the same language that suppresses them. Though the protagonists are confined to being of service to the state and their actions of rebellion against it are fragile, these attempts are simultaneously attempts to regain their individuality and thus worth exploring (Crick 150). The totalitarian governments have rigid rules that no citizen is allowed to surpass at any rate and these rules are a practical outcome of the disciplinary power, which underpins the utopian ideal held by the societies. The subject matter of ideology consists of ideas, ideas are made of language and language consists of grammar made up of single words, words which are part of an arbitrary system in which meaning is conveyed through an endless repetitive web of signifier and the signified, ad infinitum (Chandler 1).

The configuration of language and power has always been crucial in the construction of dystopias. Speech, as Aristotle noted, is what makes us political animals, and political interaction exhibits a rich vernacular of complaint, protest, intimidation, compromise, allegiance, loyalty, division, dissent, inequity, and so forth (Bird 112). Throughout the history of dystopian fiction, the conflict represented in the novels has often turned on the control of language. As Atwood suggests, the aim of absolute power is to abolish words: “so that only the voice and words are left to those of the owners in powers, and those who are not, are silenced” (Wilson 51). Winston and Offred seize the mutilated language back and make it their own, which gives the narratives their appeal as personal stories of resistance against tyranny (Howells 165).

In this thesis, my research aim is to discuss the role of language in *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* by looking at the linguistic methods the totalitarian regimes deploy in order to analyse how they interpellated and transformed their citizens into passive puppets. As I have outlined, the totalitarian governments have imprisoned their inhabitants by creating a small linguistic space in which people can only narrate their stories within the ideology that re-enforces the power of their state, but what means and methods did the totalitarians use for this? What features makes up totalitarian speeches? How does totalitarian language work? In what ways is the totalitarian propaganda re-enforced?

Moreover, I want to investigate the schizophrenic reality that has captured Winston and Offred, by examining the ways in which they reclaim their repressed language in order to destroy their suppression. What narrative strategies do Winston and Offred use in order to reclaim their agency? Do they succeed in creating a narrative of their own? By creating a comparative dynamics between the novels, I hope to provide an analysis of the discursive practices of power and simultaneously show that even though words can be used as weapons for suppression, they can be transformed into tools of resistance as well.

My research aim is to explore the subversive power that language contains and to provide an analysis of its deconstructive strength in discursive practices of power. Secondly, I hope to contribute some insight into the methods used by totalitarian regimes presented in these fictional works to show how the poisonous process of indoctrination works. Thirdly, the key question is whether the characters succeed in liberating themselves from the totalitarian discourse by linguistic acts of resistance. Thus my central research question is: ‘How do the protagonists in the dystopian

novels of *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* seize back their mutilated language, in what ways does the performative component of speech enable them to constitute acts of resistance against the despotic-totalitarian regimes imprisoning them and do they succeed in creating a narrative of their own?'

The political-philosophical component of dystopian literature has been analysed to a great extent in the academic world, but my research might advance it, as I will combine theories from a Linguistic, Psychoanalytical, Neo-Marxist and Gender department. One of the central terms that investigates the relationship between language utterances, language in our daily context and power relations, is the concept of performativity, which I will trace from its linguistic inception to its more politically encompassing full-grown body. The goal of my dystopian case-study is to investigate how citizens can collectively transform into ideological vehicles by exploring the way totalitarian regimes use language, but more importantly, my research will hopefully show how acts of performative resistance can create the opportunity for the protagonists to liberate their minds, no matter how small or insignificant these (speech) acts might seem in the face of totalitarian despotism.

In terms of what my case-study can contribute to the scholarly debate, I hope that my research will show that it is possible to successfully combine insights from literary scholars and political philosophers, travelling through the realms of literary currents, by tracing the development of a specific term. I hope this eclectic combination is able to create a philosophical dialectics that will allow me to discover how discursive practices of power influence the constitution of the human being as a subject. A question subtly threaded to this is why we, as human beings, are so vulnerable when it comes to dogmatism? On what does totalitarianism thrive? How does it lure its victims in?

My case-studies are works of fiction and there is no direct one-on-one relationship with our reality, as I have discussed, dystopian novels have been read as warnings to where society could end up, they do not necessarily predict where society will end up, nor are they historical guides that reflect where society has been. Nevertheless, the depth to which George Orwell and Margaret Atwood have studied totalitarianism is able to give us some clues as to which roads to avoid. So last but not least, I hope to show the conflicted relationship between power and identity configurations and how Winston and Offred's storytelling might offer a counter-historical vision on the reality of despotism.

x. Theoretical Framework: Why I Will Be Using Performativity

My theoretical framework is primarily made up of the linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin (1911-1960), the literary scholar and philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), the political philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990), the philosopher and literary critic Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and gender theorist and literary scholar Judith Butler (1956-present), who made significant contributions to the development of performativity. As far as methodological methods go, I want to establish a dynamics between the theoretical framework and the novels, so consequently I have selected passages in both novels that I will submit to a close-reading that constitute several acts of defiance. The majority of the sources I have investigated in secondary literature explain the workings of totalitarian ideology. This approach seemed best suited for covering both the totalitarian and the anti-totalitarian forces in *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Before I continue, it is important to point out here that performativity is not a unified term, as a result of its transformations since its origin, there are various interpretations on performativity. The contributions to the term are varied, ranging from a specific linguistic angle to broader philosophical insights that often accompany Foucauldian discourse analysis. There has been criticism on its incorporation in the literary field. On one hand, as Gorman puts it, *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) has preoccupied literary critics to the exclusion of anything else in Austin's hypothesization of performative utterances, which: "has been simplified, enlarged, and otherwise misinterpreted by literary theorists as the now-familiar shibboleth of "the performative" (Gorman 97). On the other hand, Digeser points out that the abstract theoretical apparatus of performativity is not needed to incorporate the basic ethical understanding that: "the deprivation of political rights, the deprecation of interests, the differences of wages, or the lack of respect that women (among other groups) have faced and continue to face" (688).

The challenge for me in this project is to find a common ground where I can do justice to and work with the term, as performativity is a tool to give interpretations on the political reality of two dystopian novels. As Digeser points out: "The notion of performativity does, imply, however, that if we shift our self-understandings it would become more difficult to legitimize these forms of treatment" (688).

Throughout this thesis, I will introduce performativity, give a bird's eye view of the transformations it has undergone and show how it has expanded under the hands of philosophers. How did performativity turn into a concept that relates to a subject's agency? How has the term been adopted for social-political ends? How are language utterances, identity constitution and discursive power practices intertwined with each other? This will include the several meanings the philosophers have conveyed to the term and how it has acquired its political-philosophical urgency. I will thus show how performativity is crucial for the analysis of *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The next chapters will be case-studies covering several aspects of the dark universes of Oceania and Gilead. The chapters first introduce the contributions on performativity and are furthermore combined in duos. Within *Sticks and Stones*, *Cognitive Dissonance*, *Resistance* and *Silencing the Scream*, each part consists of a chapter on the totalitarian way as well as a chapter on the protagonists' deviant acts. *Newspeak*, *Slogans & Speeches*, *Ceremonial Indoctrination* and *Silenced Voices* focus on the implications and results of indoctrination. These chapters show how the totalitarian regimes manage to transform their citizens whereas *Subversive Speech Acts*, *Internal Satire*, *Remembering the Past* and *Creating a Narrative of One's Own* focus on the characters' resistance.

With the assistance of Jacques Derrida, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler these chapters will explore the processes in which the protagonists are interpellated to take up the subject-positions dictated to them by those in power, but simultaneously show how blank spaces offer the opportunity for deconstructing those subject-positions. *Silenced Voices* explores the consequences of the internalized totalitarian regimes and *Creating a Narrative of One's Own* is dedicated to invest in what ways the protagonists attempt to liberate themselves from the regimes and regain their agency. One of the main themes interwoven throughout this thesis is whether Winston's and Offred's construction of a 'narrative of one's own' succeeds, or whether their marginalized autobiographical narratives are defeated in the face of totalitarian despotism.

As Stanley Bill put it in the foreword of *Totalitarian Speech* (2014) by Michael Glowinski, totalitarian power has two primary means of social control at its disposal: violence and the discourse of propaganda. However mighty the pen, the sword may always cut off the hand that clutches it: "yet the linguistic manipulations of Newspeak form an even more insidious and far-reaching means of control, as

George Orwell revealed in *1984*” (Bill 90). If a totalitarian regime can brainwash a society to believe that two plus two equals five, then violence becomes increasingly superfluous (90). However, according to Glowinski, who devoted his post-soviet life to the analysis of totalitarian speech, literary scholars and other intellectuals have an important role to play in resisting this process. By revealing how totalitarian speech functions, they can expose the mechanisms and methods of manipulation, rendering them less persuasive or even ineffectual (90). As Atwood explains in “Silencing the Scream” (1994): “perhaps the very least we can expect is to remind ourselves that we [...] harbour within ourselves the potential for becoming a repressive “them” and that one of the first symptoms of this regrettable change, in any society, is the silencing of dialogue and the demonizing of other human beings” (Atwood 45).

xi. A Very Short History of Performativity

Every once in a while, a philosopher introduces a term he invented that might not seem significant at first (as philosophers and literary scholars love to introduce, fill in, and alter terms regularly), but that turns out to be particularly useful in several fields. The introduced concept sparks off inspiration and all of a sudden - fierce debate breaks loose. Several scholars pick up the notion, feel obliged to comment, challenge, elaborate and gain a better understanding of it. Encouraged by the concept, they expand its meaning and incorporate it into their own theoretical framework. Such is the case with the notion of the performative. Philosophical usages of performativity have come to prominence as Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler and many literary theorists have reworked J.L. Austin’s theories of the performative, as part of an ongoing post-structural critique of agency, subjectivity, language and law (Reinelt 202).

During the 1990’s, the most important aspect of the dialogue on performativity was how to place the term within a larger philosophical movement in order to explore an intersection between divorced Anglo-American philosophies of language and pragmatism on the one hand (Austin, John Searle, Noam Chomsky, Richard Rorty) and continental philosophies of deconstruction, post-phenomenology and post-Marxism on the other (Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Slavoj Žižek). I shall be focusing on the latter. Judith Butler has been the central spin doctor in this movement, as her revisions of Hegel, Nietzsche and Foucault found a

fruitful articulation with Derrida and Austin in her own theory of performativity. After the post-structural critique of the subject, Butler brought back the political stakes in her work on the performative while shedding new light on the dynamics between agency and resistance (Reinelt 203), which is the main focus of my own research project. Literary critics have embraced the notion of the performative and it transformed into a concept that helped to characterize literary discourse (Culler 96).

But why is this the case? Literary works claim to tell us about the world, and if they succeed, they do so by bringing into being the characters and events they narrate. In the ‘Declaration of Independence’ of the United States, for instance, the key sentence runs: “We therefore [...] do solemnly publish and declare that these United colonies are and of right out to be free and independent states”. The declaration that these are independent is a performative statement, because it is supposed to create the new reality to which it refers (Culler 99). What is the relationship between a political act, like a Declaration of Independence that creates a new political situation, and literary utterances, that try to invent something new?

Both the political and the literary act depend on a complex combination of the performative and constative where success consists of bringing into being the condition to which it refers (99). For instance, the terms ‘Wonderland’ and ‘Rabbit Hole’ occur in the famous tale by Lewis Carroll *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and they have been appropriated in our culture to such an extent that they have become terms on their own. Consequently, this literary work has enhanced our language and created a new linguistic space that people associate with crazy tea parties, rabbit holes as psychedelic drugs. Terms from a fictional work have been appropriated in our world. So performativity - defined at its broadest - denotes the fact that language is not merely descriptive but often constitutive of reality (though it does not follow that you automatically tumble into a rabbit hole by stating you want to tumble into a rabbit hole, unfortunately). Language is performative in the sense that it doesn’t just transmit information but performs acts by its repetition and created an established discursive practice which constitutes our social reality (Bird 98).

After Austin’s passing, ordinary language approaches fell out of favour in areas of philosophy and slipped from the foreground of academic attention. The Austinian program has not been taken up by political theorists in any systematic way, and the stock image of ordinary language philosophy as politically disengaged and conservative has persisted (Bird 108). Ewa Ziarek explains how Derrida and Butler

both found possibility on the unlikely ground of failure. For Butler and Derrida, the possibility of failure and impurity in language afflicting the repetition of linguistic norms (like all performative acts) is not only an unfortunate predicament but a positive condition of possibility. By opening the possibility of intervention and redescription of linguistic norms, reiteration not only stresses the historicity of the law but also opens an incalculable future (Loxley 129).

Derrida relates the performative to the general problem of acts that originate or inaugurate, acts that create something new, in the political as well as literary sphere. The work of Neo-Marxist Louis Althusser is significant in this respect because, often filtered through the works of his pupil Michel Foucault, it has become the decisive influence on postmodern critiques of ideology. In particular Althusser's emphasis on the materiality of ideas sparked interest, as he focused on institutions, rituals and practices which often endorse repetitive language to create an ideological and thus 'false' consciousness. Examples of this are churches, families and schools.

For Foucault it is no longer possible to use terms as a 'true' or false' or 'consciousness', from the Foucauldian perspective, there are discourses which have given rise to truth-effects, but the fact that they have been produced by human beings deprives them of any objectively veridical character (Ryder 153). Foucault's focus therefore centres on disciplinary power of the *dispositif*, that does not punish subjects or destroy them but practices control at all times (Digeser 664). Judith Butler tried to tie Derrida's critique of Austin as well as Foucault's critique of Althusser to theories of the body in order to offer an account of how the norms that govern speech come to inhabit the body (665).

Butler's work on the performative seeks to provide an account of the possibility of redescription of sexual norms possible in the structure of the speech act itself and its relationship to the body. For while the subject is subjected to certain norms, the law itself is dependent on being cited, and is itself confirmed in the repetition of its prescriptions. However, since performatives can fail (this shall be explained in the chapter on Austin) failure is constitutive of the rupture between conditions and effects of the speech act. The resulting destabilization of law allows an opening for resistance and also for transformation in Derrida's iteration (Reinelt 204).

For J.L Austin, the concept of the performative helps us to think about a particular aspect of language neglected by earlier philosophers. Austin is interested in

ritualistic speech acts, like promises. For Butler, these ritualistic speech acts, are part of the massive and obligatory repetition that produce social realities.

The performative is a model for thinking about social processes where a number of matters are at stake: the nature of identity and how it is produced, the functioning of social norms, the fundamental problem of ‘agency’ and under what conditions I can be a responsible subject who chooses my acts (Culler 105). There is a big difference between what is at stake for Austin and Butler which shows that the meaning of performativity has expanded (Bird 97). As Butler explains in *Excitable Speech* (1997) “To bridge the Austinian and Althusserian views, one would need to offer an account of how the subject constituted through the address of the Other becomes then a subject capable of addressing others” (Butler 25). Neither the Austinian promise nor the Althusserian model require a pre-existing mental state to “perform” in the way that subjects do. But where Austin assumes a subject who speaks, Althusser postulates a ceremonial voice that brings the subject into being (Butler 19). Combining their theories means that the subject is neither a sovereign with a purely instrumental relation to language, nor a mere effect of agency in pure complicity with prior operations of power (25). Yet political theorists today rarely give ordinary language the sort of patient attention that Austin recommended. As Bird has argued, the continuing relevance of his ideas for the practice of political theory remains unappreciated (107).

Nevertheless, performativity has been appropriated in the literary field. The positive outcome of this appropriation is that term has come to denote more than the performing of a speech act; performativity enabled literary theorists to realize that language often designates and constitutes our world. Performativity helped literary scholars to understand that we are subjected to language and that there is a constant tension between our intentions, agency and identity in relation to the outside world. Performativity gained a wide understanding and by illustrating that language has a performative and shaping power, the concept transformed into a political tool for discourse analysis. Therefore model of the performative is highly pertinent for the dismantling of totalitarian speech.

Chapter 1: Sticks and Stones

1.1. Austin's Speech Acts

In 1955, the linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin gave a series of lectures at Harvard University on his newly developed Speech Act Theory, which have been collected and published as *How To Do Things with Words* (1960). In the Speech Act theory, Austin proposed a distinction between two sorts of utterances: constative and performative utterances. Constative utterances such as 'George promised to come,' make a statement, describe a state of affairs and are either true or false. Performative utterances, or performatives, are not true or false and actually perform the action to which they refer (Austin 6). To say 'I promise to pay you' is not to describe a state of affairs but to perform the act of promising; the utterance is itself the act. Austin writes that when, in a wedding ceremony, the priest or civil official asks: 'Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?' and I respond 'I do,' I do not describe anything, I am getting married: 'I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.' (Culler 95).

For this reason Austin christens this kind of sentences or utterances as performative, to make clear that 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action' (Culler 95). Performative utterances do not describe but perform the action they designate. Performatives are speech acts, cases in which saying something counts as an action: they serve to alter the world and to bring something new into existence, or to modify, create or establish a certain relationship between people (Leitch 1429). Depending on the circumstances; the speech act may be 'felicitous or 'infelicitous', by which Austin meant successful or unsuccessful. If I say 'I do,' I may not succeed in marrying if, for example, the person performing the ceremony is not authorized to perform weddings in the community. In this case, the utterance will 'misfire' and fail to achieve effect. The utterance will in Austin's terminology be infelicitous (Culler 95).

Performative utterances are not true or false in themselves, but successful or unsuccessful. They possess the felicitous or un felicitous dimension, in which various sorts of misfires can occur (not invoking the right words at the right time), which render a performative a failure (Digeser 662). For instance, if I am able to warn you (illocution) that there is a tiger in the field, my warning might serve to persuade you

(perlocution) not to jump or run. If you recognise my warning as a warning, hearing it and taking it in the right way – if, as Austin puts it, you secure the uptake, then my act of warning is accomplished and my speech act has been felicitous (Loxley 19).

What is at stake is the fact that Austin looks at the way in which our words are simultaneously deeds. The promises, assertions, bets, threats and thanks that we offer one another are not linguistic descriptions of non-linguistic actions; they are actions in themselves, actions of the linguistic kind. In the words of Loxley: “They are ‘performed’, like other actions, or take place, like other worldly events, and thus make a difference in the world: it could be said that they produce a different world, even if only for a single speaker and a single addressee” (2). As Austin comments: “In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it” (Austin 8).

Performatives are words that do things in our language: promises, threats, warnings, bets, declarations, vows, oaths and so on, that largely depend on their context. The central attribute of a performative is that in the proper circumstances, saying the words makes it happen. The performative brings to stage a vision on the use of language previously considered marginal - an active, world-making vision on language. In the words of Austin: “Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech-situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act” (Austin 19).

The question follows how speech acts work in their natural habitat, as ordinary language used in daily life. Both the illocutionary and perlocutionary force describe the pragmatics of the speech act, but denote different aspects of the pragmatic side: “whereas the work of the illocutionary is accomplished in saying what is said, that of the perlocutionary is more a matter of the contingent consequences or effect that might or not follow the issuing of a speech act” (Loxley 18).

By putting ordinary language usages under pressure, the philosopher exposes the substructure of norms and metaphors that permit or require certain ways of using language. Austin claimed, for example, that we would, and should, never ordinarily say “A wounded B for the purpose of killing him”. As he showed, reflecting on why this phrase is put this way, reveals much about our implicit conceptions of responsible action. It is illuminating to reflect on the proper use of the word “wound.” Why, as Norwood Hanson asked, does it make sense to speak of someone “receiving a wound

in battle,” but not to say that an Eskimo “wounds” the dead whale whose blubber he is hacking off? (Bird 111). Ordinary language, incited within everyday political interaction, is as important source of insight precisely because it makes us aware of its moral implications (Bird 110). Having anatomised the speech act, J.L Austin showed that words can be deeds that constitute our actions, that there are several dimensions embedded in their daily context (which one cannot grasp from its grammatical logic), and consequently, that language shapes us. Words shape our worlds; they can make us, break us, haunt us or hail us into a certain role.

1.2. Newspeak: linguistic violence

What they must see is the white wings only, a scrap of my face, my chin and part of my mouth. Not the eyes. I know better than to look the interpreter in the face. Most of the interpreters are Eyes, or so it's said. I also know better than to say Yes. (Atwood 27)

Upon meeting a group of Japanese tourists whilst Offred and Ofglen are doing the daily groceries for the Martha's, the danger of this seemingly innocent confrontation becomes clear through the way the Handmaids respond. The interpreter asks them whether they are happy and while the tourists lean forward to catch their answer, as the Handmaids are an exotic tourist attraction for them, there is nothing but a deafening silence. Offred notices that Ofglen is standing beside her, silent as a shadow. But Offred knows that in some cases, not speaking is equally as dangerous as speaking. So she recollects herself. “Yes, we are very happy,’ I murmur. I have to say something. What else can I say?” (Atwood 29). Throughout the majority of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred has to mind her speech very carefully. For instance, her first conversation with Serena Joy reveals how Offred calculates her speech. As she lifts her bag to walk into the Commander's house, she reflects: “I didn't say anything to her, Aunt Lydia said it was best not to speak unless they asked you a direct question” (Atwood 11).

When Serena Joy points out that Offred has no right to call her Ma'am as Offred is not a Martha, Offred accidentally answers with ‘Yes, Ma'am' again and reflects: “They used to have dolls, for little girls, that would talk if you pulled a string at the back: I thought I was sounding like that, voice of a monotone, voice of a doll”

(Atwood 13). Offred's speech is reduced to the speech of a puppet that constantly has to anticipate which answer will help her to survive, something she summarizes when she observes the Commander for the first time: "But watch out, Commander, I tell him in my head. I've got my eye on you. One false move and I'm dead" (83). For Offred, as well as the household staff she belongs to, there is a strict communication schedule everyone has to obey, which results in a quiet house (52). She reflects on the Commander's existence under the reign of Gilead: "It must be just fine. It must be hell. It must be very silent" (83). As Glowinski points out, totalitarian language tends to represent a breakdown of language by imposing certain choices and excluding others, tracing out the boundaries of possible speech. Naturally, the more the totalitarian language heads in this direction, the more it breaks it down (157).

The remaining language in Gilead is Biblical language: Offred remembers the prayers she has been taught: "for lunch it was the Beatitudes. Blessed be this, blessed be that. They played it from a disc, the voice was a man's. Blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the silent" (84). Getting into the biblical vocabulary includes adopting new exchanges of greeting. "Blessed be the fruit' Ofglen says to Offred, the accepted greeting among Handmaids; "May the Lord open." Ofglen answers, the accepted response" (Atwood 17). Ofglen informs her that more rebels have been defeated, to which Offred answers with "Praise be". (Atwood 17). Their conversation emphasizes the omnipresence of the scrutinizing gaze. The word 'eye' is everywhere; the secret police are called "The Eyes" and the Handmaids' farewell greeting "Under his Eye" refers to the divine gaze. It reminds them of the fact that everyone is under the eye of someone else.

As Glowinski points out, totalitarian language ensures to get an almost universal reach, dominating multiple regions of speech (Glowinski 158). Totalitarian regimes must become the master of language since language is the living memory of man and offers him space and opportunity for inner resistance. As Willet puts it, language constitutes a screen between the totalitarian gaze and the human body; it offers shelter of its shadow and veils the harsh light need to read bodies (Willet 70). Freedom of speech therefore threatens the totalitarian enterprise. From the totalitarian perspective, people must be cured of their language: "Signs must be purged and purified of their meaning and bodies of their substance" (Glowinski 98). As O'Brien declares to Winston: "We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with

ourselves” (Willet 70). So totalitarian power has a real stake in language and aims to dominate it, which is illustrated by Orwell in *1984* by his invention of Newspeak (Willet 70).

In this chapter, I want to show how the regimes of Oceania and Gilead have limited the freedom of speech in their totalitarian states, in the case of Oceania not just by making certain expressions, phrases or words punitive, but by mutilating the very language itself. As Cheyne argues, an artificial language is a deliberate construct designed at a particular time for a particular purpose (Cheyne 386). Newspeak has been developed by the rulers of Oceania to make the truth less accessible to their people. It is invented to limit independent thinking and prevent seeds of rebellious thought to flourish in the minds of their citizens. Because rebellious thought will not have to be weeded out, without the accurate words to constitute it.

In the Appendix on Newspeak in *1984*, George Orwell describes the major characteristics of Newspeak. The grammar is described as being highly regular in its forms: steal-stealed; think-thought; man-men; life-lives; good, gooder, goodest (Orwell 308). The grammatical irregularities that help to give English its colour and force are weeded out and ironed flat in Newspeak (Tibbetts 164). Although Newspeak is originally founded on ‘Oldspeak’, better known as the English language, Orwell comments in the Appendix that it would not be intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day (300).

During the time span of *1984*, Newspeak is not yet completed but in a transitional phase, so Oldspeak and Newspeak are existing side by side. While his colleague Syme is creating the definitive Dictionary of Newspeak, Winston is a linguistic translator, who has to revise articles from Oldspeak to Newspeak (Orwell 45). However, in spite of the vast elimination of English, Newspeak does contain a few compound words which appear in the novel that I would like to examine, as they reveal a great deal of the totalitarian nature of Big Brother’s regime. But first, I shall analyse Newspeak’s characteristics, as there are several methods that the makers of the Eleventh Edition of Newspeak use to achieve the ‘enormous diminution of vocabulary’ (Orwell 302).

Big Brother’s linguistic style is described as a style that is military, pedantic and easy to imitate, because of a trick of asking questions and promptly answering them (Orwell 46). Winston’s task as a translator at the Records Department in Oldspeak reads as: “The reporting of Big Brother’s Order of the Day in the Times of

December 3d 1983 is extremely unsatisfactory and makes references to nonexistent persons. Rewrite it in full and submit your draft to higher authority before filing”. However, in Newspeak the task is cropped to one sentence: “Times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unperson rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling” (44). This order illustrates the diminishing of language as well as the military style that is particular for Newspeak.

During their lunch in the Ministry, Syme preaches the merits of Newspeak to Winston. The creation of the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak dictionary is to be the definitive edition and Syme tells Winston that the philologists are cutting the language into its final shape. This process is a process of destruction: “The Eleventh Edition will not contain a single word that will become obsolete before the 2050” (50). According to Syme, the destruction of words is a beautiful thing. He explains that the philologists do not only destroy synonyms but also antonyms, because there is no justification for a word which is the opposite in itself. As Syme explains: “Take ‘good’ for instance. If you have a word like ‘good,’ what need is there for a word like ‘bad’? ‘Ungood’ will do just as well – better because it’s an exact opposite, which the other is not” (51). He does not see why the language contains: “a whole string of vague useless words like ‘excellent and ‘splendid’ and all the rest of them?” (Orwell 51). Syme concludes that ‘ungood’, ‘plusgood’ and ‘doubleplusgood’ will remain as stronger or weaker versions of ‘good’ in the final version of Newspeak. The notion of goodness and badness will be covered by one word, the contrast between good and bad will disappear and ‘ungood’ will remain as the negative version of good. Whereas ‘bad’ has a meaning and associations as its own term, ‘ungood’ seems to simply refer to something that is no good or not good enough, bringing the focus back to the fact that one has to be good. Syme adds: “Don’t you see the beauty of that Winston? It was Big Brother’s idea originally of course” (51).

The expressions used by Syme to describe the creation of Newspeak are ‘cutting’, ‘destroying’ and ‘getting rid of’, which are violent terms that signify Oceania’s approach to language. The poetic and prose it could constitute makes it a vehicle that has to be attacked and stopped in its tracks. Newspeak has been invented to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc and the language is submitted to the totalitarian system, as the ultimate aim of Newspeak is to make heretical thought - a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc - literally unthinkable (300). The

language will carry fewer words every year, which will make “the range of consciousness always a little smaller” (Orwell 54).

This has massive implications, for instance, the literature of the past will be destroyed. As Syme explains, the Newspeak versions of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Byron will be changed into something contradictory of what they used to mean, as the entire corpus of literature shall be modelled into the right fitting with the Party doctrine through Newspeak.

Countless words as honour, justice, morality, democracy, science and religion seized to exist in Newspeak. A few blanket words are invented to ‘cover’ them, but in ‘covering’ them they also abolish them. For instance, words grouping themselves around the concepts of equality and liberty, are contained in the single compound word *Crimethink*, while all words grouping themselves around the concepts of objectivity are contained in the single word *Oldthink* (306). The English language is eliminated for good measure.

This verbicide is necessary to the Party because if you don’t have the word available for an idea, you have trouble thinking of it. In Newspeak, heresy is “literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words”, so the citizens of Oceania could not discuss the idea of civil rights because they had no notion of civil rights and nothing to discuss it with (Tibbetss 164). Syme is enthusiastic about this: “In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it” (Orwell 54). From his perspective, people won’t have to use self-discipline in order to stop themselves from committing thoughtcrime, because they will no longer have the words to think anything that is incompatible with the totalitarian outlook: “In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness (54). Hence, the revolution will be complete according to Syme, once Newspeak is finished and when “the language is perfect” (Orwell 54).

What this totalitarian idea of perfection entails is further exposed in the Appendix. Orwell explains that a defining feature of the grammar of Newspeak is that it has a complete interchangeability between different parts of speech. Any word in Newspeak can be used as a verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. Secondly, Newspeak words are divided into three distinct classes, known as the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary (compound words), and the C vocabulary (Orwell 301). The A vocabulary consists of words already present in English - words like hit, run, dog, tree, sugar

house, field - but in comparison with the English vocabulary, their number is small. Newspeak words in the A vocabulary are staccato sounds expressing one clear material concept. As Orwell reflects: “It would have been quite impossible to use the A vocabulary for literary purposes or for political or philosophical discussion” (Orwell 301). The C vocabulary is supplementary to others and consisted entirely of scientific and technical terms, though Orwell points out that there is no word for “Science” since any meaning that it could possibly bear is covered by the word *Ingsoc*. Furthermore, everything that might have political signification is destroyed or altered in the B vocabulary.

Words in the B vocabulary are constructed for political purposes, they are intended to “impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them” (Orwell 303). According to Orwell, the greatest difficulty that the compilers of the Newspeak dictionary faced was not how to make sure what the new words meant but what ranges of words they shut out by their existence. Orwell comments: “No word in the B vocabulary was actually ideologically neutral. A great many were euphemisms, words, for instance, as *joycamp* (is actually forced-labour camp) or *Minipax* (Ministry of Peace, instead Ministry of War) meant almost exactly the opposite of what they appeared to mean” (Orwell 307). Examples of these compounded words are: *goodthink*, *Minipax*, *prolefeed*, *sexcrime*, *joycamp*, *Ingsoc* and *Thinkpol*. The Records Department in which Winston works is called *Recdep*, the Fiction Department is shortened to *Ficdep* and the Teleprograms Department is called *Teledep*, existing words are compounded (Orwell 307). The philologists of the Dictionary responsible for Vocabulary B figured out that abbreviating a name one also altered its meaning and as a result, narrowing also meant cutting out the associations that would cling to a word. The words Communist International, for instance, calls up a composite picture of universal human brotherhood, red flags, barricades, Karl Marx, and the Paris Commune. The word Comintern, on the other hand, suggests a tightly knit organization and a well-defined body of doctrine and is a word that can be uttered almost without taking thought (308).

To recapture, Newspeak is a language that makes it impossible for people to think independently. Narrowing linguistic structures will narrow people’s ability to think. Newspeak reduces language so that it can be used as a military machine and so it reduces human beings to puppets on a string. Orwell describes Newspeak in the Appendix as: “A gabbling style of speech [...] Party member called upon to make a

political or ethical judgment should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets” (Tibetts 164), a language “with a certain wilful ugliness which was in accord with the spirit of Ingsoc” (Orwell 309).

The aim of this enterprise is summarized by the term *Duckspeak*, meaning “to quack like a duck”. When the Party member quacks out orthodox opinions, duckspeak is nothing but praise and when “*The Times* referred to one of the orators of the Party as a doubleplusgood duckspeaker it was paying a warm compliment” (309). Thus the function of certain Newspeak words is not to express the meaning(s) of the Oldspeak words, but to delete them (305). As Orwell concludes: “Ultimately it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain centres at all” (309). The totalitarian regime of Oceania has a clear agenda to the replacement of certain concepts with compound words, pushing the language towards a blankness that results in a culture of *Duckspeak*.

Significant examples of ‘Newspeak words’ which are meant to function as replaced terms and occur are *Facecrime*, *Thoughtcrime*, *Ownlife*, *Duckspeak* and *Goodthinkful*. Firstly, *Facecrime* is considered a punishable offence and means that someone carries the suggestion of abnormality, so an unconscious look of anxiety or to look incredulous when a victory is announced, is considered as face crime, which translates as wearing an improper expression on your face (Orwell 62).

Furthermore, *Thoughtcrime* encompasses any intellectual effort, introspection or political-philosophical reflection that does not strictly confirm the established governmental doctrines. A term that specifically drew my attention was *Ownlife*, this is a negative term which Winston is acutely aware of when he wanders the streets alone on his way to the antique shop. It is used for anything that suggests a taste for solitude, even to go for a walk by yourself, a sign of: “individualism eccentricity” (Orwell 82). In principle a Party member in Oceania has no spare time and is always monitored and taking part of communal recreations (82). As we have seen, *Duckspeak* is a positive term in the Newspeak vocabulary and sounds rather like a constant quacking to Winston: “the stuff that was coming out of him consisted of words, but it was not speech in the true sense: it was a noise uttered in unconsciousness, like the quacking of a duck” (54). Winston uncannily describes that he watched the eyeless face with the jaw moving rapidly up and down, but the feeling creeps over him that he is not watching a human being but “some kind of dummy” (54). In addition,

Goodthinkful means naturally “orthodox” and “to think in an orthodox manner, incapable of thinking a bad thought (132). Winston remembers his wife Katherine as someone who was very orthodox and embodied the essence of goodthinkful (Orwell 132).

Lastly, the term *Doublethink* is literally a ‘think twice’ method that the Party introduced to teach its citizens how to control their memories, creating a “lunatic dislocation in the mind” (260). Doublethink is the highest expression of will to power, the attribute that marks party members as superior beings, and therefore its existence and exercise is consistent with the premises and the self-interest of the Inner Party (Resch 167). The successful doublethinker wins an unending series of victories over his or her own memory, by being able to forget what is necessary to forget, draw it back into memory when it is needed and to apply the same process to the process itself (Finigan 437). As Goldstein’s seditious book confirms, the use of doublethink effects a “constant alteration of the past” by enabling “the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has very much believed the contrary” (437). Doublethink is insane, but from the perspective of the Inner Party, there is method in its madness (Resch 167).

For example, when the Ministry of Plenty announces that there had been demonstrations to thank Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to twenty grams a week, Winston reflects it had been only announced the day before that the ration of chocolate has been reduced to twenty grams a week (Orwell 58). In order to ‘swallow’ this new narrative which has abruptly changed from admitting the lack of chocolate to bringing the same news as jubilant instead, one has to be skilled in the practice of doublethink. This way the citizens of Oceania keep themselves in check with the government and never fail to be appreciative of Ingsoc. Newspeak functions like the ever penetrating eye of surveillance: the Panopticon of Jeremy Bentham. According to Willet, the invention of Newspeak owes much to the ideal of absolute visibility. The Newspeak words function more or less like a telescreen, which allows a grid-work to be placed over the whole society by a continuous case. Jeremy Bentham explained that: “To be constantly under the eyes of an inspector, is to lose the power to do evil and almost the thought to wish it” (Willet 73).

Winston, who has a sinful nostalgia for Oldspeak, notices that the language stammers once people have internalized Newspeak. As a result, their noise is close to silence (Willet 73). He reflects that it is only the eyeless creature with the quacking voice that will never be vaporized. Likewise, Offred tells the reader at the beginning of her story: "I try not to think too much. Like other things now, thought must be rationed. There's a lot that doesn't bear thinking about. Thinking can hurt your chances, and I intend to survive" (Hansot 10). Newspeak is designed to cultivate ignorance. What stands out in particular is how the English language is mutilated by the philologists who are working on the Eleventh Edition of Newspeak. Due to the extreme elimination of vocabulary, it is fair to state that The Ministry of Ingsoc enslaves, destroys and instrumentalizes the language for its own totalitarian ends.

Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" (1946), makes important statements about the abuse of English. According to Orwell, political language consists "largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness" and is "the defence of the indefensible" (Tibetts 165). Orwell gives the example of an English professor defending Russian totalitarianism, who cannot say: "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results of doing so" and so will therefore be forced to say: "that the Soviet regime might exhibit certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore [...] in the sphere of concrete achievement" (Orwell 5). Orwell concludes that the German, Russian and Italian languages have deteriorated under the reigns of their dictatorships, as politics itself is a "mass of lies, evasions, follies hatred and schizophrenia" (Orwell 6).

Orwell's point is that bad language thus corrupts thought, which in turn corrupts language further. A mutilated version English has moral as well as political implications: the "necessary dialects" of bad English are "designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable" (Tibetts 696). From this Orwell's basic principle can be derived, as formulated by Tibetts: "Corruption of language leads to corruption of human beings, a process which can be halted, in part, by improving our use of the language so that it better fits reality" (Tibetts 166). The depth of Orwell's understanding of the linguistic and psycholinguistic basis of poetic language is apparent throughout Orwell's work. For instance, in the 1940 essay "New Words," he emphasizes the importance of shared associations for words and the key role of imaginative writing (Weatherly 269).

The dictatorial fantasy of a pure language as a tool for power which bows to the master's slightest desire and assures him the willing docility of his subjects, is immanently present in the history of our ideas (Willet 71). This linguistic violence is part of the greater totalitarian premise: on one hand people are exterminated, on the other language is depopulated of its words. The "social parasites" of language are exterminated, and all that is superfluous to syntax and vocabulary is eliminated (the irregular, the redundant, the accessory), just like bodies are mutilated by violence, the signs to communicate are abbreviated. The purification of language thus constitutes the imaginary horizon of totalitarian power: the completion of the Revolution (Willet 71). For instance, Newspeak resembles the archaic language in which the Nazi party called people a *Gefolgschaft*: "a perfect group of followers" readily roused to action by a seemingly religious belief in their *Führer* (Young 49).

Through Newspeak, ideology has become a component of the very substance of language, assuming a key role in the dispositif of power of totalitarian regimes. The question rises whether it is still possible tell a story in Newspeak (Bill 90). The totalitarian forms that attack language can be diverse, but one element remains uniform: these forms not only avoid questioning the totalitarian reality, but legitimize it through language, becoming the vehicles of its mandatory propaganda. As Glowinski puts it: "Any narrative derived from Newspeak, and using it in an uncritical manner, undoubtedly constitutes manifestations of totalitarian form" (94). The penetration of ideological language into exemplary stories demonstrates that the totalitarian form is dominated by mistrust of narrative perspectives pretending to gravitate even to the tiniest bit of independence (Glowinski 91).

To recapture, the decisions concerning the meaning of words can result from the arbitrary decisions of certain groups with power and propaganda at their disposal (Glowinski 158). Totalitarian language makes it impossible to tell each other stories, as "real communication is only possible when one may subvert its rules" (Glowinski 158). We may describe such listeners - in the words of Stanislaw Baranczak - as a "captive audience" (Glowinski 158). But how do listeners behave in this non-communicative process? Sometimes they remain oblivious and forget the old associations; this is the ideal towards the totalitarian propaganda aspires. As Orwell explains in the Appendix, the purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the "world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible" (300). But what I want to focus on

now are the subordinate discourses, the puppets who disagree. In other words: could a captive audience resist this process? Can dolls cut their chords and seize back the remains of their mutilated language?

1.3. Subversive Speech Acts

There is something subversive about this garden of Serena's, a sense of buried things bursting upwards, wordlessly, into the light, as if to point, to say: Whatever is silenced will clamour to be heard, though silently. (Atwood 145)

Freeden characterizes ideologies as competing over the control of political language as well as competing over plans for public policy and argues: “their competition over plans for public policy is primarily conducted through their competition over the control of political language” (55). Whoever is in control is in the strongest position to determine the political. Hence, the regimes of Gilead and Oceania struggle over the control of political language and this places language of ideologies at the heart of the political process (55). The members of the Party of Oceania as well as the Gilaedeans combine their belief in the authoritative power of a text with their absolute power of controlling it, so they can alter it to suit their ideological needs: they determine what truth is, for it to serve their own political standards (Freeden 55).

Whereas the totalitarian leaders drop ‘statements’ to their citizens, Austin claims that stating is always to take its place alongside promising, warning, betting, threatening, appointing, naming, declaring, and many other kinds of illocutionary acts that we may be doing in saying something (Golec 22). As we have seen, intentions are embedded in and framed by the social circumstances that make performatives like promises possible. The felicity of these speech acts is what Austin referred to as “uptake”, “taking effect” and “inviting a response” (Golec 77). The intrinsic strength and vulnerability of utterances is the fact that they can be repeated beyond their normal conditions of employment. Performative utterances are exposed to trouble because of this conventionality, they are often ritual and ceremonial performances: the rehearsed speech act might fail to affect (26). What Austin shows with performative speech in daily language, is the complexity of the linguistic universe in its full motion, and it is exactly in this complexity, that the protagonists in *1984* and

The Handmaid's Tale are able to rebel against the ways in which the totalitarian regimes have tried to reduce the variety of linguistic speech acts.

Firstly, it is important to point out that the official transcripts provided by the government fail because they are 'void' (Austin 11). Insofar as one can argue that performatives are actions, they are infelicitious. Violations of the conventional procedures necessary for the successful accomplishment of the performances will result in misfires (Austin 11). The act might be accomplished but remains hollow. Looking at the greetings that Offred and Ofglen exchange, it can be argued that these religious phrases as 'Under his Eye', 'Praise Be' and 'Blessed be the fruit' – even though provided by the government through indoctrination– are infelicitious. Their speech acts are successfully performed, and should bring about the re-enforcement of the Gileadean power, but they remain 'hollow' or 'empty' (11). Because as we soon discover, neither Offred nor Ofglen are 'true believers'.

The same goes for the majority of Winston's and Julia's linguistic acts performed in accordance with the government, they do their duty and play their part, but their speech acts remain void. As Syme remarks on some of Winston's Newspeak articles in *The Times*: "They're good enough, but they're translations. In your heart you'd prefer to stick to Oldspeak" (Orwell 52). As Sesonke points out, we can still be bound by a promise we didn't mean, or married if we plight our troth when drunk. This is the gap between an 'inward' state of mind and the 'outward' verbal performance (26). The only way for Offred to gain tiny bits of freedom, is by pretending she is successfully indoctrinated by Gilead's religious fanaticism of the Aunts. It is through the creation of linguistic sub contexts, which those in power of the totalitarian regimes are unable to hear or read, that the characters find various ways to communicate freely with each other. These linguistic sub contexts, consisting of subversive speech acts, form hidden transcripts that provide the characters solid ground to exchange information, even when it goes against the grain of the totalitarian reality (Hansot 58).

What I would like to concentrate on in this chapter are these small (speech) acts of resistance which remain largely undetected. The various subversive speech acts that the characters engage with and use to create secretive transcripts form a significant bulk in both novels, but I shall focus on the amputated speech Offred exchanges with Ofglen, her games of Scrabble with the Commander, Offred's secret reading and the Latin phrase 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum'. As the characters in

1984 are eventually tortured and modified by the regime, the situation slightly differs from that in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where the hidden transcripts can be argued to be more felicitous or successful. Therefore I have decided to interweave 'talking by installments', Julia's anti-party speeches and several subversive speech acts through the hidden transcripts of *The Handmaid's Tale*, taking this novel as my predominant focus.

How does Offred keep a distance from her performance as a compliant citizen, preventing the mask of being a handmaid from obliterating her former self? An escape presents itself through her relationship with words. Language, she ironically observes, is a litany she uses to compose herself. Offred's own speech acts contrast with those imposed on her by the Gileadean regime, as we see in her musings on words (Hansot 62). For instance, when she reflects on the chair she sits in she comments: "It is the first syllable in charity. It is the French word for flesh. None of these facts has any connection with the other. These are the kinds of litanies I use, to compose myself" (Atwood 40). Offred delights in playing word games, that keep the richness of the English language alive for her and frequently provide solace in empty time; sometimes her deconstructions even open new paths of meaning, interpretation, and critique (Hansot 62). Offred's condition is one of compromised resistance, where she regrets not becoming pregnant as the system requires of her (since this puts her in danger), while she simultaneously resists Gilead's imposition of control over her mind (Gottlieb 104). In the process of this growing resistance, words are her weapons. As David Hogsette suggests, Offred recognizes that she can manipulate language to create her own subjectivity, "a subjectivity that enables her to act as a subversive against the oppressive reality that the Republic of Gilead has created" (265).

For example, after she has witnessed a ceremony where supposed traitors have been hanged and a criminal has been shredded to pieces by the Handmaids, she is exhausted and reflects: "I want to go to bed, make love, right now. I think of the word *relish*" (Atwood 278). The fact that she feels guilty for being hungry after having witnessed a violent death and comments that she thinks of the word *relish*, instead of experiencing it as an emotion, shows that language is shielding her from the horrors of reality. Waiting in the living room for the arrival of the Commander and the household to assemble, she comments: "The Commander is the head of the household. The house is what he holds. To have and to hold, till death do us part.

The hold of a ship. Hollow” (75). This is an ironic exploration of the word household, suggesting that the associated ‘holds’ eventually result in a void. She subtly subverts the Commander’s dominance: without the household staff there would be nothing to hold. A ship’s hold normally carries cargo, but she ends with ‘Hollow’, as the characters in the house have lost their personalities.

When Offred remembers that one of the gravestones in the cemetery near the earliest church has an hourglass with the words *In Hope*, she wonders “*In Hope*. Why did they put that above a dead person. Was it the corpse hoping, or those still alive?” (100). Another strategy that Offred uses is transforming her old name into a secret by keeping it to herself. She keeps the knowledge of ‘this name’ like something hidden, a treasure she will return to in order to dig up once Gilead has vanished. She considers her name as a buried jewel. Her former name has an aura around it, a charm that has survived an “unimaginably distant past”. Offred describes the power of keeping her name to herself: “I lie in my single bed at night, with my eyes closed, and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark” (Dodson 79). This way, Offred uses her wordplay to create a distance between herself, what she has experienced and the purging of her emotions, as a way to remain sane. As she concludes: “One detaches oneself. One describes” (Atwood 90).

Now to return to J.L Austin’s theory, the seductive, total speech act requires its own context (Golec 78). As we have seen, the truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words but on which act you were performing in what circumstances (26). Knowing that speech acts can be void on the one hand, but that they can acquire new meanings, it is exactly the possibility of infelicity that creates opportunities for Offred to create communication that escapes the eyes of Gilead. Offred is not alone, Gilead is shot with illicit communication and acts (Hansot 56). The Marthas have their networks and the Wives conspire to get the Handmaids pregnant. Likewise, the Handmaids become experts at the strategic use of public ceremonies like Birthdays, Prayvaganzas and Salvagings, to track each other as well as loved ones from the past who are missing (Hansot 64).

The hidden sites of resistance are seemingly opportunistic as they are interlaced with the required enactment of the public transcript (so the ‘void’ speech acts demanded by Gilead), they are barely audible counter to it (64). But from their first indoctrination in the Rachel and Leah re-education centre, the Handmaids find ways to constitute small acts of resistance under the eyes of the Aunts. For instance,

using a name from the past is treason in Gilead, as it risks bringing in its train an “unprescribed humanity” to individuals (Hansot 58). But names are known in the silent whispering that the Handmaids learn in the indoctrination center (58). Through their whisperings, abbreviated biographies are attached to names and the Handmaids learn what has happened to their former friends. The night-time communications at the indoctrination center, including the knowledge of names from the now censored (and censored) pre Gileadean past, constitutes a hidden transcript.

Offred describes that she and Ofglen head for open space so they can talk: “If you can call it talking, these clipped whispers, projected through the funnels of our white wings. It’s more like a telegram, a verbal semaphore. Amputated speech” (195). The concept of ‘amputated speech’ appears in *1984* as well. It should be noted that speech acts in *1984* seem to be a rebellious enterprise in themselves, as Winston spends a great deal of his life in isolation, surrounded by silence or uneasy encounters filled with mistrust; everyone can be reported to the Thought Police by anyone whenever there is the slightest suspicion. So Winston’s biggest companion for philosophical dialectics becomes Julia as their secret lover affair is not only a matter of physical contact, but also a means of rebelling against Ingsoc. Their affair it grows into a companionship where they have debates on the nature of the state they inhabit. But to begin their meetings, Julia has developed a technique to enable the love affair to exist, which is what she calls “talking by installments” (Orwell 128).

Orwell describes how they meet each other on crowded pavements and without looking at one another, carry a ‘curious, intermittent conversation which flicked in and off like the beams of a lighthouse’, suddenly nipped into silence by a telescreen or approach of a Party uniform and taken up again in the middle of a sentence (128). Talking through installments implies that sentences are abruptly cut short ‘as they parted on the agreed spot’ and simply continued ‘almost without introduction on the following day’. Through this talking by installments they succeed in conveying information to each other they would otherwise not have gotten through without creating suspicion. Talking by installments is thus as a kind of speech act that is necessary when being monitored. It is through shattering and changing the context of their speech acts, that they constitute a hidden transcript.

Upon entering the attendance of a Women’s Prayvaganza for their district, Ofglen tells Offred to head for the back and Offred hears a cloud of whispers which she compares to the rustling of insects in tall dry grass. Indeed, the Handmaids are

skilled in creating temporary sites of non-compliance (Hansot 58). She explains that: “This is one of the places where we can exchange new more freely, pass it from one to the next. It’s hard for them to single out any of us or hear what’s being said” (210). The handmaids take advantage of the fact that no one would want to interrupt the ceremony. It is due to the context that their speech acts are felicitous, because they cannot be singled out and their whispers mask the particular conversations.

There is something powerful in the whispering of obscenities, about those in power. There’s something delightful about it, something naughty, secretive, forbidden, thrilling. It’s like a spell, of sorts. It deflates them, reduces them to the common denominator where they can be dealt with. In the paint of the washroom cubicle someone unknown had scratched: Aunt Lydia sucks. It was like a flag waved from a hilltop in rebellion. (Atwood 219)

During the Prayvaganza, the whispers of obscenities have the proper effect as they are performed during a prudent Gileadean ceremony. These speech acts do not fail to declare affect, as the Handmaids feel empowered by them. As Scott noted, the frontier between public and hidden transcripts is not a solid wall but a zone of struggle between elite and subordinate groups (14). His description of relations between dominants and subordinates (slaves, serfs, peasants, untouchables) stresses that the capacity of dominant groups to define what constitutes the official transcript is an important component of their power, but as Hansot argues; the ‘offstage’ behaviours, in this case of the Handmaids, undermine it (58).

Another hidden transcript appears when Offred and Ofglen halt in front of a Souls Scrolls store. Souls Scrolls stores are franchises in every city that make a lot of profit. Souls Scrolls stores contain machines that the Handmaids nickname ‘Holy Rollers’: “What they machines print is prayers, roll upon roll, prayers going out endlessly” (162). Offred remarks that the Wives of the Commanders order prayers from the Soul Scrolls because it is a sign of faithfulness to the Gileadean regime. She describes the metallic voices repeating the same prayers.

There are no people inside the building: the machines run by themselves. You cannot hear the voices from outside; only a murmur, a hum, like a devout crowd, on its knees. Each machine has an eye painted in gold on the side, flanked by two small golden wings. (162)

The Soul Scroll machines simply provide transcripts for the Wives in order to help the careers of the Commanders. But it is during this provided transcript, watching the

machines printing out their prayers -maybe because it is painfully obvious that there's a toneless method to the religious madness which requires nothing but money and printers- that Ofglen suddenly finds the courage to confront Offred with the secret organization Mayday. When Ofglen asks whether Offred believes if God listens to the Soul Scroll machines, Offred comments: "In the past this would have been a trivial enough remark, a kind of scholarly speculation. Right now it's treason" (164). The question frightens Offred because it is subversion, sedition, blasphemy and heresy all rolled into one. But she steels herself and Ofglen remarks: "You can join us" (164). Ofglen is part of a secret network of which codeword is Mayday; "I tried it on you once" (164).

Offred indeed remembers Ofglen's comment that it was a beautiful Mayday and how she thought of M'aidez; "help me". As Mayday is actually a subversive organisation that helps liberating people, it turns out Offred's wordplay was accurate. Their backstage speech acts are simply hidden in the interstices of the public transcript. However, the threat of betrayal is always in the background. The speech Offred encounters in these transactions with Ofglen is coded and minimalist: "an inflection here, a pause there" (Hansot 66).

Once Winston and Julia succeed in meeting each other in deserted places like old churches, they spend hours talking. Their conversations are only interrupted to check if no one is coming for them. It is particularly Julia's speech that establishes a 'subversive space' for Winston. Firstly, he notices that she never uses Newspeak words, except the ones that have passed into everyday use. Julia stays clear of the new governmental language. Secondly, she uses extremely foul language when it comes to the Party, according to Winston the kind of language that belongs on walls in old dusty street corners. Thirdly, Winston is surprised by the fact that Julia is unsusceptible to Party propaganda. As Winston mentions the war against Eurasia, Julia startles him by saying causally, that in her opinion, the war is not happening but staged by the government (154). She explains to him that the rocket bombs which fall daily on London are probably fired by the government of Oceania itself in order to keep people frightened. As she points out: "It's always one bloody war after another, and one knows the news is all lies anyway" (145). Whenever Winston tries to discuss the principles of Ingsoc, doublethink, the mutability of the past or the use of Newspeak, Julia tells him she never pays particular attention to these things: "She

knew when to cheer and when to boo, and that was all one needed” (Orwell 154). As Winston reflects:

Life as she saw it was quite simple. You wanted a good time; “they”, meaning the Party, wanted to stop you having it; you broke the rules as best you could. Any kind of organized revolt against the Party, which was bound to be a failure, struck her as stupid. The clever thing was to break the rules and stay alive all the same. (Orwell 131)

From Julia’s perspective, the Party propaganda is rubbish and therefore she does not need to worry about it. Being younger than Winston, she seems to think it natural that the Party wants to rob you of your hedonistic impulses as to doing them anyway and avoid being caught. So except where it touches upon her life, Julia has no interest in Party doctrine. This slightly worries Winston, who knows on what principles his hate for the Party is founded and desperately tries to discover how totalitarianism can possibly be blossoming while obviously causing immense amounts of damage to millions of people.

Julia therefore seems to be a crossroads, a point where the official transcripts and the unofficial transcript of Oceania more or less collide and exist side by side. Winston reflects: “Talking to her, he realized how easy it was to present an appearance of orthodoxy while having no grasp whatever of what orthodoxy meant” (Orwell 156).

Winston begins to realize that the speech acts Julia performs under the eye of Big Brother are completely void of meaning, and that these hollowed transcripts are also what stops people from starting a rebellion against the regime. Winston begins to understand that in a way, the world-view of the Party is able to impose itself most successfully on the people who are incapable of understanding it. The proles are an obvious example: “They could be made to accept the most flagrant violations of reality, because they never fully grasped the enormity of what was demanded of them, and were not sufficiently interested in public events to notice what was happening” (156). The proles remain sane by a lack of understanding.

Another opportunity which allows Offred to constitute subversive speech acts, is when the Commander asks for her one evening. When the Commander welcomes her in his study room with a ‘Hello’, Offred immediately picks up that this is the old form of greeting, one she has not heard in years. The Commander requests her to play a game of Scrabble with him. Offred is startled: “This was once the game of old

women, old men, in the summers or in retirement villas, to be played when there was nothing good on television” (133). She remembers how Scrabble never interested her as an adolescent girl but also notes that playing Scrabble under the regime of Gilead has transformed into a different kind of business, as it is strictly forbidden for woman to read or engage with written words: “Now it’s dangerous. Now it’s indecent. Now it’s something he can’t do with his Wife. Now it’s desirable. Now he’s compromised himself. It’s as if he’s offered me drugs” (133).

Offred remarks that being asked to Scrabble under the government of Gilead seems kinky to the extreme. She describes her first game in a rather sensual way. She holds the glossy counters with their smooth edges, her tongue feels thick with the effort of spelling and she experiences the desire to put the letters into her mouth, as the feeling is voluptuous: “The letter C. Crisp, slightly acid on the tongue, delicious” (134). She has been starving for intellectual food. The game triggers her imagination as her associations with a past world, a past world that has slipped out of reach but which she remembers vividly: “cafe au lait at an outdoor table, with a brioche, absinthe in a tall glass, or shrimp in a cornucopias of newspaper” (134). As their games of Scrabble continue on a regular basis, Offred and the Commander start giggling over words they have created themselves. The Commander encourages Offred to make up more words that do not exist. She points out: “This is freedom, an eyeblink of it” (134).

The second secret activity that Offred pursues in breaking the Gileadean rules, is the reading of old glossies, while the Commander watches her. She knows that according to Aunt Lydia’s standards, she should feel evil: “But I didn’t feel evil. Instead I felt like an old Edwardian seaside postcard: naughty” (151). She is given books of Charles Dickens, but she reflects that she reads voraciously, trying to get as much into her head as possible before the next starvation (181). She remarks: “If it were eating it would be the gluttony of the famished” (181). Moreover, while she reads, the Commander never takes his eyes off her. So even though her reading can be considered as an subversive act, Offred remains feeling uncomfortable: “As it is, this illicit reading of mine seems a kind of performance” (181).

The fact that she is reading while being watched also makes the reading a entertaining performance instead of an activity that Offred engages in for her own pleasure. She reads on the account of the Commander, because he finds it exiting. After all, he could have given her some of his books so she could hide them in her

bedroom, this would have given her the opportunity to engage in literature during her stretches of empty time. The rebellious activities Offred engages in with the Commander are unfortunately subversive speech acts in captivity, encouraged and controlled by the Commander, devoid of Offred's own agency.

A particular sentence that does have thorough subversive strength (though it does not strictly count as a speech act because it is written) is the Latin phrase 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum' (Atwood 50). This Latin phrase is scratched in the corner of Offred's closet. The sentence is particularly intriguing to Offred even though she is unsure in what language it is written, it is so fragile that it seems to be scratched in with a fingernail and looks quite fresh. Offred reflects: "Still, it was a message, and it was in writing, forbidden by that very fact, and it hadn't yet been discovered. Except by me, for whom it was intended" (50). Throughout the novel, Offred ponders the message that has been left for her by the Handmaid who lived in the household before her. It gives Offred a new taste of power, to think that she is communicating with this unknown woman: "It pleases me to know that her taboo message made it through, to at least one other person, washed itself up on the wall of the cupboard, was opened and read by me" (50).

Offred mutters the words to herself and they strengthen her spirit, she repeats 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum' to herself like a mantra and the words light her up. She turns the mysterious woman into her best friend Moira and thinks of her the way she used to be in college: "quirky, jaunty, athletic" (50). The fact that Offred is creating a persona out of this sentence and associates the author behind it with her best friend, shows how gripping the message is to Offred. She feels victorious because these small words have gone unnoticed and survived the regime's policy, forming another secret.

Writing is a forbidden act, but whereas Offred's reading has turned into somewhat of a performance itself, she is able to harbour this message and keep it a secret just like she has done with her former name. However, 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum' is also a strong indicator for the continuous threatening atmosphere that spreads through the novel as Gilead's grip on Offred becomes firmer. At Offred's first attempt to decipher the message, she tries to collect information from Rita, one of the Martha's, and it is hinted that the fate of the former handmaid is dark. Rita tells Offred that the Handmaid did not work out and when Offred tries to inquire further,

Rita comments: “What you don’t know won’t hurt you” (50), which clearly indicates something went horribly wrong for the Handmaid.

‘Nolite te bastardes carborundorum’ becomes a two sided sword. Offred uses it during her prayers even though she does not know what it means, but: “It will have to do because I don’t know what else I can say to God” (86). The scratched writing on the cupboard wall floats before her eyes. But as she continues her prayers, she becomes more dissociative, and instead of seeing Moira’s face, she witnesses her swollen feet after being tortured, Offred remembers they no longer resembled feet but looked like lungs: “Oh God, I pray. Nolite te bastardes carborundorum. Is that what you had in mind?” (87). This question seems to twist the sentence in an ironic but pointed direction: did you mean to establish this totalitarian reality of torture?

At the revelation of the original meaning of the term, Offred is left somewhat disillusioned. The Commander is laughing over his old Latin schoolbooks and explains that it translates to: “Don’t let the bastards grind you down”. She manages to force a smile but understands two things, firstly, why the previous Handmaid has written that on the wall of the cupboard and secondly, that she must have visited the Commander too and learnt it from him because: “she was never a schoolboy” (184). When Offred pretends that she knew the Handmaid somehow, the Commander reveals that she hanged herself. Offred pieces together why she is invited to play Scrabble: “You want my life to be bearable to me’ I say. It comes out not as a question but as a statement; flat and without dimension. If my life is bearable, maybe what they’re doing is all right after all” (Atwood 185). The Commander admits it and this and it changes their relation (185). Offred has now been given a slight form of power: the possibility of her own death: “What I have on him is his guilt. At last” (185). In the conversation that follows Offred gathers the courage and the opportunity to ask the Commander what is exactly going on in Gilead, to collect information. Her quest of deciphering “Don’t let the bastards grind you down” has given her the possibility to engage in serious debate with the Commander, which I shall elaborate on in *Slogans&Speeches*.

At the very end of the novel, the sentence returns. Offred has been caught and considers what to do while she is alone in her bedroom, waiting for her punishment: “I could go to the Commander, fall on the floor, my hair dishevelled, as they say, grab him around the knees, confess, weep, implore. Nolite te bastardes carborundorum, I could say. Not a prayer” (288). She considers to noose the bed sheet around her neck

and hook herself up in the closet where she found the phrase, in order to choke herself off. But at considering the possibilities to end her life, she feels the presence of her ancestress and her double, turning in mid-air under the chandelier. She describes her as a bird stopped in flight and a woman made into an angel waiting to be found. But Offred comments: “By me this time”. Her perception quickly changes from feeling a ghost creeping on her, to perceiving her double as an entity who has always been a presence in her room.

How could I have believed I was alone in here. There were always two of us. Get it over, she says. I’m tired of this melodrama. I’m tired of keeping silent. There’s no one you can protect, your life has value to no one. I want it finished. (Atwood 289)

The fact that the ghost of the Handmaid seems to turn violent to Offred is also tied with Offred’s fatigue with ‘keeping silent’. The height of Offred’s fear leads her to acknowledge that there is no fundamental difference between herself and the former Handmaid, who committed suicide, and she believes that the Handmaid wants her life finished now. Simultaneously, the fact that the former Handmaid has left ‘Nolite the bastardes carborundorum’ has helped Offred’s survival in several ways: she held on to the phrase during her prayers, researching it enabled her to engage in conversations with the Commander and to discover she has ‘guilt’ on him and lastly the ghost presence also functions as a dark double who warns her: Offred vividly visualises her on the chandelier like a bird stopped in flight, which indicates she is aware of the fact that this woman has died way too young and should have lived a long, prosperous and happy life in freedom. Her death is paradoxical reminder that paralyzes Offred, it stops her in her tracks and makes her wait in her room. Therefore this phrase can be considered as a small subversive written act that has major consequences, it allows Offred’s story to be told. It might be the reason we are provided with Offred’s story at all.

Once Winston is captured in The Ministry of Love, he meets his fellow colleague and poet Ampleforth, who has not the slightest notion on why he got caught and feverishly tries to remember what form of Thoughtcrime has committed. It turns out there is only one possible instance, when he was producing a definitive edition of the poems of Kipling, he allowed the word ‘God’ to remain at the end of a line: “It was impossible to change the line. The rhyme was ‘rod.’ Do you realize that there are only twelve rhymes to ‘rod’ in the entire language? For days I had racked my brains.

There was no other rhyme.” (233). So even though Ampleforth is a poetical creature who does not impose a threat to the regime, he is taken in by the Thoughtpolice. For this subversive phrase, he is transported to room 101.

This shows that there are limits to the felicity of subversive speech. Offred’s desire for verbal contact could lead to subversive speech acts and acts of rebellion in a totalitarian regime that tries to restrain verbal pleasure and that needs to keep its citizens separated and alienated from each other in order to assure their fearful compliance and to prevent their conspiratorial interaction from blossoming. But as Hansot has critically pointed out, Offred’s delightful play with language does not necessarily lead to her undertaking action. Her deconstructive wordplay may seduce her into depoliticizing the norms of Gilead and into taking action, but her toying with words seems to remain exactly this.

Although Offred is drawn to the potential of backstage activities like Mayday, her isolation, fear of the Eyes, of spies among the Handmaids and of punishment, limits her involvement as well as the process of deconstructing what has happened to her, her fellow handmaids and her former self (Hansot 58). Throughout *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Offred’s language displays a mixture of merriment, hysteria and irony. Standing in the cupboard scrawled with her hanged predecessor’s secret message, Offred is aware that she, like the other Handmaid(s), is trapped. Therefore, the Handmaids never forget to play their part and never assemble for an uprising, they remain rebels behind closed doors. Their subversion has to remain secretive if they do not want to be dispatched to the Colonies or hanged on the wall.

Chapter 2: Cognitive Dissonance

2.1. Derrida's Deconstruction

A specific feature of J.L. Austin's theory of performativity was that he excluded what he had formerly distinguished as 'the non-serious' performatives from the linguistic debate. Austin made a separation between performative utterances in everyday life and the non-serious utterances on stage. With non-serious utterances he referred to the literary language found in poetry, play and theatre (Reinelt 4). It remained a bit of a mystery why Austin thought it was necessary to exclude literary utterances from his conception of the performatives and why he decided to categorize language in art forms as 'parasitic'. As Parker and Sedgwick pointed out, the politics of the specific verb Austin choose; 'etiolate', implied that literary language weakened normal usages of languages and thus Austin treated literary language as intrinsically vampiric. As they argued: "What's so surprising, in a thinker otherwise strongly resistant to moralism, is to discover the pervasiveness with which the excluded theatrical is hereby linked with the perverted, the artificial, the unnatural, the abnormal, the decadent, the effete, the diseased" (5).

Therefore it might be no surprise that Derrida objected to this distinction in his book *Signature Event Context* (1988). Since repetition is a basic feature of language, it did not make sense to Derrida to exclude language that is repeated in a literary or non-serious fashion from the Speech Act theory. He argued that language utterances in general only work once they are recognized as versions of regular formulas (for instance, if I make the decision to refer to a table as a 'former tree', it will take a while for people to understand what I'm trying to communicate when I'm out to buy a new 'former tree'). A sign or a mark that is not repeatable, could never be a proper sign or mark as it would be unable to function as an element in our language. In the words of Charles Preice: "All our thoughts and knowledge is by signs" (Verspoor 3). Indeed, the founding father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, pointed out

that those symbolic forms are arbitrary (Verspoor 16) but that the majority of the signs, however, are understood to show a continuity, always consisting of the signifier and the signified (Wurth 280).

Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (published posthumously in 1916) has been described as a 'Copernican revolution' in the human and social sciences, in the sense that, 'instead of men's words being seen as peripheral to men's understanding of reality, men's understanding of reality came to be seen as revolving about their social use of verbal signs' (Horner 36). Saussure showed that language is not an absolute and fixed system within which a singular meaning can be located, but that it is rather a set of differential relations (Horner 40).

The possibility of being repeated in new circumstances is essential to the nature of language; anything that cannot be repeated in a 'non-serious' fashion would not be language if it were not for some mark inextricably tied to a physical situation. Having considered this, Derrida wonders if a performative utterance could succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'codified' form, so in other words: "if the formula that I utter to open a meeting, christen a boat, or undertake marriage were not identifiable as conforming to an iterable method, if it were not thus identifiable as a kind of citation?" (Loxley 74). What Derrida refers to is that Austin seems to have pushed poetic language aside as consisting of non-serious linguistic acts, based on a flaw that de Saussure and Derrida actually consider to be the general law of language.

Therefore Derrida sets out the project to recover performatives in his critique of Austin and to include literary language in the theoretical field of performativity, by insisting that the general condition of language is its 'iterability'. This makes theatrical and literary utterances not an exception but an instance of the general condition of utterances since they are "an interaction of a prior linguistic structure" (Loxley 73). Albeit, iteration shortly means that in the small space between the context and the utterance of a word, there is no guarantee of a realization of prior conditions, but rather a deviance from them (Loxley 78).

The notion iteration implies that in the space between the context and the utterance, there is no guarantee of a realization of prior conditions, but rather a distancing from them, which constitutes or dismantles the performative force (Reinelt 204). Derrida explains that our intentionality of the uttering of a word does not automatically realize the effect we hoped for. He perceives communication to be intersubjective; in communication that which is present to my mind is presented to

your mind (76). Austin had incorporated the fact that performative speech acts could be felicitous or infelicitous, but contributed this solely to the external circumstances. Derrida returns it to language itself, as an inherent flaw. If signs and signifiers are defined by their differences, it is impossible that a text will have a stable essence, a fixed meaning. From this perspective, meaning depends on the relations and differences between the words in their discursive context (Wurth 281).

What does this mean? The picture of communication that Derrida paints is one in which language is even more vulnerable and at constant risk of being infelicitous. Once our linguistic utterances travel into the world via speech and writing, they are running a greater risk at failing or getting lost. The notion of iterability points to a necessary feature of linguistic elements. The intrinsic duality of a sign is on the one hand to be repeatable (otherwise a sign could not be an element in language), and on the other hand it is iterable, as the words might alter and change over time.

Furthermore - and crucial for this thesis - is the point that if language only functioned by being rehearsed, coded and practised, this means that it could also be seen as a discursive practice. This realization was a key moment in the development of the performative notion. A discursive practice can be explained as the construction and reflection of a social reality through actions that invoke identity, ideology, belief, and power (Loxley 83). As far as Derrida is concerned, this insight takes us into the fundamental structures - not just of the speech acts theory - but of Western philosophy and into the idea of fundamental structures as well (Loxley 78). Texts introduce sets of oppositions (dichotomies) that function to structure them and this is where Derrida's deconstructive practice comes in.

General sets of dichotomies include good versus evil, truth versus falsehood, masculinity versus femininity, thought versus feeling, mind versus matter and nature versus culture, to name a few. One of these terms functions as the centre, it is privileged and given a natural status. Some terms have always been privileged - good, truth, masculinity, purity, whiteness - others can be found in the centre or in the margins. In literary history we find many works that privilege 'rationality' whereas in the work of the Romantic poets 'feeling' occupies the centre (Bertens 100).

These hierarchies between centre and margins thus take the form of binary oppositions, a surplus of meaning is added to them.

Once differences have given rise to meaning, we privilege one pole of the oppositional axis and condemn the other. Some privileges will strike most of us as

reasonable like good versus evil and truth versus falsehood. But others have done incalculable damage, white versus black and the masculine versus the feminine. These oppositions consequently speak through us (Bertens 100). The practice of deconstruction sets out to dismantle them, arguing that binary oppositions are a less oppositional than they would seem to be (101). To analyse and dismantle them, means to 'decentre' the privileged term in order to show that both terms only exist because of an arbitrary difference and are in themselves neutral (Bertens 102). Derrida is fully aware that his own language, whether spoken or written, is subject to difference (Bertens 102). In literary terms this means that a text never achieves closure and remains a field of possibilities (Bertens 103). Because deconstruction's point of departure is that language is by definition iterable, it expects to find privilegins in written and spoken texts. No matter whether a text is literary or non-literary, it can always be deconstructed and shown to rely on rhetorical operations for its internal stability, that mask their origin in difference or the surplus of meaning that is the result of difference (Bertens 103).

Consequently, the broad framework of a deconstructive writing is to unsettle the set of fundamental structures, in which one pole of the opposition is presumed to be full, substantial or central and dominant over the other. Derrida seeks to show what he has claimed to demonstrate here: that the philosophical enterprise, even at its most basic, depends on dogmatic moments that it cannot recognise as such (109). From Derrida's position, to state that institutions are 'systems of conventions,' and that discursive events are the products of such systems, cannot be the last word in explaining how their effects are achieved. The explanation in terms of conventionality also contains its own presuppositions, and it is these that the deconstructive analysis seeks to set out, explore and unsettle (Loxley 107). In conclusion, Derrida has created a tool for us to dismantle and deconstruct the dichotomies inherently rooted in our approach to the 'constative' and 'performative' statements, as well as the division between 'literary' and 'informative' language, pointing out that there are institutive elements in the ways we use language itself.

The critical edge for Austin was that a social-analytical approach to language could reveal how the social and the historical construct the world we live in (Derrida 72). In advancing this claim, Derrida's work enhances the speech acts theory, regarding the conventional or rule-governed nature of language as an institution that frequently encompasses dichotomies, and with these dichotomies, intrinsic power

structures (106). In the following chapter, I shall focus my analytical lens on the various ways in which the totalitarian regimes use their linguistic corpus, particularly slogans and speeches, in order to constitute and cement their power.

2.3. Slogans & Speeches

She doesn't make speeches anymore. She has become speechless. She stays in her home, but it doesn't seem to agree with her. How furious she must be, now that she's been taken at her word. (Atwood 42)

Within *The Ministry of Plenty*, Winston is a member of The Records Department and his job confronts him with the process of falsification that the regime of Big Brother applies on a daily basis. This process of continuous alteration is applied to all the texts and images that make up the discourse of Oceania: newspapers, periodicals, books, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, photographs and any kind of documentation which might hold any political or ideological significance. By the continuous rectification and reworking of everything that is recorded, the Party can always show by documentary evidence to be correct. Nothing which conflicts with the needs of the moment can remain on record, as Winston reflects: “All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary” (Orwell 40).

According to the standards of the Party, The Records Department is not officially reconstructing history but simply providing the citizens of Oceania with information from slogans, poems and biological treatises to a spelling books or Newspeak dictionaries. There is a chain of separate departments to repeat the same operation at a lower level, dealing with literature, music, drama, and entertainment that is especially designed for the benefit of the proletariat or ‘the proles’ (Orwell 43). As Winston readjusts the Ministry of Plenty’s figures, he realizes that what he and his colleagues are committing is not even forgery, but that he is merely substituting one piece of nonsense for another: books are reissued without the admission that any alteration has been made. Most of the material that he deals with has no connection with anything in the real world, not even the connection contained in a direct lie: “Statistics were just as much a fantasy in their original version as in their rectified version” (Orwell 41).

The reason for this is constant meta-forgery is clear: when all written records are falsified, there can never exist any standards against which the truth can be tested, so the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life has to be accepted. The Party uses the rewritten history books and falsified records to prove its good deeds. Thus every class of recorded fact, great or small, is adjusted to make the Party look good. As a result of this falsification “memory fails” and “everything faded away into a shadow-world in which, finally, even the date of the year had become uncertain” (Orwell 41). So the starting point for any citizen under Big Brother’s reign is a deep uncertainty into what is valid or invalid, what is right or wrong, what is true or false. Since this heavily depends on the multifarious needs or whims of the Party, citizens adjust themselves accordingly to stay out of the hands of the Thought Police.

This constant lack of information is also apparent in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Offred describes that she still clings to the news, even though she knows the majority to be false: “I’m ravenous for news, any kind of news; even if it’s false news, it must mean something” (18). Oceania and Gilead are societies which are built with lies instead of bricks, as the three prominent slogans of the Party clearly illustrate. Throughout the novel, Winston remembers the slogans, painted on the Ministries of Plenty, Truth and Love, like a leaden knell: “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength” (Orwell 104).

I would like to shed some light on these slogans in order to show how the totalitarian regimes intend to erode the truth. As Dwan argues, Hitler and Stalin have eroded truth by undermining free speech and circulating lies, but the totalitarian assault on truth simultaneously has a more theoretical character. For instance, Nazi theory specifically denies that such a thing as ‘the truth’ exists. The Nazis made a distinction between ‘German science’ and ‘Jewish science’. For Orwell, this relativism led to “a nightmare world in which the Leader or some ruling clique, controls not only the future but the past” (Dwan 383). I would like to look at the speeches given and the dialogues established between those in power and those victimized by the regimes.

The first slogan: “War is peace”, seems rather contradictory to citizens of a democratic society. Winston lives in London, the chief city of Airstrip One, and Airstrip One is in a permanent war with the other districts Eastasia and Eurasia (Orwell 3). The most recurring word uttered by the telescreen is victory. Winston catches triumphant phrases during his lunch about the control of the whole of Africa

which brings the war within measurable distance of its end: “victory- greatest victory in human history – victory, victory, victory!” (72) during Hate Week Victory Mansions will “display four hundred meters of bunting” (148) and even Winston’s crumpled pack of cigarettes is marked with: “victory cigarettes” (5). War is not only considered as a necessary evil in Oceania, but also as something to tighten the grip on their citizens; war functions as a means to spread more propaganda in favour of the Party. Winston describes the madness of the preparations surrounding Hate Week, a week of national hatred towards Goldstein and his brotherhood, as new posters appear over London, which represent the monstrous figure of an Eurasian soldier with a machine gun pointed from his hip (Orwell 149). This leads the proles to being lashed into one of their periodical frenzies of patriotism: “As though to harmonize with the general mood, the rocket bombs had been killing larger numbers of people than usual” (149). This results in angry demonstrations, posters being burned and mass suspicion (149). It clearly shows that the regime of Oceania synchronizes the supposed war with the general mood in order to fuel their inhabitants for Hate Week.

Reading Goldstein’s book, which is given to him by O’Brien, Winston learns that “War is peace” means that the war is a pretence. After the war in the 1950’s, with the help of the atom bomb that only superpowers could afford to manufacture, the modern world has been divided among three totalitarian dictatorships. The perfect equilibrium among the three has created the precondition for world peace. However, the dictators have been pretending to be eternally at war because only continual war gives them the excuses to keep their own population enslaved, undernourished and overworked (Gottlieb 82). This way, they keep their citizens in a permanent state of fear of the “satanic” enemy, ready to worship the dictator as their saviour. “War is peace” is a dichotomy in which war is the positive, centralised and cementing term, a means which supposingly leads to the state of peace. Though living in a constant state of war is not peaceful for the citizens at all, the Party has switched the dichotomy and puts war to use of gaining more power.

So the fact that “War is peace” is contradictory, is an important testament to the power of the Party’s mass campaign of psychological control. The party is able to maintain that “War is peace”, because having a common enemy keeps the people of Oceania united (Gottlieb 82). In effect, it is Big Brother - or the Inner Party ruling in his name - that acts as the actual traitor, conspiring against the welfare of his own people. To cover up this fact, Big Brother wears the mask of the benevolent protector.

The Ministry of Truth fabricates the most sophisticated lies of propaganda to prove that he is benevolent and infallible and will protect his people from “The Other” (Gottlieb 82). To prevent people from testing the Party's lies, the Thought Police intimidates “thought criminals” with the threat of torture and interrogation in the Ministry of Love, which is named the opposite of what it represents.

Once Winston has been captured in the Ministry of Love, O'Brien (unapologetically) explains that the party seeks power “entirely for its own sake” (Orwell 263). The Party differs from the German Nazis and the Russian Communists because, according to O'Brien, they never had the courage to recognize their own motives, thus they pretended and believed they had seized power for a limited time, and promised to their people a paradise just right around the corner where everyone would be free and equal. O'Brien points out that through the eyes of The Party, power is not a means but an end. Therefore he concludes that one does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution but that one simply makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship: “the object of power is power” (263). Likewise, the object of persecution is persecution and the object of torture is torture. “War is peace” because the Party does not feel the need to seize its hunger for power by chasing an utopian ideal and establishing a perfect society, the Party is at peace with pretending to be in constant war and bombing the city, which “blows children to pieces” (Orwell 149).

The premise that “War is peace” is not spelled out as a specific slogan in *The Handmaid's Tale*, but is apparent and permeates through the speeches that Aunt Lydia gives in the Rachel and Leah Re-education Center. Within this training center, the women trained as Handmaids are made to understand that they live on a continuous battlefield with men. Therefore it is their task to be submissive at all times: “Men are sex machines, said Aunt Lydia, and not much more. They only want one thing. You must learn to manipulate them, for your own good” (Atwood 138).

To frighten the Handmaids and in order to convince them that it is better to be a captured and subordinate woman, Aunt Lydia shows the Handmaids old porn films that should illustrate how violent the pre-Gileadean era used to be, especially towards women. These films (dating from the seventies) show women being raped, beaten up and killed: “Once we had to watch a woman being slowly cut into pieces, her fingers and breasts snipped off, her stomach slit open with garden shears and her intestines pulled out” (112). The Handmaids are indoctrinated to be without flesh as to be seen

is to be penetrated. Being with flesh is asking to be treated violently. “Consider the alternatives”, aunt Lydia tells them with a voice that trembles of indignation, as the films (supposedly) show what they thought of women in the pre-Gileadean era. The porn films are a misrepresentation, but Aunt Lydia points out that this was what men used to think of women in the old days. Offred remembers one instance where Aunt Lydia points out that women used to make spectacles of themselves by showing their bodies in public, and comments: “no wonder those things used to happen” implicitly commenting that rape was an intrinsic part of the pre-Gileadean culture. Furthermore, she adds that “such things do not happen to nice women” (52).

These passages show women to be in a perpetual state of war with men. In the aftermath of the environmental catastrophe that severely diminished the population, the role of the Handmaids is deemed vitally important for the survival of the human race, while ironically enough, in spite of the low birth rate, the majority of people are still marked as worthless and sent to colonies. However, the war could be ended through the complete subordination of the women in the lower ranks, who can replenish the earth. Aunt Lydia points out that Offred and her fellow Handmaids are getting the best treatment considering the circumstances, as she concludes: “there’s a war on” (Atwood 84). The only way for the Handmaids to live in peace is to accept their role in their war with men, nature and to perceive their bodies as strict political instruments (84).

The second slogan is a basic premise as according to the Party, the man who is independent does not stand a chance against the government, therefore “Freedom is slavery”. When O’Brien begins his speech to Winston, he explains to him that the first thing Winston must realize is that power is collective and that alone - free - the human being is defeated. The human being is defeated because every person is mortal, which according to the Party, is the greatest of all failures. The only escape for a citizen is complete submission. If he can merge himself in the Party so that he becomes the Party, then “he is all-powerful and immortal” (Orwell 264).

Consequently, O’Brien points out to Winston that if the Party would choose to wear people out faster it does not make any difference to the totalitarian government, even if they quicken the tempo of life in order for men to turn senile at thirty, as “the death of the individual is not death” (269). To the Party, the individuals equal nothing but decaying cells, a person is insignificant and will only find freedom in its slavery to the Party, the vast and immortal being. According to O’Brien the weariness of the

cell is the vigour of the organism. O' Brien asks Winston rhetorically: "Do you die when you cut your fingernails?" (Orwell 264).

As Lifton points out, in a totalitarian system, there is an overall assumption that there is one valid mode of being – one authentic avenue of immortality – and an arbitrary line is drawn between those who do and who do not possess such rights (Gottlieb 40). O' Brien's explanation of the slogan "Freedom is slavery" confirms Lifton's observation that the "collective relationship to immortality depends upon its collective denial to others' (40). Hence, only the individuals who give up their individuality to "enslave" themselves into the collective body of the Party can hope to achieve this privilege and acquire the 'freedom' of partaking in the Party's immortality. The Party does not destroy the heretic because he resists the Party, instead they capture his inner mind and reshape him: "We burn all evil and illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side" not in appearance but "in heart and soul". From the Party's perspective, it is simply intolerable that "an erroneous thought should exist anywhere in the world, however secret and powerless it may be" (Orwell 255).

The Party cannot permit any deviation, even in the instant of death: "we make the brain perfect before we blow it out" (255). Subsequently O'Brien concludes that the command of the old despotism was 'thou shalt not', that the command of the totalitarian was 'though shalt' but that their command is 'thou art' (255). By contrast, for proles and other outsiders, the apparent "freedom" from Party surveillance as "Proles and animals are free" is simply a sign of their true slavery, as they are not important enough to matter (Gottlieb 40). The proles are industrialized work forces, far beneath suspicion. Orwell based 'the proles' on Marx's notion of the 'proletariat' the base of society which enables the superstructure to exist in the first place (van Peperstraten 122).

The Handmaids in the Gileadean regime, however, - in spite of being members of the lowest ranks too - are not beneath suspicion. The only thing that can lead the Handmaids out of the Rachel and Leah-re-education center is their next imprisonment in the households of their Commanders. Whenever a Handmaid (or any individual) tries to escape by crossing the border they are executed, something which Offred and Ofglen are directly confronted with when they are standing by the Wall in the garden of what used to be Harvard, looking at the people who have been hanged. The sight horrifies Offred but as she represses her revulsion, she experiences a

“blankness” and remembers Aunt Lydia’s words about how life in Gilead will “become ordinary” (Hansot 59). Aunt Lydia’s statement reflects the power of a totalitarian state like Gilead as it transforms Offred’s natural human response of revulsion towards the dead bodies to indifferent “blankness”, in other words: the totalitarians transform horror into normalcy. Aunt Lydia’s words suggest that Gilead succeeds in establishing its state, not through making people believe that its ways are right, but by making people forget what a different world could be like. Torture and tyranny become accepted because they are “what you are used to” (Hansot 59).

During her speech, she points out that life will be better for the generations after Offred. The women will live in harmony together and the Handmaids will be like daughters to the Wives. Once the population level is rising, the Handmaids will no longer have to be transferred from one household to another and they can live as one big family (Atwood 157). This illustrates that the only way for the Handmaids to pave their way back to freedom is by accepting the slavery of their current position and obliging to the system. Their path to safety is slavery and so the regimes suggest that it is only by submitting yourself to their rules, that you will gain freedom again. What this freedom encompasses remains a mystery, but it can be argued that this is again a contrast of concepts which is turned upside down, where slavery embodies the right, truthful and positive surplus of meaning, whereas freedom is discarded as an intrinsic component of slavery.

“Ignorance is strength” is the third slogan and an important premise to the Party, since it is the inability of people to recognize the contradictions as well as their choice to remain ignorant, which cements the power of the authoritarian regime. As O’Brien tells Winston, power is power over human beings, but above all over their minds. The Party’s power over matter or external reality is not important because that control is absolute (264). As Winston reflects, what terrifies him is not that the Party might kill him for heretic thoughts, but the idea that they might convince him one day that they are right. Winston knows that “the obvious, the silly, and the true had got to be defended” (81). Even though Winston does not know how the laws of nature work, he reflects that “stones are hard, water is wet” and “objects unsupported fall towards the earth’s center” (81). If the external world only exists in the mind and his mind is controlled by the Party, they can demand him to believe that two and two makes five instead of four. This is Winston’s biggest fear. As Dwan argues: “The practice of

truth presupposes basic liberties: freedom of speech is not a sufficient condition of truth, but it is necessary for its discovery and maintenance” (392).

Freedom of speech is exactly what the Party tries to prevent. O’Brien uses the term “cleansing” when it comes to the minds of those who once held independent thoughts and did not incorporate the Party’s doctrine wholeheartedly. He describes how traitors like Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford, in whose innocence Winston believed: “begged to be shot quickly, so that they could die while their minds were still clean” (Orwell 255). The spirits of the individuals are broken and are brought back by O’Brien in some sort of “ignorant bliss”, where their heretic thoughts are washed out. The fact that trained ignorance is an important means of survival is also emphasized in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In the Reah and Leah re-education center Aunt Lydia warns the Handmaids that not all of them will make it through: “some of you are shallow-rooted” (17). Metaphorically, the Handmaids have to learn to consider themselves as seeds and she encourages them to put their hands up in the air and pretend they are trees (17), thus preparing the Handmaids for their brain dead and vegetative roles. This ignorance is something which consistently has to be practised by the population. As Offred ironically comments: “Ignoring isn’t the same as ignorance, you have to work at it” (862).

Furthermore, “Ignorance is strength” because the Party has complete political power in the present, enabling it to control the way in which its subjects think about and interpret the past: every history book reflects the Party ideology and individuals are forbidden from keeping mementos of their own past, such as photographs and documents. O’Brien points out to Winston that the past has no concrete existence. Thus he is essentially arguing that because the Party’s version of the past is what people believe, that past, though it has no basis in real events, has established itself as the truth. It has been argued *1984* reflects Orwell’s conviction that a commitment to “objective truth” was fast disappearing from the world, a prospect that troubled him more than bombs. Truth meant little in this “age of lies” and was neither the aim nor horizon of intellectual debate. Standards of rationality were often opportunistically enlisted in the service of particular ends (Dwan 381). Orwell traced the systematic erosion of truth to the rise of authoritarian politics. “The really frightening thing about totalitarianism,” he maintained, “is not that it commits ‘atrocities’ but that it attacks the concept of objective truth” (Dwan 382). Totalitarianism, in Orwell’s eyes, was characterized best as an extreme relativism (Dwan 382).

The conversations established between O'Brien and Winston, as between the Commander and Offred, are described in a rather medical and almost clinical way, implying that both Winston and Offred are the deranged citizens who have lost their minds. They are deviants from the system who got stuck in the past and did not know how to adjust themselves in the new totalitarian world. O'Brien is the director who asks questions and suggests answers. He behaves like a tormentor, a protector, inquisitor and a friend (Orwell 244). During a rare moment of wakefulness in his sedated state, Winston recalls hearing a voice murmuring in his ear: "Don't worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect" (244).

Winston has substantial trouble with this cultivated ignorance. Tortured in the Ministry of Love, Winston does not comprehend how O'Brien succeeds in stopping people from remembering the past and objects that O'Brien has not controlled his memory. To this, O'Brien responds that Winston himself has not controlled it and that he has failed in disciplining himself. He did not put in an effort of the will. According to O'Brien, Winston failed to make the act of submission to the regime that would be the price of sanity and "preferred to be a lunatic, a minority of one" (Orwell 249).

When Winston objects and points to the interchangeability of the laws of nature, O'Brien is unimpressed, as the stars are just "bits of fire a few kilometres away" and the earth might as well be "the center of the universe" (265). From the perspective of the Party, reality is inside the skull and therefore O'Brien could float of the floor like a soap bubble if the Party wished it. According to O'Brien, Winston must get rid of his nineteenth-century ideas about the laws of nature. As he argues:

You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. (Orwell 265)

The fact that the Party pretends to create the laws of nature and to control the way individuals witness reality is an example of the public "schizophrenia" that Orwell despised (Enteen 211). The Party flouts the most basic pre-requisites of truth because in Oceania, accuracy only matters if it has an instrumental value.

For Winston truth cannot be suspended in this way: it is not only built into the fabric of thought, it is also the basis of freedom. He sets great store not only in logical consistency, but in a broader form of coherence between his beliefs. What matters is not the way belief corresponds to an independent reality; rather, it is the way beliefs fit with each other in a comprehensive system. In the face of truth-deniers as O'Brien, Winston believes that there are substantive principles of truth that are worth defending. He assumes that truth is the way our statements correspond with the world and with coherent beliefs; truth is a set of statements that can be verified (386).

Winston thus considers the Party's exploitation of its fearful subjects as a means to suppress the intellectual notion of objective reality. If the universe exists only in the mind, and the Party controls the mind, then the Party controls the entire universe. As Winston ponders: "For, after all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable - what then?" (Orwell 249). Therefore $2 + 2 = 4$ becomes a motif linked to Winston's independence, which comes full circle after the torture Winston suffered in the Ministry of Love. With his soul broken, he sits at the Chestnut Tree Café and writes " $2 + 2 = 5$ " in the dust on his table to keep himself in check (Dwan 387), this is the Party's ultimate victory.

O'Brien becomes agitated when Winston confirms to believe that O'Brien has brought him to the Ministry of Love in order to punish him. As the terror continues, O'Brien comments: "I am taking trouble with you, Winston, because you are worth the trouble" (245). Instead of punishing him, O'Brien wants to "cure him" and "make him sane" (253). While he speaks his voice is patient and gentle. As Winston reflects: "he had the air of a doctor, a teacher, even a priest, anxious to explain and persuade rather than to punish" (245). From O'Brien's speech, it becomes clear that Winston has not cured himself from his mentally deranged state because he lacked the mental strength: "Even now, I am well aware, you are clinging to your disease under the impression that it is a virtue" (245). Upon this O'Brien looks at him with the air of a teacher taking pains with a wayward but promising child (247). This attitude is typical of the totalitarian mindset, which does not tolerate any form of individual thought. As Atwood points out in "Silencing the Scream", the silencing of the dialogue often goes hand in hand with the demonizing of other human beings (Atwood 45).

The same goes for Offred's dialogues with the Commander, though it should be noted that Offred does not experience physical torture during their exchange of thoughts. During their games of Scrabble, the Commander becomes philosophical and wishes to explain things to Offred in order to justify himself. For instance, he points out that the past was difficult as well and the problems lied with the men, because there was nothing for them to do with anymore, as sex was too easy. The Commander argues that there was nothing to work for and nothing to fight for: "We have stats from that time. You know what they were complaining about the most? Inability to feel" (206).

When Offred objects that the current situation is horrific, he tells her that better never means better for anyone, but always worse for some groups. The Commander adds that the government of Gilead has given people more than it has taken away. As far as the Commander remembers, women never got any respect as mothers, so he is not surprised that they were giving up motherhood. He concludes that under the reign of Gilead, people have their purpose, that women are protected and that they can "fulfil their biological destinies in peace. With full support and encouragement" (222). The new government decided to have the American Constitution suspended and return society to the distant past of the ancient days of the Bible. As Gottlieb argues, Gilead chooses the letter but not the spirit of the Bible to cover up for its power-hungry actions (105).

2.2. Internal Satire

We want you to be valued, girls. She is rich in pauses, which she savours in her mouth. Think of yourselves as pearls. We, sitting in our rows, eyes down, we make her salivate morally. We are hers to define, we must suffer her adjectives. I think about pearls. Pearls are congealed oyster spit. (Atwood 16)

As Gottlieb has argued, dystopia is often a no-man's land between satire and tragedy. The tragic elements of the protagonist's fate notwithstanding, the overall strategies of dystopian novels are often those of political satire, where the writer offers criticism on specific aberrations in our present social-political system by showing us the potentially monstrous consequences (13). *The Handmaid's Tale* can be read as a typical caricature of an American Dream gone bad. It presents a vision of hope that

“has dwindled into a nightmare of unbridled power, industrial alienation and moral purposelessness” (Dodson 71). Exposing the religious fanatics that support the house of American ideals, it can be argued that Atwood warns for the consequences of imposed utopianism. *The Handmaid's Tale* illustrates the horrors of building a perfect utopian empire which includes slavery, labour camps and colonies (Dodson 71).

In the Rachel and Leah re-education centre, Offred discovers they have been located in one of the former schools that have been closed down due to a lack of children. She remembers Aunt Lydia's remark on past governments and how they made mistakes that Gilead does not intend to repeat: “her voice is pious, condescending, the voice of those whose duty it is to tell us unpleasant things for our own good” (Atwood 106). However, right after having endured the reprimanding speech, Offred comments: “I would like to strangle her” (106).

We know that the outwardly conformist Offred has seen her social value reduced to reproduction and her personal freedom curtailed. Nevertheless, the retrospective monologue in which she tells her story reveals her as observant of the power configurations in the personal and political realms, in ‘the time before’ and the present of the novel. Within the fanatic religious Gilead the victimized Handmaids are forced into an existence that is no less hypocritical than that of their oppressors. As we have seen, in order to survive, they are constantly obliged to pretend to espouse a system of values, which denigrates and threatens to annihilate them. In this manner, an allegedly profoundly Christian society transforms every citizen into a sinner and each person must become a hypocrite to exist within the system. This is the supreme irony of Atwood's fictional future world; Offred lives in a theocracy where not one person is devout and where notions as faith and morality have no meaning (Hammer 40), these are completely hollowed out.

Atwood's condemnation of Gilead's theocracy is never in doubt as Offred exposes the hypocrisy of a regime that preaches biblical virtue, but creates a society where vice reigns (40). The representatives of the Gileadean way are consistently unhappy, hypocritical or monstrous. The sadistic aunts are frustrated older women who brutalize their fertile charges out of fear and the commander calmly justifies the oppressive regime which he partly masterminded with the observation that in the old society, men felt they were no longer needed, consequently implying that the present regime is ultimately the women's fault. One of Atwood's most ironic portraits can be argued, is that of the Commander's resentful wife Serena Joy, the high-ranking wife

who is embittered by the existence which her successful advocacy has eventually imposed upon her (Hammer 40). *The Handmaid's Tale* possesses many thematic features typical of traditional satire (Hammer 39). This satiric dimension lies embedded within Offred's own narrative procedure. In the words of Hammer: "despite the heroine's apparent straightforwardness and despite her seeming fitness to give a true, woman-in-the-street report of a nightmare situation, Offred surreptitiously offers the reader a very different kind of narrative" (Hammer 39).

As I have explained briefly in my theoretical framework, iterability ensured that the concept of the performative could not be thought of as a self-identical unity, meaning or element in a code; instead, it is differential and divided at its origin. The sameness implicit in iterability makes the concept possible to exist across various contexts with a unified meaning, but it can have this sameness only on the basis of a difference and repeatability, that marks its origin and therefore makes it different from itself (108). So what can and should be said is often very different from what speakers actually do say, as ordinary language is riddled with unclarity, cliché's and dishonest euphemisms (Bird 117).

In addition to this, the broader framework of deconstruction is to unsettle the set of fundamental structures, the conceptional oppositions in which one pole of the opposition is presumed to be full, substantial or central and therefore to come first, to destroy the prevailing dichotomy. Derrida seeks to show what he has claimed by introducing 'iterability', which entails that the philosophical enterprise, even at its most basic, depends on deconstructing dogmatism (Loxley 109). Offred's narrating voice is permeated with this deconstructive eye and she is therefore – in spite of the torture, limited freedom and indoctrination – savvy on how to live her life under the constraints of Gilead. She recognizes the social power relations and conflicts that impinge upon her life. Therefore, I will analyse some examples of the internal satire that Offred often employs in her narrative, a silent but biting satire that contains a deconstructive strength.

During her prayers in the Rachel and Leah re-education center, Offred functions as a rather snide and sarcastic narrator when it comes to Aunt Lydia, who has the girls on their knees and threatens to whip them. Offred comments dryly that part of her interest in this was aesthetic: "She wanted us to look like something Anglo-Saxon, carved on a tomb; or Christmas-card angels, regimented in our robes of purity" (190). Offred explains that they prayed for emptiness, so they could be filled

with grace, love, self-denial, semen and babies. She comments: “Oh God, king of the universe, thank you for not creating me a man. Oh God, obliterate me. Make me fruitful. Mortify my flesh, that I may be multiplied” (Atwood 190).

Once Offred is transmitted to her new address, she tells the reader that there is not much music in the house, but that sometimes the thin sound of Serena’s voice will sound from a disc made long ago, so softly that she won’t be caught listening to it, remembering her “own former and amputated glory” and Offred adds “Halleluya” (52). During dinner Offred points out that she eats creamer corn with a fork and a spoon and that her meat is cut up for her ahead of time, as if she’s lacking cutting skills or teeth: “I have both, however. That’s why I’m not allowed a knife” (255). During the Prayvaganza the Commander reads a biblical passage on Adam and Eve: Eve shall be saved by childbearing and continue in faith, charity and holiness with sobriety. Offred remarks: “Saved by childbearing. What did we suppose would save us, in the time before?”, and Ofglen comments: “He should tell that to the Wives, when they’re into the sherry” (218). When the Commander has finished the main ritual she tells the reader: “Boo, I think in my head. Take a good look, because it’s too late now. The Angels will qualify for Handmaids later, if their new Wives cannot produce” (218).

Furthermore, at an evening ceremony, she satirizes the Newsreader and deconstructs the announced victory. She notices that the reporter has a kindly and fatherly air, he gazes out from the screen with wise wrinkles around them like “everybody’s ideal grandfather”. His smile implies that what he is telling them is for their own good, that everything will be alright soon and that there will be peace: “You must go to sleep, like good children” (78). Offred comments: “He’s very convincing. I struggle against him. He’s like an old movie star, I tell myself, with false teeth and a face job” (78). Offred does not buy the news he is reading, in which he states that the Resettlement of the Children of Ham is continuing on schedule and that three thousands have arrived in National Homeland One. She wonders how they are ever transporting so many people at once and notices that no pictures are shown: “Lord knows what they’re supposed to do, once they get there. Farm, is the theory” (78). Lastly, the content of Offred’s prayers rather deviates from the standards.

My God. Who Art in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is within. I wish you would tell me Your Name, the real one I mean. But You will do as well as anything. I wish I knew what You were up to. But whatever it is, help me to

get through it, please. Though maybe it's not Your doing; I don't believe for an instant that what's going on out there is what You meant. I have enough daily bread, so I won't waste time on that. It is not the main problem. The problem is getting it down without choking on it. (Atwood 192)

She eventually concludes that it would be great if he might provide a heaven for loved ones who have to die: "We need you for that. Hell we can make for ourselves" (191). This prayer shows how Offred uses her deconstructive narrative voice to undermine the religious fanaticism of the Gileadean regime, God is a device to save loved ones in heaven as the people on earth transformed their place into a living hell. Hell we can make for ourselves, suggests that Offred is aware that the human agency is thriving towards destruction. *The Handmaid's Tale* parodies adages, biblical texts and canonical literature by supplying horrifying contexts and effects for heedless actions (Wilson 35). In Offred's words: "We are hers to define, we must suffer her adjectives" (Atwood 106).

In 1984 satire is more specifically focused. It is the totalitarian mentality in the West of the 1940s that could lead Orwell to create the horrors of Oceania, a state consciously modelled on former totalitarian regimes such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. That the transformation of the West came from within and not from a foreign power is demonstrated by the perfect equilibrium that exists among Oceania, Anastasia, and Eurasia in *1984*. As Gottlieb has argued, since Winston is a more psychologically compelling character than any of his fellow characters from the novel, we need a more complex distancing mechanism as reader in order to be able to disassociate ourselves from the character's tragic fate while decoding the satirist's social-political message to us (Gottlieb 17). As Posner argued, Satire is akin to parody, and to understand a parody you have to understand the conditions being parodied, which are usually those of the satirist-parodist's own society (Posner 9).

When it comes to the internalized satire in *1984*, the dichotomy between the ideal state the party propagates and the reality of their world becomes incredibly clear. Winston reflects that it must be easy to believe that the physical type set up by the Party as an ideal - tall muscular youths and deep bosomed maidens, blond-haired, vital, sunburnt and carefree beings existed and predominated. But actually as far as Winston can judge, the majority of people in Airstrip One are small, dark and ill-

favoured. As he reflects: “It was curious how that beetlelike type proliferated in the Ministries: little dumpy men, growing stout very early in life, with short legs, swift scuttling movements, and fat inscrutable faces with very small eyes. It was the type that seemed to flourish best under the dominion of the Party” (60).

Winston points out that the ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible and glittering, “a world of steel and concrete”, a world of “monstrous machines” and “terrifying weapons”. The government of Ingsoc wants to create a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, fighting, triumphing, persecuting, shortly: “three hundred million people all with the same face” . The reality consists of decaying cities, where underfed people shuffle to and fro in patched-up nineteenth-century houses that always smell of bad lavatories (74).

As Winston reflects, it is hard to tell exactly how much of the Party news is false. It might be true that the average human being was better off now than he had been before the Revolution. But “life, if you looked about you, bore no resemblance not only to the lies that streamed out of the telescreens, but even to the ideals that the Party was trying to achieve” (74). Julia is a character with a quite satiric tone, she teases Winston: “You thought I was a good Party member. Pure in word and deed. Banners, processions, slogans, games, community hikes- all that stuff. And you thought that if I had a quarter of a chance I’d denounce as a though-criminal and get you killed off?” (121). For some reason Winston suddenly finds himself thinking of Mrs. Parsons, with her wispy hair and the dust in the creases of her face. A faint irony comes over him: “Within two years those children would be denouncing her to the Thought Police. Mrs. Parsons would be vaporized [...].The little beetlelike men who scuttled so nimbly through the labyrinthine corridors of Ministries-, would never be vaporized” (Orwell61). This example illustrates Winston’s deconstructive voice, being aware that only those who are fully trained in ignorance, are save from the hands of the Party.

Some critical readings might not pay attention to the structural strategies of dystopian satire. But the function of dystopian satire is to warn us on how to prevent the monstrosity envisaged in a totalitarian dictatorship of the future from actually transforming into a reality (Howells 11). As Speier argues, we often hear that the political joke is an offensive weapon with which an aggressive, politically engaged

person makes the arrangements of an opponent seem ridiculous. But for Offred these political jokes serve defensive purposes, they are nonetheless weapons (1354).

As Gottlieb points out, the entire point of a dystopian satire is to emphasize that once we, the reader's generation, allow the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship, it becomes overwhelming, and no effort on the part of an individual within that system is capable of ending it. Our collective failure today dooms the individual in the future. It is inherent in the dystopian genre that, unless we prevent the repressive system from coming into being by standing up against harmful trends around us today, we ruin the chances for the protagonist's generation in the future (109). Everything for Atwood is two-sided, and both sides are subject for satire, satire subtle yet as cutting, and somewhere there is a line between laughter and anguish, "cutting the heart asunder" (Rigney 164).

Chapter 3: Resistance

3.1. Althusser' Interpellation

In their book *The German Ideology (1846)*, Marx and Engels reacted to the German philosophical fashions they had experienced during their time. German idealist thought was fuelled by incorrect conceptions and philosophers merely pitted phrases against each other. Philosophy concealed reality and adopted the form of what Marx and Engels called ideology. They maintained that within ideology, men and their circumstances appear upside-down, as in a camera obscura (Freeden 6). With this analogy they meant that ideology presented an inverted mirror-image of the material world, distorted by the fact that the material world was itself subject to the dehumanizing social relations of capitalism. Marx argued that the social unity could be maintained by the state through ideological frameworks. The role of ideology was to smooth over the inherent contradictions of society and cover them up by making them appear necessary, normal and natural.

Consequently ideology was a sublimation of material life, disguised under morality, religion and metaphysics. In addition to this, ideology was spread by those who specialized in the mental activity of sublimation; priests of 'salvation' were an early example of the emancipation from the actual world. From a Marxist perspective, ideology was one of the side effects of the division of labour which caused human thought to be abstracted from the material world (Freeden 6). As Marx saw it, ideology does this by obscuring from a society the illusory and distorted nature of the representation. Unfortunately, ideology is often inevitable because we cannot avoid such distortions (Freeden 27).

According to the Neo-Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-90), ideology has a material existence. The 'ideas' or 'representations' which make up ideology do not merely have an ideal or spiritual existence, but also a material one (Althusser 40). According to Althusser ideology works through so-called 'ideological state apparatuses', which, although they may have their own subideology, are subject to the ruling ideology. The corpus of these ideological state apparatuses is vast and large but their main feature is that they have a material component. Althusser's ideological state apparatuses include organized religion, the law, the political system, the educational system, the media and in short, all the institutions through which we are socialized and other organizations that have in one way or another been co-opted by those institutions (Bertens 66). Through those institutions, ideology is embodied in material practices, these practices can be big or minor: "a small mass in a church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports club, a school day, a political party meeting" (Bertens 66). The immense influence of ideology is thus related to the fact that it has a material component which is reinforced through these ideological state apparatuses, due to these people acquire the ideas through repetitive acts or rituals (Bertens 67).

Althusser followed Marx by pointing out that the ruling ideology is often a vehicle used to ensure the submission of workers to the ruling class. Official apparatuses such as the state, the church and the military practised control to secure repression and ensure the viability of the existing economic system (Bertens 67). But Althusser departed from Marx since he acknowledged that ideology was a 'new reality' rather than the obscuring of the material world. Metaphorically, he thought of the ideological superstructure as the top storey of a three-storied house. Ideology is on the top floor, the political and legal institutions are on the middle and the economic and productive base form the ground (Feeden 25). Being subject (bearer) of the system, man disturbs at the same time the system's very consistence. Constructing the system, the subject at the same time deconstructs it. The system thus rests in its lack, and man, located in that lack, both fills up this lack and keeps it open (de Kesel 312).

The repressive state apparatus consisted of the dominating political force, but according to Althusser, ideology developed a life of its own being a symbolic order. Unlike Marx and Engels, Althusser declared that 'ideology is external.' Specifically he meant that individuals inevitably think about the real conditions of their existence in a particular manner: they produce an imaginary account of how they relate to the real world. In Althusser's words: "As a result, ideology is waiting for us wherever we

go and everything we engage in is pervaded by ideology, which means that though people might assume they act out of free will, they are in fact acted by the...system” (Althusser 21).

Furthermore, the idea that language has an institutive quality is also addressed by Althusser and the term he introduced to explain the relationship between subject and ideology is ‘interpellation’ (Freeden 30). This is important for understanding the ceremonial indoctrination that is practised by the totalitarian governments of Gilead and Oceania. Althusser’s first thesis regarding ideology is that ‘Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence’ which roughly corresponds with the Marxist notion that ideology distorts our view of our true ‘conditions of existence’. His second thesis connects ideology with its social scores and explains how language becomes an instrument that forms an intrinsic part of the ideological framework (Bertens 66).

In developing this theory, Althusser draws on the writings of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-81). According to Lacan, the processes we go through when we grow up leave us incomplete. As a result, we yearn for completion and turn to ideology, since ideology constantly ‘hails and interpellates’ us as ‘concrete subjects’, providing us with an identity. In doing so, language ‘interpellates us’ in the different social roles that we play or as Althusser puts it; in the different ‘subject positions’ that we occupy. Ideology invites us to accept an image of ourselves that is deeply tempting as it convinces us that we could be the ‘concrete subjects’ we want to be, successfully participating in society. No wonder that whatever ideology makes us see as belonging to the natural and harmonious order of things is incorporated as such (Bertens 67).

From an Althusserian perspective, ideology is not merely a set of political views, but offers us a fundamental coherence and stability which is tied up with a specific socio-economic order. So another input of Althusser was to acknowledge the widespread dispersal of ideology beyond the public sphere to the private. One and the same woman could be ‘interpellated’ as a mother, as a member of a particular church, as a doctor, as a voter, and so on (Bertens 67). In other words, Althusser pointed out that concrete individual subjects were made to serve as carriers of ideology. For that reason, the very notion of ideology itself is dependent on the ideological concept of the subject- individuals constituted by ideology as bearers of consciousness and

agency. In other words, ‘ideology’ and ‘subject’ are mutually defining. Ideology is a representation of those relations (Freeden 29).

To conclude, ideologies form an aspect of reality, as the ideas that form the ideological framework are re-enforced through actions. Many of those actions take on rituals which the human imagination conferred social significance: political party conferences or religious worshipping (29). For Althusser, even thinking is a material practice. He referred to external verbal discourses such as speeches and texts, but also to ‘internal’ verbal discourses that shape our consciousness (Freeden 29).

Atwood describes several Orwellian rituals as Testifying, the Ceremony, Birth Day, Prayvaganzas, Salvaging and Particution. I would like to argue that in order to take up a subject-position, the ideological state apparatuses demand of the protagonists to enact a particular performance. Therefore the process of interpellation that takes place within ceremonial indoctrination deserves a closer look.

3.2. Ceremonial Indoctrination

Things are back to normal. How can I call this normal? But compared with this morning, it is normal. (Atwood 279)

During his imprisonment in The Ministry of Love, Winston meets Parsons, a colleague who he always thought of as too dim-witted to be caught for thoughtcrime, a shining example of duckspeak prudence. “Thoughtcrime is a dreadful thing, old man” he explains to Winston; “It’s insidious. It can get hold of you without your even knowing it. Do you know how it got hold of me? In my sleep!” (233). Upon confessing to Winston that he uttered the phrase: “Down with Big Brother!”, he sinks his voice like someone who is obliged for medical reasons to utter an obscenity. Parson adds that he is going to thank the tribunal for saving him before it was too late (233). This is a classic illustration of successful ceremonial indoctrination, a component of the totalitarian tactics, which I would like to shed light on in this chapter, by focusing specifically on the rituals the regimes use to indoctrinate the citizens into totalitarian dogmatism.

As Ihor Kamenetsky points out in “Totalitarianism and Utopia” (1964), totalitarian dictatorships often cherished an Utopian ideal in the creation of their society. Taking advantage of the unrest of the masses and armed with the assets of

modern science and technology, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and Red China drafted their Utopian projects on a larger scale and brought them closer to the point of realization of the Utopias of the past (Kamenestky 115). But the totalitarians did not make Utopia a starting point, they made it their ultimate blueprint. In order to realise the new utopian state, the totalitarian leaders never hesitated to apply measures which had nothing to do with their ultimate Utopian aims. Measures which were temporarily convenient in order to get mass support. Hitler's tirades for peace, disarmament and the self-determination of nations, are notorious examples of "the far reaching duplicity in totalitarian tactics" (Kamenetsky 116). Because whenever Nazi or Communist leader believed that a revolutionary action was inevitable for the promotion of an ideal society, they defended their ideological commitments above all and risked the millions of lives of their subjects (116).

According to Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorships and Autocracy* (1956), the totalitarian dictatorships consist of "an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly and centrally directed economy" (Gleasson 151). These features are omnipresent in the totalitarian dictatorships of Oceania and Gilead, but I wish to argue that the ceremonial indoctrination of their ideology is another important feature. Ceremonial indoctrination is practised in order to brainwash their citizens and to gain mass support. The ideological purposefulness of the society is one of the main totalitarian criteria and it forms a stark contrast with chaos, selfishness, frustration and constant danger (Kamenestky 116), so the ceremonial indoctrination portrayed in *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* is the glue that cements the totalitarian cage.

True to their totalitarian approach, the governments of Oceania and Gilead demand a complete conscious surrender of the members of society to the necessities envisioned by the ideology of the Party. Therefore, elements like individual self-esteem, integrity, spontaneity, compassion and even the sense of self-preservation have to be weeded out of the individual's conscience. In other words, an ideal citizen is to be conditioned to such a degree that he eventually believes that his individual value and the value of other individuals does not exist outside of the "current public opinion which was identified with the ideological requirements and political pronouncements of the Party" (Young 135). In the words of Gottlieb: "the state's intent in both novels is to deny the bonds of private loyalty and thereby to enforce not

only uncritical obedience to the state but also a quasi-religious worship of the state ideology” (12). The Party of Oceania applies the Stalinistic principle of cultivating ignorance. As we have seen, the deeper the ignorance - the stronger the submission that will generate in the true believer (Gottlieb 87).

During Winston’s lunch there is the announcement of the Ministry of Plenty that they have glorious news about the rise of the standard of living, which has resulted in spontaneous demonstrations to show Big Brother for the new and happy life “which his wise leadership has bestowed upon us” (Orwell 58). Winston notices that the phrase “our new, happy life” recurred several times and is a new favourite with the Ministry of Plenty (58). When the preparations for Hate Week are in full swing Winston spends every day altering back files of *The Times* and “embellishing news items which were to be quoted in speeches” (149). As Glowinski has argued, totalitarian language and propaganda form a single whole, which results in the complete breakdown of communication. It is language itself that is at stake, because the freedom of expression is “subordinated to immediate pragmatic goals and on a highly sclerotic ritualism” (158), and this ceremonial ritualism is meant to blur the duality between the strict Party-enforced discipline and the actual horrors of the totalitarian reality.

One of the first examples of ‘ceremonial indoctrination’ and of particular importance is Birth Day, a celebration where one of the Handmaids gives birth with the Wife’s legs about her in the presence of the other Handmaids. Facing plagues and ecological crises that caused widespread sterility, the founders of Gilead generated a right-wing fundamentalist reading of the Bible, grafted it onto patriarchal attitudes and imposed it throughout society. During the Birth Day the Handmaids are smiling, crying and experiencing the birth too: “We grip each other’s hands, we are no longer single” (118), chanting Janine to “breath, hold and expel” (116). A Handmaid giving birth is quite a spectacle, that reinforces the task for the other Handmaids: getting pregnant in order to help the human species survive.

The celebration of the birth of the baby is also a reminder to the other Handmaids to fulfil their duty, thus this public birth ritual can be said to function as a re-enforcing ideological state event. Althusser noted that ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, the Birth Day can be said to make an allusion to reality as there has been an environmental crisis and the baby is material, but that this does not mean that the role of the

Handmaid as such is not a construction. The concept of the Handmaid is institutionalised through the chanting and witnessing the birth in a communal way, forced to acknowledge that the newborn baby does not belong to its mother but is actually state property.

As Sternhall puts it, fascism was the first political system to call itself totalitarian precisely because it encompassed the whole range of human activity, ‘represented a way of life’, and ‘meant to create a new type of society and a new type of man’ (de Graef 73). This also involved the “creation of an elaborate machinery for manufacturing consensus through propaganda and indoctrination” and in this respect the relation that fascism has to art is of paramount importance. For if fascism styles itself as a response to what it perceives to be a historical crisis, or an environmental crisis like in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, it must attempt to “control the representations of that crisis and the recovery it heralds” and it “must engage with the actual representational mechanisms” which are involved in the production and reproduction of the aggressive style in which it expresses its new ethical values (de Graef 37).

This is clearly illustrated in Gilead’s Prayvaganza, a massive event where the Commander in charge of the service gives a speech on victory and sacrifice. After his speech, twenty ‘Angels’ will enter, young daughters who are given away by their mothers in order to help with the arranged marriages (Atwood 215). In Offred’s words, the Prayvaganza is brought to life to “demonstrate how obedient and pious we are” (208). Offred describes how she and Ofglen turn at a modern building with a huge banner draped above its door that says: “woman’s Prayvaganza today” (208). Below the red writing is a line of smaller print, in black, with the outline of a winged eye on either side with states that: “god is a national resource”. But on sides of the doorway stand Guardians and each “has a submachine gun slung ready, for whatever dangerous or subversive acts they think we might commit inside” (208).

Moreover, she gives a detailed account of the seats that are divided carefully for class division. The ranks of wooden chairs along the right are for the Wives and daughters of high-ranking officers, the galleries above are for the low-ranking women such as the Marthas and the Econowives. Even though attendance is not compulsory for every class, the galleries seem to be filling up and Offred reflects: “I suppose it’s a form of entertainment, like a show or a circus” (215). The Wives are seated in their best embroidered blue and stare at the Handmaids in their red dresses: “We are being looked at, assessed, whispered about; we can feel it, like tiny ants running on our bare

skin” (Atwood 210). As Althusser argued, the individual within ideology participates in regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus, so everyone submits to his or her own role, like it is the natural order.

The third example of a rehearsed ceremonial practice is the testifying in the Leah and re-education centre under the supervision of the Aunts: “Aunt Helena is here, as well as aunt Lydia, because Testifying is special” (68). Offred mentions that it is safer to make things up during testifying than to explain that you have nothing to reveal. When Janine tells she has been gang raped, Aunt Helena lets the Handmaids chant that it was her own fault: “Who led them on? Aunt Helena beams, pleased with us. *She did. She did. She did.* Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen? *Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson*” (68). When Janine breaks down, Offred finds that she looks disgusting: “weak, squirmy, blotchy, pink, like a newborn mouse. None of us wanted to look like that ever” (68). Offred continues to describe the next Testifying ceremony: “That was last week. This week Janine does not want us to jeer at her. It was my fault, she says. It was my own fault. I led them on. I deserved the pain” (68). To return to Althusser, within ideology every subject is endowed with a belief in the ideas that his consciousness has accepted, he must also act according to his ideas. If the individual does not inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice, the society excludes him or her since “that is wicked” (Althusser 297).

The elite of Gilead do not justify their legalization of injustice by racist theories but use gender hatred or misogyny within their general mechanism of scapegoating. The process in Gilead leads to the regression of a modern state with its civilized legal system based on inalienable human rights to a barbaric state where the female sex is enslaved by the state through law (106). Rituals are not mere words, but the role of words which occur in rituals is significant, the other Handmaids chanting at Janine during the Testifying has its result, Janine has “the lost eyelashes of someone who’s been in a fire. Burning eyes” (68). This passage shows that Gilead has successfully, to use Althusser’s terminology, “recruited” Janine and transformed her into their subject by hailing her ceremonially into her role as being guilty of the gang rape (Althusser 301).

The Salvagings are another prominent ceremonial ritual meant to indoctrinate, frighten and cement the Gileadean power. The Salvagings take place in the former library, Wives and daughters take their seats on the wooden chairs placed towards the

back, Econowives and Marthas around the edges and on the library steps and the Handmaids at the front where everyone can keep an eye on them (270). During the Salvagings, people who have committed crimes are publicly executed through hanging. There is, however, a change made to the Salvagings, because as Aunt Lydia explains, a public account of the crimes that the prisoners committed is followed by an outbreak of exactly similar crimes: “so we have decided in the best interests of all to discontinue this practice. The Salvagings will proceed without further ado” (272). A collective murmur rises as “the crimes of others are a secret language among us. Through them we show ourselves what we might be capable of, after all” (272).

The Salvagings are the cruellest of ceremonies. The Handmaids, on their red cushions, are forced to watch the executions from nearby. Offred reflects: “The three bodies hang there, even with the white sacks over their heads looking curiously stretched, like chickens strung up by the necks in a meatshop window [...] like wrecked angels” (274). Afterwards, Aunt Lydia asks the Handmaids to stand up and form a circle: “She is about to give us something. Bestow” (274). The rules of a Particution, which is a combination of “participation” and “execution”, is that the Handmaids can finish a convicted criminal themselves, this is announced to them as if they received a gracious gift. Aunt Lydia introduces a man who was a Guardian and has been convicted of rape, for which the penalty is death. As she causally remarks that “one woman was pregnant and the baby died”, the Handmaids look at one another, seeing the hatred and sniffing death (278). Once Aunt Lydia has blown a whistle the handmaids devour the man. The air is thick with adrenalin because the Handmaids are permitted something and even though what they are permitted is barbaric slaughter, they have been given an eyeblink of freedom (277). Offred tries to stay on her feet in the roaring mass of red cloaks: “When I regain my balance and look around, I see the Wives and daughters leaning forward with interest. They must have a better view from up there” (277).

The last ceremony is the sexual act between the Handmaid, the Commander and the Wife, where the wife is holding the handmaid tightly as she is institutionally raped by the Commander. Offred describes the ritual virtually without emotion: “The Ceremony goes as usual. Above me, toward the head of the bed, Serena Joy is arranged, outspread”. Offred lies on the bed with Serena Joy’s tights on either side of her and Serena Joy holds her hands which is supposed to signify that “we are one being, one flesh” (88). But as Offred comments: “What it really means is that she is in

control, of the process and thus of the product. If any.” (88). Furthermore, “the Commander fucks, with a regular two-four marching stroke, on and on like a tap dripping” (89). Offred adds that arousal and orgasm are no longer thought necessary as they would be a symptom of frivolity and that their sexual act “is not recreation, even for the Commander: “This is serious business. The Commander, too, is doing his duty” (90).

To recapture the ceremonies, the Handmaids are first ritually raped in order to become pregnant and care a baby for a high-class family. The Handmaids give birth with the Wife’s legs about them, in the presence of the other Handmaids, this is a national festive day for Handmaids of the district. Women’s Prayvaganzas are religious sessions where the Handmaids join group weddings. At the Salvagings, the Handmaids take part in the hangings of “criminals” symbolically and are forced to witness it closely. Finally, during Particutions, the Handmaids are re encouraged, as a means of catharsis, to tear a male offender and supposed rapist to pieces (Ketterer 211). So even the spontaneous group outlets for frustrated violence, such as the Salvagings, reveal themselves to be carefully orchestrated, closely supervised exercises in which the actors are aware that they are being watched (Hammer 45). Gilead's political power is solidified by the isolation of each woman and the reconstruction of each individual into Gilead’s mold.

Therefore the modes of personal identity formation and relations in Gilead are eventually so weakened and degraded that the modes of domination and control of physical force, political power and intrapsychic control are internalized by those who are subjected to the regime (Stillman 75). After the Particution Offred comes across Janine, holding a clump of blonde hair in her hand and giggling. Her eyes have come loose. Offred says her name, but “she’s let go, totally now, she’s in free fall, she’s in withdrawal” (278). Offred reflects that she doesn’t even feel sorry for Janine, although she knows that she should. She feels angry. She’s not proud of herself for that: ‘But then, that’s the point’ (278). That’s exactly what the regime of Gilead wants, Offred knows that Janine is lost but does not make an attempt to help her and simply lets her be, without the ability to feel empathy anymore.

This passage shows Offred’s own awareness of being stuck inside Gilead’s ideology. As Althusser remarked, what seems to take place outside ideology in reality takes place in ideology and Offred knows that the totalitarian grip on her is getting firmer (Althusser 301). As a matter of fact, the state’s intent in both novels is to deny

the bonds of private loyalty and thereby to enforce not only uncritical obedience to the state but also a “quasi-religious worship of the state ideology” (Gottlieb 12). In O’Brien’s words: “We are the priests of power” (264). Offred acknowledges in this reflection, that she has also become one of the subjects that “work by themselves” in their compliance towards the Gileadean regime. Outside of the reign of Gilead, they are ‘unwomen’ and no longer subjects, here lies the ambiguity. Living as Handmaids, they are at least interpellated Handmaids. They are able to take up as subject-position and to continue their existence, however dark, empty and merciless that existence is. Nevertheless, the true tragedy lies in their transformation from the individuals they once were, into becoming proper Handmaids.

3.3. Remembering the Past

“What shall it be this time?” he said, still with the same faint suggestion of irony. “To the confusion of the Thought Police? To the death of Big Brother? To humanity? To the future? “To the past,” said Winston. “The past is more important.” agreed O’Brien gravely”. (Orwell 176)

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt argues that one of the ways in which totalitarian regimes ensure the domination of their subjects is by the manipulation of their relation to time. As we have seen, the propaganda characteristic of such regimes consists of “monstrous forgeries in historiography” (Finigan 332). Not content with rewriting history by forgery, the totalitarian leader attempts the complete material erasure of any traces of a “past” that does not coincide with the officially sanctioned version. For instance, when Stalin decided to rewrite the history of the Russian Revolution, the propaganda of his new version consisted in destroying many texts of Russian authors and readers. The publication of a new official history of the Communist Party in 1938 was the sign that a whole generation of Soviet intellectuals had come to an end (Finigan 341).

In the words of O’Brien: “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past” (Orwell 247). This phrase is an important illustration of the Party’s technique of creating false history in order to break down the psychological independence of its subjects. Control of the past ensures control of the future, because the past can be treated as a set of conditions that justify or

encourage future goals: if the past was idyllic, then people will act to re-create it; if the past was nightmarish, then people will act to prevent such circumstances from recurring. The Party creates a fictional past, a time of misery and slavery from which it claims to have liberated the human race, thus compelling people to work toward the Party's goals.

This institutionalized power permits them to redefine of human history entirely. Given Winston's empirical view of human understanding -his trust in the "evidence of your senses" as the foundation for all epistemic claims- the verification of historical descriptions remains problematic for him (Dwan 383). The past, as O'Brien suggests, seems to lack an empirical status: "Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?" (Orwell 260). Winston turns to the sense-data of memory as a form of verification, but his mental records are not trustworthy. As Winston puts it: "I don't know with any certainty that any other human being shares my memories" (Orwell 162). He seems to rule out the possibility of memory being self-validating: the correctness of one private image of the past cannot be established by insisting on the trustworthiness of another, because the Party has mingled with the private memories of all its citizens (Finigan 388).

Throughout *1984*, Winston's memory is indeed characterized by extreme vagueness. Winston's childhood memories consist of "a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background" (Finigan 445). The reader learns that he does not remember where he bought the illicit diary, is uncertain whether or not *1984* is the actual date, cannot remember where he met O'Brien or what happened to his family. The title of Orwell's novel is significant in this regard. Upon carving the first decisive inscription in his diary is to mark the date: "April 4th, 1984 " he is immediately struck by feelings of "helplessness," since the Party's historiographic forgeries have made the actual date finally unknowable (Finigan 445).

Moreover, Winston does not remember a time when his country has not been at war. As Winston explains to Julia, they know literally nothing about the Revolution or the years before it with epistemological certainty. Because every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten every street building renamed and every date altered. As a result, history has stopped. In Winston words: "Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right" (155). Nevertheless, Winston puts up a fight by trying to decipher the truth about the erased pre-

Revolutionary past. He is aware that he and a few others are the last links that exist in relation to the vanished world of capitalism. The older generation had mostly been wiped out in the great purges of the Fifties and Sixties, and the few who survived have been terrified into intellectual surrender (Orwell 86). As Winston reflects: “The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth” (Orwell 75).

Erika Gottlieb points out that prediction play a central role in totalitarianism, which forces the heterogeneous reality of historical events into the straight-jacket of the particular logic of the given ideology (Gottlieb 90). Whoever has the power to enforce the believe in the predicted end, will have the power to interpret and falsify the past and to control it (90). Rewriting the past touches upon an existential part of people, since a population builds a collective sense of self through something like a shared cultural memory.

Once the collective and cultural memory of a nation is shattered, this can create a continuum where people have lost their bigger national narrative as well as their roots. Needless to say, with losing their roots people also use a fundamental part of themselves. The younger Julia has already incorporated the idea that the Party will always exist and that people can only rebel against it by secret disobedience or isolated acts of violence. Her historical-philosophical interest is limited to the present and she has been molded into the enduring present that Big Brother has created. For her, the Party is far more a matter of fact than it is for Winston. As Abbott has argued, the final triumph of totalitarianism will come in a future in which the past no longer exists as such. As Winston himself has already realized that nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right (Orwell 159).

In both *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, totalitarian domination is clearly premised on the control of temporality: the hours of Winston's and Offred's days are relentlessly rationalized, with no time left for private reflection or individual activity. As Finigan points out, as well as being an instrument of panoptic surveillance, commanding the Oceanic subject to be on display at all times, the telescreen also functions as an monstrous alarm clock, reminding Winston that time does not belong to himself (436). Whereas the Oceanic day is full of activities (Macey 451), Offred's time is void. Time in Gilead is compared to “white sound” (79) and resembles the medical center offices with their waiting rooms, in which Offred awaits her monthly check-ups (435).

So the present is strictly monitored and leaves little room for diversion. Not having many opportunities to escape their current lives, it seems that the protagonists are at complete mercy when it comes to the ceremonial indoctrination which is implanted in them regularly. Nevertheless, Winston and Offred find a means of escape through revisiting their past. In most of the dystopian novels the recovery of history and literacy, together with the recovery of individual and collective memory, becomes an instrumental tool of resistance for the protagonists. Because authoritarian discourse shapes the narrative about the past and collective memory to the point that memory has been erased; individual recollection therefore becomes the first, necessary step for collective action (Baccolini 52).

Winston's fight in order to regain traces of the past is sparked when he finds concrete evidence of falsification, a piece torn out of the Times that confirms that the confessions of Jones, Aronson, and Rutherford were lies, as they were in New York while according to their official confession they were somewhere in Siberia (78). It was; "a fragment of the abolished past, like a fossil bone which turns up in the wrong stratum and destroys a geological theory" (78). On the one hand Winston feels that such a piece of evidence could blow the Party to atoms, on the other hand he is frightened of what might happen when he is caught with it, so Winston throws it into the memory hole. A second encounter with the past is the secret room that he and Julia visit for their secret affair, a room above an antique shop which is "old-fashioned" and awakens in him "a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory" (96).

Throughout the novel, Winston starts the recovery of his biography, as if his own memories have been hidden from him but are returning alongside with his inner resistance. In a dream he remembers the last glimpse of his mother, and within a few moments of waking the cluster of memories have come back. Winston remembers the circumstances of the time when he was twelve: the periodical panics about air raids, the sheltering in Tube stations and the fact that there was never enough to eat (161). After the disappearance of his father, his mother seemed to have become completely spiritless (161). He remembers that she would sit on the bed for hours, nursing his younger sister, as if she was "waiting for something that she knew must happen" (161). However, the most vivid in his memories are the fierce battles at mealtimes and the feeling of constant hunger. Winston reflects that his mother took it for granted that he, "the boy" should have the biggest portion; but however much she gave him he demanded more (162). When his mother is eventually able to get a little morsel of

chocolate, Winston demands the whole piece, and when his mother gives a quarter to his sister, he snatches it out of his sister's hand and heads for the door.

He never saw his mother again. After he had devoured the chocolate he felt somewhat ashamed of himself and hung about in the streets for several hours, until hunger drove him home. When he came back his mother had disappeared. (Orwell 163)

As Winston tells the story to Julia, he realizes that his mother had a kind of nobility, a kind of purity, “because the standards that she obeyed were private ones” (164). If you loved someone, you loved him, and when you had nothing else to give, you still gave him love. When Winston snatched the last of the chocolate, his mother had clasped his sister in her arms. Even though it changed nothing, was no use and did not prevent the child's death or her own; “it seemed natural to her to do it” (164). This leads Winston to the understanding that what matters are individual relationships where “a completely helpless gesture, an embrace, a tear, a word spoken to a dying man, could have value in itself” (165). He concludes to Julia that once they are caught by the Thought Police, the one thing that matters is that they should not betray each other, although even that cannot make a difference (166). Not betraying each other and remaining loyal to each other, means that they remain faithful to their humanity and “if you can feel that staying human is worth while, even when it cannot have any result whatever, you've beaten them” (166).

So what we see here is that through the process of remembering his family and the helpless gestures of his mother, who persists in cherishing her children even though she knows death is right around the corner, is that there is something powerful and potentially subversive in remaining faithful to one's own humanity. His mother, in the darkest and most tragic circumstances, takes care of two hungry children while – what we gather from the story – is waiting in her final hours to be found and convinced after her husband has disappeared, but she is still able to provide her children love. The regime has not impregnated her heart.

Whereas Winston in *1984*, seems to be alone in the possession of memories before the Revolution, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, even the Gileadean authorities admit the presence of a “transitional generation” (135) that will have difficulty coping with the abrupt shift from liberal-democratic rules to a totalitarian monotheocracy. Nevertheless, they are working towards the same “endless present” as in Oceania (Finigan 442). The Gilead regime's assault on memory has created an unbridgeable

chasm between the unstable signifier of Offred's memories and the signified of past reality. The splitting up of families, the confiscation of photographs and other mementos, the strict supervision of any social contact, the prohibition on access to almost every form of media - all of these symbolic and actual violence's collude in the erosion of the tenuous connection between present and past (Finigan 441). Hence Offred is also an unwilling amnesiac whose memories have been "Confiscated" by the totalitarian state (441). As Arnold. E. Davidson points out, Offred's "devastating assessment of her life in Gilead [...] records the traumatic transition from one order of things to a radically different order, all of which takes place within the limited span of her childbearing years" (113).

As Offred reveals her personal story during the unfolding narrative of *The Handmaid's Tale*, the reader also gains an understanding of how the totalitarian regime seized power and established Gilead. Offred explains that the fanatical right-winged Party shot the President after the environmental catastrophe, machine-gunned the Congress and suspended the Constitution (Atwood 169). During the time the regime established itself, there were protest marches, but Offred comments that they were smaller than you might have thought: "I guess people were scared. And when it was known that the police [...] whoever they were, would open fire almost as soon as any of the marches started, the marches stopped" (176). Once she has been caught by the regime she remembers no night or day, just a hospital bed and that she frequently asked after her child, but lost track of time (37).

Whereas Winston's memories are recalcitrant as he tries to "squeeze them out" and struggles to "think his way backward", Offred's memories come in "attacks of the past" (57). Unlike *1984*, which has a straightforwardly linear plot which is told from a stable perspective by an omniscient third-person narrator and only punctuated by clearly-signposted flashbacks, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a far more temporally fluid narrative in which past and present are commingled (Finigan 447). Despite Gilead's best efforts, Offred's memories remain alive. Just as Winston attempts to retrieve aspects of the past and has to overcome Newspeak which is threatening the continuity of his language, Offred is likewise conscious of the significance of words as a means of reviving the banished world of memory (447). Her reworking of the re-imaged past merges with an equally isolated interrogation of the present. The focus and fixity of Offred's gaze at her surroundings is an exercise in paying attention, a discipline in trying to interpret the behaviours that the earlier Offred ignored.

Her commentary is often critical of herself and of her peers in ‘the time before.’ For instance, she remembers visiting Moira, but remembers it through the new Gileadean lens, commenting that the books were open on the floor in a rather extravagant way and that they used to study Psychology, English, Economics and disciplines like that in the past. When Moira explains that she has written a paper on date rape, Offred commented: “You are so trendy. It sounds like some kind of dessert. Date Rapé” (36). This passage forms a stark contrast with her present reality. In the Gileadean regime, the leaders understand that recycling a culture cleansed of its radical potential will help control a fearful population. The Republic has banned all examples of kitsch, prohibiting even their visual representation in magazines but allows whorehouses like Jezebels. Dressed in banned clothing and with feathers around the holes for her legs, Offred discovers a roomful of tropical women in gear reminiscent of masquerade parties. This clothing, recycled from a freer time, is out-of-place and therefore erotic and radical - old-fashioned (Irvine 201). This way the past becomes a parody.

When Offred looks inside herself, she finds a set of memories that allow her to recall a sense of self. She can remember her job, the love for her husband Luke, her child, her friends, her education, the conversations with her mother and the successes and failures of everyday life. Offred uses her memories of Moira to lift her out of the puritanical Republic of Gilead. There Moira suddenly is, a flash of sexuality in an otherwise rigidly stratified landscape. Moira represents a decadent but vibrant past (Irvine 209). Throughout her narrative she tries to hold on to these memories, but they fade away which results in the gradual occlusion of her memories of loved ones. Although Offred can still picture what Luke was wearing when she last saw him, she admits that “His face was beginning to fade” (118). Likewise, when Serena Joy shows her a picture of her daughter, Offred feels erased by time: “I am only a shadow now, far back behind the glib shiny surface of this photograph. A shadow of a shadow, as dead mothers become. You can see it in her eyes: I am not there” (255). She is no longer a presence in her daughter’s existence.

In the re-education centre there are initials carved into the wood on her desk: “J.H. loves B.P. 1954. O.R. loves L.T. These seem to me inscriptions I used to read about, carved on the stone walls of caves, or drawn with a mixture of soot and animal fat”. Offred reflects that they seem incredibly ancient to her, perhaps needless to add as she compares them to cave inscriptions. She also ponders the desk top, the armrest,

the way students used to write a paper in a pen: “These habits of former times appear to me now lavish, decadent almost; immoral, like the orgies of barbarian regimes” (Atwood 106). She finds that the carving in the desk has the pathos of “all vanished civilizations” (106). She knows that who made it was once alive but points out that there are no dates after the mid-eighties. Even though the gymnasium where the Handmaids are trained is only a heartbeat away from the same space in which high school dances were held (Irvine 209), this illustrates that Offred’s own relationship to the past is complicated, as she’s looking to the habits of former times through the new Gileadean lens herself.

Nevertheless, Offred remembers the battles she had with her mother in the time before. In her thoughts, she engages in a dialogue with her mother, recollecting her negative reactions to her mother’s feminist activism and learning to acknowledge the ways in which her mother was right. Like the novel’s historically based premise of a backlash against women, this recognition gets lost (Neuman 862). According to her mother, young people did not appreciate their freedom and do not understand what the earlier generation had to get through to get them where they are: “As for you, she’d say to me, you’re just a backlash. Flash in the pan”. When her mother got angry with Luke because cooking was his hobby and commented that once upon a time he would not have been allowed to have such a hobby, as they would have called him queer, Offred objected to not get into an argument about nothing, to which her mother replied: “You call it nothing. You don’t understand, do you. You don’t understand what I’m talking about” (115). Offred reflects that her mother expected her to vindicate her life for her and for the choices she’d make. But Offred did not want to be the model offspring or the incarnation of her ideas.

We used to fight about that. I am not your justification for existence, I said to her once. I want her back. I want everything back, the way it was. But there is no point to it, this wanting. (Atwood 115)

The examination of macro power relations in *The Handmaid’s Tale* shifts into an analysis of power in women’s relationships, and the conflict between the conscious and unconscious, and memory and the present (Palumbo 82). As we have seen, the revisionist history practiced by the Aunts is constituted through a decontextualized video archive that contrasts the misogyny and violence of pre-revolution American culture with Gilead’s “supposedly feminist utopia” (Finigan 137). The Handmaids are shown footage of the Unwomen and to her astonishment, Offred recognizes her

mother between the protesting feminists. Retrospectively, her mother's wry attitude makes all the more sense. Remembering the past Offred concludes that: "I took too much for granted; I trusted fate, back then" (Atwood 27).

Chapter 4: Silencing the Scream

4.1. Foucault's Dispositif & Butler's Performative

In his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Michel Foucault (1926-1984) takes note of Althusser's insights. Both Foucault and Althusser are concerned with power relations and their capacity to produce knowledge and constitute subjects. Foucault and Althusser reveal thinking individuals as effects rather than causes of societal institutions. An essential unity can be found between Althusser and Foucault's work in their insistence on the primacy of language and the mediation of discourse before an immediate understanding of bodily need, and that the constitutive and discursive practices are created through power relations, institutions and the linguistic rituals they incorporated (Ryder 148). The apparent liberal freedoms of the subjects conceal the context of power and domination in which he or she is enmeshed (148). In Foucault's view, subjects are produced by the mechanisms of society. However, Foucault and Althusser differ in their estimation of the usefulness of the name "ideology" (Ryder 149). For Foucault, knowledge and power relations cannot be distinguished and pinned down according to categories of truth. Power in Foucault's account does not belong to anyone, nor does it all emanate from one specific location, such as the state. Power is instead diffused throughout social institutions, as it is exercised by innumerable, replaceable functionaries. It operates through the daily disciplines and routines to which bodies are subjected (Leitch 1618).

According to Foucault, power not only produces subjects, it lies at the heart of all our social practices: politics, medicine, religion, psychiatry and work. These institutions are situated in a context where power is everywhere and its force inevitable. From a Foucauldian perspective, there is no escaping it: power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the

meshes of its network and no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in” (Digeser 981). In this genealogical understanding of power, power permeates every ingredient of our existence. Central to Foucault’s approach is the claim to discover: “power operating in structures of thinking and behaviour that previously seemed to be devoid of power relations” (Digeser 976).

In Foucault’s analysis, discourses are discursive and tend towards the regulation and normalisation of their subjects. Our identities, are the product of these various processes of regulation and cultivation, to which we are subjected. The mobility or fluidity in Foucault’s model stems from the claim that although power is everywhere, it does not stem from a single source. In fact, there is no such thing as power in the singular: there is only a ‘multiplicity of force relations’ (Ryder 122).

Foucault’s use of the term power is part of the description of the formation of human subjects, which are understood as social constructions whose formation can be historically described. However, because autonomy presupposes certain capacities that individualize us, it is more likely that Foucault is making the claim that the creation of subjects refers to the enabling or disabling of our agency, so the ability to have desires, form goals and act freely. If power is linked to the formation of agency, the question rises if we truly understand the costs of becoming agents (Digeser 980). For Foucault, power is productive of subjects and this production is accompanied by resistance, twined with knowledge, individuating and disciplinary subjects (Digeser 987). In Foucault’s words: “There are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. He concludes that both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates the subject (Foucault 781).

On the contrary, in Foucault’s analysis, the various institutions and discourses that constitute the social are a productive element of power and serve to constitute that which the merely claim to know (Ryder 121). For instance, the modern era witnessed the development of medical and other discourses that set out categories of human identity as sexuality, including the definition of sexual types. One of the ways these kinds of seemingly disinterested, scientific projects justified themselves, is by establishing an understanding of sexuality as an element in the fixed essence of what it is to be human, and then setting out to uncover or reveal the ‘truth’ of this human essence (Ryder 122).

That power is perceived as a relation of forces means that it is not just travelling outwards from a single source, working itself out on some passive or inert object. It is true that they are forged through institutions, but different institutions can be at odds with each other; the elaboration of disciplinary procedures may well have consequences which exceed the workings of the procedure in question (122). Our identities, therefore, although they are forged and recognised through the regulatory work of the various discourses and institutions in which they are practised, are not singular (122). We can be interpellated into different roles with conflicting demands simultaneously. There are conflicting forces from several institutions enacting upon and with a subject, demanding them to perform different sorts of behaviour and hailing them into several roles. How do we fight against power on this view? Not by trying to escape it (as if liberation consisted in standing outside power), but rather, by turning power(s) against itself or themselves and by mobilizing some forms of power against others (Medina 13). So Foucault does not necessarily count power as repressive and his narrative of its constitutive strength, the composing and ordering of subjects, is often read as a political challenge. He points out that the reason for the state's strength and power, is because it is a totalizing and individualizing form of power (Foucault 782).

Judith Butler is an American philosopher and one of today's most prominent literary scholars in the field of gender studies. Her books *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and *Excitable Speech* (1997) mainly focus on the relation between sexuality, language, performativity and power. Butler takes the idea of language as a discursive practice further by exploring the several ways in which linguistic constructions create our world. Judith Butler's position is distinctive in the way it attempts to deconstruct essentialist or naturalizing moves. She argues that the categories of gender, sex, and the self are not expressive of our bodies or natures; rather, they are the results of socially governed performances. Gender is not expressed, but acted out (Digeser 656).

As Butler puts it in her theory of performativity, we are first and foremost culturally designated to believe our gender identities are natural. As boys and girls grow up, they get to wear different clothes, play different sports and play with different toys. Through the stories they hear, see and read, they first encounter the characteristics of masculine and feminine behaviour. During the course of time, through the repetition of recognized styles and stories, we become gendered subjects.

In conclusion, we become the gendered self we learned to perform (Loxley 119). This identity is thus constituted through the performance of a set of acts. Butler perceives performativity as theatre: we act within disciplinary regimes that decide what possibilities of sex, gender and sexuality are socially permitted to appear as ‘natural’ and ‘coherent’ (119). In the words of Butler: “Discourses in society commonly regulate their subjects and we adapt to the process of normalisation” (122). This resonates with Althusser’s theory of individuals taking up subject-positions, after having been interpellated into particular roles. For Butler, domination, oppression, and exclusion are linked to understanding ourselves in these ways. She believes that by coming to see ourselves in a different way, our politics may be improved and the harms associated with essentialism will be alleviated (Digeser 667). Performativity thus offers the opportunity for individuals to be disruptive.

4.2. Silenced Voices

I don't want to be telling this story. I don't have to tell it. I don't have to tell anything, to myself or to anyone else. I could withdraw. It's possible to go so far in, so far down and back, they could never get you out. Nolite te bastardes carborundorum. Fat lot of good it did her. Why fight? That will never do. Atwood (221)

As we have seen in the earlier chapters, Offred’s verbal and tactile desire for contact, has the possibility to lead to subversive actions in a regime that tries to retain physical pleasure at all cost and that needs to keep its citizens alienated from each other. But when Gilead sponsors ceremonial activities that brings Offred together with the other Handmaids, such as the Prayvaganza, the Salvagings and the Particution, Offred participates as the government wishes. When Janine gives birth for her household, Offred cheers her on along with the other Handmaids. As Johnson has argued, she finds opportunities for surreptitious communications with other Handmaids, but Offred does not venture new connections based on their suffering, she asks about old lost friends instead and often “mouths clinches of sympathy” (76).

When Winston meets Julia again after they have been tortured in The Ministry of Love, their meeting is depressing. They admit that they have betrayed each other and Julia casts Winston a look of dislike. Julia has betrayed him too and states that in the face of the ultimate threat: “You want it to happen to the other person. You don’t

give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself” (292). She concludes: “After that, you don’t feel the same toward the other person any longer” and Winston echoes “you don’t feel the same” (292). Even though Winston’s initial idea is to walk Julia back to the Tube station, he feels overwhelmed by the desire to get away from her and back to the Chestnut Tree Café, the process of trailing in the cold seemed “pointless” (293).

These passages tell the reader that the protagonists have, up to a certain point or whole fully, internalized the totalitarian regimes. Their voices have been silenced.

What I want to focus on in this chapter are examples that illustrate the process of this totalitarian internalization, as well as in the actions of the characters, as in their internal focalisation. As O’Brien has told Winston: “We control life, Winston, at all its levels. You are imagining that there is something called human nature which will be outraged by what we do and turn against us. But we create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable” (Orwell 269). As Kamenetsky notes, people under tyranny are not expected to abstain from doing something, but expected to participate wholeheartedly.

In the face of this, the humanism of a totalitarian brand leaves no room for an individual as a unit in himself. He must always be identified with a certain group and if certain groups are put outside of the framework of a totalitarian society, the individuals who compose them lose their human value (Kamenestky 138). If the linguistic subject, As Butler suggests, “act precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor”, then this is certainly the case for subjects in the face of totalitarianism. (Magnus 86). During his torture in The Ministry of Love, Winston’s internal resistance weakens. Firstly, his awareness that that the Thought Police has watched him like ‘a beetle under a magnifying glass’ has grown, which indicates how small he feels opposed to the Party. He realizes that there has been no physical act, no word spoken aloud and no train of thought that they have not noticed, as even the speck of whitish dust on the cover of his diary has carefully been replaced. In addition to this, they play sound tracks to him and show him photographs of him and Julia. Therefore he realizes: “He could not fight against the Party any longer. Besides, the Party was in the right. It must be so: how could the immortal, collective brain be mistaken?” (277). Winston realizes that sanity is statistical and that it is a questioning of learning to think as the Party thinks.

Secondly, during his interrogations, philosophical debates and scientific discussions with O'Brien, Winston grows accustomed to the things that O'Brien dictates to him and also knows in advance what O'Brien will say:

That the Party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come, sacrificing its own happiness to that of others. The terrible thing, thought Winston, the terrible thing was that when O'Brien said this he would believe it. You could see it in his face. O'Brien knew everything. (Orwell 262)

O'Brien becomes a panoptic eye to Winston, who knows what the world is truly like, in what degradation the mass of human beings live and why the Party keep them there. Winston begins to understand the Party's perspective: "all was justified by the ultimate purpose" (262). He feels powerless towards a lunatic who is more intelligent than himself and starts doubting the epistemic foundations that he used to cling to in order to remain sane. His thoughts become apathic: "Anything could be true. The so-called laws of nature were nonsense". Winston works out that his mind should develop a blind spot whenever a dangerous thought presents itself: "The process should be automatic instinctive. Crimestop, they called it in Newspeak" (278).

Thirdly, Winston eventually starts accepting everything, because all truisms become the same sort of nonsense and do not make any difference: "The past was alterable. The past never had been altered. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia" (255). Winston reflects that remembering contrary things means that he is in possession of false memories which are products of self-deception and begins to feel that "in the old days he had hidden a heretical mind beneath an appearance of conformity" (281). The novel ends with Winston gazing up at the face of Big Brother, feeling that there has been a misunderstanding between them: "O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast" (289). Towards Winston's end, everything is smoothed out and reconciled, he remembers the Ministry of Love with everything forgiven, his soul white as snow (297) and feels that everything is all right. The struggle is finally finished: "He won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (298). Surrendering to the regime of Big Brother means that "there were no more doubts, no more arguments, no more pain and no more fear" (279). Winston blames himself for having needed forty years to learn what kind smile was hidden beneath Big Brother's dark moustache.

Needless to say, it is Big Brother himself who turns his subjects into hate-filled brutes like himself, forcing them to act out his betrayal as the further repetition of ritual human sacrifice. Winston's own crucial act of betrayal is some kind of imitation of his past in the moment that he betrays his loved one, he becomes one with Big Brother, acting out the inevitable. It results in the loving union between victim and victimizer. The God of Power transforms his victims into his own nihilistic image (Gottlieb 84). Winston is weak, silent and lonely once he has learned how to love Big Brother.

Likewise, Offred is not a revolutionary; she refuses to join the Mayday resistance movement in Gilead and does not want to adopt Moira's feminism, even though she admires Moira's recklessness and heroism. She considers Moira to be tougher. Though Offred resists the brutal imposition of male power in Gilead, she also remembers her love stories with Luke and Nick, which have a strong traditional female romance component. Moreover, Offred's accommodation of herself and her life to the misogyny of the contemporary United States and her acceptance of the conditions as ordinary, are mirrored by her gradual succumbing to the conditions of Gilead. Offred fearfully watches for blood each month; "for when it comes it means failure" (Johnson 78).

As Stillman and Johnson suggest, there is no doubt that Offred's behaviour in the time before should be open to scrutiny. Needless to say, Offred's display of emotion during the Particution eventually costs Offred her life. At the same time it can be argued that Offred is no more to blame for being ignorant than we blame ourselves for being ineffective for being complacent about every manifestation of sexism (Johnson 110). Offred's ignoring, accommodating and romanticizing are contrasted with the attitudes of her mother and Moira. Through Offred's memories, the reader witnesses her mother demonstrating for abortion rights: "Her mother was brash, energetic, and irreverent. Aged thirty-seven and unmarried, she defied the warnings of society and some of her feminist colleagues to have a child" (Johnson 79). But Offred's complacency is not solely due to generational regression, it can be argued that Moira exists as her alter ego.

Whereas Offred can be typified as "an everywoman", Moira is an exception, a rebel and a maverick. Moira is fully engaged in the world surrounding her and not mired in romantic fantasies about the past and present. In the pre-Gilead times, Moira was a lesbian feminist working in the publishing division of a woman's collective,

marketing books on birth control and rape. Because of her feminist consciousness Moira was almost prepared for the nightmarish possibility of a state like Gilead. In the Red Center, Moira acts. When Janine gets stuck in psychological haze talks as a pre-Gileadean waitress, Moira intervenes by slapping her out of it. She also attempts a daring escape and makes it as far as the United States-Canadian border with the help of the underground railroad (Johnson 79).

Offred's mother and Moira share important characteristics, which Offred cannot emulate. Offred herself acknowledges this when she comments on her hopes for her mother, "But I know this isn't true. It is just passing the buck, as children do, to mothers". In the world of *The Handmaid's Tale*, the "buck" that Offred passes to her mother is a fatal one. In a sense, Offred has betrayed both her mother and her best friend through her complicity. Unwilling to work with her mother and Moira before Gilead, with Moira at the Red Center, or with Ofglen, Offred shows herself to be self-absorbed, focused on her own happiness or survival, and unconcerned with women as a group and with society at large (Johnson 81).

After Moira has escaped, Offred reflects that the other handmaids find this frightening, considering Moira as a loose woman and an elevator with open sides. She comments: "Already we were losing the taste for freedom, already we were finding these walls secure. In the upper reaches of the atmosphere you'd come apart [...] there would be no pressure holding you together" (Atwood 127). Whereas Offred's mother and Moira are committed to friends and others who need their help, Offred is only worried that Ofglen, once caught, will be forced to talk and bring her in danger.

When Offred finally meets Moira at Jezebel's again, where Moira works as a whore, she is frightened to see an apathic Moira. She remarks to Offred that she should find a way in to Jezebel's as well: "What I hear is in her voice is indifference, a lack of volition. Have they really done it to her then, taken away something – what? – that used to be so central to her? But how can I expect her to go on, with my idea of her courage, live it through, act it out, when I myself did not?" (248).

Offred is rightfully introspective on her own lack of courage. Essentially powerless herself, she is vulnerable to the lurking Eyes, the spies of the regime who whisk wrong-doers away to death. Offred's Commander encourages her to break the rules with him. Serena Joy, fearing that he is sterile, bribes her offering her the picture of her daughter to sleep with Nick. Ofglen frequently asks Offred for information on her Commander. Amidst these requests and offers, Offred presents herself as fearful

of the Eyes and knowing that to trust another means to risk one's own life. Despite broad hints and specific requests from Ofglen, Offred does not encourage or assist her fellow Handmaid and so she cannot compose herself of the strengths that could flow from friendship and commitment (Johnson 74).

The internalization of the Gileadean regime however, does not only follow from custom and habit, but through the confrontations with death. Her prayer is a testimony to her fear of death, acknowledging that she rather creeps through her existence than having to give it up for a higher (subversive) goal: "I'll accept my lot. I'll sacrifice. I'll repent. I'll abdicate. I'll renounce" she comments: "I know this cannot be right but I think it anyway". She describes that everything they taught at the Red Centre and that she has always resisted, comes flooding in. Moreover, she admits: "I don't want to be a doll hung up on the Wall, I don't want to be a wingless angel". Offred concludes that she wants to keep on living, in any form and that she is prepared to resign her body to the use of others and allows people to do what they like with her: "I feel, for the first time, their true power" (Atwood 248).

Lastly, Offred is actually terrified when a doctor offers her help, once she puts on her clothes her hands are shaking. But as she reflects she has crossed no boundaries and taken no risks, everything is save. What frightens her is the fact that suddenly she has a choice: "It's the choice that terrifies me. A way out, a salvation" (Atwood 59). This shows how her voice is silenced by the regime; she has the opportunity to seize in order to save her life and she does not take it, not necessarily afraid of the consequences if people figure it out, but of being given a choice. She has grown so unaccustomed to this that it is the way out that terrifies her, therefore she stays put. She reflects that there is no such things as a sterile man anymore, there are only woman who are fruitful and women who are barren, "that is the law" (59).

The incorporated notion of "that is the law", shows that Offred cannot even wrap her head around the fact that the guilt might be laying with men as well. Furthermore, the fact that she is afraid of a way out, illustrates her transformation to a 'prized pig', even though she points out that her life in Gilead is not normal, she has learned how to resume it. But as Butler wonders, even if this suppressive speech works to constitute a subject through discursive means, is that constitution necessarily final and effective? Is there a possibility of subverting the effects produced by such speech, a faultline exposed that leads to the undoing of this process of discursive constitution? (Butler 19).

5.2 *Creating a Narrative of One's Own*

Thoughtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime is death - Orwell (18).

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union developed a common attitudes towards art and literature in their attempts to use them as weapons for the promotion of their ideas (Kamenetsky 128). Art and literature were never allowed to be impartial. Because impartiality implies the detachment from the ideology and might initiate a movement toward dissent, independent narratives within art and literature threaten the totalitarian enterprise. Creative persons could deconstruct the official frenzied enthusiasm under the spell of which the totalitarian governments try to keep their masses. They must be investigated because if they present autonomous ideas or cultivate art for art's sake, they should to be attacked (Kamenestky 125). What I would like to pay attention to now are the several ways in which Winston and Offred attempt to create a narrative of their own, in spite of these totalitarian mechanisms. The first aspect I want to investigate is Winston's dairy and its development. When he starts writing the first passage he reflects that he does not know what made him pour out the stream of rubbish.

April 4th, 1984. Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him. First you saw him wallowing alone in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopters gunsight, then he was full of holes and the sea round him turned pink and he sank as suddenly as though the holes had let in the water. Audience shouting with laughter when he sank. (Orwell 9)

What is particular about this imagery is that the man is not described as wounded or drowning, but that he is portrayed as full of holes, that the sea turns pink and that he suddenly sank. It is such a clinical description that it implies that the fat men they have watched is completely dehumanized. The reaction of the audience illustrates that they have been constituted by Big Brother's regime. Perhaps the roaring laughter indicates that it gives the audience a form of power, which is of course false and displaced, but Big Brother likes to fuel its audience through war. As Foucault noted: "A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities" (789).

The next sentence Winston repeats six times is "Down with big brother" (Orwell 19). It's as if his rebellion strongly pours out of him, as this is one of the most forbidden sentences. The opposite pole of power can, as Foucault argues, only be passivity. Winston writing this down means that he acknowledges the power relationship, that he is "the other" over whom power is exercised. He continues with grammatical constructions that are incoherent and hurried: "They'll shoot me I don't care they'll shoot me in the back of the neck I don't care down with big brother" (19). The sanity or psychological health which Winston temporarily gains through his art is paradoxically reflected in his recognition that having become a "dead man," he must now "stay alive as long as possible" (Weatherly 274). When he takes up his pen again, he decides that he will write the story to a reader, a reader of the future:

To the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, when men are different from one another and do not live alone -to a time when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone: From the age of uniformity, from the age of solitude, from the age of Big Brother, from the age of doublethink-greetings! (Orwell 28)

With a few strong sketches Winston paints his own world. He continues to describe a particular evening when he decided to meet a whore, like a confession, but the scene is rather creepy (Orwell 63). Reflecting upon Big Brother's regime, remembering the photograph and the past that continuously changed, he realizes that what he never understood about the nightmare state was why the imposture was undertaken: "I understand how: I do not understand why" (80). As Foucault argues, for some people, asking questions about the "how" of power would limit them to describing its effects without relating those effects either to causes or to a basic nature. This would make power a mysterious substance, which they might hesitate to interrogate in itself, "no

doubt because they would prefer not to call it into question” (Foucault 785). By proceeding this way, they seem to suspect the presence of a kind of fatalism (785), therefore Winston calls upon it: he understands how, but he wants to know why. What is the point of enslaving the entire population?

Furthermore, he decides that “freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows” (81). As Foucault argued, power is not just violence. It is instead a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions and often forbids absolutely, always finding a way of acting upon an acting subjects. He points out that the confrontation of power and freedom often results in a complicated interplay. However, within Ingsoc’s totalitarian regime, power is so uniform that it is almost the equivalent to “a physical determination” (Foucault 790). Therefore, Winston calls on the laws of mathematics, which are supposed to be objective, universal and non-permeated by ideology. Science is his last resort, bending the rules of science means that the Party tries to bend reality, and with this is inevitably shows to Winston it’s eternal hunger for power. The Party exposes itself through ignoring the laws of nature, therefore Winston finds freedom in stating that two plus to two make four. At least for the moment, the private vision saves him as there is enough trace of his Oldspeak – his collective unconscious, culture, tragedy, and language – for one last restatement of historical significance (Weatherly 274).

The Handmaid’s Tale consist of a story told into a tape recorder. Appended to Offred’s narration is a concluding epilogue, the partial transcript of an academic conference in 2195 on the defunct Gilead, in which Professor Pieixoto reports finding, transcribing and arranging the tapes (Stillman 71). Offred’s narrative forms the majority of the novel, refiguring the space she can claim as her own within Gilead. During her lifetime, Offred finds herself in the familiar dystopian predicament of being trapped inside a space and a narrative where she is denied the possibility of agency. As we have seen, a Handmaid deprived of her own name and identity (Howells 165). *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a form of space-time fiction, as it deals with the continuities of memory and those persistent traces of history that survive, that might undermine the authority of the repressive regime. Though she is trapped within a system without individual freedom, Offred claims her own private space by her refusals; she refuses to forget the past, she refuses to believe in the absolute authority of Gilead and she refuses to give up on love, she lives: “*In Hope*, as they say on the gravestones” (Atwood 99).

Composed of isolated unites with blanks in between where the episodes drift free of the present time, her fragmented narrative represents the mental processes of someone in Offred's isolated situation. Under the threat of erasure, Offred fights for her psychological and emotional survival by telling her story. Her storytelling has a double purpose, for not only is it the counter-narrative to Gilead's power, it is also her way to arm herself against the deadly brainwashing of the totalitarian state (Howells 165). When Offred and Ofglen whisper about Janine giving birth to a shredder and putting the blame on herself for being sinful, Offred comments: "But people will do anything rather than admit that their lives have no meaning. No use, that is, no plot" (Atwood 212). She is aware that storytelling is a matter of survival, anything better than accepting than collapsing into the totalitarian nihilism of admitting that their lives – outside of what is demanded of them by the regimes – are pointless. As Butler argued, the subjects comes to be through social discourse, but she emphasizes that the subject never reaches the point in which she can master her own speech. In this way, Butler introduces a notion of agency that "begins where sovereignty wanes". However, in presenting this non-sovereign subject who exists only in the speech she cannot control, Butler leaves us with a reactive, negative notion of agency (Magnus 87). A story can represent a dilemma as contingent and unprecedented and position its audience to think from within that dilemma. It invites the kind of situated critical thinking that is necessary when we are called upon, in Arendt's words, to think "without banisters" (Dish 669).

Offred appears as a sympathetic narrator in the pre-Gileadean world of the United States, who once was "an ordinary sensual woman, with a college degree, a husband, a daughter and a job in a library" (Stimpson 764). She lost these blessings as a result of the coup and is now a Handmaid in a powerful dystopia (Stillman 71). Linda Kaufman has argued that Offred's most important transgression lies in the telling of her story (288). She tells it in her head in order to survive by seeing beyond the present moment, where she does not want to be: "I would like to believe this is a story I'm telling. I need to believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance" (Atwood 39). Furthermore, she believes that her chances of survival will increase because if it is a story she is telling: "I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it" (38). She also tells it because she has to believe there is an entity outside Gilead who is listening to her. She reflects that you do not tell a story to yourself but that there is

always someone else: “A story is like a letter” (38). It takes a couple of hundred years for her letter to be delivered, when it is presented (in a third reconstruction) at a Symposium on Gileadean Studies long after the regime has become ancient history, on which I shall elaborate further in this chapter (101). Just like Winston, Offred incorporates a listener:

Dear You, I'll say. Just you, without a name. Attaching a name attaches you to the world of fact, which is riskier, more hazardous: who knows what the chances are out there, of survival, yours? I will say you, you, like an old love song. You can mean more than one. You can mean thousands. I'm not in immediate danger, I'll say to you. I'll pretend you can hear me. (Atwood 50)

Storytelling becomes a substitute for dialogue: “Because I'm telling you this story, I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are” (50). Offred's story is a ‘reconstruction’ on several levels, for not only is it her narrative of memory but it is the means by which she rehabilitates herself as an individual in Gilead. Though she begins her tale as a nameless woman traumatised by loss and whispering in the dark, Offred refuses to believe that she is nothing but a Handmaid (18). She addresses the listener of the future and explains that if that listener happens to be a man, she decides to give him a warning. She warns him that he will never be subjected to the temptation of feeling that he must forgive as a woman, and she explains to him: “But remember that forgiveness too is a power, to beg for it is a power, and to withhold or bestow it is a power, perhaps the greatest” (129).

Furthermore, she addresses the man by reflecting that nothing of what has been going in Gilead is about control. She reflects that it is not about who can own whom, who can do what to whom and get away with it: “Maybe it is not about who can sit and who has to kneel or stand or lie down, legs spread open. Maybe it is about who can do what to whom and be forgiven to it” (129), entering into the dialogue with this future man she warns: “Never tell me it amounts to the same thing” (129). As Foucault explains, the exercise of power is not just a relationship between individuals or a collective, it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Power is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, but it only exists when it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures (Foucault 788).

Offred knows that forgiveness is the only act, which could ever break the totalitarian wheel, that forgiveness could destroy the permanent power structure of

Gilead and render them powerless. This creates the idea that power is not constituted through a survival of the fittest, or who has the agency to inflict the most pain or exercises the most control over another human being, that all the methods that Gilead depends on, are not helping them in getting the final word over power. Being able to forgive, means having survived. This way, *The Handmaid's Tale* continues the examination of violence and the importance of bearing witness (Palumbo 49).

The ending of Offred's narrative, however, makes it ambiguous against whom or what the transgression of telling is committed. When Offred gives herself over into the hands of strangers, Atwood does not lead the reader to know who those strangers are. Though Nick assures her that they are May Day in disguise, Offred notes Nick is hardly trustworthy. Given these ambiguities, the reader cannot know who carried Offred away and persuaded her to tell her story to the tapes (Stillman 77).

Offred reflects that if she's ever able to set her story down, even in the voice of another, it will be a reconstruction, another move away, suggesting that it was impossible to describe the things exactly the way they were, because; "what you say can never be exact" there are "too many shapes which can never be fully described, too many flavours" (Atwood 284). This narrative self-consciousness is a postmodern feature of her narrative, as she is drawing our attention back to her storytelling process. She comments on the ways this telling shapes and changes real experience, provides the reader with reasons why she needs to tell the story at all, and reminds readers that she may not be a reliable narrator as she recounts what happened in Gilead (Atwood 101).

Offred's assertion about 'the space I claim as mine' addresses questions about her subject position within the rigidly patriarchal system and a woman's possible strategies of resistance. Appropriating her temporary room in the Commander's house as her own, Offred makes a declaration of freedom as she transforms the prison cell into an escape route into the private space of her memory. It is through storytelling that she escapes: "Where should I go? Somewhere good" (47). There is a surprising amount of mobility in this narrative as Offred in imagination moves out and away from Gilead. Her story induces a double vision in the reader as well, for she is always facing both ways as she shifts between her present life and her past (100).

But in creating her story, she also uses her fantasy. Magnus points out that the subject does not necessarily have to come into being through oppressive language, but could also come into being through a loving interpellation (Magnus 86). If subjects

are empowered through intersubjective connections, than it is through Offred's fantasy of Moira that she resists Gilead (Magnus 86). When it comes to remembering Moira, the reader is given a feminine heroine, she becomes larger than life for Offred. What frightens Offred is the disinterest that has become part of Moira's face, obliterating the larger-than-life rebel. "I don't want her to be like me. Give in, go along, save her skin...I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, single-handed combat" (324). She points out: "Here is what I'd like to tell. I'd like to tell a story about how Moira escaped, for good this time. Or if I couldn't tell that, I'd like to say she blew up Jezebel's, with fifty Commanders inside it", she wants to give Moira a daring and spectacular ending, something that would benefit her (250). Offred eventually lets go the story, now turned nightmare, of Moira the rebel. The difference, the lack of volition of the new Moira she finds at Jezebel's, scares her. This mask, the mask of a tart, appears to obliterate (Hansot 65). As the novel progresses, her storytelling becomes more apologetic:

I wish this story were different. I wish it were more civilized. I wish it showed me in a better light, if not happier, then at least more active, less hesitant, less distracted by trivia. I wish it had more shape. I wish it were about love, or about sudden realisations important to one's life, or even about sunsets, birds, rainstorms, or snow. (Atwood 263)

Offred explains to us that she is sorry that there is so much pain in the story. She is sorry that it is fragmented and compares it to a body "caught in crossfire or pulled apart by force". She explains that she tried to do good things, like flowers. But she admits that it hurt her to tell the story over and over again. That once has been enough, but that she has to keep on going with the sand and hungry, limping and mutilated story, projected it onto the reader: "Because after all I want you to hear it, as I will hear yours too if I ever get the chance, if I meet you or if you escape [...] other place". She wills the existence of the listener and decides she will go on with her story: "After all you've been through, you deserve whatever I have left, which is not so much but includes the truth" (264).

In the face of state repression and domestic tyranny Offred manages to tell her not only her own story but the stories of other women as well, all of them willing or unwilling victims of the Gileadean regime and so in some sense her own doubles. Appropriating their remembered turns of phrase, Offred's storytelling voice multiplies to become the voices of 'women' rather than the voice of a single narrator' (100).

Offred's stories, composed as they are out of present necessities, give her perspective, the illusion of depth, multi-dimensional possibilities in a present denuded of them. To the extent that all versions of her story are at variance with officially sanctioned Gileadean history, they are a potential seed bed of resistance (Hansot 61).

But the "Historical Notes" are a transcript of a lecture given by a Cambridge Professor Pieixoto, at an academic symposium on Gileadean Studies in the year 2195 at the University of Denay, Nunavit, in Arctic Canada, long after the regime has fallen and Offred is dead. It is this professor who is responsible for the transcription of the novel, because it turns out that Offred's story was recorded on cassette tapes, which he has edited and entitled '*The Handmaid's Tale*' in 'homage to the great Geoffrey Chaucer' (312). The voice of the male historian threatens to drown out Offred's voice, for Pieixoto is not at all concerned with her as an individual but is preoccupied with establishing the authenticity of her tale and its value as objective historical evidence. His reconstruction effects a radical shift from 'her story' to 'history' as he attempts to discredit Offred's narrative by accusing her of not paying attention to significant events. In response, the reader may feel that it is the professor who is paying attention to the wrong things, for the historical facts that Pieixoto selects as significant effectively erase Offred from the Gileadean narrative: of the twelve pages of his account a mere one and a half pages are devoted to her, and her fate 'remains obscure'. In fact, he does exactly what Offred feared history would do to the Handmaids: "From the point of view of future history, we'll be invisible" (240) (Howells 107).

Offred's voice itself does not encourage us to see her tale as history. She speaks in the present tense, a fact which in itself discourages us from seeing her narrative as fixed or final. It can be argued that it unfolds for us as it does for her. We might note here, incidentally, that Atwood manages by the use of this device the echo the use of the journal prevalent in dystopian works as *We* and *1984*, of which the influence on *The Handmaid's Tale* is fairly evident (Grace 458).

Offred's narrative strategies consistently stress the failure of any single reading of an event to be valid. Indeed, they challenge the very notion of a textually fixed, historical truth. Offred comments at various points, for instance, on the failure of texts to provide convincing pictures of reality. "The newspaper stories were like bad dreams to us," she observes: "How awful, we would say, and they were, but they were awful without being believable". Such accounts mutilation of women "interfered

with as they used to say”, are supposedly factual and objective, but nevertheless feel “melodramatic” and do not seem real in the context of the lives lived by Offred and her friends prior to the Gileadean takeover. The texts do not capture their experiences: “they were about other women, and the men who did such things were other men” (Grace 458).

The “Historical Notes” section further undermines the authority of Offred's account by revealing that the text of the novel is not the direct record made by Offred of her experiences, but is itself a construct of tape-recorded commentaries, edited and structured, and interpreted by its twenty-second-century editors, who have repeated the process that Offred herself uses, but with a very different agenda. In effect, our entire experience of Offred's account has been deceptive, for we have been reading it, but it is a series of recorded audiotapes. The text we have read is a documentary study, a transcription edited by scholars, not an unmediated account of Offred's experiences; it is a retrospectively organized interpretation. All that we have assumed about the text we have been reading, including the authority of the order in which the events are narrated, is violated by the “Historical Notes”, and the voice we thought we were listening to is subsumed, even fictionalized, by Pieixoto (Grace 487).

The abrupt shift from Offred's voice to the historian's voice challenges the reader on questions of interpretation. We have to remember that *The Handmaid's Tale* was Offred's transcribed speech. Her tale has been appropriated by an academic, who seems to forget that his reconstruction is open to questions of interpretation too. Perhaps he is abusing Offred as Gilead abused her, removing her authority over her own life story and renaming it in a gesture that parallels Gilead's patriarchal suppression of a woman's identity in the Handmaid's role. The world of 2195 does not seem more civilized than that of Gilead. Pieixoto's prissy academic jokes and the laughter they elicit from his audience provide evidence that sexist attitudes still persist (Ketterer 214).

Far from adding to the authority of Offred's account by providing an objective, historical context for it, far from making her tale more believable, the “Historical Notes” section casts doubt on the validity of the entire documentary mode (Grace 487). Pieixoto's acknowledgment that the tale we have read is an editorial construct “based on some guesswork... and to be regarded as approximate, pending further research” (Atwood 284). Whereas for Offred the possibilities opened up by reconstruction and the alternate possibilities they provided play a key role in the

narrative, for Pieixoto such contingency is a blemish to be removed. He wants his further research to provide the univocal, final, true account. Thus Pieixoto's search is for facts only (Grace 488). Completely lacking in Pieixoto's commentary is any recognition that the process of editing makes such an univocal truth impossible to find (Grace 488).

Offred has no modes of resistance against Gilead, at least none that threaten Gilead in any way and, equally, they seem not to threaten the smug self-satisfaction or sexism of the academic conferees in 2195, against Gilead's re-writing of history is Offred's memory. As with Winston Smith in *1984* it is not clear what is gained from one person's knowing some 'true' historical facts (Stillman 75).

Orwell and Atwood seem pessimistic about the possibility of having the last word on totalitarianism. In both novels, that is, the protagonists' attempts to locate discursive resistance to the dominant ideology end by being - or perhaps always already have been - co-opted by the representatives of what Derrida would call "archival power" (3). The Appendix to *1984* and the "Historical Notes" lie situated in post-totalitarian futures and feature scenes in which historical archives are interpreted by academics. Both texts would appear to imply that on some level, these scholarly figures' "recovery" of the past in suppressed archival fragments is instrumental to the dismantling of the dystopian political formations that have dominated Oceania and Gilead (Howells 108).

While *The Handmaid's Tale* is often described as a frame narrative, in fact there is no analogue for the "Historical Notes" at the beginning of the text to signal to readers that Offred's narrative is unfolding within a different context. As Jocelyn Harris puts it: "Atwood's epilogue shows [the] trahison de clerics in action. Here academics meeting in conference betray Offred by their obsession with form instead of content, their misogyny, their intolerance in the name of objectivity" (275). The reader cannot help but contrast the ironic epilogue to *The Handmaid's Tale*, the "Historical Notes" in which Offred's terrible story is misinterpreted in the academic jargon of professors of anthropology at an international conference (Rigney 55). In the end, the most important message archived in Atwood's retroactive future history might be that we are - potentially- the totalitarians (Finigan 453).

Ultimately, however, both Orwell and Atwood are ambivalent about the possibility of combating totalitarianism's pernicious manipulation of historical records through recourse to the more objective archival methodology of an

enlightened academic discourse (Finigan 436). Most critics have approached Atwood's work in terms of what Sherrill Grace has described as the aesthetics of "violent duality." They point to a long line of oppositional forces that are laid out in startling contrast throughout Atwood's poetry and her prose. In her novels, Atwood has made use of the double voice, depicting characters at war with themselves and their environments. Through intertextual allusions, alterations in narrative point of view, and the use of the unconscious, Atwood shows the way in which the self is constructed from contradictory impulses (Palumbo 73). Atwood's poetics contains this "violent duality" of oppositional forces but offer a way of transcending these (Gorjup 130).

The historians, perhaps, are not able to distinguish the power relations from relationships of communication. No doubt that communication is a way of acting upon another person by a person, but the circulation of elements of meaning can never be fully objective within the realm of power. Systems of communication are permeated by power relations, and because the historians are in power, their narrative strategies illuminate exactly the points that we – as readers – experience as footnotes in the stories. The question rises, in constructing a narrative, what truly matters. The reception of the stories is modified in a new power field, which once again ironically, drowns out the rebellious voices. The historians are doing what Offred blamed her own generation for. As Offred rightfully points out: "We were the people who were no in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print...We lived in the gaps between the stories" (Grace 458).

Conclusion

I set out this writing project in order to find answers to the following questions, concerning the novels *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale*: How do the protagonists in the dystopian novels of *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* seize back their mutilated language, in what ways does the performative component of speech enable them to constitute acts of resistance against the despotic-totalitarian regimes imprisoning them, and to what extent do they succeed in creating a narrative of their own? To answer the first part of the question, 'how do the protagonists in the dystopian novels of *1984* and *The Handmaid's Tale* seize back their mutilated language?'

I have tried to touch upon this question in every chapter, and discussed that the protagonists succeed in this through three methods. The first method, is through newly invented speech, "clipped whisperings", "speaking through installments" and "hidden transcripts". It is through communication with their fellow repressed citizens, through inventing new ways of speaking. that they are still able to convey messages to each other. The second method, is via their internal satire, which deconstructs those in power. It is through the telling of their stories and their internal commentary, that they succeed in deconstructing the totalitarian language. Not necessarily by opposing it, but often by contrasting it with the reality of their situation and marking the points where the slogans and speeches of the regimes falter, by exposing their frigidness, and showing to the reader that the apparent conformity only results in a duplicity, so underneath their cloaks of purity, they remain faithful to their own thoughts.

Thirdly, it is through writing and recording, that they are able to create a meta-reflexive space where they can find their own feet again. It is through storytelling that both Winston and Offred visit different perspectives, reclaim the possibility to ask questions and provide us with a multiperspectival account of their situation.

The second part of the question, namely: 'In what ways does the performative component of speech enable them to constitute acts of resistance against the despotic totalitarian regimes imprisoning them?' I can only respond to with an ambiguous answer. My findings of the close-reading of the texts have shown that both Orwell

and Atwood shows us that escaping the totalitarian reality is a daunting enterprise which might only succeed for a while. The performative component of speech enables both Winston and Offred to create hidden transcripts from the totalitarians, but Winston is eventually caught by the regime and Offred's faith remains uncertain. The complexity is that neither Winston's rebellious dialogues with Julia nor Offred's illicit reading or wordplay, leads to a consistent, spreading or coherent field of resistance. Unlike Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy, who is hesitant to take up the role of the leader of the rebellion, the resistance that Winston and Offred establish does not catch fire in the time span that the reader follows them.

Whereas Winston's insistence upon remaining an autonomous thinker leads to him being caught by the Thought Police and brainwashed in the Ministry of Love, Offred's escape arrives just at the point where she has surrendered herself completely to the regime in order to continue living. There's a stark contrast between them; Winston's worst fear was not death, but that the Big Brother's regime would change him. In the end of 1984, he is still alive, but his worst fear has come true. Offred on the other hand, wants to cling to her survival in spite of the totalitarian circumstances, but when she steps into the black van, she does not know if this will lead to her escape or her immanent death. However, the fact that Offred's stories were found on tapes suggest that Mayday has saved her, but this is not due to her own courage, her interaction with Ofglen or her decision to break free the way Moira tried, Mayday saved her because she started an affair with Nick. If anything, Atwood seems to suggest here that who survives and who does not survive under those circumstances, also depends on falling into the right hands, in other words; can depend on sheer luck. What stopped her from committing suicide before her rescue, is not her own subversive speech or revolutionary thoughts, but because of the Latin message her predecessor left before her: 'Nolite Bastardes Carborundorum'. It can be argued that it the possibility of communication and the will to keep communicating with each other among the citizens, that is just as impactful as the content of their phrases.

As Glowinski pointed out, totalitarian speech often tries to breakdown communication, because it leads to the absolute imprisonment. Once Winston and Julia meet each other but barely have anything to say, it becomes obvious that Big Brother has completely won them over, showing them their love was unable to withstand the power of the Party. There are no thoughts for them left to exchange. Nevertheless, Offred's speech is not completely smothered by Gilead, her story has

been recorded and serves as a case-study for history students. It can be argued that Offred's story has survived her and the Gileadean regime, which can be interpreted as a victory. However, the way that Pieixoto treats her story, strongly casts doubt on whether Offred's message ever gets truly delivered.

Treated as a historical document, a piece of evidence, he reviews Offred's personal gaze as limited and lacking of the proper and right kind of information. This brings me to the third part of the question: 'To what extent do they (the protagonists) succeed in creating a narrative of their own?' The harsh and most direct answer would probably be that they do not succeed in creating a narrative of their own at all. To a certain degree this makes sense; if they would have freed themselves from the totalitarian claws through the creation of their own narrative, this would undermine the entire enterprise of writing dystopian novel. After all, dystopian novels are meant to function as societal warnings. This does not mean a writer cannot create characters who successfully liberate themselves from suppression, but it would make the urgency of the dystopian warning less pressing. However, when it comes to the matter of seizing agency, the novels do show that it is through creating their own narratives, that the stories are set in motion.

We meet Winston on the day he decides to start a journal and Offred's narrative voice starts in the night of the gymnasium, where the Handmaids silently exchange their own names. It could be argued that without these small acts of rebellion, which strengthens the internal voices of Winston and Offred, we would not have been given a story at all. It is through their perspective that becomes clear what the totalitarian regimes are capable of, how barren the life under such a government is and what suffocating cruelty is used upon innocent individuals, for the totalitarians to remain in power. This is something which the historian in *The Handmaid's Tale* and the linguist in the Appendix of *1984* do not illuminate to us. Hereby Orwell and Atwood highlight to us that when we as readers, come across items in newspapers, historical accounts or documentaries on television framing war to us, are also presented with reconstructions that to a great extent get lost on us.

Foucault has argued that in the battle among power and knowledge frameworks, some stories come on top while others are subjugated. My suggestion for further research would be to approach Winston and Offred's narratives as subjugated knowledges, as they present forms of remembering and experiencing, which are pushed to the margins and unworthy of epistemic respect by both the totalitarians and

the historian(s). They do not give us the statistics of concentration camps, but describe the Althusserian social relations of the lived experience by a social subject, and the philosophical battle to preserve their own sanity in the face of horror. Their stories could form counter-histories, but are not treated as such in the post-totalitarian worlds.

As readers, we are alarmed by the ignorance that Pieixoto displays, even though he reconstructed Offred's narrative for his students, he seems to completely have missed the point. The point of what a human life is all about. Perhaps, this can make us as readers, more aware of the limits of our own moral understanding and judgement, which is often already embedded for us in the way the stories that we daily digest are framed. As long as we do not take these for granted, but keep them under critical scrutiny, enabling new dialogues to take place, we can carve paths that lead us astray, away from the panoptic totalitarian gaze.

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