

Becoming Big Brother

*On the Role of Surveillance in Power Structures
in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four
and Dave Eggers's The Circle*



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Introduction

“We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. Do you agree?” Anyone who uses a smartphone or tries to access a website in this day and age knows that it is almost inevitable to agree to the collection of data. Even though it is hard to discern what is done with these cookies, most Internet users click the agree-button because they do not want to be constrained in their online presence. However, this kind of information collection has received much critical attention over the past few years; it remains rather obscure what is done with this information. In a way, the Internet user is under surveillance; our behaviour is constantly monitored because data collection is allowed. A way to critically assess these kinds of matters is dystopian fiction; a story is projected into the future in order to look back (Stock 120). One of the most famous twentieth-century dystopian novels is George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); this novel has to be read as a critique of its own time (Crick 146; Howe 251). However, this classic was ahead of its time as the novel still proves to be relevant; in the novel surveillance practices are assessed. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* surveillance is employed as a way to repress the citizens of a totalitarian state called Oceania; their behaviour is monitored in order to eliminate those who do not abide to the ideology of Big Brother, who is the supposed leader of the only political group called The Party. Presumably he does not exist yet he becomes a metaphor of surveillance. It seems like Big Brother constantly observes the citizens. The enforcement of surveillance is continually brought to the attention of the citizens of Oceania by the ominous slogan; “Big Brother is watching you.” Another novel—yet of more recent years—also explores the theme of surveillance: *The Circle* (2013). This novel describes a society in which it is possible for anyone to employ surveillance; everyone can watch everyone. American author Lev Grossman has argued the following in an online review of *The Circle*: “We have met Big Brother, and he is us” (TIME). The novel is set in a nearby future, and elements in the novel call to mind social networks like Facebook, demand of cookies when trying to access a website. In the novel, it has become normalised to make all personal information public online; hereby surveillance over everyone, and by anyone is made possible for anyone. *The Circle* shows how we are slowly becoming Big Brother. *The Circle* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* make for an interesting comparison; both novels explore the possible implications of surveillance but because they were written over sixty years apart a development can be discerned in the perception and manifestation of surveillance

Much research has been conducted on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. An element that is widely recognised in the novel is the panoptical schema in society that Foucault has described in *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison* (1975). In this work, Michel Foucault has documented a historical shift that shows an evolution in the use of power in society from societies of sovereignty to disciplinary societies. Instead of maintaining control by corporal punishment, in a disciplinary society control is made possible by discipline, which regulates behaviour of individuals in society. Surveillance plays an important role in the functioning of disciplinary power. However, Gilles Deleuze has discerned another shift when noticing yet another kind of power structure, namely from the disciplinary societies to the societies of control. Contrary to disciplinary power, control does not function by enclosure. Whereas power relations were be fixed in order to make disciplinary power function, control in societies of control is free-floating and one is not bound anymore by enclosure. The discontinuance of enclosure is liberating yet the methods of control have also intensified, and surveillance has become more precise. This latest historical transition can be discerned in *The Circle* (2013), on which yet little research has been conducted.

Nineteen Eighty-Four and *The Circle* make for an interesting comparison because both novels allow a better understanding of the abstract concepts of disciplinary societies and societies of control. Both novels illustrate possible implications of the power structures in society that are described by Foucault and Deleuze, and the narratives of individual characters—Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Mae in *The Circle*—make these abstract concepts easier to relate to. These novels allow for a better understanding of the development of the manifestation and the perception of the role of surveillance in society, namely from noticeably present to hardly distinct, and from oppressive to something we eagerly agree to. By comparing these novels this thesis will answer the following main question: What does a comparison of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Dave Eggers's *The Circle* show about the development from disciplinary societies to societies of control concerning the role of surveillance in these power structures? In order to answer this question this thesis shall begin with an introduction to the theoretical framework, which shall be constituted by the concept of a disciplinary society by Foucault and the societies of control by Deleuze. In the second and third chapter *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* shall be analysed and compared within this framework. In the conclusion, the observations on similarities and differences in these novels will be summarised and the main question shall be answered.

Chapter One: Societies of Discipline and Societies of Control

In this research, thinking about surveillance practices within power structures shall be done with Foucault's concept of the panopticon in society and Deleuze's elaboration on this concept about twenty years after. Foucault describes the disciplinary societies in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975). Deleuze has elaborated on the concept of power and control that has been introduced by Foucault in his essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992). According to Deleuze, Foucault discerned the succession of the societies of sovereignty by the disciplinary societies—which took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Foucault 225)—and these, according to Deleuze, have been succeeded by the societies of control after the Second World War (3). Deleuze takes technological development into account and recognizes "new forms and qualities of surveillance" (Murakami Wood 253). By exploring these works, this chapter will provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle*.

Foucault and the Disciplinary Society

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) is a historical documentation of the prison system where Foucault traces the progression of penal style (Rabinow and Rose 7). The methods of punishment are described in a timeline where a shift has been denoted from societies of sovereignty to disciplinary societies. Disciplinary power succeeded sovereign power around the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In disciplinary societies the community is replaced by the individual and the state, and punishment as a spectacle is replaced by invisible surveillance. Disciplinary power in society is described as a system that enables the individual body to be controlled by the arrangement and regulation of the individual's movements. Hereby individuals are assigned a fixed place in society. Disciplinary power is exemplified by the prison design of the panopticon, by seventeenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham. This design can be recognised in the institutions in disciplinary societies. Disciplinary power and surveillance practices shall be explored in this paragraph.

Foucault uses the design of the panoptical prison of Bentham to illustrate the functioning of disciplinary power in society. The architectural model is an example and a metaphor of discipline. This prison is a circular building where the cells are at the rim of the building and a watchtower is placed in the middle in which a watchman can take place (Foucault 200). Originally, the panopticon was designed to "induce in the inmate a state of

conscious and permanent visibility that assure[d] the automatic functioning of power” (201). A watchman executed observation or surveillance; the watchman could see the prisoner, but the prisoner could not see the watchman. The idea of permanent visibility ensures the automatic functioning of power (201). The inmate is subjected to a gaze, and hereby he inmate is disciplined by the idea of that he or she might be watched. The concept of the gaze is essential to the idea of internalisation of discipline. Foucault describes the gaze as following: “A central point [which] would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned” (173). Thus the gaze ensures the automatic functioning of power because the inmate is subjected to an all-seeing eye and this knowledge withholds the inmate from doing something incriminating; the inmate automatically comes to abide to the rules of the prison. This is called the internalisation of discipline. Thus the power relation is upheld because “power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid heavy constraint” (206) but knowledge of a certain set of rules is incorporated within the individual; the gaze is internalised. Discipline is a way to control the movement of bodies; the panopticon exemplifies this idea because the inmate knows where to be because of the incorporation of the rules of the prison.

Foucault claims “the panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense: it assures its economy (in material, in personnel, in time); it assures its efficacy by its preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms.” (206) Foucault employed the design of the panopticon as a metaphor of the disciplinary society. Discipline functions by three techniques: hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and examination (184). Disciplinary power fixes the individual and confines multiplicities in institutions—similar to the panopticon—that function by enclosure: schools, hospitals, the army, and factories. Disciplinary forces are integrated into the foundations of institutions and discipline hereby organises individuals into ordered classes (Foucault 218). Enclosure within these institutions refers to the idea that a person can only belong to one institution at a time in a disciplinary society; it is only possible to identify in a singular way, for example as a student or a soldier but never as a student and a soldier (Deleuze 3). Within these institutions norms and rules are imposed via discipline and hereby judgment by these rules becomes normalised via hierarchical observation. The examination combines hierarchical surveillance with the normalisation of judgment (Foucault 170). For example, a student makes an exam (examination), which is corrected by a teacher (hierarchical observer) according to a standard (normalisation of judgment). When the results of all students are collected it enables “the

constitution of a comparative system” (190). The results of the exam hereby make the individual an object that can be analysed and classified. Enclosure is required for disciplinary power to function.

Deleuze and the Societies of Control

As said, Deleuze has observed how disciplinary societies are slowly being replaced by societies of control after World War II (4). The differences that Deleuze discerns in his essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” between these two types of society shall be discussed.

Deleuze notes that within disciplinary societies the individual is fixed; one moves from “one closed environment to another, each having its own laws” (1). These environments are the institutions that Foucault exemplifies. However, in the societies of control individuals are no longer enclosed; boundaries are described as “deformable and transformable” (6). Deleuze remarks how a person in the disciplinary societies lives “between two incarcerations” and a person in a society of control lives “in continuous variation” (4). Thus the boundaries of environments have become more flexible and allow a person to belong to multiple environments at the same time. For example, it is possible that somebody identifies as an employee but continues to follow courses, and thus be in an environment that would qualify as school.

In understanding the societies of control the concept of the ‘dividual’ is essential (Deleuze 5). Unlike an individual, the dividual does not identify anymore in a singular manner but with a scope of different publics (Lazzarato 181). The individual becomes divided; hence the name dividual. This difference between an individual and a dividual is clarified when Deleuze notes how “in the societies of control [...] what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code” (5). This can be interpreted in several ways. The individual only belongs to one environment at a time and therefore a singular signature suffices. A code signifies flexibility and the complex nature of the unstable and continuous change that the dividual finds him- or herself in by not belonging to an enclosed environment. With the digital age in mind another interpretation is possible. A signature signifies the fixed physical presence whereas a code can also suggest a digital presence, as data. By the data that are gathered and collected about individuals allows the construction a digital double, if you will, and these replace the need for physical presence (Simon 15). Deleuze has exemplified this by noting how one could simply be denied access on basis of the digital information that is gathered and transferred onto an electronic card (7). This example is still suitable; indeed,

currently we use bank cards that carry personal and financial information. Yet, techniques have developed immensely since Deleuze wrote this essay over twenty years ago.

The emergence of the dividual has major implications for surveillance techniques because physical surveillance shifts to data surveillance (Simon 15); this implies observations are based on data. Indeed, as Simon argues, the digital assembly of information about a person produces “stable representations of identity such as no visual enclosure could ever produce” (15). Surveillance is less noticeable, but more aspects of the dividual can be surveyed because of the large amount of information that is available. Of course, analogue surveillance still take place by security cameras, for example. Simon shows how effective and precise analogue and digital surveillance combined can be when thinking about airport security; a device called an Iridium Authenticam Iris Scanner scans the eye in order to recognise an individual, and hereby information is gathered about this individual from a database in order to give check whether this person might be a possible threat (15-16); this is something analogue surveillance could never achieve with such precision.

Surveillance practices seem less ominous in the societies of control than in the disciplinary societies because digital surveillance is less noticeable in comparison to analogue surveillance. For example, Lyon notes how apps on smartphones collect a great amount of data yet users hardly notice it; surveillance nowadays is introduced as a form of “entertainment and consumption” (*Liquid Surveillance* Introduction). However, data collection allows for an increase of information; as a result the lives of people become more transparent, and therefore surveillance becomes more concise in comparison to analogue surveillance. Deleuze published “Postscript on the Societies of Control” before the Internet revolution, and after the publication this work only seems to have become more relevant. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—a novel published before the Internet revolution—shows critique on disciplinary societies, and on the ways surveillance is enabled by a certain distribution of power. *The Circle* explores the concept of the societies of control and addresses the same issues but in a story that shows the possible consequences of the Digital Revolution.

Chapter Two: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Nineteen Eighty-Four tells the story of a man named Winston. He lives in the totalitarian state Oceania that partially exemplifies the disciplinary society that Foucault has described (Tyner 135). The story starts with the beginning of Winston's revolt against the Party and Big Brother. The Party is the political party who holds absolute power in Oceania and Big Brother is its (imaginary) spokesperson. The reader learns about the oppressed life Winston has to live, how the hierarchical power structure in the state functions and how the citizens are disciplined by hierarchical surveillance and constant judgment. Together with his love, Julia, he tries to break away from a life that is governed by the Party and eventually they want to join the secret rebellion that is called The Brotherhood. However, The Brotherhood is a farce and they are arrested by the Thought Police—a special force that observes all citizens of Oceania and eliminates those who do not abide to the Party. Winston gets incarcerated and gets tortured until he abides to the Party doctrine again. Just before the Thought Police kills him he declares his love for Big Brother. The novel criticises a totalitarian and egalitarian power structure by imagining a dystopia where control has become absolute and constant surveillance has become normalised. Differences and resemblances can be found between the disciplinary power structure that Foucault has recognised and Oceania. This chapter shall focus on surveillance and disciplinary power and control by taking three aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* into consideration, namely the Party and Big Brother, Winston, and the telescreen.

Big Brother and the Party

Nineteen Eighty-Four displays a society that functions the same way as a prison (Strub 41); Oceania is enclosed upon itself because it is constantly at war with the other two superpowers. There is no knowledge of any other system of the ideology of the Party that everybody abides to because the Party controls all information. As described in the previous chapter, the panopticon originally was an architectural design for a prison where the inmates would be disciplined by hierarchical observation. The inmate would incorporate the norms and rules of the prison because they internalised the gaze of the watchman; they would act as if somebody was watching. Oceania is organised in hierarchical classes in which the individual is assigned a fixed place (Tyner 138). The hierarchical power structure of Oceania has to be considered in order to discern the power structure and the distribution of power.

Big Brother supposedly is at “the apex of the pyramid” (Orwell 216), yet there is no proof of his existence. He is merely a figure on which citizens can project feelings onto; Winston reads this in the book he receives after he has joined the rebel group The Brotherhood. It reads: “Big Brother is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world. His function is to act as a focusing point for love, fear and reverence; emotions which are more easily felt towards an individual than towards an organisation” (216). Yet the metaphor of “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (4) is powerful; Party members are constantly reminded of his gaze by the image of his face on posters, and they can hereby always sense Big Brother’s eyes surveying the crowd (Shah 702). It seems that the citizens of Oceania are subjected to his gaze and they abide to the norms and rules Big Brother imposes on them, however, these are actually the rules of the Party. Indeed, as Winston reads, Big Brother only seems to be a figure of reverence and reference. Individuals internalise the ideology of the Party because of the illusion that they are subjected to Big Brother’s gaze. Foucault has argued; “Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task, or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used” (205). A panoptic schema is conceived in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* yet it has to be noted that the novel shows how people can get repressed with disciplinary power; this is something Foucault did not consider possible—he thought the system would be “democratically controlled” (Foucault 207). There is no way to object to The Party. The gaze of Big Brother ensures the automatic functioning of power; via hierarchical observation the ideology of the Party is imposed and the Party Members abide.

Disciplinary power is made possible by hierarchical surveillance: “although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised” (Foucault 176-177). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, however, disciplinary power is abused because “the Party seeks power entirely for its own sake” (Orwell 275). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* only top-down surveillance is enabled, and therefore the Party can maintain its power position. Anyone who tries to criticise or attest the ways of the Party, in other words to perform surveillance from bottom to top, is eliminated. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* hierarchical surveillance ensures the repression of the citizens of Oceania. The pyramid-like structure of disciplinary power functions in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* even though it is only top-bottom: “it has [reduced] the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised” (Foucault 206). The Inner

Party is described as the “brain of the State” (216) and the Outer Party as its “hands” (217); they exercise control. The last and broadest layer of the pyramid consists of regular Party Members; this is on whom power and control is exercised, in particular. This becomes clear when Winston describes one of his fellow-employees as “one of those completely unquestioning, devoted drudges on whom more even than on the Thought Police, the stability of the Party depended” (24). This corresponds to Foucault’s idea of internalised discipline; the Party has provided the ideology and discipline is exercised in the foundations of society (Foucault 208).

The Fixed Individual: Winston

Winston serves as an example of the fixed individual in a disciplinary society. He makes this abstract idea easier for the reader to relate to. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a vital difference between disciplinary societies and societies of control is that of the individual and the dividual. According to Foucault “the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize” (223). The classification of individuals prevents any deviation of this classification of the individual. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* classification has radicalised and “all forms of individuality and personality have become criminalized” (Tyner 133); a result of surveillance that is abused by the Party to maintain its power position. The classification of the individual enables discipline and is supported by surveillance.

Winston spends his days in an extremely structured manner. According to Foucault, disciplinary power fixes: “it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion” (219). This abstract idea is clarified when looking at Winston. All his activities throughout the day are Party-related; “Winston’s working week was sixty hours” (Orwell 135). Any variation from his daily schedule might be proof for incriminating thoughts against the Party. Winston takes this idea into consideration and adapts in order to avoid getting arrested by the Thought Police. When he falls in love with Julia and wants to spend time with her Winston starts to indulge in a great number of Party-related activities in order not to draw attention: “It paid, she [Julia] said; it was camouflage. If you kept the small rules you could break the big ones. She even induced Winston to mortgage yet another of his evenings by enrolling himself for the part-time munition-work which was done voluntarily by zealous Party members” (135-136). The uniformity of his mundane life simplifies surveillance; it is easy to track his activities and demark any deviation from his patterns.

Surveillance also functions because the Party Members are under constant observation of other Party Members. Children are trained to keep a watchful eye out for those who might

pose a threat to The Party. Winston describes this when he has to repair the sink of his neighbour who is a mother of two: “With those children, he thought, that wretched woman must lead a life of terror. Another year, two years, and they would be watching her night and day for symptoms of unorthodoxy” (26). Foucault notes “discipline creates between individuals a ‘private’ link” (222). Indeed, the metaphor of disciplinary control is realised by children like these; they would even betray their own parents because they worship Big Brother and would do anything for The Party. Discipline is hierarchical but also egalitarian; individuals are linked to one another and judge each other on the basis of a set of rules.

Technology of Surveillance: the Telescreen

The Thought Police employs the telescreen to observe all Party Members at any given moment to execute constant surveillance over the Party Members. The looks of this device probably can be compared to a flatscreen television; it is described as an “oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall” (Orwell 22) The telescreen is “a two-way device but with one-way control” (Huber 67). The telescreen shows how the three essential techniques of disciplinary power function: the examination, hierarchical surveillance and judgment (Foucault 184). These aspects shall be explored.

The device is employed to ensure that the ideology of the Party is respected. Telescreens are placed everywhere: at homes of Party Members, at the work place, and at public locations. Even at locations where the absence of telescreens seems evident, one still has to take into consideration that “hidden microphones” (Orwell 304) might be placed. Like Foucault has described; examination is a way to ensure disciplinary power (184). This idea is exemplified by the telescreen; the citizens remain ignorant of when one is watched and could be under examination and judged at any point. The Thought Police functions as the gaze Foucault describes. Party Members can be under observation at any given moment; the reader learns that the instrument cannot be switched off; it can only be “dimmed” (4). The ideology is internalised or as Winston puts it; “you had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised” (5). Discrepancies in daily life, variation in conversations, and facial signs like grimaces might give away any signs of betrayal to the Party. Development of ideas is hereby automatically prevented and therefore any danger of a revolt is averted.

Thus *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows how the abstract concept of the disciplinary society could function by imagining a dystopian society. The techniques that support disciplinary power according to Foucault are exemplified, namely hierarchical surveillance, examination, and the normalisation of judgment. Disciplinary power is made possible by hierarchical surveillance. The gaze that is hereby employed is embodied in Big Brother, and the concept can also be recognised in the telescreen. Examination takes place via the one-way hierarchical observation of the Thought Police via the telescreen. Disciplinary power is distributed into the foundations of society; the ideology of the Party is imposed on all Party Members and they internalise it. Winston is exemplary of the fixed individual. His highly structured daily life enables classification; surveillance hereby becomes more precise because any deviation stands out and any threat of revolt can be averted by the Thought Police. When discussing *The Circle* in the next chapter, it is useful to briefly keep these elements of the disciplinary society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in mind.

Chapter Three: *The Circle* and the Societies of Control

Like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Dave Eggers's *The Circle* (2013) is a dystopian novel that calls attention and raises critical questions about social control and surveillance. *The Circle* is set in a near future where Facebook is already out-dated but social networks are still widely used. The novel describes the story of an American woman named Mae, who leaves her mundane life in a small town behind when she starts working at the Internet company the Circle. The company seems like an ideal place to work; it presents itself as an open-minded, close-knit community where technological progress is actively stimulated for the favourable effects it has on the community. Mae becomes increasingly involved in the Circle and goes along with any invention the company makes. The company thinks absolute knowledge is a right. A striking example is a project to count all sand grains in the Sahara. For the sake of progress towards absolute knowledge Circlers have to make all personal information public—in the end almost nothing remains private anymore. In an online review, senior writer at Newsweek, Alexander Nazarayan, has recognised that the digital culture presented in *The Circle* is very oppressive yet it is disguised as beneficial (Newsweek). Several characters in the novel raise objections to the progress the company makes but these are constantly overruled in pursuit of an ideal world. With the societies of control of Deleuze in mind the power structure in *The Circle* shall be analysed, and the multi-facetedness of control and surveillance shall be explored as it is “both liberating and enslaving” (Deleuze 4). This chapter will look into the role of the Circle in the story and the community that is built by the company. By analysing Mae, the effects of social control and surveillance will be analysed, and the way people exercise control and surveillance. Finally, the technology that enables social control and surveillance shall be taken into consideration.

The Circle

“My God, Mae thought. It's heaven” (1). The opening line of *The Circle* describes Mae's first impression of the Circle. The company is described as one of the most innovate ones in the world; “hundreds of gifted minds [are hired] every week” (2). The Circle becomes increasingly popular by its mission to enable access to all information for everyone—to achieve complete transparency is one of its highest goals. Indeed, as cultural critic Willmetts points out: “The Circle recognises that in the twenty-first century our increasingly monitored existence is less the result of draconian state repression (a la Big Brother) than it is the product of idealistic Silicon Valley tech firms” (238). The company becomes increasingly

influential and in pursuit of its utopian ideal the novel becomes, like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a contemporary nightmare.

In *The Circle*, control and surveillance support the maintenance of power relations in a way similar to disciplinary power as described by Foucault, yet the requirement of enclosure is no longer necessary. Lyon recognises this change in surveillance techniques by data collection in the societies of control: “Not only do they have no obvious connection with imprisonment, they often share the features of flexibility and fun seen in entertainment and consumption” (*Liquid Surveillance* Introduction). Whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* social control and surveillance are made possible by enclosure, this no longer seems to be necessary in *The Circle*; in a society of control one no longer only belongs to one enclosed space at a time, like school or work, but one constantly moves between those environments (Lazzarato 178). The Circle is depicted as a close-knit community where the boundaries between work and personal time fade; this is exemplified when one of Mae’s co-workers, Gina, says to Mae: “We consider your online presence to be integral to your work here” (96). In order to keep in touch with other Circlers, the company asks of the Circlers to blur these boundaries, but hereby also enforces surveillance; by enabling the Circlers to personally follow anyone on social media, surveillance is thus presented as fun.

Everyone who joins the Circle comes to follow its ideals and is forced to move along with the progress the company makes; this is an effect of social control that has been intergrated into all layers of the company. Deleuze distinguishes the factory in disciplinary societies from the corporation in societies of control; instead of a fixed set of rules, “rivalry” is considered an “exceptional motivational force” (4). In *The Circle* this can be recognised because the company does not impose any rules but simply stimulates progress by continually challenging the Circlers to innovate; the company moves into the background. Innovation is made possible by the demands of the Circlers. This is exemplified when Mae gets asked to share her opinion on nearly everything; she was “one of the Circlers asked about her tastes, her preferences, her buying habits and plans, for use by the Circle’s clients” (228). This leads to a feeling of empowerment; she influences and exercises control. Yet this feeling seems misplaced because it remains obscure what it is that she influences. Giving your opinion becomes obligatory when Demoxie is introduced. This tool is described by Mae as “the only chance at direct democracy the world had ever known” (403), as it ensures that every Circler votes; their Circle account gets blocked until they have voted.

Progress is enabled because it becomes obligatory to share your opinion, yet it is not experienced as coercion but as recognition. By this collective effort surveillance is made possible because power is spread through all layers of society, which enables new institutions or projects to be brought into life that derive from power, from its impact.

Thus, like in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* power relations that links individual allows the creation of a structure. In *The Circle* this structure enables Circlers to exercise control are exercised. They are forcefully asked to participate in a community, and they agree to surveillance because it is presented as entertainment and a way to exercise influence and control. The dystopian element of the societies of control becomes clear; transparency is disguised as recognition and validation and hereby people lose sight of what is happening; they are forced to progress. In *The Circle* control of the company increases to such extent that it might lead to absolute control and surveillance because the Circle eliminates those who stand in the way of progress. But absolute control in *The Circle* is not attributed to one group like in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but it is in the hands of everyone who complies to the ideals of the Circle; everyone forces everyone to progress. Exercise of control and the ability to observe others is very two-sided; it leads to a feeling of empowerment yet it is questionably whether exercise of control is empowering when people are forced into it. This compulsory element can already be discerned when participation in the community of the Circle is a non-negotiable term. However, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* control and surveillance are seen as oppressive but in *The Circle* the oppressiveness of control and surveillance is glossed over by disguising it as entertainment and acknowledgement.

The Dividual: Mae

The effects of social control and surveillance in *The Circle* are distinguished most clear in Mae. Initially, when Mae starts working at the Circle she still shows some incomprehension towards the everlasting demand to participate in the close-knit community of the Circle—which is only made possible by constantly participating in events that are reported on via social media. However, after several correctional incitements of Circlers, Mae completely submerges in this community, and is taken away by the rhetoric of the Circle, which implies progress is only beneficial. In the end she hardly shows a critical attitude towards the increasing measures of social control and surveillance. By analysing Mae as a dividual it will become clear what the effects of the societies of control are on people.

Deleuze describes that in the societies of control “individuals have become ‘dividuals’” (5). The dividual is a divided individual; instead of having a singular identity the individual is fragmented because one belongs to with multiple and different publics. (Walters 191-192, Lazzarato 181). The dividual constantly gets assessed because surveillance is exercised over “the range of roles we play in everyday life” (Lyon, *Liquid Surveillance* Introduction). This range of various roles in the societies of control opposes the fixed identity in the disciplinary society. This is shown in *The Circle* by the constant demand to actively participate in everything one has ever been involved with. For example, when Mae is asked to come to an event for fans of Portugal—which she has visited only once in the past—and the host, Alistair, is disappointed when she does not attend. After a warning of Mae’s supervisor Dan about this ‘incident’, she starts participating in as many events as possible in order to show interest in as many things as possible; hereby she shows that she belongs to a scope of different publics. However, Mae hardly participates, because she has to devote her attention over too great a number to actually be invested in one group.

In *The Circle* surveillance has become normalised. According to Lyon rather than forcing people to be under surveillance, people eventually comply and agree to surveillance once they notice it cannot be avoided in the societies of control (*Liquid Surveillance* Introduction). This can be recognised in Mae; the pressure to join the community of the Circle becomes increasingly higher. For example Mae’s supervisor Dan asks Mae to participate in the community by saying “We want this to be a workplace, sure, but it should also be a *humanplace*” (47). After several more of these interventions by her fellow-Circlers, Mae is convinced and she starts participating vigorously and displays an increasing amount of personal information in several areas, like social media but also at the doctor. Her ex-boyfriend Mercer points out: “the tools you guys create actually *manufacture* unnaturally extreme social needs (134). Hereby extreme social control is enabled, because within the Circle all Circlers comply with these needs. By accepting these social needs Mae complies with the collection of data that creates transparency by making observation over an increasing amount of personal information possible.

In *The Circle* both analogue and digital surveillance are performed, and these forms of surveillance are connected tightly in order to make observation more precise. An example of analogue surveillance is the camera that Mae carries around her neck, which enables all Circlers to follow her every movement online. Digital surveillance take place over a digital double that is created from information gathered by data collection (Simon 15). This is shown

in *The Circle*; it is required of Circlers to create such a digital double because, as Mae is told: “We actually see your profile, and the activity on it, as integral to your participation here” (95). Boundaries dissolve in societies of control; this exemplified here as the requirement to combine work and personal activities by sharing experiences with co-workers. Hereby Mae becomes part of a community, which can be seen as positive, but she also becomes more transparent as she is surveyed across the range of roles she displays digitally.

Thus in *The Circle* it is implied that participation in transparency leads to a feeling of empowerment and control. By digital surveillance Mae can perform surveillance by observing others online—everyone publishes personal information on several platforms—but also becomes an object of control; a network or structure of control emerges. Refusal to participate in this structure, and hereby to refuse to stimulate development, leads to exclusion from the company, and because the Circle becomes increasingly influential it might even lead to total social exclusion; hereby people are forced to become engaged.

Technology of Surveillance or Gadgets of Entertainment

The Circle constantly provides its employees with the latest technology. Deleuze notes that “Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society—not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them” (6). And indeed, the technology that is used in the Circle expresses the desire of absolute knowledge and constant development; and surveillance depends on the technology that is developed as a consequence of these demands (Lyon, *Surveillance as Social* 25).

Gadgets in *The Circle*—like what is also signalled in the societies of control—present themselves as entertainment and for their convenience people are willing to give up their privacy (Haggerty and Ericson 616); surveillance no longer means someone is actually watching (Gilliom and Monahan 18) but it is made possible by surveillance over the digital double that is created by transparency. Surveillance is normalised, and when somebody refuses to agree to the collection of data that attribute to surveillance, this person gets put out of action. This is clarified with the before-mentioned example of Demoxie; when Mae does not want to vote on a question about her the screen on her watch is frozen, and it says “*All Circlers must vote*” (408). She cannot break away from the power relation.

The multitude of gadgets in *The Circle* are continuously developed and replaced in order to make society more transparent; to achieve absolute knowledge via data collection. Via the objectives of these gadgets it can be signalled that the individual is virtually diminished to “masses, samples, data, markets, or ‘banks’” (Deleuze 5). For example, Mae becomes

diminished as a person by the documentation of her opinion; she gets selected to answer questions that will document her preferences. “You’ll answer the question in standard English. In many cases you’ll be asked a question that’s structured to receive one of the standard two answers, *smile* and *frown*” (230). Based on her answers it seems like she can get classified, yet her opinion seems to get oversimplified when looking at the range of answers. Therefore, the feeling of validation Mae gets after contributing to these opinion-based data and participating in social media seems misplaced. “And, with the tools the Circle made available, Mae felt able to influence global events, to save lives even, halfway across the world” (243). This also signals the alarming oversimplification of active engagement caused by the extreme social demands. It hardly becomes possible to actively and fully engage in anything. Indeed, it is questionable whether she has the prescience to actually exercise any influence.

Thus, the technology and digital gadgets that are described in *The Circle* increase surveillance and hereby transparency under the guise of entertainment. According to the Circle, transparency would eventually lead to a utopia; a world where there would be no uncertainties anymore. However, counterarguments are made by Annie—a friend of Mae who introduced her to the company, and a person who used to be completely convinced of the ways of the Circle—eventually publishes the following online: “*Actually, I don’t know if we should know everything*” (439). Indeed, like Annie, others make objections—for example one of the founders of the Circle, Ty, and Mae’s ex-boyfriend Mercer foresee the oppressive consequences. However, it is impossible to stand up; this either leads to exclusion—like in Ty’s case—or physical elimination—Mercer commits suicide because he sees no way out and Annie ends up in a coma probably due to stress caused by pressure.

To summarise, *The Circle* imagines the implications of control and surveillance in the societies of control by showing people who have lost sight of the consequences caused by compulsive constant development. The novel shows how a digital utopia can become a dystopia. Social control is enforced by its integration into the entire company. The Circlers maintain the power relation by obligatory participation; they exercise control but are also constrained by it. This integration of power can also be signalled in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—yet in *The Circle* this is not hierarchical—and both novels show the oppressive nature of the maintenance of the power relation. Indeed, it seems impossible to escape it because like Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Annie, Ty and Mercer get excluded or eliminated from society in *The Circle*. Surveillance is normalised; surveillance is enacted over the digital

double the individual creates which is constructed by information of various personal facets. Analogue surveillance is already presented as oppressive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and the extent of transparency in *The Circle* only increases by both analogue and digital surveillance. Yet the perception of surveillance is twofold in *The Circle* because the oppressive element is glossed over by the ability to observe yourself and hereby exercise control. The individual is no longer fixed like Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In *The Circle* the individual is diminished by the requirement of the functioning in an excessive amount of roles one has to take on in daily life. Like the Circle, corporations that gather these data rather fade into the background, whereas the lives of people become increasingly transparent because they cannot refuse anymore, they cannot escape the power relation. *The Circle* portrays how the power structure the societies of control is twofold as it can be both “liberating and enslaving” (Deleuze 4) at the same time.

Conclusion

Deleuze has discerned how a shift had taken place from the disciplinary societies Foucault had described to the societies of control. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* conceive how these rather abstract ideas of power systems could work by imagining dystopias. Both novels show the possible implications of power structures; of a disciplinary society and society of control respectively. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* disciplinary power and surveillance are abused to attribute to a totalitarian state, and in *The Circle* social control comes to dominate people's lives in order to live up to the ideal of absolute knowledge. This thesis has compared *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* in order to show a development in the execution and perception of surveillance. In both novels people internalise certain norms and rules that are imposed on them; this is partially made possible by surveillance and hereby the power relation that maintains the power structure is upheld. Yet the role of surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is perceived quite differently than *The Circle*.

Both in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* power relations between individuals are maintained because a power structure is integrated into the foundations of society in Oceania and is at the basis of the ideals of the Circle; everyone has to comply to a certain set of rules and expectations. The Party enforces its ideology and ensures it is respected; hierarchical surveillance by the Thought Police via the telescreen is employed to discipline and repress the citizens of Oceania. The Circle ensures its ideals will be lived up to by providing gadgets that collect data; participation is made fun yet obligatory, and hereby the oppressive element is glossed over. To the Party the disciplinary power structure is efficient because it helps to obtain absolute power whereas in *The Circle* the structure that allows to enforce social control initially only seems beneficial. However, the Circle is moving towards a monopoly on technology, and there is no escaping from their digital utopia; therefore social control also becomes compulsory and oppressive.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* power relations that ensure the totalitarian power are upheld are made possible the enclosure of the individual. Winston's daily life is highly structured and all activities serve purposes of the Party. Any deviation is thus easily noticed; the Thought Police employs surveillance via the telescreen and notices any deviation from a daily structure that might be a threat. Party Members might be under examination at any point and hereby the automatic functioning of power is ensured; they internalise the ideology of the Party because they are forced to act as if they are watched. In *The Circle* power relations no longer function by enclosure. Mae is exemplary of a individual; her online activities show that she belongs to a

wide range of publics, and her digital presence allows the construction of a data double. Via online participation and the use of gadgets information is collected by sharing data; Mae's life becomes increasingly transparent. The difference becomes clear between surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle*. Fixing a person is no longer necessary for surveillance because someone can be observed with much greater precision; information on a person is now gathered by analogue surveillance and digital observation. Observation and judgment over Circlers is done by Circlers; surveillance is no longer hierarchical. However, a critical note is placed in *The Circle* because it is questionable whether conclusions can be drawn from data, as it may be regarded as oversimplified information.

In both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* it is impossible to break away from power relations; any objections that are made or questions that are raised are discarded, and the persons that make these are eliminated. Surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is easily recognised as unwanted because the Party Members are severely repressed but in *The Circle* surveillance is disguised as entertainment; its nature has become twofold. Surveillance as displayed in *Nineteen-Eighty Four* is analogue but noticeably present; the telescreen can only document any deviation of structural behaviour. Contrastively, in *The Circle* deviation is stimulated for the sake of progress and innovation, and surveillance is enabled over the multitude of roles people play in daily life because everything is digitally documented. Thus a comparison of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* shows a development of the role of surveillance in the power structure; surveillance remains of great importance in the maintenance of the power structures, yet the practice and perception of it has changed; it has become, as Deleuze said, "both liberating and enslaving" (4).

Evaluation

This research has attempted to show control how the role and perception of surveillance and control has changed, and yet how commentary has also remained the same since Orwell published *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. By comparing the societies that are shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle*, and by taking these as exemplifications of a disciplinary societies and a society of control, it is not surprising that a change of the perception of surveillance can be denoted. Yet it is refreshing to highlight the similarities between the techniques and the objectives of surveillance; it is a reminder of why these novels force the reader to reflect on possible consequences.

The results are not necessarily surprising; the emergence of organisations such as WikiLeaks already emphasise increasing awareness of digital surveillance and a need for transparency in the society of control we now live in. However, these novels show that this desire might not be as beneficial as supposed. Surveillance in societies of control is ambiguous; *The Circle* is exemplary of this as it forces the reader to reflect on the role of surveillance and transparency in society. Yet the similarities that can be found that signify that the nature of surveillance remains to be experienced as oppressive is remarkable. Even though many people recognise these similarities it has been relevant to distinguish these in order to highlight the critical note that is placed in *The Circle*.

As shown by the WikiLeaks example, abuse of surveillance via data-collection is of great interest currently. Novels like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Circle* demonstrate how this abuse can take shape. Further research can for example be pursued on the rhetoric that is employed in *The Circle*; the justification of surveillance is quite interesting because often it is difficult to disagree with the ideals of the Circle. Other novels or films that display critical notes on surveillance may be of interest to attest the assumptions that are made in this thesis, such as the novel *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin or the film *V for Vendetta* (2005).

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