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The survival of the eccentric in a hyperreal culture:

Media consumption and the public sphere in George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

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Abstract

This thesis explores eccentricity, media consumption, totalitarianism, capitalism, and the public sphere through George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. I present the concept of the *eccentric* to showcase how to strengthen the public sphere and resist both totalitarianism and mindless capitalist consumption. By exploring these topics, I seek to shed light on how the novels in question predict threats to discourse, diversity of thought, and democracy. Both of the novels, through totalitarianism in *1984* and mindless consumerism in *Fahrenheit 451*, emphasize the deterioration of the liberal humanist tradition that revolves around the thinking individual who remains a necessary foundation for true democracy and its democratic culture. This thesis further asserts that establishing a genuine public sphere, by allowing the masses of people who have no direct power to wield influence over governments or other sectional interests, will create a more democratic equilibrium through the conflict of ideas and ideologies. These conflicts of ideas will enable a society to better reflect on itself and subsequently improve. This societal self-reflection induced by eccentrics aids societies in resisting aspects of oppressive ideologies by utilizing critical thinking to point out the flaws an orthodoxy cannot or will not see.

Keywords: eccentric, totalitarianism, capitalism, media consumption, the public sphere, liberal humanist tradition, democracy, democratic culture, self-reflection, orthodoxy, interpellation, apathy, ISA, ideology, consciousness.

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1 Introduction

Tendencies pointing to the collapse of the public sphere are unmistakable, for while its scope is expanding significantly, its function has become increasingly insignificant. (Habermas 4)

The assessment of the public sphere by Jürgen Habermas that the function of the public sphere would continue to diminish rings true in our modern society due to the oversaturation and commodification of information into what Jean Baudrillard terms the "*news item*" (*The consumer society* 33). The paradoxical increased and decreased control corporations have over discourse in our contemporaneity – increased because of the monopolization of news channels on traditional media and decreased because of the breaking up of this monopoly as a result of online discourse – might lead to the reignition of new public spheres not completely controlled by monopolistic mass-media. However, the threat of manipulation of the general public remains as a result of the news item being commodified. Mechanized consumption of the news item – made into a commodity to sell to consumers rather than a way to inform the public – damages the truthfulness of discourse in the public sphere because the news's accuracy doesn't matter as long as the news generates profit. Besides the increased consumption of news, the mechanization of media and products could lead to subjects being deindividuated by technology that creates a uniform culture or way of interacting with the world, such as only through new mediums. This deindividuation would have serious negative implications for the health of the general public sphere by allowing the orthodox masses free reign to persecute those challenging their ideology. The thinking individual, or the *eccentric*, is undermined and oppressed due to the mindless consumption of media.

Evolving media technologies, deindividuation, and consumption are persistent issues in contemporaneity, especially as a result of corporate capitalism and the growth of social media. Individuals have become statistics, shopping for replaceable mass-produced items is the norm, and governments, corporations, or other groups, can more easily control groups of people through surveillance and media technology. These notions are also problematized through the fictional societies depicted in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (*F451*) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (*1984*). Both novels introduce fictional versions of television and

showcase how the public can be manipulated through this new medium, as well as how media technologies in general create uniform cultures, which causes deindividuation. Furthermore, consumption is problematized as a way of interacting with a culture that creates an apathetic public that consumes culture, products, and propaganda without question. Although we need to consider the factors that made Orwell and Bradbury consider these topics in the first place, such as World War 2, we must also connect their fears to the modern status quo. This thesis aims to demonstrate that the eccentric figure is critical to re-establish, or prevent the loss of, critical thinking, a public sphere, and a democratic culture. This thesis will accomplish this through a comparative analysis of *F451* and *1984*. The novels in question were chosen due to multiple factors, but primarily because their themes consider three realistic and possible threats to the prosperity of a society and its individuals: the mechanization of culture, deindividuation, and the increased control ideologies wield through technology.

By contrast with the more distant totalitarian regime depicted in *1984*, the threat of mechanization depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* is a slower process of a culture that begins to reject intellectuality in favor of physical labor and subservience to corporate capitalist exploitation. This process ultimately creates willing cogs in the gigantic capitalist machine while intellectuality is on the brink of extinction. The novel depicts the journey of Guy Montag as he gains intellectuality and seeks to awaken others to the same truth he now understands: the hyperreality induced by media entertainment undermines the will and life of the individual, who can now only serve corporate powers, and such media ultimately also promote the growth of parasitic capitalism which seeks to squeeze every benefit possible from the orthodox masses. The spread of dangerous ideologies is also encompassed within *F451*, but it primarily considers capitalism. This version of hypercapitalism extends so far as to create an anti-intellectual culture that revolves around the consumption of new products while increasing the surplus value of all products by coercing or manipulating the general public into becoming manual labor. All avenues of genuine education are cut off and people are instead taught to become obedient cyborgs – in the sense that they become a part of the mechanization, and thus part-robot slaves. Additionally, the masses are encouraged and manipulated to become addicted to consuming products of capitalism while having no choice but to fuel this desire for consumption by acting as cheap labor-power to the very corporations that take advantage of their addiction by manipulating them to consume more through parasocial bonds and advertisement. The monetary

value of labor is reduced by the lack of any other options than manual labor, except to enforce this society's laws or taboos, in addition to adding so much competition that there are no incentives for wages to grow. This negative cycle of work and continuous consumption is exemplified by how the focalizer and protagonist Montag and his wife Mildred are "doing without a few things to pay for the third wall," and by the fact that Mildred insists that Montag should buy a "fourth wall-TV" to satisfy her (Bradbury 33). Montag is trapped not merely by his wife's consumption, but by the expectations of his society that they ought to live a lifestyle of consumption and labor to increase their capacity for consumption. These societal expectations create a negative feedback loop in which individuals become trapped within capitalist consumption, commonly by incurring debts to buy material objects outside of their means to prove a social status or satisfy addictions, which eventually leads to the inability to extricate themselves from an exploitative capitalist system. The solution to these issues is Montag's transformation into an eccentric, which allows him to escape the cycle. One of the main factors of Montag's transformation is Clarisse McClellan, who induces critical thinking in Montag through her curiosity and mirroring of Montag. Another main factor is Mildred's eccentric action: her attempted suicide, which constitutes an attempted escape from the system.

In contrast to *F451*, which primarily revolves around capitalist exploitation and consumption of media, *1984* thematizes the spread of totalitarian ideologies following World War 2 to warn against a potential future in which fascism is the only state ideology. *1984* primarily depicts the failure of the individual eccentric Winston Smith when resisting the system alone. To understand the warning of *1984*, however, it is crucial to consider the threat of the ideology depicted, together with the mediums through which it is spread and maintained. The main reason the Party, the state, has been able to amass so much influence is due to its utilizing the new medium of the telescreen to surveil and control the masses. The novel ultimately concludes on a hopeful note in the appendix by letting the reader understand that the Party depicted throughout the novel's narrative has fallen, but the reasons remain ambiguous. The main narrative of *1984* suggests that the willingness of the individual eccentric to resist the ideology of totalitarianism, even if only in small acts or in their thoughts, will eventually lead to the awakening of the masses and subsequently the fall of the elite minority who seek to wield power over the masses. This great shift, however, is left up to the imagination.

Compared to the notion that eccentrics can generate change through vague collective effort, *F451* proposes a real method for change: inducing self-reflection and educating others about the reality of their world to free them from their hyperreality and help them make informed choices. Throughout this thesis, my principal argument is that Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and George Orwell's *1984* assert the *eccentric* as a figure who can incite change in the status quo and induce critical self-reflection both in individuals and in society at large. The masses in *F451* are kept in a perpetual cycle of unconsciousness, consumption, addiction, and apathy. The masses in *1984* are kept in a state of unconsciousness, fear, zeal, and violent patriotism induced by indoctrination, surveillance, manipulation, and discipline. Crucially, both fictional societies are inundated by new mediums that alter the culture in their respective societies away from freedom and toward coercive or manipulative control. I present the eccentric as the solution to these issues because the eccentric is by definition separated from the status quo and opposed to being controlled or coerced. Eccentric thoughts and ideas can poke holes in the negative conditions of societies by introducing self-reflection through unique ideas, curiosity, and a willingness to fight against the system seeking to control them. This self-reflection can aid society in returning to, or creating, a humanist tradition that puts the thinking individual at its center. Returning to a humanist tradition would aid in establishing a new public sphere and a democratic culture which would become the foundation for a society that gives individuals the opportunity to be themselves.

I chose this thesis' dystopian focus mainly due to my interest in dystopian literature. There is something especially cathartic in reading literature which describes horrific societies and how people resist them. It gives me hope that such authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, as well as potentially dangerous new media technology which could aid such regimes, are thoroughly critiqued and taken apart to caution the current and next generations. The audacity and will to *resist* in the face of being *vaporized*, and thus being completely wiped from Oceania's collective memory in *1984*, is a powerful example for those who don't dare to resist until it is too late to make an impact. The struggle depicted in *F451* is perhaps more tangible and relevant to our contemporary society because it depicts how corporations use capitalism to undermine democracy and shows how media consumption corrodes culture. Such a future seems far closer to our current society compared to the totalitarian society depicted in *1984* and thus feels more threatening. The topics which make the novels relevant do so partially as a result of real

encroaching autocracies in contemporaneity, such as those in Russia, China, and North Korea, which entrench their populations in a mire of mass manipulation through social media. Additionally, the news and general utilization of media to manipulate, coerce, misinform, or mislead, even in so-called democratic countries, needs to be counteracted if a genuinely democratic culture and free society are to be maintained. Beyond individual countries, there is also the threat of corporations that use manipulation, exploitation, and information as weapons to extract profits and gain power. Worries about privacy, personal data, and the lack of thorough regulations on developing industries that take advantage of people's information to accrue profit are exceedingly relevant global concerns. Matters of corruption, corporate bribery, donations, and the funding of disinformation or research campaigns that seek to prove specific views are also more relevant than before due to the disproportionate distribution of wealth and the ease with which information can spread in contemporaneity. These factors threaten the integrity of democracy and even destroy the notion of having "rational-critical debate" (Habermas 161) by undermining the public sphere – which represents the opinion(s) of the public – and the democratic culture by enabling those with wealth to gain more power over society while those who may be considered to be at the fringes of society by the state or other establishments, such as eccentrics and minorities, are commonly shunned, oppressed, or relegated to positions with limited potential for influence.

The eccentric figure can reintroduce a humanist tradition that puts critical thinking at its center because of the eccentric's innately heterodox nature. Anyone who resists the prescribed ideology or mindset that governs 'normal' society may be viewed as eccentric in the basic sense. In a society that insists on suppressing critical thought or debate, an eccentric would be on the side of the suppressed to resist having their freedom encroached upon. By extension, their resistance would aid or guide others who may lack the will to resist themselves. As a result, the eccentric figure can become the basis on which to establish a genuine public sphere and a democratic culture less encumbered by corporate or partisan manipulation.

Some of the critical concepts and theories I will utilize to make and support my arguments include Sean McCorry's arguments about deindividuation and cultural mechanization (2-3), Jürgen Habermas' argument that the public sphere is diminished (4), Marshall McLuhan's contention that "the medium is the message" (1), Jean Baudrillard's notions of consumption (*The Consumer Society*, 25), the news item (33), and the hyperreal (32), Louis Althusser's concept of

ISAs (1291), and Antonio Gramsci's conception of the 'organic' intellectual (131). I will thoroughly introduce and consider these concepts and theories in Chapter 2 and put a few of them into dialogue with each other throughout the thesis.

To understand the reasons that approaching *F451* and *1984* through the lens of the displacement, or rise, of the eccentric figure and the destruction of the public sphere is productive, we need to put the novels in their historical context. By doing so, we can better understand the underlying fears and developments considered within the fictional societies the narratives cover. *F451* was published in 1953 and *1984* was published in 1949. Both of these novels were published during the Cold War and within a decade of the conclusion of World War 2. The growing fear of atomic bombs, especially after the horrific use of atomic bombs which killed around 210 000 people in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is displayed in both of the respective novels. In *F451* we notice observations made about atomic warfare such as "We've started and won two atomic wars since 1960" (Bradbury 75), while in *1984* the damages of past atomic wars are considered through passages such as "the ravages of the atomic war of the nineteen-fifties have never been fully repaired. Nevertheless the dangers inherent in the machine are still there" (Orwell 197). This notion of the machine is another critical anxiety Orwell presents alongside the atomic bomb, but it is never a one-sided anxiety. It is lamented how the machine had made "the need for human drudgery, and therefore to a great extent […] human inequality" disappear, but only "If the machine were used deliberately for that end" (Ibid.). Through a "sort of automatic process" wealth has been increasingly produced, and thus "the living standards of the average human being" has risen (Ibid.). However, this increase in living standards "threatened the destruction – indeed, in some sense was the destruction – of a hierarchical society" (Ibid.). This threat, or actualized, destruction of a hierarchical society was to a great extent the motivating factor of the Party's revolution and the reason it began "continuous warfare" to destroy "the products of human labour" and ensure that the hierarchy was restored (Orwell 198). The masses' tool to educate themselves, "literacy," would be propagated by the "leisure" and "security" granted by the increase in living standards, and thus "poverty and ignorance" had to be purposefully induced instead to maintain "a hierarchical society" (Ibid.). This fear of how the machine could be turned against the masses through advanced weaponry and surveillance, the looming threat of atomic warfare, the recent displays of mass manipulation in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and Spain, as well as the threat of the

Communist Soviet Union, would no doubt have caused public anxiety and unrest about an uncertain future. If atomic war between the U.S and the Soviet Union did break out, the future of humanity might be cut off at the root, and thus dystopian novels that consider bleak futures either in totalitarian hellscapes or under complete corporate capitalist control showcase the fear of other societies following a similar path to oppression and stagnation. The hope of heterodox or eccentric individuals and groups rising to contend with growing oppressive ideologies and societies is at the foundation of both *1984* and *F451*, while the need for this hope comes from the horrifying reality and potential future the world had become aware of during and following World War 2. In such a period of fear, any drastic change, such as the proliferation of new mediums, becomes another potential threat that must be approached cautiously so that such mediums do not negatively affect society too drastically.

I have divided my thesis into five main chapters. Chapter 1 is this introduction to the works, concepts, historical context, and structure of this thesis. Chapter 2 consists of three sections, which will respectively consider the "History of Criticism" (2.1), "Mediums and the public sphere" (2.2), and "The Eccentric" (2.3). Throughout section 2.1 I first consider the history of criticism surrounding *1984* and *F451* by introducing the timeline of criticism surrounding the two works and then I go into some specific works relevant to this thesis. Finally, in this section, I consider to what degree I agree or disagree with various scholars and what that means for this thesis. In section 2.2 I consider how new media technologies undermine democracy and "rational-critical debate," as well as how the increased monetization and monopolization of the so-called "public-sphere" changed its purpose from being a tool for the masses to critique overarching power structures into a tool that is utilized by sectional interests such as corporations or political parties to shape a specific public discourse, which fits with Habermas' notion of the "sham-private world of culture consumption" (160). In section 2.3 I consider the eccentric figure, their role in resisting tyranny, and the deindividuation of people in the face of a new mass culture, manipulation, and oppression.

Chapter 3 consists of an in-depth analysis of aspects of *F451* relating to the "Awakening of the Eccentric" (3.1), "The Individual versus Apathy and Disruption" (3.2), and "ISAs and the public sphere" (3.3). This analysis will showcase how the society depicted in *F451* demonstrates the damage done by an orthodox public that passively consumes culture in the fashion Habermas depicts as destroying the public sphere. In *F451* we see the results of a society without such a

public sphere. This is a culture in which everyone is turned into mechanized anti-intellectual manual laborers. *F451* acts as a warning against allowing such a society to become a reality. To fight against this, I present the eccentric as a crucial figure who can re-introduce consciousness and critical thought, and thus reignite the possibility of a public sphere in which one can have a "rational-critical debate" (Habermas 161).

Chapter 4 delves into the intricacies of *1984* to uncover how the Party utilizes methods of manipulation, coercion, and propaganda to exert control while remaining unchallenged. I have divided this chapter into two main sections that respectively consider "Preventing Resistance to an Ideology" (4.1), and "Historical Revisionism and Infringements on Civil Liberties under the Guise of Public Safety" (4.2). In section 4.1 I delve into how the Party utilizes manipulation and new media technology to surveil and manipulate its population. It is this technology that becomes critical to destroy, resist, or change. However, to make such a change, groups of people that resist the manipulation and coercion of the system are required. The eccentric and their ideas are the core of such a resistance. The Party not only succeeds in sending the masses – the "Proles" or proletariat – into an unconscious animalesque state, but they even send the resisting eccentrics back into unconsciousness to exert their power "over men" (Orwell 279). In section 4.2 I use real-life examples of media manipulation and infringements on civil liberties by bringing up creeping measures to prevent crimes that continue to become more invasive, which include multiple supposed anti-terrorist acts and other ways surveillance and punishment are used to control and coerce a population, such as social credit.

Chapter 5 is my conclusion. Much of my conclusion revolves around deindividuation, economic inequality, and hierarchical inequity due to new media technologies that alter culture by enabling surveillance and commodification. In response, I conclude that enabling the eccentric, re-establishing the public sphere, and breaking up monopolies (or likely pseudo-monopolies or desired monopolies) on information are three core components to resisting deindividuation and counteracting inequality as a result of exploitation. The eccentric is critical to inducing self-reflection in a populace and thus enabling it to question the system that is oppressing it. A crucial component of breaking up monopolies on information would be to address the commodification of personal data and to reduce exploitation by reducing the monetization of information and thus making the commodification undesirable. Ultimately, the systemic issues that create inequity in capitalist societies are based on the ability to use capital to

increase social and political influence, and even directly influence elections or fund research that attempts to justify scientifically or morally certain behavior, such as justifying pollution by providing or funding research that pollution doesn't lead to climate change.

2 The pursuit of conscious subjectivity

How do *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* demonstrate the pursuit of conscious subjectivity even in societies where this aspect is lost, and what theory is required to further analyze this pursuit? In this section, I look briefly at the history of criticism surrounding *1984* and *F451*. Following this I consider the impact of new mediums on the public sphere and ultimately the role of the eccentric in facilitating the development of a genuine public sphere that could act as a foundation for a democratic culture.

2.1 History of Criticism

The history of criticism surrounding both George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is vast. The search "Orwell 1984" in the Oria search engine received 1806 hits. These hits, which likely only include a good portion of the total criticism, mostly consist of books, articles, and theses that analyze or criticize *1984* and Orwell. The history of criticism of Ray Bradbury's *F451* is less extensive but still too vast to grasp completely. The search "Fahrenheit 451" in Oria received 474 hits. Despite this vast pool of criticism, the criticism for the first twenty years after each respective novel was published is minuscule compared to newer criticism. The same searches constrained to about the first twenty years of the books being published received 32 hits for "Orwell 1984" and 9 hits for "Fahrenheit 451." *F451*'s criticism was initially sparse, but it exploded around the year 2000. Only 65 of the total 474 hits are from before the year 2000. The increase in the amount of criticism surrounding the novel also suggests an increase in interest in the novel itself and by extension its themes. *1984*'s growth of criticism was also slow for the first 20 years, but the following twenty saw a huge uptick to 434 hits in Oria. The amount of criticism for the following years increased for *1984* as well. Based on this we cannot make any certain conclusions, but this rise in the amount of criticism may indicate that the novels' subject matter has been more relevant in recent times. The criticism surrounding *1984* generally concerns itself with totalitarianism, collectivism, propaganda, freedom, media manipulation, language, and some of its unique concepts: Newspeak, doublethink, and Big Brother. The criticism surrounding *F451*, on the other hand, generally concerns itself with censorship, media, and consciousness.

One book which reflects contemporary trends in scholarship of *1984* is *On* Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Orwell and Our Future* (2005) edited by Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha C. Nussbaum. I use this book as a way to gain insight into the broader modern criticism

of *1984* without delving into any specific essays. The book is divided into five parts which consider different themes of *1984*. The themes deemed critical enough to be included in this collection of essays include: "Politics and the literary imagination," "Truth, objectivity, and propaganda," "Political coercion," "Technology and privacy," and "Sex and politics" (Gleason, Abbott et al. "*Contents*"). Without going into too much detail we can observe on the one hand that the general scholarly criticism surrounding *1984* remains focused on similar themes to the ones mentioned above, but this newer criticism seems to focus less wholly on the grand ideas such as totalitarianism and instead on more specific aspects of power, coercion, sexual freedom, language, and surveillance. This not only keeps these subjects relevant to *1984* but also expands on previous criticism by weaving old concepts and theories into continuously shifting contexts. Because of this, the relevancy of *1984* is increasing rather than the opposite. It is also interesting that in this essay collection, there are only two essays in the category of "political coercion" while all the other categories have at least three essays. This may underline that this topic in particular has been so thoroughly considered that more nuanced and specific analyses of *1984* have overtaken the grander thematic considerations that "political coercion" encompasses. This is not to say that "political coercion" is less relevant, but that it may be approached through different thematic lenses and considered more akin to a foundation to build upon. Throughout this thesis, I will build upon this foundation with an analysis of media, the introduction of the eccentric figure, and the concept of the public sphere.

This thesis builds upon earlier humanist approaches to *1984*. David Dwan, for one, connects the horror in *1984* to the question of whether or not there exists such a thing as human nature in "Orwell and Humanism." Dwan points out that the lack of human rights in *1984* signifies that the loosely defined ethos of humanism is similarly in trouble (65). Most relevant to this thesis is Dwan's reflection on the connection between reason and freedom (68). One of his conclusions is that because human dignity is based on freedom, humans "can never be viewed as a mere means to some other end, but must always be regarded as ends-in-themselves," and Dwan further pits this notion against Winston's willingness to throw sulphuric acid in a child's face to make the point that Orwell "may have been satirizing a certain style of revolutionary commitment" (Ibid.). Another critical notion Dwan presents is how the body betrays the mind "on the battlefield or in the torture chamber" (72) by corroding one's values. Ultimately, Dwan argues for humanist values such as "Autonomy and dignity," and he also presents Orwell's

warning against "man worship" by pointing out the negative aspects of humanism in *1984* (75). These negative aspects revolve around overstating "the differences between humans and animals, making us shrink from our own animality, while encouraging us to lord it over other creatures" (Ibid.). Despite these negative aspects, however, Dwan finds value in other aspects of the "human heritage" (76). Dwan concludes that Winston attempts to cling to ideals of "freedom and reason," because he believes that they are "expressive of who we are" (Ibid.). Winston's mindset puts him in the spot of a humanist revolutionary who seeks to oppose the system. However, this path leads to his ultimate failure. To rectify this failure, I propose that freedom and reason aren't enough to make a change or resist the system, but that one would also require the willingness and ability to put up resistance and suffer the consequences. This is where the eccentric becomes essential as an individual who can aid others in attaining self-consciousness and in awakening others to the truth of their society. We can never claim to be certain that we will remain unbreakable on the battlefield or in the torture chamber, but we can act on our purpose and sow seeds of discord within or outside the system before we are doomed. Eccentric ideas, questions, and curiosity are exactly such seeds.

Another critical essay that expands the humanist scholarly foundation this thesis builds upon is Lisa Mullen's "Orwell's Literary Context: Modernism, Language, and Politics." Mullen crucially points out Orwell's view that simply accepting the status quo and its current horrible practices, concepts, ideals, and people is "to consent to an entire system of moral bankruptcy and despotism: to swallow is *to be swallowed*" (97). The citizens of Oceania consume, "with obedient equanimity, all kinds of machine-made popular culture, bouts of vapid flag-waving, and the all-purpose catharsis of the Two Minutes Hate" (Ibid.). This sort of mindless consumption is a notion I consider deeply throughout this thesis, but I focus more on the consumption in *Fahrenheit 451* compared to *1984*. It becomes clear from Mullen's statement that this sort of mindless consumption is similarly present in Oceania, and thus that this kind of behavior seems to become a common theme in dystopian fiction. One point that Mullen asserts differentiates *1984* from its precursors is the "almost complete lack of exposition" puts the reader in the same position as Winston and thus we "share his predicament both intellectually and viscerally; we are flooded with doubt about our own sanity, just as he is" (104). This amplifies the emotional and intellectual weight of the novel and makes the novel's warning more critical. Mullen ultimately concludes that Orwell resisted the abstraction of both modernism and dystopian fiction and that

he viewed "both style and ideology, pursued for their own sake" (107) as a potential danger to the truth. I build on a similar foundation as Mullen to point out that unchallenged ideologies, no matter their doctrine, can lead to corruption, coercion, oppression, inequality, and monopolization that diminishes both truth and freedom. This makes unchallenged ideologies great threats to the type of humanism that values consciousness, critical thinking, freedom, and truth.

The criticism surrounding *Fahrenheit 451* is less canonized and organized compared to the criticism surrounding 1984. Because of this, I have chosen to present scholarly criticism that covers what I consider to be the most insightful main themes of *F451*. Self-reflection, which includes the imagery of the mirror, is a significant part of the criticism surrounding *F451* and is thematized in both "Distortion of 'Self-Image': Effects of Mental Delirium in *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury" by Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari and "'To Build a Mirror Factory': The Mirror and Self-Examination in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451" by McGiveron. In my analysis, I employ Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari's text to consider the importance of self-image and self-reflection. Essentially, Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari use the notion of the self-image in *F451* to showcase how the society depicted in *F451* unravels the self-image and thus destroys the enjoyment of life.

Rafeeq O. McGiveron goes a different route by considering self-reflection and self-image through the metaphorical mirror that appears as a motif throughout *F451*. McGiveron presents the mirror as Bradbury's way of promoting self-examination (282). He further considers Montag in relation to the metaphorical mirror and asserts that initially Montag "does not see himself as he really is" and is self-satisfied rather than horrified by the destruction he is responsible for (Ibid.). He concludes that we require self-examination to "avoid self-destruction" (Ibid.). Both self-examination and the mirror metaphor are crucial to understanding *F451* and this thesis. McGiveron's conclusion seems similar to my conclusion that the lack of self-reflection and ability to speak in *F451* leads to the expression of repressed thoughts and words as violence aimed both at the self and at others.

Another aspect of criticism surrounding *Fahrenheit 451* regards media and surveillance. Hassan Abootalebi's paper "*The Omnipresence of Television and the Ascendancy of Surveillance/Sousveillance in Ray Bradbury's* Fahrenheit 451" critically utilizes theories by Jean Baudrillard on "media and the influences it exerts on people's daily lives" as well as Michel Foucault on the concept of "*surveillance*" (8). Throughout his paper Abootalebi critically points

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out how the media is being utilized by the government to obscure history in a veil of the world that exists within the parlors – a room dedicated to the television walls so immersive that they create a reality more real than the 'real' world – and thus that the influence and importance of fields such as "literature, education and history" are "overshadowed by the juggernaut of media" (13). Abootalebi goes one step further by concluding:

> Bradbury's novel can be thought of as a microcosm of contemporary societies in which no single place is immune to the surfeit of technology and its dire effects, and where those like Clarisse who are reluctant to be steeped in technology are called anti-social and shunned by society. (Ibid.)

Abootalebi rightly points out that media and surveillance are the main tools utilized in the fictional society within *Fahrenheit 451* as a way of maintaining "social control" and asserts that "specific policies and informed actions are required to prevent the occurrence of possible catastrophes" (Ibid.). Abootalebi's paper is critical because it allows for a greater understanding of both media and surveillance in *F451*. The paper also brings critical theory by Foucault and Baudrillard into dialogue with *F451*. Both Abootalebi's paper and the paper by Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari bring up crucial points regarding *F451*, but they also both mistakenly point to an authoritarian state that seeks to control the individual. I disagree with this interpretation and instead agree with James Filler, who invokes Platonic images and theory in his philosophical approach to *Fahrenheit 451*:

> It is tempting to view the central theme of Ray Bradbury's classic dystopian novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, as a critique of censorship, but to do so would miss much of the point. Censorship is a by-product in *Fahrenheit 451*. It is not a tyranny imposed on society by an authoritarian regime, but rather a tyranny imposed on society by itself. (528)

The society depicted in *F451* is on a base level controlled by the population of this society, and thus it is not a true authoritarian or totalitarian regime like Oceania is in *1984*. James Filler develops his argument by exploring the themes of knowledge and freedom (529). He concisely points out the contradiction in the philosophy of complete freedom by suggesting that one person's freedom can encroach upon another's. Filler puts into words what he supposes to be the guiding philosophy of the society depicted in *F451* by using Beatty, the principal representative of the governing ideology depicted in *F451*, as his primary example. This ideology is put into terms that present a search for pleasure:

Higher pleasures do not produce more happiness than lower pleasures; they actually produce unhappiness. If happiness, and thus freedom, insofar as it is the pursuit of happiness, is the objective, then books must go. And freedom itself, at least as conceived thus far, takes care to ensure precisely that. Thus we see that the conception of freedom at play in the text, at least society's understanding of freedom, is problematic. It contradicts itself, as freedom becomes the means to oppress the freedom of others. Superficially, freedom and knowledge lie in an antagonistic relationship, and in order to preserve the one, the other must be abolished. (Filler 531)

Filler correctly points out the clear contradiction in Beatty's ideology, which represents the governing ideology in *F451*, but Filler might not be critical enough to consider that Beatty is as unwilling an actor as Mildred or Montag. Beatty might assert 'his' beliefs and ideology, but he is nothing more than a receptacle and tool for a capitalist ideology. Through his words alone, one might view him as an adamant believer in the system, but his actions contradict this. How Beatty goads Montag into killing him showcases Beatty as an unwilling vessel for a corrupted ideology that only utilizes the appearance of egalitarianism and freedom to cover up the reality that corporations, through the medium of the tv-parlor, control their society. The goals of these corporations seem to be an economic reproduction that simultaneously maintains the capitalist ideology, the prerequisites for the necessity of this societal framework, and the power of the corporations by creating both more consumers and cheap labor that remain contented and apathetic in their manual work. Filler fails to account for Beatty's desire for true expression and escape from manipulation through the only method available to him: death.

Filler's main point that "we will come to a more profound understanding of the text and the relationship between knowledge and freedom" by considering the novel through a Platonic lens might not be critical because his initial theory fails to take account of Beatty's unwillingness or deceit (529). However, Filler's utilization of the notion of the Platonic cave metaphor to describe Montag's ascent from unconsciousness within the cave to consciousness outside of the cave is significant. I agree that his conception of a journey of ascension has merit despite disagreeing completely with Filler's classifications concerning the fictional people and their 'level' of knowledge or consciousness.

There are many scholarly texts which mention both *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* together, but few in-depth analyses put them into genuine dialogue. There is one text in particular that

does, however, and that is a master's thesis by Henriette Wien titled "Claiming mastery of the word: The power of discourse in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and George Orwell's *1984*" (2012). Wien's most critical contention to this thesis is that the destruction of literature depicted is also a destruction of life (56). According to Wien:

> literature and language connect us to a spiritual and emotional dimension. Both *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* illustrate this argument. Through different discursive methods, the two systems attempt to disassociate their citizens from their emotions, spirituality, past and memories, and replace them with the system's own. By becoming 'docile' bodies, or subjects of the system, citizens lose their individuality, meaning that they will also lose all the details that make them unique. (56-7)

Through this assertion, Wien connects literature and discourse to what we can loosely sum up as consciousness. The primary connection Wien makes between *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* is that they both contain systems that seek to replace an individual's consciousness with the will of the system. Although Wien's approach might be productive, in my analysis I find that despite the general tendency of the systems to *function* as tools that disassociate their citizens from their consciousness, the systems themselves aren't *attempting* or even willfully *acting* based on a desire to alter the citizens. The systems themselves have no will or desires, so this claim is ipso facto unfeasible. Instead of this simplistic view of the system, we might instead argue that through a process of cultural alteration, *people* seek to disassociate others and themselves from consciousness because they dare not face a harsh reality. People create systems that may function to disassociate individuals from their consciousness, but this process is ultimately started and upheld by individuals and collectives that form systems rather than by the systems themselves. For example, we can observe how individuals in *Fahrenheit 451* create self-imposed restrictions to maximize pleasure and avoid pain. These restrictions manifest most clearly in the inability to face difficult truths or solve problems. These restrictions also restrict the individual's consciousness. Eventually, these restrictions might be so binding that the individuals no longer have the option to regain their consciousness, but initially, these individuals or their predecessors made the conscious or subconscious choice to allow themselves to degrade into their current state. Instead of viewing the degradation of society as simply a result of systems *or* people, however, we can view it as a combination of people, the systems they create, and mediums that alter society over time by the nature of their very existence. The fictional people in *F451* might

at some point have chosen to allow themselves to degrade into unconsciousness, but this choice only became available after the invention of the televisor and parlor. A similar choice might also have existed in Winston's past, in *1984*, but it is not entirely clear beyond the fact that the telescreens in Oceania are used to surveil, control, and propagandize. In either case, the evolution of a new medium allowed for the creation of both the apathetic society depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* and the totalitarian society depicted in *1984*. Evolutions of new mediums might be inevitable, but restricting them will be arduous and fruitless. Instead of limiting new mediums, we need to be more careful in their dissemination and use. Remembering that mediums are tools for humanity to improve will lead to a better future. If we instead submit to consumption, we may diminish our ability to think critically and thus limit the potential of our society. Ultimately, we require opposing forces to widespread cultures so that they may be improved while never being consolidated to such a degree that change becomes arduous. Eccentrics can be this critical opposition to the consolidation of cultures by utilizing the public sphere, civil disobedience, and curiosity, to better elucidate the reality of society as well as present new paths of improvement for said society.

2.2 Mediums and the Public Sphere

> In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology. (McLuhan 1)

Marshall McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message" is a productive concept for us to understand the impact of new mediums on culture. Through this lens, this section considers the depiction of mediums in *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*. By 'medium(s)' I am strictly referring to the physical tool(s) with which information is conveyed, and I use 'content' to refer to the information conveyed through the medium while I use 'media' to refer to multiple mediums and press outlets. The mediums depicted in each of these novels are greatly impactful to their fictional cultures, but the principle of the weight mediums carry remains true in our extratextual societies as well. Mediums shape society by enabling or changing the way we interact with the

world around us and *Fahrenheit 451* especially showcases the possible negative consequences of this. *1984* also showcases the possible negative consequences of the spread of mediums, but its focus seems to be more on the consequences of what is spread through the medium rather than the medium itself.

McLuhan argues for the notion that the medium is the message on the basis that "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (2). The medium *presents* the content as the message because its content overshadows the "character of the medium" (Ibid.) and this can act as a distraction from the more critical effect of the medium itself. The danger of this concealed effect is that the medium can "alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance" (McLuhan 8-9). This subtle societal change is thematized in different ways in *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*, but both of these novels showcase some aspects of the inherent danger the spread of new mediums can pose. The broad example of this in *1984* is that most content displayed through media is irrelevant because it is so far removed from the truth that it becomes impossible to reverse-engineer some truth from the misinformation. Because the content depicted is so far removed from the truth, the meaning of the content itself stops mattering. However, the intent and pattern behind the content remain critical because although individual pieces of content don't matter, all of this content is utilized to empower the Party and alter the minds of the general public by presenting conflicting 'facts' in rapid succession while continuously claiming that the new 'facts' are true while the old 'facts' are to be forgotten. The content of the media in *Fahrenheit 451* is also far less relevant compared to the cultural change that the new mediums introduce.

The large-scale impact of specific mediums on culture, politics, and the economy are critical takeaways from both *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*. To better understand how mediums can have such an impact, however, we also need to consider how the medium is used to influence society. Ana Valverde Gonzáles presents a parallel between the fictional mass media and actual modern mass media by claiming that the contemporary media, in a similar fashion to the Party in *1984*, utilizes "narrative manipulation tactics" (110) to "undermine the US democratic political system and convey to the public views of reality that lead citizens to become a homogenous whole as well whose opinions align with the agenda of those in power" (Ibid.). Such manipulation in contemporaneity might result in the creation of a version of the fictional orthodox masses we encounter in the two novels *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*. The public is

discounted on the individual level, which includes the individual eccentric, by manipulating them to form an orthodoxy that supports select interests. In *1984*, the state-controlled media promotes the Party and Big Brother (the state leader/symbol), while in *Fahrenheit 451* media promotes capitalist consumption and political apathy while the educational system promotes manual labor in the implicit service of corporations as the ideal. The critical effect of the manipulation that occurs through media in both of the two novels is that the system itself is maintained. In the case of *1984,* the totalitarian power of the Party is upheld, while in *Fahrenheit 451* capitalism is.

González further presents how the Party in *1984* utilizes the three sacred tenets of Ingsoc, "Doublethink, Newspeak and the mutability of the past" to "modify people's stereotypes through the control of their mind" (104). These tenets, however, would never have been able to become so widespread without the medium, the telescreen, which enables the Party to enforce its will on a larger portion of people than ever before. This power relies on the surveillance and spread of propaganda through the telescreens, which *could* act as a two-way communication medium for communication and propaganda, but which instead are exclusively used as tools for the state to impose their will upon the individual without allowing the individual that same power. The tenet *Newspeak* reduces the range of language to "narrow the range of thought" (Orwell 55), while *doublethink* is introduced as a state of mind which is described as being "conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies" (37). These concepts are utilized together with the purposeful re-introduction of "poverty and ignorance" (198) to keep the outer Party and proletariat from realizing the uselessness of the elite and subsequently rebelling. The modification of stereotypes González mentions is presented as absolute through the "simplification and reduction in the lexis of the so-called Oldspeak, the language spoken until the appearance of the Party" (González 104) by allowing for certain limited stereotypes while completely removing others in this new language. By creating this simplified language, "the population is expected to adhere to the Party's process of building new stereotypes" while gaining the "citizens' support" (Ibid.). This brainwashing is accomplished through "their manipulation of society through children's reeducation," which succeeds in "modifying the stereotypes new generations form so they are more favorable to the Party's interests" (107). Ultimately, González presents the parallel example of media manipulation by Fox News in contemporaneity and asserts that its ideological aim is to "reinforce previously formed ideas of the sector of the American society they address: white, religious and conservative citizens"

(González 111). This modern parallel asserts the continued relevance of concerns about media manipulation in contemporaneity both concerning its service to governments seeking to exert their power and in its part in upholding the new system, status quo, or orthodoxy that emerges after this new medium is introduced or changed.

To consider how content or mediums influence society as a result of becoming a part of the culture, I introduce Sean McCorry's statement that Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* asserts the "technological attenuation of subjectivity" as a result of "emergent mass culture" (2). McCorry claims that *Fahrenheit 451* "reflects a generalized anxiety in postwar culture concerning the future of humanist individualism" and that not only did Bradbury point out the societal trend that "technology was drawing humanist subjectivity into ever closer proximity to the (alleged) animal stupidity against which it had formerly defined itself," but that subjectivity itself was "becoming as regularized and predictable as the technological apparatuses to which it was subjected" (3). More concisely, *Fahrenheit 451* acts as Bradbury's warning against the public allowing media technology to decrease their subjectivity and instead create a standardized public that only fosters obeisance and consumption. Anyone who subsequently stands against this standardized public is cast out as unorthodox or eccentric.

The impact of new mediums and utilization of media differs in *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*, but to further consider its impact in the respective novels we need to first clarify what media is. Media can be defined as "the means of communication, [such] as radio and television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, that can reach or influence people widely" ("Media," Collins English Dictionary). Another, and perhaps more productive, way to view media is through the lens of Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses in which media are categorized under the Information Apparatus and are utilized for the system to propagate itself. ISAs are "distinct and specialized institutions" in the private domain, such as "Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures" (Althusser 1291). The communication ISA is one of these ISAs, and it includes the press, radio, television, and other means of communication which can be given the general categorization of media (Ibid.). The distinctive difference between the societies in *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* is that in *1984* all of these apparatuses fall under one of the state's "four Ministries" (Orwell 6), while in *F451* these systems are heavily influenced by corporate interests that infuse media with constant advertisements to achieve their own goals. As a result, in *1984* these apparatuses fall under

Althusser's notion of the "*one* (Repressive) State Apparatus" (1291) as an extension of the state's power rather than as individual organizations or ISAs. In F451, however, these systems seem to be ISAs mostly manipulated by corporations or other private interests.

Corporate capitalism, which we can define as an evolution of a capitalist market economy that, through exploitation, shifts value from the masses and into the hands of larger and larger corporations, threatens democracy through the influence afforded to those with substantial financial means. Thus, to empower a democratic culture we need to counteract the growing power of corporations. The ultimate trajectory of corporate capitalism's social and economic force would be that democracies degrade into plutocracies. This change need not even be official, as the ability to wield greater power through finances means concentrating it into the hands of a few and the plutocracy may wear the guise of democracy to placate the masses. Mark Fisher presents the "Nanny State" (66) as a concept that haunts "capitalist realism" – a term Fisher uses instead of postmodernism (11) – and argues the concept is there "to be blamed precisely for its *failure* to act as a centralizing power" (66). Fisher brings up two examples: a flood in Tewkesbury in 2007 and the 2008 banking crisis. The reason why Fisher brings up these examples is to present how people blame "an impotent government" and in the case of the banking crisis, "on the excesses of individual bankers and on the government's handling of the crisis" rather than the "systemic causes of the crisis" (67). Fisher's argument culminates in the assessment that "the closest thing we have to ruling powers now are nebulous, unaccountable interests exercising corporate irresponsibility" (Ibid.). In other words, the role of the government in the age of global capitalism is so diminished that seeking to blame it for issues such as those mentioned above is a fruitless task. Fisher further claims that people lash out against the Nanny State because "the centerlessness of global capitalism is radically unthinkable" (Ibid.) and thus doesn't pose a clear target. Governments, on the other hand, are easy targets. This development essentially presents the world as a plutocracy that is only supposedly run by various governments but which in actuality is run by nebulous unelected corporate forces. Another reason we need to counteract corporate capitalism is that it requires continuous growth to the point of insatiability. To maintain such growth, the corporation needs to be ruthless, and this ruthlessness regularly manifests in exploitation, conglomeration, monopolistic and anticompetitive behavior, and market value tampering by, for example, creating artificial scarcity. A stagnation in profits *is* a decline because of factors such as inflation and a more competitive market, and thus continuous

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expansion and increased profits are required to gain success in a competitive capitalist market economy. The cycle of capitalist expansion and consumption are parallel, so to understand the danger of consumption of disposable, mass-produced products, as well as media, we also need to understand that success within a capitalistic society *requires* the expansion of operations, increased exploitation, and ultimately a concentration of profits into fewer hands which occurs organically as some corporations are successful and keep expanding while others fail. This concentration of profits also inevitably creates a concentration of social and political influence in these same hands, and thus democracy, equality, and the public sphere the media initially upheld are diminished.

To better understand how capitalist consumption, and more specifically the consumption of media content, negatively influences the public sphere, we need to define the public sphere. The "Bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas 27) acts as the foundation or initial modern "public sphere" (4). Habermas conceives this public sphere as "the sphere of private people come together as a public" (27), and it acts as a "medium of political confrontation" (Ibid.) which could "undercut the principle upon which existing rule was based" (28). The creation of the public sphere was the creation of a common public opinion or utilization of "rational critical public debate" (Ibid.) as a tool to give private persons who did not 'rule' more influence over the governing bodies and thus greater impact on the future of their society. To achieve the function of this public sphere, a diversity of thought and the willingness to state eccentric or unorthodox opinions are crucial. An orthodoxy is created if no new or controversial thoughts can be presented. Over time the ability to introduce new ideas to this orthodoxy diminishes because the ideals will be more inherent to those who grew up within such an orthodoxy. Eccentrics threaten the status quo by having the potential to present views differing from the orthodoxy's beliefs. For the public sphere to act as a tool for political confrontation, eccentrics are required to use their insights to challenge the orthodoxy. The lack of opposition to an orthodoxy degrades the ability of the public sphere to act as a tool for political confrontation on behalf of the vast majority of people who have no direct position of power.

To suppress the potential power of the public sphere, the Party propagandizes through ceremonies such as the Two Minute Hate ceremony which is held two times daily. This ceremony utilizes media to suppress any notion of a public sphere by creating and forcing a specific ideological narrative on a captive audience, and as a method to release pent-up rage and

hate against the enemies of the Party. Due to the public nature of the ceremony, any outward dissension is not allowed, and the fervent nature of the ceremony makes it difficult for people to avoid joining in with the masses even if they disagree with the content of the ceremony on an intellectual level. Winston is one of those who cannot escape the ceremony despite trying, "The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in" (Orwell 16). The public is shaped by the medium of the telescreen which displays the object of the ceremony: a virtual image of Big Brother. The media can be a potent tool for spreading ideology and suppressing freedom of information and democracy. This suppression of freedom of information also diminishes the possibility of establishing a genuine public sphere because a public sphere requires individuals to think and speak freely. The Two-Minute Hate ceremony begins when a "hideous, grinding screech" is emitted "from the big telescreen," and Emmanuel Goldstein "flashed onto the screen" (Orwell 13). Similar to the indoctrination through the "parlor walls" (Bradbury 23) in *Fahrenheit 451*, in *1984* we see the "telescreen" (Orwell 4) which acts simultaneously as a television and as a surveillance device as it records images and sound. The relatively new mass media is being utilized to indoctrinate, manipulate, and control the population by inducing intense emotions of love and hatred. The "uncontrollable exclamations of rage" (Orwell 15) showcase that the Party achieved its goal of inciting hatred as set out by the title of the ceremony. The point which shows the crowd's zeal to the highest degree is that soon after Big Brother breaks down the 'evil' Emmanuel Goldstein, the crowd starts a "deep, slow, rhythmic chant of 'B-B! ….B-B! […] over and over again, very slowly" (18), which acts as a "hymn to the wisdom and majesty of Big Brother […] an act of self-hypnosis, a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of rhythmic noise" (18-19). Television, the real object the fictional telescreen parallels, has also been viewed as a tool that can induce the viewer into a state "one step beyond hypnosis" (McIlwraith and Jacobvitz 105), and thus we can see Orwell's fear that new media technology can induce self-hypnosis and thus destroy consciousness or the possibility of eccentricity. It is *crucial* that it is through this telescreen that the Party's ideology is mainly distributed because this asserts that media is the foundation for the Party's indoctrination: "As usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, had flashed onto the screen" (Orwell 13). More than being utilized to incite hatred, the telescreen is the only way we can truly see the ideological leader or rather the face of the Party: Big Brother. At the end of the Two-Minute Hate, the

"hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother, black-haired, black-moustachio'd, full of power and mysterious calm, and so vast that it almost filled up the screen" (18). Even here, however, we never see the body of Big Brother. The purely virtual characteristic of Big Brother, and his face in particular, asserts the crucial new role of mass media such as TV to spread ideology to the masses. This ideology achieves its effectiveness by forging a new mythology in which people are forced to have a parasocial bond with the infallible and omnipotent protector that Big Brother is displayed as. The lack of real and personal interaction with the man behind the title makes Big Brother more akin to a concept or ideal, and thus it is easier to idealize him.

An important trait of the telescreen is that it cannot be turned off by Outer Party members: "The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely" (4). Inner Party members can turn it off – which displays their privileged status – but it is "unwise even for members of the Inner Party to turn off the telescreen for more than half an hour" (179). This inability to escape the telescreen's surveillance and constant influence, in addition to its intrusiveness, makes the telescreen the greatest tool for the Party to maintain control over its populace. We can see an example of the intrusiveness of the telescreen when Winston is called out in his home by the telescreen during a standardized workout: "'Smith!' screamed the shrewish voice from the telescreen. '6079 Smith W.! Yes, YOU! Bend lower please! You can do better than that. You're not trying. Lower, please!" (39).

The constant buzzing and intrusiveness of media, as well as surveillance, ensures the indoctrination through a similar process to how the intrusive advertisement in *Fahrenheit 451* makes the public obsessed with the consumption of the products of capitalism: "The train radio vomited upon Montag […]. The people were pounded into submission; they did not run, there was no place to run" (Bradbury 80). The way media technology is utilized in these two fictional societies is by having a constant stream of messages spread through the media, which in turn makes it difficult to think about anything but what the media is pounding the captive audience with. The difference between the two fictional societies' media, however, is that the media in *F451* is commercial while the media in *1984* is state-controlled propaganda. We can realize this commercial aspect of the media in *F451* by Montag pointing out that other people around him "who had been sitting a moment before" were now "tapping their feet to the rhythm of Denham's Dentifrice," and that people's "mouths had been faintly twitching the words Dentifrice Dentifrice Dentifrice" (Ibid.). These people, who subconsciously move to or mimic a brand name from an

advertisement, showcase how Bradbury considered with abject horror the possibility of constantly blasting a captured audience with advertisements and the ideology it represents through new mediums. We see an analogous image in *1984* as Winston considers the impossibility of resisting such persistent and intrusive media:

> Day and night the telescreens bruised your ears with statistics proving that people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations—that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago. Not a word of it could ever be proved or disproved. (Orwell 77)

There is no escape from media in either of the fictional societies depicted, but in *1984* this lack of escape is based on the Party's enforcement of media by removing the individual's ability to shut it off, while in *F451* there is depicted an addiction to media carefully fostered through culture and indoctrination to the point that most people willingly desire to immerse themselves in it. The continuously increasing reach of media, while it simultaneously became less democratized as a result of the press merging, during the contemporary time of Ray Bradbury and George Orwell might explain the great focus on the inability to escape media. This trend likely amplified suspicion of mass media. Chris Hedges points out that "By 1930, 80 percent of American cities had given way to a press monopoly. The role of the influence of advertising revenues multiplied thirteen-fold (from $200 million to $2.6 billion)" (52). When advertising revenue increases to such a degree, we can conclude that the impact of the advertisement has become greater and thus that the media is reaching a more numerous audience or that the general market for advertising in the press/media rose sharply. The change from individual or local news to monopolized conglomerates was sudden, as only two decades earlier, "58 percent of American cities had a press that varied both in ownership and perspective" (Ewen, Stuart. qtd. in Hedges 58). This monopolization of one of the core parts that make up the so-called 'public sphere' showcases the soundness of Habermas' argument that the public sphere was turning into a "sham-private world of culture consumption" (160) rather than remaining public and open to critical debate. More than simply pointing out the increasing monopolization of media, Hedges puts into perspective how propaganda was spread post World War 2. He explains that ExxonMobil's use of "$16 million to fund a network of forty-three "grassroots" organizations opposed to the science of climate change" (Ibid.) following World War 2 was one of the initial

ways corporations utilized propaganda to profit from disinformation. Hedges asserts that "The mass propaganda established during the war, which included journalists, entertainers, artists, and novelists, became the model for twentieth-century corporate and governmental advertising and publicity" (Ibid.). This trend of advertisement and publicity tactics presents how mass propaganda through media became the norm rather than the exception post World War 2.

Based on this notion of a new and organized propaganda machine, we can argue that mass media influence was a great concern in Western society post World War 2. This concern was especially critical due to the manipulation states employed during the Cold War, but also due to the increased influence corporations have over the individual in Western societies after technological and media advancements during World War 2. From this, we can understand Ray Bradbury and George Orwell's concerns with the growing influence of propaganda and advertisement spread through mass media. This development also underlines how the media's purpose shifted from serving the masses as a tool against oppression to becoming the mouthpiece of large, monopolized media corporations and other vested interests. The shifting purpose of the media irreparably damaged the public sphere as a result. The interests of the public no longer aligned with the interests of the media, and thus the media reinforced the system it previously sought to critique, improve or uproot.

Hedges concludes that "The use of these propaganda techniques has permitted corporations to saturate the airwaves with images and slogans that deify mass consumer culture. And it has meant the death, by corporate hands, of news" (52). The death of news, and by extension of a way of reliably assessing society on a large scale, works against a free and democratic public whose members use public debate to find solutions and thus improve society. The necessary means of presenting information the general populace could make decisions based on is undermined by the unreliability and shifting purpose of media, which in turn undermines the notion of an open and democratic public sphere based on true discourse rather than being manufactured to frame the discourse in specific ways. We can conclude that following World War 2, mass media turned into a tool used even more frequently by governments, political parties, and special-interest groups such as companies to promote their products or ideologies.

Such manipulation through mass media can be further explored through Tony Milligan's concept of "preference shaping" (94). Milligan asserts:

the desires that political agents have invariably tend to be preference adapted, at least up to a point. […] Preference shaping by a media which is answerable to sectional interests, and by group prejudice seems to be a strong factor in the formation of choices. Indeed, it may lead us into precisely the kind of concerns that Mill had about the dangers of public opinion as tyrannous. Preference satisfaction as a rationale for democracy is only going to work if the preferences themselves come about in the right kind of way and do not simply express the weakness of the individual in the face of a greater body of opinion, the *we* who exert a great pressure to conform. (Ibid.)

The notion of "preference shaping" creates a difficult paradox in modern societies. Societies structured as democracies often promote the individual's opinion, and the opinion of the majority, through voting in elections and in public discourse. However, when "sectional interests" control the media and "the *we* who exert a great pressure to conform" act to shape the minds of others, the opinions which claim to represent 'the masses' suddenly seem much less individual and more like voices expressed *on behalf* of sectional interests. These sectional interests in contemporaneity are primarily corporations and political groups or parties – or even the state itself. In the case of *1984,* we see the media acts on behalf of the Party (the state), while in *F451* the media acts on behalf of corporate interests. If the opinions of the majority are greatly influenced by media answerable to sectional interests, then any democracy based on this majority is by extrapolation similarly influenced. This influence may lead to various biases that serve the sectional interests rather than the masses and thus this diminishes the legitimacy of a democracy.

Another notion that can clarify how individuals are made subjects of ideology is Althusser's "*interpellation*" (1306). Althusser suggests that ideology "'recruits' subjects among the individuals" (Ibid.). He extends this suggestion through his assertion that "ideology is eternal" (Ibid.), and thus that "*individuals are always-already subjects*" (1307). This notion goes beyond preference shaping to argue that we are already subject to the ideology of our society before our birth and during the rituals of birth. By this logic, all individuals are already subjects of their societies' ideologies, and thus the new generations of people need not be 'convinced' to submit to the system or its ideology because they are never even afforded a choice. In *1984*, we can see stark contrasts between how people of different age groups regard the Party. For one, children have "no tendency whatever to rebel against the discipline of the Party" (Orwell 26) despite being "systematically turned into ungovernable little savages" (Ibid.) by the Party. More

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than children, Winston also complains that "It was always the women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy" (12). Based on these depictions of young people and children as the most fervent adherents of the ideology of the Party, we can see the difference between the people who are born into an ideology and those like Winston who are indoctrinated into it over time. Winston's comments about women's greater bigotry could support the notion that the Party has successfully induced hostility between the sexes to make them distrust each other. We can observe a similar example about youth and ideology in *F451* as we see how children "kill each other" (Bradbury 41) while Clarisse, the one young person who is born into a family of eccentrics, is afraid of children her age. The reason she can see the horror of the violence is that her family tells her about a time "when children didn't kill each other" (Ibid.). The consequence of Clarisse not being interpellated into the overarching ideology, and instead being inducted into her family's ideology, is that she has no friends and is viewed as "abnormal" (Ibid.).

For a democratic system to work, the individual *has* to be able to express their own opinion regardless of the "*we* who exert a great pressure to conform" (Milligan 94), and thus our societies – for them to truly remain democratic and not devolve into corporate-controlled puppet-states – desperately *need* eccentric individuals like Clarisse who dare to oppose the system or the majority opinion regardless of social pressure. Because eccentricity is necessary, we as a society also need to fight for the right of people to be eccentric – to fall outside of the system – or at least express dissenting opinions without societal or lawful punishments being meted upon them for not wanting to participate, or even participating in the 'wrong way,' in the overarching system.

To further consider how mindless consumption of media damages the integrity of democracy I invoke Habermas' contention about the public sphere:

> When the laws of the market governing the sphere of commodity exchange and of social labor also pervaded the sphere reserved for private people as a public, rational-critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode. (161)

The critical difference between the two ways the public interacts with culture – and thus the basis of the public sphere – lies in the difference between "debate" and "consumption," in addition to

the ability of the public to have "rational-critical debate" with the potential to critique and influence social structures. Furthermore, the unraveling of a common public communication into "acts of individuated reception" asserts communication as transforming into a one-way channel from above to below – from state or special-interest group to the individual – rather than a communication which can be critiqued or responded to collectively by a common "public," as a two-way communication channel could enable. "Debate" is a productive concept that can lead to better outcomes through conversation, careful consideration, as well as critical thought, and better decision-making. "Consumption," on the other hand, is the breaking down and devouring of something. Thus, when *consuming* media or information, the mind isn't actively engaged in compartmentalizing the issue or critically considering the ups or downsides of the matter at hand.

To expand on the theory of *consumption* we can look to Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard asserted in 1970 that the current "age of affluence" (*The Consumer Society* 25) makes humans "surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all previous ages, but by objects" (Ibid.). One of Baudrillard's initial points about modern consumption is that today "it is we who watch them [objects] as they are born, grow to maturity and die, whereas in all previous civilizations it was timeless objects, instruments or monuments which outlived the generations of human beings" (Ibid.). Objects, at least as of 1970 according to Baudrillard, were created for constant and continuous *consumption* rather than to be lasting monuments, and thus we became trapped in a cycle of always needing more. These claims are only more relevant today with modern globalization and capitalist consumption through media, internet shopping, and disposable items.

One specific item which Baudrillard points out as increasingly consumed is the "*news item* […] in mass communication" (33). He finds this item paradoxically "entirely *actualized* – i.e. dramatized in the spectacular mode – and entirely *deactualized* – i.e. distanced by the communication medium and reduced to signs" (Ibid.). More than other categories, "The news item is thus not one category among others, but **the** cardinal category of our magical thinking, of our mythology" (34). Basing our entire modern mythology on the concept of the "news item" asserts its significance and lays the groundwork for the entirety of our consumption-based reality which is no more than the "fantasy" (Ibid.) the news item provides.

This fantastical mythos which "mass communications" such as media and news give us "is not reality" but instead creates what Baudrillard terms "*the dizzying whirl of reality*" (Ibid.). To expound on what Baudrillard means by this, he continues:

> this 'Heart' which is the locus of mass communications […] is precisely *the place where nothing happens*. […] signs are sources of security. So we live, sheltered by signs, in the denial of the real. […] The content of the messages, the signifieds of the signs are largely immaterial. (Ibid.)

Baudrillard continues by defining the "locus of consumption" as "daily life" (Ibid.). He further asserts that "Everydayness as closure […] would be unbearable without the simulacrum of the world, without the *alibi* of participation in the world" (35). The masses in *Fahrenheit 451* engage with the media they consume as their new truth and reality. By engaging only with media and not the physical world, the masses choose to remain at the "locus of mass communications" (34). In this locus, the masses find comfort in an existence that is removed from the real world and thus from the "private everydayness" that would normally clash with "mass communications" (35). The masses in *F451* are trapped in a hyperreality – a reality that appears more real than the 'real' – of perpetual entertainment enforced by a cultural demand to have 'fun.' This 'fun' is mostly achieved through the parlor entertainment of the 'family' – interactive characters which act as parallels to characters from TV shows or video games when viewed from today's purview – which is completely removed from physical reality and is instead depicted as a "gibbering pack of tree-apes that said nothing, nothing, nothing and said it loud, loud, loud" (Bradbury 53). Essentially, these fictional characters flood the masses with noises and words without saying anything of meaning. By doing this, the 'family' occupies people's senses while not giving them time to think or reflect due to the bombardment of sense impressions. McLuhan's aforementioned assertion that "the medium is the message" (2) might aid our understanding of why this fictional development is so critical because Bradbury showcases a potential future in which the 'message' of the medium is less relevant than the spread, addiction, and overall effect of the medium itself.

Mildred is described as going "into the parlor" (Bradbury 57), which could be understood not only as the physical movement of Mildred into the room with the parlor walls but as fully entering the hyperreal world within. There is no substance to this entertainment, but it is said so "loud" that these "technologies *captivate* their audience" (McCorry 14). Baudrillard points out

that the "tranquility" of simply only viewing the world through the "TV image," makes the "cruel exteriority of the world […] something intimate and warm" (35). Through this description, we can assert that the parlor acts as a shield against the external world, which might feel safe for the individual, but over time this shield turns into a prison and the only world available to the individual. The world is exchanged for the image, and the real for the simulated, for the sake of comfort or pleasure. By extension, this search for safety without challenge turns into apathy regarding the external world because the hyperreality becomes the only 'real' world for those within it.

Baudrillard goes further than merely critiquing the medium or content of media by explaining the "consumer *mentality*" which is so damaging to the public sphere: "The beneficiary of the consumer miracle also sets in place a whole array of sham objects, of characteristic signs of happiness, and then waits (waits desperately, a moralist would say) for happiness to alight" (31). This desperate wait for happiness is a way of explaining the experience of a TV viewer who sits "waiting for images from the whole world to come down on him" (Ibid.). Different from actual happiness, however, what the TV will show are only "*signs* of happiness" (Ibid.) which accumulate into affluence. These signs of happiness can create the illusion of happiness through laughter, but as Horkheimer and Adorno assert: "There is laughter because there is nothing to laugh about" (112). Baudrillard explains these *signs* of happiness as "the anticipated reflection of the potential Great Satisfaction," and thus they remain "lesser satisfactions" which are mere "means of calling down or summoning up total Well-being or Bliss" (31). This bliss acts as a miracle, and the TV doesn't cease "*to be a miracle*" due to distancing the consumer from "the very principle of social reality" (32).

The experience of watching TV distanced from the "process of production" and even the notion of a "social reality" grips the consumer in a *hyperreality* that doesn't require them to consider anything outside of the content of the media (the images and sounds) (Ibid.). The lack of critical thought becomes a result of giving the consumer a 'miracle' without personal effort or investment. This effect of not only watching TV but modern media in general, is perhaps more relevant today than ever before as a result of how much media pervades our culture. During this process of waiting for a miracle, there are no necessary decisions or realities to face. Instead, one can simply pray for a miracle and receive it. There is no longer a need for a process of experience that includes effort in either finding the enjoyable material or in actually having to

face a social reality in the process of experiencing it. Instead, everything is available through the click of a button, and thus the individual is trapped within "*the dizzying whirl of reality*" (34) as a passive observer of the surrounding reality, indeed actually the hyperreality, rather than an active participant in the process of production or in the social reality outside of this whirl. The understanding of the effect the medium has is lost to the audience because the medium utilizes distracting content and takes advantage of the impatience of captive viewers to not give them the time to consider the debilitating effects of condensing all media into a "gag" with a "snap ending" in *F451* (Bradbury 61). The ability of media entertainment to trick consumers into thinking about the content it displays without considering the effect of the medium itself makes it difficult to ascertain how the spread of the medium itself influences society. The lack of required participation by the individual helps them fully immerse themselves in the hyperreality created for their consumption, and they are – over time – separated to a greater extent from the social reality of the real. The reason for this is the fostering of a new culture that revolves around the consumption of products and services to form individuals who become dependent on the system of consumption. Through this process of turning the system of consumption into a *need* and an *addiction*, consumption changes from an *option* to a *requirement* when participating in society:

> One of the strongest proofs that the principle and finality of consumption is not enjoyment or pleasure is that that is now something which is forced upon us, something institutionalized, not as a right or a pleasure, but as the *duty* of the citizen. (Baudrillard 80)

This notion of pleasure being a *duty* asserts pleasure as the ultimate goal of the "consumerist man" who "regards *enjoyment as an obligation*" and sees himself "as *an enjoyment and satisfaction business*" (Ibid.). We can observe, in *Fahrenheit 451*, people who live to have 'fun,' but who cannot achieve true happiness. It becomes obvious that even this 'fun,' when achieved through consumption, is not actually fun. Instead it can be described as an institutionalized duty, as well as a worrying addiction. An example of this duty can be observed when Mildred describes the program she is going to participate in without really explaining anything, and then she comments, "It's sure fun" (Bradbury 33). When Montag asks what the play is about, she tries explaining it again: "I just told you. There are these people named Bob and Ruth and Helen" (Ibid.). She continues to assert that "It's really fun" (Ibid.) without mentioning one fun thing

about it. Rather than enjoying this play, she is forced to do her *duty* by 'having fun' without *actually* having fun.

The orthodox masses, including Mildred, live in the simulated world of the parlor – a world that is more real than the real. This society fits Baudrillard's criteria for being *hyperreal* by no longer functioning "by violence," but instead "by deterrence/persuasion" (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 50). This altered functioning of society is exemplified in the way Faber, a reawakened eccentric in *F451*, asserts how the firemen – the representatives of the state's coercion and oppression in *Fahrenheit 451*'s society – simply "provide a circus now and then […] a small sideshow indeed, and hardly necessary to keep things in line" (Bradbury 87). Coercion has stopped being vital and is instead only a sideshow to the cultural manipulation through media and its promotion of political apathy combined with capitalist consumption.

Cultural apathy has taken hold of the general public in *F451* to the point that they no longer care about observing 'reality.' They choose instead to dart from point A to point B and back while viewing the 'real world' through a lens that makes a rose garden into a "pink blur" and grass into a "green blur" (23). Their parlors have become the 'real world' and only the parlor "'family' is 'people'" (84). The parlor family is a good parallel for characters in TV shows and is simply the expression of the anxiety that individuals would, or have, become so dependent on these characters that they value their 'relationships' with them as greater than the ones they have with 'real' people. A term that aptly describes this phenomenon in modern-day society is *parasocial*. Parasocial relationships are one-sided relationships that can be fostered both in "traditional mass media," as well as "through messages in an online environment that are designed to bring the viewer closer to a mediated persona, such as a brand or celebrity" (Labrecque 135). As compared to the extent to which parasocial relationships can be exploited in contemporaneity, with 'relationships' between audiences and online influencers or celebrities being perhaps the most preeminent, in the age of "traditional PSI environments" such as "television and radio," there existed no real two-way communication (Ibid.). We can interestingly observe in both *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*, however, that the media the general masses interact with is a two-way communication channel in a sense, but that this two-way communication is utilized as a tool to foster parasocial relationships in which the general public or audience becomes dependent or acquires sentiments which would allow the other party – the influencer or distributer – to more adeptly influence and manipulate the individual.

Media as a whole also changed the culture of Bradbury's and Orwell's contemporary societies. McCorry explains that this process of "technological routinisation […] came now to revolutionise the leisure habits of the Western countries" (4). McCorry invokes Keith M. Booker to assert how "Fordism and Taylorism" shaped

> the production of culture, as the mass market for film and radio, together with the
> expansion of international networks of distribution for cultural commodities, meant that a
> larger section of the population than ever before were positioned as passive consumers of
> the same standardised and homogenous products of a mass culture industry. (Ibid.)

This reshaping of "leisure habits" (Ibid.) matches Habermas' notion of "leisure behavior" (160) and it is the increase in these leisure habits in addition to the "passive consumers" (McCorry 4) of the products of a "mass culture industry" (Ibid.) which forms the foundation of the Culture-Consuming Public to which Habermas refers. McCorry draws on Horkheimer and Adorno to assert that "intellectual autonomy" (5) had been compromised by "market-driven mass culture" (Ibid.) as a result of a general shift away from "intellectual creation" (Horkheimer and Adorno 131) by instead seeking to merely occupy people's senses. This occupation is displayed throughout *Fahrenheit 451* by the complete immersion of the fictional people in the parlors and their refusal to consider the physical reality outside of their simulated worlds. We see a similar, but more involuntary, occupation of senses in *1984* as a result of telescreens being mandated in every room for the Outer Party, and due to individuals' not being able to turn them off. The occupation of people's senses in *1984* is implemented due to the need of the Party to exert control "over men" (Orwell 279) rather than because of a market-driven mass culture as it is in *Fahrenheit 451*. This remains the crucial difference between the two dystopian societies: *1984*'s Oceania is driven by the totalitarian desire for control while *Fahrenheit 451*'s FUS is driven by the desire to create obedient workers to promote capitalism.

The description of the culture depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* perfectly captures the monotony and technological routinization of fields of intellectual creation, which turned culture into feeble products to repeatedly consume rather than genuine art or works of political or social importance. Leisure, rather than the relief from routinization it may have once been, became the essence of routinization and a societal norm that greatly promoted the consumption of products and culture within the allotted leisure time. This standardization of "cultural goods" lead to the standardization of "individuals as well as commodities" (McCorry 5). This was likely a worrying

trend post World War 2 because such trends could potentially turn into enforceable laws. Additionally, such standardization could lead to a society in which *eccentricity* becomes taboo.

Through my analysis of the notion of media and the downfall of the public sphere, I conclude that the combination of the promotion of consumption and leisure behavior, in addition to the monopolization and increased monetization of media, led to the undermining of the public sphere by diminishing the diversity of thought. Media was the initial tool for the public sphere to give their opinion or have their debate and it includes literary, journalistic, and audio-visual media. However, the media turned into a tool to uphold the status quo or even promote the interests of the press and media conglomerates, and the sectional interests these conglomerates served, rather than a tool that could speak truth to power. By losing this ability to hold a true "rational critical public debate" and to give people who "did not 'rule'" more power, the true public sphere not only lost its purpose but transformed into a tool which counteracted its previously critical role of critiquing social structures, cultural trends, and ideologies (Habermas 28). Both *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* present public spheres which are undermined or even destroyed by propaganda and advertisement. The worry both Orwell and Bradbury address is one of concern for the masses and their dwindling influence in a false public sphere that actually serves sectional interests instead of the public.

2.3 The Eccentric

The notion of 'The Eccentric' stands in opposition to the growing "standardisation of individuals" (McCorry 5) and is derived from the Greek "*ekkentros*," which means "out of the center" ("eccentric," *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*). The fictional societies depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* suppress the eccentric in different, but similar, ways. In this section, I argue for the value of the eccentric in resisting not only fictional tyrannies, but also as vital to the diversity of thought, and subsequently claim that the eccentric is essential to our contemporary societies. I define the *eccentric* as an individual who showcases a combination of nonconformity and the willingness to resist any overarching structure, ideology, law, or norm despite potential consequences. One of the main reasons I argue that the eccentric is essential is because of their ability to – by their nature of diverging from the opinions, thoughts, or ideologies of the orthodoxy – induce self-reflection by making crucial points about a society which the orthodoxy of said society cannot formulate as a result of a variety of factors such as interpellation, social

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conditioning, manipulation, and coercion. As someone outside of this center of opinions, the eccentric can critique it from a different perspective. In my analysis of *F451* and *1984*, I am going to uncover the critical function of the eccentric as an individual or figure who dares to resist the prescribed beliefs or ideology imposed upon them. By seeking to resist the conformity created by the totalitarianism depicted in *1984* and the senseless consumerism depicted in *F451*, the eccentrics depicted in the two novels empower the humanist tradition that puts the thinking individual at its center. By extension, democracy, which we can roughly define as a collective undertaking of governing society through discussion and voting, is also strengthened.

To more precisely define my notion of the eccentric, I put it in dialogue with Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "'organic' intellectuals" to better frame the conception of the eccentric as a resisting force against tyranny and apathy in addition to sharing the role of being an "organising element of a particular fundamental social class" (131). Throughout my analysis, I showcase why the lack of this natural – as opposed to artificial or manufactured – organizing element within the fictional societies of *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* is critical. The role of the organic intellectual who directs the general population from within a shared social class is supplanted. In the case of *1984*, the role of the organic intellectual is supplanted by the Party which seeks to impose absolute control "over men" (Orwell 279) through violent coercion in a totalitarian fashion. This includes manipulating relationships between groups of people as well as individuals through organizations such as the "Junior Anti-Sex League" (11), which sows discord between men and women, and through children's organizations such as "the Spies" (26), which promotes spying on and reporting one's own family to the Party. These organizations ultimately sow discord between individuals and undermine the ability of an organic intellectual to aid their social class. To diminish the rise of eccentric collectives in *1984*, anyone who might have become an organic intellectual and subsequently aided in "directing the ideas and aspirations" (Gramsci 131) of their social class is imprisoned, tortured, and converted into an obedient subject.

The role of the organic intellectual in *Fahrenheit 451* is supplanted by the combination of indoctrination as well as through establishing the hyperreality of the parlor. The organic intellectual is further suppressed by making the intellectual into a taboo: "the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be" (Bradbury 64). This intellectual might not be the organic intellectual Gramsci refers to, but it is how the general population is influenced by

new mediums, rather than the organic intellectual, which matters. Instead of allowing social classes to shape their own lives, capitalist consumption shapes the fundamental aspects of this society. These aspects include education, culture, taboos, and the value of life. The result of this is that the general public, or what I term the *orthodox masses*, submits to cultural pressure and refrains from challenging the system. The orthodox masses subsequently become unable to become organic intellectuals. The organic intellectual becomes supplanted by what I term the *artificial intellectual*: media algorithms, artificial intelligence, and corporations or other groups/individuals that manipulate the masses through media to use them.

The eccentric figure I refer to throughout my thesis fits the loose meaning of being outside of the center of opinions or society, but together with Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual, we can consider the eccentric figure to which I refer as a catalyst for societal change. The catalyzing effect is achieved through the qualities of the eccentric figure, which mainly revolve around challenging authority and introducing new ideas to orthodoxies. There exists a diversity of eccentrics because eccentricity can only be defined in opposition to the norm or current authorities. Critically, we need to define the eccentric figure through action as well as thought. Eccentric thoughts may be the foundation, but if these thoughts aren't acted upon, then the individual cannot be a genuine eccentric figure. In the case that the individual doesn't act on their eccentric thoughts, the individual allows the status quo to go unchallenged and thus becomes a similar tragic figure to Faber in *F451*, who only puts up a token struggle against the new world before giving up due to being alone in his struggle. If the eccentric gives up so easily, their ability to enact change is reduced and they lose their status as an eccentric by the very act of falling into line. Eccentrics aren't necessarily also "organic intellectuals" (Gramsci 131), but the eccentric figure might be enabled by taking up the role of such an organizing element in society. Through even personal resistance against tyranny or orthodoxy, the eccentric figure can subtly undermine the current authorities. Most of all, however, the eccentric figure is an example for others who might not otherwise have dared to act on their eccentric thoughts. Simple defiance and the introduction of new ideas can have a great impact on supposed orthodox individuals, who may have been unable to break away from their indoctrination without assistance.

John Stuart Mill expounds on how the eccentric threatens tyranny by asserting that the mere *daring* to be different, to not "bend the knee" or conform, is "itself a service" in the face of tyranny (113). He further correlates eccentricity with "genius," "mental vigor," and "moral

courage" (Ibid.). Such traits are all positive for the development of society. On this ground, Mill argues that being eccentric "is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny" (Ibid.) because the eccentric crucially refuses to bend to the whims of tyranny and instead innately opposes it by the nature of presenting an alternative to simple obedience. Mill's thoughts on eccentricity are a part of the liberal humanist tradition which it seems that Bradbury seeks to reinvigorate or recreate through *F451*.

Beyond the eccentric's resistance to tyranny, the eccentric is critical as an individual who can break away from "technological routinisation" (McCorry 4) and standardization of both products and people. A damaging aspect of the "new technologies of mass culture" is that they "dissolve time" by "continually occupying one's attention and preventing the reflective remembrance which Faber (and through him, Bradbury) sees as necessary to subjective individuation" (9). It is this destruction of literacy in favor of "mass culture" which ultimately makes "memory" and "political subjectivity" nearly impossible (Ibid). This destruction can be identified in *1984* through how Winson presents the Party's claim that "today forty percent of adult proles were literate" (Orwell 77), while "before the Revolution […] the numbers had only been fifteen per cent" (77-78). Despite this claim, however, Winston describes these claims as a "single equation with two unknowns" (78), which asserts the innate deception in the Party's claims and the likelihood that the numbers are decreasing rather than the opposite. The destruction of literacy is far clearer in *Fahrenheit 451*, as even possessing books has been made illegal and the educational system is staunchly anti-intellectual.

The eccentric's ability to stand up against tyranny is the reason the two novels in question revolve around the journey of eccentric individuals in their resistance against tyranny. The difference between the tyrannies in *1984* and *F451*, and the eccentric's ability to challenge these tyrannies, showcases the eccentric as a figure who can aid society in both resisting a totalitarian tyranny and a tyranny of corporate manipulation, capitalist consumption, and exploitation. If the masses remain apathetic to their oppression without daring to opposite it, – exemplified by the masses in *F451* and the proles and Outer Party in *1984* – society will inevitably devolve into the dark, anti-humanist future O'Brien, the representative of the Inner Party in *1984*, asserts as absolute: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever" (280). Only the individual who stands against oppression can change the future for the better. Bradbury's and Orwell's social critiques are grounded in the desire to steer their societies

toward a future that values "human subjectivity" (McCorry 8) and "intellectual autonomy" (5), rather than submitting to consumption or propagandized ideologies. Only by resisting the system's boot can the individual retain their humanity and consciousness, while the apathetic masses have grown accustomed to this trampling and submit willingly to it. In opposition to the submission of the orthodox masses, we can observe how eccentrics such as Winston resist the manipulation of the Party and thus exert their will and consciousness as humans. A point that can affirm this claim is that the working title for *1984* was "The Last Man in Europe" (Hitchens 46). This title points to a consciousness Winston has but the surrounding 'people' in Oceania do not possess, but might alternatively describe the feeling of all individuals within Oceania who believe they are this 'last man.' When Winston ultimately loses his resistance and instead submits to the system, he dies both spiritually and in actuality.

Orthodoxy, as opposed to 'unorthodoxy' or 'eccentricity,' is defined by George Orwell as "a body of ideas which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question" ("The Freedom of the Press"). This body of thoughts cannot be challenged lest you find yourself "silenced with surprising effectiveness" (Ibid.). What we can conclude based on how Orwell claims that "A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the highbrow periodicals" (Ibid.), in combination with *1984*'s plot taking place in a fictional London, is that eccentric opinions will be silenced even in supposedly democratic societies. Due to the baseline proposition of widespread silencing of eccentric opinions even in democratic societies, we can understand this as an assertion that totalitarian ideologies and states can form and spread anywhere. The damage of totalitarian ideologies is not confined to a place 'other' than here, such as Germany or Russia in Orwell's contemporaneity, but could happen even in supposedly free and democratic Western nations by an erosion of the intellectual by the "popular" or "highbrow" press (Ibid.). Because democracies aren't safe from the threat of totalitarianism, democratic societies need to take steps to counteract the spread of totalitarian ideologies, rather than passively observing ideologies they believe cannot reach them.

The dystopian threat that is depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* is similarly ominous, albeit entirely different. The introduction of Bradbury's *F451* in Sean McCorry's paper is presented together with Adorno and Horkheimer, "who noted 'the enigmatic readiness of the technologically educated masses to fall under the sway of any despotism'" (McCorry 7). McCorry emphasizes Bradbury's view on the changes in "technology, culture, politics, and

subjectivity as entailing not liberation but domination" (Ibid.), and thus the worry that these factors which are changing society are more likely to dominate individuals than to empower them. With Mildred as his prime example, McCorry invokes David Riesman to assert that "The technological apparatuses which disseminate the new mass media are thus charged with levelling and standardising postwar subjectivities" (8) – a process Bradbury staunchly resists by presenting the narrative of *Fahrenheit 451*. The narrative in *Fahrenheit 451*, in its essence, is the depiction of how eccentrics with some self-consciousness resist the domination of these new societal forces while the obedient, orthodox, and apathetic masses simply accept their circumstances and suffer for it.

The potential to destroy various subjectivities to form a unified orthodox consumer society is what Faber warns against when he tells Montag that Captain Beatty "belongs to the most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom, the solid unmoving cattle of the majority. Oh, God, the terrible tyranny of the majority" (Bradbury 104). The deep-seated anxiety portrayed through this proclamation is not merely one of a loss of individual outward expression through a lack of diversity in products or consumption, but instead the worry that a mechanized production process would inevitably lead to a similar trend regarding the diversity of thoughts and subsequently eradicate the intellectual and the eccentric. Whether the eccentric's opinion is suppressed, or their life is threatened or taken, their continuous resistance is crucial both for the respective fictional societies to be able to eventually transform into societies that value humanist individualism, as well as for our extratextual societies to remain democratic, self-conscious and critical. Humanist individualism might also be lost if the notion of the intellectual and eccentric are destroyed. All of these factors ground our societies and make us consider the possible downsides of our current society or future changes. Thus, such a society becomes more likely to remedy its downsides and seek to enhance its upsides compared to a society that resists change. The establishment of the fictional "solid unmoving cattle of the majority" (Ibid.) leads to the explicit suppression of the eccentric and any effort people exert to shake this majority. The eccentric does not necessarily even succeed in their resistance, as Winston's example shows, but it is the act of resistance against deindividuation that is necessary for societies to avoid devolving into tyranny. Resistance against orthodoxy is in itself an eccentric action and labels the individual who dares to oppose the orthodox as a criminal or unstable element. As a result, the eccentric is an individual who

dares to stand against the orthodoxy despite the knowledge that they will be suppressed, tortured, exiled, or killed.

In conclusion, eccentrics are critical to resist tyranny as well as orthodoxy because they can remain conscious actors who dare to question the ruling ideology or status quo of society. The eccentric's power lies in the ability to give power to those who "did not 'rule'" (Habermas 28) by expressing opinions contrary to orthodox opinions and thus debating how to improve society. The eccentric's critique of the ruling ideology or state, however, makes them in the eyes of a government – or in the eyes of an orthodox majority that cannot handle self-reflection or criticism – unstable or unsafe elements that have to be suppressed or destroyed. The most important role of the eccentric is to awaken others to the truth of their society by offering a new perspective.

3 The Eccentric, Apathy & the Public Sphere in *Fahrenheit 451*

This chapter will explore how the *eccentric* figure can induce critical self-reflection which gives the public the ability to resist the orthodoxy that manifests throughout *Fahrenheit 451* as rampant capitalism, consumption of media, and socio-political apathy. This self-reflection can aid society in returning to, or creating, a humanist tradition that puts the thinking individual at its center. I hope to contribute to the criticism of *F451* which commonly revolves around "American individualism" (McCorry 3) and the "triumph of mindlessness" (Trout 3). Although older examinations of *F451* tended to focus on censorship, focusing on this subject will make one miss the true significance of the novel. Scholars have turned their attention to more nuanced interpretations of *F451*, such as the impacts of media, hedonistic capitalism, and self-reflection. I will contribute to this criticism by examining how the eccentric can aid in developing individuality while resisting mindless capitalist consumption. More than simply being the solution to fictional societies' issues, the self-reflection eccentrics can induce in a society is presented as the extratextual solution to anxieties riddling the Western world post World War 2. These issues and anxieties include increases in consumption, utilization of media as a means for manipulation, the commodification of the *news item*, and the growing tendency toward both technological routinization and decreased individuality. Ray Bradbury utilized dystopian fiction to reintroduce the value of the individual intellectual and the consciousness which informs human actors to steer the course of his contemporary society toward a return to a humanist tradition that put the intellectual at its center. Bradbury's dystopia uses some of the Cold-War era threats to individualism, namely mechanized consumerism and rampant capitalism, to problematize how his society was devolving into one in which the intellectual individual was drowned by the deindividuated orthodox masses.

3.1 Awakening the Eccentric

My preliminary assessment of the fictional society depicted in *Fahrenheit 451*, which I refer to as FUS (Fahrenheit United States), is that its public sphere – a sphere in which sharing of ideas, thoughts, and critiques can happen in a fashion that gives the masses the power to resist or undermine established authorities – has been destroyed by having its culture suffused with apathy and capitalist consumption. This new and mindless orthodox mythos of consumption is perpetuated through new mediums such as the immersive parlor walls and the intrusive seashell

ear-thimbles. The process of the destruction of intellectualism showcases the corruption of freedom of information and educational institutions. This corruption is further emphasized by the fact that books are illegal in FUS. Reading itself is also illegal or taboo. Such restrictions are put in place due to a fear of books causing "social unrest" (Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari 1636) and thus posing unwanted questions to the growing capitalist and corporate influences that have turned the society depicted in *F451* into a training camp for manual laborers. The destruction of the freedom of information fosters a culture in which people never ask critical questions. The general population remains apathetic to socio-political issues while its members constantly consume mass media. The description we get of the school curriculum and the purpose of education can give us more insight into why FUS has turned out to be so apathetic and anti-intellectual:

> School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored. Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts? (Bradbury 62)

From this short passage, we can see that the focus of these schools is to make obedient manual workers who are far from intellectual. These fictional children are forced away from 'intellectual' subjects, and toward becoming routinized robots as their tasks become as simple as pressing buttons and pulling switches. The value of obedience is hammered into children by being bombarded with answers in school while asking questions has become another taboo (41). This manner of education promotes blind obedience and dissuades intellectualism or critical thinking.

Only technology can be relied upon because it remains the only real way to gain information. Instead of aiding individuals, however, technology and media are used to pound people "into submission" (80) by disrupting thoughts, conversations, and other intellectual pursuits. Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari explain that "relying on technologies for a solution is a hazardous act because it disrupts the introspection of an individual, leading to the psychological problem of understanding oneself and anxiety" (1637). This lack of understanding of the self is culturally and lawfully imposed on the individual in FUS by disallowing the individual from discovering and understanding themselves. Because of this imposition, the individual's free will and mind are repressed, and democracy is undermined. The general public is turned into

orthodox masses who have been shaped to be tools of corporate influences rather than thinking individuals.

The cultural trend which seeks to oppress and destroy individuality leads to the loss of any "rational-critical debate" (Habermas 161) that could have allowed for the expression of self-reflection and critique on a societal scale. Eccentrics are critical to the health and improvement of society because they can resist this process of internalizing the popular ideology and instead present different or unique insights and solutions. The masses' apathy and lack of intellectuality make them more susceptible to propaganda because they disregard reality and truth. We can return to Milligan's notion of "preference shaping" to assert that the democratic process is undermined as a result of how media functions to shape the preferences of "political agents" (94). In *F451*, these political agents are shaped to favor the tyrannous rule of corporate interests and the promotion of capitalism.

Despite the outward appearance of democracy in *F*451, the media is utilized by the state and special-interest groups to propagandize and advertise to such a degree that the notion of a democratic public sphere is completely undermined. For example, even the figure of Christ is "one of the 'family'" in the parlor and he is "a regular peppermint stick now, all sugar-crystal and saccharine when he isn't making veiled references to certain commercial products that every worshipper *absolutely* needs" (Bradbury 82). Even faith and religion are co-opted and commodified as tools of advertising to promote the overarching ideology of consumption that infects this society. It is never explicitly stated throughout *F451* that society is ruled by corporations, but every aspect of society revolves around the enabling of consumption to the point that we can gather an understanding of the power of corporations in this society. Elections are merely another entertainment show to consume (95), and education revolves around creating cheap manual laborers for corporations. Furthermore, the hyperreality of the masses – which is established by corporations – has become the 'new reality,' and thus anything of real importance is within their purview.

Montag is initially unable to resist the manipulation of having his preferences shaped by society. Montag's smile "never ever went away, as long as he remembered" (19) because he is unconscious of his unhappiness and enjoys his apathetic bliss. He even relishes propagating the system by burning books and people: "It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*" (Ibid.). From this description, we can

ascertain that Montag is initially a willing cog in the machine of oppression who is content with having his preferences shaped and that he enjoys oppressing others. Despite his smile, however, Montag is *not* happy. He is unable to realize this until he sees a reflection of himself in the young and curious eccentric Clarisse, who leaves him with the question, "Are you happy?" (24) after their first encounter. Through her curiosity and mirroring effect, Clarisse enables Montag to resist his indoctrination and preference shaping. Montag tries to convince himself that he is happy, but eventually, we see his smile "slide away" and he realizes that "He was not happy. […] He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back" (26). It is clear that Clarisse functions as a mirror to Montag: "He saw himself in her eyes" (22). Through this role, Clarisse enables Montag's self-reflection. She thus becomes directly responsible for waking Montag's consciousness. Clarisse is the first genuine eccentric we encounter in *F451* and she displays the unique ability to point out critical truths about society and Montag that he couldn't previously see. At the end of the novel, the eccentric intellectuals, including Montag, want to provide this same opportunity to others on a grand scale by building "a mirror-factory" to "take a long look in them" (149). Self-reflection is presented as the first step to creating a society that isn't ruled by an orthodox majority. For such a society to reflect on itself we need both eccentrics like Clarisse who dare to hold mirrors to society, and a public sphere in which critique and self-reflection are enabled. By going one step further, by making the collective orthodox masses take a look in the mirror, the eccentrics could awaken the masses' consciousness and thus avoid the bombing of other cities. The closest city to the eccentrics is destroyed at the end of the novel due to the masses within the city being unaware of the impending danger. However, the eccentrics survive because they abandoned this society before it was destroyed. The eccentrics have the unique ability to point out the imminent danger and make the public act on this information. Because of this ability to awaken the orthodox or unconscious, the eccentric is presented as critical to inducing self-reflection. By replicating Clarisse's ability to induce self-reflection, the eccentric could allow those within the hyperreality to escape it. Before Montag's awakening, he was unable to accurately reflect on himself or understand his unhappiness, but after Clarisse questions him, he becomes more similar to her by questioning the 'truth,' himself, and society at large.

Montag's critical realization that he is not happy is innately eccentric in his current society due to how his society demands that the masses remain obedient objects. Critical thinking, which Montag begins doing after his realization, is so unusual that his wife Mildred points out that "The man's *thinking*!" (32). Montag changes fundamentally and takes measures to evolve from his previous unconscious and passive state into an active and conscious state, but this change is viewed as dangerous and bizarre by the orthodoxy. Montag himself takes this stance when he calls Clarisse "an odd one" (23) after she continuously asks him uncomfortable or critical questions. He further asserts uneasily that she "think[s] too many things" (Ibid.) which highlights that he has not yet been converted to become an eccentric and that the notion of critical thought makes orthodox individuals uneasy. Clarisse's eccentricity is expressed by how she deviates from the masses by allowing herself to slow down to observe, think, and talk. She freely admits that she rarely watches the "'parlor walls' or go[es] to races or Fun Parks" (23-4), and as a result, she has "lots of time for crazy thoughts" (24). Based on how she differentiates herself from the norm, we can assert that her crazy thoughts, or rather eccentric thoughts, come as a result of not falling into the same cultural quagmire as the majority around her. The norm for how the orthodox majority interacts with physical reality is to race around in jet cars from A to B without truly observing the world around them. As opposed to her clarity and ability to point out critical truths, the heavily distorted view the orthodox majority have of reality is exemplified by how a "rose-garden" is not merely the "pink blur" it might be perceived as by jet-car drivers (23).

The initial moment of change induced by Clarisse is not the only thing pushing Montag into consciousness. Montag's initial realization is compounded by what he finds when he arrives home after the interaction with Clarisse: his wife, nearly dead, with a bottle of sleeping tablets lying "uncapped and empty" (27) on the floor. Mildred's suicide attempt makes him see the true state of his society for the first time. Everything 'real' had been hiding behind a façade of media consumption, adrenaline, sleeping tablets, and hollow smiles. Despite Mildred's general characterization as an obedient and orthodox member of their society, this suicide attempt can be considered an eccentric action due to being an expression of what I view to be her unconscious desire to escape orthodox society. Montag receives the only message Mildred can send: death is preferable to remaining helpless, voiceless, and unconscious. Montag's awakening is first internal, by questioning the subconscious 'fact' that he has always been happy, and then external,

when he realizes that the 'truth' of the world around him is far worse than he had previously thought. His quest for substance ultimately culminates within the first section of the novel when Montag dares to take the last step to become an eccentric and thus firmly oppose the orthodox majority. He tries reading a book (72).

Through his transformation into an eccentric, Montag becomes able to understand that something isn't right about his society despite his lacking the wisdom or knowledge to point to what is wrong exactly. Despite not being able to put words to his thoughts, beyond that he feels that the actions of himself and his fellow firemen are wrong somehow, Montag showcases his resistance to "technologies and media apparatuses of control" (McCorry 18). Montag accomplishes this by not being dissuaded from seeking to understand what is wrong with his society despite the indoctrination, manipulation, and coercion that occurs through the media apparatuses. Montag was initially a part of the orthodoxy, but after being pushed over the edge and transforming into an eccentric he becomes able to see society for what it really is. Furthermore, he seeks to help others see their society for what it is: an exploitative capitalist society that maintains a sham democracy to give the public the feeling of freedom and progression while in reality being governed by profit-oriented corporations. Based on my analysis in this section, I conclude that Bradbury argues for returning the value to the individual intellectual eccentric and against the growing mechanical consumerism and rampant capitalism which seek to turn thinking individuals into mindless consumers and cheap labor.

3.2 The Individual versus Apathy and Disruption

> 'When did we meet. And where?' 'When did we meet for what?' she asked. 'I mean-originally.' He knew she must be frowning in the dark. He clarified it. "The first time we ever met, where was it, and when?' 'Why, it was at –' She stopped. 'I don't know,' she said. He was cold. 'Can't you remember?' 'It's been so long.' 'Only ten years, that's all, only ten!' 'Don't get excited, I'm trying to think.' She laughed an odd little laugh that went up and up. 'Funny, how funny, not to remember where or when you met your husband or wife.' (Bradbury 51-2)

Part II of *Fahrenheit 451*, "The Sieve and the Sand" (73), revolves around the retention of knowledge and the difficulty of concentrating in the face of this society which stuffs its citizens' heads with propaganda and advertisement rather than information about social or political issues.

Beyond the difficulty in retaining information from literature, as Montag attempts to do, even the details of one's own life are blurred. Even the first meeting of Mildred and Montag, a married couple of ten years, is forgotten. This forgetfulness of details that pertain to 'real life' signifies that the society they live in is so distracting that real-life details become indistinct. Influencing them becomes easier because they, similarly to the public in *1984*, become disconnected from their history and memories. This disconnect is created by stuffing their heads with entertainment, 'fun,' drugs, and mindless tasks that promote only living in the moment to such a great extent that the past vanishes. The culture of FUS promotes this disconnect further by outlawing literature, altering history, promoting instant gratification, and creating a hyperreality in a fictional media world. The masses' apathy, complacency, and obedience as objects are retained because the general population isn't allowed the respite to grow from their mistakes or memories. The masses are instead kept in a perpetual cycle of consumption, addiction, and adrenaline while records of the past are altered or not kept properly as exemplified by the firemen not knowing that their vocation was once held by firemen who *prevented* fires rather than starting them. This perpetual present shapes the masses to be more easily distracted from real issues and instead be drawn to the hyperreal. Throughout this section of the novel, it is evident that even the action of reading has become practically impossible due to the continuous disruption of advertisements and the massive pressure of the orthodox masses which surrounds the lonely eccentric.

Montag creates a parallel between his mind and a sieve through the realization that "the faster he poured, the faster it sifted" (79). One of the reasons Montag has great issues with retaining knowledge is likely due to the pressure of his understanding that he will be punished – either physically by being burned by firemen or by becoming a social outcast – and thus the narrator makes remarks about daring to hold "the book in his hands" despite the "people in the suction train" (Ibid.). Montag is actively breaching the great taboo of reading in public and thus experiences the oppressive feeling of being viewed as crazy by the orthodox masses surrounding him. Furthermore, while reading, "the words fell through" as he is thinking about how he will hand the book over to Beatty "in a few hours" (Ibid.). As a result of these unceasing thoughts, anxieties, and social pressure, Montag is desperate to make sure that "no phrase must escape me, each line must be memorized" (Ibid.), but this desperation to cram knowledge in turn makes it far more difficult for him to recall what he has read. The inability to retain knowledge isn't

merely an issue Montag has but is instead representative of a potential broad social issue that Bradbury considers through the lens of *F451*. This social issue is simply that media disrupts the individual's ability to retain memories, and that our modern technological society negatively impacts the development of intellectuality and sense of self. Because memories and records of the past disappear quickly, the individual cannot properly reflect on them. Instead, the individual is ushered into the next 'exciting,' or 'fun,' experience to practically override memories through excess stimulation. Simply put, the continuous stimulation and shorter attention span of the individual make them inhabit a continuous present while the past quickly fades from their underdeveloped brains that weren't properly educated.

While Montag does his utmost to retain sand – knowledge – in his sieve of a mind created through a severely lacking education and the taboo of intellectualism, he is not only disrupted by internal forces such as his anxiety, fear, and lack of education, but also by the external forces of media, and due to the coercive pressure from both going against a cultural taboo and the fear of his fellow firemen. The small amount of knowledge he can retain isn't even a single sentence, but only a word: "lilies" (80). This search for knowledge cannot compete against the persistence of the commercial for "Denham's Dentifrice" (Ibid.), which blares again and again, disrupting his concentration and his basic ability to even *think* a complete sentence, much less read or have a conversation.

This sequence of events puts forth the notion a culture of intrusive and all-encompassing mediums makes concentration and thinking practically impossible to reinforce anti-intellectualism. This representation of a dystopian society's way of handling new advancing technologies seems to represent the fear of addictive new media technology and immersive experiences devoid of real substance – or at least devoid of an immediate apparent substance in the eyes of the generation which had grown up without the constant presence of TV or radio. Additionally, the continuous disruption of thoughts and conversation by advertisement shapes a public sphere that is disinterested in 'debate' and instead insists that one needs to submit to the culture of consumption together with the rest of the majority. Eccentricity and individuality are suppressed in favor of uniformity within the system of consumption.

Cultural consumption and repression of individuality depicted in *F451* are best exemplified in Mildred. Her unhappiness is already established in the reader's first encounter with her due to her having just attempted to kill herself. She is critical to understand because she

most aptly fits into the orthodox masses that are exploited by the corporate capitalist system in FUS. Mildred is obsessed with simple pleasures gained from media lacking substance and laughter. We can especially see this from her repeated proclamations about some programs that "It's sure fun" (33), despite her inability to say anything substantial about the show. Mildred is one of the main figures who is a "parody of humanity" (Horkheimer and Adorno 112) in *F451* because she substitutes happiness for the 'fun' the parlor provides. Mildred's existence in a hyperreality, and as an orthodox consumer, is confirmed when she states that "my `family' is people. They tell me things; *I* laugh, *they* laugh! And the colors!" (74). The 'people' she is talking about are no more real than the stories in books, but she has immersed herself so deeply in the parlor – a TV room with screens that fill entire walls and which has characters that evolve through the effort of the person watching or 'playing' it – that the fictional characters of lights, colors, and sounds have become more real to her than anything else. Mildred lives completely in a simulated world full of entertainment and fun, and thus she becomes disinterested in the physical world with its lack of colors or laughter. Her new simulated reality seems to her to be more real than the 'real' and thus can be categorized as what Baudrillard terms "hyperreal" (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 50). Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari use the concept of "Self-Image" (1635) to explain the lack of self-consciousness and personality that Mildred exemplifies, which is a broader issue of the entire fictional society depicted in *F451*. They go on to explain that one's self-image is crucial to develop one's personality, and that "when an individual becomes conscious of the imposed self-image and tries to flee from it, he is branded as an outcast and made to suffer" (Ibid.). This is the journey Montag goes through as his self-image transforms from decay to self-actualization.

To get a better grasp on addiction to television, which the addiction to the fictional parlor in *F451* is a metaphor for, we can look to a 1991 study that asserts that the addiction to TV "means dependence on the television medium itself, regardless of whatever content happens to be on" (McIlwraith and Jacobvitz 104). This assertion grants McLuhan's contention that "the medium is the message" (2) by showcasing the impact of the medium on society and the individual. More than the content which manipulates the population of the fictional societies of *1984* and *F451*, it is the new mediums introduced into these societies that alter them over time.

Despite the new technological mediums in FUS, one medium in particular is outlawed: books. Beatty claims that the reason books are outlawed is that they cause conflicts by offending

one group or another because they can be used both for and against an argument (Bradbury 104). Because of this contradictory nature, however, the solution is to burn them. Burning the books removes the need to face the contradiction. The issue with this is that the books themselves are only a receptacle for the ideas they contain. When the ideas the book contains aren't contended with, the burning doesn't solve anything. Instead, the burning is akin to shoving problems into a closet and hoping that they go away rather than daring to sort through them. This, however, only remains the cover for the real reason. The main reason books are outlawed is that they are conducive to critical thought, individuality, and discussion. Books are a medium that lends itself to deeper thinking, and this medium is – in *F451* – replaced with a medium, the televisor, and the parlor walls, that does the opposite by shaping people to not have to think at all. The three fields of critical thought, individuality, and discussion aren't allowed to flourish because they would undercut the rampant consumerism depicted in *F451*. This assessment of books remains one of the primary reasons for making books illegal within the fictional world of *F451*: the possibility of interpreting books in different ways is conducive to debate, critical thinking, and the public sphere in general – notions that work against the masses' being anti-intellectual, obedient, mechanized manual laborers. The multiplicity in interpretations of books makes the 'majority' uncomfortable, and thus to remove this chaotic and unstable element – which definitely functions as eccentric thoughts written down – books are outlawed. The other reason which is given as to why books are banned is that there are always those who will take offense to books, and thus there is no way to please everyone as long as books still exist. This conversation is cut short when they are interrupted by the sudden ringing of the station bell (104-5). Such interruptions continuously disturb the individuals living in FUS to the point that it makes it nearly impossible for a public sphere to develop. This difficulty is also exemplified during the oppression Montag experiences on the train as a result of being bombarded by media advertisements.

Montag's conclusion to his confusion and search for happiness in a world of simulation is that "books might help," but Faber points out that "Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them at all. The magic is only in what books say" (83). The reason books are singled out is due to their "quality" and "pores" (Ibid.). Faber explains: "The more pores, the more truthfully recorded details of life per square inch you can get on a sheet of paper, the more 'literary' you are" (Ibid.). Books are celebrated for daring to have a substance consisting of real or truthful depictions of

life – even if such depictions are hurtful – as well as critiques of society. These critiques function as a mirror for society to reflect on itself by the depiction of its flaws or pores. In a sense, books function as eccentric thoughts written down due to how they can be unstable elements in society and induce consciousness in the reader. Books are not only open to but indeed require reader participation and interpretation. Thus, books require a certain amount of critical thinking and intellectuality which other media made simply for consumption may not require. Rather than reading books, which dare to "show the pores in the face of life" in an eccentric fashion, people instead want to remain comfortable by only seeing "poreless, hairless, expressionless" faces (Ibid.). Essentially, people want to remain unchallenged in their ways of life and attitudes without having to think critically about social or political issues. Facing complicated books that may contradict one's beliefs may be difficult, but it is necessary for the individual to grow. The fact that *F451* outlaws books, and that books can function as eccentric thoughts written down, puts the society in *F451* in opposition to eccentric thoughts. Any notions that differ from the orthodoxy are outlawed exactly because they can incite change and oppose the orthodoxy's ideology. By this logic, it makes perfect sense for FUS to outlaw books and intellectual activities such as reading books.

The individual – despite relinquishing their freedom to a state controlled by corporations that exploit them – is subconsciously disturbed by this new culture of mindless consumption, repression of critical thought, and the realm of the hyperreal. Mildred and Beatty are perhaps the best individual examples of the orthodox majority, who are trapped as obedient subjects in the realm of the hyperreal. Despite their ideological adherence to the orthodoxy in their society, they act freely at some junctures. When they finally act on the disturbing knowledge of their oppression and depression, however, they seek death. Mildred attempts to kill herself by overdosing on sleeping pills, while Montag realizes that "*Beatty wanted to die*" due to his "not really trying to save himself," and instead provoking Montag while he is armed (114). This suicidality is described as a common occurrence in FUS, while children dying has become a 'normal' part of their culture through the normalization of violent games such as "Car Wrecker," "Window Smasher," racing, and generally inflicting pain on others and oneself (41). This violence has led ten of Clarisse's friends to die in car accidents in the "last year alone," while six of them "have been shot" (Ibid.). Death becomes more than casual. Death becomes desirable due to being the only way to return to the *real*, and this further underlines the extremely harmful

culture of a society based in a hyperreal world that seeks to exploit them rather than aid them. There is no path of discussion and problem-solving in FUS because of the lack of a public sphere. Because problems cannot be faced, they have to be ignored. However, when ignoring a problem doesn't prevent it, death becomes the most likely outcome. Bradbury problematizes the inability to face problems or hard truths and establishes the ability to face the truth as critical for the health of society and the individual. The eccentric figure enables both individuals and society to face such truths by presenting unique perspectives and posing opposition to the orthodoxy. The eccentrics' direct conflict with the orthodoxy forces the orthodoxy to face them, while books lack this ability despite their eccentric content. The awakening of the orthodox masses through being exposed to conflict, provocation, and difficult truths is not only critical because it allows individuals to regain their freedom and consciousness, but also because it counteracts the avoidance strategy of the orthodoxy.

The manifestation of repressed emotions in violence, and the inability to express them as anything but suicidality, presents Bradbury's critique as gravely important for the health of a society and depicts the enforcement of orthodoxy and the lack of a public sphere as fundamentally damaging not only to the social fabric but also to the individual and their mental state. Some may consider this as an instance of what Mark Seltzer calls the "pathological public sphere" because the fictional violence depicted in *F451* shares a similar "fascination with the shock of contact between bodies and technologies" (3). However, the society depicted in *F451* has gone beyond the fascination of "wounded bodies and wounded minds in public," and thus Seltzer's notion of "*wound culture*" doesn't seem to be entirely accurate (Ibid.). If our contemporary society could be considered a *wound culture*, then the culture in *F451* is a potential future culture that has been so engrossed in violence that it has lost its impact. I find that FUS' culture of ceaseless violence without particular care about the spectacle or the wound can be considered what I term either a *post-pathological public sphere* or an *apathalogical public sphere*. This culture revolves around the personal catharsis of the act of violence itself or as a way to express defiance against a society that prohibits the individual from genuine expression through words. This search for catharsis through violence is exemplified by how Montag initially relishes setting things on fire, and when he needs to express himself he gets the itch to "smash things and kill things" (Bradbury 69). Mildred encourages Montag to "take the beetle" (Ibid.) and have fun by running over "rabbits" (Bradbury 70) or "dogs" (Ibid.).

Additionally, this apathy toward, or relish of, violence is further exemplified by the casual and common deaths of children as a result of gunfire, car accidents, and other violent games which are presented as being played for *fun* while in reality, they are simply culturally acceptable and normalized to the point that the supposed 'fun' instead traps the individual in a cycle of adrenaline addiction. The reason I differentiate between this apathy, or relish of violence, and Seltzer's notion of a pathological public sphere is because violence in *F451* has become so normalized that it has lost its impact as a spectacle and thus the fascination with wounds is lessened. Violence has become the baseline for the expression of emotions in *F451* because no other means of expression is made available to the general public.

We can expand on the notion of a culturally enforced and normalized 'fun' that in truth has become a requirement rather than something the masses can choose to participate in by invoking Horkheimer and Adorno who contend that "Fun is a medicinal bath which the entertainment industry never ceases to prescribe. It makes laughter the instrument for cheating happiness" (112). Let us put this assertion into dialogue with Captain Beatty – the greatest representation of the system depicted in *F451*. This is his notion of happiness:

> What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these. (Bradbury 65)

Beatty assesses that people want to be happy, but his solution is to "keep them moving" and "give them fun." This 'fun' comes in the shape of what Beatty describes as "your clubs and parties, your acrobats and magicians, your dare-devils, jet cars, motorcycle helicopters, your sex and heroin," as well as dramas and films (67). Beatty sums up these aspects of the culture by concluding, "But I don't care. I just like solid entertainment" (Ibid). This culture revolves around mindless entertainment, and Beatty reinforces this as beneficial to develop happiness among the general population. He asserts that pleasure and titillation are happiness, but that is far from the truth. Instead of happiness, the individual and collective are prescribed 'fun' by the entertainment industry as well as the overall consumer society. Thus the cycle of continuous consumption is sustained while happiness remains out of reach.

As opposed to the skewed view of reality individuals have when living in this consumer society, we can look to the "special silence" (134), which Montag experiences among the eccentric collective toward the end of *F451*, to observe the closest thing to an authentic experience of reality depicted in the novel. This silence surrounds a group who give themselves "time enough to sit by this rusting track under the trees, and look at the world and turn it over with the eyes" (Ibid.). Montag explains that when they talked, "The voices talked of everything, there was nothing they could not talk about, he knew, from the very cadence and motion and continual stir of curiosity and wonder in them" (Ibid.). These fictional people have created a microcosmic public sphere, and thus they would have been labeled eccentrics by the orthodox masses. Even these isolated eccentrics, however, are not completely removed from the hyperreal cycle of consumption due to the "portable battery TV" they use to watch "the chase" of Montag (135). Different from the constant desire Mildred has to immerse herself in the parlor, however, "Granger turned it off" (137) soon after they witnessed the false proclamation of Montag's death. Through this action, they showcase that they aren't completely addicted and enthralled by mass media, and thus that there is value in mass media as long as one doesn't immerse oneself in it to the point of viewing the virtual world inside it as more real than 'reality.' Bradbury's focus is not on simply vilifying media itself, but rather on the way media – as a tool mirroring how fire turns from a horrible and destructive to a positive and warming element – can become an addictive instrument used to control, manipulate, advertise, and indoctrinate.

To understand how the new medium of the televisor parlor impacts the individual, we need to look at the separation of Mildred into two versions of herself. In response to Montag's existential talk about a woman he had killed, as well as the people behind the writing of books and the effort put into them, which he wipes away in "two minutes" when burning them, Mildred responds with "Let me alone […] I didn't do anything" as though Montag's conversation is a *punishment* to her (58-9). Indeed, Mildred feels that whenever Montag brings up a difficult topic, he is deliberately *bothering* her as a way to punish her. Montag insists that "We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while" and continues by asking, "How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?" before he remembers her suicide attempt (Ibid.). The recollection of Mildred's past suicide attempt and her current anguish at being bothered makes Montag realize that there was "another Mildred […] so deep inside this one, and so bothered, really bothered, that the two women had never met"

(Ibid.). This conflict between Mildred's indifference to the world, supposed happiness, and her suicidality, suggests to me that the culture in FUS is so repressive that true emotions can only be expressed through such a drastic shift in personality. Another example that supports this argument is Beatty, who is initially presented as the antagonist and representation of the system but who ultimately seeks to die without being able to communicate this desire through words.

The masses' inability to communicate is based on the desire for easy consumption rather than debate or conflict. Because these individuals cannot contend with their problems through critical thinking and communication, they seek the ultimate escape to no longer have to face them. The orthodox masses relish easy consumption without conflict to such a degree that they can only talk "*things*" to avoid considering anything of substance such as the "*meaning* of things" (76). Clarisse's observation that "People don't talk about anything" reinforces this: "They name a lot of cars or clothes or swimming-pools mostly and say how swell! But they all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else" (42). People don't dare to talk about the meaning of things because that could lead to conflict or losing their immersion in the simple and unproblematic world of the hyperreal. The notion that all people have become the same supports McCorry's point that during this period the routinization of technology and mass production of culture churned out "passive consumers" who consumed "the same standardised and homogenous products of a mass culture industry" (4). The ease of consuming media and the lack of substantial issues that crop up through the apathetic manner in which the masses in FUS interact with reality results in a diminishing desire for a public sphere to be established at all.

The inability of the masses in *F451* to talk about the meaning of things is further emphasized by Mildred's inability to face the reason Montag threw up on the rug after burning a woman. This inability is symptomatic of a broader cultural issue in *F451* which concerns the destruction of the public sphere through the ease media grants to the viewer, the destruction of the educational system, the cultural resistance to facing problems – which are instead burned or ignored – and the taboo of the eccentric. Montag, according to their culture, ought not to question the system or feel remorse for upholding its values, and thus his existential crisis makes Mildred experience more unease than Montag did when questioned by Clarisse earlier in the novel. Mildred instead incessantly focuses on the practical point that "It's a good thing the rug's washable" (Bradbury 57) instead of daring to give a Montag an actual answer when he even explicitly states that the reason he threw up is that "We burned an old woman with her books"

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(Ibid.). Mildred has no, or at least cannot showcase, concern for Montag's emotions as a result of how their culture restricts expression and thought. She can only talk *things* because to talk the *meaning* of things means breaking away from the immersion of the hyperreality induced by the ease of media consumption: It means being eccentric and thus an outcast to be punished.

The realm of the metaphysical is dead to Mildred within her hyperreal, simulated world, and she cannot even face the notion of its existence. If she did, she would also have to face the horror of her depression, oppression, and all the other factors which led to her suicide attempt. Because of the overarching and complete denial of anything that 'bothers' her and others in FUS, however, it is impossible for anyone belonging to the orthodox majority to face these difficult concepts. Mildred might even be completely honest when she says, "I didn't do that" (32) because the one who did attempt to take her life is so repressed that she is a completely separate personality. Based on Mildred's inability to face her suicide attempt or her unhappiness, we can firmly assert that the lack of a public sphere and the destruction of 'eccentric' actions or thoughts damages the individual on a fundamental level. This damage is at least partially caused by the individual having to repress their true feelings and experiences in favor of a pretty façade that cannot hold up against true conflict. This society not only represses the individual and splits their external façade from their true emotions by making it difficult and illegal to truly express those emotions, but it also cuts off the individual from "time to think":

> If you're not driving a hundred miles an hour, at a clip where you can't think of anything else but the danger, then you're playing some game or sitting in some room where you can't argue with the four-wall televisor. Why? The televisor is 'real.' It is immediate, it has dimension. It tells you what to think and blasts it in. It *must* be, right. It *seems* so right. It rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn't time to protest, 'What nonsense!' (84)

The televisor in the parlor becomes the only 'real' thing by blasting the individual with information while simultaneously depriving them of the consciousness and time to process the information enough to resist it. This immediacy is so forceful that it *has* to be right. The hyperreal is induced by this process of stuffing the heads of the masses with "non-combustible data" (67) so that it becomes impossible to rid oneself of this useless data that takes up swathes of the limited capacity of those in this society which purposefully restricts intellectual exercises and learning useful information. The hyperreality of FUS becomes even *more* real not only due

to its immediacy but by turning the televisor characters of the 'family' into the only people who exist. In turn, this makes everyone who is not a part of the parlor family out to be fictional or less than human. Mildred might believe she shouldn't have to answer, or answer to, Montag because he is not as real as her parlor 'family.' The rest of the world becomes less real than the hyperreal and this fosters apathy toward the 'real' world. This apathy toward the external world becomes her and, by extension, their society's downfall:

> He saw her leaning toward the great shimmering walls of color and motion where the family talked and talked and talked to her, where the family prattled and chatted and said her name and smiled at her and said nothing of the bomb that was an inch, now a half inch, now a quarter inch from the top of the hotel. (145)

Mildred is so obsessed with immersing herself in the parlor televisor that she remains oblivious to the fatal bomb until it kills her. This notion of being so immersed in a medium which says nothing about the real dangers or uncomfortable truths of the world is so dangerous because it allows for people like Mildred to remain unconscious while being under threat. She, and many others like her, either cannot or chose not to see the 'real' physical world even when it is threatening their existence, and this possibility seems to scare Bradbury.

The consensus in FUS when it comes to problems is to ignore them as Mildred does with the bomb that ultimately kills her. The alternative is to burn it, rather than face it. The reason fire is "so lovely" and beautiful, is, in the words of Beatty that "it destroys responsibility and consequences. A problem gets too burdensome, then into the furnace with it" (108). This way of treating problems is not merely how Beatty deals with problems, but how the society Montag lives in deals with problems. Even Montag himself cannot avoid this when he ultimately deals with the problem of Beatty and the hound by incinerating them both: "Beatty, he thought, you're not a problem now. You always said, don't face a problem, burn it. Well, now I've done both" (113). Despite Montag's newfound ability to face a problem, his solution is still to burn it. This showcases growth on some level, but also the difficulty in changing one's mindset away from the mindset of the orthodoxy. Montag might be able to turn on the orthodoxy, but he still utilizes their methods to be rid of the problem. His imagination and consciousness had been stunted by the culture around him and his lack of real education, but he is still able to realize that "We never burned *right*" (111). Despite his realization about what is wrong, he still cannot point to exactly what is right. To do this, Montag requires time to experience the world away from the hyperreal.

He needs to reflect on himself and grow. The group of intellectual eccentrics Montag joins toward the end of the novel offers him this opportunity.

Throughout this section, I hope that I have demonstrated that a society like the one depicted in *F451* is deficient. The factors that I have brought up throughout this section can give us an understanding of how new technology and mindless media consumption can corrode culture and society at large. The main point to take away from this is that we cannot allow our society to turn into the society depicted in *F451*, because such a society has stagnated and even regressed due to its cultural repression of intellectuality, consciousness, and eccentricity. The inability to consider problems, the obsession with the parlor and consumption of media, the taboo of intellectuality, and the constant disruption of the individual to keep them in a perpetual present all lead to societal and individual stagnation. The economy in FUS is structured to keep the masses consuming products that they have to replace often, while the producers of said products gain more influence and wealth. Such an economy of cheap replacements and consumption is not only present in fictional societies but has become a large part of modern capitalism in our societies. By understanding the warning of *F451*, we can realize that modern consumption of mass-produced products and entertainment may be an impediment to the development of the individual and reinforce an orthodoxy based on the exploitation of resources and people. Corporations are incentivized to stagnate personal development and freedom because it is profitable, and this is also the practice we can observe in *F451*. The solution to this issue would be to take away the control the corporations wield, but because governments often align themselves with or even similarly practice such exploitation, the entire structure of this society would require upheaval for any real change to take effect. This factor of remaining separate from the system would require incorruptibility, or at least the integrity to refuse corporations while continuing to wield their power for the benefit of the masses. Because creating an incorruptible organization is hardly realistic, one might instead attack the ideology and economic system underpinning exploitation for profit: the corporate capitalist system.

3.3 ISAs and the Public Sphere

The public sphere of FUS is undermined by how the culture depicted creates unconscious and deindividuated subjects. Substantial taboos in this culture include critical thinking, discussion, and being inquisitive. The individual's inability to communicate due to taboos surrounding

communication leads to adverse consequences such as the suicide attempts of the two characters Mildred and Beatty. This inability can be attributed to the culture in FUS which has formed as a result of influence by various Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that seem to reinforce and increase the rate of degradation away from a democratic and free culture. Initially, this change might have happened naturally due to the creation of new mediums, but these new mediums were in turn integrated into already existing ISAs. The concept of Ideological State Apparatuses encompasses organized aspects of a society that function to uphold the overall system because the apparatuses themselves might be destroyed or altered too much without the protection of the status quo the system provides. Different from the ISAs, Althusser asserts the critical role of *the* Repressive State Apparatus as "securing by force (physical or otherwise) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the last resort *relations of exploitation*" (1294). Furthermore, *the* State Apparatus also "secures by repression (from the most brutal physical force, via mere administrative commands and interdictions, to open and tacit censorship) the political conditions for the action of the Ideological State Apparatuses" (Ibid.). The function of the ISAs that have collapsed the public sphere in *F451*, and altered its culture, was ultimately secured by the willingness of the Repressive State Apparatus to use coercion to achieve its goals, but over time the need for coercion diminished because ISAs became able to uphold the "reproduction of relations of production" (Ibid.) through culture, media, and ideology rather than by relying on coercion.

To understand how the public sphere of *Fahrenheit 451*'s society has collapsed, we need to look to the education and information apparatuses in particular. Both of these ISAs are integral to indoctrinating both current and future generations by shaping culture and understanding of reality to benefit the system these ISAs serve. In the case of *F451*, the system these ISAs serve is capitalism. The ISAs in question create obedient worker-bees rather than intellectuals in the school system and promote cultural anti-intellectuality through media. The culture that emerges from these ISAs seeks to prohibit real conversation and thought while posing as a force for social justice by prohibiting literature to shield minorities and deter intellectual conflicts. The consequence of making FUS a post-literate society is that technology gains a "monopoly on information" to control knowledge, restrict intellectuality and ultimately create uniformity in "thought processes, ideologies, motives" (Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari 1636). These restrictions, and

the uniformity they create, ultimately lead to socio-political apathy which the scholars Jerrin and Bhuvaneswari refer to as the "primary source of dystopia in the novel" (Ibid.).

One of the consequences of enforcing this culture is that people are "arrested […] for being a pedestrian" (Bradbury 24) because being a pedestrian could allow you to observe the world in detail while giving the individual time to think. Front porches are also removed because "that was the wrong *kind* of social life. People talked too much. And they had time to think" (69). It is apparent that this culture is engineered to resist anything which could aid in shaping a genuine and open public sphere by restricting speech, conversation, and thought to keep the masses captivated in a state of apolitical, apathetic, and passive consumption of media. By prohibiting intellectualism while providing content and products to be consumed, the system creates robotic, deindividuated humans who submit to the system because they are addicted to what it provides. The horrible education system highlights the anti-intellectuality of this culture by simply getting "a bunch of people together and then not let them talk," while their curriculum is described as "An hour of TV class, and hour of basketball […] another hour of transcription history or painting pictures, and more sports," while the students "never ask questions" and then "sit […] there for four more hours of film-teacher" (41). This 'film-teacher' seems to suggest using media as a teacher in a way that mirrors modern online classes, but the novel depicts this as anti-intellectual by presenting it as though the children are simply put in front of media to stare at it without actively participating in anything educational. Rather than a genuine attempt at education, this system seems to be an attempt at making the children obedient and orthodox while ensuring that they become manual laborers rather than intellectuals.

At first, the culture depicted in *F451* changed naturally over time: "The public itself stopped reading of its own accord" (87). The lacking education system, the prohibition of books, and the criminalization of being a pedestrian are results of cultural trends. These alterations, however, were influenced by the growing popularity of a new medium – the televisor parlor – in contrast to the shrinking traditional media or literature. This fictional society seems to project Bradbury's worries that the culture and social fabric of his contemporary society would be irreparably damaged as a result of the new technologies such as TV and radio, by dissolving the ability of the masses to resist media influence. The underlying reason for this fear is likely that the new mediums seem to promote anti-intellectuality by shaping the culture into one of consumption rather than debate. By threatening intellectuality, these new mediums also threaten

the public sphere in which intellectuality can be honed or expressed. If the mode of interaction with reality becomes consumption rather than active participation, then the worry might be that democracy loses its value due to a lack of willing participation by the public in the governing of its society. The mode of consumption is susceptible to manipulation because it seeks to shape people *not* to participate, and this cultural change would gravely affect democracy over time as the general populace grows apathetic to the amassing of influence and wealth by corporations or the exploitation and manipulation of citizens. We see this desire not to participate manifest in Mildred's reaction to being *bothered* by Montag's bringing up his emotional turmoil after killing a woman, as well as in the lack of consideration of policies of candidates she and her friends voted for (95).

Ultimately, this desire to not be bothered manifests as the antithesis of a public sphere because it incentivizes avoiding conflict, truth, and pain even if these prospects would aid the general public. The struggle which creates meaning is exchanged for blissful and meaningless ease. As a solution to this, we meet Montag, Clarisse, Faber, and the collective of eccentrics at the end of the novel. Through the eccentric's ability to enable self-reflection, a new public sphere and humanism can be established separately from the current society. This humanism would revolve around the ability of humans to improve themselves and society by allowing for dissenting opinions, eccentric individuals, and new ideas. By enabling a new humanism, Bradbury encourages the healing of society and a return to individuality which would allow the docile, animalesque masses to realize the state of their oppression and enable society to face threats against their civilization. The violence depicted in the explosion toward the end of *F451* warns what could happen if people solely existed in the virtual spaces while not considering real socio-political issues. As opposed to McCorry's argument, this violence is *not* a call to violence against the orthodox masses on behalf of the individual intellectual or eccentric. The violence does indeed function as a warning against a society becoming dependent on 'blindness' as a solution, but it is the trend that made the violence occur without resistance in the first place which is problematized. It is not necessarily the orthodox 'herd' who are critiqued. It is instead the means, systems, and influencing forces that take advantage of new mediums to manipulate the masses into becoming mindless consumers that require contention.

The eccentrics could have remained living peacefully away from civilization at the end of *F451*, but they purposefully *chose* to return to the rotten civilization with a desire to return life to

society and to usher in "*the healing of the nations*" (150). This return to civilization presents this eccentric collective as the true solution to help deindividuated subjects gain consciousness. This may be achieved by having this collective serve as the foundation for a new culture that values individuality, critical thinking, and freedom. This would allow individuals to remain conscious and involved in the politics of their society as a result of retaining their subjectivity and intellectual autonomy. A culture that revolves around being conscious and involved in improving society for the betterment of the general population would lend itself to the creation of a new humanism that strives for even greater improvements.

One goal of such a new humanism would likely be to avoid having atomic wars waged on behalf of an apathetic public by giving the public back the voices which new media technologies sought to take away. Montag explains that "We've started and won two atomic wars since 1960!" (75). These wars are waged on behalf of the people by the state, and this choice subsequently leads to the complete annihilation of the nameless city in which most of the events in *F451* take place. Montag questions why people don't want to talk about the war, and this is his conclusion: "Is it because we're having so much fun at home we've forgotten the world? Is it because we're so rich and the rest of the world's so poor and we just don't care if they are? I've heard rumors; the world is starving, but we're well-fed" (Ibid.). Through these questions and statements, Montag encapsulates why the orthodox masses remain apathetic despite the threat of atomic war. His society is infested with consumption and a constant drive for immediate 'fun' as a result of their wealth derived from capitalism. As a result of being well-fed and provided with 'fun,' the masses have become apathetic to how their lives are used by the state to further expand their influence and domination by *starting* atomic wars despite knowing that they will cause millions to die. Due to the indoctrination of their populace, the choice of whether or not the masses are willing to bear such losses is taken from them by precluding the masses from thinking, discussing, and learning politics. The lives of "ten million men" (Bradbury 91), and many more civilians, rather than the supposed million that is revealed in the fictional media within FUS, become the sacrifice for the expansion of a capitalist agenda that might give the rest of the masses their 'fun' and food at the cost of being manipulated and enslaved by the mediums they rely on.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the eccentric remains crucial to point out the truth of any society as a force against tyranny, orthodoxy, indoctrination, and

manipulation. The fictional society in *F451* is steeped in repression, depression, and consumerism, and is ultimately controlled by an orthodox majority who live purely in the hyperreal due to the cultural enforcement of consumption. One of the main hindrances to the society depicted in *F451* is the public's refusal to face hard truths and instead be content with living in the hyperreal. This fictional society mirrors our contemporary society in many ways, one of the main ways being the extent to which we exist in a consumer society in which the *fun* prescribed by the media and entertainment industry enables the cycle of consumption. There is no true substance to the society presented in *F451*, and all meaning has become abstract because anti-intellectualism has become a cultural norm enforced by suppressing or killing eccentrics. The possibility for substance is further hindered by destroying the public sphere through means such as making books illegal, making conversation and thinking culturally unacceptable or even illegal, and enforcing the media's prescribed fun and consumption as the only acceptable way to engage with reality. Ultimately, *F451* is a critique of such a bleak society. Through my analysis, I have engaged with and promoted the eccentric as someone who can hold mirrors to the self, society, and the system in a fashion which supports the realizations the fictional people in *F451* attain. The eccentric is crucial to question the sanity of the hyperreal and to force people to see the truth, and thus the eccentric's role is to incite change. Enabling eccentricity will lead to self-reflection and lay the foundation for the establishment of a new humanism that seeks to improve society rather than control it. The hope that Bradbury seems to convey through his writing is that this would lead to an overall better society that has a genuine public sphere and a democratic culture that enables participation rather than an apathetic acceptance of the status quo. The alternative is a society that has an orthodox majority that cannot look themselves in the mirror because they fear what they might find. We might never be able to see every detail of ourselves or society through self-reflection, but we can try.

4 Re-establishing a Public Sphere: Media, totalitarianism, and the failed eccentric in *1984*

How does *1984* aid us in understanding the threat of new media technology concerning totalitarianism while promoting the value of the eccentric? This chapter will explore the themes apparent in George Orwell's *1984* which regard totalitarian ideology, the eccentric, the impact of new mediums, and the public sphere. The examinations of Orwell's *1984* are so diverse that it is difficult to narrow down the criticism, but totalitarianism remains a central theme almost regardless of the more specific subjects explored. To add to this discourse, I introduce the concepts of the eccentric and the public sphere, while I seek to understand how media can be used to coerce and control larger groups of people than was possible previously. These concepts add to the discourse surrounding *1984* by providing a framework to showcase how to work toward establishing a democratic culture in a totalitarian society. Through my analysis, I present how the Party utilizes media, coercion, and manipulation to separate individuals socially and thus lessen the possible impact of eccentrics. This oppression takes shape in many forms, but one critical form is how the Party actively works against freedom of thought and intellectuality. This presents the Party's ideology as the antithesis to humanism and eccentricity, but the Party's horrific practices and ideals can function as an impetus for us to embrace both humanism and eccentricity to have a chance at resisting potential future totalitarian regimes. We must avoid making the same mistake as Winston does when he embraces Emmanual Goldstein's ideology because it is presented as opposing the ideology of the Party. We need to instead consider potential solutions critically to counteract totalitarianism before it can take root.

4.1 Preventing Resistance to an Ideology

The Party bases its power on "inflicting pain and humiliation" while seeking to tear "human minds to pieces" and put them "together again in new shapes" (Orwell 279). The principal representative of the Party, O'Brien, distinguishes the Party from the "stupid hedonistic Utopias the old reformers imagined" by not disguising itself behind the veneer of "love or justice" (Ibid.). To achieve this new world, however, the Party requires the breaking down of past "habits of thoughts" (Ibid.) from before the revolution, as well as of bonds between "child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman" (280). During this process, the Party seeks to be rid of "curiosity," "art," "literature," and "science," to allow the Party to fully impose its

own will on others (Ibid.). Ultimately, the quest to get rid of these aspects of human society leads to the attempt to extinguish intellectuality and thought itself.

Critical to the Party is creating an obedient orthodoxy that welcomes having the will of the Party imposed upon them. Orthodoxy is firmly established throughout *1984* as "not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (56). This is what the Party seeks to accomplish through the concepts of "doublethink" and "Newspeak" (37): To induce the population into a state of unconsciousness through orthodoxy. Doublethink can be defined as "to know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies" (Ibid.). Newspeak, on the other hand, is a dismantling of language that purposefully seeks to create unconsciousness by continuously reducing vocabulary with the intent to reduce the tools of the masses to think complicated thoughts. Newspeak turns language into propaganda. Doublethink and Newspeak are both techniques that make the circumstances and oppression of Oceania more acceptable by enforcing and promoting self-deception, while also empowering the Party's will. Only through *eccentricity* can individuals remain conscious, and thus eccentricity is harshly punished by the Party as "thoughtcrime" (21). If orthodoxies, like the one the Party has established, were to be established in real societies, those societies would likewise lose their public sphere and ability to critique the state because the orthodoxy forbids it. Because resistance becomes more difficult the more entrenched an orthodoxy is, it is critical to oppose the notion of an unthinking orthodoxy and instead embrace – or at least be open to allowing others to hold – eccentric ideals or views before the orthodoxy is too entrenched.

Winston's acts of rebellion, both in the writing of a diary and his relationship with Julia, function to establish Winston as an *eccentric* within the society of Oceania. O'Brien calls this out as foolish by asserting: "You would not make the act of submission which is the price of sanity. You preferred to be a lunatic, a minority of one" (261). Winston being referred to as a "lunatic" and a "minority of one" is simply another way of calling Winston an *eccentric*. By this refusal to submit, Winston accomplishes the service that John Stuart Mill refers to as desirable because it resists tyranny (113). Through this action, Winston firmly places himself in the category of eccentric. One of the reasons why the eccentric is oppressed by the Party is because they resist the notion that "Whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth" (Orwell 261). O'Brien – the principal representation of the Party and antagonist to Winston – manipulates Winston by asserting that "reality is not external," but instead exists in the "human mind" (Ibid.). O'Brien

asserts, absolutely, and in the manner of a tyrannical solipsist, that "his truth is *the* truth" (Maleuvre 43). It is not the "individual mind" in which reality exists, however, but rather in the "mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal" (Orwell 261). To remain free in Oceania, one must accept that reality can only be observed "by looking through the eyes of the Party" (Ibid.). In other words, the individual must accept and join in the collective solipsists' delusions if they wish to remain alive. Despite this clash between individual experience and the prescribed collective past, doublethink makes the paradox acceptable and the individual cannot refute the prescribed past because they have no evidence to back up their claim. All evidence has been destroyed by being put in the aptly named "memory holes" (40), which destroy anything put into them. The individual mind cannot manifest reality due to a lack of evidence, but the collective Party *can* as a result of altering or deleting evidence of the past. Media manipulation and propaganda remain at the core of how Oceania remains under the rule of the Party, but this is only possible due to the creation of the instinctual 'doublethink' which constantly works to maintain the state's stranglehold over the individual. This stranglehold, when viewed through theory by Foucault, is achieved with a combination of surveillance and discipline that structure society into a hierarchy:

> Hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance may not be one of the great technical 'inventions' of the eighteenth century, but its insidious extension owed its importance to the mechanisms of power that it brought with it. By means of such surveillance, disciplinary power became an 'integrated' system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanism in which it was practised. It was also organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for 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 176-7)

Foucault presents surveillance in concert with discipline as an organizing element of society, but the organization of a surveillance society is one of stringent hierarchy. Such a hierarchized society cannot truly make individuals equal because there are always elements of superiority and subordination while individuals cannot develop naturally because they are observed and thus alter their behavior to better suit accepted societal standards. Even when such a system enacts

methods to create a more equal society, it is done within the framework of an already-established hierarchy. This ultimately makes drastic change difficult, while resisting the hierarchy is difficult because of the surveillance and the potential discipline that will be meted out if one resists the system. Because this hierarchy is based on surveillance and discipline, the surveilled parties can be disciplined or made into "'docile' bodies" (138) that – willingly or not – are molded by those at the top of the hierarchy. Foucault expresses that there is a direct correlation between "an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (Ibid.), which entails that the higher value your body gains through the hierarchy or system, the more that body belongs to the ones who made it 'docile.' By creating such an oppressive and restrictive fictional society based on a similar model of all-encompassing surveillance and harsh discipline that seeks to exploit the bodies of others, Orwell seeks to aid the individual in resisting being dominated by an outside power. In *1984*, this domination consists of surveillance, coercion, and control over individuals' every action in a totalitarian fashion. We see similar domination in *Fahrenheit 451*, but the domination in *F451* more closely emulates Foucault's notion of bodies being exploited for profit. In either of these cases, the novels present how the development of ways to control large groups of people through new media technologies that make discipline, surveillance, manipulation, and indoctrination far easier than before can hurt a society rather than improve it. These methods create a society in which the state, in the case of *1984,* or sectional interests such as corporations in the case of *Fahrenheit 451*, wield more power over the individual than could have been possible previously. New media technologies effectively aid and facilitate the manufacturing of more 'docile' bodies to exploit.

With new mediums as the base, the Party increases its influence and power by establishing self-deception as a requirement for individuals to remain unharmed. This self-deception is bolstered and enforced through surveillance and discipline if the state-prescribed self-deception isn't followed obediently. Eventually what is real is so far from any knowledge the individual has that they have to accept the concept of doublethink or go insane and be viewed as an enemy of the Party. The inhabitants of this 'real' world cannot see reality directly because they are "looking through the eyes of the Party" (Orwell 261). The notion that everyone views the world through the eyes of the Party becomes clear when we understand that all documents in Oceania are essentially forgeries. Even these forgeries seem not to matter since they merely exchange "one piece of nonsense for another" (43) to the point that what is 'real' is so far

removed from Oceania that it stops being relevant. All information in Oceania is constantly altered, and based on other false information, and because no one can ever "prove that any falsification had taken place" (Ibid.), the individual is captive to the only ideology and narrative that is permitted: The Party's. The individual cannot truly refuse or prove that the Party's reality isn't real, and thus they are forced into accepting its false signs because they are what Baudrillard terms "sources of security" (34). No other signs contradict them, thus they are the only possible choice. By embracing the narrative of the Party, however, both the masses and the individual live in "the denial of the real" (Ibid.), or in a hyperreality separated from reality.

The Party undermines the public sphere, and creates the hyperreality of a continuous present, by always altering the past and any records written in the past so that they fit perfectly with the present-day ideology of the Party: "The past, he reflected, had not merely been altered, it had actually been destroyed" (Orwell 38). By destroying the past, the Party also destroys the possibility of change. Learning from the past is impossible as a result of this, and thus Oceania is held back by its inability to reflect on itself. Winston questions if he alone is "in possession of a memory" (62) while all others swallow the Party's narrative. Despite Winston's possession of memories contradicting the official narrative of the Party, he cannot speak of them because they don't align with the official 'truth' of the Party. Through the continuous present the Party creates, we can conclude that the Party desires to uphold the status quo and the position of the Inner Party members at the top of the hierarchy. Subsequently, this puts the Inner Party in the category of being selfish and power-hungry to the point that they choose to lower the standards of living of the many to elevate their hierarchical position. Beyond maintaining the status quo and the hierarchy, the Party purposefully sows discord between individuals to stop the creation of collectives which can re-introduce diversity of thought and subsequently overthrow the hierarchy.

Diversity of thought is the hallmark of a true public sphere, and hence shaping the public to become suspicious of each other damages the possibility of a genuine public sphere forming. The Party has to undermine any true public sphere because it would enable the proles, the "dumb masses" (217), to realize that "the privileged minority had no function" (198), and the proles would subsequently "sweep it away" (Ibid.). It is in the effort to maintain a hierarchical society and benefit those at the top of the hierarchy that the Party was established in the first place. The masses in Oceania are not merely oppressed as a collective, but also put against each other to

compete in a market that induces scarcity, "poverty and ignorance" (Ibid.) on purpose. The goal behind pitting the masses against each other is to keep them down and break up cohesion by making the masses distrust everyone, including family. A similar breaking up of cohesion happens among the proles through the scarcity of products, which at some point causes what Winston believes to be "a riot" simply due to the sheer energy the proles have to fight amongst each other for "tin saucepans" (73). This manipulation of the proles mirrors how the apathetic and mechanic public we meet with in *F451* is obsessed with consumption. Furthermore, this manipulation presents how capitalism can be wielded as a tool to divide the masses or unite them behind an ideology that ultimately seeks to exploit them. The Outer Party finds itself between the Inner Party, which is described as the "brain of the state," and the proles, which is described as the "dumb masses" (217). The Outer Party "may be justly likened to the hands" of the state (Ibid.). The lack of trust between individuals in the Outer Party makes them have to rely on the collective of the Party to gain any semblance of acceptance or love, and thus the Party's power is naturally reinforced and legitimized by the public's desire for these experiences. The acceptance of these alterations by members of the Outer Party is accomplished through indoctrination, propaganda, surveillance, and torture. What ultimately differentiates the Outer Party members from the proles in this field, however, is that members of the Outer Party aren't allowed to fall into the same mindless consumption of the proles because they require some drive beyond animalistic desires to accomplish their tasks.

While people are so divided that no one can trust even their children, the Party and Big Brother are still revered. In Winston's building, we meet Mrs. Parson whose children, upon meeting Winston, hold him up with fake guns and exclaim that he is a "traitor," "thought-criminal," and a "Eurasian spy" (25). They display violence and a ferocious, practically animalistic, aggressiveness, while their mother looks helplessly on. After this display, Winston thinks to himself about how children are indoctrinated:

> With those children […] 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. […] by means of such organizations as the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages, and yet this produced in them no tendency whatever to rebel against the discipline of the Party. (26)

Children in Oceania are easily swayed and turned into agents of the Party, while the older generation, including Winston and Mrs. Parson, is more difficult to indoctrinate. The destruction of the fabric of interpersonal relationships which aren't ideologically motivated paradoxically turns the public into individualistic and untrusting actors who exist in a collective through coercion. This 'individualism' is no true individualism, however, and is instead a separation between the actual individual and the collective without giving the individual a way to express themselves. The masses are divided as individuals by having their genuine relations cut off rather than given the choice to act independently. They are not allowed to express this division and must instead conform to the unity of the collective without showcasing their individuality. Ultimately, these 'individuals' still obey the Party without question and can thus not claim to be free individuals. O'Brien further asserts this division between individuals as fact: "We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer" (280). This cutting of links between individuals makes close relationships practically impossible, and thus organizing a revolution becomes even more difficult. At its core, this purposeful splitting up of individuals makes the notion of a cohesive "public sphere" which can act as a "sphere of private people come together as a public" (Habermas 27) almost fundamentally impossible. As an extension of the lack of a cohesive public, political action against the orthodoxy becomes equally difficult.

The members of the Outer Party are controlled not only by isolation, their lack of history, propaganda, and coercion, but language itself also becomes a vessel for ideology through the creation of the restrictive "Newspeak," which is created with the explicit goal to "narrow the range of thought" and thus "make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words to express it" (Orwell 55). The ultimate goal of Newspeak is to create a world where there will "*be* no thought, as we understand it now" (56). A public sphere that allows for the critique of the government or its ideology cannot exist in a society in which the destruction of thought is one of its primary goals. If the Party's goal is achieved, resistance against the system becomes impossible and there would be no way of turning society back to one which values human subjectivity and other humanist ideals such as critical thought.

In conclusion, the Party utilizes means such as media manipulation tactics, coercion, and indoctrination through language to alter history and truth. This manipulation is ultimately done to maintain the status quo and the hierarchical superiority of the Inner Party. Beyond the tactics

mentioned, the Party also pits individuals against each other to avoid the rise of collectives that have the power to overthrow the Inner Party. One of the primary threats to this is the collective power of the proles, but they are kept in a state of unconsciousness by not being allowed a proper education while having their standards of living decreased. The reason the proles are kept poor and uneducated is to make them only consider their daily existence without having the time or opportunity to consider the system in its entirety. The situation the proles find themselves in, which entails the inability to truly resist the system because they aren't granted the tools to do this, encapsulates how oppression and poverty are perpetuated in reality and can make us reflect more on how marginalized groups in our societies are oppressed. Because of the proles' lack of ability to see the truth of their society, they remain blissfully oppressed and contend against each other for material goods to consume rather than against the Party. Winston, an eccentric individual, can make these critical observations, but even he is helpless to overcome these challenges by himself. This puts forward the notion that the eccentric is a crucial first step for a society to awaken from unconsciousness because they can see society for what it is, but that a collective effort is required for a true societal upheaval to happen. I agree with this on some level but, as Clarisse exemplifies in *F451*, the impact an individual eccentric can have on others is profound. It may be more difficult for individuals to impact society, but it is possible. Independent eccentric individuals who dare to ask similar questions to Clarisse can impact a great number of people, but it is difficult to incite a complete societal shift without some level of organization.

4.2 Historical Revisionism and Infringements on Civil Liberties

To preserve and record history, we rely on collective memories and records, but when these records and memories are continuously altered to retrofit new policies, dogma, and the overarching ideology of the Party and Big Brother, they ultimately express nothing but a foggy reflection of the *current* ideological landscape while removing the traces of the past. That the novel ends with the 'victory' of the Party over the human mind asserts the true danger of the Party's uncanny ability to manipulate people. In the words of Winston: "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (Orwell 311). This final victory is akin to the system's victory over the creative humanist intellectual. At that moment, Winston's humanity is revoked and he returns to a state of mental unconsciousness. His *eccentricity* is exchanged for *orthodoxy*.

Winston's final failure, which paradoxically is presented as a 'victory,' is the defeat of the singular *eccentric* when faced with the orthodoxy's violent means of persuasion. To understand Winston's journey from already having an eccentric mindset, to growing his consciousness, rebelling, and then ultimately returning to the fold by becoming a member of the orthodox masses, we need to look at his evolution throughout *1984*'s three main sections. Following this, we need to look at the appendix to the novel to understand how people like Winston win in the long run, despite his individual failure. After establishing this, I will delve into how the Party utilizes historical revisionism and how we see the fictional aspects of Oceania manifest in reality. Finally, I will use real-life examples to showcase how creeping surveillance measures or supposedly temporary acts of surveillance tend to become more rigorous and permanent because this serves the ruling party.

Unlike *F451*'s Montag, who had to be awakened by the external force of Clarisse, Winston Smith has already awakened to his oppression at the beginning of the novel. Despite being awakened to it, however, he isn't able to clearly express anything in particular about his oppression and thus primarily makes observations about the horror he sees around him. It is *through writing* that Winston is finally able to express his true feelings: "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" (20) repeated five times. The mere "initial act of opening the diary" (Ibid.) doomed him to be *vaporized*. Being *vaporized* entails that "Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated" (21). In essence, *vaporization* is a removal from the *prescribed* collective past of Oceania, and this is a vital tool the Party utilizes to destroy the past. Some scholars assert that this method is inspired by Stalin's attempt to remove Leon Trotsky from records and photographs to remove him from history, and Orwell also refers to this in his writings:

> When one considers the elaborate forgeries that have been committed in order to show that Trotsky did not play a valuable part in the Russian civil war, it is difficult to feel that the people responsible are merely lying. More probably they feel that their own version *was* what happened in the sight of God, and that one is justified in rearranging the records accordingly. (Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*, 15)

With the methods of Stalin as inspiration for the methods of the Party, the parallel between the Party and the Soviet Union is very clear. The historical revisionism depicted in *1984* and

discussed in this thesis is not simply based in fiction but has its root in real practices. It is because such practices pose a very real threat that Orwell created a fictional society in which such a regime had absolute power to emulate how individuals, society, and the world would be affected by a potential future in which totalitarianism has become the primary ideology.

After his initial rebellion, Winston continues to develop his consciousness by critiquing the society and people around him, but he remains a "minority of one" (Orwell, *1984*, 261). It is not until later that he acquires an accomplice in Julia and appears to fall in love with her. We see in part I that "what he wanted, even more than to be loved, was to break down that wall of virtue even if it were only once in his whole life. The sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was thoughtcrime" (71). Instead of simply seeking love or sex, Winston seeks a new way to rebel, and thus Julia becomes more akin to a tool to accomplish his rebellion than a genuine partner. In part II, this desire is fulfilled: "Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (133). Despite their secrecy, however, they are being observed by the most dangerous part of the government: the *thought police*. Winston and Julia eventually meet with O'Brien and agree to join "The Brotherhood," a supposedly secret organization that seeks to overthrow the Party and Big Brother. It is revealed later that The Brotherhood is simply a lie propagated by the Party itself to easily identify traitors and thought criminals, and thus it makes sense that at the end of this part, we see Winston and Julia surrounded by the Thought Police.

In Part III we see the breaking down of Winston's mind through torture and we observe how Winston and Julia betray each other. Their betrayal of each other is critical because it conflicts with their earlier belief that the Party "can't get inside you" (174). It is "only feelings" that matter, and thus it is only if "they could stop me loving you" that a betrayal would have occurred (173). This notion that the Party, despite being able to "make you say anything" cannot "make you believe it" (174), is a naïve one, which is disproven after Winston and Julia are caught and tortured. Their belief that ideology, manipulation, and torture cannot fundamentally change you as an individual mirrors the extratextual everyday individual's false belief in their impregnability to similar forces, which Orwell seems to have aimed his sharp critique toward. Orwell's critique asserts the importance of suspicion and resistance against ideology and manipulation. The final victory of the Party at the end of Winston's narrative asserts that they *can* get inside you.

It turns out that the Party can not only make you love Big Brother, but it can also take away your love for someone else. After betraying each other, Winston and Julia realize that they "don't feel the same" (306) toward each other afterward. By accomplishing this, the Party has truly proved that it can tear the human mind to pieces and put it back together again in a new shape of its choosing. If we view the Party as a satire of real totalitarian ideologies, then we can assert that the victory of the Party over the individual mirrors the influence these real totalitarian ideologies can have over the minds of individuals, whether they utilize torture or manipulation, and that no one is wholly impregnable to outside influence. The real threat manipulation and ideological indoctrination pose, proven by the spread of horrific ideologies during World War 2, underpins the reason Orwell's work is so important: it points out the horrible aspects of such ideologies and presents everyone as potential victims of such manipulation. As a result, *1984* makes the reader more suspicious of ideologies. By being put in the situation of a victim of such manipulation, the reader is given protection against such influences through what we can term a 'mental vaccine' against trusting ideologies and their indomitability. As a result, Orwell's work in itself functions to aid societies in maintaining their eccentric thoughts and a public sphere that could balance out the power of the state or other sectional interests.

The appendix to *1984* is viewed by some critics as the only beacon of hope of change under the fictional totalitarian Oceania because it seems to be written about a past in which Newspeak was not successfully implemented, as well as being written in 'Oldspeak' (Standard English). Jonathan Rose explains that this appendix is "written from the vantage of a future time when the regime no longer exists. The narrator speaks with frankness possible only in a free society. He discusses the Party in the past tense, and Newspeak is treated as a dead language" (40). The reason Rose gives to the downfall of the Party is that "witch hunts inevitably run out of control" (Ibid.). Ultimately, the Party's way of ruling is unstable, but during the time it *did* rule it was unstoppable. The critical lesson to learn from the novel is to do our best to *prevent* anything like the Party from taking power in the first place, and to do so we need to accept eccentricity to establish a true public sphere in which one can reflect on the faults of society, the government, systems, and people. It is also essential to stay vigilant of the information or narratives we consume to not be manipulated.

The factors in Oceania which together function to actively alter history and maintain control over individuals showcase how the state of the public sphere among the Outer Party in

Oceania doesn't mirror the arguably slow increase in cultural apathy and consumption we can observe in *Fahrenheit 451*. Instead, in Oceania, the Party's notion of the public is harshly and directly enforced. The public is heavily indoctrinated and unable to resist the official history prescribed to it under threat of torture and death. Beyond the Outer Party are the apathetic and apolitical proles. The proles, or proletariat, make up around "eighty-five percent of the population" (Orwell 217). All that is required of the proles is "a primitive patriotism […] to make them accept longer working-hours or shorter rations" (74-5), while their discontent only found its release in the shape of "petty specific grievances" (75) due to their lack of "general ideas" (Ibid.). As a consequence of this, the "larger evils invariably escaped their notice" (Ibid.). Due to their inability to recognize systemic issues, they cannot rebel. It is exactly because the proles cannot rebel, despite remaining the majority of the population, that any other rebellion becomes far more difficult. The proles support the Party implicitly by remaining passive and uninvolved in politics, and they are even easily utilized by the Party as a result of their "primitive patriotism" (Ibid.). The proles never put up resistance while their society transformed into its current state, and in the contemporary time of Winston's narrative, it seems too late for them to awaken to the reality of their oppression. This negative progression of exponential difficulty in resisting the system, due to the system establishing itself further the more it stands unopposed, mirrors the lackluster resistance made in *F451* before it was too late.

A critical paradox is established concerning the proles on the back of the notion that "*If there is hope*, wrote Winston, *it lies in the proles*" (72). I refer to this as the paradox of the oppressed: "*Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious*" (74). As a result of this contradictory state of the proles, Winston's hope is dampened, but he also acknowledges that this paradox is eerily similar to "a transcript from one of the Party textbooks" (Ibid.). This acknowledgment might suggest that Winston's belief is informed by his indoctrination and doesn't accurately reflect the true state of the proles, but this is left ambiguous. To showcase how the proles are unable to recognize overarching systemic issues and thus rebel, we can return to the example of the "tin saucepans" to observe that the proles are willing to fight over trivialities while being blind to their own power: "A riot! The proles are breaking loose at last!" (73). Winston, however, becomes resigned after realizing that the proles were fighting over trifles: "what almost frightening power had sounded in that cry from only a few hundred throats! Why was it that they could never shout like

that about anything that mattered?" (Ibid.). The proles can only shout about trivial matters, such as objects of consumerism, and never about the larger social or political issues which may have led to this scarcity of tin saucepans in the first place. In this manner, the proles mirror the orthodox masses in *F451* who are too busy enjoying simple apolitical leisure by consuming media and other products to care about their own oppression. Based on these examples, we can conclude that oppression – at least the fictional oppression depicted in *1984* and *F451* – relies on both the apathy of the oppressed masses and on consumption becoming the norm to make the masses shortsightedly only talk about *things* and base their conflicts within consumerism. If the masses are given the time or resources to slow down, process, and think, then they might come to conclusions the upper echelons of their respective societies wouldn't want them to think of because it threatens the higher echelons' power. The orthodox masses are "Surrounded […] by objects" (Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* 25), and entertainment, as a result of the commodification of the "news item" (33), but these *things* ultimately inject notions of consumption and 'fun' instead of long-term sustainability, happiness, critical thinking, and personal freedom.

We can see the effect of social apathy by looking at an example from *F451*. The eccentric Faber blames himself for being "one of the innocents who could have spoken up and out when no one would listen to the 'guilty,' but I did not speak and thus became guilty myself" (Bradbury 82). Faber remained apathetic to a changing culture he rejected, but he never did more than grunt "a few times" (Ibid.). He stopped his resistance because "there were no others grunting or yelling with me" (Ibid.). In other words, Faber's resistance to the changing culture falls flat because he doesn't dare to resist the cultural degradation on his own, and thus he instead chooses to fall into line with the others, who don't put up any resistance. His faltering resistance showcases how the "minority of one" (Orwell 261), such as Winston or Faber, becomes disheartened as a result of lacking a collective to aid them in their resistance against the system, but it also underlines how easy it is to fall into the majority opinion and orthodoxy. This ease with which one can allow orthodoxy to win, or overwhelm the individual eccentric, makes resistance to this apathy all the more critical to avoid forming such an orthodoxy in the first place. In comparison to the individual eccentrics, the orthodox masses seem to have it easy because they have the majority opinion on their side. The masses' power to enforce their opinion through legislation and social, cultural, and ideological pressure, makes shouting down the individual eccentric easy.

The media in *1984* accomplishes more than simply manipulating the facts of the world, it also creates an artificial unity among their population by vilifying Emmanuel Goldstein. This vilification mirrors how real people or groups of people, like the Jews to the Nazis or the Bourgeoisie to the Communists, are vilified to unite people against a common enemy. Using a common enemy to manipulate an audience is a real media manipulation tactic. Ana Valverde González gives us a real-life example of this by presenting Fox News's coverage after 9/11 and its founder Roger Ailes's aim "that American citizens align with his views on the events: 'This is a war between good and evil, and we ... we are not gonna be afraid to call it exactly that. And we should never be afraid of patriotism' ("2001" 25:47-25:58)" (113). In the same manner in which the strategy of repeating messages becomes central in the recent USA socio-political context by Fox News continuously showing "America at war" (114) on-screen, the 'Two-Minutes hate' in Orwell's Oceania is a daily ceremony which hammers in the jingoist agenda of war, nationalism, hatred toward Emmanuel Goldstein, and love for Big Brother. This fictional ceremony is even repeated through telescreens that cannot be turned off, and thus the individual is forced to consume its messages as the only 'truth' offered to them.

Even the parts of Oceania's society that the reader might believe are outside of the Party's control eventually turn out to be carefully surveilled and controlled all along. The opposition to the Party that aligns itself with 'The Brotherhood' is calculated, and even incited, by how the Party approaches manipulation. In this carefully constructed environment for thought, any 'eccentric' is repudiated, undermined, converted, and destroyed in what O'Brien terms a "drama," which will be "played out over and over again generation after generation" (Orwell 281). The Party desires for "The heretic, the enemy of the people" to "always be there," simply "so that he can be defeated and humiliated over again" (280). Eccentrics are purposefully fostered by the Party in a controlled fashion to create an opposition, and thus the Party has an excuse to exert – and retain – its power. Unfortunately for Winston, he isn't able to see such an escape from the power of the Party in his lifetime. It is only from the Appendix that we can understand that there has been an uprising in Oceania sometime after Winston's death and long before the writing of the Appendix.

The way the Party has constructed society makes it so that even when individuals such as Winston believe that they step outside of its boundaries by reading "*the book*" (274), which is presented as "a compendium of all the heresies, of which Goldstein was the author" (15), they

remain firmly within the boundaries the Party has created. It is the Inner Party member O'Brien who reveals that "I wrote it. That is to say, I collaborated in writing it" (274). Emmanuel Goldstein is nothing but a part of the mythology the Party utilizes to maintain its control. The fact that the frame of the Party takes into consideration this aspect of the eccentric, and the possibility of an influential eccentric inciting rebellion, confirms its members' fear and worry about letting eccentricity reign freely, and thus they create the system of the false Brotherhood and the mythology of Goldstein to maintain control even over the people who should be able to put up a resistance to the Party.

Another way the Party uses media to manipulate the public is through constant updates and statistics claiming that quotas have been "over-fulfilled" (43). This includes claims that the Party has brought improvements in fields such as lowering the "infant mortality rate" (78) and increasing the number of literate proles (77). This constant cramming of statistics and information not only makes it impossible to keep up with what is happening in society, but as Beatty states in *F451*, it makes the masses "feel they're thinking" and gives them a "*sense* of motion without moving" (Bradbury 67). This method is used in Oceania to constantly assert the positive improvements to society as a result of the Party's reign, and thus ingrain in people that the Party not only improves society but that the masses are included in this progress toward a better world. This use of media presents the media as underpinning the state's power.

One of the ways the media can underpin a state's power beyond the fictional Oceania is by making the war into a social event akin to a sport to foster a sense of camaraderie among citizens because they are all on the same 'team': "A shrill trumpet-call had pierced the air. It was the Bulletin! Victory! […] The trumpet-call had let loose an enormous volume of noise. Already an excited voice was gabbling from the telescreen, but even as it started it was almost drowned out by a roar of cheering from the outside" (Orwell 310). By using media to update the public about the state of the war, which may or may not even actually be ongoing, the public is also put in a state of constant anxiety about the state of the world and their safety. This leads to the public supporting the state and cheering for the victory of the Party despite their oppression by the 'team' they are supporting. Oceania is "permanently at war" and has been "for the past twenty-five years" (193). The fact that warfare has turned from a "desperate, annihilating struggle" into one in which the states that are locked in combat are "unable to destroy one another, have no material cause for fighting and are not divided by any genuine ideological difference" (Ibid.)

makes the continuous war out to be a simple tool for oppressing and controlling each society's population by for example forcing them to accept poor work-conditions, longer hours and lower wages.

The official aim of this "modern warfare" is to "use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living" (196) to maintain a strict hierarchy that wouldn't allow the inevitable realization in the "great mass of human beings" (198) that the "privileged minority had no function" (Ibid.), a realization which would lead to the destruction of this "privileged minority" (196). It is in the effort to create a "hierarchical society" that "poverty and ignorance" are purposefully induced by depriving the public of "leisure and security" to avoid having the masses, which were "normally stupefied by poverty," become "literate and would learn to think for themselves" (198). The notion of thinking for oneself, and being educated, poses fundamental threats to the roles of those at the top of the hierarchy, and thus these destabilizing factors are removed. A big part of thinking happens in dialogue in the 'public sphere,' and so the Party destroys this notion by making conversation always happen on the terms of the Party. The Party punishes any human interaction which could hint at the individual having an "*ownlife*" which means "individualism and eccentricity" (85) or, in effect, any desires or personality traits that don't completely revolve around their identity as a member of the Party. By the Party's forbidding people to be individuals with their 'own life,' the public is turned into one which is always required to obey without question.

The information apparatus facilitates the Party's ideology and induces war anxiety in the masses to make them easier to manipulate. Perhaps its most critical task, however, is its deliberate goal of "continuous alteration" (42) of the past for all records to fit perfectly with the present-day ideology of the Party. Beyond altering the past, the Party also takes into practice media manipulation tactics such as packaging bad news with good news to soften the blow of a negative event. On the surface level, the news is presented as positive by putting the focus on one portion of the news. In reality, however, there might not even be any 'good news,' but instead simply bad news and false 'good news' to make the citizens of Oceania feel better. A great example of this is when a newsflash asserts that "Our forces in South India have won a glorious victory," and Winston immediately thinks, "Bad news coming" (28). Winston is right, and it turns out that after the so-called glorious victory there is an announcement that "as from next week, the chocolate ration would be reduced from thirty grammes to twenty" (Ibid.). The

impact of the "bad news" doesn't last long before people celebrate and "thank Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to twenty grammes a week" (61), and the fact that they swallowed this falsehood a mere "twenty-four hours" (61-2) later makes Winston question whether he was "*alone* in the possession of a memory" (62). His memory contradicts the *prescribed* reality, however, and thus Winston cannot express his 'truth' without being labeled as eccentric and removed from society by the Party.

We can extrapolate that because Winston believes himself to be the only one who retained this memory, many others in Oceania likely feel the same way. They are isolated from each other as individuals and thus such topics can never be discussed, while everyone feels like they are living in a world in which they are the only ones with a shred of sanity left because everyone else seems to blindly obey the Party. Individuals have no insight into others' minds, so all they see is the blind obedience of others. As a result of this disconnect between the individual's knowledge and inability to assert the truth regarding their views and assumptions due to the restrictions placed upon the individual in Oceania, it makes sense that people question the sanity of the masses around them as a result of constantly seeing them swallow one lie after another. Julia is the perfect example of behavior not matching her thoughts. This divergence is exemplified through her fervent behavior during the first Two-Minutes Hate, to the point where she cries out "Swine! Swine! Swine!" and throws a dictionary "at the screen" (16), while in reality, she is merely acting. This behavior may make her seem like a perfect member of the obedient orthodoxy, but she despises the way the Party touches "upon her own life" while the overarching ideology of the Party doesn't "seem important to her" (160). This disparity between behavior and thoughts can give off the impression that there are far more ideologically orthodox members in the group of Outer Party members than there are, and thus the social pressure to conform is increased by the lack of communication and trust between individuals. Different from Winston, however, Julia easily swallows anything that doesn't affect her life, for example when she states, "I thought we'd always been at war with Eurasia" (161). Despite Winston pointing out the falsity of her claim, Julia responds, "Who cares?" (Ibid.) and later asserts that she's not interested in "the next generation" (163). As long as the truth of the Party doesn't personally affect her, Julia is content to be a member of the orthodox masses who doesn't question the Party. She remains apathetic to the truth and state of society – instead only fixating on her immediate problems and desires in a way that mirrors the lacking vision of the proles, who cannot rebel due

to their only being able to focus on "petty specific grievances" (75). The reason I differentiate egotistical, shortsighted, or apathetic individuals from the eccentric is that Julia and others like her seek no societal upheaval and cannot stand against the entire system. Julia complains about the system only as far as it currently negatively affects her, rather than taking in the negativity of the overall system. She never seeks to overturn the system, but instead to make herself as comfortable as possible within the system. Julia's apathy, when viewed together with *F451*, may be symptomatic of a corroded and apathetic culture that cannot stand up for itself and which falters in its resistance as quickly as Faber does when he is solitary in his resistance. Such mindless consumption of 'facts' shoveled to the masses through new media technologies is at the forefront of both *1984* and *F451* because it could allow for the eventual downfall of society into one in which notions like intellectuality and eccentricity are outlawed and only the opinion of the orthodox masses is acceptable. Rather than being a part of the solution, Julia becomes representative of those who stand on the sidelines while horrific ideologies spread.

Winston differentiates himself from Julia by trying to make a better future for the next generation instead of selfishly trying to exploit the system. Winston tries to make a better future by uncovering parts of history that the Party seeks to hide. Winston's job is perpetuating the state's power through historical revisionism, and thus it makes sense that he seeks to undo the damage he has wrought. In his service to the Party, Winston has altered various historical records, newspapers, and articles, as well as made people "*unperson*[s]" (48). The alteration of history itself is applied "not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs-to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance" (42). One of the reasons why Winston's opening of a diary was his initial transgression is because books represent the potential for knowledge and the sharing of information outside of the Party's control, and they remain solid records and concrete proof of reality and history which might clash with the Party's narrative of history and reality. The Party insists on maintaining complete control of all information, as exemplified by Winston's work to recreate history in the image of the Party, and thus the keeping or sharing of information privately is one of the worst offenses to the Party.

Winston sees through the Party's alteration of the past, which may have been a result of his work, but despite Winston's certain knowledge of the past and his eccentricity, he ultimately loses when the "long-hoped-for-bullet" finally enters "his brain" because he couldn't resist

having his mind altered through torture (311). Winston loses because he doesn't die as a martyr. Dying itself would not have made him lose, but he dies while loving Big Brother, and has thus betrayed any previous ideal he had. Based on his loss, and the comparative 'victory' of Montag, we could potentially argue that a collective is required to make true change. Due to the impact the singular eccentric Clarisse has on Montag in *F451*, however, I will resist such an argument. A collective can assist the eccentric, but it isn't a requirement to make a change in society. Montag has his band of intellectuals to *warm* him, and they can use their collective knowledge from books and willingness to be outside of the orthodox majority to assist society in self-reflection. In comparison, in *1984*, Winston is utterly alone after being betrayed by O'Brien, who initially presents himself as a member of "The Brotherhood," his lover Julia, and ultimately even by himself. Winston cannot even form his own thoughts, and earlier in the novel, he drinks with "certain eagerness" when O'Brien raises his glass and proposes to drink "To our Leader: To Emmanuel Goldstein" (178), despite Winston's having no idea what Emmanuel Goldstein even stands for. Winston soon realizes the wine doesn't taste as "intensely sweet" (Ibid.) as he imagined. Instead, the wine "was distinctly disappointing" (179). This disappointment may symbolize the notion that blindly accepting the complete inverse of an orthodoxy might lead to unknowingly embracing an equally bad ideology. Winston embraces a new ideology before understanding it, and he is subsequently left with a bitter taste in his mouth because it wasn't all that he imagined it would be.

To truly argue for the eccentric, and against the erosion of the public sphere, we need to return to the notion of the information apparatus – which includes media and the telescreen – as critical for the Party to be able to enforce its orthodoxy of ideas. O'Brien reveals that the creation of the new medium, the telescreen, made it far easier "to manipulate public opinion" (214). In Oceania, the "technological advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously" has ended the notion of "private life" (Ibid.). The astuteness of this assertion carries over not only to the fictional society presented in *F451* but also to our contemporary societies. Before this advancement in media technology, there were ways for citizens to consume news or entertainment in a non-intrusive manner, but when given the opportunity to intrude on the privacy of citizens, many parties, including governments and corporations, leap at it. A more modern example is the 'war on terrorism' and how it gave governments excuses to implement 'temporary' and 'preventative' surveillance measures which do not merely track confirmed or

suspected terrorists, but instead all citizens *just* to make sure that they don't develop any proclivities towards terrorism.

In truth, however, as Marie-Helen Maras asserts, preventative surveillance measures "often become permanent and the restraints on civil liberties, which result from these measures, do so too" (67). She continues to explain that "it is not uncommon to find measures, which were initially enacted as temporary provisions to combat terrorism, subsequently enacted as permanent legislation" (Ibid.). The examples she gives include the "Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts," which became a "permanent statute with the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1989" as well as the "Criminal Evidence Order" which "limited the right to silence of suspected terrorists" in Northern Ireland (Ibid.). After giving examples, Maras presents the "risk of mission (or function) creep where measures used to combat terrorism will subsequently be used for a wider set of applications such as including ordinary criminal justice purposes" (Ibid.). Quintessentially, governments exploit individual or specific events to enact 'temporary' acts or policies which often become permanent, and thus the civil liberties of the average citizen are also encroached upon. Maras questions whether measures such as "biometric passports and national ID cards" will be abolished, and if the "fingerprint, DNA, and information databases [will] ever be shut down" (Ibid.). Through these statements, Maras presents her lack of faith in a government that is incentivized to maintain the most social control and surveillance measures in place to willingly remove these measures themselves. I hope I have, throughout this thesis, adequately argued against putting such faith in governments and other sectional parties. I have instead advocated for a diversity of thought and the ability to thoroughly take apart and critique social structures, corporations, and governments to give the public a way to resist having their freedoms further restricted.

The infringement of citizens' civil liberties is generally framed by the government as not affecting "ordinary decent folk," and instead being directed "against a clear enemy of 'others' namely the terrorists" (Ibid.). This infringement is framed as a tradeoff between "*our* security and *their* liberty" rather than the more realistic "*our* liberty and *our* security" (Ibid.). This misconception, or propagandized image, of whom the surveillance is directed toward is one of the critical warnings *1984* gives us about how media and surveillance will likely be utilized by the state to assert its power. The 'orthodox' citizens have nothing to worry about, while the 'unorthodox' or 'eccentric' has everything to worry about. In reality, however, all citizens need to

be worried, because even the slightest misstep can sign their death sentence. Even the most devout and orthodox members of Oceania, like Syme, will be negatively affected by these broad surveillance measures. Syme's intelligence makes Winston realize that Syme "will be vaporized" (Orwell 56) because he can see the Party too clearly.

The reason I invoke these notions of infringement on the rights of individuals through surveillance is to showcase how, despite *1984* and *F451*'s warnings, elements of their predicted dystopias have emerged in real societies and continue to influence them to this day. Such measures ultimately function as a way for governments and corporations to accrue information, gain profits, and maintain control by categorizing and suppressing those who might oppose their power. Such private knowledge, as a result of invasive surveillance, remains a threat to even slight civil disobedience or critique made against the government and could ultimately threaten or hurt the individual, even if no official punishment is meted out. A great contemporary example of how a government uses surveillance against its citizens is how China utilizes surveillance to "score the 'creditworthiness' and 'trustworthiness' of each individual and organizational actor by a computational score based on their historical and ongoing social and economic activities, and these credit scores will determine whether the actor can obtain benefits or punishments" (Liang, Fan, et al. 416). This example displays how real governments utilize surveillance to maintain their population in a state of orthodox obedience and also to reduce certain behavior that may not even be illegal. Resisting such a system will inevitably lead to being punished by the system in one way or another because such surveillance measures have little to do with upholding laws and instead have to do with imposing the state's will and ideals on its citizens regardless of legality. The trustworthiness of each individual is based on the individual's adherence to the state and cultural norms, and thus eccentricity – or straying from these norms and expected views – would naturally lead to the individual's punishment rather than benefit.

5 Conclusion: Restoring Consciousness and Power to the Public

> The very foundation of a democratic society depends on citizens who are able to formulate plans for their lives, take actions and make their decisions free from coercion (Loader and Walker, 2007: 225e226). (Maras 75)

The foundation of a democratic society is built upon the ability of individuals not only to make their own decisions, but to do so without coercion. This includes the ability to express one's preferences, whether in public or private, and thus any action taken to restrict individuals' autonomy or judge their actions through the lenses of society undermines democracy itself (Ibid.). Marie Helen Maras draws on Gavison to conclude that privacy is "essential to a democratic government because it fosters and encourages the autonomy of its citizens, which itself is a central requirement for democracy" (Ibid.). Because privacy is essential, observation, whether intrusive, casual, purposeful, or accidental, weakens democracy by treating individuals as objects to be coerced or influenced. The individual's subjectivity becomes difficult to develop as a result of such treatment because their actions are likely to conform to the expectations placed upon them. Subjectivity may not solely depend on privacy, but having one's privacy intruded upon will inevitably affect the individual's development when the individual is forced to take into account how they are viewed by others. This subjectivity may include matters of sexuality, gender, societal roles, ideology, intellectuality, theology, and more. Surveillance axiomatically stifles the growth of eccentrics by discouraging autonomy and encouraging attempts at controlling or steering society in ways that benefit the observers.

In *1984* the totalitarian state called 'the Party' has a monopoly on information and surveillance, while in *F451* the information and surveillance monopoly belong to corporations and the puppet state that serves the corporations. To restore consciousness and enable the growth of individuals, such monopolies on information need to be avoided. The commodification of information into the "*news item*" (Baudrillard, *The consumer society*, 33) leads to a diminished public sphere because the reason for sharing the information has changed from expression and discussion to profiting corporations and other sectional groups. Coupled with an increased consumption of products, this creates a culture in which information is a tool for profit, control, and coercion. Rather than being allowed to remain autonomous members of society, individuals are treated as a sum of their categories as prescribed by the overarching system. By no choice of

their own, the individual is incorporated into, and subordinated to, the system. This may happen through interpellation, indoctrination, manipulation, coercion, or a combination of the four.

In the societies depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*, this deindividuation through observation, commodification, and consumption is a result of new mediums altering culture. The new medium in *F451* is primarily the televisor parlor, and in *1984* it is the telescreen. Critically, both of these fictional mediums are allegories for television, and thus their great effect on these fictional societies becomes analogous to the development of society after the advent of TV. The impact these new mediums have on culture is viewed skeptically throughout both fictional societies for good reason, as we see the possible negative aspects of their dissemination. The access, control, and manipulation of information – primarily through these new mediums – becomes the foundation for how power is centralized and wielded.

By drawing parallels to how information and surveillance are wielded as weapons of control in real societies such as China, Russia, and North Korea, we can further assert the veracity of the claims this thesis has considered through the lens of fiction. Beyond these countries, we need to look at how the development of machine-learning algorithms and the fact that personal data has become a commodity similarly wield information as weapons. Aziz Z. Huq, a scholar of law and professor at the University of Chicago, presents this development as an advantage for corporate capitalism that benefits corporations such as Amazon and Netflix, as well as governments (335). Huq points specifically to how such productions aid targeted advertisements and how monetary benefits can be gained from leveraging "these new information aggregates" (Ibid.). This monetary incentive, however, consequently diminishes privacy while causing "economic vulnerability for workers, swelling structural inequality at the social level, and a drip-fed corrosion of democratic values" (Ibid.). Not only does Huq point out increasing inequality and loss of privacy, but he significantly points to the corrosion of democratic values that this thesis is attempting to counteract. A portion of this corrosion and increased inequality comes as a result of what Huq points out as three examples of arguable exploitation within retail. These three issues consist of not realizing that one's data is being extracted, and thus the organizations gain far more than they spend, a reproduction of "gendered divisions of labor and reward," and "first-degree price discrimination" (Huq 355-56). Beyond this basic exploitation and manipulation, Huq charts out three "specific pathways by which data economies exacerbate aggregate economic inequalities or generate new forms of inequitable

hierarchy" (357). These pathways include tracking employees' movements through technology (Ibid.), exploiting gaps in legal protections for workers, and forgoing "human capital" (358) for "new predictive tools" (Ibid.). Essentially, Huq charts out the reality of concepts considered through the lens of fictional dystopias and presents the actual and identifiable consequences of the mechanization of culture, the corrosion of democratic values, and rampant consumerism on the back of surveillance technology.

The potential solutions to these issues in the fictional societies of Oceania and FUS, and by extension solutions we could employ in extratextual societies, is a combination of self-reflection, reducing monetary incentives, and the breaking up of information monopolies by giving the people access to information rather than allowing corporations or governments to dictate what information is shared or kept from the masses. Self-reflection not only allows a person to manifest their consciousness and act as an individual, but it enables growth by learning from mistakes in conjunction with the willingness to acquire information beyond what is given. This growth will also conflict with the orthodox doctrine of complete obedience by allowing the individual insight into their condition and the negative aspects of the orthodoxy. Additionally, this growth gives individuals alternatives to their condition by expanding their horizons in ways that may be restricted within the orthodoxy. In Platonic terms, self-reflection allows the individual to see beyond the shadows in the cave and thus see the world for what it is. Through self-reflection, and with additional access to more information and experiences, the individual graduates "from images, to things, to ideas, and, ultimately, to true knowledge" (Filler 543). Seeing the world for what it is – or at least being able to observe the closest thing to 'reality' – remains a cornerstone of any open and free democratic society because it allows individuals to make their own choices.

To correct this lack of self-reflection in *F451* and *1984*, these novels revolve around eccentrics as they gain knowledge and insight into the realities of their societies. After their journeys begin, the eccentric focalizers grow to reflect on both themselves and society at large. Ultimately, Montag escapes the clutches of hyperreality and ideological manipulation while Winston fails to do so completely. Winston attempts to resist the system, but it breaks him rather than the other way around. Despite Winston's failure, his eccentricity allowed him to resist the system to some degree. His failure and death also signify the danger that the singular eccentric faces when attempting to resist a massive system on their own. What Winston sees, but fails to

entirely grasp, is that his singular resistance, even with the tenuous aid of Julia, cannot make a genuine change unless he aids others in gaining a similar insight to his own. He does indeed attempt to open Julia's eyes to the reality of their society, but Julia doesn't care. Instead of turning to others, like his colleagues or the proles, he mistakenly and ignorantly puts his trust in the false Brotherhood. This leads to the false Brotherhood betraying him, and this development exemplifies the helplessness of an uninformed individual who is attempting to break free from a system: the system may be so great that even the avenues of resistance that seem the most available may be surveilled and controlled by it. Winston's redemption is in his writing to the future, but he similarly fails in this regard because his writing is confiscated and not made available to educate others. One might argue that his writing educates the extratextual reader, but it appears that Winston's work never achieved its purpose within Oceania. Comparatively, in *F451* we first observe how Clarisse's eccentric curiosity and mental acuity, coupled with the eccentric action of Mildred's suicide attempt, forces Montag to question himself and society. The consciousness that Montag achieves further enables him to force Faber out of his impassive state and allow Beatty his desperate wish for death. *F451* sets up the foundation for a broader societal self-reflection through the mirror motif toward the end of the novel.

Despite the personal fight the central characters Montag and Winston put up, they don't speak their heterodox thoughts in public. The reason these fictional people never speak up in their respective societies is that there exists no public sphere in which they *can* speak. They are essentially gagged from engaging in discussion because their societies lack the fundamental freedom required for such conversations to be had without harsh retribution. Ultimately, the lack of a public sphere is mainly a result of three factors: new mediums which act as surveillance and governing technology, oppressive ideologies, and cultural change as a result of the two previous factors. We could view this inability to speak as worthy of critique because they likely *could* have attempted to speak in public, but they go about their attempts at revolution more privately by attempting to elucidate the truth of their societies to individuals. The question of an open, direct, and likely bloody, revolution versus a slow ideological erosion of the status quo is highly relevant, but this topic is too extensive for this thesis and would suit a further study of this thesis' arguments.

Both *F451* and *1984* act as warnings and examples of the danger of widespread ideologies no matter their type. Even democracies can be so infested by consumption that the

influence of corporations overrides the freedom required to make genuine and informed decisions. Democracies also remain vulnerable to totalitarian or authoritarian ideologies. A society cannot grow without debate. Hence, a public sphere for such conflicts to take place is necessary. The fictional societies in these novels make discussion or dissent unacceptable, but when a single ideology becomes so pure and powerful that no other ideology can thrive, both people and societal development suffer for it. All ideologies need to be limited, either by other ideologies or by other power structures. One force that has the potential to counteract the state or corporations is the public sphere. The public sphere can act as a way for the general population, as well as specialized experts, to share opinions and shape their society without requiring legal power. If this public sphere is lost or undermined by sectional forces that seek to sway it, however, then other forces can wield far greater power with less resistance. When the people's ability to resist has been lost, restoring this ability is more difficult than preemptively strengthening it. Eccentrics are so crucial because they can aid in both creating and empowering a public sphere by pointing out critical truths or posing hard questions.

Despite the critical importance of the warnings in both of the two novels this thesis considers, by considering them together we can understand the greater picture. This greater picture consists of a general concern regarding new media technologies, ideologies, and the change they invoke, rather than the specifics the novels criticize. By reading *1984*, one might realize the danger of totalitarian ideologies, but one might miss the subtler critique of *how* such ideologies could take and maintain power in the first place: new technology. The 'how' of *1984*'s Oceania might not be entirely realistic due to the logistical improbability of surveilling so many people and manipulating their memories, but it is the spirit of the warning rather than the letter of it which is critical. A similar issue might crop up if one only considers the corporate capitalism depicted in *F451*. If we only concern ourselves with the system of corporate capitalism in *F451*, then we might miss the human element that the system is based upon. Such a system didn't simply appear due to the advancement of technology, but it was the advancement of technology which enabled such a culture and system to become viable. Ultimately, it is a twisted psychological hedonism – the notion that all humans seek pleasure and avoid pain even at the cost of living a meaningful life – that has created the culture of mindless consumption. This culture has subsequently enabled the rise of corporate capitalism to a degree that makes freedom taboo because a free people is more difficult to exploit. This view of psychological hedonism,

however, is resisted by O'Brien in *1984*, who instead insists that Oceania is opposite to the "stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined" (Orwell 279). Power is framed as an end rather than a means (276). This clearly distinguishes the society of Oceania from FUS. In FUS power is wielded to reach a different end: the proliferation of corporate power and capitalism itself. The desired end may initially have been the idealistic desire for social justice that Beatty claims, but how this is approached may have created the corporate capitalist profit-oriented culture that this society eventually becomes. This 'soft' coercion of cultural degeneration through ISAs in *F451* is very distinct from the repressive coercion depicted in *1984*. When considering the two novels' warnings together, however, we can conclude that any unchallenged ideology, when combined with the ability to manipulate or coerce through new mediums that allow for influence over the masses, is incredibly dangerous and ought to be resisted. If it is not resisted in time, then society might devolve into the societies Bradbury and Orwell fear; it is critical to remain vigilant and continue to work for a better and more open society to always stay ahead of the curve.

What this thesis signifies for contemporaneity and our future is that despite any belief that 'our' society is beyond the forces of media or ideological influence, eccentrics and an open public sphere in which new ideas and critiques can be discussed are critical for any society to reflect on itself and improve. To see beyond the surface of *F451*, we cannot reduce the dilapidation of FUS to something wrought by the state or corporations, but instead need to consider how the power of these corporations became achievable in the first place. Corporations took advantage of a self-inflicted degradation as a result of shifting culture after the introduction of the televisor parlor and may have negatively accelerated the shifting culture, but these corporations don't appear to have been the catalyzing factor. It was the slow degeneration of the public sphere on the opposite trajectory to the rise of flashy media that were the main culprits. The lack of resistance from the public only exacerbated the issues. On the other hand, to understand *1984*, it is critical to remember the bitterness and disappointment Winston feels after raising his glass to Goldstein without knowing what he stands for. This showcases that the antithesis to a bad ideology is not necessarily good and that it may be equally awful as the current ideology. We cannot simply diametrically oppose the existing ideology or hierarchy because this might create an equally bad society.

Putting *1984* and *F451* together presents two dystopian societies based on different ideologies. In *1984* we see a potential future in which the state's desire for complete control and domination saturates society. In *F451* we see a potential future in which complete freedom leads to the degradation of the individual while the influence of corporations grows so great that their ideals are imposed upon the rest of this society. Neither complete freedom nor complete domination will create an affable society, but a combination of control and freedom that will diminish how significantly people or groups of people can impose their will upon others has the potential to strike a balance. The combination of freedom and control can come about by allowing for eccentrics and opposing worldviews to exist in a continuous clash of ideas rather than seeking to eradicate any one belief. Clashing ideas in an open debate within the public sphere might aid the debaters and their ideas in improving, as a means to improve society. Additionally, the monopolization and corporatization of media damage the breadth of information available to the average citizen. This, in turn, limits the individual's freedom and ability to contribute to the improvement of their society. The solution to this issue of commodification of information is to vie for genuine freedom of information while giving individuals the tools to access this information. This might be accomplished in many ways, such as access to libraries, the internet, and devices that grant access to information. It may also be accomplished by removing the monetary aspect of commodified information. The modern freedom available on the internet is one point that can allow us to break up such monopolization and corporatization, and this is already happening by the breaking up of traditional media through the easy access to a multitude of information sources, but to achieve true freedom of information and communication as a base to empower democracy, all people need to be allowed access and the freedom to browse the internet without various restrictions or surveillance of their activity to allow them to develop naturally as individuals without the implicit anxiety that comes about from observation.

The role of information in the formation of ideas, decision-making, and spreading of ideologies is crucial. However, when information is either so restricted that only a totalitarian state or sectional group has a monopoly on it, this party can easily twist, omit, falsify, or redact information to further its goals. This method of controlling information is exemplified throughout *1984* and is a danger to the affected society. The more relevant methods of wielding information are exemplified in *F451*. These methods mirror real methods such as mining

personal data, invading privacy, and undermining the individual by inserting them in broad categories by utilizing, for example, machine learning and AI in the pursuit of profits. This, at least, seems to be the genuine function of the parlor family. The information overload the parlor family induces, in addition to the creation of parasocial relationships, allows them to manipulate, and advertise to, individuals based on personal interaction between individuals and artificial beings that act as entertainment. Such methods, however, infringe on the rights of individuals while also exacerbating societal issues and hierarchical differences, and ultimately function to weaken democracy by putting monetary rewards over human individualism and freedom.

Whether it is the diminished veracity of information in the modern public sphere, the increase in consumption through, for example, online shopping, the commodification of the news item, news being turned into political manipulation, or the spread of dangerous ideologies, these issues are present in modern society. I conclude that for a genuinely democratic culture to return, and thus for us to diverge from the corporate capitalist-controlled society we are heading toward, we need a public sphere in which eccentrics can not only introduce ideas contrary to the norm, but can even expose and critique any government, society, corporation, or group without being shunned or punished. Additionally, there need to be placed strict limits on monetary incentives for those in government and on the accumulation of wealth or property in the hands of the few to limit the potential power differential that comes about from some having vastly more resources than others. Allowing politicians or political parties to receive funding for campaigns, for example, gives corporations or individuals with deep pockets the ability to tip the scales in a political election. This ability is a testament to how democracy has diminished, and it cannot continue if we would like to shift the trajectory of society away from being controlled by corporations while the state is only democratic in appearance. Democracy requires equality, transparency, discussion, and harsh criticism for the average citizen to be able to make informed decisions and participate in critiquing the current status quo in the pursuit of a better world. Instead of funding for campaigns, what ought to be funded are public discussions, forums, votes, polls, and debates about how to improve society for the general public.

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