

Richard Jacob

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1984 Then and Now: Orwell, Anderson, and Radford Totalitarian Comparision and Warnings

On September 2, 1945, World War II ended. Six years and one day earlier, World War II began when German dictator, Adolf Hitler began his brutal, oppressive carnage by invading Poland. Hitler wanted global government control. In 1948, three years after the end of Hitler's brutal attempt to control the world, George Orwell authored the fictional novel *1984*. *1984* falls under the dystopian genre. Dystopia can be defined as a fictional society in the distant future where the inhabitants are oppressed and live in fear because something went wrong stemming from either government control, environmental destruction, or technological control. Orwell's *1984* describes a fictional, totalitarian society where the inhabitants of Oceania are heavily oppressed by government control and live in fear and paranoia. Orwell, an English novelist born in 1903, strongly opposed totalitarianism. According to scholar Gregory Claeys, "Orwell himself wanted it [*1984*] to be understood: as an attack on Stalinism..." (Claeys 391). *1984* serves as a warning for totalitarianism and speculating what could go wrong. Two English directors, Michael Anderson and Michael Radford, adapted the fictional, dystopian novel, *1984*, into two different films approximately twenty-eight years apart. Michael Anderson directed the 1956 film version of *1984*. And Michael Radford directed the 1985 version of *1984*. Filming techniques used by both directors will be explored and compared in this paper. First, I will provide summaries of the novel *1984*, the 1956 film version of *1984*, and the 1984 film version of *1984*. Then I will compare how each director applied color, lighting, sound, and presentation in their film adaptations of the novel, *1984* to emphasize the dystopian nature of totalitarianism. I will conclude with my evaluation of each director's adaptation of Orwell's novel, *1984*.

George Orwell's novel, *1984*, takes place in London in the year 1984. London lies within the country Airstrip One; part of Oceania (one of three world powers). The three world powers are Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia. Constant war ravages the world or so it seems. Big Brother, a distant figure and member of the ruling party IngSoc, rules over Oceania and controls every aspect of life. Big Brother controls the language, history, housing, marriage, reproduction, and thoughts. Citizens live in fear and paranoia because Big Brother watches citizens day and night using constant surveillance through telescreens. Telescreens are everywhere and cannot be turned off. Citizens fear being accused of thoughtcrimes which could land them in prison, labor camps, or death. Winston Smith, a thirty-nine-year-old male, works at the Ministry of Truth where he rewrites history to maintain the ruling party's power over the citizens; because "who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 34). Winston hates the party and wishes to rebel against it. Winston hides his thoughtcrimes out of sight of the telescreen. Daily, Winston breaks the law and writes in his diary; once writing "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four" (Orwell 249). Winston purchased the diary from Mr. Charrington, a shop owner in the Proles district; where telescreens and microphones are absent. Winston meets Julia, a coworker at the Ministry of Truth. Winston and Julia become romantically involved after Julia slipped Winston a note saying I love you. Both Winston and Julia know they are breaking the law. Winston rents the room above Mr. Charrington's shop for Winston and Julia's many sexual encounters. Eventually, O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party invites Winston and Julia to his home. Winston and Julia pledge allegiance to the resistance. O'Brien leads both to believe he is part of the resistance and provides Winston with a copy of the resistance's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. The novel, *1984*, contains the entire contents of the resistance's book. Winston and Julia read the book in the rented room. Mr. Charrington, an undercover member of the Thought

Police, bust Winston and Julia in the rented room in a raid. The Thought Police bring Winston to the Ministry of Love. At the Ministry of Love, Winston undergoes extreme torture for weeks at the hands of O'Brien. O'Brien tortures Winston with electrocution hoping to cure Winston of his thoughtcrimes. Winston succumbs to O'Brien's power. Next, O'Brien takes Winston to Room 101; here the prisoners meet their worst fears. Winston's worst fear is rats. O'Brien straps a cage of rats to Winston's face. Winston betrays Julia by requesting Julia receive the punishment. O'Brien releases Winston back into the public deeming Winston cured. In the end, Winston and Julia cross paths in a park, exchange a few words, and then move on. Life for Winston returns to the same state as when the novel began but Winston's mind and memories have been washed.

Michael Anderson, an English director, directed the 1956 version of the film *1984* based on the novel, *1984* by George Orwell. Anderson's adaptation comes only eleven years after the end of Hitler's attempt at controlling the world. The film begins with scenes of atomic bombs exploding. The narrator outlines the rise of three nations, Eurasia, Eastasia, and Oceania due to the atomic raids of 1965. Oceania is ruled by an authoritarian dictator named Big Brother. The first scene of the movie shows hysteria; air raid sirens can be heard, people are running to take cover in bomb shelters, and the telescreens are instructing people to take cover. Bombs can be heard in the distance. Thought Police arrive on motorcycles with guns drawn. The landscape of the city appears normal; clean streets with sidewalks. Men wear suits and women wear military style uniforms. Winston Smith takes cover in the doorway of a shop. A woman passing by takes cover with Winston; the woman is Julia. Winston believes Julia is a member of the Thought Police. Winston returns to his apartment where a screen examines him. Winston smuggled a diary into his apartment. In the diary, Winston expresses his hatred of the ruling party. Winston's one room apartment is fully furnished with furniture, rugs, curtains, and pictures on the walls. Winston's neighbor Parsons stops by for a visit. Winston and Parsons walk to the Chestnut Tree

Café for a drink and to converse. Julia enters the café and sits at another table. The Thought Police enter and re-arrest two men, Jones and Rutherford, for thoughtcrimes. Winston leaves the café and walks to Mr. Charrington's shop in the People's area of the city. Julia follows Winston. Mr. Charrington shows Winston the room upstairs. Julia enters the shop. Winston paranoid leaves the shop. On his way home, the Thought Police shine a blinding, bright light on Winston and question him. The Thought Police instruct Winston to report to authorities in the morning. O'Connor, an Inner Party member instructs Winston to get a new copy of the Newspeak dictionary. Winston attends the Two Minutes of Hate ceremony where Julia hands a note to Winston saying I love you. Julia and Winston meet at Victory Square and plan a time to meet on Sunday. Julia and Winston meet in a secluded spot in the country and become romantically involved. Julia and Winston lay on the grass holding hands and kissing. Winston proposes they rent the room above Mr. Charrington's shop. Winston believes O'Connor is part of the Underground. Winston and Julia meet O'Connor at his apartment and express their interest in joining the Underground. At the Hate Week rally, a gentleman provides Winston with a copy of Kalador's book in a briefcase; Kalador is the leader of the Underground and an enemy of Big Brother. Winston meets Julia in their room above the shop and shares the information about the book. Upon reading the book, a voice from behind the mirror calls them out. Immediately, Thought Police burst into the room through the window and door. Mr. Charrington enters the room and states, "nothing is ever hidden from the Thought Police. Take them away" (Anderson). Winston and Julia are taken to the Ministry of Love. O'Connor enters the holding room and orders Winston be taken to another room. O'Connor reveals his plans to burn all the evil out of Winston. O'Connor applies electric shocks to Winston through a device strapped to Winston's head. Winston's mind is washed. O'Connor takes Winston to Room 101. Before entering Room 101, Winston hears his voice stating he is afraid of rats. Winston is put into Room 101 with a

cage of rats. As the cage door opens, Winston betrays Julia. O'Connor releases Winston and deems Winston cured. Winston sees Julia sitting on a bench in a park. Winston sits next to Julia. Both faces resemble zombies with blank stares. Both share they betrayed each other. A war announcement interrupts their conversation, the movie ends with Winston happily chanting with the crowd, "Long Live Big Brother!"

Michael Radford, an English director, directed the 1984 version of the film *1984* based on the novel, *1984* by George Orwell. In addition to directing the film, Michael Radford wrote the screenplay for the 1984 film version of *1984*. Radford's film begins with a dramatic statement in bold white letters on a black screen:

WHO CONTROLS THE PAST CONTROLS THE FUTURE

WHO CONTROLS THE PRESENT CONTROLS THE PAST

The film opens in a large, dark auditorium where the large telescreen is projecting a Big Brother propaganda war film flanked on either side with red IngSoc flags. Oceania is at war with Eurasia. The Two Minutes of Hate ceremony is part of the daily work life at the Ministry of Truth. Ministry of Truth workers wear dark-blue overalls. Winston Smith notices a dark-haired woman glaring at him during the ceremony. In addition, Winston makes eye contact with O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party. The scene fades to Winston at his workstation where Winston receives newspaper clippings via a tube system. The date is April 4, 1984. Winston works at the Ministry of Truth and rewrites history for the party. After work, Winston walks home through war-torn streets and telescreens projecting confessions of thoughtcrime prisoners. Winston lives in a dirty, one room flat with a cot, a large telescreen that is always on, and a view of the Ministry of Truth building. Winston sits in a corner of the room out of sight of the telescreen and writes in his diary; a thoughtcrime. One day the dark-haired woman (Julia) gives Winston a note that says I love you. Winston and Julia begin a love affair. Winston rents a room above Mr.

Charrington's shop for four dollars per week. Winston and Julia meet there to engage in sex and eat banned food; more thoughtcrimes. One day O'Brien approaches Winston and compliments Winston on his exemplary rewrites and asks Winston to stop by his home to pick up the 10th edition of the Newspeak Dictionary. Back at the Ministry of Truth, there is a flurry of activity. Oceania is now at war with Eastasia, not Eurasia, and history must be rewritten. Following the long hours of history rewrites, Winston picks up the Newspeak dictionary from O'Brien. During their meeting, O'Brien turns off the telescreen and admits to Winston, the resistance is real. Winston returns home and discovers that the Newspeak Dictionary contains the contents of the resistance's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. The book explains that war is not to be won, it is meant to be continuous. War is planned to keep society near starvation. War is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects to keep the structure of society intact. Winston reads these pages to Julia while in bed. The love affair ends when Mr. Charrington, a member of the Thought Police, sets up a raid. Winston is taken to the Ministry of Love. Winston is strapped to a flat table by his arms and legs. O'Brien tortures Winston with electric shocks. Eventually, Winston is taken to Room 101, where a cage of rats is attached to Winston's face; rats are Winston's worst fear. Winston screams, "Do this to Julia!" The movie ends with Winston sitting at a table in the Chestnut Tree Café. Julia walks in and sits at the table. Both make extraordinarily little eye contact, show no emotion, and both share they betrayed each other. Julia leaves and the telescreen shows Winston's confession of thoughtcrimes.

In their films, Anderson and Radford recognize the key events outlined in Orwell's novel. However, Anderson and Radford adjust the chronological order of the events in their films. Organization of time presents the most important challenge for both directors. As a rule of thumb, a director has 70-120 minutes to put the most notable events needed to tell the story and exclude anything that is deemed unnecessary or can be inferred by the audience so the audience

remains engaged and interested (Rabiger chapter 5). In addition to the narrative, the director must rely on film techniques like color, lighting, sound, and presentation to produce an entertaining experience for the audience. Both films represent the essence of George Orwell's bleakness of the fictional, totalitarian society including the associated warning.

Anderson and Radford leveraged color to emphasize the bleakness, fear, and paranoia associated with a totalitarian society. Color in film helps convey the environment and mood in the film or a specific scene (Rabiger chapter 10). In both films, Anderson's 1956 version and Radford's 1984 version, color illustrates a dystopian, totalitarian society where oppressed inhabitants of Oceania live in fear and paranoia. Both Anderson and Radford employed dark coloring supporting a dystopian look and feel; helping the audience see and feel the fear and despair of the characters. For example, despite Anderson's 1956 film being a black and white film, the first scene depicts an air attack. In the background, the buildings cast dark shadows emulating danger. In addition, Anderson dresses O'Connor and the Thought Police in dark, military uniforms. The black uniforms of the Thought Police mimic Nazi soldier uniforms and O'Connor's black uniform mirrors that of a German, Nazi officer; providing the audience a visual of the Ruling Party's control over the inhabitants of Oceania and a symbol to fear. Lastly, Anderson increases the darkness in Room 101 to emphasize the gravity of Winston's situation. Radford's version of *1984* utilized newer color technologies as Radford produced his film twenty-eight years after Anderson's film. Radford's film used various blue and gray colors to illustrate the characters' dull, boring, dark life. The blue and gray colors mirror a black and white film. Radford applied red to represent the evil and power of the ruling party, IngSoc. Black represented the Thought Police; the oppressors. On the contrary, Radford used green to show freedom and happiness with the grand scenes of rolling green hills. Both Anderson's and Radford's implementation of color helped convey the bleakness, darkness, and fear instilled by the totalitarian society.

Anderson and Radford applied lighting to further enhance the darkness of the totalitarian society. Lighting complements color. Lighting further emphasizes the environment and mood of the film, scene, or characters. Lighting is a combination of key light, fill light, and back light. In films, key light serves as the main light in the scene. Fill light reduces contrast in the scene. And the back light creates a subtle rim of light around an object or character (Rabiger chapter 27).

Radford deploys a combination of low-key and high-key light throughout the 1984 film version supporting an atmosphere of darkness, grimness, and despair. For example, in the opening scene, the Ministry of Truth workers are watching a Big Brother propaganda war film. The scene is dimly lit using low-key light and focused on the large telescreen showing war scenes with tanks. Within the scene, Radford switches to high-key light when showing the faces of the workers. The high-key light intensifies the faces of the workers, making their faces stark; emphasizing the emotions of fear and anger. Lighting for Anderson was easier because his adaptation was a black and white film. Mostly Anderson adjusted key light to cast darker shadows and tones on characters and objects. For instance, in the scene where Winston is stopped by the Thought Police on the street, Anderson adjusts the key light on the Thought Police to make their faces more obscure with darker shadows illustrating them as oppressive and evil. Anderson deploys a blinding key light on Winston's face with no shadows to highlight Winston's fear and oppression. Anderson's and Radford's lighting techniques reveal the oppressed totalitarian society.

Anderson and Radford utilize sound in their films to tell the story and enhance the darkness of the totalitarian society. Sound can be diegetic and non-diegetic. Diegetic sound is sound that is part of the world within the movie (Rabiger chapter 27). For example, birds chirping would be considered diegetic sound. Non-diegetic sound is sound that is added like music. According to Gocsik, "The sound we hear in a film-its music, dialogue, and sound effects-creates meaning just

as much as we see. Sound helps the filmmaker tell a movie's story by reproducing and intensifying the world that has been partially created by the film's visual elements" (Gocsik 49). In both films, the dialogue reveals Oceania is at war. In addition to the visual effects of bomb explosions, both Anderson and Radford employ sound effects of bombs exploding in the distance as background noise within different scenes. Radford utilizes the sound of bombs as background noise more so than Anderson. For example, in Radford's film, Mr. Charrington shows Winston the room above the shop and in the background, there are sounds of bomb explosions. Anderson uses the sound of bomb explosions in the first scene of the movie illustrating an air raid. The sound effects of the bomb explosions are examples of diegetic sound. The sound from the telescreens is another example of diegetic sound in both movies. Radford utilizes the sound from the telescreen as constant background noise. In the cafeteria scene while the Ministry of Truth workers eat lunch and converse, in the background the telescreen provides production updates and informs the workers that the chocolate ration will be increased to twenty-five grams. Anderson uses the telescreen as background noise while Winston and Parsons are conversing about daily life at The Chestnut Tree Café. The telescreen provides updates on traitors against the party. Anderson and Radford add non-diegetic music to their films to enhance the intensity of the story. Radford adds eerie music to one of the film's early scenes where Winston is writing in his diary on April 4, 1984. As Winston writes, "To the past or to the future; To an age when thought is free; from the age of Big Brother; from the age of the Thought Police; from a dead man, Greetings." (Radford), eerie music plays; reinforcing the helplessness, fear, and despair within the totalitarian society. Anderson plays romantic music when Winston and Julia meet during their romantic getaways. Anderson's use of non-diegetic music allows the audience to feel the love, passion, and attraction between Winston and Julia. Anderson's and Radford's

diegetic and non-diegetic sound techniques reinforce and intensify the characters' fear and paranoia within the oppressed totalitarian society.

Anderson and Radford optimize the presentation in their films to tell the story and enhance the darkness of the totalitarian society. Presentation involves "staging everything we see in every shot" (Goscik 42) to tell the story and create meaning. Presentation is the strongest technique implemented by both directors. Anderson and Radford apply different approaches to presenting the society of 1984. Anderson's 1956 version presents a normal city not a war-torn city. The streets and sidewalks are clean and beautiful. The country of Oceania appears as a bustling community with buildings and smaller homes. The apartments are beautifully decorated with wallpaper, curtains, furniture, and rugs. Anderson does not use the city setting to portray a country at war. Anderson illustrates the presence of war through sound and special effects. Anderson conveys the characters' fear and paranoia through their facial expressions, lighting techniques, and non-diegetic music to set and emphasize the mood and tone.

Radford's portrays a stronger presentation. Radford presents a ruined city with bomb buildings, war-torn streets, and dark streets filled with rats and dirty water. Radford filmed his version in London during the exact months outlined in the novel, *1984*; between April and June in 1984. Radford's film follows a chronological order like the novel. Every scene emulates dirtiness and broken windows and glass. For example, Winston's apartment building and his apartment are appalling filthy. The windows in the front doors to Winston's apartment building are shattered and broken. Winston's apartment is a run-down one room flat with a cot, chair, and large telescreen. The walls of his apartment are covered in dirt. The cafeteria at the Ministry of Truth provides another example of poor conditions. The soup lady in the cafeteria appears overworked. Her hair is a mess, and she is perspiring. Obviously, there is no air conditioning in the hot

kitchen. The cafeteria is in the basement with no windows. These visual presentations help the audience feel how the characters are oppressed and trapped.

Another aspect of the presentation involves changing some details from the original story so that the film follows the 70-120 minutes rule. The director will change some details to keep it simple for the audience. Radford adjusts how Winston receives Goldstein's book. Orwell explains an extensive, elaborate plan for O'Brien to get the book to Winston. Radford simply has O'Brien hand Winston the new edition of the Newspeak dictionary. The pages in-between contain the resistance's book. Radford's film simplifies the notable event for the audience. Anderson's Julia has blonde hair. Orwell describes Julia as "a bold-looking girl of about twenty-seven, with thick dark hair, a freckled face, and swift, athletic movements" (Orwell 10). Anderson's Julia physically differed from Orwell's Julia. Anderson's Winston wore a button-down shirt and suit coat. Orwell identified Outer Party members with dark blue overalls regardless of gender. Anderson's Winston differed from Orwell's Winston. Directors change some details to help tell the story and create meaning for the story.

George Orwell described a very dark, fictional totalitarian society where the inhabitants of Oceania were heavily oppressed by government control and lived in fear and paranoia. Both Anderson's and Radford's films used color, lighting, sound, and presentation to successfully depict a totalitarian society living in fear and paranoia. Radford's film demonstrated a stronger depiction of a dystopian or totalitarian society. Radford's scenes showed the inhumane brutality of a totalitarian ruler. Radford focused on the fear, paranoia, and brutality associated with totalitarianism. Anderson focused on the love and attraction between Winston and Julia along with the paranoia associated with totalitarianism. Anderson's well-dressed characters and beautifully decorated rooms did not portray an oppressed society. Anderson used romantic music to illuminate the passionate love between Winston and Julia. Radford wrote the screenplay for

his version of the film. Radford followed the chronological order of the book more closely than Anderson. Orwell's novel, Anderson's 1956 film, and Radford's 1984 film provide entertainment and showcase the evils associated with totalitarianism. I would recommend reading Orwell's novel then watching Anderson's 1956 film followed by Radford's 1984 version and decide for yourself.

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