

ATLANTIS

Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies

45.1 (June 2023): 231-241

e-ISSN 1989-6840

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.28914/Atlantis-2020-45.1.13>

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## Approaches to Totalitarianism, Humanism and Arts in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* A Critical Review of

Waddell, Nathan, ed. 2020. *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xv+287 pp. ISBN: 1-108-89970-6

Obarrio Moreno, Juan Alfredo. 2021. 1984 (*George Orwell*) *Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I*. Madrid: Dykinson, S.L. 294 pp. ISBN: 9788413775067

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Much has been written about Orwell's masterpiece *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), so much indeed that one might think nothing original could be added. However, new reviews are published every year regarding this dystopian novel that have a fresh and different perspective. Even though Harold Bloom claimed that the novel belonged to the category of "good bad books"<sup>1</sup> (2007, 2), he also stated that "[t]he book remains momentous, perhaps it will always be so. But there is nothing intrinsic to the book that will determine its future importance" (2007, 2). Contrary to Bloom's opinion, however, it seems that George Orwell still speaks to an unquiet world, a society that appears to be facing issues that do not differ fundamentally from those Orwell addressed in his classic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom is quoting one of Orwell's essays titled "Good Bad Books," where Orwell refers to what Chesterton described as "the kind of book that has no literary pretensions but which remains readable when more serious productions have perished." *Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle would be an example of this kind of books (Marks 2011, 147).

<sup>2</sup> Tellingly, the extensive number of publications do not limit themselves to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Recent studies have also focused on Orwell as a public figure. An enlightening example is John Rodden's *Becoming George Orwell: Life and Letters, Legend and Legacy* (2021), in which the author narrates Orwell's journey from journalist to novelist. With a similar slant is the collection of essays *Journalism Beyond Orwell* (2020), where Richard L. Keeble explores the importance of journalism in the development of Orwell's writing. Both of these books attest to the undeniable vividness in this day and age of George Orwell's essays on politics and literary texts, as well as his journalistic essays.

In line with this, when speaking about the mass media of the time, the novelist and essayist showed concern regarding radio—a new technological device for him—despising it in the beginning as an “invasive instrumentalization of collective opinion that received its most dramatic literary figuration in his ‘telescreen’ in 1984” (King 2018, 64). However, Orwell changed his mind once he began to work for BBC Radio in 1941. What is more, Tim Crook in his article “George Orwell and the Radio Imagination” states that “Orwell’s experiences at the BBC were predominantly a process of positive creativity and cultural enlightenment both for himself and his audience” (2015, 204). Crook, on the other hand, notes that even though his years working on the radio could have benefited Orwell in terms of his use of narrative techniques when writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (2015, 200), Orwell continued “denouncing its relationship with propaganda” (King 2018, 68).

Similarly, a comparison could be made between the discomfort radio provoked in Orwell in his epoch and that which the new digital online technologies of our time cause within our contemporary society, where by some they are seen as “beginning to exercise a power over the public square with which no private company should be entrusted” (Maleuvre 2019, 38). What is more, as Maleuvre claims, these private companies, or “corporate-business elites” in Florian Zollmann’s words (2015, 37), could turn into “totalitarian states” if we are not careful, though this will occur “only if and when they take over the legislative and executive power of the state” (Maleuvre 2019, 38-39).

Significantly, no one thought even just one year ago that the same techniques George Orwell depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could be used again, this time by President Vladimir Putin to mislead the Russian public in relation to his attack on Ukraine, for months avoiding the use of the term *war*. Instead, Putin has endlessly repeated that the incursion is a “special military operation” to *demilitarise* and free Ukraine from the Nazi influence he implied existed at the moment of the Russian invasion—as reported by Reuters on the 24th of February, 2022 (Zinets and Vasovic 2022, n.p.).<sup>3</sup> As we can see, Putin was trying to deceive the Russian population, using what Orwell referred to as *Newspeak*<sup>4</sup> in his novel, that is, carrying out a significant propaganda operation to disseminate his own narrative of this conflict. In this sense, Putin follows the line that

<sup>3</sup> Natalia Zinets and Aleksandar Vasovic’s report the day the invasion took place stated: “After Russian President Vladimir Putin declared war in a pre-dawn televised address, explosions and gunfire were heard through the day in Ukraine’s capital and elsewhere in the country, with at least 70 people reported killed. [...] In his address, Putin said he had ordered ‘a special military operation’ to protect people, including Russian citizens, subjected to ‘genocide’ in Ukraine—an accusation the West calls baseless propaganda” (Zinets and Vasovic 2022, n.p.).

<sup>4</sup> As Stephen Ingle affirms in his article “Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and ‘The Truth’,” “Newspeak has the propensity to undermine civic culture and social values, and thereby to make Oceania, or something like it, a reality and not just a figment of Orwell’s powerful imagination. Monolithic, totalitarian states might seem anachronistic today (though North Korea remains and Pol Pot is less than 10 years in his grave), but other hegemonic structures of domination proliferate, and the growing power of the broadcasting media provides means of articulating such domination” (2007, 743).

Ingsoc imposes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, namely that “[w]hat the state says exists, is what exists: that is the natural drift, perhaps the political aim, of ideology” (Maleuvre 2019, 40).

Hence, even though *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written nearly a century ago, it remains alive, and new analyses of Orwell’s masterpiece are published nearly every year, studies that inform our understanding of the socio-political issues the world is facing. Remarkably, in his essay “Why I Write,” Orwell stated he wrote because of a “[p]olitical purpose—using the word ‘political’ in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after” (Orwell 1946, n.p.).

Not only do recent publications draw upon philosophical or literary perspectives, as previous studies have done, but they contribute to new perspectives of analysis related, among others, to the fields of law and education, as well as the fields of music, theatre or cinema. As Tyner points out, the author of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was so distressed by the “loss of humanity, of individuality” that “Orwell envisioned a totalitarian state so disciplined—spatially, temporally and socially—that all vestiges of humanity and individuality were to be subsumed under the control of the state” (2004, 145). Equally, in “Why Orwell Still Matters” Christopher Hitchens posits a similar idea when he says that “Orwell [...] was more than a foe of totalitarianism and totalitarians. He was a critic of the human species” (2007, 26). Thus the importance of reflecting on the concept of humanistic nature encountered in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

This review considers two recently published volumes. First, a monograph titled 1984 (*George Orwell*) *Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I* (2021a), written by Juan Alfredo Obarrio Moreno and published by Dykinson. And secondly, *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a collection of essays published in 2020 by Cambridge University Press and edited by Nathan Waddell. Even though the two books adopt different approaches, both share a similar objective: analysing how George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* informs our understanding of the socio-political evolution that we are experiencing so that new generations of readers become critical thinkers who can comprehend how our civilisation has developed in the last century and reached the point at which it finds itself at the moment.

Juan Alfredo Obarrio Moreno, author of 1984 (*George Orwell*) *Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I* (2021a), is a professor of Law interested in the field of law and literature. He has published various works related to the topic, such as *El mundo jurídico en Franz Kafka. El proceso* (2019)—with Luis de las Heras Vives—, as well as two other books in the series “Los totalitarismos”: *Cartas a un amigo alemán (Albert Camus) Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos II* (2021b) and *Borges frente al Nacionalsocialismo. Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos III* (2023).

In 1984 (*George Orwell*) *Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I*, Obarrio Moreno investigates the threat that totalitarianism poses to our culture and the means by which George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* advises us to become aware

and ready to combat it. Obarrio Moreno focuses on three different but related areas, i.e., law, literature and philosophy. The study of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from these perspectives makes this book significant in Orwellian studies. In Obarrio Moreno's words: "Este estudio viene a reivindicar el valor de la Cultura como confrontación, abierta y sin matiz alguno, al Totalitarismo, que no es otra cosa que la negación de esta" [This study defends the importance of Culture as confrontation, open and not merely hinting, to Totalitarianism, the latter being nothing but the denial of the former] (2021a, 14; my translation). In other words, we have to protect our cultural heritage so that those in power do not have the opportunity to establish a state in which people cannot express themselves freely, where the only truth is the one imposed by the totalitarian state, which in Obarrio Moreno's words "es el mayor triunfo del totalitario" [is the most remarkable triumph of the totalitarian] (2021a, 14; my translation).

Obarrio Moreno refers to totalitarianism as an ideology that is not limited to Communism, Fascism and Nazism; it does not belong just to the right or the left politically speaking, but to every kind of power that pretends to be the owner of the truth. Totalitarianism, consequently, could be defined as evil's quintessence (Obarrio Moreno 2021a, 15). Obarrio Moreno also states that intellectuals had an important part to play back in Orwell's times, considering their ambivalence towards the politics of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

In the second chapter, Obarrio Moreno ponders the role of the reader. In his view, the ideal reader is the one who turns into an author, since the act of reading is also an act of interpreting the text. To exemplify this notion, Obarrio Moreno extensively quotes philosophers such as Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, who dealt with this topic at length. At the same time, in this preamble to his analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he introduces some questions relating to law and the philosophy of law, which will help him sustain his study. These questions link his train of thought with that of Michel Foucault's *anatomo-politics*<sup>6</sup> and *biopolitics*<sup>7</sup> (Obarrio Moreno 2021a, 23), as well as that of the *homines sacri* by Agamben<sup>8</sup> (Obarrio Moreno 2021a, 24). Besides,

<sup>5</sup> In "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 2014. Power, Militarism and Surveillance in Western Democracies," Florian Zollmann explains that Orwell distrusted intellectuals who supported the *status quo*, since, in Orwell's view, danger lies in acceptance on the side of intellectuals of all colours of a totalitarian outlook (Zollmann 2015, 33).

<sup>6</sup> *Anatomo-politics* is a "politics of the human body." This means that *anatomo-politics* does not refer to all political techniques that alter the population's health, but rather to only those techniques that directly act on the body. More specifically, *anatomo-politics* attempts to *discipline* the human body. As Michel Foucault puts it, discipline is always "addressed to the body." When we are disciplined, our body is directly induced to behave more productively or usefully (Doniger 2020, n.p.).

<sup>7</sup> Foucault's *biopolitics* is defined as a control apparatus exerted over a population as a whole, citing the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on (Mayhew 2015, n.p.).

<sup>8</sup> Agamben is best known for his contributions to political and critical legal theory. Since the 1995 publication of *Homo Sacer I*, the first volume of his on-going elaboration of the work on *biopolitics* initiated by Michel Foucault, key concepts of his argument—such as *homo sacer*, bare life, and state of exception—have been frequently cited, debated and adopted in discussions of sovereignty, bioethics, legal violence and political theology (Ng 2014, n.p.).

Obarrio Moreno quotes Hans Kelsen,<sup>9</sup> from whom he borrows the concept *Gorgona del Poder*—that is, Gorgon of Power, indeed the title of his second chapter. With this idea, he refers to power, but to “un Poder que contamina, ofusca y petrifica toda virtud, hasta convertir su pensamiento en Ley y su palabra en verdad, en la única verdad” [a Power which corrupts, confuses and petrifies all virtue until it transforms its thought into Law and its word into truth, into the only possible truth] (2021a, 26; my translation). For Obarrio Moreno, literature is the only art empowered to comprehend this legal truth. Apart from that, he also alludes to the fundamental function of historians, in that they are in charge of naming concepts as well as narrating facts that happened in the past in order to be able to connect and interpret them properly with respect to the present. In short, Obarrio Moreno explains what totalitarianism is, where it comes from, and how we can avoid it, supporting his ideas with a myriad of concepts taken from diverse philosophers, novelists, essay writers, historians and jurists. All of this will help him in his interpretation of Orwell's novel, and in his pursuit to elucidate its most profound meaning, which, for Obarrio Moreno, is the death of civilisation as we know it, that is to say the disappearance of the State governed by the rule of law (2021a, 188).

We will examine now the third chapter of Obarrio Moreno's study, where not only does he thoroughly analyse the text and its main characters, but also provides a brief outline of George Orwell's life. In addition, the author tries to interpret why we, the public, read this text even today, as it is a novel against totalitarianism. For Obarrio Moreno, there is no room for dystopia in Orwell's text. There is, though, room for history since it is history that shows us how human beings react when a totalitarian system has been established in our society (2021a, 50-51). Obarrio Moreno also suggests that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does not focus on a particular regime, whether Communist, Fascist or Nazi; it is, more specifically, a criticism of all of these systems, of totalitarianism in itself<sup>10</sup> (2021a, 49).

In parts one, two and three of this chapter, the author concentrates on the central characters that appear in the novel and how their behaviour affects the plot. Obarrio Moreno first analyses the figure of Winston, offering specific observations about him as an “antihero” (2021a, 77). Secondly, Obarrio Moreno examines the figure of Julia, who, in the author's view, represents Winston's feminine side, as well as the rebellious side of the Party (2021a, 175). The analysis in this section finishes with an outline of O'Brien, a

<sup>9</sup> Kelsen is best known for his rigorous development of a ‘positivist’ theory of law that rigorously excludes from its analysis any ethical, political or historical considerations and finds the essence of the legal order in the “black letter” or laid-down law. A system of law is based on a *Grundnorm* or ground rule, from which flows the validity of other statements of law in the system. The ground rule might be that some particular dictates or propositions, such as those of the sovereign, are to be obeyed. The *Grundnorm* can only be changed by political revolution. The theory is best known in its development in the *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (1925, transl. and revised as *General Theory of Law and State*, 1945) (Blackburn 2016, n.p.).

<sup>10</sup> Ian Williams posits this in his article “Orwell and the British Left,” where he speaks about Orwell's disillusionment after having experienced the Spanish Civil War and having seen “the Soviet Pact with Nazi Germany in 1939.” Because of his life experiences “he came to ‘the old, true and unpalatable conclusion that a Communist and a Fascist are somewhat nearer to one another than either is to a democrat’” (2007, 80).

character who could be considered to epitomise Orwell's past life experiences in relation to totalitarianism, an example being the persecution of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM), close to Trotskyism, in the Spanish Civil War (2021a, 225).

Obarrio Moreno studies Winston, Julia and O'Brien as main characters or secondary ones depending on whether they appear in parts one, two or three of his study. Through this technique, the reader can see the influence that Winston, Julia and O'Brien have on each other and on the final result, Winston's reeducation. Julia, contrary to what Winston may think when he meets her for the first time, is a rebel against the Party who enjoys living life and teaches Winston how to do the same. Obarrio Moreno also explains that she is loyal and skillful enough not to be discovered (2021a, 181-83). Winston acquires this sense of loyalty during the period he spends with Julia, a commitment that will take him to Room 101. On the other hand, O'Brien, who is an accomplished member of the Party and able to gain Winston's trust, misleads Winston when they first meet and the former invites the latter to his home (2021a, 198-99). There Winston shows himself to be vulnerable and this is when O'Brien takes the opportunity to arrest him for being a rebel, ready to act against the Party and Big Brother. Therefore, O'Brien achieves his final goal—Winston's reeducation—once Winston finally betrays Julia and learns to love Big Brother.

In his conclusion, Obarrio Moreno encourages readers to believe in democracy and law; without them, our society is lost to the hands of a few who simply want power for the sake of it (2021a, 273). This search for power entails nothing more than corruption and totalitarianism, which Orwell tried to warn us against. That is why it is crucial to have a state which respects Human Rights and is governed by the rule of law; without it, the human being is corrupted and capable of carrying out the worst of atrocities (2021a, 227).

Obarrio Moreno is undoubtedly an expert with broad knowledge, which extends beyond his field of expertise—law and the philosophy of law—into other disciplines such as history, philosophy and literature. This is demonstrated by the number of authors and works he references throughout 1984 (*George Orwell*) *Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I*. With regards to literature, Obarrio Moreno evidences his deep mastery of the field, as the catalogue of works and authors he has selected is impressive and must be taken into account by those readers who have little experience with utopian or dystopian texts. Be that as it may, the book is sometimes overwhelming for the reader as so many quotes and footnotes—although largely illustrative—have been included in the text. This work would have benefited from less extensive use of citations and footnotes, which at some points are too long and could result in the loss of attention on the part of the reader. Apart from that, footnotes and the bibliography contain several typographical errors.

The collection of essays edited by Nathan Waddell, *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is a suggestive and heterogenous volume, which helps us approach George Orwell's novel from an interdisciplinary perspective. In consonance

with many other academics in Orwellian studies, the editor refers to the great significance the text has had over the years. However, he considers that new light can be shed on this somewhat over-exposed novel, a task that can be achieved from academic perspectives to which not enough attention has hitherto been paid, “by asking new questions about how and why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written, what it means, and why it matters” (Waddell 2020, 3). Consequently, one of the main objectives of this work is “to stimulate further exchanges about the novel’s significance in an age in which authoritarianism finds itself newly empowered” (Waddell 2020, 3).

This compilation is divided into four thematic sections, ranging from the more extensively analysed topics, portrayed in parts I and II, to the topics that are depicted in parts III and IV, which could be perceived as more bizarre in connection with the novel. Part I, entitled “Contexts,” takes into consideration four socio-historical aspects that can be analysed in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: education, geography, the manipulation of archives and Human Rights. Far from what might be thought, the situations Orwell described regarding the society of the 1940s in his novel are still relevant today.

This first part starts with Natasha Periyán’s “Teaching and Learning in and beyond *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,” an essay that reflects critically on the educational methods employed during the twentieth century and the ways such methods influenced the novel. Periyán does this through an analysis of Winston’s learning experience throughout the text, examining the manipulation of the political slogans by the Party and the learning through torture the main character experiences (2020, 23). The second chapter in this part, Douglas Kerr’s “The Virtual Geographies of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,” explores not only the geopolitical setting of the novel but also the way it affects the characters, socially and intimately speaking, taking into account the “novelistic discourse” and the “journalistic or strategic language” in the text (2020, 37). The third chapter, “The Politics of the Archive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,” written by Diletta de Cristofaro, examines the significance of the manipulation of archives, either public or private, to control Oceania’s population. The analysis is supported by four quotations: Jacques Derrida’s “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory”; Sarah Manguso’s “Why do people keep diaries? Prisoners, explorers, regents—of course. But there are so many others, nobly addressing the entire future”; the Party slogan “Who controls the past [...] controls the future; who controls the present controls the past”; and one quote about Winston’s diary: “He wondered again for whom he was writing the diary. For the future, for the past” (2020, 51). The last chapter of this first part, David Dwan’s “Orwell and Humanism,” has a clear connection with Obarrio Moreno’s, as Dwan concentrates on how human nature is transformed by totalitarianism. As such, the importance of human dignity and the protection that the Declaration of Human Rights gives human beings prevail.

Part II, “Histories,” is composed of four articles which elaborate on the literary history of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including the impact that diverse genres had on Orwell’s work, as well as how those writing about politics and literature at the time affected

him. In addition, the relevance of specific authors in Orwell's works is emphasised, finishing with the effect the novel has had on posterior novelists.

This second part commences with Jonathan Greenberg's "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Tradition of Satire," in which the author studies Orwell's work as belonging to this genre. In the following chapter, "Orwell's Literary Context: Modernism, Language and Politics," Lisa Mullen explores the literary and non-literary influences in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, examining Orwell's connections with the modernists, together with his analysis of Henry Miller's and James Joyce's texts, in addition to the impact that the "earlier dystopian" could have had on Orwell's novel (2020, 95). The third study, "Wells, Orwell, and the Dictator" by Sarah Cole, focuses on the similarities between Orwell's and Wells's writings when dealing with the future since "both can see how the individual matters, and equally where he [*sic*] will be eclipsed, in the long futures they imagined" (2020, 110). The last author in this part, Hollie Johnson, in her essay "Orwell's Literary Inheritors, 1950-2000 and Beyond," draws upon the myriad of writers whose works were inspired by Orwell in terms of topics and writing conventions, and how they are useful in facing the anxieties of our future (2020, 124).

In part III, titled "Questions," the ethical questions of the novel explored range from the scarcities experienced by the refugees in our age to the situations the proles encounter in Orwell's novel, along with the analysis of the working conditions of the proletariat and the vileness of the human being.

This third part opens with Janice Ho's "Europe, Refugees, and 1984." This essay deals with the notions of migration, nationalism and economic shortage and how these ideas are represented in Orwell's novel to show how the human being "is shaped by the political systems one inhabits" (2020, 142). The following author, Elinor Taylor, with her study "The Problem of Hope. Orwell's Workers," concentrates on the proles, who are the only ones able to give some hope to a society such as the one depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Taylor develops her analysis by describing the evolution of Orwell's ideas on socialism during the 1930s and 1940s, through the study of the ethics and "reproductive functions" attributed by Orwell to the proles in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and she wonders if the novel is hopeless when speaking about "class politics" (2020, 155). The third author—the editor of the collection—, Nathan Waddell, contributes with a chapter called "Oceania's Dirt. Filth, Nausea, and Disgust in Airship One." In it, Waddell focuses on filthiness in the novel, in terms of both the language used and the situations in which the characters get involved, in order to show the differences among the ruling class—"the apparent cleanliness of Oceania's political systems"—and those who are under their control—"the nigh-on inescapable muck of its citizens, and of the spaces they inhabit" (2020, 170). The final chapter in Part III is, in my opinion, the most captivating one, as Peter Brian Barry discusses philosophical notions such as "evil and evil people" (2020, 182) intelligibly—even sometimes amusingly—, which makes them easily comprehensible to the uninitiated reader.



Part IV, "Media," concentrates on the cultural legacy the novel has had over the years, and the artistic impact it found in other fields of expertise, including theatre, cinema, music, comics and videogames. Firstly, Daniel Buckingham presents his article titled "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* on Radio, Stage, and Screen," in which he introduces an inventory of eleven films and plays which have been influenced by George Orwell's novel. Analysing these adaptations, Buckingham outlines why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* continues to be popular today, and our need to compare our society to the one depicted in Orwell's novel (2020, 200). Jamie Wood, in "Making *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Musical: Pop, Rock, and Opera," highlights every song and musical released since the 1950s that was inspired by *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or other Orwell texts. Isabella Licani-Guillaume, in her "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Comics," takes a look at several comics that are clearly influenced by *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or which are, literally, a version of the novel. The author claims that the appropriation of Orwell's text by the "different narrative system" of comics "constitute[s] resistance to cultural homogeneity and orthodox readings," which seems especially pertinent in Orwell's novel (2020, 233). Soraya Murray's "'In this game that we're playing'. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Videogames" focuses on the critical influence of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not only on "videogame-narratives" but also their strategies, "rule-based systems, rhetorical capacities, ethical problematics" and the ability to make the player develop critical thinking (2020, 248). The last contribution is by Adam Roberts, "Coda. The Imaginaries of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*." In it, Roberts analyses how the deepest fear experienced by the society depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was to be watched by Big Brother, whereas the greatest fear in current Western society is that of not being watched by anyone in our social networks and, therefore, feeling that we are missing out. For example, Roberts explores the BBC TV program *Room 101*, and the show *Big Brother*, this latter produced all over the world, where the main goal of the participants is being observed by the audience.

Nathan Waddell's extensive collection is quite eloquent: this project—offering an extensive number of informative studies—is a highly valuable book for anyone intending to investigate Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This publication is a well-structured and well-designed volume in which each section brings together carefully chosen contributions. As mentioned before, Obarrio Moreno's work concentrates on a totalitarian and humanistic reading of the novel. Even though some of the chapters included in Waddell's collection also focus on these topics, it promotes additional insights into the matter. In this sense, this latter volume offers new views on Orwell's masterpiece, studying it in connection with topics that open different lines of research.

In this same vein, further investigation into the contrast between hypervisibility as seen in Orwell's dystopian society and in our current scenario is needed to fully appreciate the change of paradigm experienced in recent decades. While in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* citizens had a feeling of continually being observed, in our present society, as Roberts reports, there is a voluntary overexposure experienced by the individual both on TV programmes and on social networks. This hypervisibility suggests a new

way of imposing totalitarian practices, where fundamental Human Rights can be dismissed and the dictatorship of the image can be installed. Therefore, we believe that opening this line of research would be valuable for our generation and future ones in comprehending and having the ability to manage online technologies in a more efficient manner.

All in all, the works studied in this book review article prove useful to understand why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is still relevant nowadays. Orwell felt that “[g]enuine common sense is needed to counter what we have come unthinkingly to accept as ‘common sense’—the received views that all of us are accustomed to and that we tell ourselves we know are true” (Cain 2007, 76). In this vein, the reading of Orwell’s texts and the insights offered by the works analysed here significantly inform our understanding of our socio-political scenario from the point of view of different fields of study. As mentioned above, these two publications also open up new research lines that need further study, such as those related to videogames, comics, theatre and music, among others. This will help us—as individuals and as members of a community—develop that “genuine common sense” that Orwell called for.

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Received 12 March 2023

Revised version accepted 22 May 2023

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