

Feng Chia University Outstanding Academic Paper by Students

Title : Utopian Possibilities: Resistance, and Perceptions of Freedom

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Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of control, resistance, and freedom in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise* (1975), and The Wachowskis' *The Matrix* (1999). Each work presents distinct mechanisms of domination: the ideological and linguistic manipulation of totalitarianism, the architectural and social hierarchies that implode from within, and the simulated reality sustained by virtual imprisonment. The study further considers how resistance unfolds—whether through inevitable failure under brainwashing, collapse without collective purpose, or the ambiguity of choices within preordained structures. By contrasting the characters' perceptions of freedom, the analysis reveals that autonomy is threatened not only by overt repression but also by illusion, collapse, and self-deception. The conclusion reflects on contemporary parallels, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking, media literacy, embodied connections, and adaptability in navigating truth and agency in the digital age.

Keyword : George Orwell; J.G. Ballard; The Wachowskis; dystopia; control; resistance; freedom; ideology; architecture; simulation

中文摘要

本論文探討喬治·歐威爾的《一九八四》(1949)、J.G. 巴拉德的《摩天樓》(1975) 與華卓斯基姊妹的《駭客任務》(1999) 中所呈現的控制、反抗與自由的多重樣貌。三部作品分別展現了不同的權力機制：極權社會的意識形態與語言操控、建築與社會階層內部的崩解、以及透過虛擬監禁所建構的模擬現實。本文進一步分析各自的反抗方式——從洗腦與酷刑下的必然失敗，到缺乏共同願景而導致的社會瓦解，再到預言與體制內選擇之間的自由幻象。透過比較角色對自由的認知，研究指出自主性不僅受制於外在壓迫，也可能因幻覺、內部崩解與自我欺騙而受損。結論部分則回到當下處境，強調批判思維、媒體素養、身體性的連結，以及在數位時代中適應與重塑真實的重要性。

關鍵字：喬治·歐威爾；J.G. 巴拉德；華卓斯基姊妹；反烏托邦；控制；反抗；自由；意識形態；建築；模擬

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Introduction

This research paper aims to explore the natures of control, resistance, and freedom depicted in George Orwell's 1984, J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, and The Wachowskis' *The Matrix*.

When you first mention the title of the work, use the author's full name, italicize the title, and include the year of publication in parenthesis.

Explain your choice of these three.

1 Mechanisms of Control

This section will analyze the distinct mechanisms of control employed in each fictional society.

1.1 1984 – Ideological and Linguistic Control

In 1984, the Party maintains absolute power through pervasive ideological and linguistic manipulation. The official language of Oceania – Newspeak – is explicitly designed to narrow the range of thought to make otherwise thoughts “literally unthinkable” by the year 2050. Its vocabulary is severely reduced, eliminating words with undesirable meanings, and stripping others of “unorthodox meanings” and “all secondary meanings.” (page reference?)(It'd be helpful to provide examples here). This deliberate reduction of vocabulary is considered a “gain” because “The smaller the area of choice, the smaller the temptation to take thought”

Doublethink & Reality Control

The Party constantly rewrites history and facts through the Ministry of Truth to ensure its predictions are always correct and that no change in sovereignty is ever admitted. This continuous alteration of the past is known as doublethink, a Newspeak term meaning “the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them”. The Party enforcers, such as O’Brien, are masters of doublethink, consciously deceiving while genuinely believing their lies. This process means that “the past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon,” and since the Party controls both, “the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it.”

An example or two is always useful when explaining the background and making the narrative more “alive”. For instance, rather than simply defining what “Newspeak” is, you could contextualize it—when does Winston first encounter Newspeak and/or when is the term first explained to him, and to what effect? Including a bit of background story would help the passage read more smoothly.

1.2 *High-Rise* – Architectural and Social Control

[The shift to describing the high-rise apartment feels rather abrupt, esp. for readers who may be unfamiliar with the novel. A brief intro here would ease the transition into the architectural details.] The forty-story luxury apartment itself is a self-contained hierarchy, with facilities like a movie theater, swimming pools, supermarket, and elementary school, designed for 2,000 tenants. However, with full occupancy, residents separate into “three rival groups” based on their floor level, forming a social hierarchy.

All the pressure among residents begin to surface, leading to violence, abuse, and

even murder. This escalates rapidly, carrying the tenants "back into a kind of stone-age primitivism".

Despite the internal chaos and regression, residents “continue with their lives in the world outside as if nothing is amiss,” clinging to the hope of making sense of their technological creation even as it “crumbles around them”. This highlights a form of control where the internal social structure collapses from within, driven by inherent human tendencies rather than overt external forces.

1.3 The Matrix – Virtual Control

Humans live in a computer-generated world known as the Matrix, which is presented as the full-copy from the late 20th century. This entire reality is an illusion, merely electrical signals interpreted by the human brain. The true world is a post-apocalyptic reality where humans are grown in endless incubators and harvested for their bioelectrical energy by machines.

Morpheus informs Neo that humans are “born into bondage, kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.” He offers Neo a “red pill” to see the truth, or a “blue pill” to remain in blissful ignorance and believe “whatever you want to believe.” This choice is presented as the last chance to break free from the illusion. A member of Morpheus's crew explicitly states his preference for “ignorance is bliss” and the illusory comforts of the Matrix, even planning to betray his comrades to be reinserted.→ I suppose this is an incomplete paragraph. When you expand it, make sure that whatever you choose to include here ties back to Virtual Control—as indicated in the subsection heading—and connect the dots for your readers.

2 The Question of Resistance

This section will analyze the nature and outcomes of resistance in each narrative.

2.1 Inevitable Failure Against Brainwashing, Physical, and Mental Torture

The Ministry of Love is the ultimate tool of the Party's control, a place where enemies are brought not to be punished, but to be “cured” and “changed.” The objective is not merely to extract confessions, but to “reshape” the heretic, burning “all evil and all illusion out of him” and making him “one of ourselves before we kill him.”

The final stage of breaking a person is Room 101, where individuals are confronted with “the worst thing in the world” – their deepest, most unbearable fear. When confronted with this, Winston screams for them to “Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia!” This act of betrayal, giving up the person he loved, signifies his complete will surrendered, proving that “they can make you say anything [. . .] but they can't get inside you” was a false hope. His love for Big Brother at the end marks his complete reintegration, represents ultimately the whole act of rebellion always fails.

2.2 Collapse When No Hope for Future or Bigger Causes

The tenants, rather than uniting for a cause, break into tribal groups and engage in violent conflict, looting, and sexual degradation. The “civilization will collapse” aspect manifests as the internal breakdown of the community into stone-age like

primitivism.”

The novel highlights that the absent of a larger external threat or a vision for the future, the internal imbalances and repression within a seemingly perfect, self-contained society lead to its own destruction. The violence is not a means to an end (like overthrowing a regime) but an end in itself, a result of the psychological pressures within the insulated environment.

2.3 When All Things Are Fabricated, Are Choices Truly Yours?

Morpheus is convinced that Neo is “the One,” a prophesied individual capable of manipulating the Matrix and bringing an end to the war. The Oracle, a key figure in guiding the resistance, gives seemingly contradictory prophecies. She tells Neo he is “not the One” and that Morpheus will ultimately “sacrifice his life to save yours,” forcing Neo to make a choice. This raises the question of whether Neo's choices are truly free or if they are part of a predetermined path within the prophecy.

On the other hand, Neo's training enables him to perform superhuman features within the simulation, such as dodging bullets and eventually seeing the Matrix as flowing code. This implies that resistance, to some extent, still operates within the framework of the control system, albeit by manipulating its inherent properties.

3 Perceptions of Freedom

This section will compare and contrast the perception of freedom across the three narratives.

3.1 Totalitarianism

Freedom is defined by Winston as “the freedom to say that two plus two make four.” This emphasizes a fundamental intellectual freedom – the ability to acknowledge objective truth and reality. However, the Party's aim is to eradicate this by controlling not just actions, but thoughts and emotions through techniques like doublethink and Newspeak, reducing individuals to unthinking, compliant tools. The ultimate “freedom” for the Party member is self-submission and merging with the collective Party, thereby becoming “all-powerful and immortal” in their own warped-up sense. → You’ll need to make the connection between this passage and the stated subheading—“Totalitarianism”—more explicit. You might also consider revising the subheading itself, as it appears too general. The same applies to 3.2 and 3.3.

3.2 Self-Collapse

In *High-Rise*, the idea of freedom, unconstrained by external societal norms within the apartment building, paradoxically leads to regression and chaos. It suggests that unfettered “freedom” without moral or social structure can result in a destructive, non-productive construct. The lack of a “bigger cause” or “hope for the future” means the tenants’ freedom is not constructive, but rather leads to a breakdown of civilization.

3.3 Illusion of Choice

Freedom is presented as the ability to unplug from the simulated reality and see the truth, even if that truth is a harsh and dangerous “desert of the real.” The choice

offered by Morpheus is pivotal, yet the Oracle's prophecies and Morpheus's long search for the One imply a degree of predetermination. The ultimate freedom for Neo is not just to escape, but to understand and eventually manipulate the rules of the Matrix itself, breaking its boundaries. However, Neo is still operating in the system, how can he be sure of his decisions being "free".

4 Navigation of Truth and Control in Present Days

4.1 Critical Thinking and Media Literacy

Beware of the equivalent of newspeak/doublethink (e.g., words that reduce our language preciseness)

Avoid being in an echo chamber, be active in selecting all sorts of information sources.

4.2 Engage with Reality Beyond the Screen

Bonding with real people, human bodies need physical connection

Our civilization is based on human-to-human networking

4.3 Embrace Discomfort and Seek Improvements

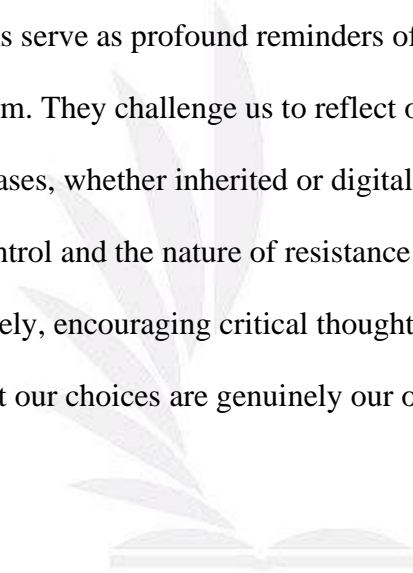
As Neo learns the need to bend the rules, we ought to take/ maintain some of the initiatives

Accept the world is everchanging, and try to adapt and live upon it.

Conclusion

The literary worlds of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *High-Rise*, and *The Matrix* offer powerful allegories for the mechanisms of control that societies, both fictional and real, can execute over individuals. From the ideological and linguistic manipulation of Newspeak and the constant surveillance of the Thought Police in 1984, to the architectural and social hierarchies leading to internal collapse in *High-Rise*, and the all-encompassing virtual prison of *The Matrix*, each narrative vividly illustrates the fragility of human autonomy.

Ultimately, these works serve as profound reminders of the ongoing battle to define and safeguard freedom. They challenge us to reflect on how we defy or change our “natural coding” and biases, whether inherited or digitally curated. Understanding these diverse patterns of control and the nature of resistance enables us to navigate the present world more effectively, encouraging critical thought, the pursuit of authentic truths and the assurance that our choices are genuinely our own.



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