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## The Vita Activa as a Literary Lens for George Orwell's 1984

Juanita Y. Escamilla-Deligani

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THE *VITA ACTIVA* AS A LITERARY LENS FOR GEORGE ORWELL'S *1984*

A Thesis

by

JUANITA YESENIA ESCAMILLA-DELIGANIS

Submitted to Texas A&M International University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2018

Major Subject: English

The *Vita Activa* as a Literary Lens for George Orwell's *1984*

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Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee,	Jonathan Murphy
Committee Members,	Paul J. Niemeyer
	Frances Rhodes
	Patricia Uribe
Head of Department,	Jonathan Murphy

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## ABSTRACT

The *Vita Activa* as a Literary Lens for George Orwell's *1984*  
(December 2018)

Juanita Yesenia Escamilla-Deliganis, Bachelors of Arts, Texas A&M International University;

Chair of Committee: Dr. Jonathan Murphy

This study will explicate Hannah Arendt's social theory and political studies and apply them as literary lens for George Orwell's iconic dystopian novel *1984*. This study focuses on Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968). *The Human Condition* provides Arendt's comprehensive delineation of the *vita activa* and its supporting social components. It explains different social components how they work interdependently to culminate in a free and public life: the *vita activa*. While her work stresses that democracy is not a perfect system, it is the system that best respects humanity's attribute of plurality.

*The Origins of Totalitarianism* follows the rise of fascist governments. Arendt's study illustrates why totalitarian governing systems are detrimental to society, and how they work to destroy democracy. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* identifies and explains the *mass man* concept. This concept gives rise to three societal components: *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob* which work to destroy democracy and exploit humanity's plurality. When the machinations of totalitarian governments are accurately executed, they lead to the dismantling of society, democracy, and the *vita activa*.

The United States has not fallen victim to fascist movements; however, it is far from immune. A vaccination lies within dystopian literature. The contention of this study is that

dystopian fiction should be interpreted as the commentary and critique of politics, politicians, and political machines that it is. This study examines George Orwell's iconic dystopian novel *1984* (1950) which depicts a society under totalitarian rule. Orwell showcases the destruction of society, democracy, and the *vita activa* through the struggles of his protagonist, Winston Smith.

This examination of Arendt's political and social philosophy as literary theory provides an informed analysis of a society gone awry. While Arendt's works do not explicitly warn American societies against the dangers of totalitarian governments, she identifies, defines, and describes what it looks like to live in a society where totalitarianism is allowed to flourish. This examination of *1984* attempts to identify elements of a fascist government in hopes that readers will recognize the warning signs and act to protect, uphold, and sustain democracy.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and friends who were the most supportive circle of people a person could ever have. Thank you, Milton for sitting up at the table late nights when I knew I was going to go insane. Thank you to the members of my book club, Maury, Venessa, Judy, Cindy, Renee, and Cris, I don't know what I would have done without book club nights. Thank you, Marissa and Lydia for all your editing assistance. I also have to thank my muses—regardless of what anyone may think of the pages that follow—my ten pups: Sherry, Rudy, Luna, Chips, BD, Kong, Oprah, Meatball, Sandy, and Zoe. Their company and calming presence around my writing/dining table was, is, and will always be indispensable. Finally, thanks to my parents and the Lord who are watching from some heavenly corner coffee shop. Dad, pour another cup, and Mom, know this ride doesn't end here—we have miles to cover, books to read, and an infinite number of ideas to pen.

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## CHAPTER I

### AN OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

The fast-paced dynamics of American politics demands that the American population be aware of political patterns, tendencies, and possible negative outcomes. Over the past two centuries American society has navigated a turbulent yet successful democratic system. While the results of American political frays are not always popular, they are the result of a society working to uphold, protect, and exercise democracy. Through the struggles and toils of American politics, American society has enjoyed being a society free of political oppression; however, if political awareness should dwindle and the toiling and struggling cease, the resulting politics would be dismal. This study aims to elucidate the *vita activa*, its supporting social components, what can destroy democracy, and how dystopian literature illustrates the dangers of a society without democracy.

Chapter two “Delineating Hannah Arendt’s Social and Political Theory,” examines the political philosophy and social theories of Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition* explicates the emergence of democracy, the *vita activa*, and its supporting social components. Close readings of her work reveal how society gravitates towards democracy as a means to form, foster, and facilitate a cooperative political system. Arendt’s work, *The Human Condition*, explains that the *vita activa* is the opportunity to act freely within the sphere of public politics. Moreover, her careful delineation of the different, yet interdependent, social components of *labor*, *work*, and *action* culminate in democracy: the *vita activa*. She explains how each social component functions as a social building block, which builds towards facilitating the sustained growth and expansion of society. These societal components account for humanity’s plurality, which necessitates the implementation of a democratic system of government.

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This thesis follows the style of *Arizona Quarterly*.

Conversely, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt examines the rise of fascist regimes in Post-World War I Russia and Germany. Her examinations demonstrate how the cultivation of fear, violence, and a splintered yet consolidated society destroy democracy through the eradication of the *vita activa*. Arendt's examination of these regimes identifies the dismantling agents of democracy. These agents are the social components that support totalitarian rule. Arendt describes each of them in detail. She labels the components *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob*, and explains how they converge to form *mass man*. The concept of *mass man*, ironically enough in both function and name, uses fear to exploit the humanity's plurality in order to support an oppressive totalitarian governing system.

Arendt explains the importance of implementing, sustaining, and protecting a democratically driven system of government. Her examination of totalitarian movements and their deliberate destruction of the *vita activa* serve to provide a historical warning of the social pitfalls of failing to protect, uphold, or sustain a democratic governing body. Arendt's study of life has a complement in literature. George Orwell provides a literary response to the real threats of oppressive political movements. His iconic dystopian novel provides an eerie warning of what follows when democracy—the *vita activa*—falls and dies. The novel develops and presents a vision of the political manipulations of an oppressive government.

Chapter three, "Reviewing the Literature," examines criticisms of dystopian literature and the American political landscape. The critics explain that utopian literature is the basis from which dystopian literature springs. They explain that the social criticism examples of the genre are a practice of the satire tradition. They explain that the satire tradition in the novels is particular to the criticisms of politicians and politics—specifically their machinations to exert absolute control. *1984* will fall short of naturalistic novel expectations; however, the critics

explain at length why the novel fails to achieve those expectations, and even as the novel fails as a naturalistic novel, it excels in its calculated criticisms of contemporary politics and the machinations of government machines. The novel in this study was selected because it is commonly assigned to middle and high school students. This characteristic is pivotal because the warnings to protect government fall to the young rather than those currently in the political fray. The novel features a society attempting to recreate itself in a manner that does not, ironically enough, lead to destruction. The society attempts to use different systems of control rooted in fear to facilitate a *better* society. However, the governing systems in place fail to account for the inherent human condition of plurality, which Arendt explains, demands the *vita activa*. In addition to the literary criticisms, the chapter also includes a brief characterization of pre- and post-apocalyptic narratives. Another defining characteristic of the novel is the setting. What most affects the setting of *1984* is not geographical but rather temporal. The most prevalent temporal benchmark is the sense of existence in a post-apocalypse environment. To that end, it is prudent to define the implied characteristic of *1984*. The novel is set after a globally life altering event. This implication steers readers to believe or determine that the event is so monumental, in reach and scale, that it affects *everyone everywhere*; this study labels the event as an apocalyptic event. This in no way references any kind of prophetic or biblical apocalypse; rather, the term's use references the event's reach and scale. Additionally, the terms pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic allow for the drawing of comparisons—before and after states that relate to Arendt views of social realities. Lastly, a political study of the American voter landscape. The political survey examines the political terrain of American voters. This reveals a currently relevant application of the information in this study. As previously stated, while American government

has been fortunate enough to have avoided the scourge of totalitarianism, it may only continue to do so if its citizenry remains informed and continues to practice and pursue the *vita activa*.

Chapter four “*1984* Epitomizes Arendt’s Political Examinations,” examines Orwell’s *1984*. The novel’s demonstrates totalitarian terror tactics and systems of control in action. *1984* illustrates the consequences of a society without the *vita activa*. It features a government whose control is absolute. The “telescreens” with their hidden two-way mirror effect erase any sense of privacy. Furthermore, the “telescreens” are the government’s attempt to build a *loyal* base out of its working-class citizens. Smith, the protagonist of Orwell’s story, has the interesting career of *correcting* history. Smith’s daily duties lead him to question what he knows and what he remembers. Throughout the novel, the reader is witness to how Smith makes connections between people, events, and places. These connections feed his rebellion against the governing body, the Inner Party, which is synonymous with “Big Brother.” As the novel concludes, the reader witnesses the deliberate decimation and demoralization of Smith who is a representation of humanity at large. This act of breaking the character down and removing any self-will is the government’s way of diminishing man’s plurality and the *vita activa*. The reader witnesses Smith’s retraining, re-indoctrination, and reinstallation into society as a *loyal* functioning member of the collective. The Smith that is returned to society is a shell of a man who moves about in an apathetic comatose state. This is Orwell’s most prevalent warning to society—do not allow government and its machinations to destroy the will of the people. Instead, as Orwell recommends in a letter he wrote, the governed should constantly evaluate, critique, and proactively make their government better.

Ultimately, this study attempts to provide readers with a comprehensive explanation of the *vita activa*, a reflective interpretation of political missteps to avoid, and a renewed analysis of

iconic dystopian novel *1984* that warns readers to protect the *vita activa* or suffer the same fate as Winston Smith. Reading dystopian fiction that criticizes politics alongside Arendt's political philosophy allows readers to grasp the significance of the *vita activa* and the consequences of not defending democracy at all cost.

## CHAPTER II

## HANNAH ARENDT'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY

Hannah Arendt could easily be the poster-child counterpart of America's Rosie the Riveter. She was a headstrong, determined woman. *The Human Condition* (1958) delineates Arendt's political theory of democracy. She explains how the Grecian concept of the *vita activa* and its supporting social components are essential to a democratic society. Arendt explains the three social components, *labor*, *work*, and *action*, how they relate to life, the human condition, and civilized society. She further explains how they are necessary in order to arrive at the *vita activa*. Arendt's study leads readers to draw the following conclusion: the *vita activa* is the singular opportunity to participate and lead a freely public life in civilized politics. This attribute of the *vita activa* is what this study terms the cornerstone of democracy. Because if constituents of a society are unable to freely and publicly voice their opinions, then the idea of democracy and civilized society is no longer a viable concept for that society.

Arendt organizes her work to illustrate the hierarchy of the social components that support democracy: *labor*, *work*, and *action*. As one reads through the *Human Condition*, the recurring idiom of *putting one's house in order* becomes evident and supports the idea that private politics are what makes public politics, the *vita activa*, possible. Arendt's explanation of the different components reveals how each of the components are independent and simultaneously interdependent. This further supports Arendt's observation that a singular political blueprint will not and cannot be successful because society is not only one person but rather many—with many individual and collective needs, wants, and ideas.

Arendt begins by defining the first social component: *labor*. *Labor* is a force whose only purpose is to sustain life and its biological processes. Arendt explains that sustaining life means

addressing the “vital necessities” which are a person’s most basic needs for survival (7). However, fulfilling these needs leaves no evidence of any product. Consider for a moment the farmer. He will labor over his crops until harvesting. He will harvest them, distribute them, and then he must repeat the process. What is there to prove that he labored? Only the need for him to labor once again. Arendt explains that “the mark of all laboring [is] that it leaves nothing behind” to attest to the effort spent (87). Arendt explains that *labor* is often erroneously considered synonymous or interchangeable with work. However, as the definition of work will show, the purpose of the products of work is different from the purpose of the products of *labor*. Moreover, unlike work, *labor* also has the quality of enslaving the laborer.

Arendt next points out that *labor* arises from being “enslaved by necessity” (83). The “inherent ... enslavement” of *labor* arises from being “enslaved by [the] necessity” to survive and provide for the survival of society (81, 83). Arendt explains that Aristotle did not acknowledge slaves a right to a political life or “citizenship,” rather he labeled them as “*banausoi* ... men whose chief” purpose was to sustain life (81). This enslaved division of society could not actively participate in the public realm of politics. His attention, effort, and power are slaves to the need to sustain his life, the life of his family, and the life of his community. According to Arendt, this definition of *labor* is the justification used for slavery because this division of humanity labors in order to allow their masters “the freedom” to realize “their...potential productivity” as agents of the social component of *action* (87). When considering *labor*, its meaning, and manifestation as Arendt proposes, one needs to remember its key characteristics. *Labor* is a force that enslaves members of society with their own needs to live. *Labor* also leaves no trace—resulting in only consumable products—whose only proof of existence exists in the effort of its production. Finally, *labor* has a singular purpose, to provide

for the sustenance of life at large. The efforts of *labor* are the source of the misinterpretation of work for *labor*. Effort to sustain life is the focus of *labor*, not work.

Work, unlike *labor*, is the process of creating the tools, possessions, and structures that, like life, have a beginning and an end. These tools, possessions, and structures act like a stamp on the world; the products of work are humanity's calling card so to speak—we *were here*. Arendt's definition of *work* is the fabrication of the "things" that make up "the human artifice" (136). Work is the mark society makes on the world and on nature in particular. In other words, work creates the concrete world that serves society. This characteristic of service to humanity is the first of several distinctions between work and *labor*. Further distinguishing of work from *labor* lies in understanding that the products of work share the traits of durability, fabrication, and service.

The idea of durability provides a stark distinction between work and *labor*. Unlike *labor*, where the products are designed to be short-lived consumables, the products of work allow people to mimic life. Through work, people take on the role of Creator, and the products of work become the images society brings into being. Furthermore, much like a person has a definitive beginning and a definitive end, so do the products of man's work. Products of work take on the cyclical quality of a life span. A product of work has a life span that is determined by its lastingness and usage. The products of work reach destruction not because that is their intended end, but rather because it is the result of the cyclical process of life. Arendt explains that "durability...is not absolute;" rather, the duration of things is measured by the "usage [which] wears out" the products of work (136-37). Arendt provides a poignant example with the duration of a wooden chair. Once built, the chair has a purpose and it is used; which in turn "uses [the chair] up" leading to its "decay" as it is worn out (137). As the chair again becomes the wood

from which it was made, the wood eventually returns to the ground from which it grew as a tree. This cycle will be repeated when society builds yet another chair. This example provides a concrete image with which to distinguish *work* from *labor*. However, the creation of some tools or structures are the cause for misinterpreting *work* for *labor*. Arendt provides one such example when she discusses land cultivation.

Arendt explains that while the component of *labor* tills the soil, plants the seed, and produces a harvest, this product does not have the quality of persisting. However, the cultivation which results from the tilling and harvesting creates an area of land. Through this continued effort of *labor*, soon the cultivated area becomes a durable fixture that must “be labored upon” from time to time to continue to serve humanity (139). At this point, the cultivated land has now taken on the characteristics of a product of *work*; it has a durability that at some undetermined point will end. The cultivation of the land creates a fabrication that will serve the *labor* division of humanity in its need to provide for the sustenance of life. The fabricating characteristic of work—in this example creating a section of land designated for crops—distinguishes work from *labor* because the section of land persists until it is used up and worn down. Through fabrication, humanity creates the tools and structures which establish society’s mark on the world.

Arendt adds that “fabrication... [is the] reification” of the natural (139). In other words, this is where people bring into being more of what they want rather than limiting themselves to what they need. In an effort to further distinguish *work* from *labor*, Arendt explains that the *efforts of labor* are often confused with the *violence* of work. Arendt explains that *labor* is a painful process because people are worn away or deteriorated by the exertion of their effort. On the other hand, work is a violent process which involves an inherent “violation” of nature (139). Arendt explains that when a person begins to create, they do so by “killing a life process ... or

interrupting one of nature's slower processes" (139). Unlike *labor*, which enslaves humanity, work allows humanity to exert their powers of creation and control over nature. When Arendt speaks of the violence of creation, she explains that it is always nature that is the victim of society's violence. Work, the means of human fabrication and creation, "has always been a destroyer of nature" (139).

The last distinguishing quality of *work* exists in the service of work's product for society. While the products of *labor* are intended for consumption, the products of *work* are not intended for consumption but rather for service. *Work* produces a product destined to have a useful life span that in one way or another enhances or enriches a person's life. Arendt returns to the example of land cultivation to explain how service is the third differentiation between *work* and *labor*. Arendt explains that within the sphere of *work* people depend on the naturally occurring materials which he reaps from the earth and "the primordial tools of his hands" to create the tools that "lighten the burden and mechanize" the processes of *labor* (144). It is through this particular characteristic that one begins to see how the social components of *labor* and *work* are interdependent on another, but not interchangeable or synonymous. In order for humanity to move from the "subjective" need or want, society fabricates the "worldly" things that facilitate the classifying of a few into the sphere of laborers, whose sole purpose is to sustain life, and those few who are creators, whose purpose is to build the environment that will serve humanity (144). Once humanity can survive to create, now society must live to act, and this leads to the third social component.

The third social component is *action*. Arendt defines action as the only dimension where humanity interacts; it is the one system where politics flourish. Here subjection to need or want is not what drives humanity to interaction, but rather the objective is to spread. The spreading out

is where politics bloom in this system because now the goal is not to create the material world or to simply sustain life, but rather to negotiate the reflections and ideas as man meets man. As with *labor* and work, there are key words that distinguish the social component of *action* from *labor* or *work*. The words that drive action's distinction are humanity and interaction, both of which carry inherent qualities. These inherent qualities, much like the slaving quality of *labor* and the destructive creation of work, are the hard differences between action and the two aforementioned social components.

The first thing that Arendt makes plain is humanity's inherent quality of "plurality" which must be considered before society can interact (175). Arendt explains that society is not just one person but many. Within many individuals there exist many ideas, and if society is to progress then it must do so together through interaction and negotiation. Arendt explains that the multiplicity of ideas draws humanity to reveal themselves: "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world" (176). Arendt explains that interaction and "the presence of [others]" gives rise to how a society sees itself and others (22). Additionally, Arendt explains that *action*, unlike *labor* and *work*, is not "forced upon us by necessity ... [or] prompted by utility," but instead "stimulated by the presence of others" (177). In order for a person to know that they exist, they must bring themselves into being through the recognition of how they are reflected in the eyes of other people. Arendt goes on to explain that these reflections are the manifestation of public life which is the tangible representation of the *vita activa*. To reiterate, according to Arendt the *vita activa* is the opportunity to freely and publicly interact. Where freely entails having no fear of persecution or threats, and publicly encompasses the political negotiations of societies. Arendt's work provides a brief trace of the *vita activa*, as it is affected by time and different societies.

Arendt begins by explaining that the concept of the *vita activa* is “as old as ... our tradition of political thought,” and that it springs from the Grecian attempts to draw distinctions between the “philosopher” and politician (12). Arendt explicates the *vita activa* as defined by Aristotle. She explains how Aristotle distinguishes the *vita activa* in three forms. Arendt explains how each form emphasizes a different appreciation for life: how life is consumed, contemplated, and lived. However, Arendt makes it plain that the acts of consumption, contemplation, and existence are free of need or want, but rather are the natural, expected occurrence of living. Arendt explains that at the point when the action becomes a necessity or is determined to be of use or service to society, it departs from Aristotle’s definition of the *vita activa*. At this point, it is prudent to explicate Arendt’s understanding of Aristotle’s three distinguished forms of living the *vita activa*.

According to Arendt, the first “way of life” emphasizes a person “enjoying bodily pleasure in which the beautiful ... is consumed” or absorbed (13). Because the person consuming the beauty is free from the need or want for beauty—this is to say, neither the want or need existed prior to the consumption or absorption—they are in effect participating in a *vita activa*. Arendt further explains the second life style that demonstrates the *vita activa* is “the life devoted to the matters of the *polis*” and the superiority of governing society (13). Again, in this distinction, the life is absent of need or want; instead, the person is “devoted” to the magnificence of politics, thereby fully living out a *vita activa* (13). Finally, Arendt explains the third manner of living the *vita activa* is “the life of the philosopher devoted to inquiry ... and contemplation of things eternal” which occurs without the intervention of others (13). The distinctive recognition of a person’s devotion to their endeavors is the prevalent determinant of a person’s inclusion in or exclusion from the *vita activa*.

However, time changes all things—including the focus of the *vita activa*. Arendt explains how the “the medieval” transmutation of the *vita activa* brings about a contradiction to the Grecian concept of the *vita activa* (13). According to Arendt, Aristotle recognized three manners of executing the *vita activa* and excluded anyone who was driven by need or want; however, medieval times alters what defines a *vita activa* to include only those in the political realm. Arendt explains how medieval times made “the realm of human affairs” especially “stressing the action ... [required] to establish and sustain” politics the only acknowledged manifestation of the *vita activa* concept (13). Arendt explains that the medieval use of the term *vita activa* is actually closer to the Greek idea of “*bios politikos*” which translates to the political life rather than the *vita activa* (13). Arendt’s tracing of the changing definition of the *vita activa* leads to an interpretation of the *vita activa* that is no longer singularly political, but also inclusive of any worldly industrious commitment (14). This newer transmutation of the *vita activa* now subjected *action* to need and want, and effectively negated the Grecian concept of the *vita activa*.

Arendt explains that the Greeks understood the necessity for politics, yet they drew distinctions between a political life and the *vita activa*. The Grecian interpretation of the *vita activa* excluded *labor* and *work* because it considered those societal segments enslaved by necessity and utility. The medieval interpretation not only excluded the societal segments of *labor* and *work*, but it subjected the segment of *action* to the same enslavement of necessity and utility effectively contradicting the Grecian concept. In medieval times the philosopher’s way of life, “the *vita contemplativa*,” remained as the only true interpretation of the *vita activa* (14).

Arendt explained that if a person lived as a philosopher then they had returned to the point which gave birth to the *vita activa*. She further explains that the Greeks drew a distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. The Greeks explain the *vita activa* as a

quietude of “almost breathless abstention from external movement and activity of every kind” while the *vita activa* encompasses all that which “disturbs the necessary quiet ... of contemplation” of life (16-17). In other words, while a politician will endeavor to orchestrate the magnificence of politics for the sake of politics, a philosopher would only contemplate the magnificent orchestration of politics, but never act on any of their contemplations. The choice to act or not act poignantly illustrates the Grecian distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*.

All things considered, Arendt’s interpretation of the *vita activa* is best demonstrated when a person is free from the needs and wants of *labor* and work, but is actively creating, sustaining, and leading the public negotiations of their community. Ultimately, the *vita activa*, as Arendt explains it in *The Human Condition*, is the opportunity for members of society to freely and publicly act to negotiate and coordinate the politics of governing. Successful integration of the components of *labor*, *work* and *action*, as defined by Arendt, allow society to flourish because each of the components respects the inherent human condition of plurality. It is humanity’s plurality that necessitates free and public negotiations. Without the opportunity to freely exercise public interaction society becomes a dissident replica of the private politics of the home, where only the voice of the head of the house is heard and enacted. History has shown that such models are attempted, but they fail as quickly as they arise. Fascism and the attempts of fascist leaders to create, impose, and sustain totalitarian societies are prominent examples of these attempts. Arendt delineates the downside of societies without democracy in her work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968). In this work, Arendt examines the societal damage caused by governing bodies which destroy and negate the *vita activa*. Arendt examines the effect of totalitarian regimes in Russia and Germany. In the chapter “A Classless Society,” Arendt

examines how the rise of a totalitarian movement creates a set of social components that work to dismantle civil society while giving rise to the paradox of a splintered amalgamation of unsustainable society.

Arendt begins her examination by explaining two pivotal characteristics of totalitarian movements. First, totalitarian movements are characterized by qualities of violence, societal self-destruction, and impermanence. Secondly, while the movements tend to be short lived, their effects reverberate for years in the society they invaded. The life span of a totalitarian movement and its leader is determined by the “proverbial fickleness of the masses” from which the movement draws its power and strength (306). Arendt also notes that “the quality of fame ... and the startling ease with which [totalitarian leaders] can be replaced” is singular to the volatile nature of totalitarian movements (305). Arendt further explains how a totalitarian system of government reorganizes the stratification of society and feeds off the disenfranchised, unrepresented, and frustrated constituents of a society. This conglomerate of politically dissatisfied citizenry becomes what Arendt calls *mass man*. Unlike the *vita activa*, which is the conclusive stage of social components *labor*, *work*, and *action* working together to bring about democracy, *mass man* is the catalyst that gives rise to the social components that work to dismantle democracy. Arendt explains that *mass man* is a “classless society” whose stratifications are now arbitrarily determined (Origins 317). In other words, the social stratifications of *mass man* are not economically influenced, but instead dependent upon a citizen’s willingness to prove their loyalty to the totalitarian leader. The concept of *mass man* is highly effective in creating “a highly atomized society” which begrudgingly co-exist with one another, but they do not respect, recognize, or stomach any ideology other than that of the totalitarian ruler and its movement (317).

The hierarchy of social components in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* work to dismantle democracy beginning with the overarching concept of *mass man*. According to Arendt, the *mass man* phenomenon is characterized by “his isolation and lack of normal social relationships” (317). Arendt warns how the *mass man* phenomenon, this paradox of a splintered yet collective society, makes totalitarian movements possible wherever this phenomenon is allowed to fester. *Mass man* are the politically apathetic citizens who are not aligned with any political party, agenda, or cause. The accentuated characteristic of class erasure facilitates the rise of the first totalitarian supporting social component: *the masses*.

Arendt defines *the masses* as having two key characteristics. The first characteristic of *the masses* is that it is the large number of politically apathetic segment of society. If the social component loses its numbers, then it ceases to be *the masses*; instead, it is a representation of the other social components that support totalitarian rule. Secondly, *the masses* are distinguishable because of their apolitical attitudes. This apolitical stance keeps them from participating in any form of the *vita activa* which benefits the totalitarian leader. Arendt explains that *the masses* are those “who either because of sheer number, [political] indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into ... political parties...municipal governments ... professional ... or trade ... organizations ... based on [a] common” idea or cause (311). Arendt is describing the primordial mixture of disaffected constituents whose lack of political awareness and participation are a massive store of politically untapped power—an unsung majority, so to speak. Moreover, this segment of *mass man* represents those whose political neutrality manifests in the silent apathetic support that “respectable” politics fail to appreciate but depend upon for consistent silent agreement (332). A politician’s failure to be cognizant of the needs or wants of this political sleeping giant results in political party ideals and goals that fail to account for or

engage *the masses*. This of course emphasizes the “indifference” that manifests itself in low voter turn outs and disconnected political platforms (311). These two qualities, large numbers and the absence of political party alliance, drives *the masses* to seek change in the form of action. Because the ineffectual civilized politics typical of democracy have not reached out to them, *the masses* latch on to the “demagogue” who taps into their need for action (307). As the largest segment, totalitarian movements depend on this segment for power and strength. This dependency demands “demagogues” keep *the masses* in a conglomeration of “monotonous but abstract uniformity” (307). In other words, totalitarian leaders keep society ill-informed, scared, and focused on a common enemy in order to use their numbers as needed by the totalitarian. The leader instills fear of “persecution” through his willingness to persecute the family, friends, or neighbors of those he targets (307). The totalitarian leader demonstrates that political action is only carried out through the use of terror, violence, and punishments, especially death. He ensures that *the masses* understand that this particularly applies to them, so the populace lives under constant threat. This constant threat of punishment and death emphasizes the splintering effect within *the masses*, as they distance themselves from any kind of individualism or connection to family, friends, or community. A sense of paranoia further dismantles any chance of democracy. Incidentally, the totalitarian leader is not exclusively responsible for instilling this paranoia; rather, the social component Arendt calls *the elite* works to manipulate *the masses* and further exacerbate the ruination of civilized society.

Arendt provides key characteristics to clearly distinguish *the elite* from *the masses*. Arendt explains that *the elite* are a combination of social outcasts and affluent members of society who harbor contempt for “the genius ... [of] respectable society ... and” want to remain anonymous (332). Arendt explains that *the elite* are completely “absorbed by their desire to see

the ruin ... of fake security, fake culture, and fake life” (328). In other words, the rise of a totalitarian movement provides those who consider themselves above or outside of “respectable society” the opportunity to be rid of “society’s humanitarian and liberal hypocrisy” that affords little to nothing for its citizens (331). Unfortunately, the efforts of *the elite* to remove and replace the old order becomes another nail in the coffin of democratic society. Arendt points out that *the elite* “placed themselves ... against the party system” and supported the use of “terror” and “death” as “political philosophy” in order to give the impression of action versus the stale mate of “calculated policy” common in civilized politics (312, 332). Arendt states that “destruction without mitigation ... assumed the dignity of supreme values” for *the elite*. *The elite* take on the role of cleaning house, systematically using *the masses* to oust all those who would insist on civilized politics by making them the enemy of action; action which could only happen through “terror” or “death” (312). *The elite* used these values to herd *the masses* like cattle in the directions needed for the “demagogues” in place (316). *The elite’s* promotion and use of violence against party driven society paves the way for *the masses* who had been ignored to rise up and force society to recognize them as equals. The numbers of *the masses* make it possible for *the elite* to maintain their anonymity because all the actions are carried out by *the masses* while *the elite* remain behind the scenes. *The masses* in turn view their rising as the “mightiest of all mass actions” which seems more like political action rather than the never-ending “calculated” negotiations of the civilized politics. At this point, Arendt explains that *the masses* are looking for their recognition as “instrument[s] of historical progress,” their place in history (329). Amidst the clamor of *the masses* and the machinations of *the elite* hides the ring leader of social components responsible for the final nail in democracy’s coffin. It is the smallest, most dynamic, and most cunning of the social components within *mass man—the mob*.

Arendt explains that *the mob* has three defining qualities. First, it has a political interest it wants to protect or to put into motion. Secondly, “their lives prior to their political careers [have] been failures” and this is their “strongest...appeal” to *mass man* (Arendt, *Origins* 327). This quality in particular earmarks members of *the mob* as leaders because they are not tainted by the stale ineffective practices of democracy. Also, much like the name of the social component implies, members of *the mob* are willing to *fight* for their cause. Keep in mind that in this instance “to fight” means to revert to physical violence and terroristic acts rather than discuss or debate a cause. Finally, members of *the mob* are quite scarce as they pose the most immediate threat to the leader of the movement because they are in a position to rise as the newest rabble rousers. Totalitarian leaders ascend from *the mob* to drag and decimate “respectable society” into the fragmented conglomeration that is ruled through violence and terror.

Upon reflection of how these regimes affected Russia and Germany, effects still felt today, one can only hope that this never becomes the case in America. In that vein, one must understand that democracy, as explained by Arendt in *The Human Condition*, requires the participation of everyone in order to be effective and sustainable. Furthermore, to allow the rise of totalitarianism is to hand over not just the government, but the lives of every citizen. Authors respond to threats of oppression using dystopian literature because it provides a safe venue for direct criticism of politics, politicians, and their machinations. Literature allows authors the latitude to be as extreme as they feel necessary to compile the images necessary to incite a revolt against oppression. Understanding dystopian literature for the criticism that it is, allows for the theoretical application of Arendt’s utopian ideals and dystopian examinations of totalitarian regimes. A renewed interpretation of dystopian literature driven by Arendt’s theory will afford readers a comprehensible toolset with which to evaluate the political machines of their society.

### CHAPTER III

#### REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

In an effort to create a better understanding of the genre, the critiques compiled in this study review how dystopia springs from utopia. The critics explain that utopian literature lays out the best of intentions for society, but as the proverb points out, *the road to hell is paved with good intentions*. The good intentions of utopias are often twisted or distorted, and it's this distortion that creates the dystopian narrative. I want to identify and explain these features and characteristics of dystopian literature in hopes of changing how dystopian literature is received. Currently, most dystopian literature is viewed as a source of entertainment, but I would ask readers to consider that the genre was developed to create a dialogue and critique of the social and political issues facing society. Behind the cover of fiction and the written word authors criticize and question authority without risk. The novels and their characters are invitations for their readers to examine the world they live in and consider its status quo.

To that end the included critiques elucidate the features, purposes, and examples of dystopian literature. Critics explain that characterizing features of dystopian literature include systems of control, societal isolation, and an autocracy form of government. The array of systems of control monitor everything from procreation to social status. Often, the systems are designed to *relieve* society of the burden of intellectualism and individuality. When it comes to societal isolation, it becomes paramount to ensure that there is no outside interference with the established order. The isolation is sometimes literal geographical isolation, like an island, or it can be metaphorical where the virtual wall rises from fear or consequences. The last characterizing feature, an autocratic governing style, is prevalent in most examples of dystopian literature. In the novel selected for this study, the autocracy is the singular focus that fuels the

systems of control and the societal isolation. Aside from references to the novel of this study, the critics also identify several other canonizing novels of the dystopian genre. *1984* along with great reads such as *We* and *Fahrenheit 451* are said to be the defining standard of the genre. Lastly, the critics take the time to explain why dystopian literature exists. As always, literature is never without a purpose, and the purpose of dystopian literature is brutally presented by the authors who define the genre. Dystopian literature is a practice in the satirical tradition. As such it presents criticism and commentary on the satirized subject. *1984* satirizes the fascist tendencies of governments and their political machines. The genre goes a long a way to reiterate and reflect the social components presented by Arendt in *The Human Condition* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Arendt's work, *The Human Condition*, delineates the governing style that best respects humanity's pluralistic nature, democracy. Democracy makes the *vita activa* possible. However, the Grecian inspired system is flawed and requires people to interact and revise as needed to best serve society. The constant revisions made possible through interaction is a manifestation of what Vivien Greene explains as the "malleable and elastic" characteristics of utopia which depend on its perceivers for clearer definition (3). With each new interaction of man, the perception of utopia changes to suit society. Greene further explains that utopias occur in two different forms: "blueprint utopianism" ... and "iconoclastic utopianism" (3). "Iconoclastic utopianism" refers to "the need for the idea of utopia to [exist] in our imagination" (Greene 2). Simply put, this is the concept of hope. Humanity needs to believe there is a "place where wishes ... come true ... [like] Oz" (Greene 2). These "utopian concepts [provide] ... theorists, artists, designers, and architects" with ideals they can approximate or assimilate (Greene 3). As with Arendt's explained concept of the *vita activa*, these utopian ideals are the plateaus that humanity

attempts to reach when they gather, interact, and enact. While iconoclastic references the idea of a utopian existence, “blueprint utopianism” supposes that governing bodies or entities will run according to a “utopian model” (Greene 2). Greene explains that “‘utopias’ are based on tenuous” concepts that facilitate “further experiment” of ideal situations (2). These often loosely constructed experiments “provide respite from or alternatives to the demands or structures of contemporary life” (Greene 2). When authors create utopias, their creations provide an escape or break from the daily grind. Greene explains that “blueprint utopias ... make their appearance in texts ... long before they are enacted as ... models of living” (2). Essentially, the composition of utopias is the preliminary phase of utopian models.

This concept is true not only for the favorable utopia, but also for the unfavorable dystopia. Greene cites Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) as an example of a blueprint utopia which “conjures an isolated island” whose government and society are a favorable “alternative” to his current government and society. However, when the utopian creation deviates from the iconoclastic utopianism, Greene explains that a dystopian creation emerges. Greene points to George Orwell’s *1984* as an example of a dystopian creation. She explains that *1984* is a “utopia gone wrong”; a dystopian “alternative” to Orwell’s current government and society.

Additionally, Greene explains that when utopianism does emerge in fiction, the stories tend to reveal utopia’s “underside ... [the] experiment” gone awry (3). Greene explains how *1984* is “characterized by [the] oppressive...suffocation of independent thought;” essentially eliminating any sense of freedom (2). Or as Arendt would say, eliminating the *vita activa*. Understanding that utopian literature—favorable or not—is intended to guide, warn, or criticize the status quo allows readers to approach the genre of dystopian literature with specific expectations.

In their “Critical Review on the Idea of Dystopia,” Ruzbeh Babee, Hardev Kaur, Jujar Singh, Zhang Zhicheng, and Zhang Haiqing, trace the evolution of dystopian literature. The professors point out that “the term utopia was ... not ... coined ... until the 1500s” by Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*. They supply the definition for More’s utopia “which means ‘No Place,’” and add critic Fatima Viera’s description of utopia “as a ‘tension between the affirmation of a possibility and the negation of its fulfilment;’” the idea of hope or a plateau still out of reach (64). Much like Greene, the “Critical Review of the Idea of Dystopia” points out well known pieces of literature that can be categorized as iconoclastic utopian or blueprint utopian. The first work they highlight is More’s work *Utopia*, which “depicts a society ... on an isolated island” where the idea of personal property is revoked, everyone is considered equally, and there is religious freedom (64). Babee et. al. also point to Plato’s *Republic* which “describes a model for an ideal world,” and provides a blueprint for society (64). These examples clearly fall into the blueprint utopia category because both More and Plato are experimenting with how best to govern society. The professors explain that More provides writers with the means “to explore and express a vast range of ... ideas about social relationships, moral orderings, [and] political-economic systems” which can be a guide or a warning for the critical reader (64). In reference to the rise of dystopian literature, the review explains that “writers recognized the impossibility of” *Utopia*, and this drove writers to bring the opposing branch of “anti-utopian” fiction to the forefront. A segment of the literature to reject “the utopian desire,” and thus dystopian literature was born.

The professors explain that dystopian literature is “a critical genre that makes [readers] aware of human manipulation” and machinations used to exert a form of control (65). While the critical nature of dystopian literature is often considered “largely pessimistic,” Babee et. al. argue

that dystopian literature is “critical . . . towards the status quo,” and aims for its audience to affect change (66). They contend that dystopian literature reveals “the truth and reality” of life (66). Dystopian literature then serves to satirize political entities and agents for the purpose of reflection, study, and reform. This study uses the complementary combination of dystopian literature and Hannah Arendt’s social and political theory to reveal the political criticisms of Orwell. Dystopian young adult literature allows for the *safe* evaluation and criticism of governing agents, their processes, procedures, and goals.

Babee et. al. defer to author and dystopian critic M. Keith Booker’s declaration that Yevgeny Samyatin’s *We*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and George Orwell’s *1984* are “the great defining texts of the genre of dystopian fiction” (65). The professors explain how each of these novels criticizes different forms of social machinations. Specifically, *1984*, is a criticism of fascist leadership and they add that *Fahrenheit 451* is a criticism of social controls. These novels are “significant” because they make readers “ponder how an originally utopian promise was abused, betrayed or, ironically fulfilled . . . to create tragic consequences for” society (66). One could argue that the utopian promise of *1984* was one of egalitarianism. Unfortunately, to have equality, the society of *1984* had to surrender to the rule of Big Brother and the Party. Babee et. al. close their examination of dystopian literature with a reminder that dystopian literature entertains readers, but it also should be seen for the wake-up call to the truth and reality of life. This brings to the forefront how labels have affected the critical reception of *1984*.

Dystopian fiction is often criticized for failing to meet the criterion of naturalistic novels. Unlike naturalistic novels, the characters of dystopian fiction tend to be underdeveloped and lacking in depth. This result is to be expected when the characters are the voices or representations of entities such as government machines, political figures, or political

movements. These entities or figureheads are never intimately known; rather, they are apart, distant, and often obscured by different perceptions. Therefore, a genre designed to create a commentary and criticism of these obtuse entities and figureheads has only surface information as a resource. Additionally, Gorman Beauchamp points out how George Orwell's *1984* may have been mislabeled and subsequently misjudged. Beauchamp points out that critics have evaluated *1984* as a novel rather than as a dystopian satire. He observes, "One source of critical confusion stems from considering *1984* a naturalistic novel and then faulting it for not satisfying novelistic criteria" (2). Beauchamp draws on C.S. Lewis' assertion that "if one is properly to evaluate [a] work ... [then] one must understand the nature of the genre to which a work belongs" (2). An accurate response or reaction to Orwell's work will consider the work's generic characteristics, not only its publishing format. Beauchamp contends that evaluations of *1984* should take into account that the work is an "ideological satire" (3). Beauchamp draws on dystopia as coined by Professor J. Max Patrick, who explains that dystopia "represents a decidedly bad/no-place—a negative utopia" (1). Beauchamp draws on Northrop Frye, who explains that "dystopias function ... as Menippean satire, whose purpose is to offer 'a serious vision of society,'" where the characters are the "'mouthpieces of the ideas they represent'" (2). *1984* is a blatantly violent burlesque representation of rising political ideologies of Orwell's time. The characters—Winston, O'Brien, Julia, the Inner Party—are all vehicles for how these ideas—clash or complement. Moreover, *1984* presents a society "whose official values represent an inversion (presumably) of the reader's own" values (Beauchamp 9).

Author John David Frodsham concurs with Beauchamp's assessment of the misinterpretations presented by other critics. He provides a closer examination of the Menippean satire tradition in his criticisms of Orwell's work. Frodsham explains that *1984* forces us to

“question ourselves, our society, and our world; our past, our present, and—above all—our future” (139). Orwell offers his readers an extreme example of the government machine crushing humanity out of existence. The novel presents readers with two ideals at odds. This particular trait often draws the scorn of literary critics who find the work missing the “depth of characterization” they have come to expect from a novel. Frodsham reminds these critics that *1984* is satirical in nature, and as such, its focus is not the characters, but rather the idea or ideal being presented. Frodsham commends “Orwell’s insight into the ... apocalyptic ... nature of the murderous politics of the totalitarian state ... [which leaves] the write bereft of” the appropriate words to describe the human casualties of these kinds of regimes (141). Frodsham provides a scope of the casualties when he points out the one hundred and ten million human casualties of Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot. A writer’s recourse is to downsize the scale to the comprehensible and digestible “crushing of one man,” one woman, or one ideal (Frodsham 141). In addition to the downscaling, Frodsham postulates that Orwell opted to write *1984* as “a dystopia” to best demonstrate “a world where the machine ... [triumphs] over man” (142). He explains how Orwell was a socialist who understood man’s need for machines, but that Orwell “was also afraid” of what a dependency on machines and technology would do to humanity (142). *1984* delivers a warning: “Either we resist the onslaught of the Marxists and the machines or civilization perishes” (Frodsham 150). Finally, Frodsham points out that “Western society ... since World War I ... [is] weakened ... by the attrition of the individual conscience ... the attrition of the authority of the family, the law, religion, public morality, and government” (150). These weaknesses inadvertently work to diminish society’s natural tendencies to seek out and foster relationships.

One last characteristic of the novels that must be discussed is the temporal placement of the setting. The use of post-apocalyptic settings for *1984* is important for a variety of reasons. First, it affords government agencies the opportunity to provide the “utopian promise” of order or egalitarianism (Babee et. al. 66). Secondly, it allows for the protagonist to delve into reflections that provide readers a before-and-after comparison. This looking back in an attempt to move forward is the springboard for criticism and evaluation. Eckart Viogts-Vircshow identifies “post-apocalyptic...narratives...as ‘journeys through the wasteland created by the cataclysm: attempts to establish a new community; the re-emergence of violence and conflict,’” and the ongoing struggle to find the truth (6). More often than not, the protagonists of dystopian fictions are trying to get back to square one, the ground zero, of the event that upset life as they knew it. The cataclysmic event that upset the protagonist’s present then sets their narrative atilt in an apocalyptic environment. Understanding that the apocalyptical environments of dystopian fiction are not necessarily rooted in religion or the finalization of life, affords readers the opportunity to better examine the criticisms and commentary about politics. The criticisms presented by dystopian fiction do not only resonate in the political theories of the past, but they also have resonating chords in the present.

The included critiques provide clarification of the different features, purposes, and examples of dystopian literature. They explain dystopian literature’s use of post-apocalyptic settings. The literature’s inclusion of literal or figurative forms of isolation, and the commonly autocratic government structure imposed on their societies. They discuss dystopian literature’s purpose to open up a dialogue, examination, and evaluation of a reader’s political machines and their machinations. Dystopian literature encourages its readers to evaluate the status quo of their government. Dystopian literature’s ultimate message is to not be a complacent, apathetic citizen.

The critics comment on the common misinterpretations of dystopian literature. Explaining how the misinterpretations can lead to false expectations of dystopian literature.

## CHAPTER IV

## 1984 EPITOMIZES ARENDT'S POLITICAL EXAMINATIONS

This study began with Hannah Arendt's social theory, examining the need for a governing system that not only accounts for the plurality of humanity, but also allows society to lead a freely public life. According to Arendt, the ideal democracy strives to promote the *vita activa*. As previously mentioned, the *vita activa* is the cornerstone principle of the democracy. Arendt's work *The Human Condition* offers man the framework with which to create a society that enables and fosters democracy and the *vita activa*. Works like Arendt's *The Human Condition* attempts to provide guidelines towards a working model of government. Much like More's *Utopia* or Plato's *Republic*, Arendt's work falls into the category of a "blueprint utopia" (Greene 3). As previously mentioned, Greene explains that a "blueprint utopia" provides the framework necessary for building the ideal (3). Conversely, Arendt's work, *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, describes the political patterns that emerge and cause the destruction of the *vita activa* and the rise of totalitarian regimes. Arendt's dire observations of the totalitarian regimes of Germany and Russia leave readers with but one conclusion—totalitarianism is destructive. Her political studies are a manual that explain how to recognize totalitarianism, what not to do, and what not to allow to happen if people are to live in a pluralistic and free society. In essence, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is an example of an anti-utopia or a dystopian blueprint.

As a dystopian blueprint, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* identifies four social components that make totalitarianism possible. The young readers of today, who will become the constituents of tomorrow, need to be aware of *mass man*, *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob* if they are to uphold democracy and defend the *vita activa*. Arendt explicitly describes the characteristics that identify *mass man*. According to Arendt, the hallmark characteristic of *mass*

*man* is that it will strip away all markers of class. For example, one of the most commonly accepted dividers of class is affluence. When *mass man* begins to take shape in a society, the hallmark of affluence will disappear. Suddenly, citizens who before were never seen or heard will come to the table. Before the rise of *mass man*, the economic status of these citizens kept them from participating, but now they will be the loudest political voice, and the largest source of bullish political muscle. This group will receive a totalitarian leader's deliberate attention because from that group the totalitarian will coax the rise of *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob*. The totalitarian leader is a rabble-rouser whipping *mass man* to a fevered emotional state that will drown out the workings of civilized politics. Once the totalitarian leader has *mass man* whipped into the crusher of civilized politics the first social component drawn out is *the masses*. As described by Arendt, *the masses* are a conglomeration of citizens whose social class has been eradicated. As such, they are a haphazardly jointed group of educated, uneducated, rich, poor, young or old. This thrown-together group of society is the integral source of a totalitarian movement's power and strength. This metaphoric *angry mob with torches and pitchforks* stomps civilized politics into the ground. This clears the way for the totalitarian leader to recruit the puppeteers, *the elite*, who manipulate *the masses* for the benefit of the totalitarian leader and the totalitarian movement. *The elite*, according to Arendt, are the disseminators of all totalitarian propaganda, orders, and rules. Arendt explains that members of this group will come from all spectrums of traditional classes, but they share a key characteristic. People who become members of *the elite* have a hatred of civilized politics. *The elite* consider themselves outside of polite society, and are looking for the opportunity to bring about the demise of what they consider a political hypocrisy. *The elite* are convinced that the totalitarian rabble-rouser's approach of violence, terror, and punishment is the result of honest hard-line politics. Through

*the elite*, the totalitarian leader will sway and command the bullish political strength of *the masses*. When Arendt reaches the final social component, *the mob*, she explains that this is the smallest of the social structures that works to strengthen totalitarian rule. The reason this is the smallest of the four components has more to do with a totalitarian leader's survival than with the movement itself. Arendt explains that direct threats to the totalitarian leader come from *the mob*. Members of *the mob* have three defining qualities. First, they have previously been political failures or complete political unknowns. This quality in particular makes them appealing to *the masses* and *the elite* because their disassociation with civilized politics makes them a promising, viable instrument of a system looking to destroy civilized politics. Secondly, members of *the mob* are the historians, the enforcers and deliberators of *justice*. The final characteristic is a constant *threat* to the totalitarian leader: potential replacements. *The mob* gives totalitarian movements a regenerative quality because among their ranks are those who can and most likely will replace the totalitarian leader if the leader is not deliberate in his or her control of them. Ultimately, Arendt's description equips her readers with the necessary information to best spot the development of *mass man* and its accompanying social components. Examples of these components at work are found in Orwell's iconic dystopian novel *1984*. Orwell masterfully constructs the manifestation of each of the accompanying social components of *mass man*. Additionally, his novel is an encapsulation of *mass man's* rampant reign over the country of Oceania. With each demonstration of the totalitarian components in *1984*, Orwell also illustrates the destruction of the *vita activa*.

The *vita activa*, as explained by Arendt, is the free and public interactions of people who work to support pluralized communities. Arendt explains that the *vita activa* "is always rooted in ... action ... and ... action is entirely dependent upon" the free and equal exchange of the

pluralistic ideas of society (Arendt, *Condition* 22-23). In other words, a gathering of people who do not exchange ideas, but are forced to exist together is a complete negation of the *vita activa*. Instead, the *vita activa* manifests itself where individuals use “words and persuasion” to coexist, govern, and expand (26). Manifestations of the *vita activa* are not reserved for politics, as humanity did not begin life in politics. Rather, manifestations of the *vita activa* begin with the home. Arendt explains how the “prepolitical force...of the household ... was ... necessary” in order to establish the social components of *labor* and *work* (32). These components made it possible for “the household head ... to be free ... to leave the household and enter the political realm, where all were equals” (32). The social components of *labor* and *work* took on the responsibilities of sustaining the processes of life while also creating the artifices that represent humanity. Members of the *labor* segment of society are so preoccupied and overwhelmed by their purpose to sustain life that they have no time become involved in the affairs of society beyond ensuring humanity’s opportunity to live. Its complement, *work*, is responsible for the tools and structures that serve society. This segment focuses its efforts on creating the shelters, tools, or monuments that mark the presence of humanity in nature. These two social components cooperatively make it possible for the family leader to step out into the public domain and secure their familial due to property, station, and security. The reversal of society’s movement from the household to the public domain is the chief destroyer of the *vita activa* in Orwell’s *1984*. In *1984*, all of humanity is forced into the household domain with one ruler who has no equal and is in control of everything and everyone everywhere. This reversal undoes and destroys the *vita activa* while giving rise to *mass man* and the inflexible totalitarian rule of the one. Subsequently, this will change the form and degree of manifestations of the *vita activa*. The manifestations of the *vita activa* in *1984* are severely limited and shallow. They in no way carry the weight of

public action, but they are the attempts of one man to establish himself in a way as to afford himself some semblance of a free and equal life—not the *vita activa* exactly, but some semblance of it.

In the field of dystopian fiction, Orwell is considered one of the genre’s canonizing authors. Orwell provides a very poignant and unforgettable interpretation of totalitarian governments. *1984* is the best novel that emphasizes the need for cultivating and protecting the *vita activa*. His novel criticizes the political efforts of politicians and the political machines of his time. According to *New York Times* writer Edmond van den Bossche, “*1984* is a political statement...a simple warning to mankind [to]...defend his most precious right, the right to have his own thoughts” (16). The opportunity to have and publicly express your own thoughts is exactly what living the *vita activa* looks like. In Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984*, individual thinking and ideas are struck down and eradicated. Political enforcers such as the “Thought Police” and “The Inner Party” exist to keep citizens in check. The restriction on individual thought, whether they are private thoughts, spoken ideas, or ideas written down or printed, provides the springboard for Orwell’s criticisms of the political machines of his time. A snapshot of the political landscape surrounding Orwell is encapsulated in a letter he writes to Noel

Willmetts:

You ask whether totalitarianism ... [is] really on the up-grade ... I must say I believe, or fear, that taking the world as a whole ... [totalitarianism is] on the increase ... All the national movements everywhere, even those that originate in resistance to German domination, seem to take non-democratic forms, to group themselves round some superhuman fuhrer (Hitler, Stalin, Salazar, Franco, Gandhi, De Valera are all varying examples) and to adopt the theory that the end justifies the means. Everywhere the world movement seems to be in the direction of centralised economies which ... are not democratically organized ... (Davison 232)

It is plain that Orwell is concerned that people are all too willing to handover their right and privilege to practice and participate in a *vita activa*. The masses around Orwell seem to be looking for one person to have the answers to their problems. Looking for one person to act on behalf of the many is a backsliding slope towards the totalitarian rule that worries Orwell. Orwell's letter includes another observation that "no one in England under 26 ... has a vote and that so far as [he] can see the great mass of people of that age don't give a damn," and that eerily echoes the modern day political findings of the Pew Research, and the segment the study labels as Bystanders (Davison 232-33). As previously mentioned these voters are the youngest of American voters, but they are also the least politically involved. If the youth fail to be involved with the machines that govern their country, they create the silent political apathy needed for a successful totalitarian movement. Yet, Orwell still has hope, as in this same letter he closes it with this thought: "I think, and have thought ever since [World War II] began, in 1936 or thereabouts, that our cause is the better, but we have to keep on making it the better, which involves constant criticism" (Davison 233). Orwell's work attempts to draw attention to the fascist tendencies of his time period and the need to check, evaluate, and change the status quo. Orwell's commentary and criticisms on the fascist political tendencies of the political machines of his time create the despotic reality in which Winston Smith struggles to find some semblance of a free and equal life. In *1984*, the modern turn of phrase *the struggle is real*, is a garish reality one hopes humanity would strive to avoid.

This chapter will examine the manifestations of *mass man* in Oceania and the individual struggles of Winston Smith. The examination reveals Big Brother's use of propaganda and indoctrination, as well as how Smith is striving to establish for himself a shallow version of the *vita activa*, and to reach it with friends rather than alone. Smith's interactions with Tom Parson,

a member of *the masses*, reveals the attributes of *the masses* identified by Arendt. When Smith meets and deals with O'Brien, a member of *the elite* and *the mob*, their interactions echo the descriptions put forth by Arendt. Additionally, Smith's relationships with Katherine and Julia reveal Big Brother's successful indoctrinations, and Big Brother's Achilles' heel. Orwell uses these relationships as catalysts to draw out in Smith his want for a free and public life, a *vita activa*. *1984* challenges readers to examine—don't just look—the political machines working the government. Are the machines working for you, or are they just working you? Only the end of the study will reveal if he makes a free and equal and public appearance in Oceania.

*1984* begins with a world already in the midst of what Arendt identifies as *mass man*. Arendt explains that *mass man* is possible when a totalitarian movement strips away all markers of class while infecting the society with a heightened sense of paranoia that is manifested in a citizenry that mistrusts not only family and friends, but themselves as well. This creates a splintered homogenized society. Consider Big Brother's overwhelmingly intrusive, omnipresent presence is introduced on the first page: "a colored poster ... depicted ... an enormous face ... It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" (Orwell 1-2). The totalitarian leader uses propaganda deliberately designed to instill and foster a heighten sense of paranoia. This first glimpse of the totalitarian rule reveals two key characteristics of Oceania's totalitarian machine: its obscurity and its vigilance. These two qualities of Oceania's totalitarian machine provide the consistent threat needed to instill paranoia. The vigilance factor leaves no question in the reader's mind that the society feels paranoid and watched. The obscurity factor makes suspects out of every member of society because who is Big Brother? The images of Big Brother are designed to "follow" everyone's every action which makes it difficult for citizens to act on any independent

thought (Orwell 2). Orwell leaves no doubt that Big Brother takes great care to instill in the citizenry the deliberate expectation that “There was... no way of knowing whether ... the Thought Police ... watched,” stalked, examined, or recorded every move, every sound, every gesture, or every expression (Orwell 3). Big Brother conditions the populace to live in a perpetual state of paranoia through the use of carefully designed images and the printed reminders “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Orwell 2). This poignant conditioning fosters the conglomerated disengaged society necessary for Big Brother to maintain control. If they can’t trust anyone, then each person is suspect, and everyone is alone, and alone they can’t escape Big Brother.

According to Arendt, this feeling that everyone is suspect is a crucial form of control used by *the elite*. In 1984 members of *the elite* are found within the ranks of the leagues responsible for the indoctrination of the young: The Youth League, the Spies, and the Junior Anti-Sex League. Arendt observes how the indoctrinated masses under Germany’s totalitarian rule “lost interest in their own well-being,” and were instead only concerned with the “violent ... voice” of the totalitarian leader (Arendt, *Origins* 315). These masses would not only give themselves up to be persecuted but they would also denounce anyone who they deemed guilty by association. This lack of concern for preservation of self, family, or friends further destroys the *vita activa* because according to Arendt the *vita activa* depends on “human plurality” which has the quality of human interaction in the presence of others (Arendt, *Condition* 175). The level of paranoia in Oceania is so heightened they not only fear the people outside their homes, but they especially fear their own children. Orwell describes the Parson children, current members of the Youth League, as “tiger cubs which will soon grow...into man-eaters” (Orwell 23). Orwell explains how the Parson children will most likely over the next “two years” terrorize their

parents with threats of accusations of being “traitors” or “thought criminals” (23-24). According to the protagonist, Winston Smith, “hardly a week passed in which the *Times* did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak” had “denounced his parents to the Thought Police” (24). Tom Parson, a member of *the masses*, exhibits the fruition of Big Brother’s systems of indoctrination when his daughter denounces him as a thought criminal: ““Are you guilty?” said Winston. ‘Of course I’m guilty!’ cried Parsons with a servile glance at the telescreen. ‘You don’t think the Party would arrest an innocent man’” (233). Parsons’ blind faith in the Party and Big Brother is adamant even against himself. This shows how Big Brother’s systems of indoctrination are successful in negating any desire for self-preservation. Instead of self-preservation Parson supports his apprehension, ““I’m glad they got me before it went any further ... Thought crime ... It’s insidious ... it got hold of me ... In my sleep!”” (233). Parsons’ actions demonstrate his need to reflect Big Brother and the Party ideals rather than to distinguish himself from *the masses*. This again negates the *vita activa* because Parson relinquishes his right to have himself reflected by his society. Arendt explains that routine mass purges of society where anyone associated with an accused person were made to suffer the same punishment, usually death, made having any kind of social tie a liability. In a totalitarian society the number of social ties a citizen keeps, is equal to the number of opportunities the despot has to torture, threaten, or attack the citizen. The cultivation of “‘guilt by association’ ... transformed” a person’s friends and family into vehement enemies “in order to save their own skins” (Arendt, *Origins* 323). Totalitarian leaders used *the elite* to target every kind of relationship that man cultivates: colleagues, friends, family, and lovers. Orwell demonstrates how Big Brother exploits this idea and uses members of *the elite* to keep *the masses* under tight control. Orwell includes a scene where Smith has a conversation with a co-worker, Syme. Syme, who also works at The

Ministry of Truth, is responsible for the language of Oceania, *Newspeak*. Among his other duties, Syme compiles the dictionaries used by the Ministry of Truth. In their conversation, Syme is venting to Smith that he does not agree with how *Newspeak* is developing. Smith makes no comment on the issue, but he remembers well Syme's complaint. Shortly after this conversation, Smith notices "A morning came, and [Syme] was missing from work" (Orwell 147). Smith goes to check the bulletin boards where people's names are listed according to the committees they are involved in; Syme was part of "the Chess Committee" and its "printed list ... was one name shorter. It was enough. Syme had ceased to exist" (147). Smith demonstrates his understanding of how Big Brother uses social ties when he interacts with O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party: "I was talking recently to a friend of yours who is certainly an expert. His name has slipped my memory for the moment." ... It was inconceivable that this was anything other than a reference to Syme. But Syme was not only dead, he was abolished, an *unperson*. Any identifiable reference to him would have been mortally dangerous" (158). Smith sees the dangers in admitting any connections to Syme, so he is careful to remain silent allowing O'Brien to draw his own conclusions. This silence, while it keeps Smith safe, it again negates the *vita activa* because Smith is unwilling to reveal his interaction and relationship with Syme. Big Brother's use of *the elite* to monitor and curtail the relationships of *the masses* is perhaps the most blatant transgression against the *vita activa* because it effectively eliminates any free and public interactions between people. This is not the only way that *the elite* affect the social ties of Oceania's society. The reach of The Party and Big Brother also especially work to extinguish intimate relationships.

The indoctrination powers of the Youth League and the Spies complement the destruction of social ties initiated by the Junior Anti-Sex League. Smith explains how "The aim of the Party

... was ... to kill the sex instinct ... to distort it and dirty it” so as to discourage both sexes from willfully engaging in sex (65-66). This very basic and instinctual process of creating a bond is a threat to totalitarian movements because the bond encourages “loyalties” outside of the Party’s control (65). Instead, through the Junior Anti-Sex League both men and women are convinced that “celibacy” is the best option (66). However, totalitarian movements are dependent on *the masses*, so procreation is essential to sustaining the numbers of *the masses*. The Party then depicts the act of conception “as a ... disgusting minor operation, like having an enema” (65). Katherine, Smith’s wife, explains to Smith that sex was their “‘duty to the Party’ ... [t]hey must ... produce a child ... for the service of the Party” (65, 67). Unlike his wife, Smith “wanted ... [t]he sexual act” to be a manifestation of his “rebellion” against Big Brother because “[t]he sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion” (68). Smith’s inability to accomplish this act of defiance—this manifestation of the *vita activa*—is a source of frustration for Smith. Smith’s unchecked sexual frustration are exhibited in his vehement aggression towards Julia while they are still strangers: “He hated [Julia] because she was young and pretty and sexless, because he wanted to go to bed with her ... He [wanted to] flog her to death with a rubber truncheon. He [wanted to] tie her naked to a stake and shoot her full of arrows ... He [wanted to] ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax” (15). Because of the Junior Anti-Sex League, Smith cannot fathom a positive relationship resulting from desire. Rather, Smith’s desire manifests itself in the only unchecked emotion, violence. As an enforcer, the Junior Anti-Sex League reinforces the atomization of man ensuring that man does not come together and organize outside of totalitarian rule. As long as man is kept in a state of “isolation,” the *vita activa* “is never possible” (Arendt, *Condition* 188). As *mass man* expands, giving rise to *the masses* and *the elite*; it becomes complete when *the mob* finally appears to act as historian, executor of judgements,

and leader replacements. While *the masses* occupy themselves with laying low, reflecting only the ideas, image, and actions of the totalitarian ruler, and *the elite* use indoctrination, propaganda, and terror to ensure *the masses* stay in check, *the mob* is first demonstrated by Orwell when Smith describes the duties of the Records Department at the Ministry of Truth.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt levels the accusation that “all totalitarian regimes” unabashedly forge history to suit their needs (Arendt, *Origins* 332). She explains how *the masses* passively accept the corrections because what was there before “was a forgery ... since it ... excluded” *the masses* (333). The redacting of history is the paramount purpose of Oceania’s Ministry of Truth. The Ministry of Truth uses its different departments to ensure that all printed materials reflect Big Brother and the Party in the best light. This system of routine redaction assures that corrections are done “to every kind of literature or documentation” in an effort to establish Big Brother and the Party as the only accurate source of information (Orwell 40). The routine redactions guarantee that “every prediction made by” Big Brother is always accurate; creating a society that sees printed information as arbitrary. The arbitrariness of printed information is illustrated by Julia’s stance on printed information, “she [is] ready to accept [Big Brother’s] mythology, simply because the difference between truth and falsehood [is] not...important” (153). Smith, who works for the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, is responsible for *updating* printed materials. Smith explains that “Day by day and almost minute by minute the past” is updated to match the state of current affairs (40). Early on in the novel Smith believes the updates he does are corrections, “slips, errors, misprints, or misquotations” (40). Smith’s explanation that he is making *corrections*, echoes Arendt’s observation that *the masses* believed that what was there before was a forgery, and what Smith is doing now is “not ... forgery ... merely the substitution of one piece of nonsense for another” (41). However, Big

Brother's institutions are the beginning of the end for its overbearing control of Smith. Smith begins to connect the names of people, places, and events in the redactions he is assigned. He realizes how some people are first praised for their work and then later admonished, erased, and ultimately eliminated from history through his redactions:

Just once ... [Smith] possessed—*after* the event: that was what counted—concrete, unmistakable evidence of an act of falsification ... It was a half-page torn out of the *Times* ... that ... included the date—and ... a photograph of the delegates at some Party function in New York. Prominent in the middle of the group were Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford ... all three men had confessed that on that [same] date they had been on Eurasian soil ... [betraying] important military secrets. The ... only ... possible conclusion: the confessions were lies ... this was concrete evidence; it was a fragment of the abolished past ... [Smith] dropped the photograph into the memory hole ... [turning it] into ashes. That was ten—eleven years ago. Today ... he would have kept the photograph. (Orwell 75, 78-79)

That particular redaction causes Smith to realize that Big Brother and the Party are working not to correct “slips, errors, misprints, or misquotations,” instead they are rewriting history to suit the Party (40). Smith's admission that “he would have kept the photograph” is his meager attempt at action—at the *vita activa* (79). As previously mentioned, the manifestations of action, the *vita activa*, will be perceived as small and seemingly insignificant. The *vita activa* manifests itself in Smith's attempts to secure a *space* for himself. As Arendt explains in her work *The Human Condition*, the “prepolitical force” of one's own home needs to be established in order for *action*, the *vita activa*, to be fully realized (Arendt, *Condition* 32). When one considers the environment which has conditioned Smith, his small overtures of rebellion disguised as reaches for freedom, privacy, and human contact are the only possible manifestations of *action*, the *vita activa*. The examination of Smith's overtures reveals his actions incrementally increase in significance as the novel approaches the end.

Orwell demonstrates the first of Smith's several rebellious actions in the novel's opening scenes. As the novel begins, Smith's mannerisms and behavior divulge to the readers his need for privacy. Once Smith reaches his apartment his actions are deliberate in securing a sense of privacy. Smith's first move is to turn "a switch [on] the [telescreen, so the] voice sank somewhat" allowing him to create a distance between himself and the voice of Big Brother (Orwell 2). The act of lowering the volume illustrates Smith's dissent with Big Brother's rule. It also allows Smith to exert a form of power over how present Big Brother is in his home. The next thing that Smith does to tangibly contradict Big Brother's control is how he implements a sense of privacy for himself: "It was safer" to keep "his back turned to the telescreen" this way Big Brother was less likely to see and discern his expressions (3). In addition to keeping his expressions and gestures secret from Big Brother, Smith explains how in his apartment has an area where he has complete privacy: "sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back" allowed him to stay in the blind spot of the apartment's telescreen (6). This private behavior is Smith's only way of defying Big Brother. Smith further demonstrates his attempt at action when he reveals his one "compromising possession," a journal (6). At this point it is interesting to note that Smith explains to the readers that under Big Brother "there were no longer any laws" (6). Much like the redacting of history, printed laws are no longer a societal staple. Rather, justice was arbitrary, subjective, and left to *the elite*, in this case the Thought Police. As with the disappearance of Syme, 'justice' was served when someone "was abolished" or made an "unperson" (158). Orwell's next depictions of Smith's rebellion are directly connected to the freedom of expression ideal, the opportunity to have someone respond to personal expressions. Orwell describes how Smith is overwhelmed by the blank page of his journal. He desperately wants an audience for his thoughts, "For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary? For the

future, for the unborn” (7). Smith’s instinctual thought and desire for an audience illustrates the crux of the *vita activa* principle—to “insert [oneself] ... with word” into the world of man for other to reflect (Arendt, *Condition* 176). As Smith sits looking at the blank page of his journal with a pen in hand he is ready to put his idea out there to illicit a response from someone. Again, Smith’s attempts to experience the *vita activa* are limited to what his environment allows, and the restraints to Smith serve to demonstrate Orwell’s criticism of an oppressive ruler. Orwell’s next descriptions of Smith’s attempts are woven into the fabric of Smith subconscious self. Orwell reveals Smith’s instinctual needs for familial and intimate relationships and freedom. Smith’s first dream is a reminiscence of his mother and younger sister. Smith’s dream and memories merge to reveal the human connections he most wants—affection. As Smith recounts his dream about his mother and younger sister, he reveals how his “mother’s memory [tears] at his heart because she ... [dies] loving him ... she ... sacrificed herself” for him (Orwell 30). Smith explains how this kind of emotional connection and “loyalty ... could not” be possible in his society (30). According to Smith, in the current state of affairs the only emotions connecting one person to another are the paranoid derivatives of “fear, hatred, and pain” (30). Smith’s third dream is also connected to a desire for personal interaction. At the point of this particular dream sequence, Smith and Julia are still strangers. In fact, Julia is a source of aggravation for Smith because he sees her as unapproachable and completely unattainable. He sees her as a cog in the machine he is trying to escape. However, in his dream sequence, Julia is not only a contradiction of the totalitarian system, but also the totalitarian system’s eliminator. Julia makes it seem to Smith that shedding the oppressive figure of Big Brother is done with a simple gesture. Julia boldly sheds the oppressive shroud of Big Brother and the Party with poise:

[Julia] was coming toward him across the field. With what seemed a single movement she tore off her clothes and flung them disdainfully aside ... What

overwhelmed him in that instant was admiration for the gesture ... its grace and carelessness ... seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm. (Orwell 31)

Orwell's depiction of Smith's subconscious desires for personal interaction are laced with a need for the freedom that would allow him to truly live the active life, if only Big Brother could be shed like an old shroud. Orwell's final dip into Smith's subconscious brings to the forefront Smith's desire for freedom. This dream reveals a different, better place. For Smith, the only escape from Oceania and Big Brother is a place where the buildings are gone, the telescreens are gone, and nature is allowed to flourish. Smith "was standing on short springy turf, on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground. The landscape that he was looking at ... was an old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a foot track wandering across it ... he called it the Golden Country" (30). In this dream sequence Orwell depicts an environment that is in direct contrast to Smith's daily environment. When Smith calls this place the "Golden Country," he implies that this place is not only pleasant, but also preferable to his current living situation (30). The lack of structures on the land are the first representation of freedom. Nothing blocks the sun or the grass from going wherever it wants. The absence of man-made structures and paths are direct illustrations of Smith's desires to be rid of Big Brother's overbearing control. The connotative implication of "Golden" encourages readers to understand that Smith considers this place precious and valuable (30). Again, while Smith's attempts to establish a *vita activa* have been small and seemingly inconsequential, his next attempt is the realization of one of his dreams and an exponential leap in significance.

Smith next has the *vita activa* pushed upon him when Julia secretly passes Smith a note while at work. With that small action, Smith's interaction with an active life grows exponentially. Julia is entreating him to interact with her. Smith is eager and anxious to discover

the note's contents: "Whatever was written on the paper [had] two possibilities" (107). His anxiety stems from his conditioned state of paranoia: "One ... the Thought Police ... a threat, a summons, an order to commit suicide, a trap of some" kind (107). His eagerness stems from his want to join an organization that he considers a contrast to Big Brother: "the Brotherhood existed ... [Julia] was part of it" (107). Either of these results would force Smith to demonstrate *action*. However, what is revealed catapults Smith into an interaction and relationship he had only imagined. He opens the note to find a simple three-word declaration: "*I love you*" (107). While small in nature, this declaration does a world of damage to Big Brother's efforts to condition Smith. It is the beginning of an intimate bond between Julia and Smith. From this point forth, Orwell reveals how Smith's loyalties are to Julia and their relationship. While their relationship remains hidden, it becomes one where Smith and Julia freely exchange ideas. Their inability to take their relationship public is built into their conditioning by Big Brother.

Smith's ultimate endeavor to live an active life is possible because of the false sense of security he finds in his relationship with Julia. Smith's relationship with Julia has transformed him; he has actively engaged in an active life with Julia. They meet and talk, exchange ideas and opinions on everything from the proles to Big Brother and everything in between. In this fashion, Smith has secured a private form of the *vita activa*. He freely exchanges ideas and views with Julia. Julia provides Smith with a reflection that serves as a form of recognition of Smith as an independent entity separate from the conglomerate masses that follow Big Brother. Smith's successful navigation of these *private politics*, leads him to believe that public politics, a true *vita activa*, is possible. Unfortunately, unlike Julia, Smith is not "good at spotting people who don't belong" (122). Smith's naiveté is the chief cause of his downfall, and the end of his opportunity

of a *vita activa*. The end begins with O'Brien, a member of the segment of society Arendt terms *the mob*.

Smith describes O'Brien as "a member of the Inner Party and holder of some post so important and remote" that Smith cannot even begin to fathom his actual function or position within the ranks of Big Brother's regime (10). Smith explains how he feels inexplicably drawn to O'Brien; Smith explains his "secretly held belief ... merely a hope—that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was not perfect" (11). Smith's unilateral relation to O'Brien is yet another demonstration of Smith's need for free and public interaction that recognizes him as something other than a member of Big Brother's masses. However, when O'Brien finally does approach Smith, Smith's inexperience causes him to misinterpret O'Brien's intentions:

"...I noticed you had used two words which have become obsolete. But they have only become so very recently. Have you seen the tenth edition of the Newspeak Dictionary?"

"No," said Winston. "I didn't think it had been issued yet. We are still using the ninth in the Records Department."

"The tenth edition is not due to appear for some months, I believe. But a few advance copies have been circulated. I have one myself. It might interest you to look at it, perhaps?" (Orwell 158)

Smith does not realize that O'Brien's true loyalties lie with Big Brother; rather, he believes that this brief interaction with O'Brien will lead to the "conspiracy ... he had dreamed of ... [and] that sooner or later he would obey O'Brien's summons" (159). Smith's relationship with Julia emboldens him to attempt to create another relationship. At this point Smith's relationships serve to recognize and reflect him as an entity separate from *mass man*. However, Smith's eagerness to create relationships hinders his ability to judge people, and this leads to several mistakes in his interactions with O'Brien.

Smith's first mistake is that he ignores what he *knows* about O'Brien. O'Brien is a member of the Inner Party. As such, one would expect Smith to be wary of trying to include

O'Brien in his quest for a free and public life. Ignoring the fact that O'Brien is a member of the Inner Party, Smith indulges his conspiracy hope, "O'Brien seemed to be saying to him ... 'I am with you ... I know precisely what you are feeling. I know all about your contempt, your hatred, your disgust. But don't worry, I am on your side'" (17) Smith is so eager to find others to reflect his ideas and his identity that he fails to consider the possibility that O'Brien will betray him.

Smith's next mistake is when he goes to O'Brien's home with Julia. Again, Smith is desperately searching for recognition and acceptance with another person that he forgets what he knows about the Inner Party and how they deal with the intimate relationships of men and women: "The aim of the Party was ... to prevent men and women from forming loyalties" (65). Smith and Julia showing up together demonstrates how Smith is already working outside the norms set forth by Big Brother and the totalitarian government. This inadvertently places Smith and Julia in danger. However, Smith's need to interact freely and publicly to distinguish himself from *mass man* disarms him and makes him vulnerable to the machinations of the same government agencies he is attempting to oppose.

Smith's final mistake is his eagerness to join the ranks of The Brotherhood, "'Shall I say it, or will you?' [O'Brien] said. 'I will say it,' said [Smith] promptly" (169-70). What Smith doesn't realize is that O'Brien is creating an opportunity for Smith to incriminate himself; unfortunately, Smith not only incriminates himself, but he also includes Julia in his plans to oppose Big Brother: "We believe that there is some kind of conspiracy, some kind of secret organization working against the Party, and that you are involved in it. We want to join it and work for it. We are enemies of the Party. We disbelieve in the principles of Ingsoc. We are thought-criminals. We are also adulterers. I tell you this because we want to put ourselves at your mercy. If you want us to incriminate ourselves in any other way, we are ready" (170).

With Smith openly incriminating himself, O'Brien further tests Smith's disposition, "we should begin by drinking ... To our Leader: To Emmanuel Goldstein." Winston took up his glass with a certain eagerness" (171). O'Brien then proceeds to bait Smith further:

You are prepared to give your lives? ... You are prepared to commit murder? ... To commit acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people? ... To betray your country to foreign powers? ... You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases—to do anything which is likely to cause demoralization and weaken the power of the Party? (Orwell 172)

To all these questions, Smith eagerly affirms his willingness to comply, until O'Brien reaches the question that places his relationship with Julia at risk. However, it is pertinent to note that Smith is not the one to voice an objection. Rather, Julia finally speaks to declare how she refuses to be separated from Smith. When Smith finally does chime in with his answer, he echoes Julia's sentiment. This particular interaction reveals Smith's inexperience with enacting a *vita activa*. Additionally, for the first time, Julia incriminates herself, and demonstrates her devotion to Smith. This relevance of loyalty between Smith and Julia serves only to increase the degree of their deviant behavior, and provides for O'Brien and Big Brother an intimate weapon to exploit in the process of their eminent punishment.

In spite of all these behavior flags that should have alerted Smith to O'Brien's true loyalties, O'Brien does one more thing to seal Smith's fate. He gives Smith the one piece of incriminating evidence that cannot be denied or concealed, a copy of "Emmanuel Goldstein's *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*" (184). O'Brien explains how this book has everything Smith needs to know about The Brotherhood. O'Brien explains that The Brotherhood swears and lives by the book. Smith's acceptance of the bait quickly brings his active life to a grinding halt. The Thought Police, which Orwell reveals includes not only

O'Brien, but also Mr. Charrington, descends on Smith and Julia in their apartment and arrests them. Both Smith and Julia are subjected to the tortures of Room 101 for what seems like days. Smith's final crack occurs when he denounces Julia, and the Party and Big Brother regain control over Smith's life. Smith returns to the frame of mind he had before his relationship with Julia, "the moment of declaring war on the Party it [is] better to think of yourself as ... dead" (135). Orwell's depiction of Smith's negligible attempts to pursue an active life can be difficult for readers to empathize quite simply because modern day America has never had to accept an overbearing fascist rule, yet. But considering the environment into which Orwell tossed Smith, his actions while meek and covert were Smith's best attempt at a free and equal life; unfortunately, taking his attempts public led only to the decimation of himself and Julia. A reality Arendt warns is possible if the concept of *mass man* is allowed to fester and facilitate the rise of a totalitarian movement.

When one considers the deck Orwell stacked against Smith, one would venture amazement at the small successful attempts Smith experienced when attempting to assert his own will. Remembering that *1984* is a satire determined to amplify the detrimental effects of totalitarian rule, Smith has little recourse, but his quiet covert shallow demonstrations of free will. Orwell poignantly illustrates the duplicitous nature of Big Brother and the Party through the machinations of the ironically named Ministry of Truth. Orwell demonstrates how the indoctrination efforts of those in *the elite*: the Youth League, the Spies, and the Junior Anti-Sex League, work to eradicate society's instinctive development of social ties. The final critical stab to the heart of democracy is the torture and re-indoctrination of Smith. The satiric close of the novel reveals Smith as an apathetic shadow of a man whose will has fallen into a comatose complacency state blindly following Big Brother.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study attempts to reintroduce the purpose of dystopian literature. A purpose effectively highlighted and made more poignant with the application of political studies and social theory. Additionally, the study examines a classic novel whose inclusion in the dystopian genre is attributed to its reputation as a standard of the dystopian genre. Finally, this study provides an explanation and connection to a current and relevant political survey. All these elements work together to emphasize the importance of literature as a tool to critique and evaluate the agencies of government and humanity.

The genre of dystopian literature is often viewed as source of entertainment. This genre often provides the platform from which to consider the hypotheticals of society. Everything from a society without ruling entities to societies whose ruling entities are so oppressive it makes the reader wonder how anyone could live that way. That said, one must also remember that dystopian literature has a purpose beyond entertainment. In fact, dystopian literature serves to critique and evaluate the political agencies responsible for the governing of society. To that end, chapter three is a collection of criticisms of the genre. Additionally, it addresses the misinterpretations of some critics of the genre. The chapter also goes into detail to elucidate and discuss the features, purposes, and examples of the dystopian literature genre. The chapter draws on the expertise of critics like Vivian Green, Gorman Beauchamp, John David Frodsham, and other critics to definitively define the features of dystopian literature. The critiques explain the nature of dystopian literature. They also explain how it rises from its converse utopia. Readers come to realize that utopia is a happy place while a dystopia is a not so happy place. The critics go to great lengths to emphasize that dystopian literature is not for entertainment purposes only;

rather, it is a derivative of the satirical tradition, and as such it should be examined for its commentary on its satirized object, ideal, or persona. The reviews provided by the critics bring to mind the idea that things are not always what they seem. The critics imply that careful scrutiny of dystopian literature is not only wise, but highly encouraged. The critics, like myself, believe that George Orwell's *1984* is not only a classic, but a standard by which other dystopian satires are measured. His careful construction of the relationships or lack thereof throughout the novel, leave no room for question: democracy needs to be protected at all costs. While his hero, Winston Smith, suffers to get this idea across, the life of a fictional character is better than the lives of a nation, a country, a state, a city, a family, or a person.

As this study moved forward, it became paramount to identify a lucid source of political and social theory. Because dystopian literature is a commentary on the agencies, actors, and movements of politics and politicians, Hannah Arendt and her examinations of society and totalitarian movements was the perfect source. Her comprehensible presentation of social and political theories creates the ideal lens with which to examine the dystopian political commentary. Her insights into the machinations of totalitarian movements, their leaders, and the social components necessary to foster and facilitate totalitarian rule are clearly identified as hallmarks that civilized politics is in trouble. Trouble that can be reversed if action is taken to combat the propaganda, paranoia, and general disintegration of social ties between groups, families, and people. Arendt's lucid descriptions of the concepts of *mass man*, *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob* allow the everyday person to critically examine their community and affect the status quo, so that it promotes the free and public life, the *vita activa*. Along with her political theory, Arendt's social theory brings to the forefront the paramount characteristic of humanity, its plurality. Arendt explains that a government that respects the plurality of its society will be a

successful government. One needs only to take stock of how many Second Amendment supporters there are in a room to know that one size fits all government is not a feasible idea for the pluralistic nature of society. Moreover, her distinctions of the different social components needed to support a democratically driven government make it easy to understand the purpose behind establishing the different roles people fill in society. Furthermore, Arendt's unambiguous distinctions between the social components make it easy to understand purpose of each component and their level of interdependence.

As the study continued forward, chapter four focused on demonstrating how Arendt's political theory resonated within the plot of *1984*. The novel's artful mimicry of *mass man* encompasses the homogenized splinters of the paranoid society Arendt describes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. While recreating *mass man*, the novel also brings to light the characteristic behaviors of *the masses*, *the elite*, and *the mob*. With each turn of a page the reader is met with one instance after another where simple freedoms are curtailed, human connections are destroyed, and democracy is incinerated in the "memory hole" of fear and oppression. Big Brother's resemblance to figures like Stalin or Hitler is no accident. Big Brother, much like Stalin or Hitler, aims to be overbearing and the only recognizable idea or force in their society. Through the movement of the plot, readers find that Winston Smith is meek in his attempt to break free; the result of the careful and deliberate conditioning of the Party and Big Brother. However, in spite of his meekness, he does recognize his need to break away. When he finally does break, it isn't away from the Party or Big Brother. Rather, Big Brother breaks his spirit. Smith ends up working through the motions of living without really living, which is a direct result of being victimized by the totalitarian rule of Big Brother and the Party.

Finally, in an effort to link all this information to the current state of affairs, a study conducted by the Pew Research Center was a natural inclusion. In their study the center surveyed the political landscape of a period in America, specifically 2012-2014. This period, often referred to as the mid-term election years, generally determines which American political party will control the House of Representatives, the Senate, and Congress. Often times, the political layman will say that only the Presidential election is important. This study shows that the political topology as it currently exists will greatly impact *all* elections. Unfortunately, the study also shows that voting apathy is at its highest, political parties are loosely bound and internally extremely splintered, and there is a large segment of the society that does not identify with either Democrat or Republican, meaning that a large portion of the voters out there cannot be depended upon by either party. So how do you select candidates if neither strong party members nor party dark horses are guaranteed the majority of votes? These political characteristics are the totalitarian breeding ground Arendt defines in her work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which then explains why the Pew Research Center's survey study is especially important and relevant to the heart of this study. Considering the current trends of American politics, this particular study carries weighty implications. American politics have been primarily and traditionally two sided—Republican or Democratic. However, the recent study by Pew Research Center shows the emergence of a rough third group. The ambivalent political terrain in America has sparked a renewed interest in voter tendency and practices. In 2012 Pew Research Center initiated a political research in an effort to determine the American political typology. In June of 2014, Pew Research released its findings in an article entitled, *Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology*. Their findings explain how “the political landscape [now] includes a center that is large and diverse, unified by frustration with politics,” and looking for the political movement that

advances their interests (*Political Typology*). The 2014 typology report identifies eight groups of American voters. The divisions include three groups that are “strongly ideological, highly politically engaged,” and dedicated to their Republican or Democratic Party (*Political Typology*). Pew Research identifies the first two groups as “Steadfast Conservatives” and “Business Conservatives” which are loyal to the Republican Party (*Political Typology*). These two groups are characterized by their “staunch [criticism] of government ... [a] preference for limited government” and social conservative views (*Political Typology*). The third group, “Solid Liberals,” is loyal to the Democratic Party, and they are characterized by their “liberal attitudes across ... government, the economy and business and foreign policy” as well as social issues (*Political Typology*). The remaining five groups are a toss-up on which party or party leader they will support. Across the five groups, there is a mix of voters who supported the 2012 Democratic Presidential incumbent, President Barack Hussein Obama II, but who did not repeat their support of the Democratic candidate in 2016. Pew Research identifies these five groups with the following labels: “Young Outsiders, Hard-Pressed Skeptics, Next Generation Left, Faith and Family Left, [and the] Bystanders” (*Political Typology*). Each of these groups has defining characteristics; however, the trait that is the most troublesome is the inability to “be integrated ... into [existing] political parties” because in essence they are a mass of untapped political potential power (Arendt, *Origins* 311).

These five groups are distant reminders of what Arendt termed *the masses*, which are waiting to be impressed by some form of political advancement or change. However, if history is to be trusted, then the advancement or change will be abrupt and shocking, as it will contrast with the “calculated ... negotiations” of conventional politics (317). The emergence of this

splintered yet conglomerated group of voters makes Arendt's observations necessary and prudent if democracy is to be upheld, sustained, and maintained in America.

In the presented political theory and the dystopian novel, a splintered society makes oppression possible. Current study shows that American voters have never been so thinly spread across the political topology. The modern-day marvels of technology give the impression of people always being connected, yet if push came to shove, people could not honestly claim to know everyone on their friends list beyond their post count and social media screen name. I'm not a conspiracy theory believer, but some of the characteristics poignantly depicted and enacted in both history and fiction give reason for pause and evaluation. The question is what will your evaluation demonstrate? Will you find that the political machines of society are working for you? Or will find that they are working you? Once your evaluation is done, what will your overture illustrate? Apathetic complacency; publicly silent and privately frustrated, or will you exercise your right to free and public expression, and actualize a *vita activa*?

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## VITA

Name: Juanita Yesenia Escamilla-Deliganis

Address: 2314 Severita Ln  
Laredo, TX 78046

Email Address: jdeliganis@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts (May, 2008) with a Major in English and a Minor in Reading, Specialization in English. Texas A&M International University, Laredo, Texas